E-portfolio as a tool for self-awareness, communication, social activism and career development

manual

www.eportfolio-youthwork.org

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How To Organize Workshops Using EPortfolio

Chapter 1: The ePortfolio as a Tool and the EPortfolio as a Method
1.1 The ePortfolio as a Tool
1.2 The ePortfolio as a Method
  1.2.1 Definition of the Objectives, the Context and the Purpose
  1.2.2 Collection and Selection of ePortfolio Artefacts
  1.2.3 Reflection on and Steering of the Learning Process
  1.2.4 Presentation of the ePortfolio
  1.2.5 Assessment and Evaluation
1.3 Use of the ePortfolio in non-formal education

Chapter 2: EPortfolio Software

Chapter 3: Different Types of EPortfolio and Their Implementation
3.1 Types of ePortfolio
  3.1.1 Definition of the Objectives, the Context and the Purpose
  3.1.2 Collection and Selection of ePortfolio Artefacts
  3.1.3 Reflection on and Steering of the Learning Process
3.2 Purposes of an ePortfolio
  3.2.1 A tool for active learning
  3.2.2 Presentational ePortfolio
  3.2.3 Assessment ePortfolio
  3.2.4 Self-awareness ePortfolio
  3.2.5 Communication ePortfolio
  3.2.6 ePortfolio for social activism
  3.2.7 ePortfolio for social inclusion
  3.2.8 Career development ePortfolio
3.3 Safe in Internet, copyright and ownership of art media (photos, graphics, video, music etc.) in the Net.
  3.3.1 Safe in Internet
  3.3.2 Copyright and ownership of art media

Chapter 4: How to Start Your EPortfolio Using the Developed System in the Frame of the Project EPortfolio as a Tool for Self-Awareness, Communication, Social Activism and Career Development

Chapter 5: How to Organize Workshops Using EPortfolio
chapter 1  

The ePortfolio as a tool and the ePortfolio as a method

The chapter introduces the ePortfolio as a concept and a method from the pedagogy. It includes the five ePortfolio processes (see point 1.2 for more information) as well as a description of the ePortfolio as a tool.

In the last years the term “ePortfolio” has became popular in the teaching process because the trainees are the main actors in the ePortfolio operations. Working with ePortfolio makes them responsible for their own education. In that way the ePortfolios serve as a tool and a method for continuing development of competencies.

Working with ePortolio isn't limited only to the teaching filed. The main principles of development of the competencies from the trainee himself could be perceived as an essential factor of the youth work. The ePortfolio method offers a structured approach which helps the trainees to identify their strong sides, to document their personal progress and to seek their specific goals.

The ePortfolio is a method for developing the competencies not a tool for collecting artefacts!

In that sense, a well structured ePortfolio process requires guidance. This means that a tutor or consultant must continuously provide feedback regarding the work, as well as help the trainees in planning their future development, and to support them in the process of developing competencies. Although the idea of ePortfolio could have other dimensions which don’t include structured planning, the consulting and feedback help from their peers in the ePortfolio method is necessary.

1.1 The ePortfolio as a tool

The ePortfolio is an electronic portfolio of learning that has been acquired from all learning environments – a digitally created and managed archive of acquired skills and knowledge. Beyond the classroom, it has a vast array of applications that represent both opportunities and challenges to all of us. The ePortfolio, as defined by the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (2003), is “a collection of authentic and diverse evidence, drawn from a larger archive representing what a person or organization has learned over time.” The person or entity that owns the ePortfolio should reflect on its content. This content is “designed for presentation to one or more audiences for a particular rhetorical purpose”.

The ePortfolio as a tool and the ePortfolio as a method
The goal of the portfolio work is to document and support the learning processes and learning results. What is important is that ePortfolio is a concept and as such it refers not only to the digital collection of artefacts, achievements etc. but it refers to the whole process of planning, documentation and reflecting upon these artefacts, achievements etc. Thus, all definitions of ePortfolio are related to a process that:

- focuses on learning products and learning processes;
- uses ICT;
- supports self-directed learning, its planning, documentation and reflection;
- includes the opportunity for an authentic and holistic approach of assessment.

