

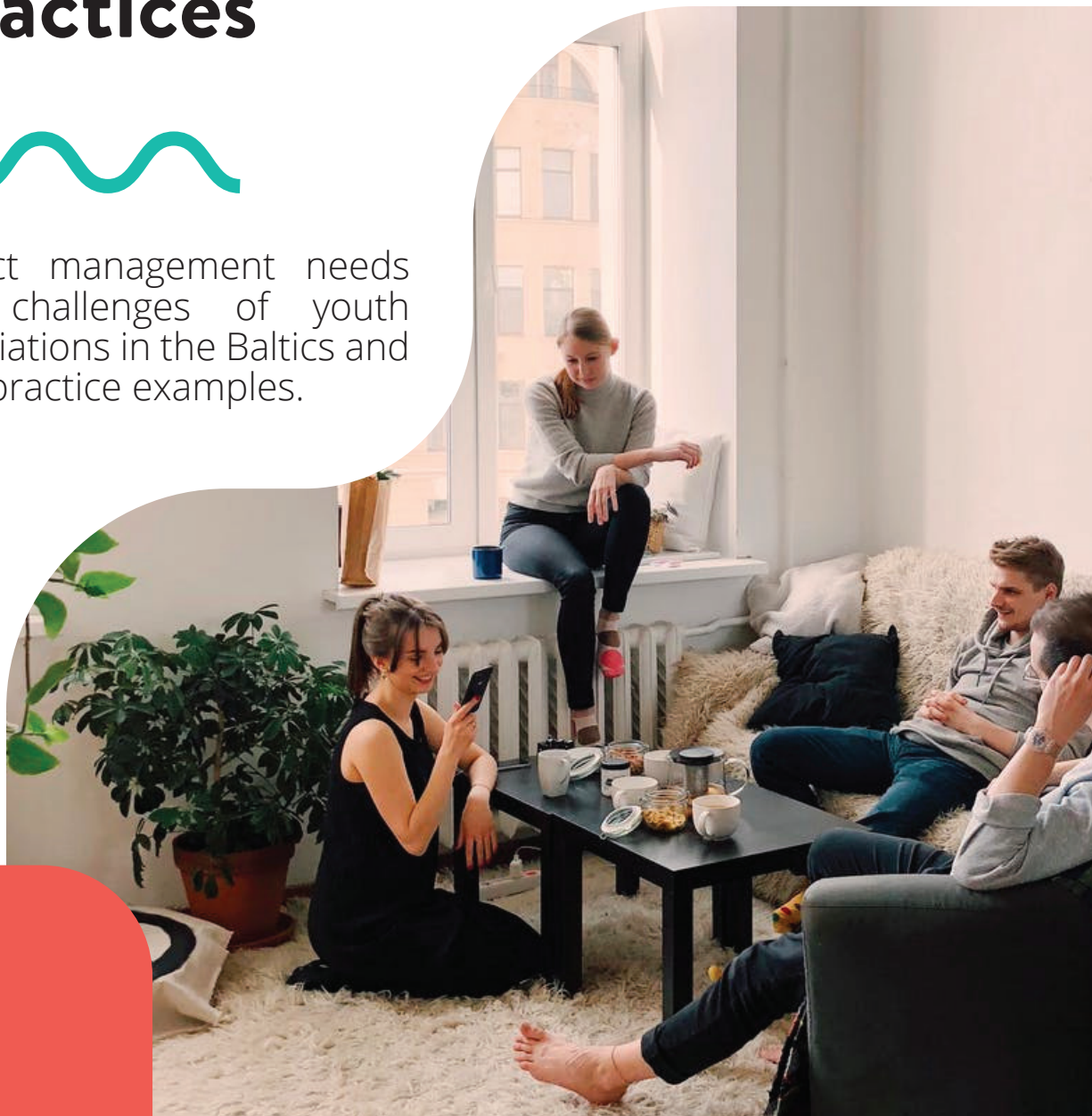
BALTIC : YOUTH : IMPACT

Needs assessment and overview of the best practices



Impact management needs and challenges of youth associations in the Baltics and best practice examples.

