Operating Model for Girls’* Empowerment Centres
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*List of Abbreviations: GEC Girls' Empowerment Centre
GEW Girls' Empowerment Work*
The “Operating Model for Girls’ Empowerment Centres”, that you are holding in your hands, is one of four intellectual outputs prepared in a ERASMUS+ funded project of Polish, Belgian and German feminist organisations, titled “Empowerment Education of Girls and Young Women, Through Educating Youth Educators and Creating Girls’ Centres”. The organisations involved, i.e. the leading Autonomia Foundation in Cracow, Poland, as well as the partners – Garance in Brussels Belgium and “Zimmzicken” at Autonomes Frauenzentrum in Potsdam Germany – are dedicating their work to girls’ and women’s empowerment in different socio-political contexts and in various forms. The goal is to contribute to a more equal and inclusive society by empowering girls’ and young women to play a more active role in all spheres of society.

We intend to 1) develop, test and disseminate an “Operating Model for Girls’ Empowerment Centres” which will include the perspectives of various target groups (also girls’ from minority groups). 2) In order to create, test and promote innovative and inclusive pedagogical approaches and methodologies of empowerment education for girls’ and young women’s (“Empowerment Education Curriculum for Girls’ and Young Women” [13-22)]. These two outputs will be based on good practices from our 3 countries. 3) To develop competencies among educators, youth workers and trainers and equip them with tools to work on girls’ empowerment with diverse groups (“Competence Model and Training Programme for Empowerment Educators”). 4) To promote high-quality empowerment education for girls and young women in Europe (“Model of Girls’ Empowerment – Recommendations and Standards”).

The leading partner of this first Intellectual Output (IO) of the Project is “Zimmzicken” Potsdam, but the texts have been established in a participatory way, taking into account the different professional backgrounds and experiences from Autonomia and Garance. All partners are feminist activists and have contributed their passion for and knowledge of work with girls’ and women’s from an emancipatory perspective. In the following, the basis, topics, objectives and stances of Girls’ Empowerment Centres (GEC) will be explored as well as necessary organisational matters such as Management, Human Resources, Quality Management, Spaces as well as Fundraising and Finances. But let’s first have a look at the legal foundations and more historical aspects of how GEW, as we knew it today, has come to be, or is coming to be. The Model is trying to develop an approach, which is transferable and applicable in different e.g. European states, but at the same time values specific experiences in order to make the idea of opening an Girls’ Empowerment Centre (GEC) as viable and attainable as possible. It is conceived to be a guidebook and inspiration for feminist practitioners, primarily trainers and youth workers, but can also serve as inspiration for decision-makers.

1 We use the term Girls’ (and Women’s) to indicate that our work is addressed at a wide spectrum of individuals at hand, including persons socialised as girls, identifying as girls or having the experience of life as a girl, queers, transgenders, non-binary, all the identities that have anything to do with same form of gender identity, irrespective of the gender assigned at birth. The term was only omitted in situations where it was not originally present, in proper names, in critical descriptions of the patriarchal dialectics and in the heristical passages where we felt it would be somewhat anachronistic to use.

2 Are you a cis-man and are wondering if this brochure is for you? Yes, absolutely! You can be a feminist, a well informed and sensitised ally. This brochure can help you take into consideration how emancipatory empowerment for girls’ and young women’s can be included in your field of work.

This operation model was published with the joint work of:

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Below you will find a brief description of the project organisations:

Autonomia

Autonomia struggles for every single girl’s and woman’s safety and courage, so they can make their own decisions freely, so they can develop, and join their efforts to change the shape of the world together. Our motto is ‘strength, courage, solidarity’. We wish to build an empowered and resilient society, able to resist the discrimination and violence based on gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, ability level or any other factor. As an organisation, we are strongly committed to accessibility and the inclusion of intersectional perspectives. We rely on expertise and extensive experience in the fields of: empowerment; Wer-Do – feminist self-defence for women’s and girls’, or in a broader scope – the prevention of violence and discrimination (including hate speech and hate crimes); civic and anti-discrimination education, development of critical thinking skill, capacities and media literacy, awareness-raising campaigns and advocacy. We do a lot of civic organizing: we created and now run the first Polish Girl’s Power Centre and the Girl’s Repair Café. We support professionals, organisations and institutions through trainings for trainers ("No-one’s Born Prejudiced" and "Wer-Do Training Academy"), design and produce educational material (books, brochures, films). We also run the Cracow edition of the “WATCH DOCS”, human rights film festival; we offer counselling and support in the creation of anti-discrimination policies and solutions for public institutions, e.g. a model of anti-discrimination policy in higher education in Poland, titled “The Anti-Discrimination Standard for High Schools”.

AFZ Zimmzicken

Girls’ Empowerment Centre „Zimmzicken” was established in 1996 and is a project of the Autonomous Women’s Centre in Potsdam, Germany. We focus our girls’ empowerment work on girls’ between ages of 8 and 22, who define themselves as girls’ and/or are socialised as girls’ We invite girls’ who live in Potsdam, including long-time inhabitants, refugees and all kinds of newcomers. We offer activities and opportunities for girls’ in the fields of recreation, education and social counseling. Our goal is to foster self-confidence and assertiveness and to promote tolerance, solidarity, responsibility and social participation. During our opening hours, girls’ can come and go as they like. Each day we offer 2 hours of different activities in the fields of sports, democracy, education and leadership, healthy living and cooking, creativity and "nonsense activities". During school holidays we offer special activities, for example rock-climbing, circus, horse riding, working with modern media or sailing. We emphasize multicultural activities, for example, we invite girls’ from a variety of cultures to share their background to other girls; invite refugee girls’, or organize culture trips like the Vietnamese New-Year in a Pagoda, to the Muslim Sugar...
Feast in a mosque at the end of Ramadan. We are also connected with other centres in Europe, with Poland for example. We have a partnership with a Polish democratic school “Fundacja droga wolna” who helps us to organize meetings with a growing group of Polish girls which we visit each year in order to celebrate the International girls’ day and share holiday activities. We have held International girls’* meetings since 2012, together with Magdalena Reichardt, who is a co-author of this Operating Model.

**Garance**

Garance is a Belgian feminist NGO based in Brussels and active in the field of the primary prevention of gender-based violence. We provide prevention training to more than 2000 women*, children and professionals. To this end, we organise classes in feminist self-defence for different target groups, critically question safety and security policies from a feminist perspective, and carry out action research on gender and public space. We also train professionals in violence prevention in different contexts, e.g. youth work, schools, or centres for asylum seekers. These activities are organised all over French-speaking Belgium, for Garance’s own programme and for partners from civil society and public authorities. On occasion, Garance publishes safety guides and does research and consulting. In this project, we draw from experiences with two of our projects in the field of empowerment education and violence prevention:

- “CAPlable Children” is a prevention project for primary schools where we work in parallel with school staff, parents and classes from 6-12 years on the prevention of violence against children (violence among children, sexual violence by known and unknown adults). We provide these workshops with a feminist perspective for both boys and girls* in mixed gender groups and during school hours in the school building. The project is supported by the Minister of Education and has recently achieved the EYRAS label for good practice in education on relational, affective and sexual issues.
- Project “Merida” provides feminist self-defence classes for girls* to challenge gender stereotypes, strengthen girls* self-confidence, self-efficacy and positive body-image and decrease sexual violence victimisation and the negative effects of previous and subsequent victimisations. We have developed a trainer manual and facilitation tools for age groups 8-10, 10-12, 12-14, 14-16 and offer training of trainers.
2.1 The International Framework

When the call is "women* and children first", what does this mean for girls? Are they even "finer" than women* and boys*, or does this separation of groups deserve protection erase girls* specific social position at the intersection of sexism and adulthood?

The policy-making processes in international organisations exemplify that having a gender equality policy and/or a children's rights agenda is insufficient to meet girls* specific needs and safeguard their rights. Girls* needs and interests are not the same as those of women*, due to generational hierarchies, nor those of boys*, with regard to the gender order. Women's* rights and gender equality policies therefore need to take into account girls* age-specific vulnerabilities while children's rights and youth policies have to integrate the analysis of structural gender inequalities and how they manifest in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.

In spite of this need to specifically address girls* needs and interests, girls* are not (yet) a separate social category of international law. Historically, girls* rights have first been represented as an implicit extension of women's* rights, but subsequent efforts to establish their rights as children did not yet translate into widespread, girl-specific and girl-centred programming (UNICEF 2020). That the international discourse has evolved from "the girl-child" to "girls' rights" (Croll 2006), however, girls* empowerment education is today supported by many international human rights instruments and policy approaches.

Girls* as (young) women*

In the wake of the women's liberation movement, international organisations developed a series of tools to promote gender equality. In 1975 started the UN Decade for Women which resulted in several milestones, such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Commission on the Status of Women and the UN Development Fund for Women. Many governments created gender equality bodies and adopted specific programs. Girls* and young women* appeared only sporadically in the documents of that period as one of many "areas of special concern," with vague language on their access to education and employment and their protection against violence, but no specific measures.

In the Global Campaign for Women's Rights, a coalition of 100 feminist NGOs around the world, led a major advocacy effort under the slogan "women's rights are human rights" (Friedman 2003, Kelly 2005, Reilly 2009). The Global Campaign ascertained that, while women* were victims of violence and discrimination worldwide, existing human rights instruments failed to protect them and that governments neglecting their responsibility to protect women* were violating women's* human rights. Thanks to these efforts, the Vienna Declaration of the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights stated that "the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights" (UN 1993a: 118).

However, the mentioning of girls* as beneficiaries of women's* rights efforts was not yet generalised, a fact exemplified by the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly later the same year that did not once mention girls*. In the same period, UNICEF issued a joint statement with UNIFEM that women's* rights and girls* rights are inseparable as girls* are tomorrow's women*, and therefore, CEDAW should also apply to girls* (Croll 2006).

The Cairo Programme of Action (UN 1994) was the first important international instrument to define, protect and promote sexual and reproductive rights and was a first step into a new direction. It dedicates a section on girls* sexual and reproductive rights as an important part of gender equality. The Cairo Programme calls on governments to eliminate discrimination against girls*, improve their well-being, increase awareness of girls* intrinsic value and "strengthen the girl child's self-image, self-esteem and status" (UN 1994: 34).

This evolution was completed with the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995, due to the commitment of UNICEF, the UN fund for children. The Beijing Platform of Action reserved an entire chapter on "the girl child" that addresses many issues such as harmful practices, access to education, nutrition and healthcare; and gender socialisation and stereotypes and their lifelong impact on girls' self-esteem and choices. The Platform states that "all barriers must therefore be eliminated to enable girls* without exception to develop their full potential and skills" (UN 1995: 2/2) and establishes nine strategic objectives:

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child. Actions to be taken.
- Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.
- Promote and protect the rights of the girt-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.
- Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work.
- Eradicate violence against the girl-child.
- Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.
- Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child.

Among others, the proposed measures include efforts to ensure girls' equal access to extra-curricular activities, calling for "giving priority to formal and informal education programmes that support girls and enable them to acquire knowledge, develop self-esteem and take responsibility for their own lives; (UN 1995: 277d) and for the support of NGOs in their efforts to promote the equality and participation of girls in society" (UN 1995: 284 b). The Beijing Declaration remains the most ambitious international instrument to promote gender equality today, and its provisions establish a clear support for girls' empowerment education. This support has been reiterated in major UN policy documents since, such as the Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (Nos. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) (UN 2015: 13).

On the European level, the Council of Europe has shown a similar evolution: girls* are not yet a specific target group for policy making, but are included in gender equality policies through consistent naming of women* and girls* as beneficiaries of the policy.

Currently, two major gender equality instruments address girls*: The Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CoE 2011) defines girls* as women* and mentions them specifically in relation to female genital mutilation. Children are mentioned as vulnerable persons whose needs should be taken into consideration in policy making and programming, and their specific situation is explicitly addressed in measures concerning the prevention of violence, as well as their protection and support as victims. The Recommendation on Preventing and Combating Sextism (CoE 2019) consistently names women* and girls* together, and all recommended measures therefore apply to girls*, however, the youth sector is not among the sectors explicitly listed as priority for action.

In the European Union, gender equality is a core value and a fundamental right enshrined in the EU Charter (EU 2012). The EU's Gender Equality Strategy (EU 2020) "names girls* as a separate category only in relation to digital literacy (see cp. 5.3: Important Stances) and access to ICT training and professions. However, women* and girls* are used as a combined category throughout the document, so that all provisions also apply to girls*. The only youth-specific measure of
the strategy concerns a future strategy for promoting inclusion and diversity in the Earmark program that will aim to address gender inequality, including the youth sector (European Commission 2014).

Girls\(^*\) as (female) children

In the field of children’s rights, the attention to sexist discrimination against girls\(^*\) started later, in the 1990s. While the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 does not mention girls\(^*\) specifically, it enshrines the principle of non-discrimination, including on the grounds of sex (UN 1989). A year later, the board of UNECE recommended that all its policies and programs include specific measures on girls\(^*\) needs. However, observers noted that the commitment at headquarters did not translate into successful programming at the national and local level, with the exception of girls\(^*\) formal education (Cröll 2005).

UNESCO, the UN’s agency for education, science and culture, has also taken up girls’ rights in its field of competence, focussing mainly on girls’ formal education and cultural participation. In 2008, it declared gender equality one of two global priorities and has since adopted two multi-annual gender equality action plans (UNECE 2019) that are part of the UN-wide action plan on gender equality, UN-SWAP.

The European Convention of Human Rights, the UN’s human rights instruments, do not mention girls\(^*\) explicitly. For example, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention, CoE 2007) is based on the principle of non-discrimination, but does not mention girls\(^*\) specifically. In spite of girls\(^*\) being disproportionately exposed to sexual violence. The current Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016–2021) is more specific, as it prioritises specific opportunities for and among children and the participation of all children. It stresses the need to tackle discrimination and violence and to promote gender equality, including by addressing stereotypes, sexism and sexual harassment.

While youth is not a direct competence of the European Union, it develops youth-relevant policies, focussing on young people’s access to education, employment, participation. Gender equality is a relatively recent issue in these policies, apart from the ever present principle of non-discrimination. However, one of the first European Youth Goals established through a two-year dialogue process in 2017/18 is the equality of all genders. The current EU Youth Strategy (EU 2018) operationalises that goal into seven targets:

1. Tackle discrimination and ensure equal rights for all genders in cultural, political and economic life.
2. Achieve universal awareness of gender-based inequality and discrimination, particularly in the media.
3. End gender-based violence by addressing and tackling it effectively in all its forms.
4. Eliminate stereotypical gender roles and embrace diverse gender identities in education systems, family life, the workplace, and other areas of life.
5. End gender-based structural discrimination in the labour market and ensure equal rights, access and opportunities.
6. Ensure access for equal work and the equal sharing of the responsibilities of care work.
7. Ensure equal access to formal and non-formal education, and that the design of education systems follows gender-sensitive approaches (EU 2018: 12).

The EU Youth Strategy names empowerment as one of three core areas of the youth sector. “Empowerment of young people means encouraging them to take charge of their own lives. This requires the necessary resources, tools and an environment that is willing to pay proper attention to the voice of young people" (EU 2018: 5). Governments are called upon to recognise the critical contribution of youth work to young people’s empowerment and to financially support civil society organisations to develop good-quality youth work.

Conclusion

International human rights instruments and policy documents make a convincing case for girls’ empowerment education. Living at the intersection of sexism and adulthood, girls\(^*\) have specific needs and interests that are not fully taken into account by one-dimensional human rights approaches such as gender equality or children’s rights. Therefore, a specific approach to their empowerment is needed to eliminate all barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights and to the development of their skills and competencies. This approach, girls’ empowerment education, needs the recognition and funding of public authorities that have taken on this responsibility by ratifying international conventions and signing up to non-binding documents.

However, not all efforts flying the flag of girls’ empowerment are actually a part of girls’ empowerment education. Girls’ education is an example for the need to critically question the use of the term empowerment. Girls’ education is generally viewed as crucial for decreasing natality, improving nutrition, health and the education of subsequent generations, and integrating women in the labour market; therefore, education is presented as intrinsically empowering (UNECE 2020). However, girls’ education in international discourse is rarely presented as a tool for girls’ empowerment in and of itself, but rather as a means to improve the quality of life of girls’ birth and future families and the national economy. This is an instance of girls’ empowerment being instrumentalized for the benefit of others that may be rooted in the intention to advocate more successfully for girls’ empowerment. However, the example shows that a de-politicized empowerment frame resists the full inclusion of girls’ rights and girls’ empowerment.

Finally, when implementing girls’ empowerment education, it is also necessary to take the diversity of girls’ social group into account. National frameworks provide standards for specific groups such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006), that recognises the increased risk of discrimination and violence against women\(^*\) and girls\(^*\) with disabilities and calls for their empowerment, in addition to extensive measures ensuring accessibility, awareness and fundamental rights for all people with disabilities. Another example are the Yogyakarta Principles (Yogyakarta 2007) where the call for specific social programs that take into account children’s and young people’s increased vulnerability to homelessness on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. The 10-year update of the principles (Yogyakarta 2017) also includes a provision on the reasonable accommodation for equality on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in education and access to services.

The current hostile climate (backlash) for girls’ rights in many EU member states shows down and reverts the progress in gender equality and children’s rights made in the last decades (Huidobro, Pap 2018). Girls’ empowerment education can help girls\(^*\) to acquire the necessary critical reflection, competencies and social capital to resist traditional gender expectations and play an active role in building a society rooted in the European core values and fundamental rights. For this, official recognition and support for girls’ empowerment education and the NGOs that provide it by local, regional, national and international authorities is indispensable.


2.2 Legal Framework in Poland

In Poland, there are no specific regulations on a national level that would define the activities of initiatives such as the Girls* Empowerment Centre (GEC). Running a centre aimed at strengthening and supporting girls*, teenagers and young women*, preventing discrimination and violence on the basis of gender and other factors, a centre aimed at education for equality and diversity (including anti-discrimination), human rights education, civic and global education, offering free time activities and activities free from stereotypes is not regulated by unified, detailed regulations.

