

A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS
USING THE EXAMPLE OF ŁOBEZ COMMUNE

WAKE-UP!

The Wake Up! project was carried out with the support of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme.



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Contents

Preface	4
Introduction	5
1. The essence of non-formal education.....	9
2. Non-formal education in Łobez Commune – research results	12
2.1 Methodology	13
2.2 Condition assessment - the necessity to implement non-formal education in Łobez Commune based on research carried out during the Wake Up! project	13
2.3 The effects of applying non-formal education methods during the project – research results	15
2.4 An assessment of the knowledge of non-formal education among representatives of Łobez Commune Office and the institutions run by the commune, and of the use of non-formal education methods in the commune	26
2.5 An assessment of NGOs' knowledge about non-formal education, and of the use of non-formal teaching methods in youth activities carried out in Łobez Commune	29
SWOT analysis	31
A strategy for developing non-formal education in Łobez Commune	33
Conclusion	37
Bibliography	38
A list of tables and graphs	39

Preface

We would like to offer you a publication which concerns most people, as it is hard to find someone who does not have children and teenagers in their nearest surroundings, in their family or among friends.

Having these young people in mind, we have started a fascinating journey through non-formal education, analysing its potential, testing its methods and examining its results. We have been accompanied by partner organisations from Germany and the Netherlands, where this type of education is more widespread and popular than in Poland.

Our belief that the youth has a natural need for learning and an extraordinary potential has inspired us to look for a place in Łobez Commune where young people could implement their strangest and boldest ideas; a place where, with our support, they could activate their sense of agency and realise that everyone is an expert in a field and has something to offer.

We are guided by a conviction that there is value in acting together for the benefit of the youth. Owing to the support of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, we gained an opportunity to promote the non-formal education concept in Łobez area, which had never been done there on such a large scale before. As ardent supporters and advocates of this idea, we would like Bonin Foundation to contribute to developing non-formal education in Łobez Commune and the entire Łobez District. One of the ways in which we can help is by making our staff and premises, including green spaces, available for non-formal teaching activities. At the same time, we are counting on continued goodwill of the local authorities and their further cooperation to achieve the objectives of this strategy. By presenting the outcome of the Wake Up! project, we would like to convince you that the proposed forms of non-formal education can help improve the learning results within mainstream education. The strategy also demonstrates possibilities for common initiatives, such as partnerships aimed at developing non-formal education in the future.

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Introduction

'A basic principle of contemporary education is that it should be accessible and ensure equal opportunities. This is reflected in Polish and international legal norms, which regard education as a basic human right, and in the development of the education system along with extensive systems for supporting students' families and educational institutions. The importance of education in the modern world, including Poland, is increasing rapidly, affecting societies on an ever larger scale. Declared educational aspirations are growing, but their fulfilment depends on family income, parents' education, the socio-economic status of the household and the place of residence.'¹ Living outside big cities and the necessity to commute are a great obstacle. Ensuring equal educational opportunities for youth from rural areas is one of the more difficult challenges faced by the social policy in Poland. One of the principles of education is that it should be accessible, including secondary and tertiary education. According to the Polish constitution, the state has an obligation to provide equal access to education for young people, regardless of their social and environmental background. However, it appears that even though the current initiatives designed to improve the educational opportunities for youth from villages and small towns are heading in the right direction, they are not sufficient.

According to research, the inhabitants of rural areas view obtaining access to education as difficult. Respondents think that **the largest educational barrier are after-school activities** (...), which are usually difficult to reach. The respondents are aware of the difficulties related to entering the labour market and remaining in it. They know the importance of education, which determines a person's place in life and their social standing.²

It is vital to be aware that education preparing students to enter the job market constitutes a promise of a better life for many young people. It is their chance to break free of the circle of poverty and a way to fight against learned helplessness and passivity, and to prevent passing down poverty from generation to generation.³

These factors can be partially compensated for by improving teachers' qualifications and the quality of teaching in rural schools, as well as supporting families in shaping higher educational aspirations on one hand, and supporting the school environment on the other. Such initiatives play an important part in motivating students to deepen their knowledge.

The idea of non-formal education fits into all the programmes designed to counteract unequal access to education. Introducing it on a larger scale will result in raising the qualifications of teachers working with children and youth in rural communities, thereby improving the quality of services provided by rural schools and community centres. Additional benefits include increasing the motivation of the students themselves to deepen their knowledge and supporting families in shaping higher educational aspirations. To further these proposals, we have come up with the idea of a project called Wake Up! Promoting Non-formal Education of Youth in Łobez Commune through International Strategic Partnerships. The project is in line with the local and national governments' initiatives and has produced tangible results, which are described below.

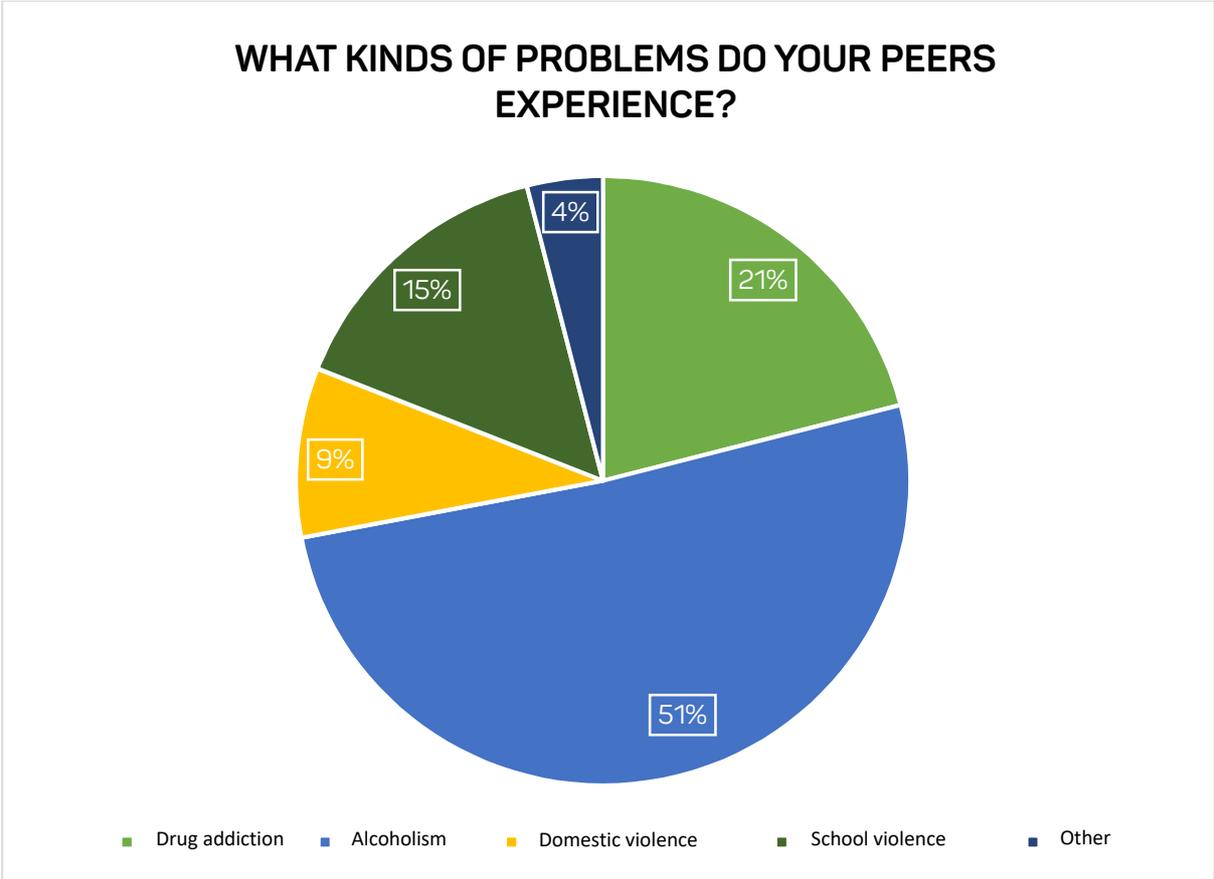
¹ B Kółaczek, *Dostęp młodzieży do edukacji: zróżnicowanie, uwarunkowania, wyrównywanie szans*, Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych, 2004

² B Balcerzak-Paradowska, 'Rodzina jako podmiot inwestycji w młode pokolenie', in K Gutkowska, J Ozimek (ed.) *Polskie gospodarstwa domowe w perspektywie integracji z Unią Europejską. Materiały z konferencji*, Warszawa, 1999.

³ G Cęcelek, 'Wyrównywanie szans w dostępie do kształcenia jako podstawowa zasada współczesnej edukacji', in *Paedagogica at Utilitatem Disciplinae*, yearbook no. 3, 2007, pp. 63-71. 'Organizacje pozarządowe przyszłością społeczeństwa obywatelskiego', in *Roczniki Łowickie*, vol. 3, 2005, pp. 327-330

Viewing the idea of non-formal education as a great opportunity for creative and effective youth work, before launching the Wake Up! project, Bonin Foundation carried out its own survey research concerning the lives of young people in Łobez Commune. The results of the research match the outcome of surveys carried out on 26 February 2016 by the Youth Town Council in Łobez. The answers given most frequently to the question about the problems encountered by youth in their peer group were alcoholism and drug addiction (see graph no. 1).

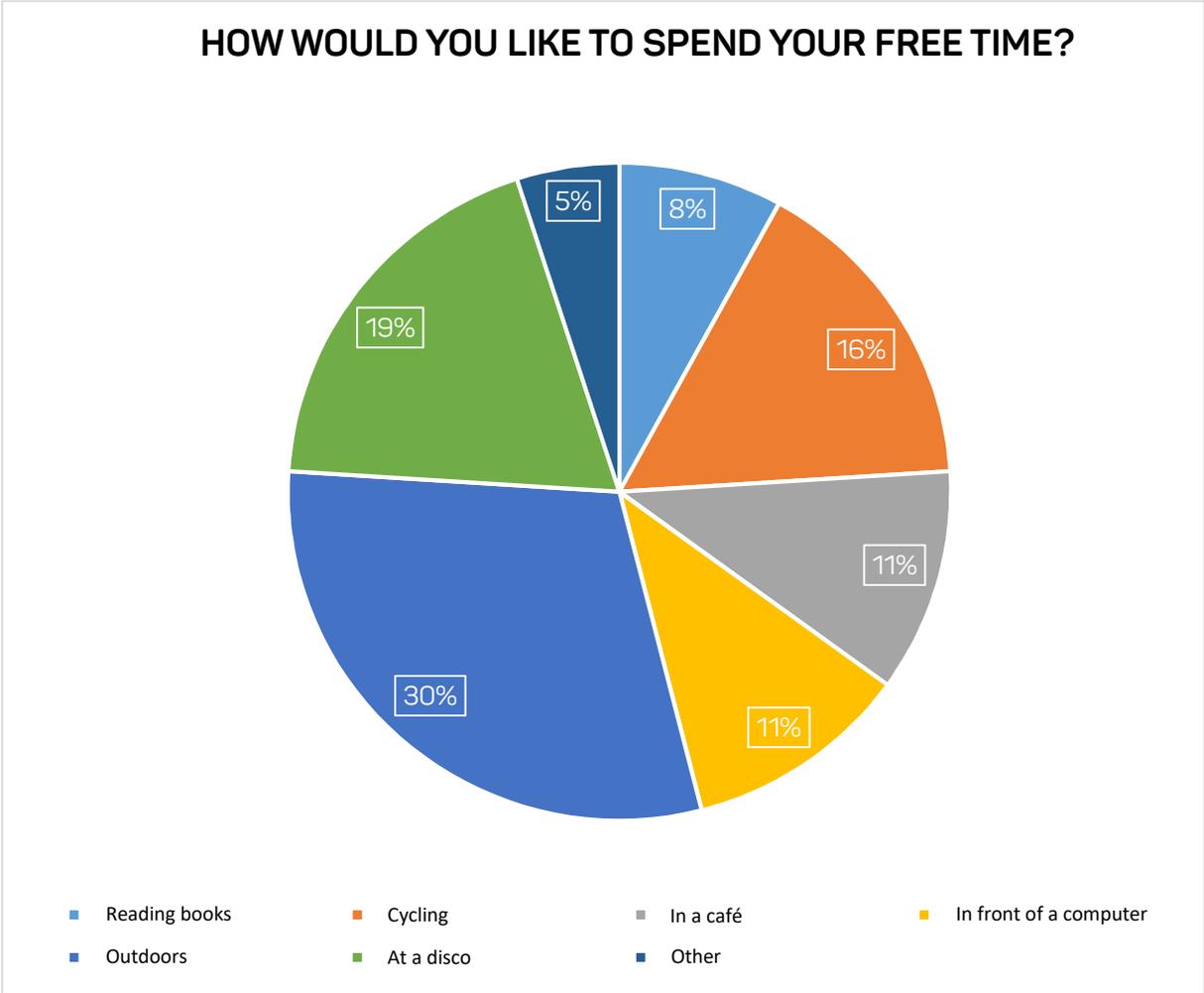
Graph 1. Problems encountered by youth in their peer group



Source: surveys carried out by Youth Town Council, Łobez, 2016.