2021





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Introduction

This paper provides an **overview of whether and how youth organizations and social enterprises in the three Baltic States — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — measure their impact and presents different examples to give other organizations tips for measuring their organization's impact.** The aim is to establish the experience for today and determine the aspects motivating organizations to assess their impact. In light of the current situation, the authors of the project seek to determine the impact measurement tools or instruments which would help organizations to measure their impact more effectively. Furthermore, this paper gives an overview of the reasons due to which some organizations do not measure their impact, the aspects that would motivate them to do so, and the skills and tools needed to begin measuring impact. Finally, the best practice examples from Baltic youth organisations are introduced.

This paper summarizes **the results of the first phase of the Project “BALTIC : YOUTH : IMPACT”** jointly implemented by five partner organizations from the Baltic States with the aim to tackle the issue of social impact management by improving the knowledge and skills in social impact management and increasing its recognition in the Baltic States. **The main objective of the project** is to improve the capacity, skills, and expertise of youth workers in youth organizations in the matters related to social impact management — impact tracking, measurement, evaluation, and communication. Based on the study conducted, materials will be developed to help youth associations and social enterprises working with young people to start measuring their impact or to do it more effectively.

The study consists of multiple steps taken in the first phase of the project. Firstly, the authors looked at the national documents of the three Baltic States to determine the extent to which the topic of impact has been covered and to learn about the context surrounding the notion. Secondly, an online survey was designed to be later sent to various youth associations and social enterprises working with young people such as youth organizations and councils, student unions and clubs of universities as well as social enterprises working in the youth field.

Online surveys were conducted in Estonia on 15-28 February 2021, in Latvia from 15 February to 25 March 2021, and in Lithuania from 15 February to 05 March 2021. In each of the Baltic States, 19 organizations responded to the survey making a total of 57 organizations. Although the initial goal was to collect at least 30 responses from each country, the collected replies showed a large variety of practices and attitudes of the youth and social organizations towards impact management that the researchers had to reconsider the number of responses needed. Finally, five in-depth interviews were conducted in each country — three of which were with those measuring their impact and two with those not measuring it.

Definition of impact

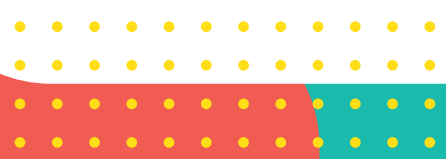
The impact of a youth organization or social enterprise is any effect of the organization's activities on individuals or groups or the surrounding environment. The easiest way to think about impact is by asking such questions as "What changes do we cause?" and "What changes would not have happened had we not organized our activities?"

Different impacts can be positive or negative, intended or unintended. Typically, youth organizations may influence young people's attitudes, knowledge, skills, and experience as well as their living conditions.



Positive intended impacts are usually related to the organization's mission, vision, and main objectives. In the case of youth organizations, there may also be many unintended positive impacts, e.g., when an organization primarily aims to educate and activate young people on a certain topic while they learn project management and teamwork skills in the process.

Negative (usually unintended) impacts may occur when activities are incomplete or of low quality, e.g., young people getting "bad" or "boring" experience without the possibility to reflect, learn and grow. Also, negative impacts can appear in relation to the so-called opportunity cost: the time young people spend participating in the activities with a lower impact is the time that cannot be spent in higher impact activities.



To summarize, being successful as a youth organization means being positively impactful while avoiding and minimizing any negative impacts on young people.

