# IO5

# SparkSEED

*SparkSEED* model guide makes part of the set of results developed in the frame of the project **SparkSEEDs – Empowering Youth Learning Communities** and it is open, free, and may be fully distributed to any third parties interested its replication

SparkSEEDs

ja Juventude em ação | Erasmus+

Version 0.3 December 2020

PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

**Coordination**
(Portugal)

**National Partners**
(Portugal)

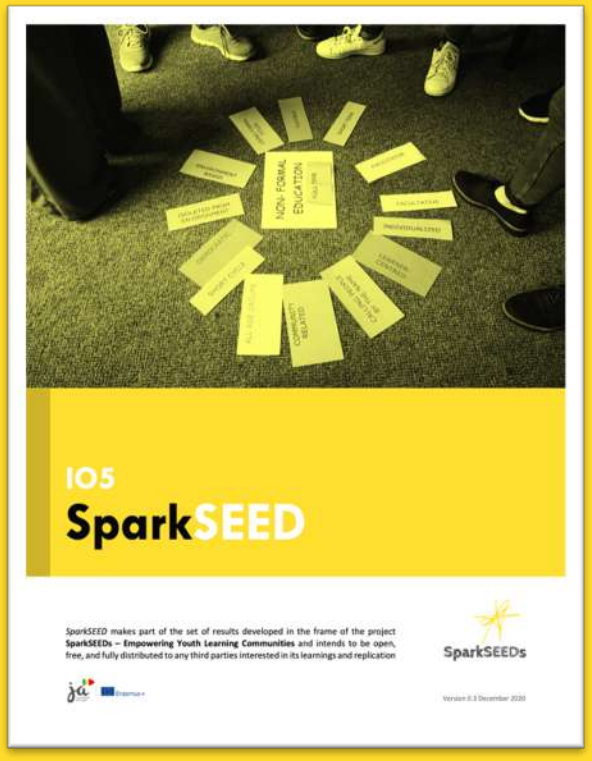
**Transnational Partners**
(Poland & Italy)

**© 2019 - 2021 SparkSEEDs - Empowering Youth Learning Communities**

SparkSEEDs is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme of the European Union. This communication reflects the author's opinions only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

# INDEX


**About the guide** ..... **4**
Why? ..... 4
What? ..... 5
For whom? ..... 6
Who benefits from it? ..... 6
**About SparkSEEDs** ..... **7**
Rationale ..... 8
The objectives ..... 9
The main results ..... 10
The Target groups ..... 11
The partnership structures ..... 12
**SparkSEEDs model** ..... **13**
Introduction ..... 14
Usability of the model ..... 14
Needs addressed ..... 15
Core values & principles ..... 16
Components of the model ..... 16
**The SparkCOMMUNITY** ..... **17**
Objective & expected impact ..... 18
Target groups ..... 19
Methodology ..... 20
Critical points ..... 21
Implementation effort ..... 21
**The SparkLABs** ..... **22**
Objective & expected impact ..... 23
Target groups ..... 24
Methodology ..... 25
Critical points ..... 26
Implementation effort ..... 26
**The SparkYWorkers** ..... **27**
Objective & expected impact ..... 28
Target groups ..... 29
Methodology ..... 30
Critical points ..... 31
Implementation effort ..... 31
**The SparkCLUBs** ..... **32**
Objective & expected impact ..... 33
Target groups ..... 34
Methodology ..... 35
Critical points ..... 36
Implementation effort ..... 36
**Sustainability of the model** ..... **37**
Quality and credibility ..... 38
Indicators of achievement ..... 39
Monitoring progress ..... 39
Adaptability ..... 40
Exploitation ..... 40
Comparing model components ..... 41
**Conclusions & Recommendations** ..... **42**




# About the guide

## Why?

*SparkSEEDs* project envisioned a strong dissemination dimension, considered at the time as one its main pillars. The goals and issues addressed throughout its development, besides being strictly aligned with EU and global trends and recommendations on youth and education policies, are strongly representative of the needs and challenges from many other educational ecosystems and communities all over Europe, facts that justify the usefulness and pertinence of project dissemination.

Throughout the project it was intended to record and monitor the most relevant phases, critical points, successes, obstacles and learnings, feeding the assembly of relevant dissemination guides. These guides, where the present one is included, should help now any interested parties to replicate, adapt or implement the *SparkSEED* model in other geographies, communities or institutional contexts.

## What?

The ***SparkSEED model guide*** is the result of a 24-month project implemented by seven organisations, public and private, from three EU countries. It is based on a free global interdisciplinary educational and supportive ecosystem for youth, youth workers, organisations and communities in general, that encourages all, despite having or not a direct role in education, to participate actively in the construction and dynamics of a real youth learning community.

The tools, techniques and methods developed throughout the project are incorporated in the *SparkSEED model*, allowing its replication and transference to wider social, geographical or educational instances.

Guide users will be able to recreate, adapt, or simply to be inspired by the narrated practices and tools. The goal is to introduce a change in the practice of schools, youth organisations, youth workers and communities through the implementation of the model thus spreading new ideas, sharing and promoting new concepts, not only for addressing educational basic needs, but also addressing the global challenges being faced by societies.

This publication, the *SparkSEED model* guide, should be understood as work in progress, a white book, which is open to any further contribution or enrichment by any of its users or readers. You're invited to participate!

*encourages all, despite having or not a direct role in education, to participate actively in the construction of a real youth learning community!*

## For whom?

The present model guide is oriented to organisations working with youth and or in youth education fields, independently of its geographic context. These organisations, and their staff and decision makers, should constitute the primary targets of dissemination for the present guidelines.

The model we're sharing provides key information to interested parties and is the main tool to guide and support the replication and adaptation of *SparkSEEDs* initiative in your own educational context. It intends to serve the purposes of institutions such as schools, municipalities, learning communities, vocational training entities, parents' associations, youth associations, among many other, that may seek the same type of goals pursued by the *SparkSEEDs* project.

*The core elements of implementing such a model are willingness to benefit from it and openness for cooperation!*

## Who benefits from it?

The main groups of individuals that may benefit (end beneficiaries) from the development of the practices narrated in the present guide are:

- Young people (aged 8-16), especially those with fewer opportunities;
- Youth Workers, teachers, educators, mediators and other relevant youth working staff;
- Families & Communities in general;
- Decision makers and relevant stakeholders: actors of the local and regional "political environment" that can leverage the sustainability of the benefits resulted from using the guide and implementing a project such as *SparkSEEDs – Empowering Youth Learning Communities*.

# About SparkSEEDs

Understanding the context. A brief summary on *SparkSEEDs* project, its objectives and best practices

CHAPTER I

# Rationale

The importance of education is unquestioned in today's world, being considered one of the biggest challenges of the actual society. Indeed, high-quality and inclusive education for all is effectively considered by EU, and by many other important international organisations, one of the most effective defences against the risks of social marginalisation, poverty and exclusion, especially at times of crisis.

Throughout the last centuries, a considerable investment has been made in education, namely focusing and strongly based in formal education processes. Although, in the last years, worldwide, a new trend on education practices, more informal, has been proving higher, solid and more sustainable results when it comes to the learning outcomes and youth personal development. By means of the opportunities made available through the non-formal and informal sector and through youth work, children and young people had now the chance to develop their personal potential, acquire basic skills and qualifications, and become integrated into own communities and in society at large.

According the recommendations extracted from the Youth Report 2015, from the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, from UNICEF's key recommendations for youth, and lately as discussed on May 2018 in the EU Youth Conference (Youth Strategy for 2019-2027), the actual education approach must be updated and aligned with the fast-changing society and with today's youth needs and interests. It should:

- prioritize social inclusion, participation and engagement of adolescents in their communities and society – especially the most vulnerable young people;
- prepare all adolescents with quality inclusive education and the skills they need to prosper in the 21st century;
- renew the education methods and contents (which are still too much knowledge based – teachings from the past, and few updated to the present and to the future – which are, nowadays, mainly assured by "machines" and by the digital era tools).

According to World Economic Forum, robots will replace 800 million jobs by 2030, pointing that education agents should not teach youth to compete with "machines", once they are "smarter" in terms of knowledge-based learnings. To prepare youth for the jobs of the future, we have to teach them to master skills that machines will never master. To this extent, new investments on education should be made as way to teach something unique, human based, such as soft skills: social and personal values, independent thinking, teamwork, care for others, sports, music, painting, arts, and creative thinking.

## The objectives

Having in mind the challenges underlined in the rationale section, the *SparkSEEDs* project followed one main objective:

"Building and developing a community based non-formal educational ecosystem with the aim to promote and support the regular offer of extra-school high quality and enriching activities, dedicated to and participated by youth, by capitalizing important endogenous resources (human, intergenerational, cultural, natural, material, traditional, among other) in a crossed approach between youth main interests & needs and actual societal challenges. A concrete "learning community" is created, powered by a local network of public, private and civil society representatives, capacitated and oriented by the main actual and future needs of youth."