Other problems listed by the respondents included school and domestic violence. These are all serious issues in themselves, but there is also an additional danger that the respondents may adopt the negative patterns of behaviour existing in their surroundings. Taking it into consideration, the research included questions about the ways in which the young people would like to spend their free time (graph no. 2) and the types of activities they would like to take part in (graph no. 3).

Graph 2. Leisure preferences



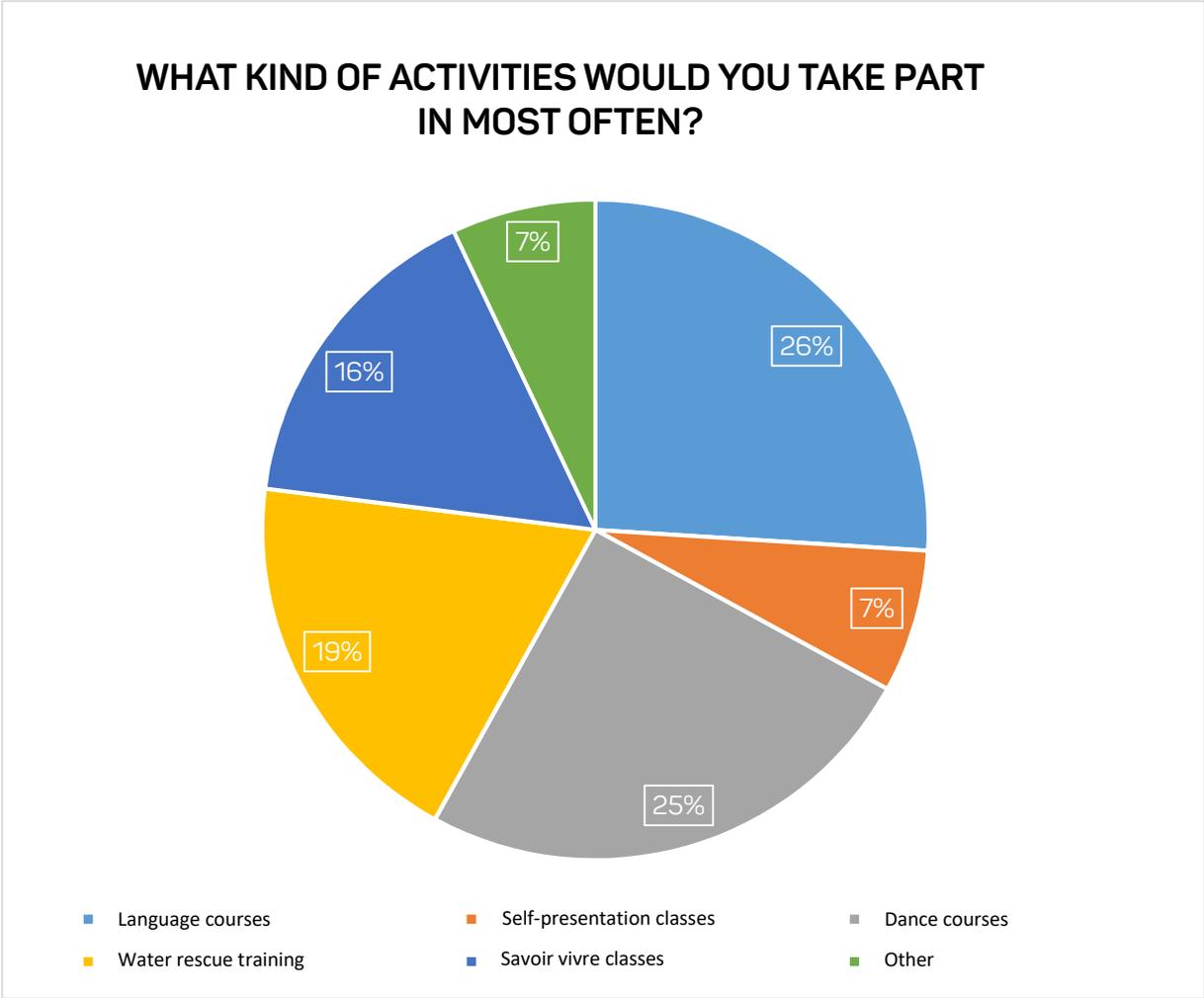
Source: surveys carried out by Youth Town Council, Łobez, 2016.

According to the data gathered, almost half of the respondents (46%) like to spend their free time outdoors and at a disco (19%). 11% prefer to spend time in front of a computer or in a café, while 8% enjoy reading books.

It is worth comparing the above results with the youth’s preferred forms of activity (graph no. 3). Most of the respondents would like to attend language courses (26%) and dance classes (25%). Next, the respondents listed training with the Voluntary Water Rescue Emergency Service (WOPR) - 19% - and savoir vivre classes (16%).

The data gathered by the Youth Town Council in Łobez is significant. Even the fact that the young people asked their peers such honest questions can be regarded as a manifestation of the ideas of non-formal education. Thanks to this approach they obtained candid and relevant answers based on experience and self-reflection, which may not have been provided otherwise. Also, reaching almost all the secondary school students in the commune is quite an achievement. This gives rise to further considerations: what can we change and how should we do it to be able to count on young people’s involvement? One could say that the initiative of the youth council marks the beginning of non-formal education activities in the commune - even though the term ‘non-formal education’ is yet to be widely introduced.

Graph 3. Types of activities preferred by the youth



Source: surveys carried out by Youth Town Council, Łobez, 2016.

1. The essence of non-formal education

In contemporary scientific discourse, education is categorised into three types: **formal, non-formal and informal**. The differences between these types of education are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Differentiations between formal, non-formal and informal education: theoretical formulation.

	FORMAL (INTENTIONAL) EDUCATION	NON-FORMAL (INTENTIONAL) EDUCATION	INFORMAL EDUCATION
GOAL	Yes	Yes	No
PLAN	Yes	Yes	No
PARTICIPATION	Mainly obligatory; voluntary in further stages	Voluntary	Automatic
LEADER, TEACHER PROVIDING INSTRUCTION	Directive	Supportive; moderator, facilitator	None
TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP	Hierarchical	Partnership	None
EFFECTS OF LEARNING	Knowledge, information, some practical skills	Competencies, practical skills	Competencies, practical skills, attitudes, a system of values
MISTAKES	Punished, classified	Acceptable; being aware of one's mistakes and weaknesses, drawing conclusions and willingness to improve are all valued	We learn from our mistakes.
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESULTS	Educator	Participant, group, development facilitator	Individual
AGE OF THE GROUP	Peer group	Doesn't matter	Intergenerational group
ROLE OF THE GROUP IN THE LEARNING PROCESS	It has an influence but is not key	Key	If a group exists, it matters
RELATIONS IN THE GROUP	Competition	Cooperation	N/A
METHODS	Standardised methods, eg lectures, lessons, training	Innovative methods based on experience and participation; fulfilling the participants' individual needs, eg by organising workshops; project method, events, experimental methods, coaching, volunteering	N/A

Source: authors' own compilation based on M Novosadova, et al., *The impact of non-formal education on young people and society. Non-formal education book, 2007, pp. 1-58.*

Formal education takes place within the school system, in schools and other educational institutions, according to approved educational curriculums and plans. Usually the students are obliged to participate in classes, the teachers use standard, expository teaching methods to deliver content, and the teacher-student relations are hierarchical. The students learn in peer groups characterised by strong internal rivalry and lack of cooperation. This type of education leads to obtaining qualifications verified by an end-of-term report or a school-leaving qualification, such as a certificate or a diploma.

Informal education does not have a set educational goal or plan, and individuals participate in it automatically. There are no teachers and the ensuing teacher-student relations, and no internal group relations. Teaching methods are absent as well.

Looking at the two types of education above, it becomes clear that the society also needs to be educated within a **non-formal education** system. This type of education is referred to as learning through practice and experience. According to David A Kolb's ⁴ model, it has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation (drawing conclusions from the experience) and active experimentation (applying what one has learned).

In this place, it is probably worth mentioning the importance of the person who facilitates the non-formal learning process, ie the so-called development facilitator.⁵

1. Creating a positive atmosphere and work climate in a group depends largely on the facilitator.
2. A facilitator helps to define and organise both the individual goals of the group members and the group's common goals. The facilitator should be able to accept different views and controversial conclusions of the group members without misgivings, and allow them to speak and act freely - that is how a positive learning (development) climate is created.
3. A development facilitator reinforces the objectives of each group member and helps them to fulfil them. If the participants need support, then the development facilitator acknowledges it and helps them find individual space for self-fulfilment.
4. A development facilitator ensures easy access to materials that aid the learning process - anything that can be used by the participants to achieve better learning results and fulfil their goals.
5. Development facilitators regard themselves as flexible sources of knowledge which can be helpful to the group, while being aware that this is not their only function. They also act as advisers, teachers and supporters, drawing on their experience.
6. While answering questions and joining conversations within a group, a development facilitator accepts both the intellectual value of the participants' utterances and their emotional attitudes, trying to attribute equal importance to each of these aspects. They treat the group's opinions as equal in value to the views of the individual members.
7. Development facilitators work continuously on their relations with the group. They assume the role of equal, active participants, members of the group, who do not obtrude their opinions upon others, but speak on equal terms.
8. Development facilitators take the initiative in sharing their feelings with the group, in a way that is neither obtrusive nor manipulative, but serves to present their point of view, which can be accepted or not by the group members. Thus, facilitators are free to express their feelings, share their satisfaction and offer their opinions, as long as they are not judgmental towards others.

⁴ DA Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1984

⁵ MS Knowles, EF Holton III and RA Swanson, *Edukacja dorosłych. Podręcznik akademicki*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2009

9. While acquiring experience in working with a group, a development facilitator tries to diagnose the sources of any difficult situations that may be caused by someone's pain or suffering. In such cases, the development facilitator offers gentle support to the participant in question and strives to create an atmosphere of understanding within the group.
10. Development facilitators recognise and accept their limitations. They constantly learn and perfect their role.

According to the definition in the official guide to the European Union's **Youth in Action** programme, 'Non-formal education refers to the learning which takes place outside formal educational curriculum. Non-formal learning activities involve people on a voluntary basis and are carefully planned, to foster the participants' personal and social development.'

Thus, non-formal learning stipulates different forms of work and its outcome, compared to formal education. A basic feature of non-formal learning is that it lacks a core curriculum, which is present in formal education. Moreover, non-formal education includes various types of conversations and social gatherings, which are regarded as a valuable source of knowledge thanks to exchanging information, and a means of shaping the way individuals think about the problems affecting the world today.

Taking the above characteristics of non-formal education into account, Bonin Foundation launched a project with the support of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, called Wake Up! Promoting Non-formal Education of Youth in Łobez Commune through International Strategic Partnerships. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of the education, training and youth work in the commune by introducing non-formal education methods designed for the local community. The project was carried out by organisations from three countries: Poland (Bonin Foundation and D Bonhoeffer International Centre for Studies and Events), Germany (Association of the Trebnitz Castle Education and Exchange Centre, and agitPolska e.V.) and the Netherlands (Richter Foundation). Thanks to the participation of two expert organisations - the Bonhoeffer Centre and Trebnitz Castle - it was possible to prepare and test new methods during the project. According to the idea of non-formal education, the youth took part in the project voluntarily, and their learning took place in different contexts and environments, where favourable conditions for self-fulfilment, self-development, creativity, self-expression and involvement were established. Each participant was aware that: 1. A group is a source of knowledge, 2. The relations between the teachers and learners have the character of a partnership, 3. The learning process has a holistic character.

The non-formal education methods tested during the two youth exchanges organised as part of the Wake Up! project were designed to help the participants to develop the above qualities and skills.