Legal support for this type of activity can be found in the national law: the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, the law on associations and the law on foundations, the law on the education system, the law on the implementation of certain provisions of the European Union in the field of equal treatment, commonly known as the equality law, and other. Through this legal context, Poland is obliged to make every effort to prevent and combat various forms of discrimination and violence against women* and girls*, including incorporation of the gender perspective in anti-violence activities and by countering stereotypes and discrimination in education and through education.

In Poland, youth policy has been developing for several years, understood as a set of legal acts and practices used by public institutions and other entities for the benefit of youth. In areas such as education, culture, social security and assistance, health, labor market, participation in political life functioning in the legal system, but there is no single act directly affecting children and youth. Polish youth policy, however, has not developed systemic solutions, it is not consistently conducted and coordinated. Youth does not have its representation, although there are local youth councils.

There are also no official guidelines or standards addressed to youth organisations and entities working for children and young people that would oblige them to conduct activities taking into account the gender and anti-discrimination perspective.

Unfortunately, in recent years, activities for equality and freedom from violence and discrimination have been heavily criticized and blocked by central and some local authorities. Regarding the regulations that can be taken into account in connection with running the GEC, the following issues will certainly be relevant:

• Who establishes and runs a project: informal group, non-governmental organisation (association, foundation), youth organisation, social economy entity (social cooperative), company, school (public or non-public), public administration unit (related to education, culture, social welfare, health and others).

• What form does the GEC take: is it a program/project (in the field of education, health protection, safety, activation to public and professional life), a day room (school, village, of therapy, at a community centre), youth club or educational centre? Or maybe the so-called a day support facility, which is intended as an offer for families in need of support? The choice of the form will affect what kind of regulations will govern the activities of the centre.

Many forms of activity, especially those which are "public tasks", are regulated by very specific regulations (e.g. family support and foster care system, educational system, municipal self-government, organizing and conducting cultural activities, the law on associations, the act on foundations etc.) – whether the offer will apply only to the period of the school year, or also school holidays – camps, camps, hiking camps, etc.

Each solution is associated with opportunities and challenges if we decide to run the GEC in cooperation with public administration (whether local or central) – we need to think about how we will ensure the possibility of implementing activities for equality, diversity and human rights. What if it turns out that the public institution will not support the initiative aimed at LGBTQ+ children and adolescents, youth with experience of migration and fleeing, and with disabilities? If it is a business – how will we ensure economic availability?

The most important thing is to find solutions that allow us to carry out the mission of the GEC.

2.3 Legal Framework in Germany

This chapter presents the laws in Germany which provide the basis for the offers and measures of GECs in work with children and youth. These laws are binding and explicitly call for the reduction of injustice between the sexes.

Only recently has a third sex and gender, beyond binary thinking (i.e. "diverse") been recognised on state level.

Legal norms in the Federal Republic of Germany

If one visualizes the hierarchy of legal norms worldwide, international and European law are at the top of the pyramid. Germany has signed all the key conventions. In this way, Germany commits to ensuring that human rights are granted.

There is no relationship of superiority or subordination between the constitutional order of the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Community legal order. In its principle, European law takes precedence over national law which in the end leaves it up to interpretation as the relation between the Federal Law and the European Law remains inconclusive (Höreh 2013).

Legal basis for empowerment work with girls

The most important legal basis of girls* empowerment in Germany is Article 3 of the Constitution (Grundgesetz GG), which explicitly calls for gender-equitable measures:

1. All persons shall be equal before the law.
2. Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and work towards the elimination of existing disparities.

For a deeper insight into the legal requirements for the declaration of a third gender in state authorities, see the European Commission on the Sexual Orientation Law (ECOSL, 2018).
disadvantages.
3. No one shall be discriminated against or privileged because of his or her sex, ancestry, race, language, home and origin, faith, religious or political views. No one may be disfavoured because of his or her disability (Article 3 (1–3) Constitution-GG).

In 1994, the Constitution was supplemented by the sentence under Article 3 (2), that the legislator must act wherever women are disadvantaged and discriminated against.

The relevant legal basis for gender-equitable youth work in Germany is formulated in particular in the Eighth Book of the Code of Social Law (SGB VIII). It states that children and young people have a right to be promoted in their development and to be educated to become autonomous and socially responsible individuals. In order to realize these rights, young people are to be supported in their individual and social development and disadvantages are to be reduced and avoided (§ 13.3, SGB VIII). In respect, children and young people are – in accordance with their stage of development – to be involved in all decisions of public youth welfare that affect them (§ 6, SGB VIII).

§ 59 establishes that the equal rights of girls and boys are to be promoted (§ 93, SGB VIII) and that “the different life situations of girls and boys must be taken into account” when determining the services and fulfilling the tasks of youth empowerment.

§ 11 stipulates that the state shall offer youth work available to young people, which promotes their development, is linked to their interests, is “co-determined and co-designed by them, enables them to autonomy and encourages and leads them to social responsibility and social commitment” (§ 11.1, SGB VIII).

§ 13 contains explanations on the content of youth social work. It includes socio-educational assistance to compensate for social disadvantages and to overcome personal impairments. Assistance in this field is intended to support young people in their schooling and vocational training and to promote their integration into the world of work as well as their social integration (§ 13.3, SGB VII).

§ 14 lists offers of educational child and youth protection in addition to the services provided by youth welfare. Those offers are intended to “empower young people to protect themselves from harmful influences and lead them to critical faculties, decision-making ability and to personal responsibility as well as responsibility towards their fellow human beings [and in addition are intended] to better enable parents and other guardians to protect children and young people from harmful influences” (§ 14 paragraph 2 SGB VIII).

Since Germany is a federal state, in which the states (“Länder”) have comparatively far-reaching competencies, the Constitution of the State of Brandenburg (LV) (the state in which “Zweckzweck” is situated) is to be cited. It has also committed itself not to favour anybody or discriminate against anyone on the basis of “descent, nationality, language, sex, sexual identity, social origin or status, disability, religious, philosophical or political beliefs or on racist grounds” (Article 12(2) LV). Article 12 also states that Brandenburg pledges to take effective measures to ensure equality between women and men at work, in public life, in education and training, in family and in the field of social security. This also applies to the equality of the living conditions of persons with and without dis-abilities (Article 12(3–4) LV).

References

2.4 Legal Framework in Belgium

The Belgian youth sector comprises different types of organisations. Two decrees, one on Youth Organisations and the other on Youth Centres and Houses, define the characteristics of the organisations and their access to accreditation and basic funding (Conseil de la Communauté française 2000, 2009). Youth Organisations are NGOs the public of which is composed of a majority of young people (3–30 years) and which promote their expression and develop certain competencies and qualities defined by decree. They are divided into five categories: youth movements, thematic movements, youth services, federations of Youth Organisations and federations of youth centres.

Another decree oversees Youth Clubs, Meeting and housing centres and information centres for young people, which all cater to young people between the age of 12 to 26. Both decrees make the accreditation depend on the missions of the organisations, including the goal to pave the way for young people to become CRACS (“Citoyen.ne.s Responsables, Actifs.ives, Critiques et Solidaires”), i.e. responsible, active, critical and solidarity citizens. They also must form part participation and a critical awareness of social realities in their beneficiaries.

Other services cater to young people, e.g. the Accueils en Milieu Ouvrier (“Open Environment Reception/Open Environment Facilities”). AMOs offer social support based on individual assistance and counselling and on communal action. They differ from Youth Clubs with respect to the social-work dimension of their services and the individualised assistance to young people in relation to their families. Youth Clubs, on the other hand, focus on promoting sociability among young people.

Youth organisations are required by decree to apply a “perspective of equality, justice, democracy, solidarity and to promote the meeting and exchange between individuals, social groups and cultures in all their diversity” (Conseil de la Communauté française 2009). However, the decree also allows for, and provides additional support to, actions for specific target groups, such as working-class youth, survivors of discrimination or young people with disabilities. Theoretically, this creates the base for the development of gender empowerment education, but in practice, very few initiatives do so. Similarly, Youth Clubs and other services financed by the
second decree have to be accessible to all young people and promote the encounter of young people from different horizons.

Therefore, the legal framework of the Belgian youth sector adopts the heterogeneity, diversity and mixing of young people as central principles. However, the diversity and mixing are not defined specifically and seem to focus on socio-economic and cultural diversity. "Mixité" is framed as an objective in and of itself, a goal to be achieved and a guiding principle for any program offered for young people to acquire civic values because it is thought to guarantee equal access to knowledge, services and, in fine, emancipation. It is seen at once as a tool and as an indicator for gender equality. This explains the way that gender diversity is approached in the majority of organisations working with young people.

While the legal framework of the youth sector in French-speaking Belgium promotes gender diversity and mixed spaces, there are no legal obstacles for single-gender activities. Some legal provisions could be used for programming groups or activities for girls* as a discriminated group, but they are seldom used. The conceptualisation of gender and gender equality in the youth sector falls short of an explicit support for girls* empowerment education.

References


Obviously, the history as well as defining factors of Girls* Empowerment Movements are incredibly rich and a whole library could be filled with the different aspects and facets, which influence and concern this topic.

The focus here is on European perspectives, since the cooperating partners are Polish, German and Belgian. The corresponding different experiences, based on national local developments and laws will be depicted in this chapter. Even in this context, not all influences, backgrounds and movements can be presented exhaustively. The focus will be on formative happenings for the work of Garance in Belgium, Autonomia in Poland and Zintzickerin in Germany. Since the different initiatives are rooted in very diverse circumstances, a range of insight to the GEW that has been done is provided.

3.1. Girls* Empowerment Movement in Poland

The living situation of girls* and young women*

Girls* and young women* in Poland face inequality, injustice, prejudice, discrimination and violence in every aspect of their lives. Girls* in Poland have the lowest self-esteem among all European countries (WHO 2016). However, the Polish government, on both central and local level (barring the few exceptions, e.g. Warsaw, Gdańsk, Łódź or Poznań), hardly provides for the prevention of infringement of the basic human rights of young and adolescent girls*, concerning the right to education and development; the right to healthcare, the right to live a life free of violence, to equal treatment etc. No public programme is in place to prevent and counter violence in a gender-sensitive manner. There are no countrywide public programmes to provide education on the specific topics of anti-discrimination, gender equality and sexual identity and orientation. Schools have children learn from textbooks which imprint stereotypical gender roles and prejudices against non-heteronormative people. There is no reliable sexual education nor an education on reproductive health. In addition gender-based discrimination is clearly visible in the curricula, the textbooks, the everyday life at school and in the didactic. Different Expectations are being imposed on boys* than on girls*, which is particularly visible in regard to disclosed cases of sexual violence (which are usually ignored or erased). Moreover pupils who do not fit into the tightest norm of obligatory co heterosexuality are being stigmatised. With a few exceptions, teachers do not obtain any training in their professional development on the prevention of gender stereotyping.

The issue of ‘gender neutrality/blindness/ignorance’ is present in the absolute majority of organisations for children and youth. In addition, Poland lacks comprehensive research on the situation of young and adolescent girls* from a gender-sensitive perspective.

The HERstory of girls* emancipation and empowerment work

Poland actually does have a rich emancipation history (cp. for term used: Carroll 1976) which also includes girls* and young women*.

Between 1896–1906 Kazimiera Bużydowa, the Chairwoman of the Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne Szkoły Zespolonej (Society of High Schools for Girls) established the first High School for girls on Polish territory where girls could take state graduation examinations. Bużydowa initiated a campaign for women’s university admission in 1894. In 1897 the campaign succeeded and the Universities in Lviv and Cracow decided to open their philosophy and medicine faculties for women.

Since 1918 women in Poland have the right to vote. One of the most renowned actions, that enabled women’s voting rights, was conducted by Maria Dulębińska. Even though she formally had no right to stand for election, she received 400 votes which in the end were regarded as void.

The involvement of girls and young women in political life was prominent and constant during the partitions of Poland (end of the 18th century), the WWII Nazi occupation, socialist times, the “Solidarity Revolution/Movement” in the 1980’s as well as during the transformation period and it remains strong nowadays. Girls* and young women* were and are active in the workers movement, trade unions, LGBTQ+ movements, sport.

The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego or ZHP) with its majority of female members, lacked a gender-sensitive perspective. Nonetheless the largest youth organisation in Poland is adopting positive change towards gender equality.

The feminist movement and empowerment work for young and adolescent girls*

For quite a long time the second wave of feminism in Poland had not undertaken activities, focussing on the empowerment of girls*. The first initiatives for young and teenage girls* were (and many still are) organised by adult women*. The first feminist organisation that brought adolescent girls* together was founded only in 2016. Currently, a number of NGOs exist and deal with empowerment work as well as the prevention of gender-based discrimination and violence against girls*. There is also a growing number of organisations providing teacher-trainings in the field of equality and anti-discrimination education.

In order to keep this chapter brief, we can only refer to a selection of empowerment initiatives in Poland after 1989. One of the first initiatives to organise activities for girls* were the feminist camps, since 2002, by an informal group called ‘Sisterhood Street’ (Ullica Siostrzanna). In 2003 first Wen-Do – feminist self-defence and assertiveness workshops for girls* from 7 to 10 years of age took place.

The “Towards the Girls” association (W stronę dziewczęcia), established in 2006, was the first organisation whose mission and vision clearly states empowerment of girls* being the main goal. During 2012–2013 the “Association of the Practitioners of Culture” (Stowarzyszenie Praktyków Kultury) ran a project called “Daring Girls**” (Dziwne Dziewczyny) and in 2014 and 2015 the Feminiteka – “Girls Fly High” (Dziewczyny mierza wysoko) project.

In 2015 the “Foundation for Positive Changes” (Fundacja Poztywowych Zmian) and the “Women Transmission Association” (Stowarzyszenie Kobiec Transmisji) organised the first Girls Rock Camp in Poland as members of the Girls Rock Camp Alliance (GRCA). In 2018, “The enForest” (ewuszczonie), organised a feminist forest camp to invite teenage girls* into the ‘girl’s business’ of chopping wood, climbing trees, lighting bonfires and tracing the wolves.

There are also other initiatives, such as the “Girls as Engineers” (Dziewczyny na politechnik) which aim to encourage girls* to study new technologies.

Girls* empowerment work. A new chapter

The majority of the above examples were occasional activities or single events. However, in the recent years there was a shift in programmes, which have been designed for long-term activity. The „WeHave/voice Foundation“ (#AMyGirls) was established in 2016 as the first formal initiative of six teenage girls* with a mission to promote the rights of women* and empower fe

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5. Wen-Do is the longest running Women’s Self Defence organisation in Canada and was established 1964 by Anne and Dr. Niel Page.

6. “The Girls Rock Camp Alliance is an international membership network of youth-centered arts and social justice organisations” which provides resources in order to build “a strong movement for collective liberation” (Girls Rock Camp Alliance 2020).
On December 19, 2011 the United Nations declared this day to be the International Day of the Girl Child in order to recognise and promote the unique challenges girls face around the world. This global occasion is to highlight and address also the fulfillment of human rights (UN 2020).

Since 2018 a commercial magazine "Outer Space for Girls" (Kosmos dla dziewczyniek) is published, which sets itself the goal to empower girls and create an environment without any stereotypes that would limit their potential.

The most long-term and complex initiative is the activity of the Autonomia foundation, which was established in 2007 and exists "for every single girl and woman’s safety and courage, so they can make their own decisions freely, so they can develop and join their efforts to change the shape of the world together". Autonomia has been taking up girl empowerment activities, with as much of an intersectional perspective as possible. Autonomia does its best to make its spaces and events accessible, both physically and economically, as well as sensitive to the fact that girls differ when it comes to background, orientation etc. Women Do trainings are also offered for young and teenage girls and organised the first celebrations of the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11th 2015. Autonomia’s Girls Power Centre (GCM) is the only year-round space in Poland where girls can build up their self-esteem, reclaim their bodies, voices and their subjectivity. They have a space to develop their agency and decision-making competencies, their independence and abilities to create healthy and meaningful relationships. The Centre is a space that was created by girls and for girls and with the support of some allies. The GCM is based in Krakow, Nowa Huta district. Autonomia also launched the first Girl Repair Café (Dziewczyńska Kawalerska Naprawacz) in 2019. The Girl Repair Café combines the empowerment of women and girls with the education about responsible consumption and ecological issues. The workshops and classes are run by both teenage and adult women with different backgrounds, affiliations and various educational paths. This publication is a part of a project to go further and set up a network of GECS all around Poland and other countries.

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On December 19, 2011 the United Nations declared this day to be the International Day of the Girl Child in order to recognise and promote the unique challenges girls face around the world. This global occasion is to highlight and address also the fulfillment of human rights (UN 2020).
3.2. Girls’ Empowerment Movement in Germany

When looking at the background of girls’ and women’s empowerment movement in Germany, it is important to take into account fascist ideology concerning women, by which Germany had been largely dominated in the years before 1945, but that naturally did not vanish all of a sudden by itself afterwards. Women were to identify as wives and as mothers of multiple children, in order to be a pillar of racist and militaristic politics. They were not to be active in public and were excluded from certain positions such as judges. They also did not have the passive right to vote, i.e. were not allowed to be voted for in politics. Of course this text cannot go into detail, but fascist right-wing politics such as the prosecution and murder of queer, lesbian, Jewish, too liberal, resisting and disabled girls* and women* shall not be forgotten.

West Germany

In the 1950s, in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) at the time, young women were to be prepared for a future in which child care, motherhood and being a wife were at the centre of socialisation. By the end of the 1960s, in the course of the Second Wave Feminism in West Germany, this conservative role of women and restrictive youth work came under criticism. Gender-homogeneous services were to be abolished in favour of coeducation. At the end of the 1960s, a home campaign by the extra-parliamentary opposition directed society’s attention to the inhuman conditions in German welfare education. Girls and young women who were placed in assisted living experienced dramatic conditions. There was neither schooling, nor education, they were simply exploited as cheap labour. They suffered from violence and lack of medical care. In the 1950s, the youth welfare service for girls was aimed at maintaining the female role as chaste and caring housewife and mother.