Overview of previous research or other information published in the Baltics

LATVIA



According to Latvian [youth policy documents](#), the most important task of youth policy stated in the Youth Law is to ensure appropriate activities for the development of young people's personalities by creating services and activities to promote their full integration into society and the labor market. However, the national level [report](#) "Municipality-Level Youth Work Analysis and Development of Youth Work Models in Latvia" specifies that the policy is developed as a process of inclusion of young people often lacking relevant data and evidence. Therefore, it creates difficulties to strategically plan an independent, competent policy area where youth work quality and impact are set as priorities. The Youth Policy Implementation [Plan](#) 2016-2020 mid-term evaluation states that it is necessary to define youth work areas of responsibilities, target groups, specific activities and the results to be achieved both at the individual and

societal level to reach sustainability and target-oriented development of the policy. Addressing today's challenges in youth policy is essential to strengthen and promote youth entrepreneurship so that more young people are involved in entrepreneurship and civil society activities.

One of the key indicators of youth policy is the participation of young people in youth associations or other non-governmental organizations. However, one of the problems of Latvian youth policy is the decline of the activity of youth organizations (e.g., [the decline in youth participation](#)) which is caused by the low capacity of youth organizations and the lack of experience in implementing administrative processes. To strengthen youth organizations, they need to have access to relevant resources as well as the motivation from young people to invest their knowledge and skills.

ESTONIA

The new [Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035](#) highlights, on several occasions, the impact and cost-effectiveness assessment in the youth field as a priority, while youth associations are not mentioned separately in this regard. The national development documents and the funding model for youth associations favor a formal count of the number of members of youth associations. No separate substantive impact objectives have been formulated concerning the involvement of young people by youth associations. This can lead to the state requiring a minimum number of members as a condition for youth associations to receive support; however, only mere proof of participants may not help with reaching meaningful impact goals.

Previously, the impact of youth associations in Estonia has only been studied once. The [analysis](#) commissioned by the Government Office and the Estonian National Youth Council in 2018 revealed that most youth associations measure the activities and results of the organization unevenly and do not assess their impact. The study highlighted the lack of meaningful measurement of data collection such as counting participants of certain events. When feedback was collected by the survey participants, it was not done in a manner allowing the data to be compared and, thus, learned from. The impact of participation in activities is usually not measured. The analysis also noted that a well-thought-out structure and division of tasks in youth associations did not automatically mean more members or more effective activities.



LITHUANIA



According to the [Lithuanian Youth Council's study \(2020\)](#), youth participation in youth organizations' activities plays a major role in forming the features of active citizenship of young people and increases their involvement in various processes in their communities. Additionally, it creates opportunities for an accurate representation of youth needs by actively representing young people from different social backgrounds as well as involving young people in youth-related policy-making processes. The study also highlights that the competence of staff members of a youth organization is crucial

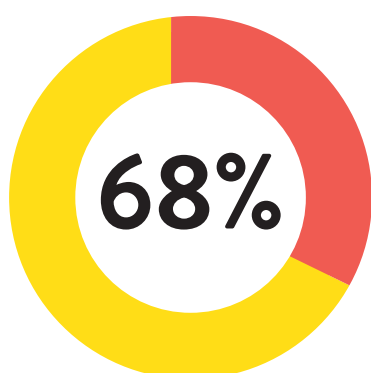
for the successful work of the organization as well as the representation of its service users.



["The Study of Youth Problematics, 2020"](#) demonstrates the decrease in youth participation in youth organizations' activities. The comparison of data collected in 2010-2011 and data collected in 2020 demonstrates a decrease in youth involvement in NGOs and their activities from 9.20% to 0.9%. Also, the study shows that youth participation in volunteer work has also decreased three times, and 80% of study participants have never volunteered.

Conclusions

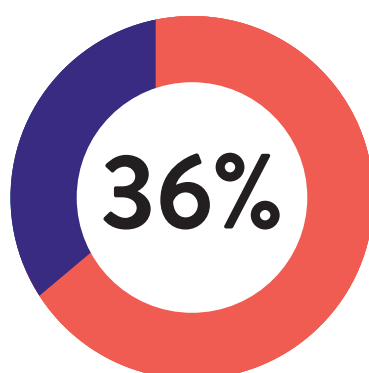
Meaningful studies of impact measurement and management of youth organizations and social enterprises are scarce in the three Baltic States. However, the youth policy documents and the results of previous studies demonstrate the importance of youth organizations for societal development, while many organizations struggle with measuring their impact and maintaining active membership. There is a clear need for addressing the notion of impact in the field of youth work and participation to offer a clear understanding of why measuring impact is important and tools with which to conduct impact measurement and management. Developing impact measurement will not only help the organizations to measure their impact, but also to plan more impactful activities, e.g., to involve more members.