2. Non-formal education in Łobez Commune – research results

2.1 Methodology

The activities carried out as part of the Wake Up! project were evaluated by their participants, aged 14-19, using surveys, which were conducted between April 2016 and January 2018. The test group consisted of 28 respondents: 14 Poles from Łobez Commune and 14 Germans from Berlin. First, the legitimacy of introducing non-formal education in Łobez Commune was evaluated. The assessment served as a basis for conducting evaluation research concerning the Wake Up! project, focusing on the results of applying non-formal education methods in order to reinforce the participants' key skills and competencies. The evaluation concerned the following:

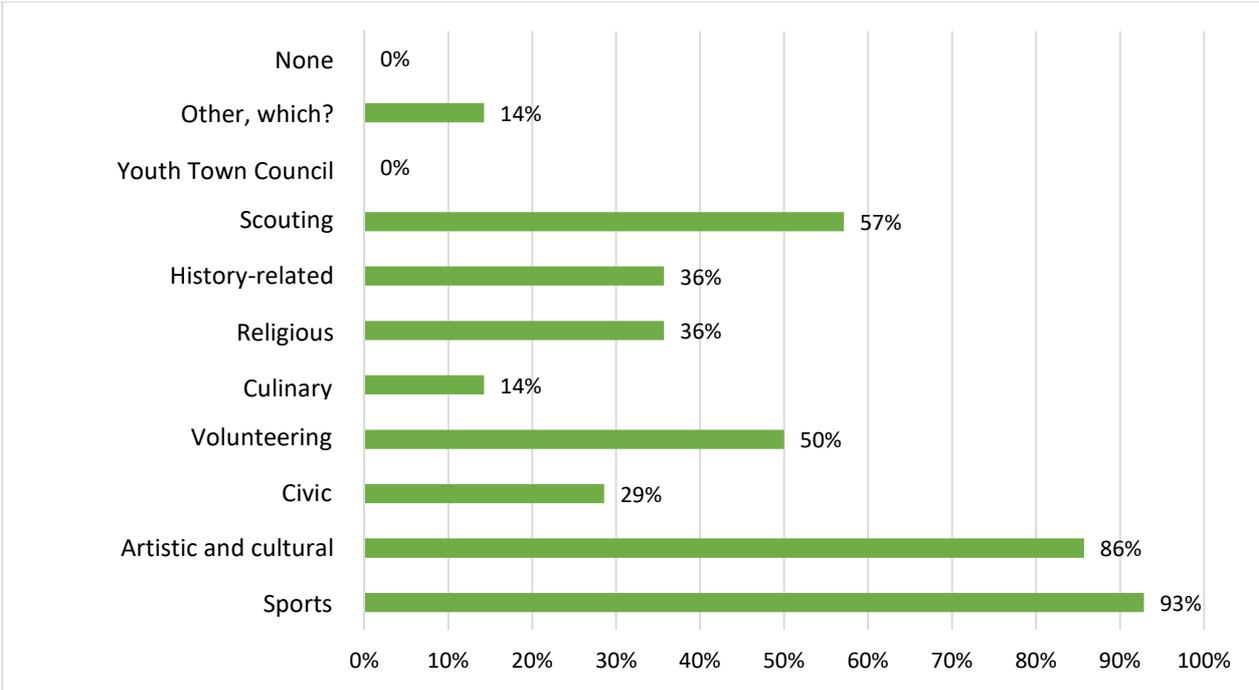
- cooperation in an intercultural group,
- recognising one's needs,
- communicating one's needs,
- decision-making,
- providing arguments to support one's view,
- public speaking,
- providing constructive feedback,
- preparing and making public statements,
- assuming responsibility for common tasks,
- the ability to listen to others,
- solving conflicts,
- communicating in one's native language and in a foreign language,
- planning one's day,
- digital skills,
- caring about the natural environment,
- acquiring knowledge about financing youth activities.

The study on the effectiveness of the non-formal education methods applied in the project was supplemented with an assessment of how non-formal education is viewed by Łobez Commune Office and the institutions run by the commune, as well as an assessment of how non-formal education is viewed and applied by NGOs which direct their activities at young people. The studies were conducted between May 2016 and January 2018. The first one was carried out among representatives of Łobez Commune (3 respondents) and the local institutions run by the commune (8 respondents). The second study was conducted among representatives of 15 NGOs. In both groups tested, the research methodology was quantitative, including a description of qualitative phenomena. A questionnaire-based survey served as a research tool. In order to emphasise the importance of a problem, the data obtained was additionally compared against relevant entries in Łobez Commune's strategic documents, concerning youth education and forms of youth support.

2.2 Condition assessment - the necessity to implement non-formal education in Łobez Commune based on research carried out during the Wake Up! project.

In order to justify introducing non-formal education in Łobez Commune, the young inhabitants of the commune were asked about their extracurricular activities. Their answers are shown in graph no. 4.

Graph 4. Extracurricular activities of youth in Łobez Commune



Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

A clear majority of the respondents participates in sports (93%), artistic and cultural activities (86%) and scouting activities (57%). Other activities listed were: volunteering (50%), history-related activities (36%) religious activities (36%) and civic activities (29%). Some of the respondents also mentioned culinary activities (14%) and other types of activities, such as dance and theatre (14%).

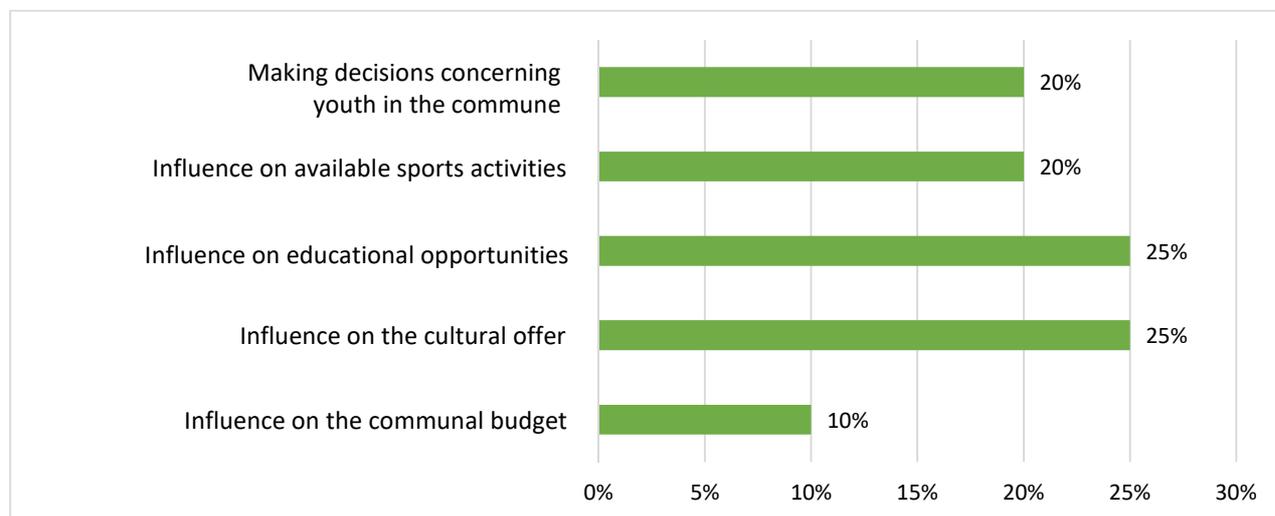
Taking the above answers into consideration, the respondents were asked about their own ideas that could be implemented in their town or village. Obtaining answers to that question proved difficult; only a small number of the respondents (10%) shared their ideas. They were:

- 'Conducting a referendum to determine what young people in the town want',
- 'Organising activities supporting the relations between young and older people in order to bridge the age gap',
- 'Creating opportunities for public speaking, eg expressing one's views or showing that it's not hard to say 'no'; I would also like to show that each person deserves attention, eg through film or journalism.'

Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents did not want to share their ideas, claiming that 'nothing will come of this anyway', 'no-one will listen anyway', 'what's the point?'

Despite the fact that the youth from Łobez Commune believed there was no point in suggesting their own ideas, it was decided that they should be asked about their willingness to influence the decisions made in the commune (graph no. 5).

Graph 5. Willingness to influence the decision-making processes in Łobez Commune



Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

One in four respondents wanted to have an influence on the decisions concerning education and culture in the commune, one in five wanted to have a say in the available sports and youth activities, and one in six wanted to co-decide about the communal budget.

The next question concerned lacking youth opportunities in the commune. Most respondents mentioned the following issues:

- lack of a permanent meeting place **dedicated solely to the youth**,
- no activities for the youngest children,
- no youth projects,
- no opportunities for integration and joint activities, such as youth events,
- no cinema, no cultural offer,
- lack of courses and shooting clubs,
- lack of an ice rink in Łobez.

Considering that the youth want to have an influence on the decision-making processes in Łobez Commune and that they are able to pinpoint lacking opportunities in the commune, it was reasonable to ask them whether they would get involved in the local elections if they were given the chance. This question was meant to examine their entrepreneurial attitudes, defined as a sense of agency resulting in concrete actions. An overwhelming majority - 90% - would vote, 20% would attend a meeting with the candidates, while 10% would run for the communal council.

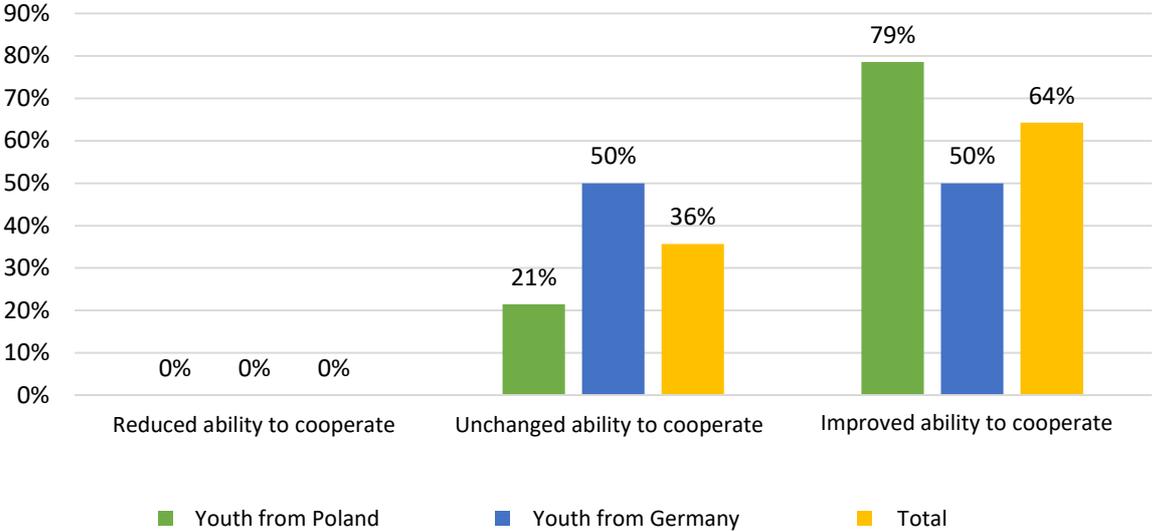
The results presented above show clearly that the youth from Łobez Commune have an entrepreneurial potential, which can be used in the process of shaping civic attitudes. These, in turn, can contribute to the socio-economic growth of the commune. One of the mechanisms that can be utilised in this process is non-formal education, which is conducive to the development of social, individual and group competencies, and builds an active community that feels responsible for its surroundings.

2.3 The effects of applying non-formal education methods during the project – research results.

In order to assess the results of applying non-formal education methods during the Wake Up! project, the respondents were first asked if they thought their soft skills had developed thanks to the project.

According to the data gathered, the participants had improved their ability to cooperate in an intercultural group by 64%. Nearly one-third of the respondents answered that they had not noticed any changes regarding this skill (graph no. 6).

Graph 6. Cooperation in an intercultural group

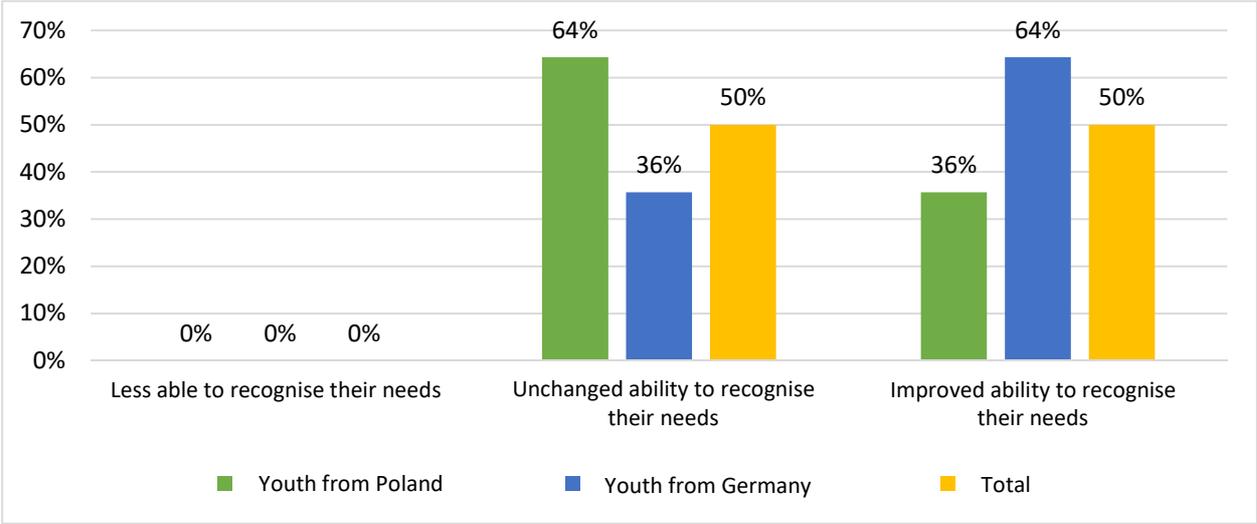


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

Analysing the changes in the competencies of the youth from Łobez Commune, it should be noted that almost 80% of the respondents were clear about their improved ability to cooperate in an intercultural group, while only about one in five did not notice any changes. In the case of the youth from Germany, the figures were respectively 50% and 50%.

