



# National Report Austria

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## 1. Introduction

The present study tries to assess the significance of digital media within youth work in Austria.

The online survey which was directed to a target group consisting of youth workers was conducted throughout Austria. Case studies and focus groups were limited to Vienna. This was a purely pragmatic decision and shall not narrow the existence of a lively and diverse media-pedagogical practice in other federal states in any case.

During the course of the study, “digital gap” and “education potentials of youth work” became the two focal points which kept coming up again and again during interviews. Both concepts can be demonstrated very concisely by means of hotspot-districts within a larger city.

With regards to case studies, we attached particular importance on a good diversity of methods and media. Moreover, it was one of our main concerns to point out that incorporating media-related topics into everyday youth work is just as essential as coming up with innovative projects.

The focus group talks with young workers were conducted in institutions where media work is already significantly established. Our focus was not placed on obstacles, because we believe they were already discussed quite extensively in the online survey. Instead, we wanted to let colleagues have their say, who can tell us from their own experience what benefits engaging with media can bring for youth work, but especially for our target group.

## 2. Youth work in Austria

The *Federal Ministry of Family and Youth (BMJF)* defines the term “extra-curricular child and youth work” in accordance with the definitions by Werner Thole and Thomas Rauschenbach as leisure-time activities, however it is also directed to informal and non-formal learning processes of adolescents during after-school hours.<sup>1</sup>

In Austria, extra-curricular child and youth work on municipal, state and federal levels is subjected to different political and legal framework conditions. On federal level, youth agendas are inter-departmental cross-sectoral issues. General issues and their coordination lie with the *Federal Ministry for Family and Youth (BMFJ)*<sup>2</sup>. Designing extra-curricular child and youth work on federal state level is under the responsibility of members of the provincial government and their administrative advisors on youth. On a municipal level, municipalities as immediate living environment of children and young adults play an important role in shaping child and youth work and in creating infrastructures.

To the *BMFJ*, media competencies are an important field of action. By creating *Medien-Jugend-Info* (media-youth-info), a service facility was provided in order to impart and foster

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/jugendarbeit/einfuehrung-kinder-jugendarbeit.html> “Extra-curricular child and youth work in Austria. An overview.” See page 4 (in German: „Außerschulische Kinder- und Jugendarbeit in Österreich. Ein Überblick.“)

<sup>2</sup><http://www.bmfj.gv.at>

a great bandwidth of media competencies to young adults and parents through offering information, workshops etc. Another crucial building block is the *Federal Office for the Positive Assessment of Computer and Console Games (BuPP)*<sup>3</sup> which is managing information regarding digital games and compiling a recommendation list of especially valuable games in order to offer pedagogues and parents an orientation guide for purchasing games.

In answer to the EU council's resolution regarding a youth-political cooperation in Europe from 2010-2018, Austria began developing a national youth strategy in 2012 in order to generate more visibility for all activities for young adults throughout all political fields and fields of action as well as turning extra-curricular youth work into one pillar of youth politics. The *Austrian youth strategy* is an ongoing process for strengthening and developing youth policies through active engagement with young adults (youth surveys and workshops) in order to identify issues and fields of action: *employment and learning, participation and initiative*, as well as *quality of life and spirit of cooperation* were selected as the main topics. In the online survey of 2012, young people were asked about issues and topics in which they would wish for a stronger voice – 20% of young adults questioned stated the issue of “media”. In line with the youth strategy, a pool of measures for improving media-related competencies was compiled, especially containing projects for internet use in order to support access to the labour market.<sup>4</sup>

### *Three pillars of youth work in Austria*

- **Open youth work:** combines social work, educational work, cultural work and health promotion within its offers and represents an important place for socialisation for young people in Austria in youth centres, youth cafés as well as throughout public space (mobile youth work). *The Federal Network for Open Youth Work (bOJA)*<sup>5</sup> acts as centre of excellence for open youth work in Austria, and serves as networking and service facility for around 400 carrier institutions of open child and youth work.
- **Youth information:** In total, there are 27 youth information facilities throughout Austria offering drop-in services for young people and providing counselling with regards to life issues. Counselling offers and main focus points vary across different regions. *The Federal Network for Austrian Youth Information*<sup>6</sup> acts as networking basis on national as well as on international levels.
- **Youth work associations:** There are more than 50 organisations for confessional, cultural, ecological and party-political youth work as well as youth sports' associations etc., that are consolidated within the *Federal Youth Agency (Bundesjugendvertretung; BJV)*<sup>7</sup>. Organisations of associated youth work reach out to around 1.5 million young people under the age of 30. Additionally, the *BJV* is the legitimate special interest group for all children and adolescents in Austria. In 2015, the *BJV* adopted the positioning paper “Youth and the Internet”<sup>8</sup> combining web-political concerns and demands. Along with participation, exclusion, data protection etc., media competencies is one topic of interest of this catalogue

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<sup>3</sup><http://bupp.at>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.bmfj.gv.at/ministerium/jugendstrategie/dokumentation-jugendstrategie/publikationen.html> (see “Youth Strategy Goals. Success. Plans. 2012/2013” page 9, page 58ff; in German)

<sup>5</sup> see <http://www.boja.at> and basic information at: <http://www.boja.at/english>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.jugendinfo.at> and/or basic information <http://www.jugendinfo.at/home/top-menu/info-in-english>

<sup>7</sup>[www.bjv.at](http://www.bjv.at)

<sup>8</sup><https://www.bjv.at/politik/internetnetzpolitik> („Positioning paper Youth and the Internet“ June, 2015)

including demands for more media education at school and for an increased exchange of competencies between school and out-of-school partners.

Moreover, extra-curricular child and youth work is also providing a valuable function as interface between parents and guardians, schools as well as child and youth services and child and youth advocacies.

#### *Initiatives in relation to digital media on a federal level*

On a federal level, Meral Akin-Hecke was appointed *Digital Champion Austria* during the *Digital Agenda for Europe* in 2013 in order to raise awareness of the importance of digital media competencies; together with Digital Champions from other EU member states, she is providing input to the *Digital Agenda for Europe*. *Werdedigital.at*<sup>9</sup> (Becomedigital.at) is a project by *Digital Champion Austria* combining all information regarding digital media competencies on this knowledge platform and it is Austria's prime offensive to bridging the digital gap.

*digi4family*<sup>10</sup> is an initiative by the *BMFJ* and the *Professional Association of Management Consultancy and Information Technology* of the *Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO)* with the aim of increasing media competencies of families, supported by *SaferInternet.at* and *werdedigital.at*. This set of measures is directed to young adults as well as to parents, grandparents and multipliers and is offering webinars and further information on media-related topics.

In 2015, the *Austrian Federal Council* kicked off a public consulting action in relation to "digital change" and how legislation should react to it. It aims at expanding skills in this field and to compile a Green Paper entitled "Digital Change and Politics". During the online consulting, action issues and opinions were collected.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Youth work in Vienna as an example*

Vienna is a federal state and at the same time it's Austria's biggest municipality. The responsibility for extra-curricular child and youth work lies with the *Municipal Department 13 (Education and extra-curricular youth care)* within the Youth Department.<sup>12</sup> The Municipality of Vienna is supporting the work of 26 associations employing some 1,000 people at over 500 sites and public places with approx. 2 million contacts with young adults per year.

Some of the goals of child and youth work in Vienna include, for example: having fun and enjoying life, self-esteem and forging identity, expanded freedom to act based on principles of orientation on young life worlds, low-threshold, diversity etc. In the brochure of child and youth work in Vienna, "media work" is formulated as one of the offers of child and youth work.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.werdedigital.at>

<sup>10</sup><http://www.digi4family.at>

<sup>11</sup><http://www.parlament.gv.at/PERK/NRBRBV/BR/PARLEQU/PENQUWANDEL/index.shtml>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.wien.gv.at/freizeit/bildungjugend/jugend>

<sup>13</sup>see <https://www.wien.gv.at/freizeit/bildungjugend/jugend/leitgedanken.html> (Brochure „Child and Youth Work in Vienna“; in German)

### *Four pillars of child and youth work in Vienna*

- **Open child and youth work:** lifeworld-oriented approach with indoor and outdoor activities: “at the park, around your block, within the district or in virtual space”<sup>14</sup> such as youth clubs, day care in parks etc., e.g. *Association of Viennese Youth Centres* (see *Focus Group Talks 5.2., 5.4., 5.5., Case Study 6.3., 6.4.*), *Association Multicultural Network*, *Tangram: proactive child and youth work* (see *Focus Group Talk 5.1., Case Study 6.1.*), *Kiddy & Co – proactive child and youth work Penzing* (see *Focus Group Talk 5.3.*)
- **Community-based offers:** strengthening local cohabitation
- **Transregional child and youth work:** throughout Vienna for all children and young adults, e.g. *Association wienXtra* (see *Case Study 6.1., 6.2., Focus group talk 5.5.*)
- **Associated child and youth work:** religiously-, politically- or ecologically-oriented and often requiring membership by children and young adults.

### 3. Relevant studies on youth and media

This section includes several Austrian study examples as well as parts of their core statements, that were conducted over the last five years. Overviews of relevant studies can be found on the website of *EU Kids Online*<sup>15</sup> as well as on the website of *saferinternet.at*<sup>16</sup>. For the purpose of comparison, studies from Germany are also significant for Austria, such as the studies conducted by the *Media-Pedagogical Research Association Southeast: JIM-Study – Youth, Information, (Multi-)Media*<sup>17</sup>, *KIM-Study (Children + Media, Computer + Internet)*<sup>18</sup>, *FIM-Study (Family, Interaction & Media)*<sup>19</sup> as well as the *Media-Convergence Monitoring by the University of Leipzig*<sup>20</sup>.

The **Youth Monitor**<sup>21</sup> (Jugendmonitor) by the *Federal Ministry of Family and Youth (BMFJ)* was collecting attitudes and opinions of young adults aged between 14 and 24 during the years of 2010-2013. The collective report is only marginally mentioning media: as means for political participation, and that this form of participation is not really well established yet. In 2010, there was a special enquiry into the topics of “new media” such as social networks, weblogs and computer games, which revealed that *Facebook* ranks on top of all social networks and is predominantly used for maintaining contacts.