In the wake of the West German student movement and Second Wave Feminism in the early 1970s, the way girls were treated in social work corresponded with the feminist awakening in society. In addition, self-governed youth centres were established to provide opportunities for leisure activities and political influence. The aim was to create spaces without repression and external determination (Diemer 1973: 10). Visitors from the proclaimed middle class wanted to work politically, and the working class youth claimed space for recreation and relaxation. In this combination of class struggle and women’s emancipation, the politicised women of left-wing groups defined girls from working class families as a new target group for political agitation. This double marginalized group of women was now to be mobilised and liberated. With socialist-feminist concepts, the working-girl approach was intended to awaken the girls’ awareness of their socially oppressed position and to develop possibilities for a change. This approach failed in the early 1970s because it had too little to do with the everyday life of girls and young women. In addition, there were recurring sexual assaults from boys on girls within the self-organised centres. In order to counter sexual assaults, girls* and young women* were taught to behave and to dress in a less provocative manner. It was not the aggressive boys who were taught to act differently but rather the victims of sexual violence, the girls*. The way girls* were treated in social work corresponded with the social and societal status of women* at the socio-political level of development in Germany at that time.

The second German women’s movement fought against the structural disadvantage and discrimination of women* on all levels of society. Feminist approaches to youth work and youth education emerged in the 1970s (Wallner 2003). "Mädchenarbeit" (literal translation: girls’ work, i.e. work with girls) as a concept emerged in the West German states at the end of the 1970s from a feminist critique of the social condition of girls*. Youth work of that time was rightfully so accused to cater mainly for boys, “jugendarbeit ist jugenarbeit”. “Youth work is boy work” was a slogan of that time. Almost all youth activities and projects were aimed at boys and therefore reproduced inequalities and disadvantages of the sexes, rather than reducing them. The first GECs and girls’ projects were established by the end of the 1970s, as a part of the political and feminist struggles. From the mid-1980s onwards, more and more institutions adopted approaches and methods from the girls’ projects. Since 1990/91 the general requirement, according to Article 9 SGB VIII is to take the different life situations of girls and boys into account, to reduce the disadvantages by promoting equal rights for girls and boys (cp. also Legal Framework Germany). This definition introduced a normative reference framework for gender-specific and gender-homogeneous services for the child and youth welfare. Moreover this legitimised the gender focus in social work which led to the GEW.

East Germany

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR) there were no gender-homogeneous offers for children and young people within the welfare system. All areas of the so-called “Volksbildung” (public education) targeting young people were co-educational. Collective education was given priority in all areas. The educational guidelines were based on the understanding that it is imperative to put aside one’s own needs, interests and wishes in favour of the socialist community. Gender was not taken into consideration as GDR socialist rhetoric declared the struggle for equality of humankind to be won. Women felt emancipated, as far as it was possible in a “dictatorship of the proletariat”. They mostly felt self-determined and economically independent. Cases of violence against women were denied and the differences in income (gender gap) were concealed and declared as bourgeois relics of class society, which remained to be resolved. This is why only after the reunification of Germany, towards the end of the 1990s, girls’ projects and GECs became more popular. The focus of the newly founded girls’ projects were based on recreational and advisory services. GECs offered training and professional orientation which, due to mass unemployment and the newly created gender segregation on the labour market during the aftermath of the (re)unification, became most needed. One of the aims of girls’ work at that time was to maintain the understanding of emancipation and self-sufficient working women prevalent during GDR times. In addition, attempts were made to prevent the traditional West German role model of women as housewives* becoming the self image of girls*. Following these objectives, five of the GECs that still exist in the state of Brandenburg, the Easter German state in which “Zimtziener” is situated, were established between 1991 and 1996. In addition a wide variety of girls’ projects were put in place, who sadly fell victim to cuts of the public funding in the early 2000s.

Girls’ work has always been and still is under a strong pressure, as many believe that equal rights and gender justice have been attained and therefore deny the legitimacy of gender specific social work. Since the 2000s, work with girls* has been developed on the basis of the empowerment approach. A re-politisation of the services on offer is happening in the direction of opening up spaces for multifaceted identities (e.g. diversity and variety related to gender, sexual identity, social or geographical origin as well as experience of racism).

Migration is a part of Germany

With regard to the current focus on diversity in GEW, a short digression on migration to Germany since 1945 may be permitted.

As early as the 1990s, a public debate on immigration flared up in Germany, under the influence of increasing migration to Europe (van Mol, Valk 2016). Since then, concepts and attitudes of public institutions such as politics, administration, culture, education, health and church have
been directed at the deficits of immigrants and their education (Nacro et al. 2019). In fact, millions of refugees and displaced persons came to Germany after World War II. They were followed by “Gastarbeiter*innen” (“guest workers”) in Western Germany, “Vertragsarbeiter*innen” (“contract workers”) in Eastern Germany, “Spätaussiedler*innen” (late repatriates), “Jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge” (“Jewish contingent refugees”) and asylum seekers and, more recently, the refugees from war zones such as Syria and Afghanistan (van Moi, Vaik 2016).

Immigration movements are processes that have been common for centuries and enable us to experience a diverse society and an ongoing discourse about values and goals, which can only be achieved through respect, tolerance and the willingness for discussion (Garber 2019). Today, the focus of attention in GEW is on diversity, on different life choices and on the constantly renewing possibilities of identification. This perspective opens up new educational processes in the context of intercultural girls’ work. It enables girls to actively shape the society they live in. A society in which people in girls’ work with different socialisations (e.g. languages, cultural practices, self-understandings) are recognised as valuable and equal pillars of a society. In achieving this goal, an intercultural and intersectional GEW serves as a shelter from discrimination and violence. At the same time it offers a free space in which girls’ work have the opportunity to discover their abilities and grow beyond themselves. It also includes the need for a diverse staff, in which employees with different levels of experience, social and cultural backgrounds enrich the daily work routine. For example, multilingual colleagues contribute to the intercultural opening of a GEW. In this way, girls’ work with different social backgrounds feel recognised in their identity.

3.3 Girls’ Empowerment Movement in Belgium

In Brussels and the francophone part of Belgium, gender equality issues are discussed in terms of “mixinét” (i.e. the mixing of genders, or gender diversity with regard to the youth sector) and “non-mixinét” (i.e. single-gender groups and services). The term gender is mostly used only in its sense of acquired differences in attitudes and behaviors, but almost never includes an analysis of structural inequality and unequal power relationships between girls* and boys*. For example, gender stereotypes are thought to affect girls* and boys* equally, in disregard of empirical research of the material and psychological implications of stereotypes that differ substantially between the two genders. An approach aware of, and aiming to change, gender hierarchisation, unequal resource allocation or interactions between boys* and girls* that structure, reproduce and legitimate gender inequality, is sorely lacking.

In today’s youth work in French-speaking Belgium, gender diversity comes up in individual publications, analyses and sometimes also activities for young people. Nearly all of these efforts aim for a greater gender diversity, i.e. co-education of girls* and boys* in mutual respect and cooperation. In this perspective, gender diversity (and equality) is thought to be achieved when quantitative indicators on the presence of girls* and boys* are attained. Most of the initiatives in the youth sector consider single-gender activities and groups as an inherent problem, as a kind of gender segregation that negatively impacts gender equality because it is thought to reinforce gender stereotypes through preventing openness towards “difference”. Gender diversity is seen as a necessary condition for gender equality because it allows for raising awareness on stereotypes, learning mutual respect and cooperation, building shared gender cultures and promoting social integration. However, all actors in the youth sector point out the overrepresentation of boys* and young men* in their organisations, in particular in Youth Clubs. Therefore, promoting “mixinét” for them comes down to making a place for girls* and tackling their exclusion.

In the Belgian context, gender-specific activities therefore are not represented as a means to empower girls*. When “non-mixinét” is evoked at all, which happens quite rarely, it is as a temporary measure to overcome the lack of gender diversity (i.e. to first attract girls* to, then, integrate them in the mixed gender groups and activities), but not as an emancipatory practice as such. As a result, gender-specific activities for youth workers, and they remain a rarity in the youth sector. In the following section, we will explore how gender equality is tackled in the two major forms of youth work: youth clubs and youth organisations.

References


Practical examples – Youth Clubs

Youth clubs (Maisons de Jeunes) are more active than Youth Organisations (cp. Legal Framework in Belgium) on the issue of sexism and gender equality because they provide a space for young people’s daily lives and sociability where the collective and relations among young people are central. Gender regimes and gender relations play a much more central role to the interactions between girls* and boys* in this context. Youth workers observe not only gender unequal access to the Youth Clubs, but also the unequal participation in different types of activities and the spatial hegemony of boys*. While youth worker training on sexism exists, the practical application of tools and concepts depends on the personal commitment of individual youth workers and does not represent a generalised change of attitudes and practices in Youth Centres.

In 2008, “Collectif Mixinét” was created to address the overrepresentation of boys* in Youth Clubs in Brussels’ disadvantaged neighborhoods through the empowerment and participation of girls*. Youth workers from different Youth Clubs identified girls*
needs and demands and decided that gender-specific activities were necessary for girls* to appropriate space in the Youth Clubs and develop confidence. During the project, girls* frequenting different Youth Clubs established a network to act together on their situations and advocate for their inclusion. For example, during a girls-only weekend, the girls* imagined a new tool, the “disembarkation”, a group of girls* would pop up unannounced at a Youth Club and take over the facilitation during the opening time. Disembarkation aims to put boys* in a situation of minority that usually is only experienced by girls* and to empower girls* as actors of the facilitation. The collective also organised an exchange of practices among youth workers.

* In a study day on sexism in Youth Clubs organised in 2017 in collaboration with Garance, youth workers concluded that a numerical equality in frequencies did not automatically allow for gender-equal interactions among their beneficiaries. The professional and volunteer teams needed to reflect in depth on their own representations and practices. Specific activities to promote gender diversity and deconstruct gender stereotypes were identified, and “non-mixité choisie” (activities for consciously defined target groups, such as girls*, non-binary youth and/or LGBTIQ+ youth) were considered as an important tool to liberate young people’s expression on gender relations.

* The Youth Centre CEMEA published the brochure “Living and encouraging mixed*” in which youth workers can find indicators for further reflection and activities to challenge their own practices and promote an egalitarian form of gender diversity. For example, single-gender and mixed-gender arrangements alike have to be well thought out, single-gender spaces are not automatically safe, but can become so through a reflection on other power inequalities that cut across each group (e.g. racism, ableism, classism).

In general, it is necessary to integrate any reflection on gender equality and girls* inclusion in Youth Clubs in the broader social context, as other power inequalities are also at stake. Some Youth Centres have to address specific local problems linked to racism, delinquency or violence and have to focus their activities on these issues. However, gender also plays a major role in this kind of social problems, and a gender analysis can provide useful insights in how to tackle them.

Practical examples - Youth Organisations

For most Youth Organisations, gender equality is not a central issue. Only two federations promote facilitation tools and critical analyses on gender issues, i.e. "COJ" and "Relie-F". In their case, some of their member organisations are working more specifically on gender issues and participate in the collective process of creating these tools and analyses. For example, the Youth Organisation "Les CHEFF" works specifically on LGBTIQ+ issues. "Relie-F" is the most active on gender issues and has among its 89 stances on a supported, inclusive and pluralist youth sector two sections on gender equality and the inclusion of young LGBTIQ+ people.

Girls-only organisations have existed in Belgium for more than 100 years. The “Girls’ Guides” is a youth movement that was created in 1909. Belgium saw the first “Girls Scouts” in 1915 and the foundation of the “Catholic Guides” in 1919. After World War II, the pluralistic “Belgian Scouts” and “Guides” merged to create the first co-educated youth movement in Belgium. The Catholic guides opened their organisation to boys later in 1965, but adopted co-education as a principle in 1979 only and continue to leave the choice to each group to organise along single-gender or mixed gender lines. They are today one of the very few Youth Organisations that offer single-gender activities as a goal and of itsself and not as a transition towards gender diversity.

However, gender-specific activities do not automatically make for girls* empowerment edu-
References


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This chapter focuses on the selection of the target group as for work with girls, since defining the target group is crucial to the selection of programs offered and therefore demands of GECs.

**Girls**

The main and most important target group of GEW are girls (cp. 5.3. Important Stances, Intersectionality). This came to be by the effort made to establish girls as an independent target group in education and youth welfare (cp. 3. Socio-political Roots of GEW). Girls own life situations, problems and needs were and are highlighted in contrast to those of boys. Gender was and continues to be an essential category that determines the opportunities and limitations in the lives and social position of people, with a disadvantage for girls and young women. However, society today is characterised by tendencies of pluralisation and individualisation and demands for a far more differentiated view of girls. One greater example of the successful struggle to accomplish a step towards a non-binary perspective on gender is the introduction of the third gender option in three European countries so far (Austria, Malta, Germany) (Holzer 2018). The legal extension of gender concepts tasks work with girls with broadening the view of social gender and what a girl is (cp. 5.2. Topics in GEW). Differentiations (categorisations) in GEW such as ‘immigrant girls’ or ‘lesbian girls’ or ‘girls with disabilities’ do not go far enough and do not adequately address the different lifestyles and needs of girls. The new task of GEW is to raise awareness of the fact that girls vary greatly no matter what their cultural and ethnic background is, their social environment, family circumstances, educational level, religious orientation, regional affiliation and personal abilities, wishes and problems. They therefore require different offers, activities and adapted methods of social work. Girls with different socialisation experiences need and want a non-generic view of their worlds. At the same time, coming together with girls who also share the experience of migration can have an empowering effect, strengthen their self-image and help to question social attributions.

The aim is not to develop concepts exclusively for specific ethnicity and life-world references. The aim is rather to develop sustainable concepts that leave room for convergence, solidarity, the recognition of differences and to shape and partake in a diverse society.

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**Target group orientation using the example of Mädchen treffen “Zimtzicken”**

**Girls and young women**

In the Mädchen treffen “Zimtzicken” (GEC) in Potsdam, our target group are girls and young women between 8 and 22 years. We are basically open to all girls and young young women within this age group. We have no admission requirements or restrictions with regard to nationality, religious affiliation, ethnic origin and so on. In some cases, age-segmentation must be planned in order to meet the needs of the respective target group adequately. This approach is rooted in the different stages of psychosocial development.

We particularly address girls from immigrant families in order to accompany and support them, when they arrive in their new living environment. In addition, our services are aimed at girls with disabilities who would otherwise be severely restricted in their opportunities to participate in regular leisure activities. Since the GEC is also used by girls and young women in precarious living situations, we must generally ensure that the financial costs for participation are affordable for everyone.

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According to the psychologist couple Erikson, a young person goes through various phases of psychosocial development which are accompanied by special challenges and needs (Erikson, E., Erikson, J. 1998).
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5.1 Empowerment as a Strategy and Tool

Since work with girls is not automatically empowerment work and GES finds itself to be doubted from different sides, the concept and implications of Empowerment must be enlightened and explained in depth.

Empowerment (PL: upewnienność, Fr: pouvoir diriger) is an approach used since the 1960s in the fields of emancipatory activities, prevention of violence as well as social work, psychiatry, business, healthcare and management. Since the very beginning it has been directly linked with feminism and emancipatory pedagogy. Empowerment uncovers the cultural and systemic and structural nature of discrimination and oppression, and subverts the existing power relations. It is where a language of rights is used, rather than of support or help.

The strategy of empowerment is a process focussing on the reinforcement of individuals belonging to marginalised groups (in our case: women* and girls*), especially minority groups, (intersectional) approach through a combination of activities that allow (to gain) control over their lives, interests, spaces, rights and language in its capacity as a means of perceiving and dealing with both their sexuality and their lives. Empowerment also includes the theoretical and practical application of various tools to make one’s voice, attitudes and opinions public to support agency, decision making and influences the awareness of one’s own rights. Part of our professional understanding is hence to learn from voices and experiences that are being marginalized in our society. It mobilises other assets essential to create change on both individual (own personality) and structural (within one’s social network or systemic level within the political, public and societal sphere). The goal is to achieve the capacity to establish rules, social protocols and rights, to access information and services as well as the justice system and the factual implementation of rights; also to achieve an accessible market, political and civic representation and management of public resources.

Why is empowerment among the key feminist strategies?

In the patriarchal context, girls* and women* are socialised towards traditional female gender role, which is – compared to the male one – constructed as less powerful (e.g. to have no confidence in one’s competencies (e.g. a ‘billy blonde’), unable to make one’s own decisions (A woman is folej). She says no but thinks yes), and dependent (the man is the head and the woman is the neck), in the financial and legal field (think of discrimination on the work market, the so-called gender contract, or the legal system and practice); and so on. Women are denied the abilities and competencies crucial to empowerment – the freedom to make choices, to be active and have control. These are regarded as ‘unnatural’ and ‘unfeminine’, as opposed to the stereotypical feminine characteristics, which include being inactive/passive. What is especially prominent, is the physical socialisation into the female role, evident in the system of control over women’s* bodies and bodily expression. As a result of this, the empowerment of women* and girls* accounts for the freedom of both mind and body. As such, empowerment is a strategy, a method, a process and also a status to which GEC aspires. When viewed as a process, empowerment works as a spiral, not as a cycle. This understanding implies empowerment to be a process which cannot be halted. Disregarding the history of anti-feminist backlashes, empowerment staff believes the reversion of the empowerment of women* to be temporary, as the progress made by and for women* is ascending.

The challenges and barriers to empowerment

Empowerment strategy in mainstream politics and the actual process

Any attempt to operationalise, structure or institutionalise empowerment and emancipatory education can lead to the process becoming blocked, overly rigid, warped or malformed, and result in the process of change being frozen, while the undertaken activities deteriorate into false colours or even a contradiction of the initial meaning and goal could occur.