Whether a person functions correctly in their peer group is partly determined by their ability to recognise their needs. Thus, it made sense to evaluate the development of this skill in the test group. Detailed results are shown in the graph below.

Graph 7. Recognising one’s needs

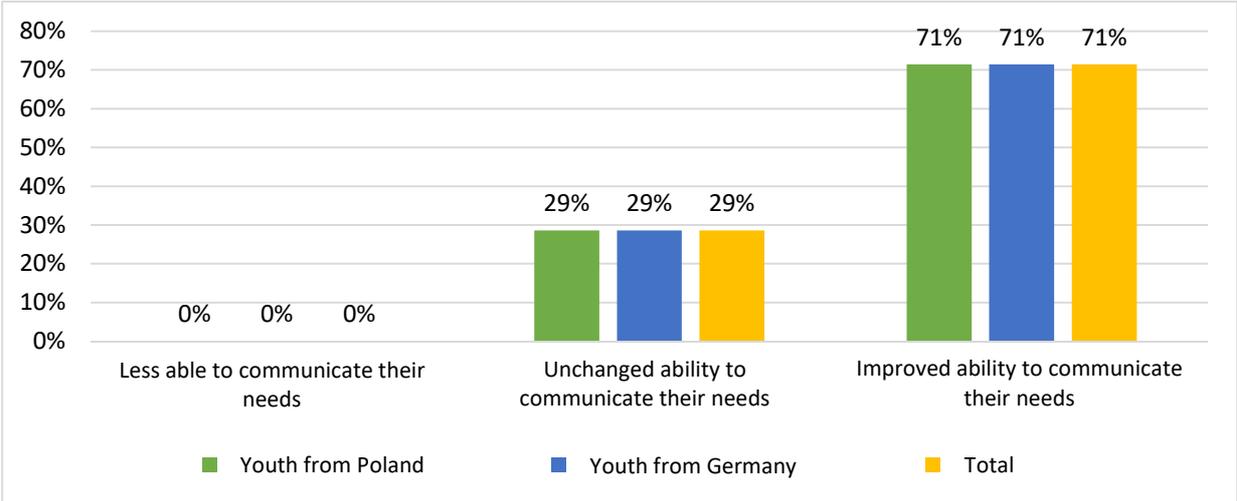


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

As a result of applying non-formal education methods during the project, the participants became more aware of their needs. Most of the participants who reported that this was the case were from Germany (64%), and the total came to 50%.

According to the sociological approach, learning to recognise one’s needs should be followed by communicating them in various social contexts. Data concerning this stage of participants’ learning is presented in graph no. 8.

Graph 8. Communicating one’s needs



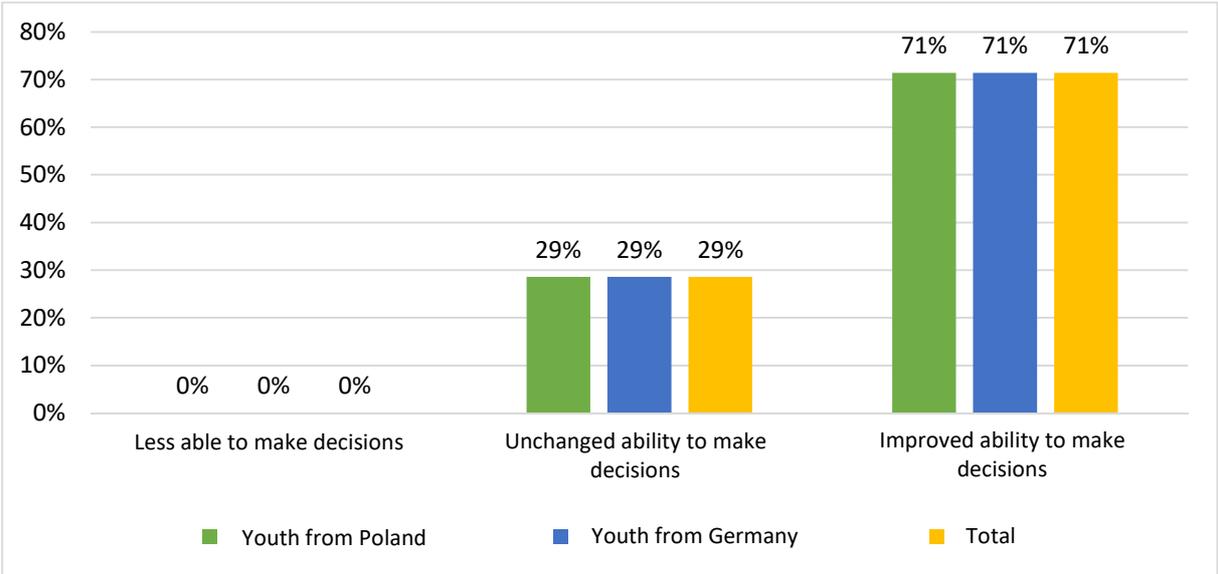
Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

Thanks to applying non-formal education methods, 71% of the project participants declared an improvement in their ability to communicate their needs. Only one in three respondents did not notice any considerable changes. The answers did not differ depending on the respondents’ country of origin; the youth from Łobez Commune and from Berlin improved their communication skills to an equal degree.

This can mean that an appropriate choice of non-formal education methods increases learners' skills regardless of their environment.

Decision-making is a key ability in an adult's life. Owing to the non-formal education methods applied during the project, over 70% of the respondents reckoned they had become better at making decisions (see graph no. 9).

Graph 9. Decision-making

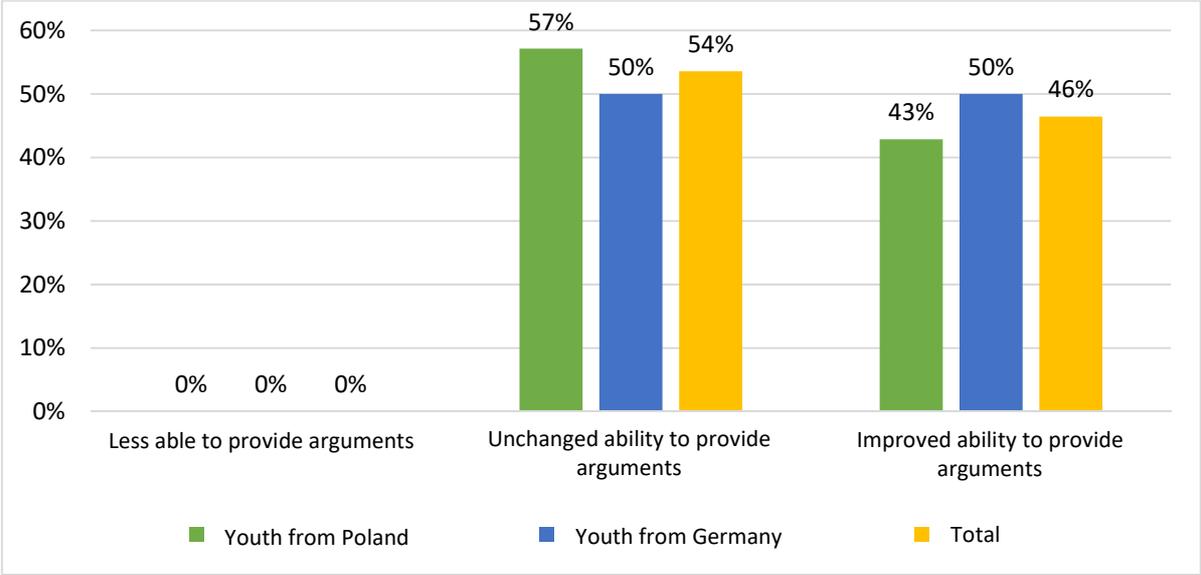


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

As in the case of group communication skills, there is no difference between the youth from Łobez Commune and Germany when it comes to their declared decision-making skills. Also here, the result can mean that appropriately selected non-formal education methods neutralise the influence of external factors on the process of developing these skills.

Another skill tested during the project was using arguments to support one's views in various social situations (see graph no. 10).

Graph 10. Providing arguments to support one’s views

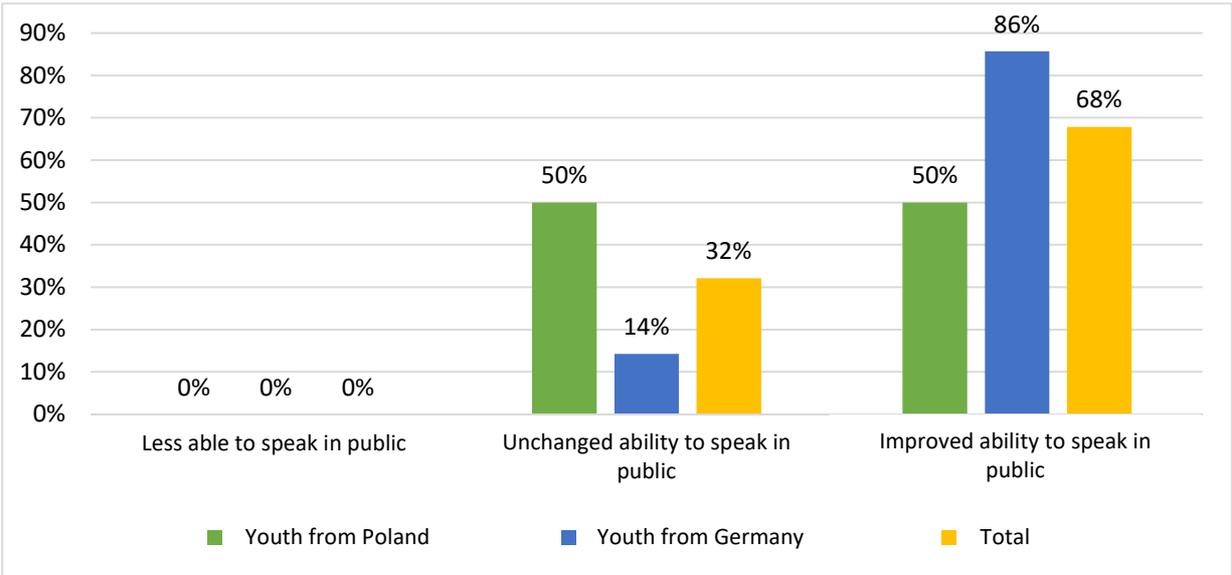


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

54% of the respondents declared that their arguing skills had not improved, while 46% noticed an improvement.

Public speaking is a very important skill in the modern world, therefore it was reasonable to check whether the non-formal education methods applied during the project contributed to developing this skill (see graph no. 11).

Graph 11. Speaking in public

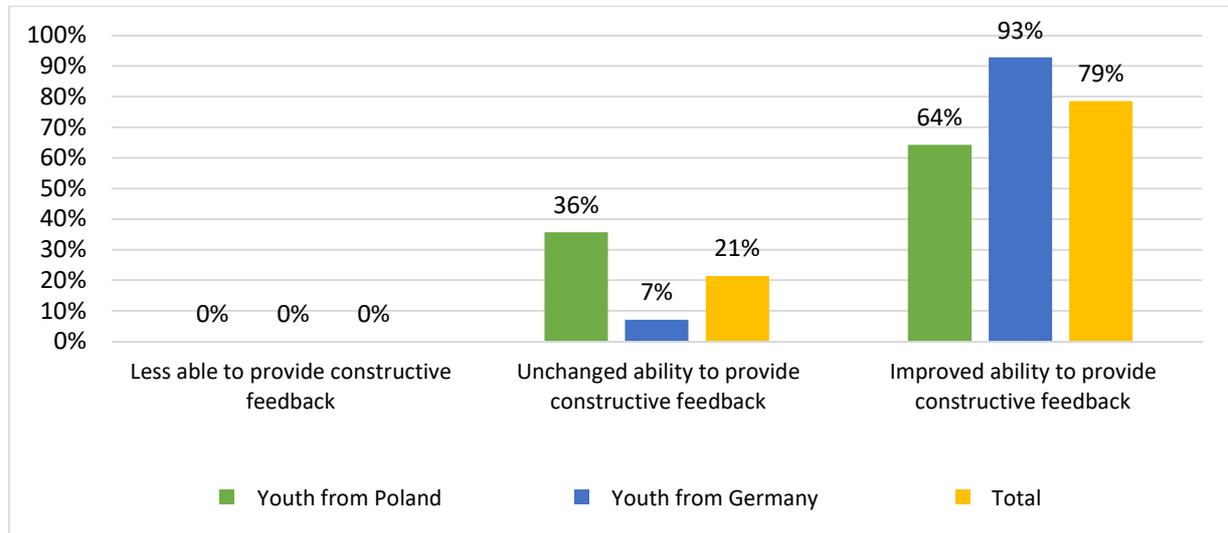


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

These results clearly mean that the respondents developed their public speaking skills during the project. 50% of the respondents from Łobez Commune and 86% of the respondents from Berlin reported an improvement.

