

aha plus and Young Scot Rewards Recognition Schemes for Youth Activities Manual



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How it all came about – Erasmus+ Project “Active citizenship pays off”

This manual documents the cooperation and development of Young Scot Rewards and aha plus – two recognition programmes for youth voluntary activities. It is the result of a Strategic Partnership in the framework of the EU programme Erasmus+: Youth in Action.

The idea to implement a project together was born at a meeting of the European Youth Card Association EYCA on the topic of recognition schemes. In this meeting in January 2014, the Scottish Youth organisation **Young Scot** presented its Rewards programme. Since at that time **aha – Youth Information Centre Vorarlberg/Austria** together with the Vorarlberg youth card “aha card” (at that time still “360 card”) already considered implementing a recognition system for voluntary engagement, two team members of Young Scot were invited to Vorarlberg to present their work to the political decision-makers as well. During this meeting the idea for the current project became more concrete.

The cooperation with the third project partner, **Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung – Büro für Zukunftsfragen (ZuB)/Office for Future-Related Issues**, resulted from the fact that ZuB – as a connecting point between politics (State of Vorarlberg/Austria) and a wide range of different actors of civil society – is active in the field of voluntary engagement and civic participation in Vorarlberg.

With the Erasmus+: Youth in Action KA2 – Strategic Partnership "Active citizenship pays off: European cooperation on a recognition system for volunteering and active young people" the project partners aimed at promoting active participation, positive activities and volunteering among young people. By implementing this project the partners responded to an identified need for recognition of voluntary work and of the competences acquired while volunteering.

The project partners' expertise on recognition systems for voluntary activities of young people was to be shared and a system was to be developed which was to allow young people to earn points for active participation in various positive activities and to receive recognition such as meaningful products and special experience opportunities. Additionally the project partners, together with different stakeholders, developed the basic structure of a "Social CV" which lists type and scope of the young people's voluntary activities and documents the acquired experience. This Social CV increases the young people's employability and helps companies to hire committed young people. In the course of the project three tools were developed (manual, website and app), which also facilitate the transfer of the recognition system and the Social CV to other European organisations and regions.

The project partners are active in the fields of youth information/youth card and civic engagement/volunteering. They set up the project for the following target groups and expect the following impact:

- Young people between 12 and 24 engage increasingly in society and thereby expand their personal and social competences and have better opportunities for their future education and career.
- Organisations and institutions which offer young people the opportunity to help them in different activities more easily find committed young people.
- Companies can use the Social CV as a tool that documents skills and competences acquired in voluntary activities in informal and non-formal contexts.
- Society/stakeholders in the fields of volunteering, business, youth work, administration etc. perceive young people as active citizens.

By means of the Erasmus+ project and its three Transnational Meetings the Austrian project partners had the opportunity to get to know Young Scot's Rewards scheme in detail and to learn a lot about how to plan and implement a recognition system from scratch: How Young Scot met certain requirements, what Young Scot had learned since the introduction of the scheme in Scotland, what kind of challenges they face, what is going well, which obstacles they had to overcome, etc. This know-how has been invaluable for the development of the Vorarlberg recognition scheme aha plus.

In many talks and emails a lot of new ideas for the recognition system came up: The backend for organisations, the voucher function in the app, and the experience diagram were among the topics which were (further) developed together, in addition to the outcomes which had been outlined in the Erasmus+ application (this manual and the Social CV).

We hope to stay in contact after the end of the Erasmus+ project phase in order to be able to continue taking a critical look at the two systems which are embedded in two different cultures of recognition and engagement (in Vorarlberg, the focus lies on the recognition of volunteering as a contribution to the community, whereas in Scotland also activities for the benefit of the young people themselves – e. g. sports activities – deserve to be recognized) to be able to continue developing them and learning from each other.

aha plus

The idea behind the recognition scheme aha plus

According to a study on volunteering (“Bürgerschaftliches Engagement und Sozialkapital in Vorarlberg 2014”¹) carried out by Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences in cooperation with Büro für Zukunftsfragen – ZuB (Office for Future-Related Issues), 48 % of the population of Vorarlberg engage in voluntary activities. However, the voluntary engagement has changed in the last years. Nowadays, people prefer to engage selectively and not regularly and rather without commitment instead of assuming a function or responsibility for a longer time.

This is especially challenging for associations. According to the study, the highest engagement potential can be seen among young people between 15 and 29 because a relatively low number of this age group are already active. It is all the more important to motivate them for voluntary engagement since experience which is made while young leaves an imprint on the whole life. Someone who has done voluntary work as a young person is more inclined to engage himself/herself as an adult as well than someone who has never made this experience while young. If people who do not engage themselves are asked about the reason for their non-engagement, they often answer, “I’ve never been asked”, “I don’t know where I can get active or which kind of voluntary engagement suits me.”

We could base the development of aha plus on two interesting but very different systems and the experience gained from the implementation of both of them:

In 2004, the Youth Service of the city of Bregenz introduced the youth social project “Bre!ak” (<http://break.bregenz.at>). In this project, young people from Bregenz can help in different institutions in Bregenz such as social centres, kindergartens, after school care centres or libraries and collect points which they can exchange for vouchers in the city. Bre!ak is the basic tool from which aha learnt a lot for the recognition system in Vorarlberg. Young people who were or are active with Bre!ak were involved in the workshops on the aha plus tool and contributed essential inputs on its functionality, its design, etc. The team of the Youth Service Bregenz also gave us very valuable advice for the state-wide implementation of the recognition system.