Every four years, a **Youth Report**<sup>22</sup> commissioned by the *BMFJ* is published. The last edition was presented in 2011<sup>23</sup>, in which the importance of media for young adults was highlighted and media as well as peer groups were identified as substantial elements for developing one’s own system of values (cf. p. 1, German): “*Youth research concludes that the*

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/DB/home.aspx?query=Austria>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.saferinternet.at/studien>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.mpfs.de/index.php?id=276>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mpfs.de/index.php?id=462>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mpfs.de/index.php?id=272>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~mepaed/medienkonvergenz-monitoring>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bmfj.gv.at/ministerium/jugendforschung/jugendmonitor.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bmfj.gv.at/ministerium/jugendforschung/jugendbericht.html>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bmfj.gv.at/dam/jcr:78a8063e-902d-4996-986d-e35aed979c7a/Auf%20einen%20Blick.pdf>, engl.: <http://www.bmfj.gv.at/service/publikationen/jugend/sixth-austrian-youth-report-2011-overview.html>

*assumption of an increasing relationship deficiency and social islandisation of today's youth, which is often being drawn by the media, is lacking empirical backing. Using media also constitutes a significant part of leisure-time interests. Even within the group of computer-savvy young adults (gamers/young adults belonging to a computer-savvy scene) which is classified by public discourse as being especially vulnerable, no social islandisation is observed. A majority of passionate gamers (young adults who play computer and/or console games on a daily, almost daily basis or at least several times a week) has strong ties to relevant circles of friends."* (p.67, German). The use of media also constitutes a big part of leisure-time interests. (see p. 73, German)

On the occasion of the *Safer Internet Days*, **saferinternet.at** commissions studies and research about the (safe) use of internet, cell phones and computer games and above that, is also contributing to studies. An overview can be found online (see above). The surveys are seizing current topics such as *"Sexting in young life worlds"*<sup>24</sup> (2015), *"My web-reputation – impacts on future careers"*<sup>25</sup> (2014) or *"Opportunities and dangers of online-communities"*<sup>26</sup> which is a study on the use of online-communities by children and young adults in Austria (2010; conducted by the Institute of *Youth Culture Research*<sup>27</sup> commissioned by *Saferinternet.at*).

Media usage behaviour of young adults in Upper Austria aged between 11 and 18 has been monitored by the *Education Group GmbH* within the **Youth-Media-Study of Upper Austria** since 2009 and serves as benchmark value for Austria<sup>28</sup>. Every two years, the media usage behaviour of young adults is assessed by young adults themselves, parents and pedagogues, the last time in 2015<sup>29</sup>. From an adolescent's point of view, the smart phone has emerged to be an indispensable companion, also, having access to a computer is taken for granted, however meeting friends in real life remains the most essential leisure-time activity. Communicating about media-related topics also plays an important role: *"A vast majority of young people in Upper Austria states that dangers and risks in relation to the internet are being discussed in schools as well as during talks with their parents."* (p. 7, German). Parents express their wish for better media competencies: *"More than one in four parents wants to learn more about supporting media competencies – with an upward trend. Schools are seen as good information channels... parents identify the biggest needs with regard to main focus points such as the internet, computers in general and smart phones."* (see p. 9, German). This goes hand in hand with the observation that the impact of media on family life is increasing (see p. 9, German) and parents worry more about their children's internet use. (p. 11, German). It's also a central issue for pedagogues *"that young adults acquire digital*

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<sup>24</sup>[https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Sexting\\_Studie/Praesentation\\_PK\\_Safer\\_Internet\\_Day\\_2015.pdf](https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Sexting_Studie/Praesentation_PK_Safer_Internet_Day_2015.pdf)

<sup>25</sup>[https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Presse/sid\\_2014/Pr%C3%A4sentation\\_PK\\_Safer\\_Internet\\_Day\\_2014.pdf](https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Presse/sid_2014/Pr%C3%A4sentation_PK_Safer_Internet_Day_2014.pdf)

<sup>26</sup>[https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Studien/Online\\_Communities\\_Studie/Ergebnisse\\_Safer\\_Internet\\_Quantitativ\\_Ultimativ.pdf](https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Studien/Online_Communities_Studie/Ergebnisse_Safer_Internet_Quantitativ_Ultimativ.pdf) und [http://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Online\\_Communities\\_Studie/Bericht\\_Safer\\_Internet\\_qualitativ\\_Online\\_Version.pdf](http://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/files/Online_Communities_Studie/Bericht_Safer_Internet_qualitativ_Online_Version.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> The Viennese Institute for Youth Culture Research is continuously researching youth-relevant topics, e.g. in 2014 "Youth and Leisure-Time", by commission and on its own account: (German webpage) <http://jugendkultur.at/forschung>

<sup>28</sup><https://www.edugroup.at/innovation/forschung/jugend-medien-studie.html>

<sup>29</sup>[https://www.edugroup.at/fileadmin/DAM/Innovation/Forschung/Dateien/JugendMedienStudie\\_Zusammenfassung\\_2015.pdf](https://www.edugroup.at/fileadmin/DAM/Innovation/Forschung/Dateien/JugendMedienStudie_Zusammenfassung_2015.pdf)

competencies – they also regard discerning questioning of media offers as vital aspect of media use.”(p. 15, German)

In 2015, the *Institute of Youth Culture Research* conducted the **Youth Study Burgenland 2015**<sup>30</sup> commissioned by the *Administrative Youth Advisory Board* (Landesjugendreferat) *Burgenland*, in which media were assigned a big role as part of young life worlds. Online-communication is a constant part of leisure-time activities, but it's not a contradiction to offline-communication (see page 28).

**EU Kids Online** is a pan-European comparative study on the use of internet and new media by children and young adults aged between 9 and 16 to which Austria has also contributed<sup>31</sup>. In 2011, the report “Internet risks and safety” was published, giving an overview of European comparative statistics and results in Austria.<sup>32</sup>

## 4. Use of digital media in youth work in Austria

### Results of online questionnaire

By means of this Screenagers online questionnaire we wanted to find out what kinds of digital media could be used by youth workers in Austria as working tools and also, how they'd be used. Another focal point of this study was youth workers' attitudes toward the usage of digital media. In this context, digital media refers to web-based services and apps as well as media devices (camera etc.).

This very comprehensive study consisted of 31 questions or blocks of questions, respectively. It was accessible from the beginning of May until the end of June 2015 (2 months). People were called upon to participate through Austrian youth work networks. Hereby, we would like to take the opportunity to convey our special thanks to *boJA (Bundesverband Offene Jugendarbeit; Federal Association of Open Youth Work)*, *Bundesjugendvertretung (Federal Youth Representation)*, *ARGE Österreichische Jugendinfos (ARGE Austrian Youth Info)* as well as the *Department of Youth Politics of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Family Affairs and Youth (BMFJ)* for their support.

147 youth workers answered this questionnaire in its entirety. For evaluation purposes, only fully completed questionnaires were considered.

All the participants of this study are actively engaging in youth work and are working directly with the target group. All specific duties given by the participants are covering essential responsibilities in the field of youth work (walk-in service during office hours in a youth centre/meeting place, counselling and information, proactive youth work). With 70 participants (48%), Vienna is over-represented within the study. Other participants are distributed more or less evenly throughout the remaining federal states. A great majority of study participants works solely in positions within the field of youth work (92%), most of

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<sup>30</sup>[http://www.ljr.at/html/index.aspx?page\\_url=Jugendstudie\\_2015&mid=920](http://www.ljr.at/html/index.aspx?page_url=Jugendstudie_2015&mid=920) (“Youth Study 2015“)

<sup>31</sup><http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/ParticipatingCountries/austria.aspx>

<sup>32</sup>[http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20II%20\(2009-11\)/EUKidsExecSummary/AustriaExecSum.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20II%20(2009-11)/EUKidsExecSummary/AustriaExecSum.pdf)

them in part-time employment (60%). The ratio between men and women is relatively balanced. The age structure throughout the participants corresponds to a relatively “young” career group: 30% of all participants are aged between 25-30, 42% are between 30-35 years of age.

Completing the study took at least 30 mins. – as determined through feedback – and there were no tangible incentives for participation. Therefore, it can be assumed that we were disproportionately successful in reaching all of those youth workers who already show an interest in the topic. In all questions regarding attitudes, it has to be taken into consideration that we may have collected many opinions of those who are openly in favour of digital media. However, statements on the benefits of using digital media in youth work and their target group are gaining more importance: it can be assumed that many are sharing their own experiences. Due to the very good variance of answers given in other questions, we assume that conclusions drawn from information on working reality (equipment, support) in youth work are entirely admissible.

Due to the extensive scope of this study, only excerpts are being presented herein. The full results of this online questionnaire and all raw data will be accessible online at a later point.