Having the objective of the project in mind, it was also interesting to see the answers concerning constructive feedback. Graph no. 12 below shows detailed results.

Graph 12. Providing constructive feedback

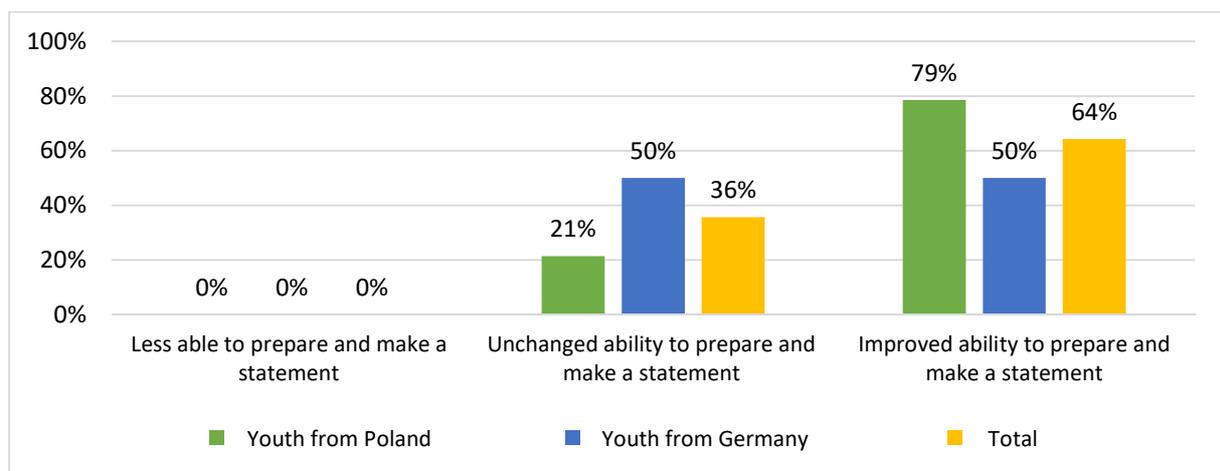


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (79%) confirmed an improvement in their ability to give constructive feedback. By country, the result for Polish participants was 64% and Germans 93%.

Another important skill sharpened thanks to applying non-formal education methods was preparing and delivering public statements (see graph no. 13).

Graph 13. Preparing and making a public statement

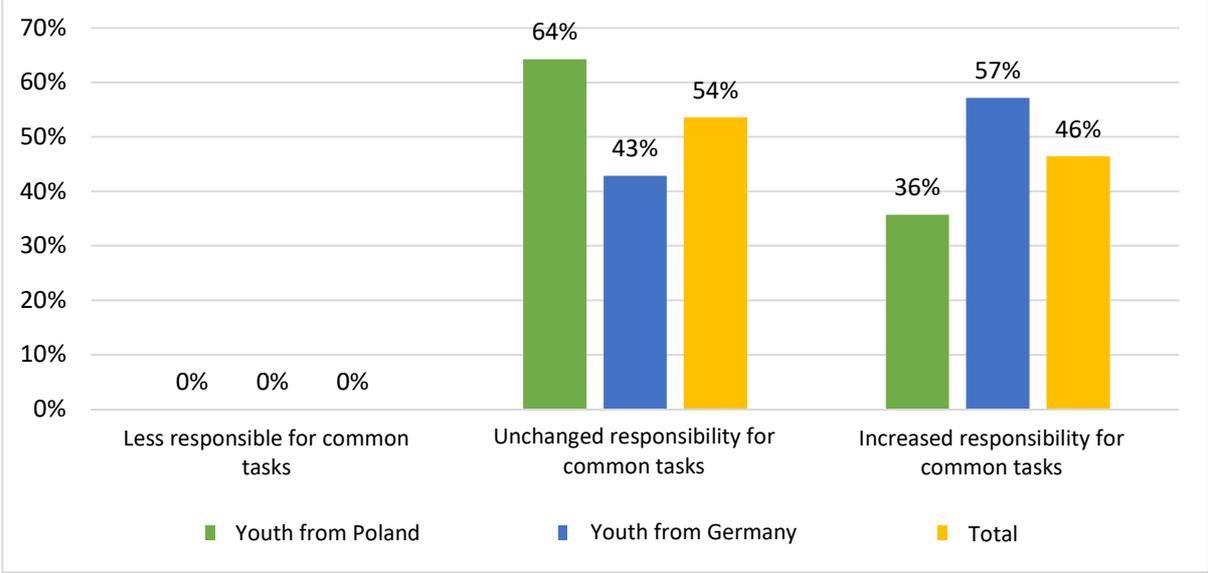


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

According to the survey results, two-thirds of the project participants noticed an increase in their ability to prepare and deliver a statement, with the youth from Łobez Commune making the biggest progress (79%).

Another skill looked at during the Wake Up! project was assuming responsibility for common tasks. Detailed results are presented in graph no. 14 below.

Graph 14. Assuming responsibility for common tasks.

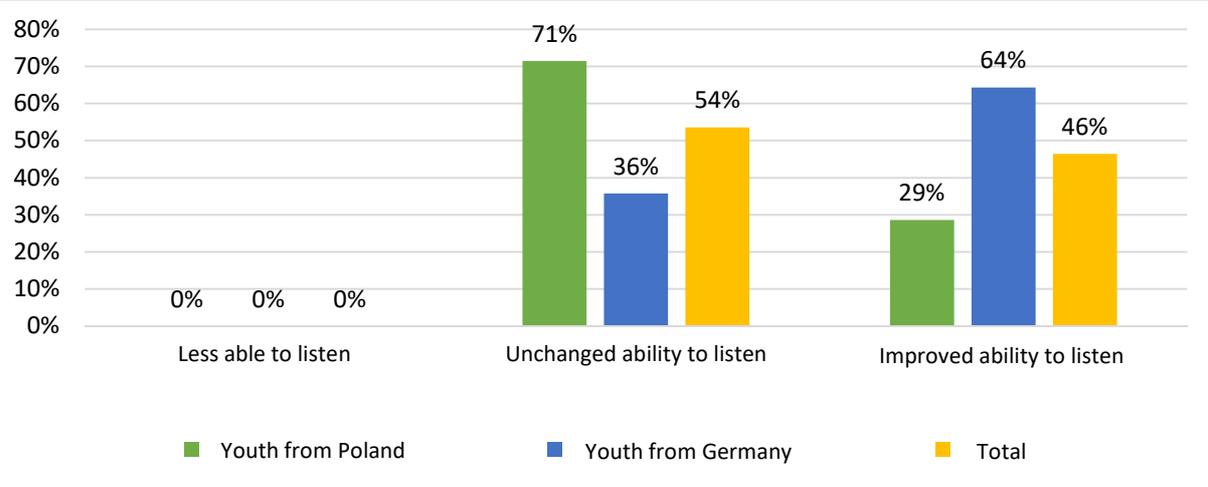


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

46% of the project participants reported that thanks to non-formal education, they felt more responsible for common tasks. One in three respondents in this group were from Poland and one out of two from Germany.

Another important skill in the context of shaping entrepreneurial attitudes and the civil society is listening to others (see graph no. 15).

Graph 15. The ability to listen to others

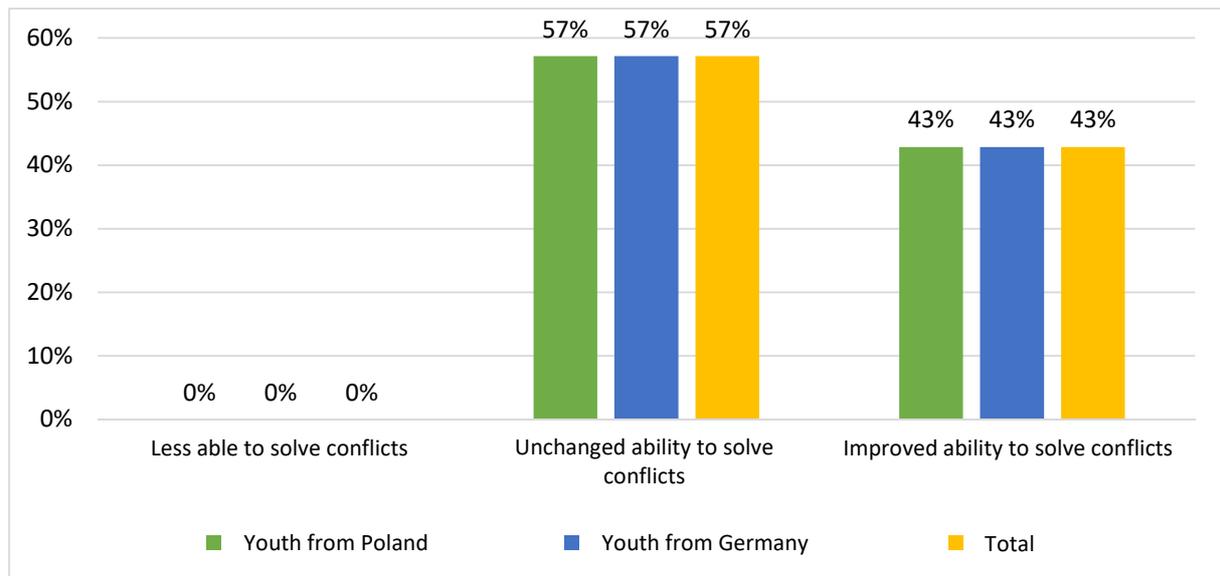


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

According to the survey, 46% of the project participants saw an improvement in their listening skills. By nationality, the stats were: 64% of German respondents and 29% of the Poles.

Our daily lives require us to cope with conflicts on a regular basis; therefore it was reasonable to check whether the development facilitator supported the project participants in resolving difficult situations. Graph no. 16 shows data concerning this skill.

Graph 16. Solving conflicts

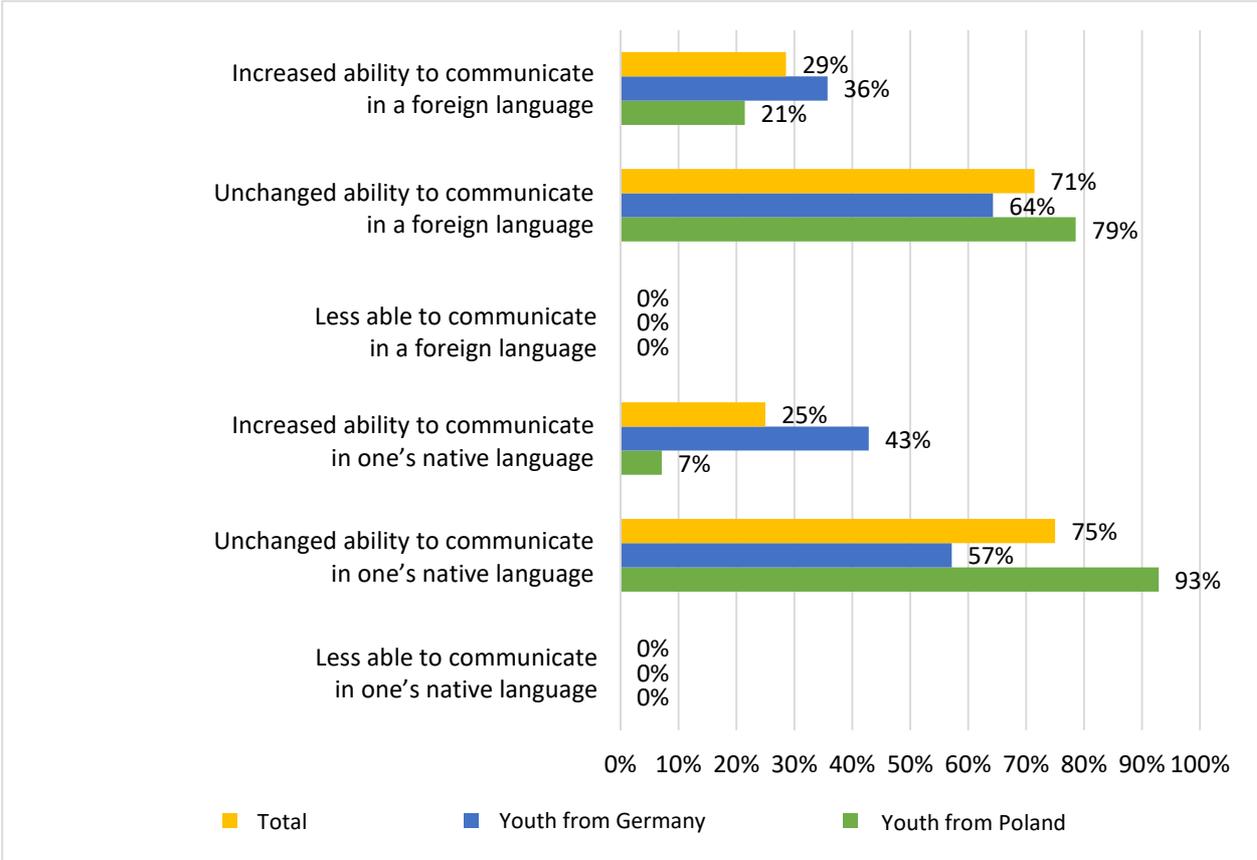


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

43% of the respondents confirmed they had got better at solving conflicts, while 57% did not observe any changes. No-one thought their conflict-solving skills had worsened.