Empowerment targets the existing system of social hierarchies and power structures. Thus, it is a challenge to include empowerment in mainstream politics and activities, regarding e.g. efficient violence-prevention strategies. Empowerment is change. The changes which we (as educators) can influence involve negotiation, collective conceptual work and decision-making. They involve having control and power with and over a certain situation in which we find ourselves.

Limited access to resources and entanglement in token activities vs. the initiation of empowerment.

Empowerment is at its peak power when it comes from the grassroots level. However, marginalised or discriminated individuals are often dependent on organisations and institutions such as social services, and do not have a sufficient possibility to efficiently become autonomous, self-sufficient and self-driven. And yet, it is exactly those individuals, who are the actual subject of empowerment, that have the best knowledge of their own needs, and any third parties wielding control over them may further reinforce their exclusion and discrimination. The resources and engagement of third parties (resulting from them being in a privileged position) should serve to disclose inequalities, provide better access channels to rights, information, assets as well as the decision making processes and fora. One possible strategy is to act in support of both self-organisation (into informal groups, organisations, associations) and self-sustainability.

Isolation and antagonising vs. Solidarity in the struggle against oppression

The structures of oppression sustain the divisions among various minorities and marginalised groups (and within the groups), isolating them from one another and thus depriving them of the power they could wield if they acted together. As this is the case, liberation calls for a spirit of collectivity which should be founded upon solidarity. Which in turn is only made possible if the victims (and people concerned by discrimination and violence recognise one another and their common interest in liberation.

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9. The man is the head and the woman is the neck (Polish: mężczyzna jest góra, a kobietą szyja is a sexist and heteronorm based allegory deeply entrenched. Its meaning is quite confusing, although the man is the head (de- cision, power), the neck (woman) shakes the head – it affects where the head is turned, how it moves (whether it nodes or denies). The saying indicates the alleged unnatural power of women over men, in the hidden way that women can have power and influence in decisions. This is a message for women – do not reach for any open form of decision making, power. It is not appropriate for a woman to express her opinions openly, women should not make a decision about something, but should use methods, tricks, to have an impact. These are ‘female’ ways, i.e. ‘female power’. Many women-included in patriarchal realities and are involved in reproducing this stereotype – especially those women who want to think of themselves as having influence, not deprived of it, thinking I actually have an influence on my man’ – husband, partner, boss – is just invisible, a bit tricky. This proverb and stereotype are reflected, inter alia, in court judgments in cases where a woman appears in a group of people who have committed a crime – very often a woman is punished for an ancillary perpetration, or even for leading a criminal group.

10. The term power refers to the characterisation of power suggested in ‘The International Manual for Empowerment’ (Riley, Tetter 2013).
In recent years, fashion companies started to promote and sell feminist slogans, which is considered "faux feminism" (false feminism). The placement of feminism in capitalist structures, falling to address specific feminist issues, as e.g., the exploitation of girls* and women* in the production process of clothes, cannot be tolerated. This form of promoting feminism, on the expense of women* and girls*, goes against the understanding of empowerment promoted in this publication.

No formulas, no magic bullets, nothing ‘ready to wear’

There is no universal formula for empowerment-oriented projects or programs. It is impossible to create a universal program, which would be adequate and relevant for all groups of women* and girls*, since the gendered and intersectional dimension of power, as well as the factors which can shape the empowerment process, vary greatly according to culture, dominant religion, geopolitical and historical context and so forth. What is possible? It is possible to define the frameworks for such activities.

Empowerment – the development of competencies

The four dimensions of power

The empowerment process requires the recognition of the four dimensions of power that its participants are (re)gaining. These are as follows (Henry, Felter 2013):

- power in: refers to self-confidence and the feeling of self-worth, to the broadening of one's independence and self-drive, self-awareness and the ability to make use of one's own power to enable change;
- power with: refers to the ability to create alliances, a community of the oppressed, to organise and mobilise others, to act together in the spirit of communication and respect to i.e. the autonomy of others and diversity;
- power to: refers to the idea of reimagined, collective leadership which should serve the change and the decision-making process, the participation in identifying and naming the norms that regulate the way societies work, in order to be able to take part in their (re)formation;
- power in order to control one's life: refers to the control over one's own life in all its dimensions, the control over the conditions that influence one's life, and to the capacity to make meaningful choices.

The levels of intervention

Empowerment-oriented activities should refer to the following levels: individual, social and group level and structural level. Empowerment becomes whole and durable when it is firmly anchored in the inter-related changes on all three levels and on all spheres of empowerment work, which are presented in the following paragraph.

The spheres of empowerment work

Emancipatory education

Creating educational situations is a key part of any empowerment activities, it describes education that goes far beyond school education. The educational situations should be based on what Paulo Freire called "emancipatory education", a type of education whereby girls* develop emancipatory competencies and a critical analysis of their own existence in the world, and the way in which this world is functioning.

Banking Model of Education

Alienated minds

A crucial tool the dominant groups use to keep up the status quo is found in the system of socialisation and education, to which Paulo Freire in his “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” referred as Banking Model of Education. The banking model of education relies on a sturdy hierarchical structure and the division into the ones who teach and the ones who are taught, those who are in possession of resources and knowledge and those who are lacking them. The knowledge is transmitted by those who teach to those who are subject to teaching in the form of deposits to receive, memorize, and repeat. The banking model of education sustains the social structure tailored to exploitation (i.e. violence) by teaching the subjects into submission and oppression and as such it is useless in the (re)gaining of liberty.

Alienated bodies

Socialisation (and thus alienation) is imposed not only on the mind, but the body as well. The body becomes trained into the better fulfilment of roles and tasks assigned to a certain social group, which in our case are women* and girls*. Alienated bodies are stripped of the possibilities to initiate and participate in acts of resistance in both the private and public space. The tools used to alienate the body are found in, on the one hand, the socialisation process, and on the other, in the system of rewards and punishment, which includes physical and sexual violence, or threats thereof, against the discriminated or subjugated group.

Internalised oppression and learned helplessness

Internalised oppression (not necessarily on a conscious level) pertains to the internalisation of derogatory and suppressive convictions on one’s own group – which has a tremendous influence on the dynamics of the liberation from oppression. The recognition and exposure of internalised oppression is essential to the empowerment process.

The focus on micro-practice without influencing the system and its structures

The goal of the empowerment of particular individuals and groups lies in the achievement of social change, in the field of the relations of power, influence, resources and rights. In order for such an achievement to be possible, a balance between individual and systemic perspective must be maintained (the micro and macro perspective).

Language and empowerment

With its functions of both creating and mirroring reality, language is of crucial importance to the possibilities for change. The manner in which we describe the world may facilitate or hinder the empowerment process.

‘Feminist’ clothing and the commodification of feminism

The commodification of feminism describes the placement of feminism and empowerment of women as a new target market – a product that can be bought (purchased with money).  

As it is evident in the research of empowerment-education-based programs in the USA during the 1970s by Paulo Freire, their ‘effectiveness and efficiency’ measured i.a. by the number of participants, their attendance and the percentage of those who actually complete the process/project, were superior to the scores by the traditional programs based on the banking model of education, praiseworthy and support (Freire 1979). Regrettably, the institutionalisation, dependency on public funding or the realisation of projects/programs within the conditions derived by the state structures, the focus on ‘results’ and bureaucratisation all lead to a severe drop in their effectiveness, and thus to stagnation. The system is naturally interested in creating such conditions whereby any change is subservient to the system is hampered or blocked.

Read more in: Zeser 2017.
Comenences
The components of an (empowering) education include the acquisition and expansion of cultural competence (access and knowledge of cultural practices), instrumental competence (move as active agents in the material world of nature, things and goods), social skills (engage with other people, taking on social responsibility), personal competence (deal with one's own world of thoughts and feeling, being and belonging (Rauschenbacher 2013)).

Attitudes/Awareness
- self-worth,
- self-efficacy,
- self-confidence,
- pride in who you are,
- moral courage,
- self-awareness, access to one's own resources (skills, attributes, talents, experiences and networks),
- experience of agency, decision-making and group solidarity.

Knowledge
- rights,
- decision-making structures and social mechanisms,
- structural barriers,
- recognition of and access to information sources and the tools to research and process information,
- reclaiming of individual and group his- or herstories.

Skills/Social Skills
- critical reading, thinking and writing,
- communication and consensual collective decision making,
- assertiveness: in particular the competence to express one's own opinions, formulate interests and set boundaries,
- the means of opposition and resistance,
- individual and collective reactions to violence and other oppressive practices, and the prevention of such,
- the modification of one's own behaviour and role, broadening the girl's* scope or taking up new ones that were previously unfamiliar or inaccessible,
- introducing changes in tasks and activities,
- impacting structural changes through the means of expression and influence,
- civic activity,
- involvement in and accountability of joint actions of solidarity in order to introduce (constructive) structural change.

Expression and communication
Empowerment and emancipatory education are geared to dismantle the culture of silence, hence the particular attention to the process of liberation, recognition and reclaiming of the competencies to express oneself and communicate, both verbally (image and speech) and non-verbally (music, arts, motion in all its forms and spaces), as these are essential to express resistance against constriction and oppression.

The design principles of empowerment work
A program based on the empowerment perspective sets the following goals (cp. 5.3 Important Stances in GW)
- Subjectification of girls* and women*;
- (Re)gaining individual and collective control over their own lives, interests, spaces, rights and language;
- (Re)gaining the means of formulating and expressing opinions and attitudes;
- (Re)gaining the influence on decision making and institutions;
- Nurturing the skills to resist violence and discrimination and to practice and enact autonomy and solidarity;
- Convey that the resistance to violence and discrimination is an issue of human rights and justice, and not charity;
- Recognises the discrepancies between strategic and practical needs;
- Works to revise and deconstruct the relations of power, e.g. those based on gender;
- Reveals the social and political dimensions of individual experience, including the experience of daily life;
- Recognises and impacts the following dimensions: individual, group/social, structural;
- Dismantles the culture of silence about oppression and violence;
- Engages both mind and body, since both are subject to alienation;
- Creates the space to recognise and name situations of oppression or discrimination;
- Reveals the intersectional nature of oppression;
- Relies on a non-coerced group process;
- Recognises the expertise of participants (every girl is an expert of her own issues);
- appreciates and makes use of girls’* competencies;
- Cedes the decision making to the participants who determine the design and planning, the distribution of means and assets, the realisation and evaluation of the project or program. It should be the participants who create every single dimension of the process;
- Develops the skills to act together, make decisions by consensus, and/or reclaim one's rights, liberties and subjectivity;
- In-creasing the emancipatory competencies (such as critical thinking) and the means of expression and communication, as well as the tactics of resistance;
- Creates opportunities to gain power, recognition by and influence over the society and its institutions;
- Provides constant opportunities for involvement, activity and the experience of one's own agency, power and influence with others and over the society, its structures and institutions.

In Conclusion:
An intersectional perspective is needed in all offers. Categories such as gender, skin colour, age, social background, ability or sexual orientations do not work alone, but in their interlocking they lead to multi-faceted inequality and oppression. Intersectional work in the GICs contributes to raising the girls’* awareness of various forms of oppression, to reflect on their own discriminating behaviour and to change their behaviour.

As a general rule, the offers are oriented to the needs of the girls*. This includes, for example, help, advice and support for demands that must be met before girls* can take part in leisure activities. Low thresholds must also be ensured throughout the planning and design of the program offered. This means, for example, that invitations should be written in simple and/
or easy language, the spaces should be designed barrier-free and offer protection against assaults. And finally, participation fees for special activities must be as low as possible, so that nobody is excluded for financial reasons. It is equally important to create opportunities for the girls* to put their own ideas and wishes into practice and to experience self-realisation.

In addition, the activities should be suitable for identifying and breaking with stereotypes of gender roles rather than manifesting them. In the work in the GECs it is necessary to take a global perspective. This should take place on the level of employees and users. Furthermore, offers must be designed in such a way that they open up new perspectives for the girls*, inspire them and increase their interests. The projects should be challenging, so that the girls* have a motivation to step out of their comfort zone. They should give the girls* strength to achieve their goals regardless of their economic and physical situation.

5.2 Topics in Girls’* Empowerment Work

When being in charge of a GEC, the staff must be aware of the subjects that are concerned and may arise in the work with girls*. This way staff will be able to achieve the competencies necessary for approaching the topics professionally and in an empowering way. This chapter deals with topics like Body Positivity and Sex Positivity and places them in the context of GE extended. In addition, it examines media and their significance for young people and social work, answering the question how GEW and social work can be offered online. An insight to the connection between media representations and body images and eating disorders is also offered in the following chapter. It also addresses the protection of girls* and young women* in the digital space (cyber bullying). Finally, it defines and explains substance abuse, sexualised violence and the function of GEW in protecting those affected.

**Body positivity**

The term “body positivity” describes first and foremost a movement that fights for body acceptance and a positive approach to bodies in all their diversity. This includes the perception and the handling of one’s own body, but also the description and reflection of one’s body by other people. Bodies are subject to body politics, which must be reflected in social work (Thiessen 2011, Siebers 2001).

The body is a controversial and contested area in the life of every girl. It is being discussed in the media, by friends and also taken up in science. The body is not only to be understood materially, it also describes an objectified “body” which is simultaneously suppressed (Butler 1993). These practices of attribution and description take place in the everyday life of every girl and are subject to social changes. For this reason the topics body and physicality are of great importance in GEW. The aim of the body positivity approach is to help girls* to develop a conscious, strengthened and positive relationship to their own body and to describe it in a self-determined way. For this reason it is the task of GEW to place the topic of physicality at the centre of debate and to develop a shared critique of this system. This deconstruction can only happen with socio-pedagogical methods that are tailored to the needs and requirements of girls* and young women*. The attitude of the (social) pedagogical specialist is fundamental to the work. Girls* and young women* observe the performance of women* in their environment and partially adapt their behaviour. Youth workers who are active in (intercultural) work with girls* must see themselves as part of the direct environment of girls* and young women* and derive their emancipatory function from within. Therefore youth workers have to reflect upon their own bodies and understand it as a (positive) resource.

**Physical dis-ability**

People’s bodies are subject to (social) attributions which construct and evaluate social norms of the body (how small and fit a body has to be). This compiles to a normative understanding of bodies which imposes non-inclusive depiction of what an able-bodied person has to look like. This narrow understanding creates further barriers for people with dis-abilities and hinders their access (Stein 2008). Normative body attributions can only be countered with a body-pos-itivity approach, which can be applied not only on able-bodied but also dis-abled bodies, notwithstanding the objective of the focus being on dis-abled bodies. The body should be emphasized

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14 For a deeper discussion on gender and the performative aspects of it, see Butler 1988.
15 The spelling “dis-ability” illustrates the social construction in which people with dis-abilities are hindered from fully participating in society by the normative ideas and barriers imposed (Stein 2008: 353).
as a strong resource and not understood as deficient or as deviating from a social norm. It is only through a lack of access that exclusions are created. Hence a clear concept of programs has to be created, oriented towards the needs of people with disabilities, the goals always being to diminish the lack of access. A more accessible design of the facilities is also very important. The possibility to participate in programs in more accessible rooms empower dis-abled girls* and young women*. This eliminates or reduces their dependence on assistance in everyday activities, which is the core of empowerment work.

Sex positivity

Sex positivity is strongly connected to the topic of body positivity. The history of the sex positive movement began in the 1980s and goes back to the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (Reich 1976). The sex positivity movement aims to liberate sexuality from religious, conservative and normative restrictions and sexual morals. Sex positivity advocates sex as a practice of consensual coexistence and free expression, emancipated from the constraints of heteronormativity, binary gender and kinship. Especially with regard to the sexuality of girls*, education about consent, contraception, abortion and STI/STD has a high priority in GEW (Fahs et al. 2016). A shift in discourse must take place in which female sexuality is no longer seen as a danger and part of heteronormity, i.e. being controlled by others.

The topic of consent has been and is an important topic for young women* as well, not only since the #metoo movement: No means NO! and a non-no does not imply consent – only a loud and clear Yes means Yes!

In summary, sex positivity describes the freedom to do what they [the girls] want, and the freedom from what they do not want to do (Fahs et al. 2016: 1014).

Media education in GEW

Social media and the communication via online platforms has become one of the most, if not the utmost, form of exchange. Media structures (and) everyday life, contributes to the formation of and information on identity and makes different worlds and realities accessible. Stepping-out of everyday life through the use of social media, enables girls* to experience the world around them and experiment with different scenarios of social reality. Disregarding the benefits media has, it often contains stereotypical representations of norm that undermine the diversity of what being a girl means (e.g. the "beauty standards") 15. Therefore media education i s of great importance in GEW. Youth workers have the task to support girls* and young women* questioning media issues media competence, i.e. the critical questioning and consideration of sources as well as information about one’s own rights (data protection rights) and copyright, is a central task in the work with young people. On the one hand, youth workers have the task of supporting girls* in achieving a balance between their online and offline presence, e.g. by transferring the online topics into the interaction between users and youth workers. Thus, digital youth work cannot only take place virtually, but must also generate topics that are worked on in real life between users and social workers. On the other hand digital youth work, and digital/online offers create the chance to make intercultural GEW participative and reach a more diverse group of girls* (see pp. 99. Public Relations). This means that for digital GEW, technical resources are needed and therefore to be obtained/purchased. Only if the GEW supplies the girls* with technical equipment, a successful and inclusive program for all the girls* present (disregarding their social and financial situation).

The digital space as a place of exclusion

With the shift of communication experiences of exclusion, discrimination and bullying are shifting from the daily life into the digital world. The forms of exclusion presented online differ from the non-digital world and are partly more difficult to identify. This trend is increasing and challenges youth workers to include special programs and methods targeting cyber bullying.

What is bullying?

Bullying describes an “aggressive behaviour that can occur in all social contexts where people (children and adults) meet regularly in which the victims cannot easily escape their attackers” (Waisaw 2020, quoted by Smith et al. 1999). The intentional behaviour takes place at work, in schools, public spaces, within the peer group and online (cyber bullying).

The currently most common online platforms, such as TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have features (forms to fill) that can be used to report bullying. Disregarding the offers given by the providers, cyberbullying has to be addressed both online and offline. In situations such as this, youth workers and the GEW are essential. Only when those affected are empowered and know whom to turn to, they are enabled to report the cases.