Online survey results



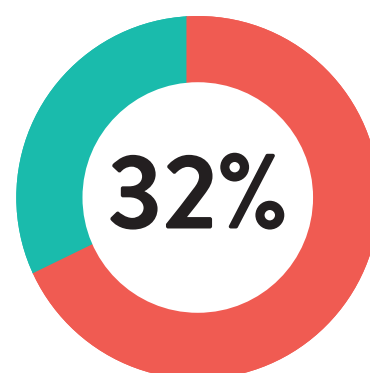
 measuring
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LATVIA



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ESTONIA



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LITHUANIA

In Latvia, out of 19 online survey respondents 13 organizations claimed to measure their impact, in Estonia there were only seven such organizations, and in Lithuania — six. These results are based on the respondents' self-assessments which depended on the organizations' interpretation of their impact measurements.

Organizations measuring their impact

26 organizations measuring their impact pointed out that it helps them to understand the organization's role in society and see if their activities create a positive change in service users' lives. It is also vital to earn trust from the public and partners to get more funding and prove the importance of their work to financial contributors. Additionally, feedback provides information on what needs to be improved in the organization and whether the activities performed have had a sufficient impact and helped to achieve strategic goals. The impact assessment

results are also necessary for effective communication.

Out of 26 organizations measuring their impact, 13 organizations stated they measured all their organizations' activities, seven organizations said they measured only financed projects because of the funder's request, and nine organizations only measured the impact of certain activities they found important. However, some respondents claimed they only measured the number of participants and voluntary work.

The tools used to measure impact are as follows:

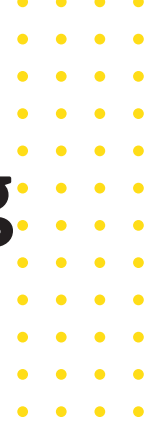


The target groups to which the main impact measurement results are communicated are funders or sponsors and partners, members, social media followers, news media to reach the general public, and the companies that the youth organizations wish to cooperate with in the future. They communicate with stakeholders mainly by using social media and organizations' webpage, writing and publishing articles and organizing events or discussions, and using internal communication channels to reach their members.

The need for a better means of impact measurement was required by those already measuring their impact. The need for more knowledge on how to efficiently

and continuously measure their social impact was brought out the most. Information and examples as to why measuring impact is important and the value it would help to create is also necessary. Additionally, good examples, tools, and external help in forming the organization's individual criteria of social impact measurement were mentioned. There is also a lack of knowledge-based methods and tools that could combine all the data. The representatives of the organizations wish to participate in workshops and interactive learning events to gain more knowledge. Furthermore, the necessity to have more financial and human resources, motivation and involvement of managers to measure the impact arose from the interviews.

Organizations not measuring their impact



The factors identified by the respondents as the reasons for not measuring their organizations' impact are as follows: not seeing the need to measure impact nor benefits it could bring, insufficient knowledge, not having enough activities to measure, lack of skills and resources (time, money, people) to measure impact, not enough suitable tools to use. It was also mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic made it more difficult to begin measuring social impact.

To motivate organizations to measure their impact, the need for it should be well justified and the benefits of it should be made clear. One of the main reasons why

organizations do not measure their impact is lack of knowledge. It is crucial to educate organizations, provide them with the necessary information, materials, and tools, and organize workshops or courses to teach them to use those tools. Such resources as information and tools should be available for all, and the impact measurement process should be rather short to guarantee that it is not dismissed due to the lack of time. In addition to the availability of materials, organizations want an external mentor to help them with the whole process and to provide advice and support. Many organizations see the need for additional funding to measure impact.