From a more technical view, the ePortfolio integrates the following components:

- **An online personal workspace** where an individual can easily write and publish text-based information, links, digital images and audio or video clips. Everything can be published in an ePortfolio: projects, pictures, drawings, articles, publications, one's CV, interests, hobbies, educational and work history and more;

- **Social networking facilities** allowing the reaching out and discovery of other young people or educators/trainers with similar interests, sharing the use of similar knowledge resources. Via the ePortfolio young people can communicate and exchange information on topics that are of interest for them, they can share knowledge, experience etc., just any kind of information;

- **Tools for publishing and distributing the content** in multiple ways;

- **Features to categorize tag and classify** the content. These features are one of the most significant and differentiate the normal paper-based portfolio from the ePortfolio. One can organize the content in an ePortfolio a lot more easily and quickly. Thus, a major advantage of an ePortfolio is that it saves a lot of time for its owner and at the same time can be a lot more complete;

- **Search and filtering tools** allowing easy extraction of relevant and related information on any specific topic captured by the learner;

- **Management and rights access facilities** to allow personalized access to specific content sections to different stakeholders – for example, a young person may want his/her peers to see his/her hobbies and interests but not the teacher or the trainer. In this case there might be different “views” for these different stakeholders. The friends will be presented with the complete view together with the hobbies and interests and teachers/trainers will be presented to another view without the hobbies and interests. The rights for the access are entirely in the hands of the owner who is the only person who decides what should be visible for the others and what not.
1.2 The ePortfolio as a method

Assuming that ePortfolio is a pedagogical method we can easily say that in every point of the development of the competencies the learners are guided from other prior processes. These processes are continuous and repeating and lead the learners deep into the learning process.

Having in mind that ePortfolio is a general concept, the priorities and goals of the working process may differ. To better understand what we told so far, we will consider the 5 ePortfolio processes in detail.

1.2.1 Process 1: Definition of the Objectives, the Context and the Purpose

Starting without pre-defining the context is one of the most common mistakes made when working with ePortfolio. All participants in the process (learner, peer, trainer, audience) must be aware of the purpose of the portfolio process, what activities are expected to be accomplished, what learning goals are provided (general goals, specific goals) and how the evaluating process is arranged. It is important to discuss this questions before the beginning of the ePortfolio work and after that to define the conclusions made, especially when the work with ePortfolio is in an educational environment and in comparatively non-formal conditions. Sometimes it is necessary to conclude the so called competence development contracts, so all the participants are fully aware with the essence of the forthcoming work.

1.2.2 Process 2: Collection and Selection of ePortfolio Artefacts

Having in mind that the overall goal of the ePortfolio method is to provide a comprehensive documentation of the competence development process, it is necessary to diligently choose the supporting documents. Furthermore, it is useful to link related object to each other so that the combination of different artefacts provides a holistic view on the development process. Finally to create a complete look of the progress of the learning process, the documenting must be related with the planning part of the ePortfolio process.

1.2.3 Process 3: Reflection on and Steering of the Learning Process

Portfolio artefacts prove that a certain stage of the development of competencies or learning progress is fulfilled – but not by themselves. This means that it is necessary to bring them into the respective context and to describe (on a meta level) the purpose and the experience related to the artefact. This requires reflection. Reflection is the key to portfolio work, because it is a structured self-assessment where learners review their own learning activities and estimate the impact. Reflection happens on tree levels: self-reflection (the learners reason with themselves), reflection with peers (dialogue with a peer or tutor), reflection with the help of a third party (comments by people outside the portfolio process). No matter which of the reflection levels, we must be aware of the process of developing the competencies, as well as looking at the learning process from the view point of an observer. Documenting the reflection process is crucial.
1.2.4 Process 4: Presentation of the ePortfolio

ePortfolio work has two sides: the inner “working” side to which only the learner has access; teachers, trainers, consultants or peers may have limited access to certain products, artefacts or fields, but only with the permission of the ePortfolio owner. The second side is public presenting, in which the respectively artefacts are grouped according to a concrete goal. This goal may be preparation for exam, collecting documents for job application or a resume of the current situation. It is important to have a specific goal and the presentation itself to be well structured so that the reader is able to take an overall look over the acquired competencies.

1.2.5 Process 5: Assessment and Evaluation

The purpose of the ePortfolio process is to show the presence of a particular competence and therefore it is necessary to determine the evaluation process. This must be done before the real work has begun. In the end this main terms serve as a foundation of the evaluation process. The main idea is not just to evaluate a single artefact, but the whole development process. When assessing ePortfolios, it is helpful to define criteria rubrics which guide you through the assessment process, no matter if you do a self-assessment, peer feedback or if you mark a certain portfolio.