Being able to communicate in one's native language and in foreign languages are vital skills, which have also been evaluated in connection with the summer youth events.

Graph 17. Communicating in one’s native language and in a foreign language

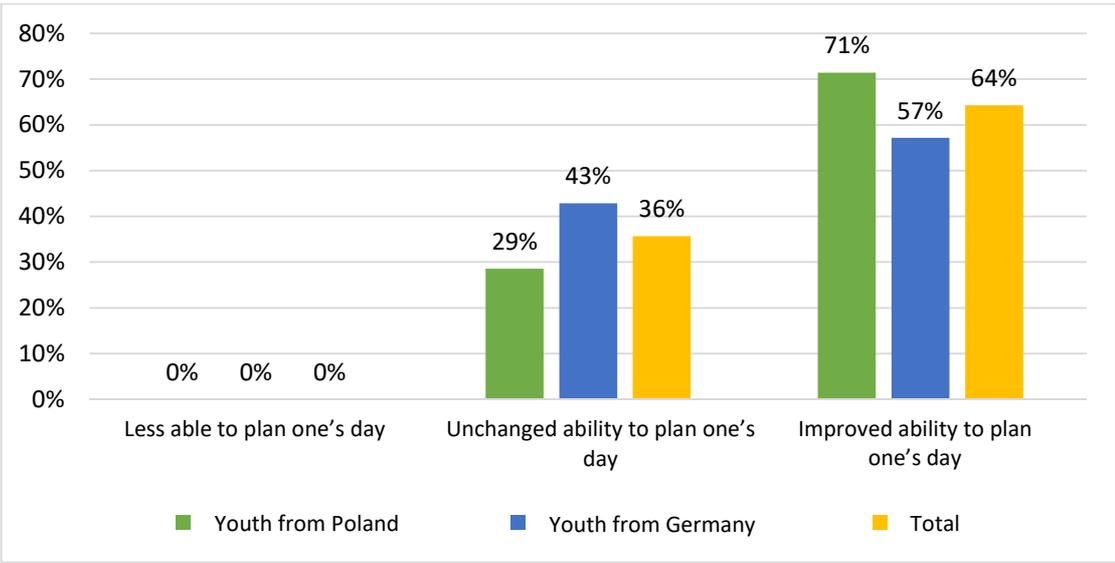


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

According to the data above, applying non-formal education methods resulted in increasing both skills – 29% of the respondents became better at communicating in a foreign language and 25% in their native language. In a national context, the stats were respectively 21% and 7% for the Poles and 36% and 43% for the Germans.

While examining the effectiveness of the non-formal education methods applied during the Wake Up! project, it was decided that also the ability to plan one’s day should be evaluated. Please see the graph below for detailed stats.

Graph 18. Planning one’s day

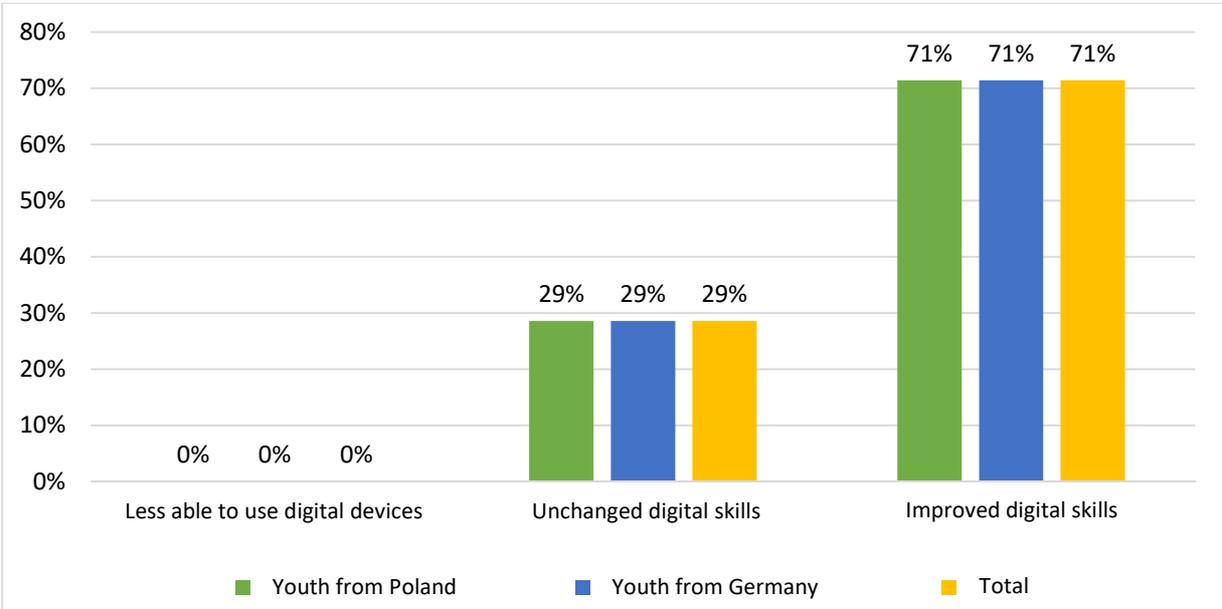


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

Two-thirds of the respondents stated that thanks to non-formal education received during the project they became better at planning their day. Over 70% of the respondents in this group are from Łobez Commune. One-third of the respondents did not observe any changes.

The next skill under evaluation was the ability to use digital devices (see graph no.19).

Graph 19. Digital skills

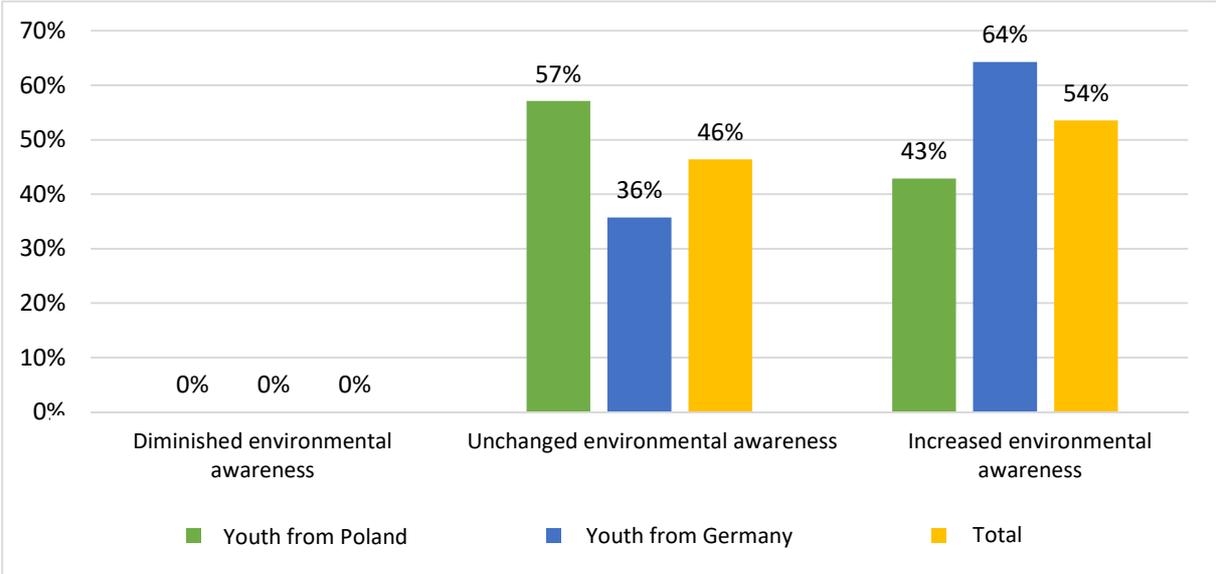


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

As a result of applying non-formal teaching methods during the Wake Up! project, over 70% of the participants improved their digital skills. There were no differences between Poles and Germans in this respect.

Teaching young people to care about the natural environment is an important element of education in the context of globalisation processes. Non-formal education should contribute to increasing environmental awareness. Please see graph no. 20 for detailed data.

Graph 20. Shaping environmental awareness

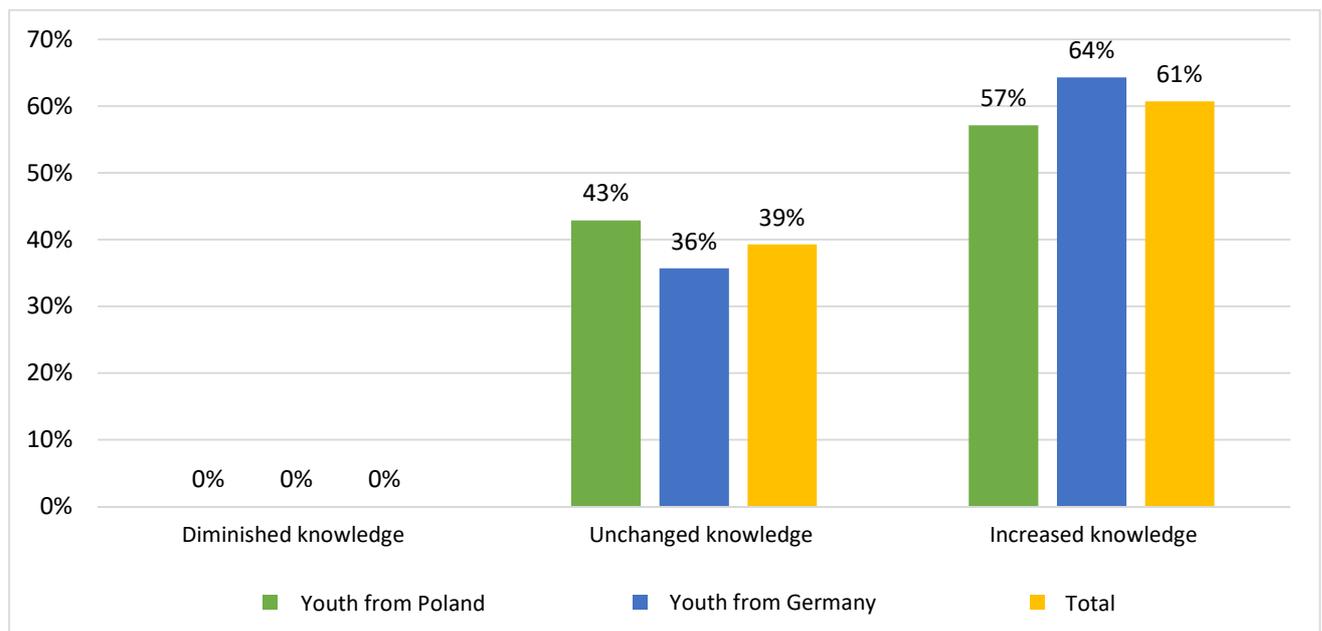


Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

According to the above data, most of the respondents had become more aware of the necessity to care about the environment; 64% of these respondents were from Germany and 43% from Poland.

The last question in the survey concerned the entrepreneurial attitudes of youth, and how they had been shaped by non-formal education methods. It tested the respondents' knowledge about the ways to obtain funding for their initiatives, and their ability to notice and use relevant opportunities.