Benefits of measuring the impact



In-depth interview results



Smaller organizations prefer to take action over measuring impact because they find it more reasonable. However, some in-depth interviews revealed that in many cases organizations are collecting feedback and evaluating their work without considering it to be measuring impact because of their lack of knowledge on the subject.



Larger organizations often involve other organizations in conducting impact measurement.



In some organizations, the CEO or project manager is responsible for measuring impact. However, in other organizations a different person is each time responsible for impact measurement and is not expected to know much about the concept.



Several organizations found that they could measure impact more effectively if they had the necessary knowledge and tools. Furthermore, organizations face difficulties in communicating the results, and need additional knowledge on the topic.



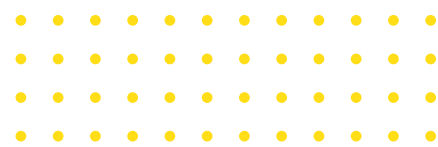
Respondents pointed out that they have not heard much about impact measurement. It was suggested that, for example, youth associations could be more active in this field and organize training for their members.



To learn how to measure impact, there could be training and workshops where basic knowledge is provided and where impact measurement can be practiced on a case-by-case basis, and short written materials on the topic with sharing best practices could be created.



It was repeatedly expressed that tools should be interactive and time-efficient as organizations do not possess enough resources which could be invested in prolonged social impact measurement processes. Additionally, impact management activities must be interactive and engaging due to surveys often being boring for young people. It was suggested to use more non-formal activities to collect feedback and to introduce gamification to measure impact better.



Summary

The literature overview demonstrates a decline in active participation of youth, therefore, it is substantially important to provide quality service in youth organizations.

Measuring organizations' impact is one way to contribute, and it is important that government agencies both evaluate youth associations through the number of young people involved and take into account youth associations' influence and impact on young people. Meanwhile, the problem is that many youth organizations do not have sufficient impact-related knowledge. Even the organizations claiming to measure their impact found that they could do it faster

and more efficiently if they had more knowledge and resources. On one hand, organizations need basic materials and training for measuring impact, including examples of how exactly to measure it and how other similar organizations have done it. On the other hand, those who already measuring their impact need additional knowledge and tools to measure and communicate their impact more effectively.



Best practices and recommendations



PROCESS OF IMPACT MEASUREMENT

- Plan your impact measurement strategically by long-term, mid-term and short-term evaluations. Set your goals and implement your activities accordingly.
- Use various methods to measure your impact.
- Use appropriate online tools available to measure your impact and prove your credibility.
- Build your activities and measurement system on mapping the concerns and needs of your beneficiaries. Research the other important target groups as well (e.g., if you are an advocacy organization).
- Involve into your impact measurement the stakeholders that your organization's members and event participants interact with (e.g., other organizations, community members). You will get more diverse information while strengthening your relationships with these stakeholders.



DATA COLLECTION

- Follow the progress of the individuals and collect a wide range of data.
- Create space for young people to evaluate themselves and present what they have learned and gained. Use their input also in your impact measurement.
- Create a process and unified methods to be used by the organizers/trainers as well as participants to meaningfully collect data for impact measurement.

USING THE RESULTS AND COMMUNICATING THE IMPACT



- Motivate your target audience to track their growth and celebrate your impact.
- Communicate and share the impact created.
- Use the results to motivate your employees.
- Fully integrate your communication activities and impact measurement system: base the messages and content of your communication plan on the information gained from impact measurement (e.g., survey results, testimonials, personal stories).
- Use your social impact measurement data to advocate for your cause.

DATA COLLECTION



- Follow the progress of the individuals and collect a wide range of data.



Laboratorium

Science School Laboratorium offers science lessons, performances, camps as well as other activities in physics and chemistry. They believe that the lack of exciting, practical experience is one of the reasons why so few children choose science as their educational field. Informative, cognitively challenging and practical lessons can make children fall in love with science and choose a profession connected to this field in the future. The primary target audience Laboratorium works with is children aged 8 to 18 years.