1.3 Use of the ePortfolio in non-formal education

In the field of non-formal education, the ePortfolio development can:

• improve understanding of the self and the curriculum;
• engage and motivate learners, both individually and as part of a community of practice;
• personalise learning;
• support models of learning appropriate to a digital age;
• promote reflective practice;

ePortfolios can be used as a method for recognition of non-formal education. They provide evidence of learners’ progress over time, and, in the developmental sense, they engage learners in ongoing self-evaluation through reflecting on personal strengths and weaknesses, recognising gaps in existing knowledge and competences and evaluating how to move forward.

In this sense, ePortfolio could empower the youth workers during out of school youth activities (youth training courses, youth seminars, youth exchanges and others).
There are different types of social networks in which ePortfolio elements have been incorporated.

One of the examples is the social network Facebook. It was originally intended for college students, but today anyone can join the network. Although the site’s scope has expanded to include more than just students, its purpose remains the same - giving people a way to share information in an easy and entertaining way. As of July 2011, Facebook has more than 750 million active users.

LinkedIn is a business-related social networking site. It is mainly used for professional networking. LinkedIn has more than 100 million registered users, spanning more than 200 countries and territories worldwide. The social network isn’t very popular within teenagers and young people, because of its professional orientation.
Myspace is another example of a social networking site. It was the most popular site until 2008 until its main competitor Facebook overtook it. The Myspace profile includes moods, blurbs, blogs, multimedia, comments, profile customization and music.
**Twitter** is a website, which offers social networking and micro-blogging service, enabling its users to send and read messages called “tweets”, which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters.

There are also specialized, Mahara based, ePortfolio systems that we are going to present in the next chapters.
chapter 3
Different types of ePortfolio and their implementation

3.1 Types of ePortfolios

There are three main types of ePortfolios: developmental, reflective, representational. These three types can be mixed in different ways to achieve different learning, personal or work-related outcomes or to serve different purposes. That is why when it comes to categorizing ePortfolios we speak of: types of ePortfolios and then of purposes of ePortfolios. Here we first discuss the three main types of ePortfolios:

3.1.1 Developmental ePortfolios

Developmental ePortfolios are a record of artefacts that the owner has done over a period of time. They are called this way because they demonstrate the advancement and development of the owner over a period of time. Developmental ePortfolios are work in progress and may include reflection, feedback and self-assessment. A kind of developmental ePortfolio can be the working ePortfolio.

3.1.2 Reflective ePortfolios

Reflective ePortfolios include personal reflection on the content and also information on what this content means for the owner of the ePortfolio, what this content means for the owner’s development. For example, a young person, publishing in his/her ePortfolio information about participation in a youth seminar on the topic of ePortfolios may reflect on this participation and state what he/she has learned on the topic or how this seminar has changed his/her views about self-assessment ePortfolio issues etc. After 1 year passes the young person may go back to this reflection written down in the ePortfolio and reflect again this time on the basis of some other experience on the topic gained in the meantime.

When it comes to ePortfolio, reflection is very important for learning and development, where this is valid especially for young people who very often gain knowledge and experience quickly and chaotically. Thus, it is of great help and use for them to have some space of their own where they can put down information about these knowledge and experience – this way they subconsciously are made to think over what they have learned and what good this has done them or think about what more they need to know.

3.1.3 Representational ePortfolios

Representational ePortfolios show the owner’s achievements in relation to particular work and are, therefore, selective. Young people choose some artefacts (samples of projects, publications, writings etc.) to represent what they have achieved in the course of a project.
3.2 Purposes of an ePortfolio

3.2.1 A tool for active learning

In the context of non-formal education and youth work it is very important to acknowledge the advantages of the ePortfolio because it is on the first place a tool for active learning. Active learning means that learners are not passive recipients of information but they are active participants in the learning process. This makes them feel responsible for this learning process which on its own leads to better learning outcomes.

In an ePortfolio for active learning young people can have their own space where they collect artefacts of their own choice, present those in a way they would like to see them and finally show those artefacts to whoever they decide. This process is conducive to active learning because it encourages reflection on one’s own achievements and construction of knowledge over a period of time. Thus, the Learning ePortfolio has to document young people’s development over time and nurture learning. Young people are owners of their ePortfolios – they decide what, when and how to put inside their Learning ePortfolio which makes them responsible and active learners. It is very important for the learning process that the ePortfolio provides possibilities for communication and information exchange between peers because feedback also guarantees improvement and reflection on the part of the ePortfolio owner.