Online procedure

- Find out what is being spread online. It is often helpful to not react to insulting statements of impulse online;
- Use screenshots to document the case. Block the postings so that they cannot be distributed (any) further;
- Report the postings to the platform operators/providers;
- Find a way not to use social media during cyber bullying. Not surrounding yourself with it can relieve the emotional stress;
- Introduce Internet security systems so that, for example, no fake profile can be created under a false name;
- Change the access details of the account;
- Possibly delete the account (and create a new one, if wanted).

Offline procedure

The face-to-face approach is comparable to other methods in problem-oriented work with girls*.

- As soon as a suspicion exists, ask the girl* concerned and observe the behaviour;
- Ask what the girl* concerned wants;
- Take the problem and the girl concerned seriously;
- Ask about the situation and the people involved;

16 Barriers are not only defined from a spatial point of view, they describe different restrictions on access and participation depending on the needs of the individual, which are socially, socially and politically present. Thus, the term barrier free would shift the social mix of exclusion. The term “more accessible” was chosen because there are no barrier free spaces.

17 For a deeper insight into the patterns of interpretation girls* and boys* have of beauty ideals in the media, see Zlotz et al. 2008.

18 The Child Helpline International has received more than 1.2 million requests for help in the years 2002 to 2012, which specifically concerned bullying. The study and further materials on Child Helpline International can be found in different languages at: https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/

19 In this section the thematic focus is on bullying. Other forms of exclusion, such as discrimination and racism also occur online and require targeted action. There are helpful handouts online on this topic, see Titley et al. 2014.

20 The term “bullying” was first used scientifically in Scandinavia and is defined as group violence against individuals (Waisaw 2020).
• Document the case;
• Consult professional support (psychosocial services).

In the offline procedure, the aim is to devote the focus from the offending or hurtful statements. It is important to note, that once an image is uploaded to social media, the terms of use and regulations of the platform apply. The social media platforms do not require any special permission or consent for the use of the content. By using the platform, consent is given at the same time, unless separate settings have been set on the profile. Copyrights outweigh personal rights. This means that the person, who takes the picture, and not the person who is shown in the picture, decides on its use (cp. 9.3. Public Relations).

Digital work with girls22

Digital work with girls focuses on the digital change of institutions, approaches and practices. Proactive use of and involvement with digital media and technologies is elementary in a positive media-pedagogical approach. As a resource, digital tools for example in decision-making processes can increase the opportunities for girls and young women to participate (e.g. via online surveys). In addition, digital youth work offers the possibility of online support for girls and young women who are in difficult situations. As an activity, digital work focuses on learning-by-doing and is at the same time a practical activity. Digital content can be produced collectively and underline the empowerment character of digital tools and their use. In this context, topics such as coding/programming and IT can be brought more into focus. Girls and young women often do not get sufficient encouragement from their environment or educational institutions to test and develop their programming skills. Digital work with girls offers the opportunity to empower and promote girls and young women in this area.

Trigger warning:

The following section deals with the topics of eating disorders, addictive drug use as well as abuse. As these topics affect many people, they are emotionally challenging and may trigger personal experiences and traumatisation, we would like to provide a trigger warning at this point.

Attention!

If you feel triggered by the mentioned topics and wish for support, please turn to your local support centres and helplines.

Eating Disorders (ED)

An eating disorder is a disease. The Eating Disorder Foundation defines eating disorders as an "...unhealthy preoccupation with food, weight, or appearance that interferes with everyday life. Disordered eating behaviors and eating disorders are not a choice; they develop due to a combination of an individual's genetics, social environment and psychological health." (The Eating Disorder Foundation 2020).

Substance consumption

Girls and young women from very different lifestyles, ages, with different disabilities and different cultural backgrounds come to us and seek varying degrees of support in questions relating to addictive substances. Recent studies have increasingly shown that substance use and addiction prevention must also be gender-sensitive and gender-appropriate. Reasons for the development of addictions like, in stress, crises, conflicts or traumas and can be dealt with in the context of a GEW (resource oriented approach) and the assistance of a specialist in the field of gender-sensitive addiction prevention.

What can GEWs do and not do?

• Youth workers can accompany and support girls* and women* in addressing their consumption. Abstinence is not a prerequisite for participating in the GEC activities;
• Youth workers can make information accessible on the effects of drugs, on the services offered by advice centres and psychological support and, if necessary and desired, youth workers can refer them to detoxification hospitals;
• Youth workers can accompany and support the girls* and women*, if a person close to them is at risk of addiction or is addicted;
• The counselling is confidential and no information is passed on without the girls* consent. They do not have to give their name and, of course, they are advised free of charge.
• Again, youth workers should refer to a specialized centre.

Sexualised violence

Sexualised violence (rape, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment) is an omnipresent topic and affects the entire society, therefore this problem concerns society as a whole and especially women* and girls* – the main victims. Sexualised violence describes unwanted and unsolicited sexual advances and/or actions. It is being exercised verbally, non-verbally, physically in daily life as well as online. Sexual violence can be experienced in all parts of life, at work, at school, online, in the family environment, during leisure activities, in romantic and sexual relationships and in the circle of friends. Any incident of sexualised violence is violence against women* and girls*, and as such, a violation of their physical and psychological integrity. These acts are criminally relevant and must be outlawed.

A disturbed eating behaviour is related to body images. Research shows that dissatisfaction with one’s own body (body image) is associated with eating disorders. Research shows an over-valuation of bodies and the focus on it leads to unhealthy body image disturbances (Mond et al. 2011: 724). For the practice of GEW this means that topics such as body and appearance have to be addressed in a very specific way. Excessive materialisation and reflection is not helpful. Moreover youth workers should avoid criticising their own body, as they do in influence girls* through their own body behaviour (even unconsciously). Disturbed eating behaviour must be recognised and addressed at an early stage as eating disorders are contagious. This refers to social interaction and eating behaviour. Peers adopt eating practices, which in certain context, through repetition, becomes normalised and thus the eating behaviour becomes socially "infectious" (cf. Bould et al. 2016; Festinger, Htte 1954). Specialists should be consulted for this purpose as they have the knowledge and experience to deal with eating disorders.

Copyright and the data protection rights are subject to governmental control systems and these differ from country to country. For this reason it is difficult to make a general statement.

This chapter is based on the European Union publication: Developing Digital Youth Work (European Commission 2018). This booklet is translated into 24 languages and gives an overview of methods and practices in digital youth work.

Eating disorders and other issues also affect boys* and men*. In this chapter, however, the focus is exclusively on the experience of young women* and girls*, as they represent the target group.

21 In November 2018 the first UN resolution focusing on sexual harassment was published, calling on states to recognize violence against women and girls (UN General Assembly 2018). Previous resolutions deal explicitly with gender harassment, especially in the context of discrimination and general harassment and abuse of power (UN SG Bulletin 2008). In the UN Resolution of 2018, for the first time, structural reasons and risk factors for the protection of affected women* were explicitly protected. In this resolution, the protection against sexual harassment is extended to the digital space (cf. UN General Assembly 2018).

22 Copyright and the data protection rights are subject to governmental control systems and these differ from country to country. For this reason it is difficult to make a general statement.

23 This chapter is based on the European Union publication: Developing Digital Youth Work (European Commission 2018). This booklet is translated into 24 languages and gives an overview of methods and practices in digital youth work.

24 Eating disorders and other issues also affect boys* and men*. In this chapter, however, the focus is exclusively on the experience of young women* and girls*, as they represent the target group.
Safer spaces, such as GECs, serve to protect against sexualised violence and to help survivors navigate the legal and support system. But also service points and advice centres serve as shelters. Unfortunately, these places of social counselling are sometimes difficult to reach, and young women* and girls* concerned feel ashamed to visit them. For this reason, the role of the GEC should be considered separately here.

The role of GECs
GECs are defined as safe, non-violent spaces, and therefore a clear statement against sexualised violence should be formulated. This should be displayed visibly to all girls*.

The question arises as to what GECs can achieve beyond this. A written statement of self-understanding is important here. This can be used to formulate guidelines for action and assume responsibility (see mission statement).

What can a GEC achieve?
At the outset, an awareness of the possible courses of action should be created and later on communicated in the process. If a girl or woman reports sexualised violence, the following points must be observed:

- The feelings of the girl* affected must be taken seriously;
- Experiences must not be questioned. GEC are partisan spaces for girls* and support them but do not offer psychological support (specialists have to be included);
- Solidarity with the affected girl* is a priority;
- The protection of the girl* is in the foreground;
- Support must be offered explicitly and not assumed.
- Further actions can only be decided in consultation with those affected. Only after, legal actions can be taken, psychosocial services visited and the case being legally documented.

To ensure that these steps can be taken, the topic of sexualised violence should generally be discussed with girls*. Girls* must be empowered so that in case of experiencing or witnessing violence, they know what to do and where to get help.

ATTENTION!

Should a girl* report sexualised violence, please inform yourself at the beginning about the service points to be reached and what you can do. Only a well-informed youth worker can provide informed care for girls*.

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The Eating Disorder Foundation (2020): What is an Eating Disorder?


For individual country information, see UN Women: Global Database on Violence against Women.


### 5.3 Important Stances in Girls’\textsuperscript{*} Empowerment Work

Beside objective and measurable qualifications, GEW is profoundly rooted in essential and defining specific perspectives, approaches and ways of behaviour, i.e. stances.

**Respect, acceptance and meeting as equals**

It is the task of the staff members of a GEC to engage in the topics/interests of the girls\textsuperscript{*} and to trust them and their process of becoming an adult. The realisation of interests of girls\textsuperscript{*}, youth workers must meet them with the greatest possible openness and respect. Irrespective of their own ideas, they must be open to the wishes, needs, interests and the most diverse topics that the girls\textsuperscript{*} are inclined to discuss. Respect means that we act together in a way in which no girl is being excluded. Differences in opinion and world view are seen as a strength.

**Anti-racist work**

The society is permeated by racism (racist structures) and therefore a reflection on racism must also take place on an institutional level. Dealing with racism primarily involves white\textsuperscript{26} people examining and questioning their white privilege\textsuperscript{27} and dominance in society (critical whiteness\textsuperscript{28}). Being white always means being privileged in relation to people affected by racism (Piesche 2013). This insight is essential, because only after the recognition of this power structure one can reflect upon possibilities of how resources have to be redistributed. This includes a constant (self-)reflection which is never completed, as the racist structures of society persist. Suggestions for the practical anti-racism GEW as follows:

- Acknowledge the limits of one’s own knowledge, perception and experiences;
- Accept upset as part of the process;
- Be open to criticism;
- Recognize the legacy of mistrust of Black and People of Color (BPOC) towards the white people;
- Withdraw from teaching authority and the desire to have the last word;
- Provide and redistribute resources and accesses;
- Enable empowerment, make room for BPOCs;
- Organise trainings on critical whiteness and empowerment;
- Learn and engage in anti-racist language;
- Learn about the history of colonialism and its influence on today’s society;
- Don’t presume the self-definition of a BPOC (Ronacher 2017: 15).

The staff of the GEC is not only open to girls\textsuperscript{*} with different experiences of discrimination, of all national origins and of the experiences of discrimination but also explicitly create space for different cultural, linguistic and religious lifestyles. At the same time, the centres openly and hon-
estly reflect on the stereotypes and racist ideas of normality that shape them.

In this way, structural change can only take place when staff train themselves, exchange views on anti-racist work and, if necessary, consult a supervisor focusing on anti-racist education. The biographical experiences of the girls* are accepted, reflected and anchored as a strength and resource, an essential basis for social interaction and the process of mutual cultural participation. Differences and similarities are resources of diversity, and the recognition of this fact forms a basis for solidarity.

Conclusions for practical work:
- Staff and girls* learn how to recognise and fight discrimination/racism and exclusion;
- Different forms of discrimination are being called out and made a topic;
- Discrimination and racism are thought and understood intersectionally;
- In solidarity with girls* who experience discrimination, youth workers rise up for the protection of human dignity, democracy and diversity.

Intersectionality

The jurist and human rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “Intersectionality” to describe a form of understanding identities, in which experiences of discrimination are articulated and experienced on the basis of several categories constructed by society (multiple discrimination), e.g. discrimination based on gender, sexuality and national origin.

Crenshaw filled the gap in the law where experiences of discrimination were seen as a only one-dimensional.

Intersectionality, then, was my attempt to make feminism, anti-racist activism, and anti-discrimination law do what I thought they should – highlight the multiple avenues through which racial and gender oppression were experienced so that the problems would be easier to discuss and understand.

(Crenshaw 2015)

The understanding that women* and girls* experience multiple discrimination poses a new challenge for GEW. In intersectionality, discrimination is understood as a part of the relationship between users and youth workers, too. In this way the experience of discrimination is not reduced to simply another dimension to an experience girls* have. Puntz suggests a discussion of the following questions (Puntz 2015) in order to promote a reflective social work approach:

- Which categories of difference and discrimination are (not) important in the speech or actions of my client or of me as a social worker?
- Which positions and asymmetrical relationships become visible here? To what extent do I appear as a privileged person in this relationship and in what role?
- Which situational, context-related impact of lines of difference becomes visible? (cf. Riegel 2012: 50, quoted according to Puntz 2015);
- How do I talk about my clients in the team? How do I communicate orally and in writing with partners, sponsors, media etc. about my clients?
- Which categories of difference do I (not) use to describe my clients?
- Which categories of difference does the institutional framework construct? Which form

of norm orientation does the commission provide? In which way is the organisation’s work for involved in the reproduction and production of difference and discrimination in different contexts? And how is this reflected in my speaking and acting towards my clients?

“The personal is political”

This slogan of the 1960s women’s* movement is still valid today. Women* still experience inequality, for example in employment and remuneration. Many women* are dependent on their partners (husbands) and are threatened with poverty in case of a divorce after many years of marriage. The ongoing efforts made by women*, activists and feminist movements create changes which can be observed. Nonetheless, women* nowadays are still regarded as the person responsible for care work in their families, in relationships and at work. The question of how youth work is shaped and how power relations can and will be shifted, cannot be answered in private only. It must be discussed, worked on and changed politically in order to create equal opportunities, not only for girls*, but especially for LGBTQI+ youth, girls* with disabilities, for girls* and women* of Color (BPOC) as well.

Girls* as a active members of society and activists

Girls* and women* still do not enjoy equal rights and representation in society, politics, within families or at school. Hence, youth workers need to specifically support the active participation of girls* in civil society. In GECs, girls* are given the opportunity to actively influence social processes, to question their role in society and shape society according to their own ideas.

Consent and voluntary participation

The voluntary character of participation lies at the base of GEW. Every conversation, every activity offered, every interaction must be voluntary and subject to approval. Collective activities e.g. require a joint decision making. The methods for reaching a common consensus (small groups, interest groups, not participating is always an option) can vary and comply with specific situations. Still, the goal remains for every girl to learn how to make her own decisions. Voluntariness presupposes that the girls* are always informed about what they are getting involved in and are aware of the possibility to change their mind and make a new decision at any time. In this way girls* feel taken seriously, motivated and empowered to take responsibility for themselves and others.

LGBTQI+ youth

The term LGBTQI+ covers different sexual desires and descriptions of identity (lesbian, gay, bisexual – both pan, as well as asexual – transsexual and intersexual, questioning and/or queer). This multitude of identities shows that there is not one community and not one single identity. Of course this diversity also shapes the lives of girls* and young women* and is automatically negotiated within the GEW.

Important tips for the work:
- Educate yourself about sexual identities and desires – use the correct terms;
- Create acceptance – make different lives and lifestyles visible by incorporating them into the work;
- Acknowledge complexity – giving girls* and young women* room to discover them-

28 For a deeper insight into the connection between intersectionality and social work, see Robbins, Nayak 2020.
29 Already in the black women’s rights movement in the USA, intersectional approaches were advocated, which resulted from the experienced marginalisation in the white feminist women’s rights movement (Wagnerbach 2012).
30 This slogan is attributed to the feminist Carol Hanisch, who published an essay in 1969 entitled “The Personal is Political” (Hanisch 1969). “The Personal is Political” was the slogan of second wave feminism (from 1960s onwards) and called for women* to not be concealed under the cloak of the private. For a historical embedding of the slogan “The Personal is Political”, see Grant 1993.
Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

Marshall B. Rosenberg created Non-violent communication as a tool for conflict resolutions, aiming to improve communication processes during a conflict (Rosenberg 2019). This method is of use not only for the staff and their team but is also fundamental to create a safe and non-violent space for girls*, concerning speech and action.

The model of non-violent communication follows a four-step program (Puddle Dancer Press 2020):

- **Observing** – first the (communicative) situation is observed, then the action is formulated objectively;
- **Feeling** – it is formulated (first-person message) which feeling prevails in this moment and why;
- **Need** – out of this feeling a need (first-person message) is formulated for the other person in order to deal with the situation;
- **Request** – the need is turned into a request that can be followed by a concrete action.

The staff should also be able to negotiate conflicts without fear but with courage. With the help of a proactive approach to conflict, girls* experience conflict resolution methods understanding that in spite of an argument, youth workers remain a friendly and respectful interaction and recognize aggression as a human trait and offers girls* various opportunities to express their feelings of hurt, fear and anger productively. From the respectful interaction with each other (among the staff, among the girls*, and in the interaction of staff and girls*), first confidence, and later on trust will develop. These two qualities are the basis for following processes. Non-violence is a prerequisite for maintaining the GEC as a shelter and a safe place.

The freedom to dream and experiment

GEC's provide a free space in which girls* are allowed and invited to dream big. The motto “Everything is possible” and “The sky's your limit” does not remain an empty promise but accompanies girls* utopies and building of ideas by trying out different strategies.