Impact management practices

Laboratorium's social impact measurement strategy entails the collection of a wide range of data starting from short-term projects and events and ending with the monitoring of a child's development through regular participation in their classes. The best reward is seeing your students succeed in school or various competitions and hearing their parents appreciating the efforts of Laboratorium.

Social impact measurement results help to regularly improve classes and activities. Most of Laboratorium's new customers learned about them by virtue of word-of-mouth marketing that means that good experience is the best advertisement. Social impact results make a great marketing story, make marketing strategy planning easier.

- Create space for young people to evaluate themselves and present what they have learned and gained. Use their input also in your impact measurement.
- Motivate your target audience to track their growth and celebrate your impact.

Latvian 4H

Today, Latvian 4H is the largest and strongest non-governmental youth organization in Latvia which, through practical work and non-formal education, supports the growth of Latvian society leaders and young entrepreneurs. They implement environmentally friendly actions and promote rural development. Each year they invite youngsters to implement at least one project that would result in personal growth or would be useful for society in general. Latvian 4H has more than 100 clubs all over Latvia and they also organize various seminars, sports games and camps along with different events to invite young people to get involved and participate. The main target group is young people aged 8 to 18 years. The second target audience is volunteers aged 16 to 30 years.

Yearly Youth Forums where young people present annual projects that they undertook. During this event, the organization can see how many youngsters have started their projects and how many

of them delivered the goods. At this forum young people present individual and group projects developed from March to September. For a well-designed project, youngsters receive a certificate. ***At this forum, young people also tell what they have learned and gained from working on their project, evaluate themselves; this is also a point of reference for organizations to measure their impact.***

Honorary nomination "Let's grow!" is a yearly event in which the youngsters who have been in an organization for at least five years and received at least five certificates from Youth Forum can take part. During this event, the youngsters present and reflect on their work during these five years and receive an honorary award which includes a silver spoon and the "Let's grow" nomination. This event helps an organization to reflect on what has been the organization's long-term impact and see how the youngsters have grown and what they have learned during these years in their organization.

Both events are the time when the youngsters evaluate their growth and present it to their organizations. It is the time when the youngsters themselves, their mentors, parents, and organizations see the impact that has been created, and organizations see what their members have been able to do throughout the years. Almost every youngster in the organization is eager to be nominated, and it is something that all mentors of the clubs wish for their club youngsters



Create a process and unified methods to be used by the organizers/trainers as well as participants to meaningfully collect data for impact measurement.

Erasmus Student Network Estonia

Erasmus Student Network Estonia is a non-profit organization that belongs to the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the biggest student organization in Europe. ESN Estonia operates in two cities - Tallinn and Tartu through five sections. ESN works for the creation of a more mobile and flexible learning environment by supporting and developing student exchange at different levels as well as by providing an intercultural experience to those students who cannot access the study period abroad. One of their main projects is "Erasmus in Schools" aimed at all Erasmus and international degree students interested in visiting local high schools during their stay in Estonia.

Impact management practices

To know exactly how many students have been reached and whether they liked the lesson, different types of data are collected. **International students receive a to-do list of activities that need completion during the visit.** Firstly, at the beginning of the lesson, international students note down how many of them are present in the class. Secondly, at the end of the lesson, they complete an online survey and answer three questions: Did you like the lesson? Would you like to study abroad in the future? What was the most memorable message of the lesson? Thirdly, photos are taken during the visit. To improve the project, feedback is also sought from international students, teachers, coordinators, and the project sponsor.

Such to-do lists and coordinators' assistance help to collect statistics that shows the impact of the project, while the photos taken at school during each visit are used on social media to make the project visible. In the spring of 2020, the "Erasmus in Schools" program in Estonia won the second place in the Erasmus Student Network STARawards competition as the most impactful project on student and youth mobility.



MEASURING THE IMPACT

- > Plan your impact measurement strategically by long-term, mid-term, and short-term evaluations. Set your goals and implement your activities accordingly.