Bre!ak is a recognition system which works mainly offline: Young people make appointments with an institution, they go there to help, they receive a written confirmation for their work and take it to the Youth Service office. The points they get are put in a list and when the young people come to

¹ Fredersdorf, Frederic; Rebitzer, Fabian; Moser, Sarah (2015): Endbericht zur Studie „Bürgerschaftliches Engagement und Sozialkapital in Vorarlberg 2014 – Soziales Monitoring für Sozialkapital und Engagement“. Online: www.vorarlberg.at/pdf/studiesozialkapitalundbue.pdf (06/02/2018).

exchange their points for vouchers, the points are subtracted again. This procedure takes a lot of administrative time for the Youth Service team, as well as for the young people.

The Young Scot Rewards scheme in Scotland, on the other hand, is an online-based recognition programme. The Erasmus+ Partnership allowed us to gain a lot of very valuable insights for aha plus from Young Scot Rewards. You will find more information on Young Scot Rewards in this Manual.

What is aha plus?

aha plus is a recognition system for young people who engage as volunteers beyond the ordinary membership activities in an association or an organisation, in their municipality or in an initiative.

For example: The musician Alex attends the rehearsals of his band every week. He is also responsible for the website of the band and for this webmaster activity he gets points in aha plus. In order to be able to collect points young people need an aha card and the association for which they want to get active must be registered at aha plus and publish its activities online. The young person can exchange the collected points for so-called rewards, for example, a job shadowing in a well-known company, a meet-and-greet with a famous person or concert tickets.

Apart from the opportunities which aha plus offers to young people who are already active in an association, the tool also helps young people who would like to do voluntary work to find appropriate tasks. It offers organisations the opportunity to promote their activities among young people. The tool's special selection opportunities allow associations to find suitable youngsters and young people to find interesting activities.

How does aha plus work?

For young people from 12 to 24 years of age:

Get the aha card, set a user name and a password for aha plus, enter your interests and your associations and get going.

For organisations, associations, institutions, municipalities, initiatives:

Complete the registration form and send it to aha, the data are verified by aha and you receive login details by email. Then the administrator registers and adds to the system the activities (quests) which the young people can do at the organisation.

For reward sponsors:

Send your reward ideas to aha.

www.ahaplus.at

The [aha plus app for iOS devices](#) (minimum standard: iOS 8 or iPhone 4s) is available on the App Store.

The [aha plus app for Android devices](#) is available on the Playstore.

Which elements make up aha plus?

aha plus focuses on the so-called offline activities. Young people who are active in associations, organisations, initiatives or their municipality collect points for their voluntary activities and can exchange them for recognition and rewards. The three steps are managed by means of the aha plus tool.

- 1.a The young person finds an activity (quest) in the aha plus tool or
- 1.b the young person has already been registered for a certain activity by his/her association.
2. After having completed the activity the points are added to the young person's account.
3. The young person can exchange the points for rewards.

Voluntary activities (Quests)

There are two types of "offline" quests: **Continual quests** are activities that associations assign to young people for the length of more or less a "season". These are quests such as helping as a trainer or a leader of a children group, working with a children or youth group, as a board member, regular visiting services, bar services, etc. The young people are registered once for the quest and they are regularly awarded points for their activities during the whole season.

The second type of quests are **unique quests**, such as helping at a clean-up day, helping at the cashier desk at an event, leading a workshop, etc. These quests can be repeated as well but they do not take place regularly. That's why points can be claimed only once but if the quest takes place again, it can be easily activated with a new date in the tool. Apart from these two basic types of quests, it is also possible to plan a complete event with aha plus.

In order to allow easy access to the tool and to reach young people who haven't had experience with voluntary work yet, there will be online activities as well, for example, a short online survey on voluntary engagement. The tool can also be used to share knowledge, to raise awareness or to involve young people in political decisions. The online element can be expanded at will but in the beginning it will be kept in the background and used only for specific purposes.

In the course of the participation process in the development phase it became obvious that it is important for the associations – especially for those which are based on voluntary work – that aha plus creates an added-value. The biggest doubts concerned the time the entry of the quests would take. Another point of criticism was the age limit: In order to facilitate the administration, members over 24

should also be able to register. Therefore, the tool requirements were expanded: aha plus can also be used as a **planning tool** for events; and persons older than 24 can also be registered in the system and managed by the tool. They can collect points for the Xperience diagram (see below) and for the association's statistics but they cannot claim rewards.

Special opportunities, meaningful products (Rewards)

The points collected for the voluntary activities can be exchanged for "Claim Rewards" and "Apply Rewards".

Claim Rewards can be claimed immediately. The young people just have to answer a control question and can then download the voucher to their smartphone or order the printed voucher at the youth information centre. Claim Rewards are mainly food vouchers or rewards which are available in bigger numbers.

For **Apply Rewards**, young people can apply by answering a question. The points necessary for the reward are frozen until the draw. Apart from the answer to the question the winner is selected with the help of statistical information – how often has she/he already applied for an Apply Reward, how often has she/he got one? Etc. Those who do not get the reward are notified and their frozen points are added to the account again. The winner is also informed by aha.

In order to make the claim of rewards as simple as possible for everyone involved, a voucher function is integrated in the aha plus app. The young people can download the reward vouchers to their smartphones and redeem them directly on site. Once the redeem button is clicked, both the company where the voucher is redeemed and aha are notified. This helps to keep track of the rewards redeemed. In view of the fact that not all young people (want to) own a smartphone this function is also possible without smartphone: In this case, the young person can request the voucher by mail.