Renounce the hurry, savour the moment

Hurry and stress cannot only be harmful to the body but also hinder creativity and the desire to explore new things. GEC’s oppose the hurry and create a space for deceleration. The staff acknowledges that each individual in the group has a different sense of time and an individual reaction to (both inner and outer) hurry. Disregarding the possible reasons for a change of speed, such as state of consciousness, feelings, tensions, relationships and other preconditions, the programs offered by social workers should always aim to include different needs at different times. The staff give the girls* time to enjoy the moment, time to “linger in the moment,” to recognize and understand one’s needs, to feel one’s own tempo and that of the others. Only by then everyone learns serenity and experiences a sense of luxury.

We are a community and we function in D.I.Y.

Behind the letters DIY there is a philosophy that is of great importance in GEW. “Do it yourself” is about using one’s strength to make a project or idea come true and to awaken a wide range of interests. The most important thing about this principle is self-realisation and development. Experiencing that “I can do this myself” encourages girls* and reinforces their strengths and abilities. At the same time, a sense of solidarity can be fostered in which the girls* draw from the knowledge available within the group and feel secure in the community.
Religious practices
With reference to Art. 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the staff of the GEC consider religions to be of equal value in the context of religious freedom.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

(United Nations 1948, Art. 18)

Since the 1960s, feminist thought and practice criticises religion as a patriarchal institution that oppresses women*. Some feminists see the only possibility for emancipation in the detachment from- and overcoming of- religion, while others strive to reclaim patriarchal religions from within. Within the feminist movement, the first approach remains dominant (Foxworth 2017).

The youth workers in GEW have to acknowledge the life realities of young women* and girls*, which also include religious self-understandings and beliefs. Especially in adolescence, during this time, where girls* feel tension between difference and assimilation, they contest cultural and religious self-assertion. This dualism can lead to either a strengthening or weakening of religious self-understanding. Disregarding the outcome, youth workers, who ‘seem to have overcome’ religion (as described in the introduction of this chapter), are confronted with the religious practice of girls* and need to remain open minded to the process, disregarding the contradictions that might arise (Rommelspacher 2008: 52). This complexity of religious and traditional ways of life in the life and experience of girls* must be given space.

Partiality
For the staff of the GEC, partiality means believing that girls* and young women* are to be taken seriously, placing them at the centre of attention, promoting them at all levels and jointly developing strategies to enable them to lead self-determined and self-confident lives. Partiality does not mean evaluating everything that girls* or young women* do uncritically and exclusively positively. Partiality means to publicly side with girls*, to support them, articulate their concerns and to support the establishment of GEW until equal opportunities are achieved.

Autonomy
In psychology, autonomy is described as a state of independence (Brunner/ Zeltner 1980: 26). The terms autonomy and self-determination are therefore directly related. Both describe the ability of people to shape their lives freely and according to their own standards. The prerequisite for autonomous action is self-awareness, i.e. ‘I know my own personality, I know who I am’. Self-awareness forms the basis for developing self-confidence and a positive self-esteem. If I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses, I can move confidently even in unknown situations and successfully master new challenges. Such feelings of success then in turn have a positive effect on my self-esteem and I become increasingly independent of recognition or validation from other people.

Girls* Only
These are places that are only open to girls* and young women*, i.e. all young people who define themselves as female and/or are socialised as female. Through the absence of (cis) male persons girls* have the possibility to try out new competencies and behaviours without having to stand out in front of the opposite sex or being observed and evaluated from a male perspective and experiencing male fragility e.g. that boys* and men* feel personally attacked and criticised by their experiences and go on the defensive to maintain a positive self-image.

Resilience
Resilience describes the ability to maintain mental health in crises and stressful life situations and to restore it quickly afterwards and to emerge strengthened. Reliable caregivers in childhood, a sustainable social network in later life support the development of personal strength, which contributes to resilience. GECs therefore offer the opportunity to discover individual resources.

Interest, persistence and courage
Curiosity is considered an essential basis for exploratory behaviour and learning. With the beginning of puberty the curiosity is reduced to those interests that are relevant to individual identity formation. Aspects of interest, ... which do not fit into one’s own self concept with its characteristics such as gender, specific group membership, perceived own abilities and preferences* (Kramer, Spangler 2019: 299) are increasingly avoided. Sometimes it seems as if the girls* lose their childlike curiosity, their ability to wish for, to be interested in and to commit themselves to something, when they reach puberty. As curiosity is considered an essential basis for exploratory behaviour and learning the staff has to develop a strong sense of when girls* need and require support in order to foster curiosity for new things.

Empowerment work in the GEC’s helps girls* and young women* to:
- Remain curious and open to new experiences;
- Maintain their own sense of purpose even against resistance from their family and social environment and continue to pursue their goals;
- Boldly voice their opinion;
- Stand by their values and defend them against adversity;
- Take responsibility for themselves and others.

Giftedness, strengths and power
The discovery and promotion of talents and strengths is an important part of GEW. A gift is often seen as an inborn potential. The concept of talent includes both intellectual (e.g. verbal, numerical, spatial) and non-intellectual (e.g. musical- artistic, sersomotoric, social-emotional) talents. The term is therefore broader than the concept of intelligence. A talent / a gift is not the same as an accomplishment. A talent is only an initial disposition. In order for talents to develop into strengths and achievements, talents must be recognised and promoted (at an early stage), e.g. by family, school and appropriate social conditions. If this does not happen or if the expression of special talents is even prevented, the girls* seldom or never experience that they can successfully master challenges. This happens when their talents/interests are contrary to traditional gender-specific role assignments. As a result, the girls* are not able to build up any confidence in their own abilities. In the worst case they lose the desire to learn, are dissatisfied and do not feel valued. GEW recognises the talents and potential of girls* mobilises their strengths and promotes literally their empowerment and dare to be important as a girl* and use their power (Busche et al. 2010: 13).
Participation

The term “participation” aims at an equal involvement of those concerned and is guided by democratic objectives such as self-determination and autonomy (Pluto 2007: 13).

Numerous participation models for young people have been developed at municipal level (e.g., children’s and youth parliaments). Gender aspects (and → Intersectionality) are rarely taken into account in participation projects. Empowerment work therefore strives to give girls* and young women* opportunities to participate which correspond to their needs, knowledge and abilities and which they can freely choose. This can always be reflected upon in the context of questions of power and structures. In other words, it is not only about access to and availability of resources, but also about the right to take responsibility for the planning, implementation and results of participation projects.

Solidarity and cooperation

Different definitions of the term solidarity can be found in the scientific disciplines. As a social movement and concept of struggle, solidarity is defined from the tradition of the women* movement (Körber, Mökrosh 2009: 79). Solidarity is “the willingness of an individual or a group to help another individual or group to assert his or her rights” (Actetelik 2019: 41). This understanding of solidarity implies that the actors involved pursue a common goal. In the GECs it is not about “making a concept for girls*” but about sharpening the view for differences and similarities. This is the prerequisite for the development of a well-reflected and inclusive solidarity.

References


In accordance with the principles, topics and objectives of girls' empowerment, which have already been depicted, a short overview over the range of services that may be provided in a GEC shall now be given.

As depicted under 4. Target Group, a GEC orientates itself towards the needs of girls*, which often change due to the developments and circumstances of life. These needs are translated into offers for girls* and young women*, whilst taking the available space, the number of staff (permanent, employed or voluntary), financial resources and support from politics and administration into account. Due to the wide range of conditions and variety of resources available, GECs offer a diverse, varied program which are illustrated in the following chapter 34.

**Permanent services**
- Everyday meeting space, GEW for drop in;
- Open group work;
- Advisory Service (individual);
- Networking;
- Outreach work.

**Non-permanent and occasional offers**
- Open events;
- Camps, excursions, trips;
- Workshops;
- Actions in public space.

**Open youth club for girls**

The offer of an open meeting place is an invitation to all girls*. Open meeting places provide spaces without the pressure of consumption and offer young people a stimulating environment for self-determined leisure activities. It is a place to learn, to play and experiment, to relax, rest and to feel safe.

Activities of an open meeting point are:
- **Homework** – With the help of adapted and reliable opening hours, girls* can do their homework and be supported in pursuing their professional goals.
- **Need-based equipment** – Materials such as games, sports equipment, books, furniture, media, decoration, etc. are selected, maintained and supplemented together with the girls.
- **Rules** – Rules for behavior and interaction and instructions for action are drawn up, discussed and, if necessary, revised together with the girls*. In this way, the joint "contract" provides a basis for discussing violations later on the basis of fairness.

As a safe space, the GEC is open to a variety of lifestyles, languages, religions and world views. This openness can of course lead to conflict and negotiations between different expectations and needs. So the social workers are required to find a balance in which situation an intervention is needed and in which not. Therefore it is important to reflect on the boundaries and rules of the common space so that the girls* experience the GEC as self-determined. This means that the girls* can and should define, build and determine the GEC independently and according to their own ideas (cp. 8. The Space).

**Advantages of an open youth club for girls**

The freely accessible space allows girls* to decide for themselves what they want to do, what they want to get involved in and how long they want to follow their interests. Moreover the open space creates room for learning, social interaction and communication.

**Challenges of an open youth club for girls**

It's hard to estimate how many girls* will be present, so the effort asked from the social worker to meet the demands of the girls* is higher. Especially considering the group dynamics, as a high fluctuation most certainly leads to an ongoing shift of group dynamics.

**Group Work**

The socio-pedagogical group work describes the possibility of dealing intensively with a fixed group of girls* and young women* on specific topics such as body-positivity or sex-positivity (see cp. 5.1. Topics in GEW). All topics of interest should be decided by the girls*, following a participatory approach. The social workers are then asked to prepare the inputs, themselves or with others. The socio-pedagogical (thematic) group work can also be enriched by externally invited experts and should be offered primarily on weekends or during school holidays.

**This can be helpful if**
- The users want to work on topics that the social workers is not qualified or suited for;
- A space is to be created in which the social worker (reference person) should not be present;
- There are better trained experts on the subject;
- New people should be familiarised with the work of the GEC;
- The users express the wish for a certain expert.

At the starting point of GEW lies the understanding that every girl comes into the group with personal competencies, talents and strengths which recognises the individual person and simultaneously supports an introspection of a certain social role and behavior, which can be redefined in the course of the group work. The task of the educators is to give impulses during group work which and, if necessary, discuss goals and direction of the individual group members.

The most important elements of group work are made available to the group by the accompanying pedagogy:
- **Group Dynamics**;
- **Sociometry** 35;
- Principles of action such as starting where the participants stand, giving altruistic services to support the program design;
- Setting boundaries;
- Installing group phases;
- Question their own role in the group (Schmidt-Gruner 2009: 111f).

The main emphasis of social group work in GEC lies in giving (new) impulses and expanding the skills and experiences of girls*.

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34 For corresponding details also see Chapter. 7. Staff. 5.3. Important Stances. 9.1. Quality Management. 4. Target group.

35 Sociometry describes a creative and interactive method according to Jacob Levy Moreno. The method of psychodrama is not only applied in therapeutic work, but also in pedagogical and psychosocial fields. In general, it is an exploration of interpersonal relationship systems (Moreno, Moreno 1969). For a deeper insight into the practice of psychodrama in social work, see Konopka, Cheung 2013.
Important!
The girls* and young women* are the experts of their own social space and this also cannot be questioned by externally invited experts.

The goal of the GCE staff is to use workshops, group and educational opportunities for girls* to develop the skills and abilities to develop interests. In order to achieve the goals, the following conditions have to be taken into account.

Spatial conditions: Depending on the topic and content, socio-pedagogical group work takes place outside the GEC, for example at seminar rooms of cooperation partners, in youth hostels, sports clubs, theatres, museums or at unusual spots, such as sailing ships, for example.

Personnel requirements: At least three social workers with different cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds are best to participate in the programs offered by a GEC (cp. 7. Staff and 5.3. Important Stances, Intersectionality). If needed, language mediators and other freelancers* can be included.

Financial requirements: Municipal grants, third-party funds from foundations are applied for. In addition, sponsorship, own marginal income (e.g. participants’ contributions) are used for the programs (cp. 9. Management).

Cooperation partners: Other organisations and institutions working with the target group (cp. 9.2. Stakeholders).

Advantages of Group Work
The advantage of socio-educational group work is foremost the in-depth exploration of a (new) topic (e.g. reflection of one’s role in society, communication, sex education, addiction, and dependencies, experiential education, practical life skills). It can take place in the form of three-day educational trips or exchanges. Within the group, social mechanisms can be intensively discussed, deconstructed and newly framed. Moreover, the socio-educational group has a set time and space and aims to strengthen group dynamics.

Challenges of group work
The greatest challenge in group work is the time factor. It is time intensive in the planning and implementation. On the one hand, planning is carried out on a long-term basis, e.g. concept-related for one year, and is used in the short and medium term basis, as high costs may arise because of the acquisition of experts (freelancers).

Socio-educational advisory service
In the open youth club, girls* get to know the staff without obligation. On one hand this is the cornerstone for trust building and on the other, it opens the opportunity to be advised by a person of their trust.

Experience shows that girls* rarely use specific counselling times with a stranger. It is more likely that personal relationships develop over the course of time and later on lead to social counselling settings, in which the girls* begin to open up and talk about the help they are in need of.

Side note: Social counselling can also be done online or by phone (cp. 5.3. Important Stances in GEW). The counselling situation for girls* follows specific rules, which are defined in the following paragraph as guidelines for social workers.

- Strengthen the girls* with a partisan-feminist approach;
- Approach the girls* with sensitivity, e.g. do not force any form of consultation upon the girls*;
- Practice active listening;
- Support the girls* in identifying their own wishes define following scopes for action, i.e. provide help for self-helps;
- Support discussions with parents, schools and other institutions if needed;
- Involve language mediators if necessary.

During social counselling, pay attention to the following:
- It can make sense to go to a separate room for consultation with the girl in order to ensure privacy.
- Younger girls* in particular like to make use of the presence of friends and to lighten up the atmosphere through a group situation.
- The girls* own their story. Therefore, the focus of the consultation is on the wishes and suggestions made by the girls.
- Only if a satisfactory solution has been found for a girl, the consultation has reached an end.
- If the consultation is interrupted prematurely (e.g. disturbance, appointment etc.), appointments have to be made after consulting with the girls* as to when they have time.
- The consultations are documented and discussed in the team meetings (cp. 9.1. Quality Management, Supervision).
- In case girls* experience a threat to their well-being (or the social worker identifies it as such), a series of actions dealing with threats to the well-being of a child come into force. These are e.g. procedures that the staff has agreed upon in advance; also, staff must be informed about legal provisions.

Social counselling topics (in addition to those already noted cp. 5.2. Topics in GEW) can be:
- Life planning, school and training (transition from school to training/occupation);
- Friendships and peer groups;
- Assistance with official appointments; bureaucratic matters (accommodation, social welfare, residence permit etc.).

Social counselling is successful if:
- The girl* signals that she feels well and understood;
- The girl* is satisfied with the solution she has worked out, and ideally has formulated it herself;
- The girl* has the courage to try this solution method;
- The girl* is willing to go to another specialist / counselling centre if necessary;
- The social workers and pedagogues are addressed and accepted as counsellors.
Further forms of counselling

Parental counselling – in (intercultural) work an indispensable part of the counselling service. Parents often only gain confidence in the staff of the GEC through this specific counselling. In this way, the inhibition threshold to let their daughters participate in the offerings and to make use of referrals to other specialist services, is lowered (certain reservations cp. 4 The Target Groups of Girls* Empowerment Work).

Counselling for new employees – Young women* who complete an internship at the GEC as part of their education or studies require special supervision.

The professional supervision includes:

• Weekly reflection sessions;
• Supervision during everyday experiences in the GEC;
• Assistance in practical tasks;
• Advice on any problem and or conflict of personal matter (if needed and appropriate).

Community work

The community work method was transferred to Germany in the 1970s and had already been used in the USA and the Netherlands. In this classical method of social work, it is not people who are the target group, but communities, districts or social spaces.

The social pedagogue has thereby the task of integrating herself into the existing structure of social and socio-political responsibilities in order to improve the living conditions of the members and participants of dialogue groups (social intervention concept) (Schöning 2012 : 31). The guiding principles of community work are (Schöning 2012 : 39):

• Structure instead of (case) work;
• Inclusion of useful services;
• Non-directive guidance and support;
• Orientation towards local aspects, needs and resources;
• Political activities.

Selection of methods

Thus, when selecting methods, several criteria are important to be taken into consideration:

• Who makes the offer?

The more a pedagogue enjoys a method, the more confident she or he feels in it, the better she or he can convey this method.

• The target group is a pillar of any program.

Is it about a single person? Who do I have before me? What is important to her? What are their resources, talents, interests and needs? At what level can I best reach them?

• Interchanging the techniques with different senses being targeted.

In a GEC, methods of social group work are in the centre of attention, because the most diverse experiences are made with a broad spectrum of participants.

In conclusion

Educators in GECs have the task to accompany, support, and to distinguish between common goals, individual goals whilst in defining joint objectives.

It depends above all on the target group, or rather the dialogue group.

The most effective activities are those that allow several goals to be reached simultaneously. Then the users can concentrate on individual techniques according to their preferences and thus focus on their personal wishes and let them become goals. We strive to achieve harmony with the goals we have set ourselves in the context of the GEW.

References


The Staff in Girls’* Empowerment Centres – Function and Competencies
In addition to the important stances, which we have seen in Chapter 5.3, as well as the knowledge, convictions and competencies necessary in order to meet the objectives and topics depicted in Chapters 5 and 6, some additional necessities in Human Resources for a GEC will be presented in the following chapter.

The skills and experiences needed for GEW

In general it can be said that work with girls* is the work for girls* and (young) women* by (young) women*.* The work of men (people who are read as male in society) is an exception. When implementing programs, it must be clearly defined in advance whether and why men can become part of a program.

A high degree of professionalism is required within the field of GEW. This includes the qualifications and competencies to offer different methods, lines of action and approaches to a various number of problems and issues a girl faces in course of her life. Staff members are educational companions, contact persons and with whom the girls* can learn to discover their own preferences and talents in order to pursue their dreams and goals and at the same time, solve their conflicts. The girls* have the opportunity to choose their preferred person of trust within the team.