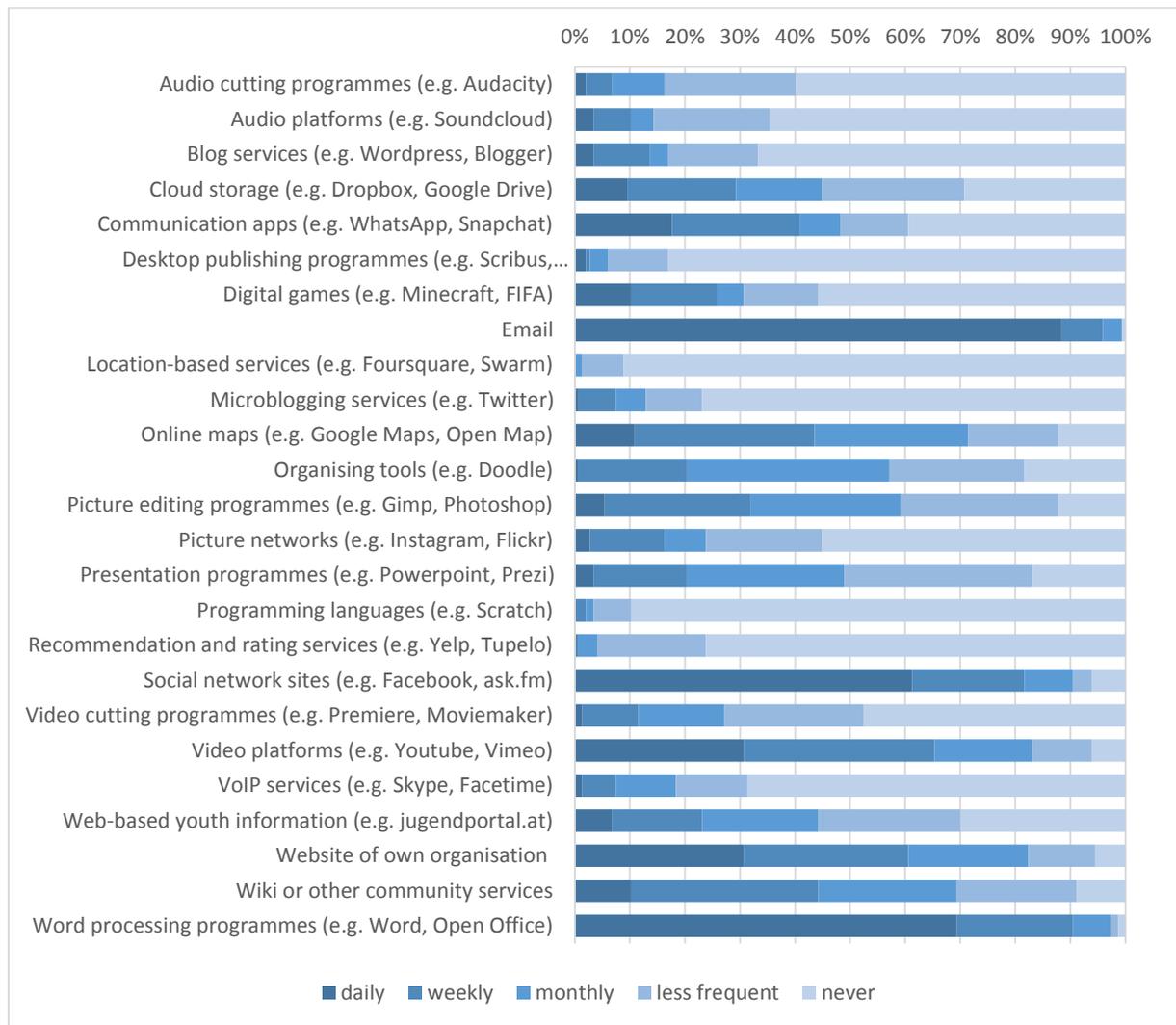
#### *Equipment consisting of digital devices and use thereof*

Equipment which is accessible for substantially all study participants at work for individual or shared use are computers or laptops (90%) and internet access (93%). Very frequently, there is also a video projector/beamer (78%), Wifi (78%) or an audio replay device (sound system, boom box) (86%). The fact that popular digital entertainment devices like games consoles only make up 44% of leisure equipment can be attributed to highly variable work spaces and responsibilities of youth workers.

As inadequate equipment is often mentioned during talks with youth workers, we were interested in the frequency of the use of private devices. Strikingly, this is often the case with smart phones: nearly one in three (32%) state that they also use their own private smart phone for work. Other privately-owned devices that are brought into work are cameras (13%), audio recording devices (11%), computer/laptop (9%), tablets (7%) and video cameras (5%).

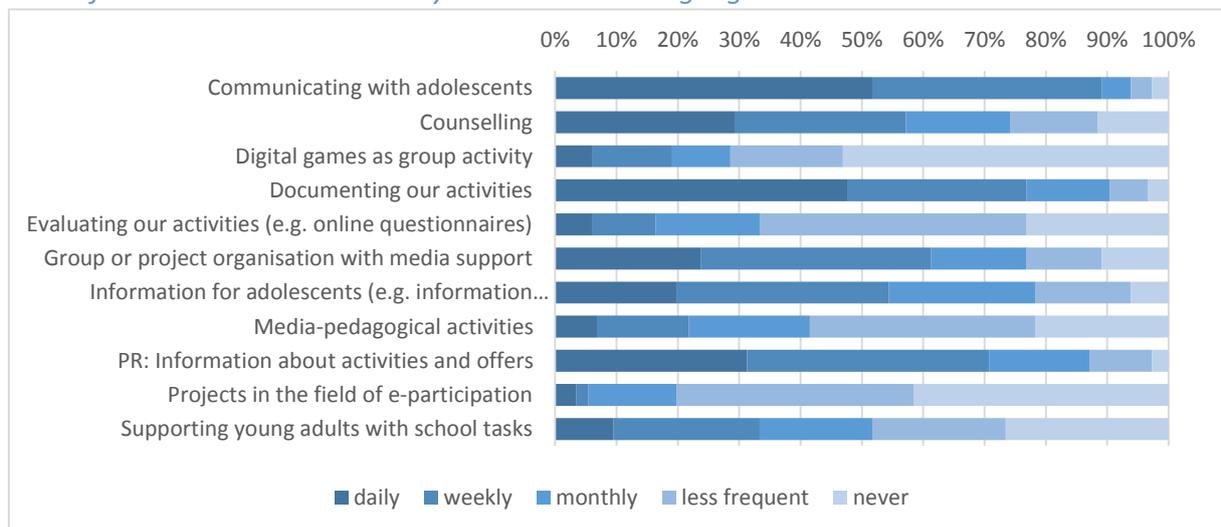
In use on a daily basis are – unsurprisingly- internet access (90%), computer or laptop (84%) as well as mobile phones (37%) or smart phones (43%) as well as cameras (10% use it at work on a daily basis, a further 40% every other week). Tablets in youth work only seem to be an evolving trend, nearly one in three (31%) have access to a tablet at work, however only 17% use it daily or weekly.

### Which online services, applications and apps are used at work by youth workers?



There is no way around social networking sites – 81% of all study participants use them on a daily or weekly basis. Also, video platforms show a strong presence (65% of study participants state a regular use) as well as communication apps such as WhatsApp (41%).

### How often and to which end are youth workers using digital media in their work?



## *Obstacles*

When asked if there was anything preventing their using digital media at work, an overwhelming majority of study participants (72%) answered “Nothing – using media is part of my work”. Every one in five (20%) stated that there were benefits to using media, however they listed other, more imminent priorities. 18% of all participants mentioned the lack of a technological infrastructure, 10% simply do not have the time. Priorities of institutions and umbrella organisations were virtually neglected when listing obstacles: only 2 participants (1%) thought that their superiors or their organisation wouldn’t assign any importance to the usage of media.

The next block of questions consisted of enquiries about factors which would generally hinder the active use of digital media in youth work. For this question, participants would need to identify up to three main impediments. Here we noticed that study participants evaluated the situation within their own immediate surroundings at work much more positively than the situation of youth work in general. Only almost one out of four agreed with the statement that there were “no inhibiting factors – working with media does already bear high significance within youth work”. 52% lament a lack of technological infrastructure. 41% said that youth workers were lacking expertise. 32% were of the opinion that the working hours of youth workers would not suffice for the use of media, a further 32% listed concerns regarding data protection and an uncertain legal situation in general as obstacles.

## *Self-assessment of skills*

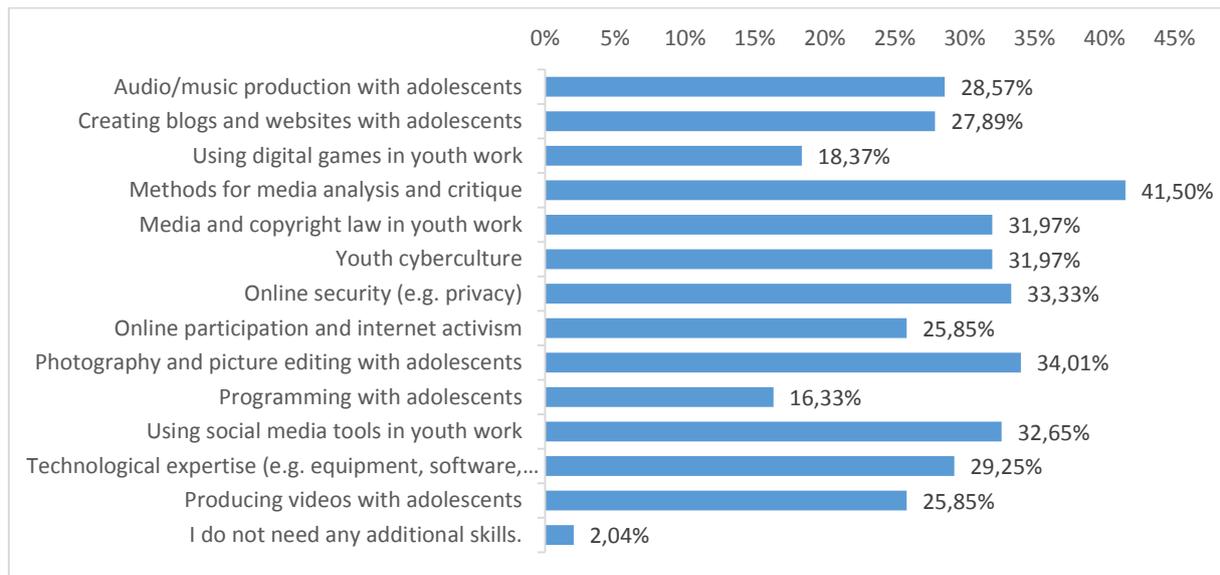
The participants were asked to assess their very own skills in several areas of media usage.

The highest grades were awarded by study participants for their own social media competencies; 18% seem to have satisfactory, 40% good and 35% proficient skills. Further results in other areas also paint a very positive picture: most study participants rate their own skills mostly satisfactory and even up to proficient, e.g. when being asked about young internet culture (86%), photography and picture editing (83%), media analysis and critique (78%), media and copyright law (79%) or online security (88%).

Strongest discrepancies are found with digital games: while half of all participants are also reporting satisfactory to proficient skills, every one in four rated their skills as poor and every one in four states that digital games have never been an important topic to them.

Lagging far behind is programming (coding): half of all participants state that coding has never been of any relevance to them.

### What are the areas in which youth workers would want to acquire additional skills?



Although participants already assessed their own skills in many areas positively, the interest in learning more is considerably high. Participants were asked to name up to three areas in which they wanted to acquire additional skills. It is remarkable that the answers are distributed evenly – all areas are seen as important and worth pursuing. One peak was observed at “media critique – media analysis” – the importance of reflexive skills is growing. In comparison, interest in digital games and programming (coding) is relatively small.