Graph 21. Knowledge about financing international activities shaping entrepreneurial attitudes



Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

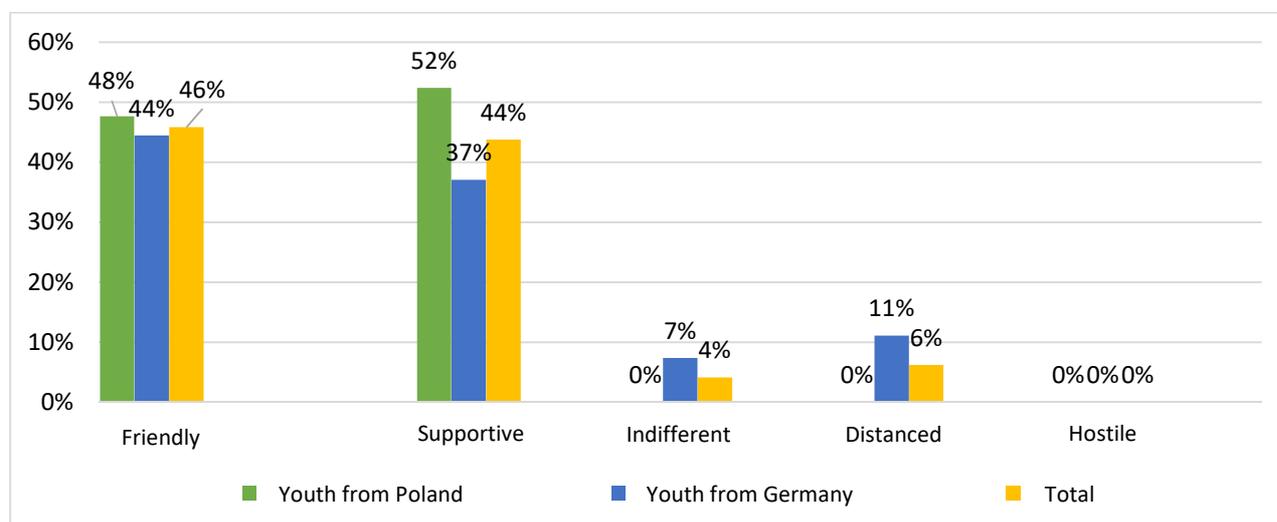
According to the replies, 61% of project participants increased their knowledge about financing international activities that help shape entrepreneurial attitudes, while 39% did not notice any changes.

Summing up the above survey results, it is clear that thanks to the non-formal education methods applied during the Wake Up! project, the participants have improved the following skills and knowledge:

- cooperating within an international group (a 64% increase),
- recognising one's needs (increased by 50%),
- communicating one's needs (a 71% increase),
- making decisions (increased by 71%),
- supporting one's views with arguments (a 46% increase),
- speaking in public (a 68% increase),
- giving constructive feedback (increased by 79%),
- preparing and making a statement (increased by 64%),
- assuming responsibility for shared tasks (a 46% increase),
- listening skills (a 46% increase),
- solving conflicts (an increase by 43%),
- communicating in one's native language (a 25% increase),
- communicating in a foreign language (an increase by 29%),
- planning one's day (a 64% increase),
- digital skills (a 71% increase),
- sustainable development – caring about the environment (a 54% increase),
- knowledge about financing international youth activities (increased by 61%).

Achieving these results was possible not only through applying non-formal education methods, but also thanks to the relationship between the development facilitators and the participants (see graph no. 22).

Graph 22. Evaluation of the relationship between the youth and the development facilitator



Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

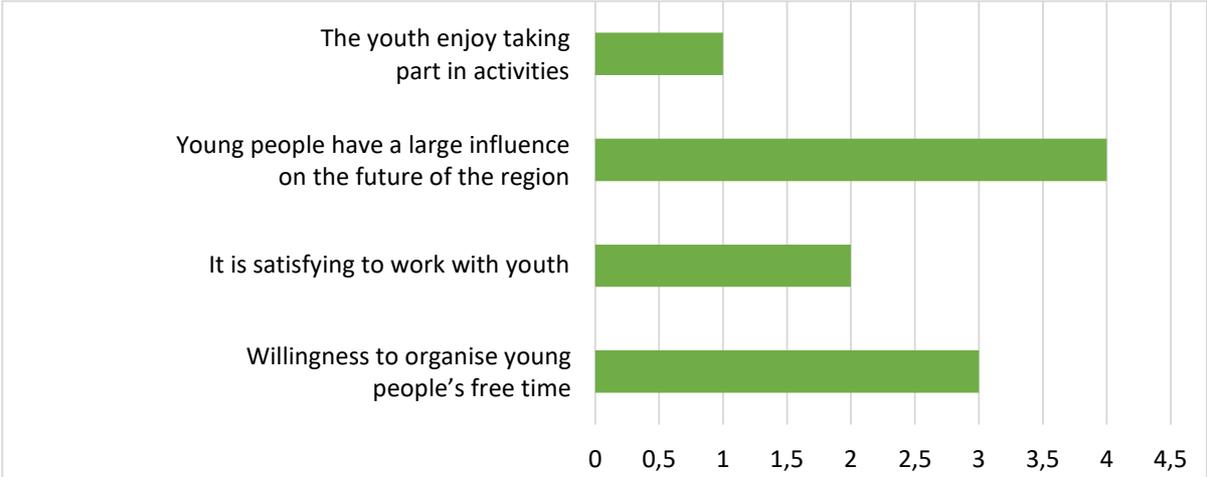
Most of the project participants thought that their relationship with the development facilitator was friendly and supportive. Only few respondents evaluated the relationship as indifferent or distanced.

2.4 An assessment of the knowledge of non-formal education among representatives of Łobez Commune Office and the institutions run by the commune, and of the use of non-formal education methods in the commune.

In order to analyse how Łobez Commune Office and the public institutions run by the commune view youth initiatives, representatives of these bodies were asked about the reasons for Łobez Commune's interest in youth as a target group for activities organised by the commune (see graph no. 23).

According to their replies, the main reason is their awareness of the passage of time and of the influence that young people can have on the future of the commune. The second most important reason for coming up with initiatives directed at youth is the need to help children and teenagers fill their free time. This response is also reflected in the strategic documents of Łobez Commune, which list ways to organise children and teenagers' after-school time through education and various leisure activities. These records give scope for introducing non-formal education in the commune, as they mention the necessity to develop talents and interests, and promote a healthy lifestyle and volunteering activities.

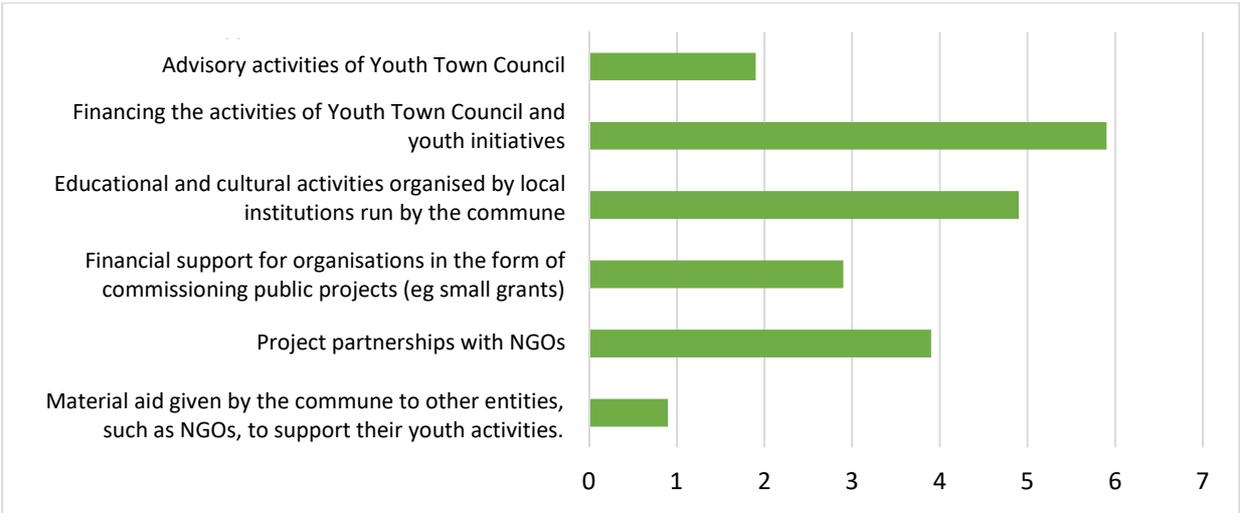
Graph 23. The reasons for Łobez Commune’s interest in youth as a target group for activities.



Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

It is also worth pointing out that the strategic documents of Łobez Commune declare a need to support the professional activation of young people, especially considering the poor job market. However, it has not been fully defined how young people’s key skills should be developed. This lack of specifics has also been confirmed by our research. Providing knowledge and experience through formal education is not the only way to prepare young people to enter the job market. Developing interpersonal skills thanks to independent activities offered by non-formal education is also an important element in this process. Thus, non-formal education activities can become part of the local initiatives designed to boost young people’s social and professional activation. As the next step of the research, the representatives of Łobez Commune and local institutions were asked to evaluate different types of youth support. Please see graph no. 24 below for their answers.

Graph 24. The commune’s evaluation of different types of youth support.



Source: results of surveys conducted during the Wake Up! project

While looking at the best ways to support youth, representatives of the commune chiefly mentioned the financing of the Youth Town Council⁶ established at the commune office, and financing youth initiatives. This shows that they are well aware of the need to provide funds for young people's initiatives. This also constitutes a vital aspect of building a strategy for developing non-formal education in Łobez Commune.

Evaluating the knowledge of non-formal education terminology among representatives of Łobez Commune Office and the local institutions constituted another part of the research. The respondents' answers pointed to sparse knowledge in that regard. However, it is promising that the effective methods for youth work listed by most of the respondents count as non-formal education methods; these are workshops, debates, creative works, theatre performances, simulations, films and the youth's own projects. **This is in line with the planned programme for cooperation** between Łobez Commune and NGOs and bodies mentioned in Article 3 paragraph 3 of the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work for 2018, which lists the following spheres of youth activity:

- activities aimed at European integration and developing contacts and cooperation between societies - particularly youth exchanges,
- education and activities for children and youth, including recreation; particularly activities aimed at organising children and youth's free time (such as developing talents and interests, promoting healthy lifestyles and volunteering activities, and organising winter and summer holidays),
- fitness and tourism - particularly children and youth's sports training, and promoting physical culture and healthy lifestyles; popularising sports in local communities through organising and participating in events, competitions, and sporting, recreational and tourist activities,
- health protection and promotion, including medical activity as defined in the Act of 15 April 2011 on Medical Activity (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 1638), covering specialist care for children and youth threatened with social pathology,
- public order and safety - particularly events, meetings and contests increasing public awareness of road safety rules, fire safety and flood protection, mainly among school pupils,
- counteracting social pathology - particularly activities related to preventing addictions and violence among children and youth.

Among the above spheres of activity, education and activities for children and youth, including recreation, seem to be most important as regards the development of non-formal education. However, each of the spheres listed provides opportunities for implementing activities consistent with the idea of non-formal learning.

⁶ The tasks of the Youth Town Council established at Łobez Commune Office: 1) promoting the idea of self-government among local youth and increasing young people's level of activity; 2) building a sense of responsibility for issues related to local self-government; 3) involving youth in making decisions that have a direct impact on their way and quality of life; 4) shaping and strengthening democratic attitudes, and developing the ability to make decisions in certain areas of civic life; 5) conducting an information campaign, directed at youth, about the council's role in the local self-government and the self-government's powers and responsibilities; 6) representing youth's interests to self-government institutions and non-governmental bodies; 7) cooperating with student councils; 8) protecting students' rights and dignity; 9) cooperating with self-governmental youth organisations from other cities and with foreign organisations; 10) organising cultural and sporting events, and youth meetings.

2.5 An assessment of NGOs' knowledge about non-formal education, and of the use of non-formal teaching methods in youth activities carried out in Łobez Commune

As a result of assessing NGOs' knowledge and awareness of non-formal education, and whether it is applied in youth activities in Łobez Commune, it was established that 53% of the respondents were familiar with the term non-formal education. However, only one in four organisations (26,6%) confirmed that they use non-formal education methods in their activities. It is significant that none of the respondents who declared being familiar with the term non-formal education stated that the registration documents of their organisation, such as the statutes or rules and regulations, contain references to applying non-formal education as part of the organisation's statutory activity.

Further research concerned the reasons for carrying out youth activities by the NGOs. The main reason declared by the NGOs was their willingness to organise young people's free time. Further down the list were: satisfaction derived from youth work and a conviction that young people have a large influence on the future of the region and enjoy youth activities. These results are consistent with the commune's policy on supporting young people in developing entrepreneurial and civic attitudes. By adding relevant details to the self-government policies in this area, it is possible to modify the extent and forms of the support to incorporate non-formal education.

Next, the research helped determine how many young people have been receiving the NGOs' support. A clear majority of the organisations (53%) declared up to 10 beneficiaries, 30% are supporting more than 30 people, while 13% of the organisations mentioned between 10 and 20 people, and 4% have been helping more than 100 people. The frequency of giving support also matters - 26% of the NGOs are providing continuous support and 4% carry out their activities once a month. The remaining organisations have been conducting youth activities once in three months or more sporadically, eg once every six months.