3.2.2 Presentational ePortfolio

The ePortfolio can be used as a tool for presenting achievements. In this case the young person can collect and sort out artefacts that are representative for a specific field he/she has excelled in or a specific work done, course completed etc. This type of ePortfolio stores the digital artefacts that the young person can later use or finds necessary for presenting himself/herself for a concrete audience.

3.2.3 Assessment ePortfolio

ePortfolios are also known as alternative assessment tool. In contrary to classical assessment concepts, ePortfolios provide a possibility for the learners to present their individual knowledge in their own preferred way. Using ePortfolios for assessment purposes is more than “handing in a presentation and getting a mark”. When working with ePortfolios in the assessment context, it is necessary to look at the portfolio from a wider perspective.

Moreover, with an ePortfolio, learners get the possibility to lead the assessment process and to present their skills, knowledge and competences from a pro-active perspective. Learner involvement in their own assessment is an important part of the preparation for life and work. In self-assessment learners take on more responsibility for their own learning and become more aware of their own knowledge gaps (if any) since they assess themselves in relation to the course objectives. Through assessment, viewed as part of the learning process, the learner can track his/her personal development resulting in a deeper learning process.
experience. Learners will be working on tasks at their own pace and will then receive feedback expressed in private messages (this could be particularly advantageous for reserved pupils). Such feedback could be more frequent and could better cater for individual needs than in traditional classroom settings.

### 3.2.4 Self-awareness ePortfolio

ePortfolios come in handy when a student tries to get back into the past to see what he/she has done well and what not so good. In that way the learners get an idea in which areas of their work they need more practice and learning. By self-awareness ePortfolios young people can monitor their progress in the learning/training process. Creating such a type of ePortfolio helps the learners to find out their strong and weak points, where they have gaps in their experience, how to address their weaknesses and to capitalize their strengths. Self-awareness ePortfolio shouldn’t be just about weaknesses, but just as much about identifying strengths.

### 3.2.5 Communication ePortfolio

ePortfolios serve as a tool for connecting with people. The biggest social networks work as a communication ePortfolio. The main idea behind it is to set up your profile, choose which artefacts you want to use, depending of the topic and allow or disallow other users to see your information, depending of your privacy settings. The learners may add their contacts in their friend lists, so it will be easier for them to follow their activities. One of the most used artefacts in a communication ePortfolio is the Wall, where users can post links, share videos and pictures so they can be commented by the owner of the profile.

### 3.2.6 ePortfolio for social activism

Activism consists of intentional efforts to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change. Activism can take a wide range of forms from writing letters to newspapers or politicians, political campaigning, economic activism such as boycotts or preferentially patronizing businesses, rallies, street marches, strikes, sit-ins, and hunger strikes.

Some activists try to persuade people to change their behavior directly, rather than to persuade governments to change laws. The cooperative movement seeks to build new institutions which conform to cooperative principles, and generally does not lobby or protest politically (Wikipedia).

ePortfolio could be a strong tool for promoting some ideas for change. In order to achieve maximum impact social activism ePortfolio could be developed in some wide-spread social networks like Facebook, Twitter and others. There are different formats in which such portfolio could be developed, for example, in “Group”, “Cause” or “Event” formats. Then, of course, the number of people joined or supported is important and it could be achieved in many ways, like inviting friends, sending messages to join, advertising, posting interesting information on the wall etc. Facebook, for example, is providing some guidance how to promote your idea/event (when you set-up a group).
3.2.7 ePortfolio for social inclusion

ePortfolio could be important tools for a social inclusion. There are different types of outsiders among the young people, some of them are disappointed from their families, some of them are not attending the school, some of them are entering in groups which demonstrate anti-social behavior. The reasons for being outsider are sometimes in bad influence from the surrounding, the economic or minority issues and others. Sometimes it is because lack of adequate attendance from the parents or from the teachers and lack of understanding. And, we often could see that young people are expressing themselves in the net, sharing their negativism or problems and asking for some feedback from the peers. ePortfolio could be really a good media to share your thoughts, your fears. In such cases, anonymous accounts (or nick names) offer wide possibilities to express everything that is difficult to say in the real life. The youth trainers and consultants may observe such virtual communities and make conclusions about the problems of the youngsters. As a result, they may suggest measures for their social inclusion.

Exploring young people portfolio may identify some potential early school leavers. Indicators for early school leaving could be: lack of attendance in the school (young people declare they spent most of their time outside); estimating the school atmosphere as bad and not motivating (they don’t like the subjects and the way of teaching); announcing some outsider groups as more interesting than the schoolmates; expressing economic difficulties in the family and necessity to work full-time; lack of friends in the class and estimating the classmates as boring; too much negative thought about the future; too much criticism and negativism about the people etc.