In the work with girls* there is a wide range of possible and necessary qualifications. The minimum qualification is an understanding of the standards and objectives of a GEC. Girls* perceive employees as role models and to an extent project social norms, social behaviour wishes and needs onto them. For this reason it is indispensable for employees to be informed about psychosocial development of girls*, their interests and the society they live in. This means that a (self)reflection on being a woman, on gender constructions, social oppression mechanisms and different life plans is inevitable. This does not only develop the employees world view, but more so enables them to recognize, identify and understand the girls* lifestyle.

In addition to emotional intelligence and educational training, there are legal requirements for youth work and their employees, which differ in each country and depending on the position in question.

An absolute prerequisite for the work is, in any case, the willingness to undergo further training and to keep on learning about professional approaches and methods as well as marginalized perspectives, which are not one’s own. An empowerment centre being a space of exchange and diversity, must enable women* from different social, societal and professional contexts to participate in the work (cp. 5.3 Important Stances, Intersectionality). The more intersectional the staff is (regarding religion, sexuality, abilities, migrant background, experience of discrimination etc.), the more diverse and qualified the programs of the GEC will become and subsequently a greater variety of girls* will be able to partake in the programs.

The design and implementation of programs is largely determined by the employees. Their own initiative, creativity and dedication in their work contribute to making GEC a safe space. This requires many helping hands, which are linked to the GEC in different ways. The resources a GEC disposes of, is of course dependent on the available financing.

Forms of employment

Permanently employed (e.g. social workers or youth workers)
- Have a contract under employment law and with e.g. health insurance;
- Commitment to specific tasks (specified in the contract) in accordance with qualification;
- Claims to statutory benefits (breaks, holidays, regulated working hours);
- Obligations on the part of employers.

Temporarily employed (e.g. honorary staff for workshops)
- Have a contract under employment law (or according to local conditions);
- Temporary / topic-specific cooperation with respect to qualification;
- An additional support at work;
- Frequently multiple hiring;
- Rights and obligations exclusively set out in the contract.

Volunteers (e.g. pupils, retired neighbours)
- Committed supporters of the work;
- Most volunteers have no financial allowance, therefore should not be treated as having the same responsibilities as permanent employees;
- No legally binding working contract*;
- Focus on leisure time activities or tutoring;
- Vocational qualification is not a requirement;
- Additional support at work.

All forms of cooperation are crucial for the work. It is important that everyone is treated with appreciation and respect.

The number of employees and paid working hours needed

The number of skilled workers depends on the form of work, the methods being used and on the physical conditions of the girls* and the staff at the same time. For the planning and implementation of a group activity a minimum of two colleagues is recommended, if a number of six underaged girls* is participating. Since there is always the chance of a girl* being in need of special attention (in need of one-on-one support), one colleague is able to continue the activity with the rest of the group.

In the following, an idea of the necessary working hours in a GEC shall be given, using the example of “Zintzicken” in Potsdam, which disposes of three full-time positions and numerous volunteers as well as budget for temporarily employed for certain workshops and projects. Here we will depict the division of working hours of the activities provided by the permanently employed. In Germany a full-time position is 40 hours per week, in the GEC “Zintzicken” the weekly working time is 23 hours, which are dedicated to the activities with the girls* and young women* and 17 hours for office work, for further education and supervision.

The distribution of so-called “specialist service hours” in the fields of activities, which are in average 299 hours per month:

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27 Nonetheless also voluntary work is regulated by law, hence the laws have to be disclosed and followed.

28 For the information about the work field please refer to Chapter 6. Services provided by a GEC.
• Open GEC: 122 hours per month;
• Open Group Work (e.g. artistic, sports, activity in order to meet, exchange and inspire): 37 hours per month;
• Advisory Service: 15 hours per month;
• Social Work with Groups (focused on current problems or issues/topics of interest): 60 hours per month;
• Networking as a mandate: 32 hours per month;
• Outreach work with girls*: 6 hours per month;
• Working on the GEC’s profile (i.e. activities in accordance to the specialized profile of the Centre, from all the 6 fields named above): 26 hours per month.

Additional fields of work: Advisory service for the youth workers of the Centre and furthermore a multiplier role, conception of gender sensitive projects, cooperation with colleagues in the field of male gender-specific youth work and public relations.¹

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**Working conditions**

**National characteristics** – The work regulations are subject to the national legal requirements. Working hours, break times and workers rights (e.g. health insurance, pension insurance etc.) are subject to local specifics and cannot be determined by this publication. However, it should be noted that all work must be fairly remunerated. By pursuing a professional activity, a person must be able to finance one's livinghood.

**Lack of recognition** – Social work is still not adequately appreciated and is still under-represented in society. This also applies to work with girls*, which leads to social workers also lacking financial recognition, the extent of which differs gapingly world wide.

**Psychological stress** – Social work is a profession that places great psychological and physical strain. The daily confrontation with social exclusion and suppression mechanisms is a burden. Girls* often experience (sexual) violence, bullying, discrimination and suffer from eating disorders in their everyday lives (see pp. 5-2. Topics in GEW). These topics become part of everyday life in the work with girls* and can lead to re-traumatization and stress also for the employees. Therefore we understand supervision as an indispensable condition and part of the work. Only this way a safe and qualified working environment can be guaranteed for the girls* and young women* and also the staff of the GEC.

¹ For the specific contents and everyday realities of all the named areas of responsibility, please refer to Chapter 9: Management, 6: Services provided, 9:4: Fundraising.
In this chapter, we will focus on a space in a physical sense, without forgetting that none of the following solutions will be effective without ensuring the implementation of the approaches, goals and values described in previous sections of this intellectual output.

Historically, women* and girls* were deprived of their space (e.g. by having to move home to their husband after marriage, not designating any room at home dedicated to the girl* and woman* – except the kitchen), or the right to decide about it. For centuries they did not inherit or otherwise acquire the right to home or land. Girls* and women* did not have (and still a very small group of girls* and women* have) a space in which they could safely and freely indulge in their passions, creativity, in which no one would control their activity, no one would limit the right to decide how to spend time. Both private and public spaces are not safe for women* and girls* – they are exposed to physical and sexual violence, harassment, verbal violence, sexist messages literally everywhere – at home, at school, at universities, in the workplace, on the streets, in cafes, hospitals, the media, etc. Although sometimes women* have an influence on the arrangement of a flat, the influence of women* and girls* on how the world is arranged, in the literal sense of the word, remains very low. In addition, women* and girls* have a limited impact on how security is understood and to what kind of security the priority and money is given.

Therefore, the physical space in which girls*, teenagers and young women* make their own decisions, in which they can feel safe, in which they can develop without obstacles and build their courage and solidarity – is one of the key issues in empowerment activities. It is worth creating such spaces as well as regaining spaces for girls* and women* to which they do not have formal or practical access. Emphasizing the importance of physical space does not mean that girls*, teenagers and women* are to be locked up in buildings! This also does not mean that a space in which solemnly girls* and women* are participating can be defined as a safe and supportive. There are needs and measures to be taken in order to ensure a safe space.

**Features of Space**

Girls* Only – if it is catered to be safe for girls*, it is important that such a space functions openly and that information that it is a girls* women’s space only appears outside of the space, seen by everyone walking by.

Belongs to girls* – it would be best if girls* (from different groups) co-decide if and on what terms other people can use the space.

Accessible and available – the space has to meet the architectural needs for people in wheelchairs, on crutches, with a walker, with a cane, for people with sight dis-abilities.

Diverse and dynamic – the space is subjected to the people who contribute to it. It makes it possible for those who are absent to appear in it (e.g. by asking the group questions – what girls* are not with us? Why? What can we do to make them come?).

Appreciating – underlining and promoting the achievements and activities of girls* and women* from various social groups, places on earth, etc. – through publications, selected movies displayed in a reading room, board games (e.g. herstonic), all kinds of posters and other visual objects.

Free of stereotyping – against the undermining the girls* abilities.

Common – co-created by all people using it, open to various ideas and initiatives of girls* on how their space should look like, allowing for diverse expression and movement.

Safe – physically and emotionally – it is necessary to develop the rules associated with being in the space, which will clearly define which behaviors are appreciated (respect, creating space for expressing opinions and reflections, as well as emotions) and which will not be accepted: offence, verbal and physical harassment, sexual harassment, touching without permission, peeping, etc.

**In conclusion:**

- A safe space is one where the group doesn’t ignore the manifestations of such behavior, but rather face them together;
- A safe space is also such a space that will be inclusive in the context of sensitivity to a broad spectrum of gender identification, diversity in terms of religion/non-denominational status, psychosexual orientation, ethnic or national origin, etc.;
- A safe space is a space where people, natural resources and animals are respected;
- This space should serve as a tool.

In this chapter, these agreed upon values and principles should be clear and presented in the form of infographics, posters, stickers, etc.

**Rooms and their Functions**

The experience of our organisations shows that it is highly desirable that the following rooms be in the empowerment centre:

- Meeting room – the size should be adequate to the number of people who are to use the space (min. 50 m2);
- Room / space for relaxation and movement (without furniture, equipped with mattresses);
- Space for individual meetings, counseling, silence;
- Restroom and bathroom (preferably with shower, charging table, accessible with a wheelchair);
- Garden / terrace / balcony (garden can also be set up on the terrace or balcony);
- Office space;
- Kitchen and dining room – allowing you to prepare refreshments and food togeth.

Also very important (not necessarily separate rooms):

- Reading room;
- A workshop space, e.g. for bike repairs and upcycling activities (with tools, sewing machines, etc.);
- Surroundings – the road to this place must be safe for girls* – The environment should be friendly.

It is very important for girls* to be able to create this space with their own hands, that is, they were engaged in minor reparation works, cleaning. They decide what posters, paintings, photographs hang on the walls (they can have, for example, their own wall on which they jointly determine what will hang for the next few weeks).

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The following passage was based on the experience of the GEC "Zimtstücken". The conditions of the space can differ depending on the legal, financial or infrastructural context of a given GEC.
The Girls\* Empowerment Centre Autonomia – an example

Autonomia (Krakow, Poland) rents 160 m², which we have renovated and adapted to the needs of people with disabilities with our own hands and with the help of individual donors. Our place is located on the ground floor. You can get to us safely and without barriers, directly from public transport.

We have a meeting room (approx. 50 m²), in which there is a relaxation area and reading room, a room for meetings and workshops (approx. 60 m²) with a separate bike repair and DIY space and training equipment, kitchen with dining room, office and storage room.

Some of the walls are painted by girls\* with blackboard paint. On the walls of all rooms we present an exhibition about the idea of consent and the paintings of girls\*. In the near future there will be posters about women\* and girls\* involved in the feminist movement and illustrating initiatives for equality and human rights.

We make sure that the operation of the GEC is the least harmful to the environment (i.e. people and animals); we segregate waste, reduce resource consumption (e.g. water), refreshments which we serve and prepare are vegan.

Our place is accessible: architecturally and based on the principles of the economy of sharing. Fees are almost never charged for participation in workshops. At the same time, this place exists thanks to the community that contributes to it: it cares for space (renovating, equipping, cleaning it), supporting it with its competencies and conducting classes/ workshops, making donations.
This section outlines the different fields in which management and administration may become necessary in a GEC. Management, as well as all other activities of the GEC follow the standards and criteria depicted above.

If you run a GEC, the following areas of administration may arise

Finances
A central point of management is of course finance (cp. 9.4. Fundraising and Finances). In day-to-day business you need to bear in mind: are there proposals, activity reports, documentation such as working time accounts, statistics, etc. for funders to be written and updated?

In addition, an up-to-date overview of finances must always be kept, whether for human resources, rent and running costs (electricity, water, telephone, etc.) or all purchases, undertakings and other costs involved. Often there are different sources of money for different items and segments and accordingly this is documented and managed separately.

Human Resources
Human resources and staff are an important part of the financial and organisational management in a GEC (cp. 7. Staff). This includes remuneration and documentation for employees, honorary staff, compensation for voluntary work, possibly a facilities manager, external tutors and trainers. For example, with volunteers or honorary staff, monthly invoices and work meetings are possible. If necessary, certificates of employment and a qualified and benevolent job reference are to be issued upon leaving the company. The departure should be done explicitly and with the involvement of the users of the GEC.

Furthermore, the following questions and issues should be clarified concerning Human Resources Management:
• Where and how is a job advertised?
• Who decides and how is it decided who is hired?
• Clear division of tasks and responsibilities, who is a contact person and responsible for what;
• Clarify contracts, obligation of confidentiality, data protection (contact details, mail and phone, photo rights, copyrights etc.);
• Concept, mission and vision statement in writing for employees and others involved;
• Making of the work schedule in a transparent and fair way;
• Provide necessary documents and training of new employees;
• Regular team meetings, transparency and communication, case discussions, creating openness for conflicts and problems, staff appraisals, supervision, further training as required, keeping minutes of team meetings, taking account of absent colleagues;
• Documentation of work fields and information in order to transfer knowledge, reduce knowledge hierarchies, not making a staff member indispensable and improve replacement during sick leave or handover;
• Evaluate internal communication regularly and try out new means and ways if necessary: what is practical in addition to team meetings?
• Online data storage and communication platforms;
• Pads (web-based editors for collaborative text editing), software for team communication, file hosting services, cloud storage, group chat in messengers, mailing lists. Of course, the security of data and communication must be taken into account.

Legal form
Many initiatives that are working for and with young people have an association or another legal form as their responsible body. In this case, activities relating to the association and its members are also part of management. This also includes activities relating to the association and its members. This means to organize general meetings (with invitation, signed participants list, minutes, etc.), membership services – e.g. with an annual party or informing via newsletter (also here, clarify data protection). Of course, an association also has to answer the questions of who is accepted into the association, how and why, i.e. what are the rights and duties of the members. In addition, the legal form (in Germany non-profit status, support association) has consequences; whether donations and donation receipts are possible, as well as whether employees can be members of the association and also on the board of directors etc. This can have implications for the content and financial orientation of the project (cp. 7. Staff; 9.2. Stakeholders; 9.4. Fundraising and Finances).

Infrastructure
With regard to the users of the Centre, some administrative tasks are of course to be carried out in the context of admission. For example, it may be useful to have an admission interview in which the mission statement is presented, time is taken to invite and space is given to clarify needs. A contact list of the girls* for internal use, possibly also of contact persons in case of emergency, must be kept up to date. In order to provide the daily infrastructure, administration is required for purchases (cleaning and hygiene articles, and kitchen and educational material, games, handicrafts and DIY, sports equipment, depending on what the facility offers as program). IT, PCs, Internet, photocopiers must be looked after, and cleaning, maintenance and design of the rooms (sound insulation, keeping the information boards up to date) must be organised (cf. also 9. Space). In the case of co-use with other initiatives, agreements, rules, financial issues etc. must also be clarified with those.

A small but important subsection regarding the basics of day-to-day business is everything to do with guidelines and regulations, which in turn can lead to administrative activities. Here is a list of some areas that may be relevant to your institution:
• Fire protection;
• Maintenance (as all tasks preferably by women*);
• Caretaking (likewise);
• Liability or accident insurance;
• Safety of users during excursions (possibly declaration of consent by parents);
• Hang out contacts for emergencies – for janitorial services, but also fire brigade, police, hospital, violence, suicidal tendencies, debts... etc.;
• Know national and regional regulations – youth protection, insurance, obligatory supervision (especially during excursions etc.).

Here, as in many other points, the decisive factor for the distribution of activities is whether the institution is organized autonomously or whether there is a higher ranking implementing institution. In a small GEC (comparable to “Zimmzieken” in Potsdam, for example), the administration is taken over by the staff themselves. The administration of HR and finances will be divided within
the team according to agreement. Teamwork is based on trust among each other and communication at eye level. It makes sense to distribute the work according to talents. An accountant is needed who takes full control of the finances. It can also make sense to assign another woman to do the controlling at regular intervals. The accountant also needs an overview of personnel financing. It can be advantageous to assign another colleague to do the human resources management. The application for and accounting of funds should always be done in close cooperation with the accountant. In accordance with the principles of empowerment, it is always worthwhile to provide a budget that is administered by the girls*. Girls* should also be given the opportunity to apply for funds themselves, either from the financier or from other foundations or institutions. On the level of management it is also fundamental to include the girls* and young women* in questions concerning infrastructure and human resources where possible.

9.1 Quality Management

Quality management is a long established term in youth work. Quality management describes a practice for introducing and enforcing professional standards.

The objectives of quality management are:

- Quality management (QM) is the reflection of one’s own work and the strategies used in order to ensure the quality of one’s work and the achievement of one’s goals. A further objective is to make the goals and effects of one’s work transparent for the girls*, their parents and possible donors. QM also supports GECs to sharpen their working profile. This all comes together with the operationalisation of methods in the work with girls.

This is done by means of targeted instruments, which are explained in the following section.

Quality management is a 3-step program and consists of:
1. Quality development
2. Quality assurance
3. Quality measurement

Quality development

When planning measures, one should always define the objectives and effects of the planned program in advance. The measures are defined by the target group and stances as defined in the chapters above.

Quality assurance in youth work takes place on two levels

Quality assurance describes steps of control in order to check the objectives of quality development.

On the level of content, programs and measures must be designed with the target group in mind. In doing so, ethical, political and methodological particularities are being examined and reflected upon the group of girls* taking part in a program.

On the structural level, the content, goals and concepts of the specific needs of girls* must be established and anchored as standards for youth work. In GEW, the special focus is on this dual strategy. On the one hand the GEW focuses on strengthening girls* and young women* (cp.

5. Empowerment as a Strategy). On the other hand GEW requires lobby work for girls* and GECs, in order to establish and maintain GEW (Chwalicek 1999: 36). All of the aspects mentioned above contribute to quality assurance and therefore it is not a fixed program.

Quality assurance is best illustrated by the following three criteria:
- Rules of action (How do I react to certain/recurring situations?);
- Structural changes (How, in what way can a recurrent/defined situation be made productive?);
- Documentation (How, in what way can I record the change in the situation, make it applicable and explain it to outsiders?).

