

## Concept Note

### Project Title (proposed)

**SOLE Youth Leadership Hub: Empowering Young People for Employability, Participation and Community Resilience in Southern Odesa Oblast**

### Proposed Project Duration

24 months

### Background and Rationale

Southern Odesa Oblast continues to face significant social and economic challenges that disproportionately affect young people. The prolonged consequences of war, internal displacement, educational disruptions, labour market uncertainty, and limited opportunities for meaningful participation in community life have increased the risks of youth disengagement, outward migration, and declining social cohesion.

At the same time, young people demonstrate a strong willingness to contribute to their communities and shape their own futures. However, they often lack access to practical competencies, supportive networks, leadership opportunities, and mechanisms that enable them to translate their ideas into action.

Since its establishment, SOLE Izmail has successfully functioned as an educational and methodological centre, providing high-quality learning opportunities and fostering innovation in education. Building upon these achievements, the proposed model envisions the transformation of SOLE Izmail into a next-generation regional youth hub that equips young people aged 15–25 with the competencies, relationships, and opportunities required to thrive in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing environment.

### Overall Objective

To strengthen the resilience, employability, leadership capacities, and civic participation of young people aged 15–25 across southern Odesa Oblast through the development of a regional youth leadership ecosystem.

### Specific Objectives

1. To improve young people's access to practical competencies that enhance educational achievement and future employability.
2. To strengthen youth leadership and civic participation through the activation and capacity-building of youth representative structures.
3. To support youth-led community initiatives that generate tangible local impact and foster active citizenship.
4. To establish a regional platform for cooperation, innovation, and exchange among young people, educators, civil society organisations, and local authorities.

### Target Groups

#### Primary Target Group

- Young people aged 15–25 from southern Odesa Oblast;

- Students of schools, vocational education institutions, colleges, and universities;
- Representatives of student councils and youth self-governance bodies.

### **Secondary Target Group**

- Educational institutions across southern Odesa Oblast;
- Teachers and youth workers;
- Local authorities and youth councils;
- Civil society organisations and community initiatives.

### **Geographic Coverage**

The project will be coordinated from Izmail while expanding partnerships and outreach throughout southern Odesa Oblast, including communities such as:

- Bolhrad;
- Reni;
- Kiliia;
- Tatarbunary;
- Other municipalities interested in strengthening youth participation and leadership.

### **Project Components**

#### **1. Employability and Future Skills Programme**

The project will maintain SOLE's educational mission while strategically focusing direct educational activities on competencies that offer the greatest long-term value for young people.

The programme will provide:

- English language courses tailored to adolescents and youth;
- Soft skills development programmes covering communication, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, presentation skills, emotional intelligence, and time management;
- Interactive learning methodologies that encourage peer support and practical application;
- Opportunities for participants to apply acquired competencies in real-life contexts.

These activities will improve educational outcomes, increase access to future employment opportunities, and strengthen young people's resilience in rapidly changing social and economic conditions.

#### **2. Youth Leadership and Civic Participation**

A second strategic pillar will focus on strengthening youth voice and participation.

The project will establish systematic cooperation with student and youth self-governance bodies in educational institutions throughout the region.

Support will include trainings on:

- Leadership and facilitation;
- Project cycle management;
- Advocacy and representation;
- Participatory decision-making;
- Community mobilisation;
- Volunteer engagement;
- Democratic governance and accountability.

Young people will be supported to establish, revitalise, and strengthen representative youth structures capable of engaging constructively within their institutions and communities.

### **3. Youth Microgrant Programme**

To transform learning into action, the project will continue and expand its existing microgrant mechanism.

Youth teams will receive support to:

- Identify community needs;
- Design community initiatives;
- Develop project proposals and budgets;
- Implement local solutions;
- Monitor results and communicate achievements.

The programme will promote ownership, responsibility, teamwork, and practical leadership while generating visible community benefits.

Examples of initiatives may include educational campaigns, environmental actions, inclusion activities, cultural events, peer-support initiatives, and community improvement projects.

### **4. Annual Regional Education and Youth Innovation Festival**

The project will introduce an annual regional festival dedicated to educational innovation.

The festival will bring together:

- Youth leaders and students;
- Educators and youth workers;
- Civil society representatives;
- Local authorities;
- Community stakeholders.

The event will serve as a platform for:

- Peer learning and exchange;
- Dissemination of successful practices;

- Presentation of youth initiatives;
- Networking and partnership-building;
- Recognition of youth achievements;
- Promotion of innovative educational approaches developed through the project.