To address the needs of the target groups, a set of specific objectives were defined:

- Young people (8-16) soft skills, abilities, ingenuity, genius, creativity, interests and vision are coherently supported, promoted and developed, through a set of activities held under a community based educational ecosystem.
- Generation of a solid and proactive "Learning Community". Community (and its main agents) is involved and promotes youth educational contexts and development, and youth is enrolled and empowered to participate in community development.
- Youth Citizenship, participation, community awareness, initiative, collaboration, solidarity and social entrepreneurial attitudes are promoted and supported.
- Youth workers skills and methodologies are increased and developed, as way to assist regular & consistent non-formal learnings and to transfer society fundamental values to young people, preventing the main phenomena actually affecting young people.

It is precisely on the first and last specific objectives and respective target groups that the present Book tries to focus, sharing the relevant learnings and giving clues on the role of the youth workers in the whole ecosystem.

*"Building and developing a community based non-formal educational ecosystem"*

## The main results

The project predicted the concretization and achievement of several results, subsidiary and complementary, which would be contributing jointly for the general and specific goals of the project. The main results, considered here as structuring pillars of the project, were:

- **SparkCOMMUNITY**: Building and developing a "Community Based Educational Ecosystem" with the aim to promote school and extra school high quality and enriching activities, dedicated to and participated by youth. This educational ecosystem capitalizes important endogenous resources (human, cultural, natural, material, traditional, intergenerational, among other) as tools for learning and education, always focusing a crossed approach between youth main interests and societal challenges.
- **SparkYWORKERS**: The skills of Youth Workers (trainers, facilitators, volunteers and NEETs) from the community and from its agents were increased and developed, as way to gain capacity to develop and assist regular and consistent non-formal learnings and activities for youth, but also to transfer societal fundamental values, thus preventing the main phenomena actually affecting young people. Youth work was purposefully adjusted towards young people's needs through the development of comprehensive training programme and adequate job shadowing actions.

*Youth work is purposefully adjusted towards young people's needs*

- **SparkCLUBS:** Constituting the practical activities addressed to youth, these "clubs" recreate different "spaces", entirely participatory (by all, community agents, youth workers, schools and youth), providing regular extra-school and free time activities for the integrated education and learnings of young people. The SparkCLUBs followed different thematic approaches (prepared and developed under a set of activities called SparkLABs*)*, being generally dedicated to: Arts & Culture; Nature & Sports; Science & Technology; Citizenship & Entrepreneurship. The tools, methods and contents produced and applied in the frame of the SparkCLUBS can be compiled envisaging the creation of vacation camps (programs of enriching activities for occupation of free time during school vacation times), facilitating an additional important result: safe and quality alternative/solution for families and educators for the "positive" occupation of the free time of their youngsters.

## The Target groups

Let's focus on the main end beneficiaries of the project, the youth. About 50% of the project beneficiaries are young people with fewer opportunities. These have been involved based on their level of disadvantage, ethnical, cultural and gender representativeness, proximity, interest and capacity to participate actively in project activities. The criteria applied:

- Economic obstacles are, probably, one of the most decisive problems once they can influence all others. Partner regions have economic difficulties caused by high unemployment rates and considerable high life costs. Young people (and also elderly) are the most affected groups;
- Geographical obstacles in combination with economic obstacles hinder the access to better services, educational facilities, and availability of extra school activities for occupation of free time and vacation periods;
- Educational difficulties can be caused by the necessity of working (young labour) to guarantee own or family subsistence. It is quite a common problem still in some rural regions of Europe, and in southern countries. In addition, this can be caused by limited access to information. Additionally, sometimes an unsupportive family can hinder the young person's interest in education and educational attainment;
- Social obstacles and cultural differences are connected, constituting the core problem of young migrants (independently of the type of migration – rural exodus – internal migration; or going abroad – external migration). Intercultural learning, tolerance and respect for differences are cross-cutting topics addressed by the project, and generally by the partner organizations.
- Disability obstacles such as physical disadvantages and reduced mobility. The project should allow young people with functional diversity to participate in all kinds of project activities giving them the opportunity to meet different people and to learn in open and participative settings.

*About 50% of the project beneficiaries are young people with fewer opportunities*

Besides youth, and not less important, other direct beneficiaries (target groups) were centrally involved in the action, namely:

- Youth Workers (teachers, educators, facilitators, monitors, educational staff)
- Public and private stakeholders (schools, youth, sports & cultural associations, parents association, municipalities, civil society representants, companies, youth clubs, universities, among many other entities from the local communities)

## The partnership structures

Considering the pilot nature of the project, seeking the development of a replicable community based educational model (local), developed and assisted at European level, the project partnership was composed in two operational levels:

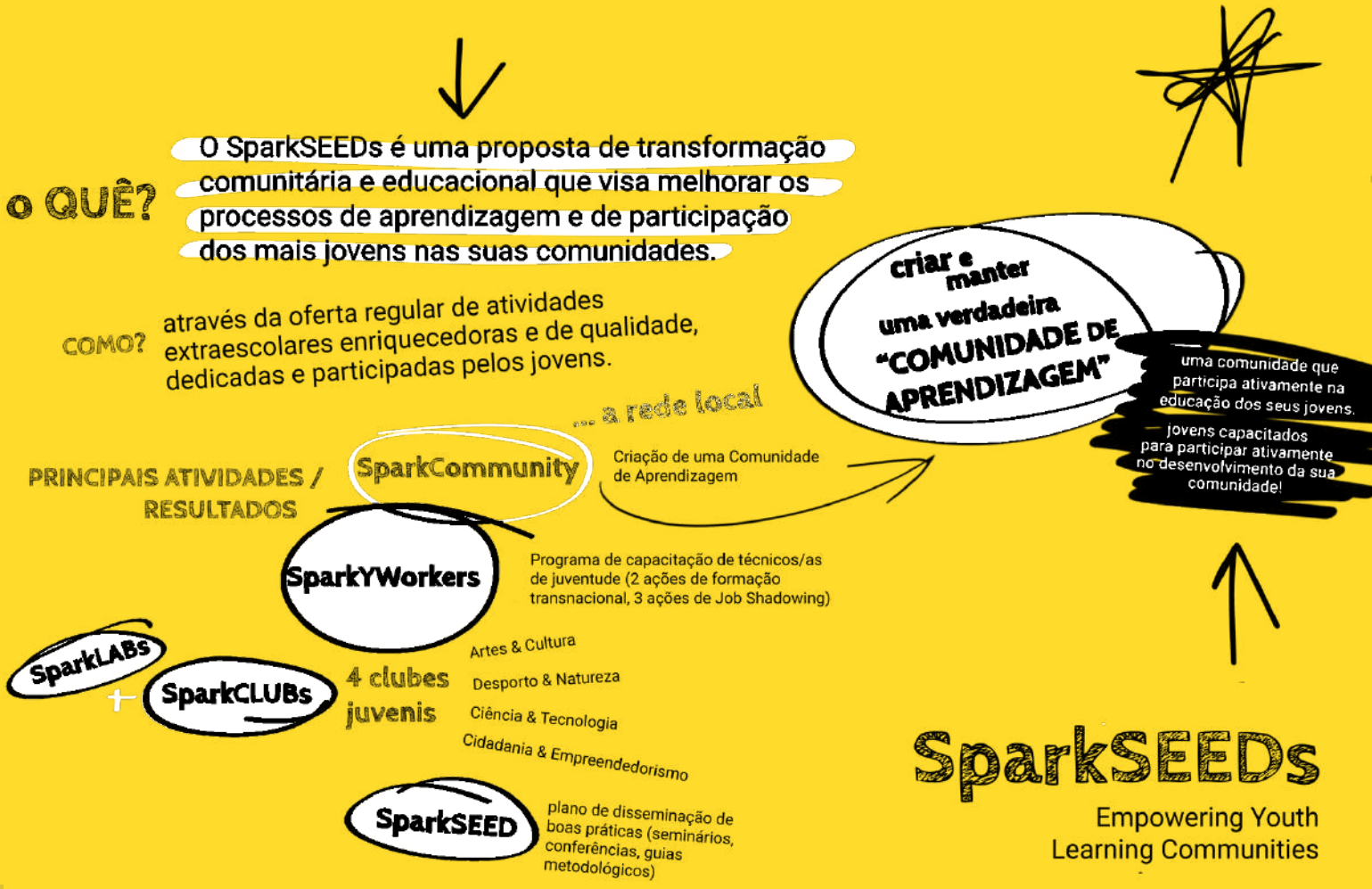
[1] **Local partnership**: piloting the main actions and innovative approaches;
[2] **Transnational partnership**: assisting and supporting the local partnership and the development of the project as a whole.