Experience (Xperience)

Young people do not only collect points for their voluntary activities but experience as well. An overview of this experience is depicted in an Xperience diagram. The experience areas of each quest are determined by the associations when they enter the quest in the tool. It can be one or several areas. The areas have been worked out in cooperation with a human resources office, which considers them relevant for professional life as well. It was a conscious decision to call the areas "experience" and not "competences" since we cannot tell if the young people have really gained competences while doing a quest but, in any case, they do have the opportunity to gain experience in the area.

The experience areas are:

- Arts and creativity
- Catering
- Craft and technology
- Education
- Environmental protection
- Finance
- Marketing
- Organisation
- Security
- Social welfare
- Responsibility

How do people get to know about aha plus?

In order to successfully establish aha plus in Vorarlberg associations, organisations, municipalities and young people are directly informed in workshops and at events.

In the course of winter 2017/spring 2018 14 workshops were organized for associations, organisations, etc. in all the regions of Vorarlberg. The associations and organisations were invited to the workshops by the head of the state government. In the workshops, the idea of aha plus was conveyed and the participants could try out the basic functions of the online tool. Young people are informed about aha plus at a variety of youth relevant events and in workshops in schools.

The roll-out is accompanied by different public relations and marketing activities (press articles, posters, advertisements) and an online communication campaign (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp ...).

We attach high importance to the roll-out: The project is only successful if aha plus is accepted and used by the target group.

What are the expected benefits for each target group (young people, organisations, reward sponsors, society, etc.)?

Young people:

- Young people's engagement becomes visible.
- Recognition for voluntary work through invaluable opportunities opens up new possibilities.
- Employability is increased by strengthened social competence and a Social CV.

- Young people broaden their horizon through new (non-formal) community experience.

Organisations:

- Youth work of associations/institutions becomes visible.
- Voluntary work is attractive to young people.
- Active young people keep associations alive.

Companies and reward sponsors:

- The Social CV helps companies to hire active young people.
- Relationships with young people are established and cultivated.
- The project partnership is perceived positively by the public.

Society

- Voluntary work as an important pillar for good quality of life is promoted.
- People who are actively involved actively contribute to the community.
- Attractive leisure time activities keep rural areas attractive for young people.



Attitude and vision

Which values form the basis of aha plus?

aha plus is based on the participation and the contribution of the actors involved (young people, associations/organisations, etc.), as well as on the creation of new pathways for young people. Quite consciously, it does not want to be called “reward system”.

The rewards which the young people get for their engagement cannot be converted one to one to Euro. There is no conversion key from points to rewards. Rather it is planned that the young people stay involved in the categorizing of the rewards.

The rewards focus on regional and sustainable opportunities which provide experience and open up possibilities for the young people. Big shopping or restaurant chains are avoided if possible, even though young people's wishes often go in this direction.

In the development phase of aha plus, there was a nice experience on this topic in a workshop with young people: Two girls said that in their opinion the project wouldn't be successful if the rewards did not include food vouchers of a big restaurant chain. But as one of the boys in the group asked them if they didn't sometimes walk by shops in which they would like to buy things but couldn't afford them, they agreed. The boy's remark, "Isn't it cooler, if you get something from these shops as an aha plus reward and can use your pocket-money for the fast food restaurant?" caused an aha moment for the girls and for other young people as well. In this way, aha plus is also about awareness raising among young people about the above mentioned basic principles.

Under no circumstances should the recognition system be used for commercial purposes. Companies, for example, do not receive data about young people, the online quests won't be misused for market research, the concept must not be adapted by banks or similar companies for their self-interest.

What is the vision in focus of aha plus?

As described at the beginning of this manual, voluntary work is an important pillar of the high quality of life in Vorarlberg. Without this voluntary engagement, many things would not work as well as they do. Therefore the recognition of voluntary activities has been in the focus of the state government for a long time and is meanwhile considered of high importance. aha plus is custom-built to young people and is meant to offer them not only recognition for their engagement but also opportunities in the fields of employability, social competence, community experience and integration – fields where you can actually learn only by doing and not theoretically, fields that have an impact on life as a whole.

A country with a lot of committed people is endowed with ...

- people who are involved in the community,
- active villages and regions,
- a strong sense of cooperation,
- a lot of valuable competences which are useful for society and the economy as well.



Process and milestones

How was aha plus developed?

In the development of aha plus the focus was on activating and motivating young people for face-to-face voluntary work.

Which elements were particularly important in this process?

The special feature of aha plus was and is the extensive participation process that accompanied the development process from the beginning to the end and beyond. The participation of all the target groups is crucial for the establishment and the success of a project like aha plus, which is built on a lot of volunteers. It is not possible to develop a recognition system in an office with a few people with specific experience in voluntary work, it takes the intelligence of many to develop a widely accepted, needs-oriented system which

- is useful in everyday life and, at best, facilitates jobs such as the administration of the activities over the course of the year.
- is easy to use, especially for organisations (most of the associations which we approach with the project work on a voluntary basis themselves).
- is self-explanatory.

If taken seriously, participation processes can be challenging on many levels since they imply modifications of original plans. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the effort was worthwhile! Beyond the development phase, participation is also very valuable in the phase of implementation since there are already users who know the project and who have taken part in the decision-making processes. They have developed a positive attitude towards the project which they express when they talk about it and this has a positive impact on the view of potential new users.