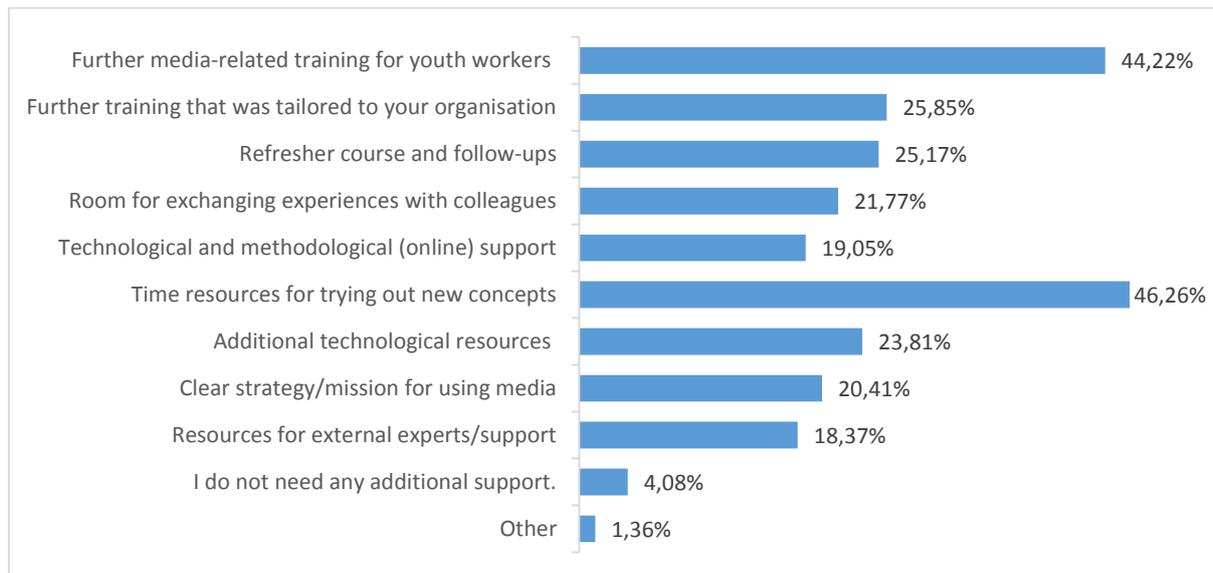
#### Beneficial factors

In the next section participants were asked about the benefits of using digital media over the last few years specifically in relation to their own work. For this question the target was also to identify up to three beneficial factors. Acknowledging media as an essential part of teenage life and the fact that this is the reason why youth work also should engage with media were rated as the most beneficial factors (69% approval).

Other beneficial factors were: positive feedback by adolescents on media-related activities (23%), having time to engage with media (20%), the fact that one’s own organisation values and supports the use of media (20%) and that using media is incorporated within the organisation’s core concept (22%) and that there was the possibility for further training on the subject (20%).

Only 7 participants (5%) stated that there were no beneficial factors, they claimed that the use of media was not being supported over the last few years.

### What kind of support would youth workers wish for?



Self-learning processes are important for youth workers when it comes to skills concerning digital media – the same goes for adolescents themselves. Even stronger than the wish for further training on media-related topics (44%) is the study participants' desire for more time resources, to be able to try new things (e.g. equipment, programmes, methods) (46%). Moreover, further training courses that were tailored to their own organisations were ranked high on the wish list (26%), followed by refresher courses and follow-ups (25%) as well as additional technological resources (24%). In this question, participants could choose three supporting structures that they would wish for. Only 6 participants (4%) stated that they didn't need any additional support.

### Digital media and youth work – possible outlooks

Every one in four participants thought that they were not assigning enough working time to using digital media. All the others found the extent to be adequate. Nobody felt that they were dedicating too much time to digital media.

A great majority (71%) assumes that the use of digital media at work will still increase. Even more participants (77%) believed that the use of digital media will intensify within their own organisation.

### Attitudes and opinions

All study participants paint a very differentiated picture of adolescents. Claiming that the level of young people's media proficiency is highly variable is met with the clearest agreement – 93% approve. Generally, study participants know young adults to be competent users of media who could nevertheless still learn more (85% approval). Stating that young adults were competent and that youth work had nothing left to teach them was met with a negative response by an overwhelming majority of study participants (91%).

Meeting adolescents online may be valuable to some participants, however this does not substitute for offline contact (80 %approval). Analogous to this, forms of youth work which

are exclusively based on online interaction with young adults could only be envisioned by 26% of all participants.

Claiming that the use of digital media would distract from essential responsibilities of youth work is mostly rejected (81% don't agree or would rather not agree).

### *What are the benefits of using digital media in youth work?*

Study participants generally agreed on one thing: youth work needs to engage with digital media in order to keep track of a young person's world in which media play a strong role (95% approval).

Furthermore, they highlight the potential which is contained within the use of digital media in youth work: it's a methodological enrichment (92% approval), its use helps offering attractive activities (84% approval) and communication with adolescents is done in contemporary ways (81% approval).

### *How are young adults benefiting from the use of digital media in youth work?*

There is an even more positive picture if the question regarding benefits of the use of digital media in youth work is directed towards the target group. Those answers can be deemed especially significant, because we, as was mentioned earlier, can assume that many of the study participants can already draw on specific experience.

By using digital media, media skills in young adults can be improved (92% approval).

Should there be a problem in relation to media, youth workers can act as contact persons for adolescents (e.g. data abuse, unpleasant encounters, conflicts) (90% approval).

Youth work creates the possibility to speak out and offers public spaces for topics and concerns of young adults (88% approval).

Adolescents discover a new course of action in relation with media (86% approval).

Youth work can compensate for situations in which young adults are left alone with their acting and dealing with media by their families (74% approval).

Another concern which is still apparent is having access to digital media. This might be surprising given the relatively strong implementation of digital devices in private homes. 64% of all study participants stated that youth work could compensate for a private surrounding in which adolescents only have limited access to digital media.

## 5. Focusgroups

### 5.1. Youth focus group – Tangram

*Tangram* aims at providing open and proactive child and youth services throughout Vienna's 7<sup>th</sup> district. The interview of the focus group took place in an adjoining room during open business hours while students were on summer break. Four teenagers participated: one girl (13 years old) and three boys (12, 13 and 14 years old).

The pivotal communication medium of everyday life of those teenagers is their cell phone: all four of them have smart phones and name several social networks and communicative apps they use on a regular basis. Compared to their ever-present smart phone, everything else seems to be of secondary importance. The girl tells us that she doesn't have a TV. The boys sometimes use the TV as a monitor, to play games or watch YouTube videos on a bigger screen. Even the computer only plays a subordinate role: *"I only use my laptop when I want to watch certain things, videos on YouTube, for example. Sometimes, I also listen to music." "I only ever use my computer at school or to do my homework."*

Two of the teens are creating media themselves: the girl is editing pictures for Instagram, one of the boys likes cutting videos to upload them on YouTube. In fact, those are the specific fields they name when asked what they wanted to know more about around the topic of digital media: How to make better videos, learn everything about film and camera equipment.

It was of great concern to the group to highlight that media carry great importance for them but are not yet indispensable: *"The four of us, we really enjoy spending time outdoors, at the park, playing football... we are no media addicts."*

The term "addiction" which is occasionally used by the teens during the talk to refer to media usage of others is being put in relation later on: *"It really depends on the situation... a friend of mine is using her phone all the time... but I don't think that makes her an addict. You're addicted to something when you get aggressive when you can't have the thing you want. When you cannot stand being without it."*

At *Tangram*, young people may use computers with internet access, games consoles and a small recording studio as media-related infrastructure. Things that some of them could use at home as well, but at home the situation of using them is different: *"At my home, we have a Playstation too, but we can't really play there. I've got two younger siblings and they would break it instantly." "No one is bugging me around here."*

When being asked if they experience the staff at *Tangram* to behave differently with regards to media compared to other adults (parents, teachers), most of the teens responded with a big laugh: *"There's a huge difference." "My mother doesn't know the first thing about media, but the people here, they do." "Some teachers really don't know much about that either."*

Relating to the dark sides of digital media, the young interviewees identify online conflicts and mobbing. *"People are much braver communicating in chat rooms. If, for example, you're being verbally harassed via whatsApp – they wouldn't have the courage to actually tell it to your face." "Last year, I've been mobbed in class. Not via WhatsApp but at Telegram. There was a group chat and I was constantly insulted there. I just ignored it. But it went on and on and finally, I talked to my teacher about it. After a while, it stopped."*

The teens perceive *Tangram's* staff as adults who they can turn to when problems arise out of the use of certain media. *"If, for example, I was being mobbed, I know I could talk to them about it and that they'd help me." "At Cultcafe (a 'sister project' of Tangram realised by the same umbrella association) they even went to the police with some of the people to seek help. I think that's cool." "You can talk to them about anything, I trust them."*

## 5.2. Youth focus group – CU television

*CU television* is a monthly youth television series by the Association of Youth Centres in Vienna broadcast on *OKTO*, a community TV-channel and offering a chance for teenagers to put their very own interests on television. The youth and district community centre *5erhaus* situated in Vienna's 5<sup>th</sup> district serves as home base to the CU youth editorial team. The focus group interview was conducted on a Saturday, a busy editorial working day at *5erhaus* with four participants: two girls (19 and 23 years old) and two boys (19 and 23 years old). Three of them have been taking part in CU since their teenage years and have been a part of CU's editorial staff for between five and seven years now. During our interview they were reflecting on this project, CU, out of their very own, experienced point of view and have been telling us how their work on CU has shaped their own behaviour with regards to different media channels: *"...here I am able to work creatively, that's the reason why I've been coming here regularly for 7 years now, and I still like it very much."*