Project partners were chosen according their profile and ability to ensure these two operational levels and the partnership settled as follows:

[1] The core partners that would pilot and constitute the local network (responsible for supporting the *SparkCOMMUNITY* to be created). This "local base" partners were chosen by their complementary and supplementary experiences, knowhow, competences and resources, contributing with specific expertise to activities development, namely considering the 4 areas envisaged in the *SparkLABs* and *SparkCLUBs* to create (Arts & Culture; Nature & Sports; Science & Technology; Citizenship & Entrepreneurship). This group of partners should show high interest and commitment towards the education of youngsters, and particularly on the enforcement of the learning community to build. All entities should work closely with community and its agents, being for so fundamental as partners under the present model;

*"partners chosen according their profile, commitment and ability to ensure two different operational levels in the action"*

[2] The core partners that would constitute the Transnational Network (responsible for assisting the overall design and development of the project, but as well for their expertise in the fields envisaged). These partners, transnational, should show solid experience and skills in education and in youth worker capacity building (embodying the *SparkYWorkers* capacity building programme, namely in areas such as non-formal education tools and practices, and transversally in those thematic (feeding the *SparkCLUBs*) not dominated by the local partners. This group of partners should show strong interest in the project model, assuming it as a pilot initiative for innovation, which they should be committed to disseminate and replicate in own intervention spheres.




# SparkSEEDs model

A review on the set of practices developed during the project, aiming to introduce a proposal for social transformation in local educational systems

CHAPTER II

# Introduction

The SparkSEED model seeks to describe the set of best practices developed during the *SparkSEEDs* project, which aim in general terms to introduce a change in the approach of schools, local organisations and communities working with young people. It entails a proposal for social transformation, gathering all (youth, youth workers, organisations and communities) in a common goal – improving the quality of education while guaranteeing focus on a crossed approach between youth main educational needs, their particular interests and the actual societal challenges.

# Usability of the model

The whole model has been designed for use at the level of a specific community [Cuba, South Alentejo region, Portugal, a small community (≈4500 inhabitants), strongly marked by its interiority and rural setting, which was assumed as the pilot territory for the development of the envisaged innovations].

Independently of the type of pilot territory considered in the development phase, the actual model can be easily applied in larger or smaller community scales, or just be centred at a specific school context or neighbourhood.

It can be applied as described in the present guide or it can be adapted to any context of implementation you may want to consider. Whereas relevant, the replication of the model should be subject to a previous assessment of needs: of a particular school (or group of schools), of a community (or neighbourhood); of the youth, and; of the relevant stakeholders that have power of influence or interest in education and or in youth systems.

By using all or just some of the components of the model, as further described, people and institutions from the local educational ecosystems can contribute to improve:

- the networking and cooperation (youth centred) among the relevant stakeholders,
- the skills of youth workers,
- the offer of enriching activities (and new learning opportunities) for youth and the positive occupation of free times,
- but most of all, the quality of education and thus the best personal, scholar and future professional development of youth.

**The SparkSEED model entails a proposal for social transformation**

# Needs addressed

The motivation leading to the development of *SparkSEEDs* project resulted directly from a deep and participatory exercise of needs assessment, previously developed at the local educational sphere.

Under this exercise, established among many organisations (schools, municipality, youth organisations, public-private networks, public bodies, parents association, training institutions, teachers and many other) it became clear the urgent need to change and to innovate in the educational process, being intended the update of the current education model to a more modern, capable of preparing youth for the present and for the future, and empowering them to overcome the most pressing challenges of society.

The building and development of the main components of the model were dictated by a number of needs that could be summed up in two macro-areas: the educational needs and the motivational needs.

- The **educational needs** revolve around the problems that may occur in traditional education and how it affects the youth. *SparkSEEDs* has addressed these needs by promoting a change in the school paradigm that tackle the unbalanced didactic approach, too much knowledge based. Aiming at providing educational opportunities, the first step was to choose pedagogic tools that were closer to students' reality, promoting a new approach to education through non-formal and informal activities. Experimenting with innovative contents the youth found themselves trying new learning processes in a non-judgmental environment. The practical and non-formal activities have given more learning possibilities to the participating pupils, both high performers and those with special needs.
- The **motivational needs** affect the youth on a deeper level: it is fundamental to help them thrive not just as students, but also as human beings, support them in their passions, stimulate their critical thinking. The interventions must be made on different levels: on one hand, trying to motivate the youth with innovative contents that stimulate their involvement in the activities, with the help of the community, with a focus on the students at risk of early school leaving; furthermore, increasing youth critical thinking and soft skills development; helping them finding new talent and vocation, giving them the opportunities to show in what they are good and thus empowering them. The aim is not only motivating to learn through more appealing methods, but above all give them the opportunity to express themselves and have future perspectives.

***SparkSEEDs* results from a deep and participatory assessment of needs**

## Core values & principles

The values of *SparkSEEDs* that are worth to convey to different contexts can be summed up in three words: youth, community and innovation.

- **YOUTH**: The empowerment of the youth is the key value of the project. It is conveyed by putting youth at the centre of the project, meeting their interests, prospects and educational needs through non-formal and informal learning processes that lead the youth outside the school walls, in ways that traditional education often fails to enable.
- **COMMUNITY:** The involvement of the community is a focal point of the project: by opening the schools to the community, and vice-versa, the dialogue benefits all the stakeholders involved, and ultimately the youth itself. This process produces an educational community ecosystem based on non-formal and informal practices, that creates synergies and links with the local needs and that can be a model of dialogue among institutions from different countries. In this virtuous circle, the more vulnerable subjects can be included in a more sustainable and adequate way.
- **INNOVATION:** Innovation is a central concept for the project: It should be understood not only as a goal, but also as a tool. in order to create an education model that fosters creativity and innovation, the resources, expectations and values should be shared and improved through a proficuous dialogue between all parts involved. Moreover, is fundamental the habit, as more participative as possible, to brainstorm around new ideas and strategies. Youth benefits from this informal and stimulating dialogue, learning to think outside the box and developing creative ways to solve problems and difficulties, with a renewed perspective upon the future. On the other hand, the model entails a proposal for social transformation, implying necessarily a strong innovation dimension.

**The values worth to convey can be summed up in three words: youth, community and innovation**

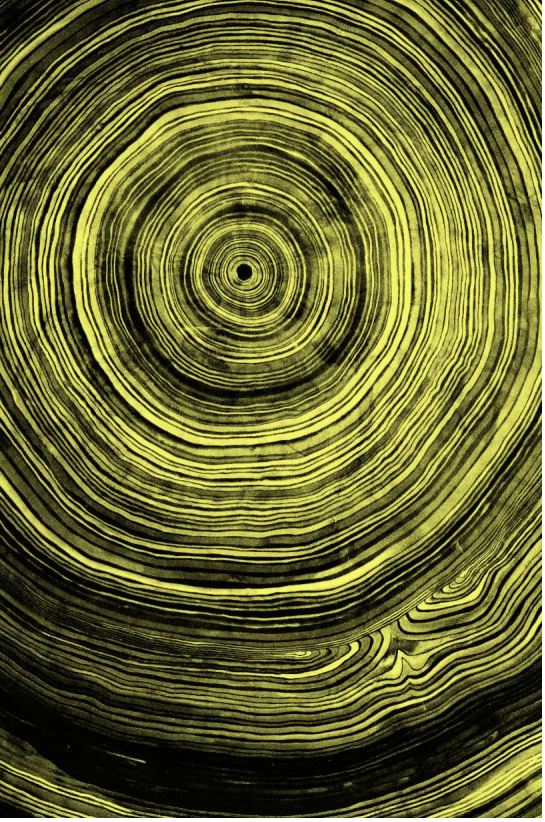
## Components of the model

The components of the model are outlined in function of the main practices and results predicted to be achieved by the project. They are:

- The SparkCOMMUNITY
- The SparkLABS
- The SparkYWorkers
- The SparkCLUBS

In the following sections a detailed description of the above components can be found.

# The SparkCOMMUNITY



## The SparkCommunity

# Objective & expected impact

The main objective of this model component, the SparkCOMMUNITY, is building and developing a “Community Based Educational Ecosystem” with the aim to promote and support school activities and as well the regular offer of extra-school high quality and enriching activities, dedicated to and participated by youth.

The educational ecosystem envisaged should be able to capitalize important endogenous resources (human, intergenerational, cultural, natural, material, traditional, among other) as tools for learning and education, always focusing a crossed approach between youth main interests and actual societal challenges. In practical terms, a concrete “learning community” (the “SparkCommunity”) is created, powered by a local network established between public and private entities and civil society representatives, and oriented by the main actual and future needs of youth.

The creation of a concrete "learning community" allows the development of youth educational projects, linked to the school but going beyond its limits, thus involving the entire community in the formation of their young individuals.

As previously referred, it encompasses a proposal for innovation and social transformation, translated, in practical terms, in the consolidation of an educational community-based ecosystem with the purpose of supporting the acquisition of critical skills for young people and educators. The school "uses" the community as an educational resource and community recognizes the school as an essential strategic element for its own development.

The constitution of a SparkCOMMUNITY (based on a local network of agents), itself a powerful generator of innovation, although widely recognised in terms of its conceptual value, is not yet common in the local, regional, national or even European frames.