What were the stumbling blocks?

The desire to meet as many of the needs as possible of the people involved in the development process made the system very complex. However, since simplicity is equally important in a project like this, it was crucial to reduce the complexity, also in view of the funding of the recognition system.

The discrepancy between the complex and manifold needs of the associations and organisations and the desire to keep the recognition system easy to use made it necessary to take decisions and to stand up for them, to let go of some things and to make compromises. This implied a lot of listening to and communicating with all the actors involved.

The programming of the system was a big challenge for the company in charge, as well as for the project team. Many steps had to be designed and described several times until everything worked to everybody's satisfaction.

To implement a project with a high level of participation is a comprehensive learning process. The people involved in the different project phases had several objections which resulted in a revision of essential project elements. This process was very time-consuming but inevitable since it was necessary for the people who will apply the system in their daily life.

Another challenge was the coordination of the needs of the different actors involved: public authorities, users, project team. Their perspectives on the project were as diverse as their needs. However, it was always possible to find a common view in the end.

What were the milestones?

Research

The project began with a period of extensive research: Which recognition systems for volunteers are already there – in Austria and in other countries? How do they work? What are the challenges they face? Etc.

Kick-off event

The participation phase began with a kick-off event in January 2016: The aim of the event was to inform about the project idea and to get an impression of first ideas, opinions, points of criticism, etc. from the participants.

Participation phase

Two workshops on the topics of functionality and awarding of points with twelve organisations in which young people are active as volunteers.

Five workshops on the topics of look and feel, awarding of points and technical implementation with young people.

Three workshops on the topics of functionality, adaptations and tests with pilot organisations.

Design of the online tool on the basis of the results of the workshops, the research and the meetings with experts

Testing and adaptations/pilot phase

The testing phase led to insights which we estimate as crucial for the success of the project in terms of cooperation with associations. The adaptations of the points criticised by the pilot organisations – planning tool for the association as a whole, statistics, etc. – required new solutions for specific elements. This resulted in a delay in the schedule of about three months because the programming of the basic tool with all the necessary adaptations took much more time than planned.

Implementation/pilot phase

Five organisations tested aha plus in desktop version.

Launch event

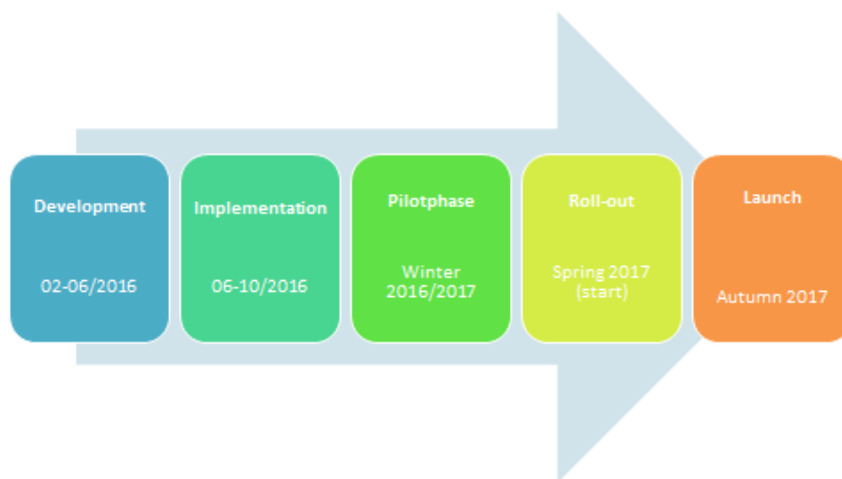
On 6th November 2017, aha plus was launched by the head of the state government of Vorarlberg in an event on the premises of the state government. Young people as well as representatives of associations, organisations and municipalities presented aha plus to the public.

Roll-out in Vorarlberg

From autumn 2017 to summer 2018 aha plus was presented in 14 workshops to representatives of associations, organisations and municipalities. In parallel, young people were introduced to the tool.

What did the project schedule look like? Were you able to stick to it? If not, why not?

The schedule for the years 2016 and 2017 was as follows:

**Schedule (October 2016)**

In the course of the process the schedule had to be changed several times. There were delays for the following reasons:

- Due to the participatory process which was planned with an open outcome it was necessary to organise more workshops, meetings, etc. to receive answers to questions that remained open after the first workshops.
- Due to the feedback from associations, organisations, young people, etc. the original concept had to be adapted. The original idea of the tool was more rudimentary in its functionality. In the course of the development phase it got much more complex.

- The desires for a more complex recognition system prolonged the development phase beyond the original schedule.
- It was decided to develop a comprehensive tool which would be easier to use for our target group. This meant that the system got more complex and elaborate, new functionalities had to be thought through, designed, implemented and tested.

Nevertheless, we could more or less stick to the schedule. The roll-out started in autumn 2017 as planned. What changed was the way of proceeding. The beta phase (software testing, adaptations, updates, etc.) continued in the roll-out phase until January 2018. As a consequence, a few bugs had to be eliminated while the tool was already running. On the other hand we received valuable feedback from users which helped us to make the tool stable and free from bugs.