The next question concerned the types of activities organised by the NGOs. The most frequent ones are: games, workshops, experiments, theatre performances, simulations and films. The respondents also mentioned activities related to formal education, such as lectures and talks. It is significant that the NGOs have scarcely been helping young people develop foreign language skills, digital skills, and the ability to plan their day, speak in public, take responsibility for common actions, recognise their needs and solve conflicts. These deficiencies can be caused by:

1. Not enough staff,
2. Lacking space for conducting youth activities and meetings.

53% of the NGOs mentioned they were understaffed, while as many as 80% declared they did not have enough available space to carry out youth activities.

The survey also looked at how much influence the participants of the activities have on the types and topics of these activities. 60% of the NGOs strive for their activities to match youth's expectations. This is a good opportunity to introduce non-formal education methods, as these are popular among young people.

Regarding the evaluation of NGO partnerships, 66% of the organisations taking part in the research saw the need to carry out youth activities in partnership with other NGOs. However, only 20%

of them do work with such partners. The advantages of partnerships mentioned by the respondents included: extra space, financial support, more beneficiaries, organisational support, help to obtain permissions, fee exemptions and the possibility to act under the auspices of another entity. These results show that there is a potential for starting common initiatives and activities, including preparing applications for external financing.

Interestingly, the respondents have reported their organisations' state of finances as quite poor. 60% of the NGOs have an annual turnover of 10,000 zloty, 34% have declared no revenue, and only 6% have confirmed a turnover higher than 50,000 zloty. Most of the organisations, ie 54%, are financed externally, while 46% are funded by membership fees. The respondents considered their organisations to be inefficient in obtaining external financing, mainly due to low qualifications of the management and staff, who have difficulty preparing relevant applications. These results demonstrate a need for networking and common initiatives between NGOs to ensure their stable and balanced development.

SWOT analysis

The research results presented above have served as a basis for preparing a strategy for developing non-formal education in rural areas, using the example of Łobez Commune. **This non-formal education model can be applied in any local, regional or border area which has set itself similar goals with regard to creating a civic society to Łobez Commune.**

SWOT analysis

The table below contains a SWOT analysis of the development of non-formal education in Łobez Commune.

Table 2. SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Establishing the Youth Town Council; the council's work;	Insufficient awareness of the benefits of non-formal education in the commune;
Łobez Commune's focus on fostering entrepreneurial and civic attitudes among youth;	The youth in the commune lacks key skills necessary to undertake social activities - such as initiative, resourcefulness, cooperation, communication, time management and project work;
NGOs' activities aimed at shaping entrepreneurial and civic attitudes among youth;	Lacking good practices in the area of forming NGO partnerships to organise youth activities;
NGO members' sense of mission;	Lack of non-formal education experts in the commune;
NGOs' declared willingness to cooperate with each other and form partnerships;	Insufficient space for organising youth meetings;
High effectiveness of non-formal education methods confirmed by the study;	Lacking training of NGO staff in obtaining funding, including funds for non-formal education;
The youth's key skills can improve thanks to applying non-formal education methods;	
Premises and space available in Łobez Commune;	Insufficient financial and project resources of NGOs as regards non-formal education in Łobez Commune;
Means of transport available in the commune;	NGOs' cooperation with other entities is limited to the commune and the institutions run by the local self-government;
Bonin Foundation's high potential for implementing non-formal education and obtaining relevant funding;	Limited mobility in rural areas;
Available premises belonging to Bonin Foundation;	
Bonin Foundation's good practices as regards non-formal education of youth, which were verified during the Wake Up! project.	

OPPORTUNITIES	DANGERS
The youth's readiness to become involved in developing non-formal education;	Lacking initiatives that include non-formal education methods;
Readiness of the commune and local institutions to implement non-formal education methods;	Lack of teachers willing to apply non-formal education methods;
NGOs' readiness to implement non-formal education methods;	Neglecting to make use of Bonin Foundation and other entities' experience, or the guide to non-formal education methods and tools prepared as part of the Wake Up! project;
Creating a budget managed by the Youth Town Council;	The youth council has only existed for a short time;
Creating an advisory centre for non-formal education activities;	Limited decision-making authority of the youth council;
Learning, by local institutions and NGOs, to prepare and submit applications for non-formal education funding;	There is no guarantee that partnerships will lead to obtaining funds;
A possibility to obtain external financing for non-formal education of youth thanks to partnerships;	Low effectiveness of fundraising training and other types of staff training;
Providing non-formal education and using the guide to non-formal education methods and tools prepared as part of the Wake Up! project, by entities that conduct youth activities;	Lack of funds to use the commune's means of transport;
Increasing the effectiveness and range of youth activities by forming coalitions to promote non-formal education;	Unclear partnership agreements and small involvement of the partners;
A possibility to train staff in non-formal teaching;	Competing for external funds by similar organisations operating in the same area;
Using the commune's means of transport;	NGOs viewing each other in a context of a conflict of interest;
	Insufficient knowledge and experience in managing international partnerships.

Source: results of research conducted during the Wake Up! project

A strategy for developing non-formal education in Łobez Commune

The strategy is based on the experiences gathered by Bonin Foundation during two rounds of testing of non-formal education methods, the results of the surveys carried out during the Wake Up! project, and the subsequent SWOT analysis. The strategy clearly demonstrates that non-formal teaching methods help young people to understand the value of education, awaken their educational aspirations and provide them with experiences that enable them to fulfil those aspirations. Having a sense of agency can lead to overcoming differences in access to skills and competencies valued on the job market, thereby ensuring social mobility. This is especially important in rural areas, including places where state-owned farms (PGRs) used to exist in socialist times.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN ŁOBEZ COMMUNE

Main objective: increasing the provision of non-formal education by organisations and entities supporting youth in Łobez Commune, by 2020

Specific objective no. 1		Specific objective no. 2		Specific objective no. 3		Specific objective no. 4	
Increasing the knowledge about non-formal education among representatives of NGOs, and other entities and institutions operating in Łobez Commune, by 2020		Increasing the awareness of the benefits of non-formal education activities for youth among representatives of NGOs, and other entities and institutions operating in Łobez Commune, by 2020		Increasing the number of initiatives that involve non-formal education methods in Łobez Commune, by 2020		Increasing the number of partnerships formed between entities from Łobez Commune in order to use non-formal education methods and tools, by 2020	
Actions:		Actions:		Actions:		Actions:	
1. Popularising the guide to non-formal education methods and tools for rural areas (the Guide to Pedagogy of Freedom)		1. Popularising the Strategy for Developing Non-formal Education in Rural Areas Using the Example of Łobez Commune as a model for conducting youth activities 2. Making the local community aware of the effectiveness of the non-formal education methods applied during the Wake Up! project		1. Providing non-formal education training for local staff, including how to use the Guide to Pedagogy of Freedom 2. Supporting the Youth Town Council in launching initiatives 3. Creating a budget managed by the youth council		1. Conducting training in obtaining funds for non-formal education of youth in partnerships 2. Organising networking and integration meetings for representatives of NGOs, local institutions and youth organisations 3. Making Bonin Foundation's premises and staff available to support non-formal education initiatives in the commune	
Indices	Target value	Indices	Target value	Indices	Target value	Indices	Target value
1.1 Number of printed copies of the Guide to Pedagogy of Freedom	100 copies	2.1 Number of entities and institutions declaring their willingness to enter into cooperation to introduce non-formal education into their activities	At least 8 entities declaring their willingness to enter into cooperation	3.1 Number of initiatives involving non-formal education in Łobez Commune that Bonin Foundation has been made aware of	At least 6 initiatives	4.1 Training in obtaining external funding in partnerships	1 training event
1.2 Number of organisations and/or institutions to receive the Guide to Pedagogy of Freedom by email	50 organisations and/or institutions	2.2 Number of entities and institutions declaring that they apply non-formal education methods in their	At least 5 entities who have confirmed including non-formal education in their statutory and/or project support in their	3.2 Number of initiatives launched by the youth council	Minimum 3 initiatives	4.1 Number of representatives of NGOs, local institutions and the youth council trained in obtaining external funds	At least 10 people

		registration documents, such as the statutes or rules and regulations, on their websites and in other places they use to publish information about their activities	registration documents				
1.3 Number of websites offering access to a digital version of the Guide to Pedagogy of Freedom	Official websites of Łobez Commune Office, Łobez District, Bonin Foundation, Wake Up! project partners, and the platform for publishing the results of Erasmus+ projects	2.3 Entries concerning non-formal education in strategic documents of Łobez Commune, eg in the programme for cooperation with NGOs for 2019 and 2020	At least 2 entries in Łobez Commune's strategic documents for 2019 and 2020, recommending youth support in the form of non-formal education	3.3 Number of staff from NGOs and Łobez Commune's institutions trained in applying non-formal education methods	At least 10 people	4.3 Providing advice about building partnerships by Bonin Foundation	10 instances of providing advisory services
		2.4 Number of meetings concerning non-formal education organised by Bonin Foundation for entities from Łobez Commune by 2020	5 meetings			4.4 Number of integration and networking meetings for entities providing youth support	5 meetings

		2.5 Number of websites offering access to a digital version of the Strategy for Developing Non-formal Education in Rural Areas Using the Example of Łobez Commune	Official websites of Łobez Commune Office, Łobez District, Bonin Foundation, Wake Up! project partners, and the platform for publishing the results of Erasmus+ projects			4.5 Number of places made available for youth activities involving non-formal education methods	Łobez Commune's available premises – 1 place Bonin Foundation's premises - 1 building and the surrounding green spaces
						4.6 Forming project partnerships to provide non-formal education	At least 2 project partnerships

The strategy for introducing non-formal education in Łobez Commune should contribute to increasing youth's entrepreneurial intentions. Thanks to strengthening their entrepreneurial skills, becoming aware of their potential, recognising their strengths and weaknesses, and developing a thirst for knowledge, young people will be able to take part in developing social ties in their nearest surroundings. This, in turn, is going to result in more non-formal education initiatives of NGOs and self-government organisations in Łobez Commune and in the neighbouring communes. Consequently, the number of partnerships formed between entities operating in these communes will grow as well.

Increased entrepreneurial intentions of youth and more non-formal education initiatives guarantee an upswing in Łobez Commune's innovativeness and competitiveness.

Conclusion

The challenges currently faced by non-formal education include the following:

- improving the understanding of the idea and principles of non-formal education and its importance for comprehensive education of youth,
- including non-formal teaching methods in general education as a complementary element,
- increasing the visibility of activities conducted using non-formal methods,
- training development facilitators,
- increasing the funds available for non-formal education,
- increasing the recognition of non-formal education methods and tools,
- setting quality standards for non-formal teaching.

The strategy for developing non-formal education in Łobez Commune, which was prepared by Bonin Foundation and its partners as part of the Wake Up! project, is an attempt to meet these challenges. The actions recommended in the strategy are aimed at developing the non-formal sphere, including a wide variety of its forms and methods. Unlike research and controlled methods, the non-formal teaching methods, which are based on freedom and self-regulation, allow individuals to swap external motivation for an internal drive and become more active, creative and enterprising as a result. This, in turn, leads to greater awareness of the importance of social activity and an increased social capital, as well as improved employment opportunities. The strategy of Łobez Commune's self-government and the statutory missions of many organisations and entities active in the commune contain similar ideas. The ways to implement this strategy include using the guide to non-formal education methods (Guide to Pedagogy of Freedom) that was prepared during the Wake Up! project, as well as utilising Bonin Foundation's premises and staff. The first step has already been taken: the Wake Up! project has undoubtedly contributed to understanding and accepting the idea of non-formal education by Łobez Commune's NGOs and authorities.

And this is just the beginning...

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A list of tables and graphs

Table 1. Differentiations between formal, non-formal and informal education: theoretical formulation.

Table 2. SWOT analysis

Table 3. Objectives of the strategy for developing non-formal education in Łobez Commune

Graph 1. Problems encountered by youth in their peer group

Graph 2. Leisure preferences

Graph 3. Types of activities preferred by the youth

Graph 4. Extracurricular activities of youth in Łobez Commune

Graph 5. Willingness to influence the decision-making processes in Łobez Commune

Graph 6. Cooperation in an intercultural group

Graph 7. Recognising one's needs

Graph 8. Communicating one's needs

Graph 9. Decision-making

Graph 10. Providing arguments to support one's views

Graph 11. Speaking in public

Graph 12. Providing constructive feedback

Graph 13. Preparing and making a public statement

Graph 14. Assuming responsibility for common tasks

Graph 15. The ability to listen to others

Graph 16. Solving conflicts

Graph 17. Communicating in one's native language and in a foreign language

Graph 18. Planning one's day

Graph 19. Digital skills

Graph 20. Shaping environmental awareness

Graph 21. Knowledge about financing international activities shaping entrepreneurial attitudes

Graph 22. Evaluation of the relationship between the youth and the development facilitator

Graph 23. The reasons for Łobez Commune's interest in youth as a target group for activities

Graph 24. The commune's evaluation of different types of youth support.