In the particular context of the municipality of Cuba (± 4500 inhabitants spread over 4 parishes), this would imply a critical change, entailing necessarily strong innovation in the educational process, once it is intended (by all) to approach the current educational model to a more modern model, capable of preparing young people for the present and for the future, and empowering them to overcome the most pressing challenges of society.

## Transferability

This component of the SparkSEED model presents high potential for transferability and replication in other communities or school contexts, which are interested or dedicated to the development of key competencies in young people. "Learning communities" are actually a European trend (supported by member states all over Europe and by the relevant EU policies and recommendations on youth and education) and can be supported by the learnings and achievements of the present model. The base concepts are, indeed, cooperation and articulation (of efforts, resources, opportunities, availability, etc.) generating thus important synergies focused on youth development.

Among any other attributions that can be decided in its own sphere of participatory management, the learning community (network of relevant local agents) should be responsible for creating and implement an annual integrated “programme” of non-formal and informal teaching/learning activities for youth. Going from the scarce and scattered initiatives, most of them promoted by the school or by the local authorities on education, the “learning community” can introduce not only innovation, but most of all quality and diversity in the local education approaches. Tools like intergenerational learning and the transfer of oral traditions can be also tackled under the learning community.

**The base concepts are, indeed, cooperation and articulation (of efforts, resources, opportunities, availability, etc.)**

## Target groups

But who should be involved in the development of a SparkCOMMUNTY? As a matter of fact, the group involved in the discussion and creation of a SparkCommunity can be as enlarged as possible. It will depend on the nature of the educational ecosystem that gives setting to your intentions. In the case of the pilot community more than 20 entities where challenged to participate, among which we can outline the following: Municipalities; all the schools in the territory (primary, basic, secondary, VET); NGO’s; civil society organisations and their representatives; parents association; cultural associations, youth associations; museums, galleries, heritage and historical entities; libraries; environmental institutions; companies; sport clubs and associations; social well-fare and health organisations; among many other local public and private entities.

Naturally, someone has to take the initiative, being advisable to start the process with a structured set of entities, gathering at least a school, any local authority on education, any NGO skilled in participatory processes, education and youth fields and other youth representatives.

**The most relevant requirements are a good approach and will to cooperate for a common goal**

# Methodology

The preparation and implementation of the SparkCommunity doesn't require any special skill, tool, technic or method to follow. The most relevant requirements are actually a good approach and will to cooperate, intra and inter-institutionally, towards a common goal. In the particular case of the pilot community created in the frame of the *SparkSEEDs* project, these, bellow, where the main steps followed:

- Start by drafting an initial proposal for the network, configuring its basics such as: its objectives, the responsibilities and roles of the members, the overall strategies for the involvement of the whole community in the education of youngsters, how to proceed for the entrance of new/additional members, how should the coordination structure be, among other subjects you may want to consider;
- Promote a first meeting among a restricted group of local key stakeholders (as referred in the previous section) for presenting the idea and the proposal. The discussion should lead you to deeper structuring of the initial proposal for the network to create, generating consensus on all the items discussed;
- Update the initial proposal, according the results of the first meeting and share it with the group for further validation. Include in the updated proposal: a list of potential entities that may be invited to join the network; a simple participatory assessment exercise regarding the local educational ecosystem (what are the main problems, the needs, but as well the opportunities and strengths), and ask for additional contributions from the group;
- Once all the info above is gathered and a new update on the proposal produced, promote a second meeting with the group for the discussion and agreement on the contents of the proposal document. The meeting should result in the definition of a final proposal for the network, compiling all the necessary topics and data;
- Based on the final proposal, start preparing the contents of a Cooperation Agreement. The formal document to be subscribed by the future members of the local network. The agreement is produced in according to the decisions of the previous meetings and group works, redacted and shared with group for revision and validation (consider as well juridical and legal validation). A final text should be achieved, and a formal document produced for future signature;
- Now, it is time to spread the word and involve a more complete set of local institutions in the network. This should be done according your normal practices and context. In the case of *SparkSEEDs*, it was made through direct and structured meetings, one-on-one, with the potential members (discussing all the details of network, and sharing the agreement), resulting successfully in 100% of the cases!

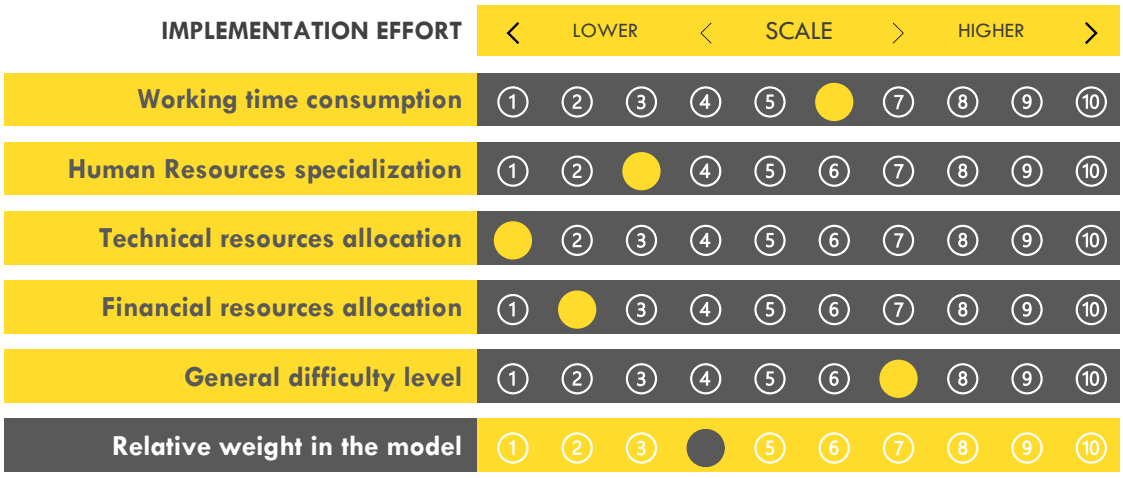
# Critical points

What are the main critical points that you should have in mind for guaranteeing as much as possible the success of the implementation of this component?

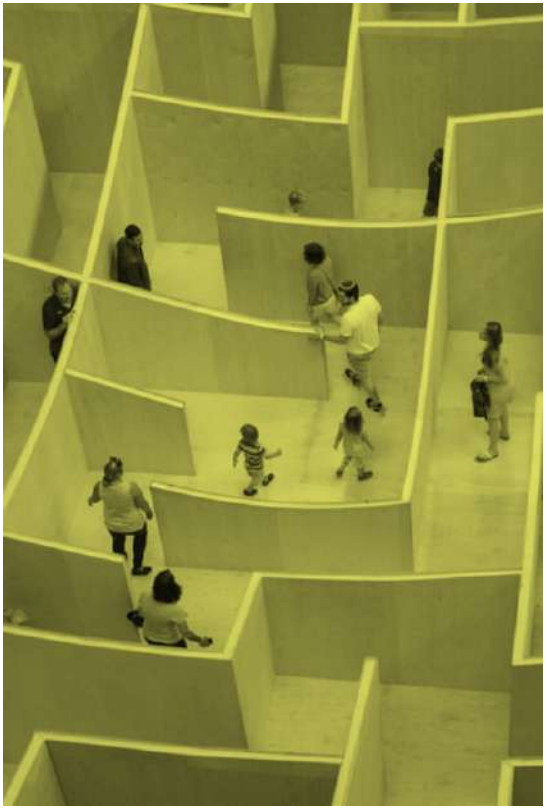
- Maintain an independent leadership all over the process. The network to create should start, when feasible, from an independent approach (independent from any parties, political or institutional ideologies, hidden agendas, or other influences). The network should be solely focused on the common goals of the members towards a best education local model;
- Formalizing the agreement! Considering the strategic, institutional and eventual political frame on which the network is found, and naturally its importance for the educational ecosystem being reinforced, we advise you to organise a public session for the official signature of the agreement by the members. The public session for the signature of the agreement (constituting officially the SparkCOMMUNITY);
- Don't forget to issue press releases (if feasible, consider as well inviting media and press for a press conference) and to prepare conveniently the promotion of the network and of the public session. It is all about "involvement" and the word must be spread as widely as possible inside and outside your community;
- The network will be the "entity" responsible for developing, validating and supporting all upcoming activities (the other components of the model). It is then the base where members of the network will develop further works, will share and exchange resources, and will provide educational opportunities for youth, articulated with school.
- It would be great to build a webpage for the network, giving visibility and promoting the sharing and cooperation (see our: www.sparkseed.pt)

# Implementation effort

The efforts necessary to undertake this component of the SparkSEED model can be described according the following scheme. Please note that the efforts are here considered in a comparative scale (1 lower effort; 10 higher effort) among all the components of the model.