Schedule aha plus (September 2017):

Development Spring 2016	Implementation Summer 2016 – autumn 2017	Pilot phase Winter 2016 – autumn 2017	Beta phase from 31/07/2017	Launch event 06/11/2017	Roll-out Autumn 2017 – summer 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 workshops with organisations • 4 workshops with young people • Feedback loops • Talks with different stakeholders • Conceptional work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptional work • Definition of all the functionalities • Connection with the youth card • Design and programming • App 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bre!ak Bregenz ○ Football Club SC Dornbirn Hatlerdorf ○ Scouts Hard ○ Open youth work Lustenau ○ Harmoniemusik Bartholomäberg - Until summer 2017 feedback about functionalities, design and programming dummies - Testing of specific tool elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot organisations test aha plus in desktop version • Meetings with umbrella organisations to register quests to be put at the disposal of member associations as templates • from 12/09/2017 • Full version of tool is available, incl. app and voucher function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event with the head of the state government in the premises of the state government of Vorarlberg • Open for all youth card holders, organisations and municipalities interested • Official schedule of workshops in the municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out in Vorarlberg with a tour in several municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workshops in municipalities ○ Workshops with umbrella organisations ○ Information stands for young people at events such as career fairs, etc.

Implementation of marketing activities from October 2017



Functionality and technical requirements

What are the functionalities of the aha plus system?

Organisations (associations etc.) register, establish a user account and use aha plus

- to put quests online

Quest Details

Eckdaten

Titel*: Jugendtrainerin

Beschreibung*:

Datum*: Start: 19.01.2018 Ende: 19.01.2018

Bitte gibt die genau Uhrzeit wann die Quest beginnt und Endet im Beschreibungsfeld oben an

Statistik-Stunden pro Einheit*: Std min

Points pro Einheit: 300 Pkt

Wiederholungs-Rhythmus: Bitte auswählen Woche(n)

Wochentag: Mo Di Mi Do Fr Sa So

Ortsbezeichnung:

Straße:

PLZ:

Ort:

Image Video

Browse...

Für eine optimale Darstellung lade ein Bild im Format 540px x 304px hoch.

Erfahrungsbereiche*:

VERANTWORTUNG Finanzen

Gastronomie Handwerk und Technik

Marketing Organisation

Pädagogik Sicherheit

Soziales

Personen

Cemeinde: Ganz Vorarlberg

Alter von: 0 Alter bis: 0

Kontaktart*:

Zuständig Quest (0)

Teilnehmende (0)

Termine zuweisen / anpassen

Punkte

Punktevergabe*: 48h Is scan QR code:

Sichtbarkeit*

Für alle sichtbar

Nur Organisationsintern sichtbar

Für niemanden sichtbar

- Quest details: title – description – start and end date – number of hours – points per unit – repetition pattern – location – photo/video – experience areas – target group – type of contact (simply take part, contact by phone or email) – person responsible for the quest
- Unique quests (e.g. bar service at an event) or continual quests (e.g. weekly scouts meeting)
- Several quests can be combined to a so called “Event” (e.g. a big festival with the quests “promotion”, “bar service”, “stage”, “technician”)
- The target group can be determined. Geographical and age restrictions are possible.
- Points are calculated automatically.
- The time when the points are allocated can be determined.
- QR code function (e.g. for open quests without registration)
- **to get in contact with (potential) quest participants and to manage the contacts:**
- **to invite young people to take part in quests**
- **to reply to inquiries**

Young people between 12 and 24 years of age register via aha card at aha plus and can

- **take part in the quests promoted on www.ahaplus.at and collect points:**
 - Registration as described in the quest details
 - Geographical or age restrictions apply to some quests, some are only visible for members of the organisation that runs them.
- **exchange the points for rewards published on www.ahaplus.at**
- **see their points’ statistics and their Xperience diagram**

(People older than 24 years can also take part in quests and collect points but they cannot get rewards for them.)

Other functionalities:

- aha plus is also available as an app for smartphones.
- The provisional registration of participants with obligatory data validation afterwards allows young people to spontaneously take part in quests.
- The quests and the participants can be managed by one or several organisation administrators.

- Existing contact lists can be imported into the tool.
- Umbrella organisations can provide their member organisations with quest templates.
- A QR code can be created for each quest. It allows non-registered participants to participate spontaneously in open quests and facilitates the overview of participants on-site.
- Automatic calculation of points: The hours spent for different quests are all calculated following the same scheme. No difference is made for different activities, with the exception of quests that imply a “Leading activity with responsibility”. The hours spent doing a quest are grouped in periods of time: from a one to four hours long “short quest” to quests that take several days.
- The points are allocated automatically 48 hours after the quest. It is also possible to allocate the points by scanning the QR code.
- Forthcoming: Digital vouchers with expiry date as rewards combine the possibility to immediately pass on claimed rewards digitally with the advantage that vouchers which are not redeemed remain at the disposal as rewards.
- Notifications (also on the app) accompany the process – from the start of the quest to the redeeming of the reward.
- All the voluntary activities of an organisation which are managed via aha plus – including the activities of the over-24-year-olds – are recorded for the organisation’s statistics.

How did these functionalities come about? Who defined them?

The functionalities resulted from the talks and workshops with young people and organisations, as well as with other stakeholders involved in the development of the tool. They were defined together with them and then tested by them.

We tried to balance the complexity of the system with an easy, self-explanatory use.

What were/are the technical challenges?

- Coordinating and informing all the companies that were involved in the programming turned out to be time-consuming but it was essential for the success of the project.
- It was not always easy to reconcile the desires with regard to the look & feel of the user interface and the budget available.