Quality measurement

When it comes to questioning different expectations of girls* and young women* in society and trying oneself out, the question arises: How can e.g. reflection about gender norms be measured? Especially when it comes to long-term programs? The answer is: It cannot be measured completely. There are, however, tools (e.g. questionnaires) and indicators (e.g. number of participants in the programs, popularity and standing of the institution) which take part in the assessment of the success of a program. Thus a combination of different forms of documentation leads to a greater success in capturing the quality assessment. The forms of documentation vary, depending on the question asked (e.g. question: how satisfactory are the MEC’s services?).

What does quality management (QM) mean?

QM describes:
- How and in what sequence work is carried out (process quality);
- What is needed for the implementation of processes and who is responsible for it (structural quality);
- Which goals and results are to be achieved (quality of results) (see Senate Department for Education, Youth and Science 2012: 144).

Advantages to QM

- Orientation in daily pedagogical situations;
- Internal communication becomes clear, structure of responsibilities is clear to everyone;
- Simplifies the coordination and organisation of working processes;
- Creates binding rules for key situations;
- Prepares for proactive negotiations with donors (cp. 9.4. Fundraising and Financing);
- Strengthens professional self-confidence;
- Simplifies the training of new employees (work guidelines for new employees).

Which are the quality requirements for GEW?

- Resources for the implementation of quality development;
- Regular team meetings (exchange, supervision, collegial consultation), planning meetings, closed meetings (joint decision-making);
- Further training;
- Uniform forms of work (documentation/methods);
- Self-evaluation;
- External consulting (cooperation with networks).
### Example of an internal evaluation of work with girls (Hormann 1999: 20)

**Focus**
- **Conceptual perspective**
  - Are we pursuing the right goals?
  - Are we getting closer to our goals?

- **Process perspective**
  - How does social counselling/pedagogy proceed?
  - Where do we need a revision?
  - What financial resources does our work require?

- **Structural perspective**
  - What effects (objective changes) can be identified?
  - To what are they attributed?

- **Results perspective**
  - How do our external conditions support or hinder our work?

**Typical questions**
- Are we pursuing the right goals?
- Are we getting closer to our goals?
- How does social counselling/pedagogy proceed?
- Where do we need a revision?
- What financial resources does our work require?
- What effects (objective changes) can be identified?
- To what are they attributed?

**Evaluation criteria**
- **Effectiveness, Appropriateness, Professionalism, Procedure**
  - Professional standards
  - Active factors
  - Identification of critical events

- **Efficiency, economy, ratio of effort and success**
  - Price and performance

- **Subjective benefit effects**
  - Approximation to desired results

**Purpose**
- Adaptation to the needs
- Qualification of methodical procedures
- Improving the framework conditions
- Rationalisation of working methods

**Measurement procedure**
- Observation and assessment of your own work
- Reconstruction and monitoring of own processes
- Analysis of conditions, processes
- Assessment of the impact of the measures (questionnaires, surveys) to assess success

### 9.2 Stakeholders and Partners

The following chapter outlines potential partners and interest groups involved or addressable in GEW.

1. First of all, there are the stakeholders in the sense of those who have an increased interest in the project, its content, its course and its orientation – they are those who are primarily concerned by it. In GEW, the primary group of stakeholders in this sense are of course the girls themselves. These are the girls of the chosen target group, with all their different experiences, needs, backgrounds and abilities. GEW is geared towards them in order to support and accompany them in their autonomy and on their path. It is in their interest that the institution and the services provided give space and means of participation (cp. 4. Target Groups, 5. Empowerment as a Strategy and Tool and 7. Staff).

2. If stakeholders are now understood in the sense of participants or people and institutions with an interest in the project, the circle of those affected is considerably expanded. There are the professionals, i.e. educators, counsellors and social workers, as members of the interest group and as those affected by the project. In addition, the parents, siblings, other people close to the girls*, such as foster families, legal guardians, youth welfare services, social services, who often need trust and orientation regarding the activities. They should therefore be included or addressed as far as their inclusion does not contradict the empowerment and self-determined space of the girls* using the service provided by a GEC (cp. 5. Target Groups). This aspect should always be taken into account when stakeholders (in terms of potential partners) are being addressed. So which political and social groups, authorities, players, institutions, facilities and associations are affected by working with girls* or should be included in our planning and considerations as potential partners?

This is of course not an exhaustive list. It is simply to inspire ideas for possible cooperation and networking.

At the level of institutional policy, of course, there are ministries, other state institutions and bodies for youth, children, social affairs, women* and education. Also corresponding organisations on a federal, state or local level are youth welfare offices, educational institutions, town halls, neighbourhood management, equal opportunity commissioners and individual politicians.

In the private and public sector there are school-associated educational and leisure facilities, youth work, relevant university persons or institutions, and social and medical facilities (for physical and mental health and well-being of girls), educational and counselling institutions (in all imaginable professional, social, psychological fields), neighbourhood centres, religious or cultural institutions (if relevant for girls*). Associations and initiatives of political education work are e.g. media education, theatre, radio, journalism, artistic and cultural associations and institutions.

Of course, sport clubs as potential partners and multipliers should not be forgotten - from swimming, ball sports, dance, kickboxing, yoga to providers of self-assertion courses and Wen-Do. An important stakeholder in the work with girls* of course also civil society with its socio-political movements and associations, informal groups, “meeting places” and interest groups.

### References


Attention!

All stakeholders, representatives of interests and partners are always to be measured by the interest of the empowerment of girls* and women*.

Particular focus should be placed on interest groups and partners from feminist and marginalized groups and with experience of migration, dis-ability, racism (anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, etc.), sexism, heteronormativity, etc.

Objectives of the networking activities

In addition to the goals mentioned in the mission statement (cp. 9.1. Quality Management), the following concrete goals result for the staff of the GEC in the field of networking as a mission:

1. Lobbying for the interests and needs of girls* and young women* city-wide (cp. 9.3. Public Relations) e.g. translating the needs and interests of girls* with a migrant background and their families to various committees, working groups and to other institutions and to school (lobbying);
2. Securing professional standards, quality development, sustainability (cp. 9.1. Quality Management);
3. Ensuring specific offers tailored to the needs in the region;
4. Regional evaluation of risks, combined with the coordination and development of assistance systems;
5. Cooperation between youth welfare (especially gender work) and schools;
6. Participation opportunities for our public.

Structure of the networking activities

Networking is an important pillar for the promotion of GIW. In the following paragraph the networking activities of the GEC “Zintzicken” are presented as an example. It is a summary of the measures taken by “Zintzicken”.

The Networking process

1. The staff gets an overview of the existing infrastructure.
2. There is an exchange of information with representatives of other youth welfare services about their offers, target groups and networking possibilities.

As a result, it will be decided which of these institutions correspond to the services of the GEC and meet the needs of the users, so that joint projects, events and services can be designed and provided. These corporations are always assigned to a certain project and for a limited time frame.
3. The offers provided are being evaluated and the feedback of the girls* is taken into account. The resulting synergies and resources are expanded.
4. On the basis of observations in the pedagogical work specific needs of the visitors are determined. After these observations have been professionally underlined (cp. 9.1. Quality Management) these needs are being incorporated into the relevant regional or national networking structure.
   a) The municipal working groups provide information on current political discourses (e.g. youth violence, youth protection, child protection, basic provision of open youth work, quality assurance). On the basis of the information gathered there, an exchange with other professionals takes place.
   b) Political statements and common demands are formulated and translated to the working level of city parliament.
5. The staff members participate in regional working groups, deciding on conceptual developments regarding youth welfare planning in the region. They represent their expertise on youth welfare and design the circulation of information from the interest groups into the GECs.

The Networking process is successful if:

- The cooperation partners of the GEC are known to the girls*;
- The stated needs and interests of the girls* have been considered within resources available;
- The staff members bring their professional positions to expert working groups and networking committees and circulate the knowledge generated;
- Gender aspects of youth work are discussed (and taken seriously) in professional and regional committees;
- The results of our networking activities support the qualitative development of the services offered in the region;
- The youth welfare sector is introduced to the professional opinion and statements generated in the networking process (see step 5);
- Further counselling centres, special services and other open youth work centres throughout the city are known to the girls* and/or their families;
- If the needs of immigrant families and girls* are included in the professional and professional and political discussion and taken into account in youth welfare planning;
- The employees are accepted as partners in individual work*. They feel supported in case of the risk of a child’s welfare (cp. 9.1. Quality Management).

9.3 Public Relations

Following this task, social workers and employees of GEC’s (GEG) serve as representatives of the Girls* and act biased towards women* and girls*. In some sense this describes the process of image branding on behalf of girls* and young women*. The public appearance also serves to inform girls* and young women* about offers.

When thinking of pushing content, some specific aspects should be taken into consideration. The following 3-step method acts as a guideline on how PR is being produced.

For whom? Define target group and include them in the process
For what? Clearly define what the content (should) represent(s)
How? Which form of advertising fits the format and target group and how is it to be implemented.

It is especially helpful if PR content follows a similar style throughout. It helps on one side for the users to recognize the theme and centre for example but it also simplifies the process of producing content. Once a design is established it is much easier to build upon the existing format and produce new content. A logo e.g. is the first step to optimize the recognition factor of a GEC.

* The “case” is omitted from the term individual (case) work in order to make it clear that these are girls* with individual abilities, resources and talents which can not be subsumed under a case definition. The term “individual work” is used instead.
Online and offline appearance

Nowadays, the online presence (social media) is the most popular and widely used platform to convey content tailored to target groups. Nevertheless, PR work also takes place offline, by distributing the program of events. E.g., program schedules can be distributed at the beginning of the month and handed out to schools, after school activities and so on (e.g. youth clubs, accommodation for refugees, special needs schools).

Pictures

When images of girls* and young women* are used in publications (online and offline), it is of great importance that the images depict diverse bodies and people in order to reflect the reality of the diversity of body shapes and people. The pictures should simply depict the reality and spark interest in the viewer, who possibly could become a new member of the GEC. In addition to the composition of images, legal requirements for the use of images must be observed. No images may be published without the consent of the persons depicted. Especially during activities, when girls* relax and take pictures themselves, it is of high importance to agree in advance whether pictures (private or not) may be uploaded online. Consequently, a breach of such agreement has to be discussed and the person should be held accountable (cp. 5.2. Topics in GEW, Media).

Tips

- Always address girls* directly when pushing content (You, us together, with you, you will and so on);
- In social media, content should be designed to be as accessible as possible (e.g., videos with subtitles, plain language, little text, if text, then in several languages, etc.);
- Also possible: videos in sign language.

9.4 Fundraising and Finances

Unfortunately, contrary to the lip service often paid in politics - that girls* empowerment is a crucial topic - there is rarely a fixed budget for GEW to say the least.

According to the principles of empowerment, the work and services provided are to be recognised on a monetary level, and activities need to be accessible for all girls* and women*, regardless of their economic situation. Activities must not be made on the expense neither of the staff, nor the girls* and young women*. Therefore oftentimes GECs are in demand of funding. At the beginning it is important to note that fundraising can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, public funds describe funds that can be used for an economic, political or social sector and are granted by public bodies (such as municipalities, funding agencies). Private funds on the other hand are usually granted by private institutions for non-profit purposes.

The conflict of remaining autonomous whilst receiving funding.

Public funding, but also private donations are of course fantastic, but the services expected in return should nevertheless always be defined before accepting funding or donations. Money means power and with substantial funding, the donor may want to claim influence and access to the GEC’s stance and methods, which in case is not welcome. It should be clarified beforehand, whether it is feasible to provide the consideration asked for in return.

Private funds

If private funds are to be acquired, it is important to be well prepared. Especially when it comes to individuals, a strategy should be developed. In preparation for fundraising, a mission statement should be prepared in which goals, methods are presented (cp. 9.1. Quality Management).

The context of such mission statement answers the following questions:

- What are the important topics?
- What does the GEC stand for?
- What is the specific profile of the GEC?

Private donors, in most cases, need adequate gratitude and care. Therefore we, in the case of “in the kitchen”, find it advisable to focus on material donations, as they are very helpful at times especially because the bureaucratic effort is much less and the girls* are able to make use of the donation immediately. In the next step organisations and supporters are being researched.

Side-note: On the homepage of organisations and NGO usually donors and supporters are listed. This can be a helpful source to begin the research at, as some don’t list their donor programs within a certain frame and profile, and under a certain focus. In addition, the homepage of donors themselves provide information about which projects have been supported in the past. Networks also come into play, as they do have information about new openings and most probably about funds and deadlines (cp. 9.3. Public Relations).

Public funding

In most cases, public funds are tied to the financial support programs at municipal, local or political level. Therefore, there are often application calls for specific programs or topics. Also whilst applying for public funds, a thorough preparation is of advantage. Research should be carried out to find out which programs start when and which documents are of need for the application.

Checklist for applying for fundings

It is advisable to consider a few criteria when researching fundings, so that the effort being put in corresponds with the outcome. As the research to ensure program fundings is part of the working hours, it is most certainly important to take the time aspect into account. The following questions may offer some guidance in the fundraising process:

- How high is the financial requirement? (Work time is one of the most expensive resources and should always be taken into account as generously as possible when planning a project, especially if it involves transnational work);
- Which foundation or which funding program is best suited to the target group, objectives and the content of the GEC?
- What is the deadline for submitting the application?
- How often does the funding committee meet?
- Are there any support programs that are specifically related to your region?
- What is the maximum amount of funding in the respective funding program?
- Is there an own contribution to be made? (An own contribution can be made in an MEC from participation fees and donations).

Footnotes:

* For a deeper insight please see the webpage Donordatabase.org

1. How time-consuming is the accounting? (many funding agencies offer the possibility of online application and accounting);
2. Which authorities are behind the advertised money?
3. What consideration do the donors require in return?
4. Are personnel costs also funded?
5. How fair and correct are the fee rates for fee costs?
6. Are there guidelines for the funding amounts, e.g., for travel costs?
7. Are administrative costs covered?
8. Can the money be shifted back and forth between the individual items previously estimated if it turns out that more is needed in one item and less in another?
9. How complex is the documentation? (it is worthwhile, for example, to calculate a fee and material costs for the photo documentation and also for public relations work);
10. Are catering costs financed?
11. Are costs for assistants for people with disabilities covered?

When drawing up the financing plan, it is important to research the actual costs and to adhere as closely as possible to the financial plan when implementing it. Compliance with deadlines is not only essential to the quality management, but also allows for a trustworthy relationship with funding agencies.

Accounts
For the settlement of accounts, proper receipts (stamped and signed with date, article description, VAT and business owner) are always required (receipt books with this information can be purchased in advance).

In conclusion
1. At the beginning research the objectives/mission statements of the donors.
2. To ask for money for important projects is a respectable task.
3. A self-confident appearance is especially important.
4. Be creative and dare to try out new projects.
5. The effort put in must answer the means received.
6. Go ahead courageously! Writing applications is a matter of practice and dare to think big.

References
Empowerment work has learning and exchange at its heart and thus will always remain a process and a lively developing field. So at this point there will not be a final conclusion to be drawn. The depicted experiences, backgrounds, practical as well as theoretical approaches hope to give inspiration and be a basis for empowering feminist alliances, exchanges and activities. This project as such will be continued with multipliers, stakeholders and most important of all of course lots of great girls* and women*.

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11 References
11.1 Poland

Websites:

https://autonomia.org.pl/dowiedz-sie/#publikacje
At Autonomia's website you can find publications, guidelines and educational documents on empowerment, gender equality and diversity, antidiscrimination and human rights, prevention of violence and discrimination.

https://tea.org.pl/publikacje/
Anti-Discrimination Education Society develops the competencies of people engaged in anti-discrimination education (trainers, teachers, youth workers), conducts research on the formal education system in Poland, builds standards for anti-discrimination education and advocates for anti-discrimination education in the formal education system in Poland. You can find a number of publications and scenarios e.g. on "Education, Empowerment, Equality". (In Polish and English)

Books:


11.2 Germany

Examples of Good Practices:

https://www.sozialraum.de/methodenkoffer/
The mentioned website offers a wide selection of methods being used within social work. Once a year a new method is presented and discussed. For example in 2019, the Appreciative Inquiry was presented, a model of change management, focussing on stakeholders and finances. (In German and English)

https://www.claudia-wallner.de/maedchenarbeit-2/
PhD. Claudia Wallner received her diploma in pedagogy and wrote her dissertation on "Feminist Girls' Work". On her webpage one can find discursive publications on GEW and feminist issues. (In German)

https://www.bildungsserver.de/institution.html?institutionen_id=13040:
The German education server offers a wide range of publications and discussions in the German education system. It includes successful examples from youth work and statistics on the state of education in Germany. For further inside see "BAG Mädchenpolitics" (In German and English)

Books:


Examples of Good Practices:

http://coderdojo4divas.be/fr/

“Coder Dojo” organises a yearly “Cool Girls Code” workshop for girls* under 18 years to discover programming languages, electronics, robots and high-tech gadgets. Women with professional experience in IT facilitate the workshops as “super coaches” to serve as positive role models in a male-dominated field, and communication and logistics strive to make the event as accessible and inclusive as possible.

https://www.girlsgoboom.com/
https://www.facebook.com/girlsgoboom/

“Girl’s Go Boom” is a feminist collective that started out with the goal to make alternative and punk stages more accessible to women artists and fans. They soon found that organising concerts was not enough and that harassment-free spaces for girls* and young women* are needed. Therefore they organise a summer rock camp and workshops and opened a club house for girls* “where they can make noise and be themselves”.

https://www.facebook.com/collectifettasoeur/

“Et ta soeur?” is a collective of feminists from 18 to 35 years in Liège that originated in the feminist NGO Vie Féminine in 2018. Their goal is to provide a friendly, inclusive space for young feminists to organise and get involved in social justice issues such as violence against women* and girls*, and anti-fascism. Workshops for demonstration preparations, anti-sexiist photography or awareness raising on sexual harassment are organised as needed.