When asked which media they use in day-to-day life and what's most important to them, they collectively refer to their smart phones as universal tool and to social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp topping the list of favourite communication channels: *"The most important thing is my smart phone. It combines so many things in one."* At the same time though, they said that it could be hard to navigate through the sheer flood of information and to remain in control about one's networks and time resources: *"I've switched off all notification messages, you can choose to do this yourself. My phone will only go off if I receive a text or if somebody's calling me. I only check Whatsapp once or twice a day."* *"However, you really must have the will and strength to do that."* What's crucial to all four of them is treating each other respectfully and that one's smart phone must not dominate a real offline-meeting. TV and radio programmes remain important in everyday life: *"My TV simply has to be turned on, no matter what I'm doing."*

The answers that they've given to the question of how they'd proceed if there was something new that they wanted to learn about media, show the diversity of their strategies for self-teaching and what forms of digital media they're using in the process. One of the boys emphasised that online-tutorials are an important resource for him: *"I almost exclusively learn new things via tutorials. I research topics we've discussed in school watching tutorials, this way I learn new things most effectively."* At the same time, though, YouTube *"is really great to unwind, if I work too much and feel like I need a break, I simply watch silly little videos."* The other young man acquires new information via written text first, subsequently leading him to watching videos: *"First, I use Google and type in 'How to...' searching for blog posts where I can find very detailed information... only after this I turn to tutorials for help, I need more than one source."* One girl kicks off her search offline, subsequently looking for answers on the internet. *"When I need help or want to learn something new, the first thing I do is ask friends or people I know about their experiences."* To hunt down information yourself, same as teaching yourself also strengthens self-confidence and makes the newly learnt skill much more valuable: *"I think the information you've been looking for becomes more valuable, if you're seeking and finding it yourself."* *"To me, this is way cooler than simply asking somebody. If you do all your research yourself, it'll feel great afterwards."*

Apart from the possibility of using the equipment, there are many other advantages for young adults in producing TV-shows and meeting as part of a group at a certain place such as the youth centre. *“Here, I feel like I am more focussed when I’m cutting films... it’s why I came here and there are fewer distractions.” “... and additionally, our mentors are also here to help.” “They offer great mental support... almost like a sports coach.”* When being asked if there was a certain topic that they wanted to learn more about, the majority named the field of entertainment and copyright law. And, in their opinion, what are the advantages of engaging in media-related topics together with peers and assigned youth workers? *“If we want to learn more about the law, they make sure we do. No matter what we want to achieve, they make sure that we can.” “It’s great that we’re all part of a group here and that there are other people asking questions that’ve never crossed your own mind, but that are equally exciting.” “We use another language. It’s just much more convenient having people teach you things in German as opposed to Chinese.”*

Producing CU as part of a team reassures young people even after they leave their editing headquarters: *„Here, I have really learned a lot, it’s all learning by doing.“*

### 5.3. Team of Kiddy & Co

*Kiddy & Co – Association for Creative Games and Communication* is offering proactive child and youth work services in Penzing, Vienna’s 14<sup>th</sup> district. The association is running two open kids and youth clubs and is also present in eight parks in Penzing during the summer months. Two media projects are connected with one of the two kids and youth clubs: the internet café *KICKS* and the recording studio *Sound On*.

The interview was conducted on 22 September 2015 with three members of staff of *Kiddy & Co* (1 female/2 male).

Being online is almost a basic need for *Kiddy & Co*’s target group at the moment: *“We do offer Wifi and it’s being used heavily, even outside our business hours. It extends as far as the bus stop up front and the kids are sitting there during the weekends.”* Apart from the youngest children (under the age of 8), almost all of them have their own smart phones.

Although most of the kids have access to a computer and the internet at home, the possibility of using the internet at the youth club still remains attractive to them. They come here to play browser games, to use social media or to finish homework for school. *“Some of them want to print stuff or do research for a school presentation. That’s when they ask us for help.”*

Once a week, *Kiddy & Co*’s internet café turns into a girls-only zone: *“During mixed opening hours, there’re more boys here and they also claim a lot of space. That’s why this girls’ day is so important, it’s a safe environment for them and we are able to dedicate more time to the girls’ questions. It’s then when we’re discussing topics such as WhatsApp-chain messages, or who am I sending what kind of picture of myself.”*

Regarding the use of media, the team of *Kiddy & Co* identified considerable differences between girls and boys. *“Boys share videos and connect with each other in games. With the girls, it’s more about communication, what am I saying to whom, how do I present myself.”*

Social networking sites present issues which require constant discussion with adolescents, most of all Facebook, and data security: *„For many of them it’s hard to understand how everything is connected and how complex these structures are”.*

Generally speaking, adolescents want to settle online conflicts by themselves. *“Those little dissing rants, I’m not even noticing them anymore.” Youth workers have only been asked for help in few, more serious cases, “where you could almost speak of serious mobbing.”*

Staff members of *Kiddy & Co* are addressing young people pre-emptively when they get the impression that those kids are presenting themselves in a way that could be harmful to them.

In all things media, the kids are advancing the team of *Kiddy & Co* *„with a tremendous amount of pre-trust”* and have a lot of confidence in their problem-solving abilities. *“Contrary to that, this is not the case with parents, where we find ourselves with a constant need to justify or explain our actions... which is generally also a good thing.”*

The level of support that kids receive from their parents in media-related fields is perceived by the youth workers at *Kiddy & Co* as *“varying – but overall, not enough. I think the kids are more or less on their own when it comes to media. There’s a lot of rejection from the outset. Parents simply prohibit many things and there’s almost no support or help.”*

One of the potential strong suits of youth work in the field of media is supporting children and young adults individually and according to their needs and wishes. *“There’s a difference between having to pay attention to something that’s explained to me at school and reaching out myself, going to a place and asking questions in the very moment when it’s of importance to me.”* The amount of individual advice that can be given to the questions of kids is highly dependent on the way in which the respective institution is managed and run: *“It’s very difficult for us during youth club hours when we’ve got a full house. The situation is better during internet café.”*

There are regular gaming days scheduled at the *Kiddy & Co* kids’ and youth clubs which are very attractive to the target group – irrespective of the fact if there’s a games console at home or not: *“This is more about the social factor of playing together. It’s not always easy to organise competitions, we’re doing it for them and are eager on providing a fair contest. They really appreciate that we’re providing a framework for them here.”*

Team members primarily require further training options for themselves in order to stay up-to-date on media-related topics: *“There’s already a lot on offer but overall it’s still not enough and the time between trainings is too long, especially in the field of social media everything is changing so very fast.”*

What would be even more important is a networking platform where youth workers could exchange experiences and opinions about media-related topics with members of other

institutions: *“To be able to contribute and to notice how others are doing. I could always get the most out of such interactions.”*

#### 5.4. Team of “5erhaus” - youth and district centre Margareten

This interview was conducted on 15 September 2015 during an approx. 2-hr-session with 9 youth workers (5 female/5 male) of *5erhaus*. The team of *5erhaus* consists of people with varied backgrounds and experience in the field youth work ranging from 25 years to only 2 months of employment time.

*5erhaus* is an institution run by the Association of Youth Centres in Vienna and is located in Vienna’s 5th district. The youth and district centre *5erhaus* combines a meeting place with strong focus on teenagers living in Vienna as well as offers that reach out into the community for adults and children. Young adults visiting *5erhaus* are predominantly members of bigger families with more than one child and weaker social bonds.

At the beginning of this interview, questions about the young target group’s needs in relation to digital media were raised. To the team of *5erhaus*, media offers *“a wealth of possibilities to young adults, they’re using them with great curiosity and we want to accompany them as far as we can in their curiosity.”* It’s important to recognise needs and wishes in everyday life and to react almost instantly: *“Watch, talk, learn, that’s already a very specific approach.”* On the other hand, it’s also possible to stir curiosity through integrating media as low-level and given part of normal teenage life. *“In light of that, through offering projects and equipment we can give rise to needs and create a domino effect.”* A very specific need, that of free internet access, is met at *5erhaus* by offering open Wifi throughout the building.

When asked if there still existed a need for supporting media competencies the team uniformly answered with ,Yes‘, and highlighted, *“that adolescents already know a lot, but there are also big gaps in their basic knowledge.”* Therefore, it’s of great importance to counteract this trend together and to balance out young adults’ media knowledge. Topics in relation to specific occasions such as photographic projects and copyrights on one’s own pictures, concerns about ethics, privacy etc. translate to other areas and *“we often see light-bulb-moments in the kids during such talks.”*

Where does the team perceive differences between girls and boys? On the one hand, during the setting process of media productions (e.g., girls need their privacy during musical recordings, while boys like to produce “themselves” in front of others) and on the other hand concerning impacts in and with media. Self-presentation in social networks as a central principle is seen differently here; through pictures during sports etc. boys place more importance on showing “what they can do”. Girls on the other hand use selfies to show the world “who they are”.

Asking for advice or tips is also perceived differently: *“Boys don’t like to ask questions in front of others, they only do it in private. Asking questions isn’t cool.”* In this, age is an essential factor, the limit lies at around 13/14 years of age: *“Younger children ask quick, very specific questions, elder kids go about it in a roundabout way.”*

Apart from school and their homes, adolescents spend most of their time at the youth centre. Is there any support from schools and family regarding digital media or is it the youth workers who compensate for a lack thereof? The team at *5erhaus* does not perceive school and domestic settings to be really supportive of its target group. What happens at school, stays at school, *"it's in one ear and out the other. Those are school lessons, you just don't remember a thing afterwards."* Hence, the youth centre is also a place where low-threshold learning is encouraged: *"Here, everything has a stronger purpose and is palpable, this is also why time here is not bound to course lessons."* Compensation is provided by the youth workers, in that individual working tasks are actually lived here day-to-day.