Lessons learned

Participation

- Ongoing communication with the people involved in the process by email, phone and personal contact is essential so that everyone stays involved and people do not lose interest. Feedback from the workshops with the young people to inform the organisations about the results and vice versa also intensifies the connection to the project of the people involved.
- Young people have to be invited personally by team members whom they know in order to make them really take part in the participation processes. Without connection to the project the motivation to participate is very low.

Programming

- The topic of user experience needs a lot of attention in the programming. Since programming companies or web designers often do not have this competency it is advisable to have this expertise in the project team or to employ an external expert for it. The user experience has to be very good for the young people on the frontend, as well as for the organisations on the backend.
- The more companies are involved, the more time is needed to keep everybody informed.
- It has to be decided in the beginning if the tool should be digital only, which implies that all the users have to have a smartphone.
- Legal questions have to be considered: liability for quests and rewards, voluntary work and disguised employment, data protection, etc.
- Data security: The more security, the higher the costs.
- The more notifications, the better.
- Enough time to test the tool has to be calculated.
- The time for user support must not be underestimated.

Implementation/Project management

- Small, versatile teams can act fast and flexibly.
- At the beginning of the project you need a clear definition and written description of the aims, the contents and the mission, as well as a common understanding on these issues of all the people involved in the project.
- Getting to know all the actors involved and connecting them with each other is crucial for the success of the project.

- Professional project management is essential in projects of this size.
- A common project management tool which covers as many project requirements as possible facilitates the work for all the actors involved.
- Competences which the team does not cover should be contributed by external experts.
- Contracts with external subcontractors have to be checked in detail before the start of the project (property rights, contents, limits, costs, etc.).
- Regular meetings are crucial – to exchange important information and to take decisions, as well as to strengthen the team spirit and to give support in difficult project phases.
- Project documentation is imperative.
- Intermediary evaluations are important to keep track of the progress in reaching the objectives.
- External sparring partners can provide a valuable view on the project and contribute to finding solutions.
- Successes and milestones should be celebrated with the team.
- Participation is a boost for projects! It is important to involve the target groups in order to be able to take into account as many needs as possible and to gain broad acceptance. Feedback from the target groups and the stakeholders increases the project team's self-confidence and provides good arguments for decisions.

Institutionalization

- The time-consuming participative process was worthwhile!
aha plus is widely accepted among our target groups. They see their needs taken into consideration and can understand compromises.
- Relationship and communication are important!
In order to make people accept aha plus, all the stakeholders must be involved and informed. This works best by personal contact. We organised workshops for associations and organisations in municipalities all around Vorarlberg and informed young people at events. We also paid attention to inform our contracting authorities regularly about the progress of the project.
- Events and campaigns that attract public interest support the project!
Events and PR activities help to familiarize the public with the project, which makes it easier to approach the target group. Apart from the marketing effect, events (for example, a kick-off event) can have the nice side-effect to provide the project team with fresh energy and new motivation.

Further stages of development

Social CV

Once aha plus will be institutionalized, the first thing to be developed will be the Social CV. The Xperience diagram described above is one out of three elements of the Social CV. Its main purpose is to make the young people reflect: to understand and to express the added-value of their engagement and the potential competences which they have gained.

This should be of use for them for job applications. In the development phase of the Social CV, it was also an often expressed feedback from personnel officers that a visualization of interests and areas of experience would be helpful in a (job) application procedure.

The second element of the Social CV is the reference letter from the association. The young person can ask his/her association for it using the aha plus tool. The association only has to add a short text about the youngster, everything else is already provided in the template. This is meant to bring fairness into the “business” of certificates, where young people had to rely on the goodwill of their association up to now.

The third element will be a quantitative list of the voluntary activities that the young people can print out and attach to their (job) application if they want.

The detailed contents and the design will be worked out in workshops with young people, organisations and personnel officers.

Statistics

Associations need statistics about the number of hours of voluntary work done (per year, for a big event or per activity) for different purposes, for example, if they apply for public funding. The aha plus statistics should facilitate the statistical recording and should allow umbrella organisations to access the data of their local member associations. Organisations such as the Young Farmers’ Club or the Alpine Club can get the data they need for internal awards etc. from aha plus.

Therefore it is important that all the members of an association – also the over 24-year-olds – can register with aha plus and collect points. This way, the association gets a complete statistics of the volunteering hours

Group rewards

When young people are asked about their ideas for rewards, they often mention activities which are only fun as a group, for example, visiting a sports event with your team, a barbecue party, visiting an amusement park, a group trip, etc. Therefore we plan to have group rewards as well. These are rewards which can only be claimed if several young people join their points.

Rewards for members only

In the workshops in the roll-out phase, associations commented that they would like to offer their members their own rewards. These rewards will also be available for people older than 24.

Possibility to donate points

Young Scot is currently trying to set up a cooperation with the Development Fund so that young people can support specific projects with their points. We also consider this option.

Transnational rewards

On account of the European project partnership with Young Scot transnational rewards have been considered since the beginning. Examples could be taking part in youth exchanges or international conferences, job shadowing with partner organisations, etc.

Expansion of online quests

It will be possible to collect points at online quests as well but to a very limited extent at first. It is also planned to use aha plus as a tool to consult and inform young people about different topics. In Scotland, online quests include the possibility for young people to connect their sports apps with the Rewards scheme and to collect points for sports activities, etc.