### **Expected Results**

By the end of the intervention:

- Young people demonstrate improved English language proficiency and strengthened soft skills relevant to employment and lifelong learning.
- Youth leaders possess enhanced competencies in leadership, advocacy, and project management.
- Student and youth self-governance structures are strengthened and actively functioning within educational institutions.
- Youth-led initiatives contribute to positive social change within local communities.
- Young people participate more actively in local decision-making processes.
- Partnerships between educational institutions, civil society organisations, and local authorities are strengthened.
- A regional network of youth leaders and change-makers is established across southern Odesa Oblast.

### **Expected Added Value**

The proposed model offers several strategic advantages:

- Alignment of project activities with emerging needs related to employability, leadership, civic participation, and social resilience;
- Creation of a regional ecosystem of active youth leaders capable of initiating and sustaining positive change;
- Expansion of the project's geographic reach through partnerships with neighbouring communities;
- Strengthening of youth participation and increasing the visibility of youth voices within local governance processes;
- Development of sustainable youth leadership pathways enabling participants to progress from learners to volunteers, facilitators, mentors, and community leaders;
- Increased collaboration between educational institutions, local authorities, civil society organisations, and youth groups, fostering stronger community networks and social cohesion;
- Greater potential for long-term sustainability through investment in local leadership capacities and community ownership rather than reliance solely on direct service delivery.

### **Sustainability**

The intervention is designed to generate lasting impact by embedding capacities within local institutions and communities.

Young participants will progressively assume leadership roles as peer educators, volunteers, mentors, and facilitators. Strengthened youth structures and partnerships with educational institutions and local authorities will enable activities to continue beyond the project period. The microgrant mechanism will further reinforce local ownership by positioning young people as active contributors to community development rather than passive beneficiaries.

## Conclusion

SOLE Youth Leadership Hub represents the natural evolution of the SOLE approach. By combining future-oriented skills development, youth leadership, civic engagement, practical action, and regional collaboration, the initiative seeks to empower a new generation of young people who are capable of shaping resilient, inclusive, and vibrant communities throughout southern Odesa Oblast.

## Estimated budget

<b>Proposed Budget Line</b>	<b>Estimated Amount (EUR)</b>
Project Personnel (Project Manager – 1.0 FTE; Accountant – 0.5 FTE; 2 Senior Social Workers – 1.0 FTE in total; 2 Social Educators – 0.5 FTE each)	115,932
Renovation of the existing SOLE Izmail hub	9,000
Additional equipment for SOLE Izmail (5 laptops, interactive panel, EcoFlow power station)	10,000
Employability and Future Skills Programme (English language + soft skills; regular sessions; learning materials; facilitation; digital tools; stationery; consumables; refreshments; printing)	54,000
Youth Leadership and Civic Participation Programme (leadership trainings; facilitation skills; project cycle management; advocacy; simulation exercises; mentoring; development of youth initiatives; training materials; participant support)	18,000
Youth Self-Governance Strengthening (support to student councils and youth structures; coordination meetings; inter-institutional networking; facilitation sessions; online coordination; regional coordination events)	10,000
Youth Microgrant Programme (support for youth-led initiatives; selection process; mentoring; small-scale procurement of materials/equipment; implementation of community actions; monitoring of sub-projects)	8 microgrants × EUR 1,500 = 12,000
Annual Regional Education and Youth Innovation Festival (1 annual event × 2; regional platform for youth, educators, CSOs, authorities; logistics; venue; technical setup; communication; visibility; dissemination of youth initiatives)	2 events × EUR 10,000 <b>20,000</b>

Mentoring, Monitoring and Quality Assurance (regular field visits; coaching of facilitators; supervision of activities; data collection; monitoring tools; documentation of outcomes; internal quality review; learning system)	10,000
Capacity Building for Educators and Youth Workers (training of facilitators; TOT elements; methodological workshops; supervision sessions; materials development; certification; participant refreshments)	18,000
Travel and Field Missions (mobility across southern Odesa Oblast; public transport; per diems; local logistics; outreach missions to schools, colleges, communities; 2–3 day field visits)	14,000
Communication, Visibility and Dissemination (project launch; regional forum; visual identity; printed materials; storytelling; photo/video documentation; online dissemination; promotion of youth initiatives)	14,000
SOLE Methodology Development and Adaptation (updating SOLE methodology for 15–25 age group; toolkit development; adaptation of learning materials; design; layout; printing of methodological package)	8,000
External Evaluation and Audit (independent evaluation of outcomes and impact; final audit; verification of results; reporting to donor standards)	10,000
Operational Support (office supplies; communication costs; internet; banking fees; courier/postal services; basic administrative support)	6,000
Staff Wellbeing and Burnout Prevention (team retreat; supervision)	8,000
Contingency Reserve (unforeseen costs; inflation risks; logistical changes; emergency adjustments in implementation)	7,000
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT BUDGET</b>	<b>314,932</b>