Global Shapers Riga HUB

Global Shapers Riga Hub is a diverse group of young leaders residing in Latvia who are proactive in initiating change within the local community, city, and country. The hub represents a very diverse profile of IT, finance, business, arts, and education professionals. The hub works on various projects of their interest such as tackling bullying, youth mentoring, corporate sustainability, senior inclusion, and mental health topics. Their target audience depends on the project, and in general their projects target young people.

Impact management practices

They do rigorous and strategic planning of social impact measurement to evaluate which of the projects bring additional value and to ensure that both the projects and the organization reach their goals. Global Shapers Riga Hub is one of the many hubs around the world, and social impact measurement is the action required by their mother organization. Social impact measurement is divided into three levels:

1.

Long-term social impact measurement: at the beginning of each year they organize a team building/retreat event where they discuss and define the project's long-term goals for a year.

2.

Mid-term goals for projects and the hub as a whole:

Hub-level goals for the defined projects with the aim to see if the projects are developing and what value and impact they bring.

3) Short-term impact evaluations: setting

3.

Short-term impact evaluations: setting short-term goals, evaluating certain activities.

It helps in shaping the organization's work, putting more effort into the projects bringing additional value and impact. Sometimes, during the work process, the projects have to be re-organized in a different way to reach the target audience and achieve its goals. Impact measurement motivates the members to devote more time to the organization's work as they see the effect of their work. Measurement of the project's different phases helps to structure the work to see the beginning and end of the project and its created impact.




- > Use various methods to measure your impact.
- > Involve into your impact measurement the stakeholders that your organization's members and event participants interact with (e.g., other organizations, community members). You will get more diverse information while strengthening your relationships with these stakeholders.

Global Citizen's Academy (GCA)

Global Citizen is a social enterprise implementing various funded international projects focusing on global education as well as providing services such as youth work and non-formal education for young people, professional development of youth workers, youth leaders, and educators. Their main target audience is young people, youth workers and educators.

Impact management practices



They measure their impact continuously. For example, they implemented an evaluation of one long-lasting project by arranging interviews with project multipliers and local communities. Those in-depth interviews helped to clarify the social impact they had created for other organizations within the 3-year project implementation period: increased their growth, helped to form their own identities. Also, interviews revealed that global education has become a new priority of all participant organizations. Furthermore, they have implemented a survey of how this project impacted all young people who participated in it. The impact turned out to be quite positive: they now have a better understanding of the importance of global unity, education, are more interested in participating in global problem solving, etc.

This helped to understand the success and effectiveness of their work and contributed to their planning of future activities and aims. It also largely contributed to the motivation of the organization's employees. ***The measurement of this project's social impact helped to encourage all employees to aim for bigger projects, activities, and goals in the future.***

> Use appropriate online tools available to measure your impact and prove your credibility.

Junior Achievement Lithuania

Junior Achievement Lithuania is an international non-profit organization providing education programmes for entrepreneurship, financial, economic literacy and work readiness for youth. Their target audience is children and youth aged 7-19 years, school teachers, and impact investors who fund their activities.

Impact management practices

One of their programs called "Titan" impact is measured using the online [Mission Measurement](#) impact measurement tool. 'Titan' is an experiential online entrepreneurship education programme that challenges students to apply their knowledge of business as they compete online in the highly competitive industry of the fictional Holo-Generator (they run a simulation). With the help of this online impact measurement tool, they measure their program's main outcome "Job readiness".

According to the Mission Measurement data generated in February 2020, the program reached 4,406 young people all of whom developed marketable job skills, attained soft skills and knowledge necessary to search for employment, attained certifications and education in the areas related to high-demand careers, removed significant barriers to employment. This tool also measured the cost per outcome, program intensity, and other important impact measurement data.

The example demonstrates the success of using online tools while generating social impact measurement data. Using this comprehensive framework in time-efficient way, the organization is aware of the "Titan" program's impact and can improve it accordingly. Furthermore, the organization provides this generated data to their current stakeholders and, thus, ensures the credibility of the program.