What are the kids getting out of their work with various media channels? Skills, self-confidence, knowledge. *"It's our aim to make them carry on independently, because young adults share what they know with each other. Thus, they become multipliers."* What is also a very important aspect is competition. *"Now I can do it too! This boosts confidence in myself, because I'm finally having access to a whole range of possibilities, rather than being excluded. This is crucial as it changes young people's significance for society."*

It very much depends on an existing relationship of trust when it comes to the question whether or not teenagers need and seek adult advice with media-related topics. Most of the teens have made the experience, *"that your peers are more willing to give and share than adults. Adults are just incompetent and all they ever do is to forbid things."* The staff at *5erhaus* is perceived as an exception to that, *"because with us, there are hardly any taboos. Yet, we do look at things critically but we also talk about it without applying sanctions."* *"Kids need trust, a certain amount of competence and they are very cautious in awarding it. They hardly ever find this at school or at home because they're always afraid of consequences. They don't want to be confined or indoctrinated but be free to explore. Youth work is a place of exploration for young adults and this has a huge impact on media."*

The mission of open youth work is very diverse. In this overall mission package, how important is media and supporting media skills on a list of priorities? At *5erhaus*, teens themselves dictate how they want to spend their leisure time and that's where the general orientation of our target group's lives becomes highly visible: *"The priority is strongly determined by the significance of digital media within a young person's life world, and this has increased tremendously. A huge amount of social interaction is going on there, and a great variety of creative processes have developed thanks to it, and this is reflected here at 5erhaus in the work we do, because that is the world that teenagers live in."*

However, the question if additional support would be needed to continue working on media-related topics elicits the general tenor that the overall significance of media work needs to be strengthened, first and foremost in education: *"Basic media competencies are basic skills for everybody who is working with young adults."* Moreover, there is a need for *"a broader content-related discussion which is presenting media work for what it is: an absolute necessity with considerable backlog."*

## 5.5. Focus group pedagogical management

During focus group talks with pedagogical managers from big youth work associations in Vienna, we were posing the question for the significance of digital media and support of (digital) media competencies in young adults in concepts and in practical use. These talks were held on 29 September 2015, with Manuela Smertnik (*Association of Youth Centres in Vienna*), Gabi Wild (*Juvivo-Association*), Sonja Brauner (*wienXtra-Association*), Georg Baumgartner (*Association Save the Children*) and Bernhard Füreder (*KUS – Association of Culture and Sports of Vocational Schools Vienna*).

In addition to the results of the online-study, social media and online communication with young adults were asserted as issues in which all organisations had the strongest involvement over the last few years. None of the organisations involved stipulated that the teams had to be present on certain social media platforms, however they endeavour to provide direction and support through guidelines, additional training and exchange meetings.

*Gabi Wild: “The time factor is one big obstacle – managing social media is not something that can be done on the fly.”*

*Sonja Brauner: “Social media is taking up more and more time and has almost become its own field of work.”*

Benchmark values of how much time is available for this field of work may vary greatly: from 5 hours/month split between the whole team (Save the Children) to up to 10 % of total working hours of one member of staff (KUS). Clearly, these differences come about due to the highly variable areas of responsibilities.

*Georg Baumgartner* from the Association Save the Children, who is predominantly engaged in proactive youth work, states: *“First you have to go out on the streets, virtual space comes in second, not the other way around, because to us, communicating face-to-face still bears more value.”*

Those involved wish that their co-workers would show willingness to engage in digital media worlds of young adults, however they do assert that this is not a question of age but a question of attitude.

*For Manuela Smertnik, it’s a question of “positive attitude, of not showing a general defensiveness, because this would go against the life world of our adolescents.”*

*Bertram Füreder* would wish for a more intense pursuit of media-related topics during basic training (University of Applied Sciences, social work programme):

*“I’ve gained the impression that those who newly graduated from UAS did never really engage with media skills. Those who did, did so out of their own impetus and interest.”*

To the participants of this discussion, the digital gap is a fact. Similarly to participants from the online study, they identify a substantial backlog in relation to discerning, analytical and reflexive skills. Having a smart phone and internet access is far from actually being able to equally participate in a digital society.

*Gabi Wild: "We perceive that our children and adolescents are using media intensively for entertainment purposes, however they've only acquired very few reflexive skills."*

Nevertheless, claiming that this problem would only concern young adults is wrong – there exists *"too big a group that is no longer distinguishing between serious and unreliable sources"* (Georg Baumgartner) and a *"deficit in media skills affecting our whole society"* (Manuela Smertnik), respectively.

In their everyday work, youth workers are always confronted with the fact of how current events and global conflicts affect young adults via online media such as YouTube. Often, these are one-sided, provocative or openly manipulative representations. Youth workers however might get easily overwhelmed by them: do I know enough about this medium and the topic to actually engage in discussions with adolescents?

*Manuela Smertnik: "Further education courses are constantly on offer... but they have limits. All depends on the members of staff who have to be self-confident enough to talk about so many issues with adolescents without actually being experts themselves."*

Often, it's already enough for adolescents to be able to rely on an adult partner who may raise other perspectives on a certain issue:

*Georg Baumgartner: "... someone who has the necessary experience of life, can distance themselves, has the ability to look at things in a more discerning way. At the age of 15, I'm simply not able to understand this algorithm, why it keeps pulling me deeper and deeper into a certain topic and point of view."*

*Sonja Brauner: "It's already enough to have a discerning attitude... knowing that you need to question everything."*

One specific possibility for that is, e.g. using Google together and in connection with different or opposed search items, in order to escape this "filter bubble" and to highlight that there are other opinions about the same topic as well.

An attitude that encourages trust and interpersonal work outside of authoritarian surroundings, which are both quality features of youth work, create good ground work for discussions about media with adolescents.

*Gabi Wild: "Building trust takes time, a differentiated offer, and space for encounters in which this trust is able to grow. If you look at youth work from the outside, unfortunately there's only numbers which stand out – not the quality of interpersonal work that is done in the background."*

What's also important is that young adults perceive youth work as an adult domain that is substantially open to their media-related life world.

*Manuela Smertnik: "It's about an accepting basic attitude, about the willingness to working through conflicts instead of prohibiting everything out of fear."*

Apart from events like discussions and invitations to contemplate certain issues, action-oriented media work can strengthen adolescents' media-critical skills:

*Sonja Brauner: "Create media yourself, try how to manipulate a picture or re-write a text to mean something completely different, for example. I simply have adopted this discerning attitude from the moment where I've done such a thing myself – because I can see how easy it is to control things".*

Resources of staff members as well as stamina and perseverance of adolescents are setting narrow boundaries for what is actually methodically possible during working hours. Thus, a simple approach for the support of digital media skills that is embedded within daily working routines still remains crucial.

*Gabi Wild: "... being able to continuously seize issues on a very low-threshold level that were brought in by adolescents themselves."*

## 6. Case Studies

### 6.1. Watching you - A playful involvement with video surveillance (Tangram / wienXtra)

"Watching you" was a cooperation project between *Tangram* and the *wienXtra-medienzentrum*. *Tangram* provides open and proactive child and youth work services in Vienna's 7<sup>th</sup> district. The *medienzentrum* is an institution of Viennese Youth Work specialised in media education.

The initiative of sensitising adolescents for surveillance cameras in public space through a media project was put together by *Tangram*. In interviews with adolescents, *Tangram's* staff members were struck by the fact that young adults notice surveillance cameras, but they don't necessarily take them seriously as real instruments for surveillance.

In order to make this rather serious, problematic topic palpable for young adolescents (10 to 13 years of age), the project team decided on adopting a playful approach. They developed three games in connection with the topic at hand and wanted to try them out and develop them further together with the adolescents. One GoPro-Camera with a tripod and other, self-made mounting devices as well as one iPad and a radio set were used as gaming devices.

#### *Playing Hide-and-Seek*

One of the players was given the task of hiding the camera in a park. The others were allowed to view a picture of the location that was transmitted to the iPad for a brief moment and then tried to find the hidden camera based on the photograph. The size of the playing field was limited by the Wifi extension range (approx. 50 m in every direction).

#### *Surveillance game*

An area of the park was defined as the playing field by putting up streamers with a starting and finishing point. One of the players hid the camera on or at the borders of the playing field. It was his or her duty to position the camera in such a way that the picture transmitted to the iPad showed as much of the playing field as possible – but not the whole area. The others were moving forward from the starting point (walking, running, crawling...) one after another and tried to avoid the camera's surveillance range and to reach the finish point. The

player who was hiding the camera was monitoring the video footage on the iPad – whenever the player whose turn it was, became visible on the screen, he or she had to “freeze” right there on the spot.

### *Blind-Man Game*

One player had to reach a particular point in the park while being blindfolded. The camera was mounted on his or her head. Another player was observing the footage on the iPad and gave directions to the „blind man“ via the radio set on how or where to walk. A third player was walking alongside the “blind man”. It was his or her duty only to react in dangerous situations, apart from that he or she had to be silent and was not allowed to give directions or any other support.

This pilot scheme was conducted during one afternoon during summer break at Josef-Strauß-Park. The playing phase lasted two hours, all three games were tried out and discussed during this period. Overall, 12 adolescents aged between 10 and 15 (4 girls and 8 boys) participated.

Some adolescents were already familiar with the GoPro-camera, for others it was a new experience, consequently they were curious about using this technology. Depending on the playing mode, a multi-dimensional perception was also encouraged. The kids were learning from one another how to orient themselves via the iPad on the spot, thus different levels of perception could be connected and communicated.

The level of difficulty was increasing with each playing mode. However, the kids were not put off by that. One of the topics discussed within the group was how to vary the level of difficulty during the game. On one hand, the kids were establishing their own rules, on the other however, they also relied on input given by the project team.

Entirely new experimental concepts require a certain “fearlessness” of the project team. It is never going to work out exactly as planned – one has to be able to tolerate that and deal with it in a flexible way. During the pilot scheme for example, it took a long time to find an appropriate hiding place for the camera. This rather long period of trial and error really stretched the waiting kids’ patience. The third game proved to be a very demanding communication task – monitoring the camera footage and creating clear, continuous instructions for the “blind man” in real-time was a bit overwhelming for the kids. (more specifically: on the screen the “guiding person” can see that the “blind man” is about to hit an obstacle but they weren’t able to utter directions fast enough, “Stop!”, “Don’t move!”.)

This innovative use of digital media lead to experimental concepts which open up room for experiments for everyone involved (adolescents AND youth workers). The methods are never really “completed”, but rather they are testing grounds to which everyone involved can contribute something new.

By way of example, this project “Watching You“ demonstrates the great potentials harboured within digital media as gaming devices – the possibilities that were tried here are only a few amongst many. If a gaming concept involves media, adolescents are more willing to engage in games that they would otherwise perhaps deem uncool. All approaches of

“mobile gaming” invite participants to define public space differently and anew as playing space – this is why they are so fascinating for youth work.