# The SparkLABs



## The SparkLABs

# Objective & expected impact

The main goal of the SparkLABs is to create different "spaces" and moments, entirely open and participatory, gathering a pool of relevant stakeholders, sectors and education layers active in a specific community context (local stakeholders – as identified in the target group section, youth workers, and youth). These "spaces" and "moments" envisage the analysis, identification, brainstorming, exchange, discussion and design of models, tools and practices for a more proficient education of youngsters. Ideally, the SparkLABs are initiated and developed in the frame of the learning community developed through the previous component of the model (SparkCOMMUNITY) and thus supported by the local network constituted.

Each lab constitutes a kind of *think-tank* and is the mechanism used by the SparkCommunity to generate one of its main working outputs, which would be later applied to compose the programme of activities to be implemented for the youth. The Labs can be understood as the tools for the development of a long-term non-formal learning/teaching programme for youth (in the mentioned thematic, dedicated to the development of key competencies in young people), respective tools, and in the development of adequate youth worker skills, which, altogether, are applied in the practical context of the local community.

The SparkLABs may follow many different thematic approaches (in fact, as many as you want), but always dedicated to the skills that you want to develop or improve in your youngsters. Following the major recommendations extracted from the European Commission, World Economic Forum and United Nations reports, as mentioned in project Rationale section, the pilot practice was framed in 4 thematic labs:

- Arts & Culture
- Nature & Sports
- Science & Technology
- Citizenship & Entrepreneurship

Although the operation of this component of the model may depend greatly on the previous one (the network), it gives it coherence and content. We shouldn't forget that to achieve the major goal of the model (building a "Community Based Educational Ecosystem" with the aim to support school activities and as well the regular offer of extra-school high quality and enriching youth activities), is not enough just to have a good network sharing resources. What to do with those resources is then the moto of the SparkLABs (defining the type of activities to offer, its pedagogy, methodology and approach, for the success of the model).

## Transferability

This component of the model presents high potential for transferability and replication in other learning communities or school contexts, which are interested or dedicated to the development of key competencies in young people.

Besides innovative in the regional and national spheres, the SparkLABs are fundamental tools for innovation, as they strongly contribute to the participative design and implementation of an annual pilot programme of teaching/learning activities for youth. They contribute as well for the participatory design of the capacity building programme that needs to be implemented so the necessary qualification of the youth workers (that will be implementing the activities) can be increased.

The component is originally designed as making integer part of the whole SparkSEED model. It can, nevertheless, be adapted or replicated individually. The transferability effort would be in this case comparatively higher once you need first to create and involve a specific pool of participants for each (as diverse and participated as possible), pool that in our case was already guaranteed by the local network constituted.

## Target groups

But who should be involved in the development of the SparkLABs?
As an entirely participatory practice, the SparkLABs should join as many layers of participation as possible. Although, each lab should not have a group larger than 15 people, otherwise you risk dispersion, lose focus and reducing the overall performance of the meeting.

The selection of the participants will depend on the nature of the educational ecosystem that gives setting to your intentions, but mostly it will depend on the thematic of your lab. For each lab you should try to involve those persons and entities (preferably from the network) that can introduce important expertise in relation with the chosen thematic. For instance, if the thematic is Arts & Culture, you should invite artists, cultural groups or associations, handcrafters, among other relevant agents.

In addition, independently of the thematic, a stable group of entities should always be invited to participate: Municipalities; schools; NGO's (preferably skilled in participatory processes, education and youth fields); civil society representatives; parents association; relevant local companies; trainers and teachers (pedagogy), youth workers and youth representatives (pupils from the school and from the community).

**SparkLABs are the participatory tools for innovation in the design of activities for youth**

**SparkLABs require time, but mostly relevant skills for groups facilitation, dynamics and participatory approaches.**

# Methodology

The implementation of the SparkLABs require some time for preparation, but mostly relevant skills regarding group facilitation, dynamics and participatory approaches. The richness of the labs depends as well on the diversity of the participating entities and expertise. In the particular case of the practice developed in the frame of the *SparkSEEDs* project, these, bellow, where the main steps followed:

- Start by drafting an initial proposal of agenda for each of the labs you want to develop, configuring its basics such as: objectives, thematic, background, profile of the participants, expected results, agenda and schedule for the session (sessions not longer than 2,5h), among other points you may want to consider. For each lab, you should delegate a coordination role in one of the entities in the network, which should have relevant thematic expertise;
- Each SparkLAB (one per thematic area) can have as many sessions as needed to achieve all the proposed goals. The number and frequency of the sessions is decided in the first session by the respective pool of participants. The sessions can be both online or face-to-face;
- Although you can sum-up others, the practice seeks to achieve important outputs for the whole SparkSEED model to run:
  - **A.** An assessment regarding the profile of the youth workers in the community, but as well regarding the critical skills needed to be increased for a more proficient and qualified youth work;
  - **B.** Tailoring a capacity building programme for local youth workers according the needs assessed (as result from the previous procedure), which will feed the implementation of the consequent component of the model (SparkYWorkers). The capacity building programme include 2 different measures: *B.1)* 2 training actions (short-term training events for youth workers), one on non-formal education and youth work (concepts, practices, methods and tools), other in the specific thematic covered by each of the SparkLABs; *B.2)* A Job Shadowing programme permitting the temporary immersion of selected candidates (local youth workers) in real professional and relevant experiences abroad (in peer entities working in the envisaged fields of action).
  - **C.** A comprehensive plan of activities (guidelines, tools & contents) for youth, which will feed the development and implementation of another consequent component of the model (SparkCLUBs);
- In practical terms, SparkLABs is the privileged instrument used by the local network (SparkCommunity) to develop contents and actions towards the particular development and achievement of the goals set for the learning community.

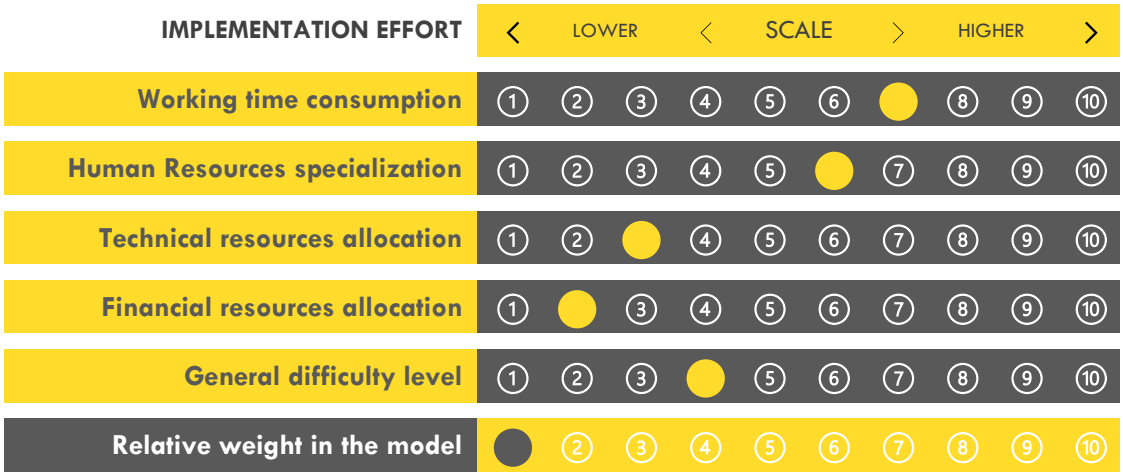
## Critical points

What are the main critical points that you should have in mind for guaranteeing as much as possible the success of the implementation of this component?

- The local network should be the trigger for initiating the development of the labs. The network, as the "entity" responsible for developing, validating and supporting all upcoming activities (other components of the model), must feel that the work is being done and that the results keep coming as planned. Again, try to maintain an independent leadership all over the process.
- The facilitation and guidance of the SparkLABs is really a critical point. Make sure to use the best working methodology for each session and guarantee that the time of participants is well invested. Avoiding conventional type of meetings is mandatory!
- Be realistic with the timings. Probably you'll need to implement several SparkLABs sessions and many of the participants will be the same in each. Try to articulate agendas in a flexible way avoiding too many sessions in a short period (unless all agree so);
- The assessment (as in *Methodology* section, A.) should be as extensive and rigorous as possible, making sure that the different actions to be developed are really in line with needs detected. We advise you to apply complementary methods and tools to do so: interviews, focus group technics; application of online surveys, all applied to the most relevant stakeholders and groups;
- Regarding the capacity building programme (as in *Methodology* section, B.), and namely as far as it concerns with the "trainings" (B.1 & B.2), we advise you to include mobility (including transnational). Promoting training actions in a different geographic context, increases not only the motivation of participants, but mostly the exchange of experience and the identification of best practices in an intercultural and multidimensional setting.

## Implementation effort

The efforts necessary to undertake this component of the SparkSEED model can be described according the following scheme. Please note that the efforts are here considered in a comparative scale (1 lower effort; 10 higher effort) among all the components of the model.



# The SparkYWorkers

## The SparkYWorkers

# Objective & expected impact

The main objective of this model component, the SparkYWorkers, is the creation and development of a comprehensive capacity building programme.