> **Build your activities and measurement system on mapping the concerns and needs of your beneficiaries. Research the other important target groups as well (e.g., if you are an advocacy organization).**

Estonian LGBT Association

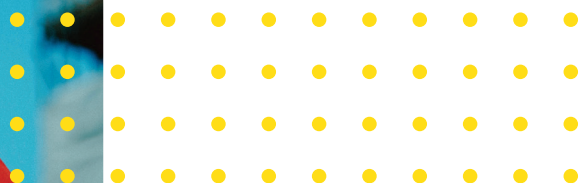
The Estonian LGBT Association is a non-profit association working for the benefit of LGBT+ people and their relatives by providing support services, advocacy, and to raise the awareness of society about LGBT+ issues through information activities.



Impact management practices

They ask for feedback, analyze specific indicators such as number of events, number of participants, inputs, etc., and research the field. For example, they mapped the concerns and needs of the Estonian LGBT+ community by conducting a survey the results of which were taken into account when compiling the Association's new strategy.

Community research and impact measurement provide them with an overview of the situation and needs, and offer a good opportunity for politicians and other decision-makers to demonstrate what changes are needed. With researching and measuring impact, the organization has found out how they can reach the “movable middle” (a group of individuals who have not taken a stance on the LGTB+ topic yet) and how to influence their opinion even when the group might be reluctant to listen.



USING THE RESULTS AND COMMUNICATING THE IMPACT



- Communicate and share the impact created.
- Fully integrate your communication activities and impact measurement system: base the messages and content of your communication plan on the information gained from impact measurement (e.g., survey results, testimonials, personal stories).

Youth For Understanding Estonia (YFU Estonia)

Youth For Understanding (YFU) is one of the world's oldest, largest, and most respected international exchange organizations. YFU aims to encourage people to find common ground between different cultures through educational cultural exchange programs, and also to appreciate and recognize differences. YFU programs offer Estonians a chance to go see and discover the world during their high school years. It allows them to invite the world to their home by hosting a student for a year. Since 1995 they have hosted over 500 students from around the globe.

Measuring its impact helps YFU Estonia to compose strong messages and communication. Since they collect donations to offer scholarships for young people with an economic background that would not otherwise allow them to go on a change year, it is essential to show the impact of the program.

Impact management practices

Every year, YFU Estonia asks students for feedback on their satisfaction with YFU Estonia's support during the exchange year and support activities. They closely monitor the results and improve their activities accordingly. In addition to the evaluations, they also ask for comments and testimonials from which they conclude that people are satisfied enough to be ready to write them because people are asked randomly and are always ready to write them. Apart from that, they conduct volunteer satisfaction surveys on a yearly basis, and get a more thorough look at the topic by compiling an impact report for Maailmamuutjad.ee (ChangeMake webpage).

> Use your social impact measurement data to advocate for your cause.



Lithuanian Youth Council (LijOT)

The Lithuanian Youth Council is the biggest youth organization in Lithuania uniting around 70 national and regional youth organizations and youth councils. LijOT implements different funded projects related to youth matters in Lithuania as well as consults their network organizations and represents their voices in the policy-making processes. Their main target audience is organized youth involved in various youth organizations across the country.

Impact management practices

Their continuous qualitative data collection helps to measure own impact and impact of their network organizations' on their service users. Every year, they organize two assemblies with all network organizations and, more frequently, forums where all participants share qualitative and quantitative data to be later summarized and involved in the general social impact measurement data summary of LijOT and their represented organizations. Along with these events, LijOT implements numerous studies analyzing youth problems in Lithuania and contributing to their social measurement processes.

They use this social impact measurement data to plan and structure their future goals and actions as well as in the policy-making processes where social impact data proves the value of the youth organization's work. This helped to achieve a big goal – funding for youth matters in Lithuania has been increased by 30% this year. This will benefit not only LijOT and their network organizations, but also all young people in Lithuania.