Methods that were developed through the project „Watching You“ were already used in several media-pedagogical seminars held by *medienzentrum* for youth workers. Also, there were enquiries from other institutions in youth work that wanted to realise similar projects themselves. Moreover, a follow-up project with *Tangram* is in the works.

## 6.2. Let's play workshops (wienXtra)

This project is a cooperation between the *wienXtra-mediencentrum* (wienXtra media centre) and *wienXtra-spielebox* (wienXtra gaming box), both are institutions governed by the wienXtra Association. The *spielebox* is a place for children and families where they can play games together. The *mediencentrum* is the prime location for adolescents to produce media and constitutes a specialised media-educational institution designed for people who are realising media projects together with children and young adults.<sup>33</sup>

The project aimed at creating a joint educational concept around the immensely popular video format 'Let's play' for kids and to design workshops teaching kids how to produce their very own 'Let's play' videos.

For many years now, *spielebox* has been offering games workshops for children and teenagers aged between 7 and 13, where they can try out computer games and games consoles. There was a clear tendency with kids aged between 10 and 13 towards watching others play compared to playing games themselves. This also increased interest in 'Let's Play' videos. Let's Play refers to narrated live recordings of one's own playing a computer game or playing on a games console. Most of the times, not only what is happening inside the game is recorded on the screen, but also the players themselves are visible via facecam. Thus, games can be experienced apart from actually playing them. Also, children and teenagers gain a vast variety of knowledge in and around the topic of games as cultural asset.

The workshops were designed for girls and boys aged between 10 and 13 and took place as part of the concept of the *wienXtra-ferienspiel* (wienXtra-holiday games - free leisure programme for kids during summer holidays).

A total of five daily workshops of 6 hours each were offered. There were 51 children altogether (9 girls, 42 boys) who took part in the programme. Three pedagogues conducted and supervised each of the workshops to create a working atmosphere in small groups of 3 to 4 teens each, wherein each group was able to present their own Let's Play video at the end of the workshop.

### *Workshop procedure*

In order to get a feeling for the participants' varied interests and to get to know each other better, the workshop started off with a sociometric exercise, during which the kids had to

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<sup>33</sup> [www.wienxtra.at](http://www.wienxtra.at)

split up into different corners of the room, depending on their answers to the following questions:

\*How often do you use a computer, games console, tablet etc. for playing games? (daily/1-2 times a week/less)

\*Which gaming platforms do you use most often? (PC/games console/phone & tablet/ I don't play at all)

\*How many Let's Play videos do you watch? (1h per day and more /1-2 videos a week/less)

\*Why are you watching Let's Plays? (finding solutions/techniques for own playing, learn about new games, entertainment/fun, I'm a fan of certain Let's Players)

Surprisingly, the PC was ranked gaming device No 1 and the smart phone was not perceived as important gaming device, although there was a lot of gaming going on during workshop breaks. For many participants, watching Let's Plays daily and for particular games as well as keeping track of the most recent activities of one's personal Let's Play favourite is part of their daily routine and contributes to everyday entertainment.

By finishing the round of introductions (name, favourite game and favourite Let's-Play-channels) the absolute preference for the PC as the top-gaming device was set: *Minecraft* for a PC was by far everybody's favourite.

During the joint viewing of Let's Plays the group was gathering features that make for a great video production (from suitable games to great commentary skills) as well as various Let's play genres: *Walkthrough* (play a game through until solution is found), *Blinds* (play a game live for the first time and simultaneously commenting on it), *Rants* (playing "bad" games) etc.

The mentors presented games suitable for every age group and the kids were given the chance to choose two favourites among them: *FIFA 15*, *FIFA Street*, *Bejeweled*, *Rayman Origins*, *Little Big Planet*, *Indiana Jones Lego*, *Minecraft*.

After that, they were divided into small groups and were given enough time to play the selected game together and to sketch out the main features of their own Let's Play: who will be behind the camera, when will players be visible via facecam, how should the video be introduced and closed, ...? For each group there was one mentor to help with any arising questions, to remind the teens of their task over the next hour, to support them in drawing up a concept and to give advice on feasibility. In order to provide a clear framework, the exclusive time for recording per playing session was limited.

At the recording station, there was one mentor who would calmly reiterate the course of the respective Let's Play and show the girl or boy behind the camera how the facecam was operated. After recording, the group would cut and reorganise the recording material with cutting software into their finished Let's Play video.

Every small team then presented their Let's Play to the other participants. Spirits were high and excited and many times outcries of '*That's a wrap!*' could be heard. However, the videos were not uploaded onto YouTube, as then there was a round of talks concerning copyright of

one's own picture, parental consent, possible copyright infringements through using a certain game etc.

The feedback rounds showed that producing Let's Plays is fun indeed. As viewed from the outside, the 7-8 min. videos couldn't maintain the arc of suspense for non-participants throughout, nevertheless, there was a call for a longer recording time. We can therefore conclude that playful elements are much more important within this age group: to have a go in front of the camera, to imitate your favourite Let's Player for the camera or simply to play together. Soon it became clear to all participants that technically as well as creatively it's far from child's play to produce a Let's Play clip. Hence, the workshop also broadened the kids' range of possibilities and allowed them to gain insights into the growing field of Let's Plays by contributing to actual production.

Thanks to the workshops' design and implementation the teams were not only able to look deeper into a media topic that's relevant for children and teens alike, they also expanded their technical capabilities of how a Let's Play production involves games consoles and video equipment in a group setting that's as easygoing as possible. Through continuous repetition, the concept was thoroughly investigated and thus its value will be recycled in the further education and advanced training possibilities for youth workers.

Through this project, *spielebox* and *medienzentrum* established a direct link to the world of young adults, took up current media preferences and advanced and broadened possibilities for action of children and teenagers by providing valuable spaces so they can try out and experiment with their own ideas for creating media.

### 6.3. "The Witches of Simmering" (Youth club Eleven)

The *Youth club Eleven (Jugendtreff Elven)*<sup>34</sup> is an institution by *the Association of Youth Centres in Vienna* located in Vienna's 11th district and constitutes an open space for adolescents.

Every Saturday, two hours are dedicated to the "girls' club" which was also the birthplace of this project. The incentive came from the girls themselves. While talking to them, two pedagogues sensed the girls' desire to look into the subject of gender equality and subsequently raised the topic during one of the girls' afternoons by discussing legendary women.

The girls were flicking through a book about great female personalities in search of strong women and also continued their research online. First of all, the girls came across popular women in the music industry such as *Rihanna* and they found out that contrary to this, men were much more dominant and popular in fields such as science and politics. Thus, they embarked on a search for female role models and each of them picked a woman's biography that fascinated them. At the same time, the question of women's visibility in public places, in their immediate surroundings arose, especially in relation to street names in the Simmering district. How could they make women more visible? "*We could shoot a video about that!*"

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<sup>34</sup><http://eleven.jugendzentren.at/>

During the next girls' club, the girls thought about the roles they wanted to play in the video; this gave birth to the idea of darting around Simmering as witches and to hex women's names into given street names. Three girls were acting in front of the camera and were also directing their pedagogue who was behind the camera on how the shots should look like. Their very own home district, Simmering, became a playful world. Not only did they put magic spells on street names so that they suddenly contained women's names ("Malala-Yousafzai-Street", "Cleopatra-Street", "Marie-Curie-Alley", "Pippi-Longstocking-Street"), they also wanted to gender street names: they transformed the German masculine street name "Simmeringer Hauptstraße" into its female equivalent "Simmeringerinnen Hauptstraße". In enchanting street names, the girls also made visible how they themselves wanted to be perceived in the public eye. Thus, they conjured a female "Dancers' Park" ("Tänzerinnen-Park" in German) and the "Volleyball-Players' Street" ("Volleyballerinnen-Straße in German).

At the next girls' club meeting, they watched the video material and discussed appropriate music and the final overall look of the video. The cutting was done by one of the pedagogues according to the girls' instructions. It was most important to her that every creative element was determined in cooperation with the girls.

After finishing the video, a film premiere was held at the girls' club and those involved discussed if they wanted to publish the video. "The Witches of Simmering" can now be viewed on the *Jugendtreff Eleven's* YouTube channel.<sup>35</sup>

Dealing with media in a playful way is a substantial part of the youth club's day-to-day business. Thus, the pedagogues were able to react swiftly and very flexibly to the girls' wishes. Approximately 8 to 10 girls aged between 10 and 14 years were involved more or less intensely in the project. For some, discussing the topic of strong women was their only interest, while others went even further and decided to become witches.

The primary aim was having fun in producing a video, showcasing themselves in public places and being able to induce changes and calling for attention. The collective realisation of such a video project had many effects on different levels: Sensitisation to gender equality, increasing women's visibility in public, realising their own ideas in relation to media, self-empowerment through positive, funny actions in front of the camera, strengthening the girls' self-confidence, and supporting creative and active movements in favour of women's & human rights.

*The Witches of Simmering* is a good example on how working with media within the context of youth work can be successful. Media are present tools in teenagers' everyday life and are also accessible for many of them, therefore the girls and their pedagogues were able to approach this topic from a substantially content-specific point of view. Discussing how to intensify their approach came later on. Complying with a media project which was in line with the teenagers' needs also required the right attitude as well as the technological and

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<sup>35</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQeD57YVs1Y>

media related self-confidence in their educators. They had to realise that media are part of the repertoire of possibilities which can be used to react to various subjects in youth work.

The video was also highly popular with other youth centres and the concept was adapted and applied in various other districts as well.<sup>36</sup> The girls were invited to other youth centres where they screened their video and advised other girls on how to realise their own videos.



#### 6.4. 5erhaus - youth and district centre Margareten

The youth and district centre Margareten, *5erhaus*<sup>37</sup>, is an institution of the *Association of Youth Centres in Vienna*. Commissioned by the Community of Vienna, it manages over 35 institutions and projects with more than 300 employees. *5erhaus* sees itself as an open meeting location and communication space in Vienna's 5th district which has the highest population density. Young adults living in Vienna account for the main target group. In accordance with its orientation towards reinforcing communities, *5erhaus* doesn't consider young adults as being isolated, instead they regard their core target group in connection with their entire social surroundings, in that they are also creating offers for children and adults. Through their systemic and social-space-related approach, they are answering to changing population structures, thereby exerting a balancing influence on family life. Young adults visiting *5erhaus* mostly come from families with more than one child and with weaker social bonds. The *5erhaus* team consists of 9 youth workers (5 female, 4 male) who are supported by freelancers for specialised programmes.