The programme aims to recycle, increase and developed the skills of Youth Workers (trainers, teachers, facilitators, volunteers and NEETs) from the community and from its organisations (schools, municipality, youth organisations, cultural organisations, civil society organisations, other). To this extent, it is expected youth workers to gain qualification and capacity to develop and assist regular & consistent non-formal learnings and activities for youth.

It aims also to support and recover and transfer the set of societal fundamental values to young people, thus preventing the main phenomena actually affecting young people (school absence and unsuccess, bullying and any kind of violence, non-healthy behaviours, lack of participation and initiative, among many other).

The implementation of SparkYWorkers programme, should follow the previous assessment (of the needed skills and youth workers profile), includes two main type of actions:

- **Training Actions**, preferably transnational, provided by members of the network or by external expertise (if needed), focusing on informal and non-formal education and youth work (concepts, practices, methods and tools), and on the particular thematic of the previous SparkLABs;
- **Job Shadowing Actions**, preferably provided abroad (transnational if possible), in real professional working contexts, where participants (candidate youth workers) can immerge, collaborate, learn and get further experience by staging in peer organisations dealing with the same kind of activities and youth work;

Besides being based on the concrete needs assessed in the territory (under SparkLABs), and once it combines different models of “training” (comprehensive training programme and adequate job shadowing actions), it should purposefully promote the adjustment of youth workers skills and knowledge towards young people needs and interests.

Due to the high youth unemployment rates, general lack of initiative from young people, and mismatch between school curriculums and future labour market trends, youth work in the community should then become a strategic tool for supporting young people genius, ingenuity and creativity, help them later to find jobs or even better to create jobs themselves.

## Transferability

By its programmatic nature, and once it is based on open educational resources, the SparkYWorkers Programme show a very high potential for transferability and replication in other communities or educational ecosystem contexts, alone or together with the replication of the whole SparkSEED model.

Exactly as presented, the SparkYWorkers programme depends on the results achieved by the SparkLABs, which on its turn depends on setting the SparkCommunity. Nevertheless, with relatively more effort, it can be implemented alone, with no need for implementing the previous components. Independently of the above, as long as you want to promote the development of adequate youth worker skills in your learning community, you can always trust in the SparkYWorkers as a very good and innovative practice to achieve your goals.

One of the best practices, which we advise you to replicate, is the Job shadowing. It consisted in a set of interesting opportunities to observe ("shadow") someone in their job and can be seen as an extension of the trainings. Typically, job-shadowers follow an employee taking part in their day-to-day work. They might be asked to join some activities and do some tasks, giving the opportunity to see the peer organisation from the inside - get to know the work ethics, methods, including conflict resolutions, local political and regulatory decisions, among other practical learnings.

## Target groups

But who should be involved in the development of the SparkYWorkers? The capacity building programme should join two levels of participants: the trainees (youth workers) and the trainers and experts implementing the actions (from the local network). The trainee groups should not be larger than 15 people. The number of participants in a job-shadowing action can vary though (depending on the hosting organisation capacity and will) being advised not more than 3 at the same time.

The selection of the participants (trainees) will depend on the needs assessed in your community, but mostly on the profile and availability of the potential trainees. The trainees chosen should participate in the complete capacity building programme (trainings and job-shadowing).

In addition, a stable group of entities should always be involved in the implementation of the practice: municipalities; schools; NGO's (preferably skilled in training, education and youth fields); trainers and teachers (pedagogy); civil society representatives; parents association; and, of course, all the interested youth workers.

**Job shadowing is a very good practice for observing and learning in a peer professional context**

**SparkYWorkers performance depends on the mobilisation of people and expertise**

# Methodology

The implementation of the SparkYWorkers programme requires a good amount of time for preparation, and the allocation of relevant skills regarding hosting events and training for youth workers. The best performance of this component depends thus on the mobilisation of people and expertise resources. In the particular case of the practice developed in the frame of the *SparkSEEDs* project, these, bellow, where the main steps followed:

- Start by recalling the work done under the SparkLABs, where supposedly the whole capacity building programme was drafted according to the needs. With this work in hands, promote a meeting among the relevant network members, and start making decisions;
- The meeting should address the preparation of the Programme, by defining the following: distribution of roles and responsibilities; identifying and selecting the hosting organisations (for training and for job-shadowing); scheduling the implementation of the programme; promotion the activity; identifying, selecting and mobilizing participants/candidates;
- The Capacity Building Programme for youth workers, is implemented through two different but complementary types of activities:
  - **A.** 2 training actions (5 days each): one, first, on youth work and non-formal education (concepts, practices, methods and tools), other, second, in the specific thematic covered by each of the SparkLABs you have considered. Trainings are coordinated by the local network (by members with relevant expertise) but supported by the training hosting entities (specialized training providers);
  - **B.** Job Shadowing actions (minimum two-week duration, each action, for 1 to 3 people at the same time) allowing the immersion of the selected candidates in real professional and relevant experiences abroad. The actions should be co-coordinated by the local network and the hosting organisation. Make sure to promote the best matching between the youth worker profile and expected learnings, and the hosting entity work plan. Logistical, subsistence & mobility arrangements should be ensured by the local network.
- In the meanwhile, with the support of the expertise available in the network, make sure you take-care of the details you want to add to the capacity building programme. Remember, details can make all the difference in terms of the satisfaction of the participants, but as well in terms of the overall results of the trainings and job-shadowing actions. Give special attention on the training contents and materials to be provided by the training entity. If you can, besides continuous assistance to the trainees, introduce some web support or eLearning tools, that can help learners in their learnings.

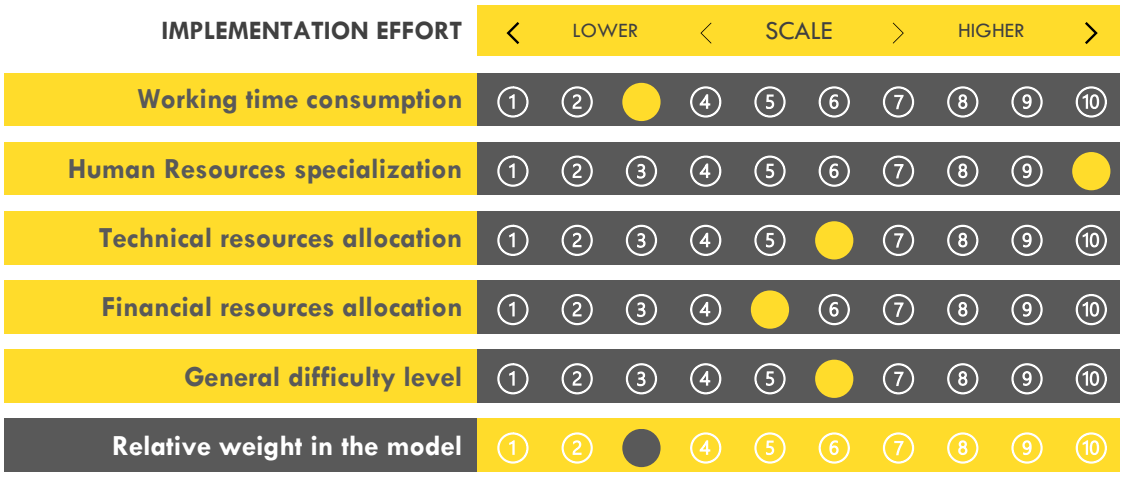
## Critical points

What are the main critical points that you should have in mind for guaranteeing as much as possible the success of the implementation of this component?

- Exactly as presented, the SparkYWorkers programme depends on the results achieved by the SparkLABs, which on its turn depends on setting a SparkCommunity. These sequent stages are fundamental to ensure coherence between: the needs assessed in the community (at youth workers, educational ecosystem, and youth levels); and the content and quality of the trainings and job-shadowing actions to be promoted. Remember, the idea is to purposefully adjust the "youth working" capacity and ability to tackle the main youth related challenges in a specific community;
- The local network, namely the expertise members appointed to be responsible for the activity, should be the trigger for initiating the programme. The network, as the "entity" responsible for developing and supporting all upcoming activities (all components of the model), must feel that the work is being done and that the results being achieved;
- Discuss and get consensus on the schedule of the trainings between all parts involved (group coordination, trainees and training providers). Trainings can occur separately in time, but the pace should depend on the network plans and on its urgency. Job-shadowing may be managed with additional timing flexibility. The match between the candidate availability and the hosting organisation availability to receive the candidate;
- Again, we advise you to include mobility (including transnational). Promoting training actions in a different geographic context, increases not only the motivation of participants, but mostly the exchange of experience and the identification of best practices in an intercultural and multidimensional setting.

## Implementation effort

The efforts necessary to undertake this component of the SparkSEED model can be described according the following scheme. Please note that the efforts are here considered in a comparative scale (1 lower effort; 10 higher effort) among all the components of the model.