3.2.8 Career development ePortfolio

Last but not least, the ePortfolio can be used by young people for the purposes of career planning and career development. The ePortfolio tool can assist young people in creating and maintaining the following aspects necessary for a successful career development:

- career goals;
- keeping track of work experience and accomplishments;
- creating, updating and keeping reliable storage of the resume.

Moreover, young people’s ePortfolios can be used for the purposes of giving career advice by career counsellors. A career consultant can enter the ePortfolio system and go through the profiles of young people (only if they have granted access to their profiles). After that the career consultant can give professional career advice and consultations to these young people depending on what they have found in their ePortfolios.
3.3 Safe in Internet, copyright and ownership of art media (photos, graphics, video, music etc.) in the Net.

When working with ePortfolio it is suggestible to aware about some aspects of protecting your data of unauthorized use. Such unauthorized use may arise either from violent access to the data (compromising the security) or from lack of knowledge how to cope with ownership issues of different media.

3.3.1 Safe in Internet

Some typical examples of data stealing are:

- When the computer is virus infected and important data is transmitted, in such cases proper anti-virus software and firewall software should be installed; The computer has to be regularly scanned for viruses;
- When you enter the credit card numbers etc. in non-secured www site or in “copy” site and your card data is stolen; In such cases it is advisable to check the site name and site view carefully (if it is the original www site of the company and not a copy) and to check if the data is encrypted (secure sites start with https://).
- When you a receiving some strange attachments in e-mails and you try to open them. Some attachments could install viruses or toryan horses. You should not open mails form unknown users and with strange attachments. Also, you should have installed anti-virus software to check all the incoming e-mails.
- Browsing in Internet and looking in some www sites could also upload some software on your computer and damage it. You have to browse only well-known www sites.

Last but not least, there no 100% security in Internet. If your computer is used for storing secure data you have to consult specialist how to protect it and take a lot measures to minimize the data compromising.

Another important issue is how to share of your personal data. Some young people are providing access to all of their portfolio data to all the users. It could be useful for the communication but it could lead to a lot of undesired consequences. For example, some photos may be used for improper purposes; some information could be compromising when you apply for a job (for example) etc. The “culture” how to share in the NET should be developed and youth trainers and teachers have to contribute to this during the training activities.

3.3.2 Copyright and ownership of art media

Young people sometimes don’t aware much about copyright of images or text used in their creations, in the www sites or CD/DVD project. You could often see in the social networks or in someone portfolio a lot of photos, graphics or videos just copied from some other www sites. What we should aware in such cases:

First, we should understand, in general, what ownership of media products means. Authors and owner issues are treated not equally in different legislations but in most of the countries
there are similar concepts about that incorporated in the law. For example, the writers and painters remain authors of their products even if the products belonged to someone else (have been sold). This leads to some rights even after their products are in other hands. The author rights of software products, for example, usually belong to the developer company and the individual developers are not considered as authors (except there are some negotiations in advance). Author rights are usually kept until some time after the author death, in average 70 years after. The relatives of the author may use these rights during that period. One interesting issue, ideas don't have ownership and copyright (legally). Only if they are developed in a particular way and described as products or technologies they could be patented and in this way protected from unauthorized use.

In some countries, media products could be used for educational or information non-commercial purposes without authorization. Usually in such cases there are limitations for their quality in order to prevent a production of commercial copies. For example, if some journalist is using an image of some movie to present this movie in a paper, the quality of the image should be low and it should not be possible to copy and use this image to produce posters or souvenirs, for example. Even in such cases the official enquiry is sometimes necessary; there are a lot of discussions about that in the net.

Copyright usually specifies the person/organization that is authorized to give permission for making a copies and/or distributing a product. If the copyright legal person is different from the author usually there is some agreement between them.

Copyright usually specifies the person/organization that is authorized to give permission for making a copies and/or distributing a product. If the copyright legal person is different from the author usually there is some agreement between them.

In the net, there are different types and levels of copyright protections. Some of such examples could be observed in the wikipedia.org. For example, there are:

- **Copyrighted works (all-rights reserved copyright, sometimes indicated as ©) –** they should not be used without official permission from the copyright owner. The modification is not allowed without prior permission.

- **Public domain works -** Works are in the public domain if they are not covered by intellectual property rights at all, if the intellectual property rights have expired, or if the intellectual property rights are forfeited.