Life world orientation and voluntary working principles are the youth centre's main concern. With opening hours spanning over 80 hours/week, *5erhaus* provides space and various offers for several target groups: children (ages 6-10), teens (ages 10-14), young adults (14+) and adults, especially women. Two days a week, the centre opens its doors during morning hours for women to offer them space for exchange, counselling and project-related work. In the afternoons, *5erhaus* belongs to children, offering tailored leisure day care and learning support. In the evenings, teenagers and young adults take over *5erhaus*, including study rooms, practise rooms etc.

One day per week it's "girls only". Teens in the afternoons, young adults during the evenings – each group is developing their own programmes together. They've got their own group on

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<sup>36</sup> "Girls Action" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo\\_QcHwFyAs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo_QcHwFyAs)

"The Checkers" – "Die Checkerinnen" (in German) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVicXzjooLM>

"Flash Girl" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZHHjHgrGA>

<sup>37</sup> [www.5erhaus.at](http://www.5erhaus.at), [www.facebook.com/5erhaus](https://www.facebook.com/5erhaus), [www.youtube.com/user/5erhaus](https://www.youtube.com/user/5erhaus)

Facebook, in which the girls can vent and discuss their ideas and wishes chaperoned by the youth workers. As a counterpart, there's a boys night once a week. Here as well, the programme is developed together and is alternating for teens and young adults.

### *Media at 5erhaus*

At *5erhaus*, the use of media is an essential part and important field of action within the work in all target groups on several levels:

The youth centre provides technological resources (Wifi, media devices such as cameras, video cameras, tablets, possibility for music production, free computer access, ...), and staff members are offering their expertise in many media-related fields to their target groups.

The main focus is placed on everyday-, situation-based media work which is tailored to the needs of young adults during opening hours when youth workers are providing support for school tasks (incl. internet research and even preparing presentations) or helping young adults in finding a job (incl. online-job-hunt, preparing CVs and job applications). Creative media work such as picture editing or cutting videos are also part of their work, as is lending a helping hand in opening email and social media accounts or fixing little damages or malfunctions of the teens' own devices. Quick, creative experiments in the field of coding and within the Maker-scene are also part of the deal, the same goes for group gaming sessions on the computer or games consoles in the open area and moreover, there're also LAN-parties combined with sleepovers at *5erhaus*.

As an addition to the open area, there are also planned media projects (partly supported by external partners) through which adolescents can explore central life issues within expanded time resources and open themselves up to new creative possibilities. For example, during talks with younger children one topic comes up again and again: that of online-videos with paranormal contents, and that the kids experience fear while watching them. In collaboration with the *wienXtra-medienzentrum*, *5erhaus* addressed this issue with a cartoon week during semester break. During this week, children had the possibility to produce their own films containing a touch of magic.

The youth editorial team of CU television calls *5erhaus* their homebase as well: they produce television – made by young adults for young adults. CU television is a monthly youth television series by the *Verein Wiener Jugendzentren (Association of Youth Centres in Vienna)* broadcast on *OKTO*, a community TV-channel. Every Saturday, the editorial team is meeting up to work on their programme. Nevertheless, all the production facilities and means (camera, cutting workplace, studio, greenscreen) are always open for all teens.<sup>38</sup>

The focus placed on media is obviously very attractive to all target groups. According to their own statements, also members of staff benefit from engaging with various media, *“this goes for all youth-cultural topics”*, media are becoming social working tools and play a significant role in establishing working relationships. Also in the selection process for potential new staff members, media skills are in demand: *“We need to see a willingness to get involved*

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<sup>38</sup> [www.facebook.com/CUtelevision](http://www.facebook.com/CUtelevision)

*with media and an openness to engage with it. Through your own attitude towards lifelong learning, you're also influencing our visitors' curiosity."*

In 2014, the youth centre recorded almost 40,000 contacts that were made directly with their target groups and more than 2,000 contacts that happened online. Many adolescents are using *5erhaus'* Facebook page to get into contact with their youth workers, either via chats or the messaging function. This way, a great amount of individual counselling and communication occurs, supplementing the offline-contact at the youth centre. YouTube is playing another important role in individual communications and relationship work, as adolescents are sending links to their own films to the team of *5erhaus* in order to receive online-feedback from them.

The principle of voluntary work does not only harbour great opportunities, but problems as well. Concise, quick reactions to and in conjunction with media at the open area of *5erhaus* are a daily occurrence. Longer media-related projects requiring stamina and commitment are hard to plan and to put in action when it comes to resources. All the more, *5erhaus* constitutes a highly commendable example of youth work in Vienna because the needs and wishes of young adults in relation to media are being dealt with in the context of modern everyday life and in response to the kids' needs. Just as our life today is inseparably connected with media, *5erhaus* offers something for each target group; including encounters on equal footing which are oriented towards the lives of young adults. Primarily, these encounters are only possible thanks to the *5erhaus*-staff who accompany their target groups on their way toward participation in our digital society and who look upon media-related skills as a process within lifelong learning – their own as well as that of their respective target groups.

## 7. Recommendations

Youth work that wants to qualify as acting in close connection with actual life worlds has to incorporate media-related life worlds of adolescents and all the issues which are of interest to young people within this context. Concepts in Austrian youth work already seem to acknowledge this to a certain extent.

Study results contradict the image of adolescents as one uniform crowd consisting of "digital natives" who already possess all the competences which are required for equal participation in a digital society. Instead, they highlight the demand for differentiated and need-oriented support of digital media skills.

In Austria, we're witnessing an increasing polarisation of public discourse – one study participant referred to it as "*two parties that are on the verge of drifting apart*". This situation is also caused by media structures which tempt people to stay close to like-minded peers (the "filter bubble"- phenomenon). Therefore, we should put particular emphasis on how to strengthen adolescents' critical and analytical skills. Here, pilot schemes are required which develop methodical approaches suitable for youth work and also put them to the test.

Media critique and analysis with young adults was also identified as one area with the biggest training backlog in youth workers.

Youth workers as adult guardians have the potential of taking a special position in media-reflexive and orientation processes of young adults. On one hand, because they are often believed to work closer to and with the media-related life worlds of adolescents (compared to other adult figures, parents or teachers). On the other hand, youth workers often enjoy a high level of trust. From that, another argument in favour of the importance of relationship work can be derived: effective, media-pedagogical interventions require existing mutual trust.

During talks with young adults, youth workers are predominantly confronted with anything that is concerning, irritating or simply too much for them within the media world. On one hand, one must appreciate the huge efforts that youth workers put into that, on the other hand we mustn't forget the question of just how much support they are lacking, in order to be able to exert their important role as adult partners well. Further training courses can be motivating, however, exchange meetings with others working within the same expertise and who are confronted with the same questions are also crucial. Youth workers don't have to be nor can they be experts in every social and media-related topic there is. Often a credible hint to other, different points of views and perspectives is already sufficient.

From a pan-social point of view, youth work can offer a major contribution towards digital media skill support by potentially reaching even some of those adolescents, albeit not all of them, who are not (sufficiently) supported at home or by formal education systems (compared to schools). Individual learning based on current events is successful on a sustainable level, but it needs time and corresponding human resources.

To equalise the support of digital media skills in youth work only through selective media projects is not enough. Media projects can do so much; i.a. they can expand the scope of possible actions in relation to media in everyone involved or they can boost self-worth through a sense of achievement. However it could well be the case that youth work will show its biggest efficiency through continuous engagement with media-related topics in everyday encounters with adolescents.

One needs to ascertain that media skills/media education is given sufficient significance in youth workers' basic training.

Among areas of action of active/action-based media work, especially digital games seem to be an expandable area in which there lies great potential for youth work. Currently, youth work is only very marginally touching the field of coding/programming – methods and approaches that also work well within the context of youth work, are still under development for the most part. Also, the wealth of possibilities of using tablets in low-threshold, quick media work don't seem to be fully appreciated yet.

Ideally, youth work can offer its target groups a very broad, differentiated palette of possibilities to engage with media: starting with very low-threshold approaches, up to events where media-related interests can be deepened together with like-minded people.

## 8. Screenagers National Study Austria – pivotal findings

Digital media have now become indispensable in some areas of day-to-day work of youth workers. The most essential topic in this regard over the last few years has been social web and online-communication with adolescents. Digital media also serve as production tools – especially cameras – and are used fairly often. Areas that are rather neglected by comparison are digital games and programming/coding.

Study results contradict the image of adolescents as one uniform crowd consisting of “digital natives”. Youth workers perceive adolescents as having “highly varied degrees of media competency”. Generally, young adults are conceded a fair amount of skills, however there are still many areas in which they could improve through the offers of youth work.

First and foremost, successful media education in youth work is a question of attitude: it starts with acknowledging the fact that media are an essential part of young life worlds – which are the main field of action of youth work.

The biggest potential of youth work for supporting digital media skills can be found on an interpersonal level. Whoever is trying to establish a trusting, non-hierarchical relationship with their young clients is at the same time building a good foundation for media-related counselling.

Areas in which youth workers would like to deepen their own knowledge in relation to media are very diverse. What does stand out however, is the wish to have more time to engage in media critique and analysis. We would attribute this to the current situation: In spring 2015, when the online survey was being conducted, the IS and radicalisation were the central issues in Austrian youth work. Later (autumn, focus group talks), we were very preoccupied with the strong polarisation of public discourse due to the refugee crisis.

A good diversity in measures seems to be the key in supporting youth workers in their media-educational responsibilities: apart from specialised further training, many of them would “just” wish for more time in order to engage with media and learn something new. What’s also important are opportunities for professional exchange with other youth workers.

Our case studies show: regardless of the medium at hand, participants gain new experiences and have space to experiment. Usually, there is a lot of pro-identity work going on within media projects: it’s all about testing what you can do, role-game experiments and emulation/role models.

In the talks adolescents show that they are conscious of media-related problems – they also talk about their individual coping strategies, though. They are well aware of critical issues (stress through media, mobbing, addiction) and they are addressing them when talking about their own use of media.