# The SparkCLUBs

# The SparkCLUBs

## Objective & expected impact

We got to the last, but not less important, component of the SparkSEED model: The SparkCLUBs. It aims to recreate different thematic “clubs”, entirely participatory, envisaging articulated, tailor made and more proficient non-formal education activities to support and enrich the current education model in the community. SparkCLUBs constitute then the practical activities addressed to youth in the frame of the model, providing (on a frequent bases) regular school and extra-school, and free time activities for the integrated education and learnings of youth.

Altogether, the SparkCLUBs (respective tools, methods and pedagogical contents, which are previously developed under the SparkLABs), are applied in practical context in the community, resulting on a long-term non-formal learning programme for youth (in the chosen thematic), dedicated to the development of key competencies in young people). To this extent, SparkCLUBs constitute the main “service” provided for the end beneficiaries – youth – and the most impactful result in terms of the gains expected to achieve in youth learnings and their further dynamics.

The SparkCLUBs may follow many different thematic approaches (in fact, as many as you want, as in the precedent SparkLABs), but always dedicated to the skills that you want to develop or improve in your youngsters. Following the major recommendations extracted from the European Commission, World Economic Forum and United Nations reports, the pilot practice was framed in 4 thematic clubs: Arts & Culture; Nature & Sports; Science & Technology; Citizenship & Entrepreneurship.

The tools, methods and contents produced and applied in the frame of the SparkCLUBs can be compiled and restructured for the settlement of comprehensive free time “camps” (programme of activities for occupation of free time during school vacation periods), sponsoring an additional important result as well: safe and quality alternative or solution for families and educators for the "positive" occupation of the free time of their youngsters, even beyond school time (vacation periods). These “camps” (SparkCAMPs), running for the necessary duration, should provide a continuous programme of activities for youth, occupying their leisure times when no other alternatives are available in the territory.

SparkCLUBS are implemented in the settings of the local network, supported by the contents and guidelines developed in the SparkLABs, but, very important, being assisted and served integrally by the youth workers that were empowered by the SparkYWorkers capacity building programme, closing thus the cycle envisaged by the present model.

## Transferability

This component of the model shows a good potential for transferability and replication in other learning communities that may be interested or dedicated to the development of key competencies in young people, alone or together with the replication of the whole model.

The component is originally designed as making integer part of the whole SparkSEED model. It can, nevertheless, be adapted or replicated individually. The transferability effort would be in this case comparatively higher once you need first to recreate all the previous baseline conditions for the clubs to run (skilled youth workers; activity contents, tools and methods; and many supporting resources – as the ones a local network could share, like spaces, equipment, materials, staff, etc.).

Besides innovative in the regional and national spheres, the SparkLABs are themselves triggers for innovation, as they strongly contribute to stimulate initiative and creativity, and thus sparking the genius and ingenuity in youngsters.

There are many forms, though, of creating and maintaining youth clubs for the same goals. For instance, differently from the SparkCLUBs, you can only have one single club created, with no particular thematic, but then its programme of activities can include flexibly various areas or thematic approaches. To know more about youth clubs, we advise you to take a look on the other SparkSEEDs output, the *SparkYWorkers guide*.

## Target groups

But who should be involved in the development of the SparkCLUBs? The practice should join three levels of participants: the youth itself, the youth workers and, directly or not, the whole organisations making part of the local network. These last are critical once the clubs need to rely in a great set of resources to run properly (spaces, equipment, materials, staff, safety and insurance measures, among other).

The selection of the participants (youth), if needed, should prioritize the groups facing more disadvantage or having less opportunities for personal or school development or simply for occupation of the free times. Nevertheless, we advise you to create all-inclusive kind of clubs, which may respond completely to the local demand (leaving no one's out).

In addition, all interested youth workers from the community should be involved (preferably the ones that have participated in the capacity building programme). In function of the activity / thematic of the club, and whereas relevant or needed, these youth workers should be supported by the members of the local network (with relevant resources).

**SparkCLUBs motivate initiative and creativity, thus sparking the genius and ingenuity in youngsters**

**SparkCLUBs require time and a significant amount of resources, but no investment is better than the one made on youth**

# Methodology

The implementation of the SparkCLUBs require more time and resources than the previous components of the model. Even though, we would say that the most relevant requirements are a good articulation of efforts among network members and ingenuity to turn the shared resources into a valid and fruitful programme of activities for youth. In the particular case of the practice developed in the frame of the *SparkSEEDs* project, these, bellow, where the main steps followed:

- Start preparing your club or clubs. At this stage you should have already available the main resources needed: you have a group of prepared youth workers (you did it under the SprakYWorkers); you have the main contents you can address in the development of the clubs (you did it under the SprakLABs). Now you just need to gather the youth groups that that will participate in the clubs, and to find some fundamental resources (at least a space to install the clubs);
- Involving youth: Probably you don't have to make big efforts to get this group participating actively, as they've been already introduced to the practice in previous stages. Nevertheless, make sure to communicate properly the clubs. Use the local network to spread the news (by principle all youngsters in the community are reached by the set on entities involved, and surely by the school and parents' association). Besides direct contact (for instance by teachers & parents), you can also use posters, flyers, and social networks;
- Spaces and tools for running the clubs: The ideal facilities should guarantee minimum conditions for the clubs to run: a comfortable setting for the participants, its safety, spatial flexibility (allowing to adapt the space to the operational needs and dynamics of a specific club), good accessibility, communications and Wi-Fi infrastructures, electricity, water, WC, climatization, furniture (tables, chairs, shelfs) and equipment (computers, printers, screens, camera, among any other relevant equipment). We advise choosing a space that permits continuity of the clubs, preferably out of the school facilities (a place youth feels not connected with scholar obligations would be better);
- Now it is time to put all together. The local network delegate in the youth workers the responsibility for running and managing the clubs (individually or in small groups), which should draft a proposal for the clubs configuring its basics such as: schedule, thematic, plan of activities, participation rules and "contract", among other points you may want to consider. Each SparkCLUB should be open and running in a frequent basis, being this decided according the needs and possibilities of the youth, and according the resources available;
- For more details on running and managing a youth club, please take a read on the *SparkYWorkers Guide* provided by SparkSEEDs project.

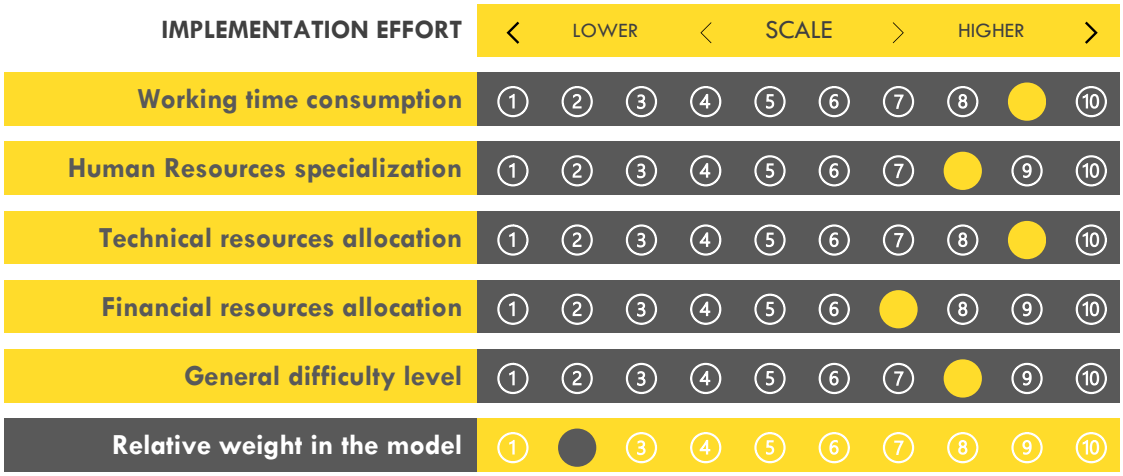
## Critical points

What are the main critical points that you should have in mind for guaranteeing as much as possible the success of the implementation of this component?

- The local network should be the trigger for initiating the clubs. But not only the trigger. Network members must have clear the need for allocating important resources, from which depend the quality and even the possibility of having the clubs running or not;
- The facilitation and guidance of the SparkCLUBs are critical points. The youth workers should be capable of adapting the working methodology according the pace, rhythm and interests of the clients (youth). Avoid conventions! Remember, open participation, informal and non-formal practices are the key for the satisfaction of all parts;
- Youth should be involved at all times in a voluntary way. It's their will and energy to participate that will make the difference on the clubs best success;
- Level the expectations and start simple. Clubs are a bit more complex "service" than any other in the model. Even with limited resources, it is better to have something than to have nothing. Be ingenious with the resources made available, which may not be the best or ideal, but surely, they're more than enough to start making the difference;
- Keep an evaluation habit within the clubs. Don't worry about failing in your initial club structures or functioning characteristics. Make sure to turn every less good experiment into new learnings, so the clubs turn progressively better and more fulfilling for youth, for youth workers and for the community;
- Although the operation of this component of the model depends greatly on the previous ones (the local network, the empowered youth workers and the activity contents), it gives to the whole model a vision and a mission. Always keep this vision and mission in mind, so the focus on youth is maintained and all pieces are articulated and fluid.