- **Creative Commons (Attribution) License (sometimes indicated as CC) –** Works could be freely used and modified but on some conditions, for example the author should be mentioned, some limitations should be respected. These licenses allow creators to communicate which rights they reserve, and which rights they waive for the benefit of recipients or other creators.

In the net, sometimes publishers are including so called “water-marks” on images and video or publish the text as an image (not as doc) in order to warned the users that this work has intellectual property and is copyrighted. Sometimes, special players and drivers are incorporated in the www sites in order to prevent copy-paste operations. All of us should aware about the sources from which we are using different media -images, text, video, graphics, music etc. And, we should carefully explore in advance the rights to use such intellectual property works.
How to start your ePortfolio using the developed system in the frame of the project E-portfolio as a tool for self-awareness, communication, social activism and career development.

The developed ePortfolio system is Mahara based, open source code products which have some advantages in relation to the existing social networks. First, it is typical ePortfolio environment allowing different views of ePortfolio and second it allows personalization and localization (it could be modified for specific purposes).

After registering in the system by entering a valid e-mail and password and activating your account via the e-mail sent to you, log in using your username and password.

After entering in the developed system edit your profile information by clicking on the “Profile” button from the main navigation. Then enter your profile information in the “About me”, “Contact information”, “Messaging” and “General” categories.
Fill in the artefacts in the “Introduction”, “Education & Employment”, “Achievements”, “Goals”, “Skills” and “Interests” categories of the resume tab, found in the “Profile” sub-menu.

How to start your ePortfolio using the developed system in the frame of the project E-portfolio as a tool for self-awareness, communication, social activism and career development.
After filling your profile information and resume create a view form the My Portfolio tab. Drag and drop all the artefacts that you want in the layout of the view. For example, if you want to create an educational portfolio, you would want to add an educational history artefact, but you probably won’t need a career goals artefact.

While the principle in which the system is organized is somehow similar to other ePortfolio systems and social networks it also has some unique characteristics and offers a wider range of possibilities compared to social networks that are usually used mainly for communication and campaigning. Probably the biggest advantage when it comes to the ePortfolio system is that one can make different Views and use each one of them for distinct and specific purposes - e.g. one view for assessment, another one for applying for a job and so on.
We will present one typical example how to organize a workshop using the developed system.

**Duration:** Approximately 90 min.

**Users and groups:** Workshop including between 5 and 30 people.

**Technical requirements:** Hall with computers connected with Internet. It is preferable to have one computer for each user but in case of small number of computers, 2-3 users may stay in front of one computer. The computers have to be separated (if possible) at least 2 meters from each other in order to avoid interference between the players. If the players have lap-tops (portable computers) and there is a Wi-Fi, they may stay in different places and even not in one hall.

**Worming up:** The introduction could be approximately 10-15 minutes. The facilitator may explain briefly about the ePortfolio in non-formal training topics and give some examples about using ePortfolio for communication, career development, self-awareness and assessment; ePortfolio as a tool for social inclusion; ePortfolio and social networks as a tool for social activism and campaign activities and Safe in Internet issues like ownership of media and data, privacy issues, information protection etc. This could be also included in a special input somewhere in the training course programme (outside the workshop).

**Defining the tasks:** Approximately 5 minutes. The facilitator has to explain the tasks the trainees have to perform during they develop their ePortfolios. For example, to think what kind of usage the ePortfolio is best suited for, to record their thoughts/findings and present them afterwards in front of the others. Since there are different types of e-portfolios depending on the purpose (presentation, business etc) either the trainer has to pick one ePortfolio type or the trainees should choose one.

**Assisting during the development:** Each ePortfolio could be developed for approximately 40-50 minutes. During the practical work of the facilitator/trainer have to monitor the development and help, if necessary. Approximately 5 minutes before the end the trainer may ask the users to finalize the ePortfolio and if necessary, to assist them. Of course, if necessary, the time for the completion of the ePortfolio could prolong but not much.

**Discussion after the development of the ePortfolio:** 10-20 minutes. After developing the ePortfolio the trainees may join the plenary and the facilitator may give the floor to them to explain how they developed the ePortfolio, what they think about the problems covered, if they like the ePortfolio system. At the end of the discussion the facilitator could summarize some of the main topics and could present them in more structured way in front of the audience. Also, the facilitator may discuss how such ePortfolio systems could be developed in a small youth organizations with limited resources.
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manual

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