Ranking

For some young people it is interesting to compete with other young people using a tool like aha plus. Therefore a ranking is envisioned for the future. In this ranking they can anonymously compare themselves with other young people in the association or in aha plus in general. In order to see other people in the ranking or to become visible for others they need to have the respective approvals.

Awards

A smaller version of an event like the Young Scot Awards, which celebrates young people for their engagement for the community, would be possible for Vorarlberg as well – also to combine different awards at one big event which is attractive for young people. Options for such an event are being examined.

How do ideas for further developments emerge?

- Needs and feedback from organisations, reward sponsors, public authorities
- Inputs by young people
- Cooperation with Young Scot
- Current social challenges or events

Who is in the team when new stages are developed?

- Young people
- Organisations
- Reward sponsors
- Public authorities
- Experts (user interface/experience, software developers etc.)

Young Scot Rewards

The idea behind the recognition scheme Young Scot Rewards

For over 30 years Young Scot have been providing young people aged 11–26 with information, ideas and access to opportunities to help them make the most of their lives, particularly at times of transition. Our services are developed to keep pace with the ever-changing needs of young people and our information provision makes best use of a wide range of digital tools to engage young people where they are, being responsive to what they are talking about and current trends. Discounts, proof of age and access to local services remain crucial elements of the Young Scot National Entitlement Smartcard, with the innovative Young Scot Rewards platform bringing together information and opportunities for young people in new ways. Our co-design service has enabled young people to shape legislation, strategy and policy, from climate change to culture to community safety. Our reach has never been greater, with over 670,000 cardholders and 2 million page views per year for digital content. We are a universal service, with equality and inclusion at the core of what we do, and our user profile demonstrates that we reach all of Scotland's young people. For example, over 30% of Young Scot Rewards users come from the two most deprived quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Young Scot Rewards is a pioneering national Rewards programme which connects over 112,000 young people aged 11–26 from across Scotland to an incredible range of positive opportunities to support personal development, their communities and the environment. Rewards recognises positive behaviours and creates new pathways to opportunities for all young people across Scotland.

<http://rewards.youngscot.org/>

How does it work?

Any young person aged 11–25 who has a Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) can register for an online Rewards account, becoming a user. Registration is completed through a short, online form. Once registered, users are connected to a wide selection of national and local opportunities to participate in positive activities which support their personal development, their community and the environment. A young person can engage with an opportunity online or offline (in person) and once completed collect points. Online activities range from sharing their thoughts and opinions through an online survey or engaging in an interactive activity which challenges perceptions and promotes learning and understanding to offline activities such as volunteering and attendance of careers fayres.

Once points have been collected a user can opt to exchange these for rewards which support personal and community development.

What are its elements?

There is a national portal where young people are connected to national and local opportunities, they manage their account online, redeeming points for activities and then exchanging these points for rewards.

Points are awarded through a 6 digit code system, whereby activities have a unique code with a value attached. Users are provided with this code electronically (e.g. via email or thank you message) or via a paper voucher/poster then redeemed by entering the code through their account. Additional methods include tapping their card on a bespoke card reader with Rewards app and automatic of points allocation through an electronic API feed agreed with a service points provider.

The points are then registered to the individuals account and the user is able to manage and exchange for rewards. There are 3 types of rewards – CLAIM, WIN, APPLY.

CLAIM

The claim model is used for lower/multiple quantity items. A young person exchanges their points in return for an item. These items must fit the Young Scot Rewards ethos; the item should be beneficial to the young person in some way (encouraging learning, development of skills, supporting low carbon behaviours, or supporting social action) or reducing barriers to access. Some examples include photography and fitness iOS apps, small items of sporting and music equipment, craft items, gym passes, book tokens, recipe books etc.

Tickets to events are considered public events and are subject to Public Liability Insurance. If a young person is under the age of 16 they must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or responsible adult and must confirm their second ticket will be used by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.

WIN

The win model is used when an item is of a sufficiently high value, or you only have one or two of a desirable item. Competitions are 25 points to enter regardless of the value of the prize. To enter a competition the young person must answer a question; this is a legal requirement. This is also a great opportunity to gather some insight directly from young people. We will work with partners to develop such questions to ensure their relevance and value. We would normally run competitions for a minimum of two weeks and up to four weeks. Once the competition runs for its allotted time a winner from the pool of those who answered the question correctly is picked at random using a random number generator. If we are unable to contact a competition winner within a set period (set out in initial email to young person) to time we will redraw the competition and select a new winner. Competitions should not be used for experiential rewards.

APPLY

The apply model is used when offering an experience. 'Apply' rewards require 25 points to enter regardless of the value of the experience. The young person will have to demonstrate why they would like to apply for this experience and how they feel it will benefit them or their community. Once the experience has been on the Rewards site for the allotted time the successful applicant is chosen on the merit of their application. This is usually done in conjunction with the partner offering the experience. When developing unique experiential rewards with partners we will work together to identify any eligibility criteria and communicate this through the opportunity. If a young person is under the age of 16 they must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or responsible adult and a consent form must be provided.

All partnerships and opportunities are managed by a small office-based team based in Edinburgh.

What are the expected benefits for each target group (Young people, organisations, society, reward provider etc.) and what benefits does the Rewards system provide?