## Implementation effort

The efforts necessary to undertake this component of the SparkSEED model can be described according the following scheme. Please note that the efforts are here considered in a comparative scale (1 lower effort; 10 higher effort) among all the components of the model.



# Sustainability of the model

A review on the elements that support the transference, adoption and sustainability of the SparkSEEDs model

CHAPTER III

## Quality and credibility

The most successful educational institutions are those that can implement and sustain effective improvement initiatives leading to the constant update of the practices and models that support not only stable learning communities, but as well the educational ecosystems behind those learning communities.

With the aim to promote and support the regular offer of school and extra-school high quality and enriching activities, dedicated to and participated by youth, the learning community outlined by the SparkSEED model implies from its promoters some attention around the main pillars that support the practices.

There are two key elements, which will help users and replicators to demonstrate the results and expected impacts of applying the model. The first is identifying the benefits and the second is being able to effectively communicate the evidence.

By using the SparkSEED model users will experience benefits such as:

- Young people develop creativity and fundamental soft skills;
- Increase interest and motivation for learning by changing the education model to one less formal (non-formal, informal);
- Increase youth initiative and participation on community issues (combating ignorance or devaluation of their own surroundings);
- Reduced rate of early school leaving, increasing attainment;
- Increase free time occupation opportunities;
- Institutions get recognised as example of good practice;
- Improved skills for youth workers and educational staff;
- Improved cooperation (youth focused) among local actors;
- Renew education methods and contents;
- Contribution to improved education policy.

Evidence of the benefits above and beyond those gained through the implementation of the model will give people reason to support, accept and participate in the change. But how do we get evidence?

- Choose a good set of indicators of achievement before the model implementation and illustrate the differences between the educational ecosystem situation before and after using the model;
- Identify the benefits for youth workers, youth, organisations and the community itself, as a whole;
- Ask for testimonials from all the parts and make sure to apply participatory approaches in every step;
- Communicate those benefits in a way that meets the needs of these different audiences.

**successful educational institutions are those that can implement and sustain effective improvement initiatives**

## Indicators of achievement

The indicators of achievement in relation to the implementation of the SparkSEED model will surely vary from organisation to organisation, from community to community. These indicators will depend on whether the model is implemented as a whole or just partially, if it is implemented as a partnership project or simply by the sole initiative of one stakeholder, on the resources available, on the policy of an organisation and even on the specific regional/national education policies, among many other variables. As a starting point, we recommend that SparkSEED model users focus on at least one of the following indicators:

- Number of youth workers involved in the practices;
- Number of youngsters and pupils involved in activities;
- Volume of pedagogical content created and applied;
- Level of skills that youth workers and youth develop;
- Rate of early school leaving and or scholar success;
- Number of events organised and number of stakeholders involved;
- Number of youth workers and educators applying the new skills, knowledge, practices and tools in their educational context;
- Number of entities subscribing and participating actively in the local network created (SparkCommunity);
- Number of SparkCLUBs created and its running frequency;
- And many other you may want to achieve as making part of your success story.

**In the absence of feedback, serious flaws or 'slipping back' may go unnoticed, which are likely to make the model unsustainable.**

## Monitoring progress

When the user has completed their pilot testing of the model and begins full-scale implementation, a baseline will have been established that will allow to determine whether the desired level of improvement has occurred.

The indicators that were set at the beginning are very important for measuring progress and checking that achievements were made. There is a resonance in the saying 'we manage what we measure'. More than just maintaining position, measurement and communication help the implementation team to look toward ongoing improvement of the model beyond the point when it is implemented. Thus, organisations using the model are always ready to make changes to it so that it fits their needs.

But why is measuring progress important? Measuring keeps us informed about success and identifies further areas for improvement. That means that the SparkSEED model can be continuously improved and adapted to meet the ongoing changes in the organisations. In the absence of feedback, serious flaws or 'slipping back' may go unnoticed, which are likely to make the model unsustainable.

## Adaptability

Adaptability can be very important in determining whether a new or improved process will be sustained over time. Although entirely supported by a transnational partnership (Portugal, Italy and Poland), we have tested the SparkSEED model in one pilot European school community context (Cuba, Alentejo, Portugal) and have identified three situations where this adaptability can be very important:

- During the design stage, when you take the SparkSEED model exactly as it was developed and make it fit within your operational context. This is where adaptability is decisive, being the main reason why this guide was produced, explaining the concepts in the base of the model and giving guidance on its implementation;
- During the period when your educational ecosystem changes (e.g. changes in people, structure, policies, practices) and the relevance of the SparkSEED model is being questioned. This is when the quality and credibility of evidence becomes crucial. If you use adequate indicators of achievement to obtain concrete evidence of the benefits of using the model, then whatever the change in staff, leadership or organisation structure, the use of the model will be supported and encouraged. As shown, the SparkSEED model is quite flexible and requires easy achievable resources, which makes it relatively easy to adapt to change;
- Over time, as the SparkSEED model itself becomes a candidate for further improvement. The model that is proposed in the present guide was developed with the idea of offering a simple and flexible model that can be continuously adapted and improved to meet the needs of its users. As said before, the flexibility and the use of easily achievable resources make this model a highly sustainable one.

**flexibility and the use of easily achievable resources make of SparkSEED model a highly sustainable one**

## Exploitation

Sustainability and Exploitation are closely related, as sustainability is ensured by sustaining the exploitation. Exploitation means "making use of and deriving benefit from a result." This means that sustainability is only guaranteed if the uses of and benefits from the project continue beyond project's completion.

And this is the major aim of the present guide, which was pursued, from the beginning, by all model promoters, which were fully engaged in the pilot experience. For all of them, the model constitutes an innovative approach designed to mitigate common problems and needs. Surely it does not fit perfectly on your context, but it should be continuously adapted, dynamically, in respect for the societal changes, but mostly in respect for the challenging sectors that are youth and education.

# Comparing model components

In this section we´ll help you compare the different components of the model by applying a simple and relative classification regarding some relevant resource allocation dimensions of its implementation. A comparative scale is applied, from lesser (●) to bigger (◯), as follows:

| Analytical dimension | Model Components: Spark Community | Spark LABs | Spark YWorkers | Spark CLUBs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WORKING TIME CONSUMPTION** Time needed to prepare and implement the practice | ● | ● | ● | ◯ |
| **HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIZATION** The level of specialization the key HR must have to prepare and implement the practice | ● | ● | ◯ | ● |
| **TECHNICAL RESOURCES ALLOCATION** The level of technical resources (equipment, materials) to prepare & implement the practice | ● | ● | ● | ◯ |
| **FINANCIAL RESOURCES ALLOCATION** The level of financial resources (comparative cost) to prepare & implement the practice | ● | ● | ● | ◯ |
| **GENERAL DIFFICULTY LEVEL** The overall level of difficulty (complexity) to prepare and implement the practice | ● | ● | ● | ◯ |
| **RELATIVE WEIGHT IN THE MODEL** The weight and relative importance of the practice in the performance of the whole model | ◯ | ● | ● | ● |
| **TRANSFERABILITY** The easiness of the transference and replication of the practice to other contexts | ● | ◯ | ◯ | ● |

Image: SparkClubs in action (SparkCAMP) July 2019, Cuba, Portugal

# Conclusions & Recommendations

The SparkSEED model guide proposes a simple and effective framework that allows institutions and any other interested part to build and maintain a community based non-formal educational ecosystem with the aim to promote and support the regular offer of extra-school high quality and enriching activities, dedicated to and participated by youth.

Powered by a network of public and private entities and civil society representatives, a concrete "learning community" may be established, competent for embracing a proposal for social transformation, and qualified for supporting the acquisition by the youth of critical skills linked to the school. The practice aims to go beyond the school limits and to involve the entire community in the formation of their individuals. To this extent, is highly recommended the implementation of the model, passing at least through the constitution of this local network. It is under the "umbrella" of the local network that the additional set of results (main components of the model), subsidiary and complementary, may be reached:

- The SparkCOMMUNITY
- The SparkLABs
- The SparkYWorkers
- The SparkCLUBs

The model is sustainable and adaptable to different contexts and needs. It relies on the sharing and exchange of easily achievable educational resources and on the willingness of organisations and people involved to benefit from it.

The guide offers the alternative between implementing the whole model or just parts. Therefore, users are free to choose those elements that better match their needs and available resources, but as well to use widely and freely any of the resources being shared.

This guide does not necessarily exhaust all the learnings and details that may be important for its plain use. We would be glad to support you with additional information on the process, so don't hesitate getting in touch.

Good luck!

Intellectual Output (IO5 – SparkSEED) [December 2020]
**IO Coordination**: *Europole – Polo Europeo della Conoscenza (Italy)*
**Edition**: *Make it Better – Association for Innovation & Social Economy (Portugal)*
**More info**: *www.sparkseeds.eu & www.sparkseeds.pt*
**Contact**: *educacao@makeitbetter.pt*

# SparkSEEDs