



Workshop Guide

Communicative Ecologies

AT A GLANCE

This toolkit offers tips, techniques and ideas for engaging young people in a process of reflection on their life and career aspirations and the influencing role of communication and social connections. It is best delivered under the guidance of expert facilitators knowledgeable about the support networks available for young people in a locality: the final part of the workshop proposes a collective sense-making experience where each young person participating is helped to identify supporting people and organisations according to specific needs, from taking decisions to mentorship and skills building.

WHO CAN OFFER THIS WORKSHOP AND WHY?

This is a practice-based creative research methodology that can be adopted equally by researchers and practitioners working with young people in areas ranging from education, career development, social work and communication for social change. Practice-based researchers might use these insights in order to devise novel, richer data collection protocols for investigating the relationship between aspirations, communication and media practices. Practitioners can find within a ready-made template to use for aspirations mapping workshops with young people, which they can use as such or adapt for their contexts and needs.

SPACE AND MATERIALS

The workshop would ideally be held in a location (indoors or outdoors) that provides participants the space and freedom to both work on their own zines and exchange views and ideas with the other participants. Circled arrangements are preferred, so that all participants can face each other. Materials include:

1. **Aspirations mapping board printed on cardboard:** Each participant is provided with an aspirations mapping board printed on A1 (ideally) or A2. [Download and print from [Connect2Aspire website](#)]

2. **Facilitator cards:** These are used by the facilitator and can also be spread on tables for inspiration, following the main landmarks in the aspirations board. [Download and print from [Connect2Aspire website](#)]
3. **Comments & questions board:** A large board visible for everyone, where during the workshop young people can go and pin questions, comments, thoughts, ideas.
4. **Creative DIY materials** - additional papers (white and coloured), pencils, markers, scissors, glue and a selection of illustrated magazines as material for collages, stickers. These are optional, but useful if participants wish to employ sketching, drawing or collage to complete their boards.

PROCESS USING THE BOARD AND CARDS

The process is supported by a large board with hotspots along which the facilitator guides the participants, clustered around three areas: **Explore** (focused on a self-analytical, reflective process); **Envision** (future-orientated formulation of career goals) and **Connect** (enacting the power of social connections). The facilitator can take inspiration from the cards which help keep track of the sequence; cards can also be printed in several versions and spread around tables for young people.

Area 1: Explore invites young people to reflect on the people and things they cherish and value, the different social roles they play and what they enjoy doing offline and online, focusing on the following:

- **Me & my community:** The first cluster to explore includes highly personal values, aspirations and ideals and is meant to focus young people's attention on what they wish to achieve in life and express their aspirations thinking only of how these align and resonate with their deeply held beliefs and values.
- **The roles I perform:** Next, young people are asked to reflect on the roles that they play in their social milieu, and rank them according to time spent in each; and then according to personal importance. The facilitator can probe the gaps between the first and second columns.
- **Interest areas:** The final cluster to explore regards young people's favourite pastimes, online and offline.

Area 2: Envision invites participants to focus on the future, a future of their own making where they do what they love, expressing themselves and their values and making a difference.

- **Dream profession:** First, young people are encouraged to think of their **dream profession** and the outcomes and rewards they associate with this. The facilitator should encourage them to be open about what they genuinely like to become, not yet about how achievable that might feel.
- **Professional goal:** The next hotspots then focus young people's attention on realistic targets; they are encouraged to relate the goal to themselves and their skills – the ones they possess and the ones they need to cultivate to profess. Finally, they are asked

about **Support** and sustenance they have, challenges and what they need in order to overcome challenges.

Area 3: Connect

The hotspots in this last column are explored by each young person closely supported by facilitators who initially ask each person to locate themselves at the hotspot that best represents the sort of support they need, whether related to choice/inspiration; getting close mentorship; enhancing skills; or access to professional roles they target. The role of the facilitator is extremely important at this stage. First, it is essential that young people are adequately helped to synthesise and use the rich information they explored in the other column – including existing connections they can nurture. Second, the facilitator should be able to offer advice about supporting networks in the locality for each of the key needs or guide the discussion so that new ideas are generated by the entire group.

PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK & WRAP-UP

At the end, the facilitator invites young people to share their impressions and take aways from this exercise, and any other comments on the experience. The post its or notes on the *Comments & questions* board can be used to stimulate discussion.