Benefits to young people

- Connected to opportunities, creating positive pathways
- Recognise and celebrate positive participation and achievements
- Opportunity to build knowledge and understanding of complex/sensitive topics/issues
- Opportunity to build experience, skills and confidence
- Level the playing field through equal access of opportunity
- Opportunity to influence change/decision making
- Access bespoke rewards packages to support specific groups

Benefits to partner organisations

- Visibility across communication channels
- Opportunity to educate on issues/key messages,
- Opportunity to equip young people with skills, knowledge and experience
- Inspire and support ambitions
- Fulfil Corporate Social Responsibility – supporting young people

Benefits to society

- Engaged, active citizens
- Empowered young people

Attitude and vision

What are the values Young Scot's Rewards System is based on?

The Rewards programme is based on supporting and removing barriers to young people engaging in three key areas:

- Personal development – engaging in positive opportunities which support learning, understanding, new skills and enhance employability
- Community – engaging in positive opportunities which support health and wellbeing, creativity, active citizenship, influence and affect decision making processes and
- Environment – engaging in positive opportunities that reduce carbon footprint and enhance environmental sustainability

What are the visions behind it?

Rewards was built on a vision to connect and enable all young people to engage and participate in opportunities which support positive behaviours. Connect, recognise, celebrate and reward for positive contributions and create new pathways for continued development no matter what their background is.

What is the Rewards System not?

A monetary based system, an event management system, an accredited award.

What should it never be?

A marketing platform driven by the interests of partners.

Process and milestones

How was the Scottish Rewards System developed?

A beta version was launched in 2012, based on a co-design process with young people from across Scotland. Following an external evaluation towards the end of 2012, the approach and technology within the website was reviewed and redeveloped. The current website was launched in 2013, a bespoke custom build.

Which elements were especially important in the process?

Involving young people from the outset to ensure the development of a relevant, attractive service, which complimented existing services and added value to the Young Scot offer. An ongoing priority is ensuring that there is a wide range of interesting, relevant and valuable opportunities to help young people make the most of their lives.

Which stumbling blocks did you encounter?

A range of challenges have been met over the years including technical capabilities, resource and capacity as an organisation, marketing and promotion and developing an attractive offer with varied stakeholders and partners.

What were the milestones?

We are in our 5th year, we align to 3 year strategic plans and annual workplans

Key achievements

- 100,000 users – October 2017
- National and local
- Hundreds of partners supporting the development and delivery
- National and local opportunities
- Positive case studies
- Diversification of application – no limits other than technology to deliver

What did the project schedule look like? Were you able to stick to it? If not, why not?

There was a 1-year trial period, with an external evaluation during the final 6 months. Changes were made following evaluation and since 2013 we have adopted a flexible, agile approach of continual improvement; developing the service in line with advancing technology.

How did it go on? What were the essential findings after the launch and the following steps?

- Evaluation after year 1
- Regular insight gathering with users and non-users
- Regular engagement and surveys with partners
- Continued evaluation of data – data driven decisions

Functionality and technical requirements

What are the functionalities of the Rewards System?

There is a huge range of applications, with functionality to support our varied network of partners and the changing needs of young people.

How did they come about?

Current platform developed from ideas of young people in partnership with digital agency.

Who defined them?

Young people and dedicated project manager at inception and team thereafter.

Who did the programming of the tool?

Storm ID, our digital agency.

What were/are the technical challenges?

The biggest challenge has been developing the functionality of the site to keep pace with changing landscapes and multiple applications. Many creative manual workarounds have been employed due to constraints in resource.

Have the functionality requirements changed since the launch?

Yes, our current ambitions are being limited by technical capabilities around using smart technology, the Rewards programme and Young Scot NEC card to tackle inequalities through a personalised offering, containing entitlements. We are currently working with the Improvement Service to develop all digital services connected to the Young Scot NEC card including Rewards. This collaborative partnership will enable us to realise our ambitions.

Have there been adaptations during the implementation process? If yes, how did they work out?

We adopt a flexible, agile approach, developing services and applications as needed.

What has to be taken into consideration, especially as far as the functionality and the technical implementation is concerned?

- Be willing to be flexible
- Consult with audience
- Consult with partners

Lessons learned

What were the results of the first evaluation of the Young Scot Rewards System?

To simplify messaging and functionality and build up functionality and features.

What happened with the results?

The results informed redevelopment and a hard launch.

Were there more evaluations of the Young Scot Rewards System?

Regular surveys with users and non-users and partners and constant monitoring and evaluation of data. Currently evaluating last 5 years with support from Data innovation centre *The Data Lab* – identify successes and challenges/pain points and consider how can improve.

At which intervals a rewards system should be evaluated? Who should do the evaluation and how should it be done?

- Constantly with young people
- Annually with partners

Further stages of development

What further stages of development have been implemented since the launch of Young Scot's Rewards programme?

We adopt continual improvement with regular developments to enhance application and reach of our opportunities and diverse usage of third party tools to enhance and deliver services.

What are the developments planned in the future?

We are currently working with the Improvement Service to develop Rewards 2.0 as part of a wider National Entitlement card programme of work, this development will build on the lessons learned over the past 5 years and enable new applications with enhanced functionality including closed groups, pooled points and gamification.

How do ideas for further developments emerge?

Organically – from young people, partners and team and horizon scanning.

Who is in the team when new stages are developed?

Variable over years.

How demanding is it to adapt the system to the further developments?

Can be challenging – ideas not issue it's the technology to keep up and deliver!

Were there developments that were planned right from the start of the Rewards programme?

No, re-worked in 2013 after pilot – simplified, now looking to re-introduce some elements – badge/achievements system, record if achievement/social CV.

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