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[Home](#) > SALTO Toolbox

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## SALTO Toolbox

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SALTO Toolbox was set up in 2003. During the introductory phase, all SALTO centres published the tools used by their trainers during their institutional activities. This practice has been dropped in the last 4-5 years in favour of a more hands-on role by the trainers, youth workers and social workers in uploading tools they consider worth sharing. Interestingly, one of the interesting effects of this change has been a decrease in the number of uploads and activated tools per year.

The Tool Fair, together with the European strategy on Tools for Learning, has become an official and regular meeting focused on tools, which is beginning to influence the quality of the uploaded tools.

The decreased number of uploads per year corresponds to a more structured format for those that are inserted, nearer to the definition of a tool as elaborated by the working group on Tools for Learning.

In 2010, the first meeting of the working group of experts reflecting on Tools for Learning took place during Tool Fair V in Venice (Italy). Coordinating the experiences, knowledge and skills of experts, trainers and national agencies is the most effective way of capitalising on shared experiences and defining a common strategy to realise SALTO's aims. The working group is composed of experts who act as a consultative group and scientific committee, setting up the strategy to meet the identified needs of National Agencies and SALTO Network. Benefiting from its decade of experience and its human capital, SALTO EuroMed would like to meet the following objectives on behalf of the whole SALTO network:

- Take stock of the outcomes achieved so far, particularly with regard to the Tool Fair and the Toolbox;
- Improve the overall quality of the educational tools developed and adopted during SALTO training activities;
- Boost the role of non formal education in general, more particularly by also making the Tool Fair and Toolbox venues and occasions for sharing good practices and ideas with educators external to Youth in Action programmes.

This led in 2012 to the start of a process of transformation of the Toolbox from an online database to a learning community, aimed at establishing links between researchers, trainers and practitioners, stimulating their professional relationships based on mutuality and on the development of common content tools for the educational field in general. Attention was focused on the wider humanisation of the Toolbox and on the reinforcement of tool ownership as a common resource developed by groups of researchers, officers, trainers, youth workers and social workers. Multilinguism was also included as a fundamental condition for easier accessibility and facilitating the spread of non formal education practices at national levels.

The Toolboxproject (this is the working title given to new Toolbox beta version) starts by considering the current Toolbox as a repository of tools, into which youth officers, trainers and youth workers have so far uploaded more than 1,100 tools. Although the toolbox is one of the most used references for finding, comparing and inspiring activities, the approach of most of its users remains passive, limited most of the time to extracting what is useful, without contributing to its development. This diffused disengagement could be the outcome of the 2 main difficulties the Toolbox regularly encounters. Due to the enormous amount of tools available, users tend to get non specific answers to their queries, obliging them to select possibilities from among many tools that are not always relevant and rarely finding the one that is at the top of the list. Moreover, the limited possibilities for sharing variations in the materials used or in the text of the original online tool are not in line with the requested take&give approach.

In order to promote greater interactivity, users of the new Toolbox will be able to play different roles, corresponding to the different possible contributions to its development. Uploading a new tool will be one of the active roles played in the Toolbox community, being a condition also for adding a variation to the original tool (a change in the structure or in the materials associated with it) or publishing a translation of the tool and its associated materials in a language other than English. The developers have chosen Drupal for the Content Management System (CMS) and, as it is an Open Source CMS, the available languages should cover all those needed.

The multilinguism dimension will open the door to easier accessibility to Non Formal Education tools developed at International level, and will also facilitate access to youth workers, social workers and trainers with limited English. They are generally extremely committed to their work in the field, so

they should be very interested to have access to a Toolbox that can be used at national level, collecting and offering tools in their mother tongue through the search function. In this way, all the tools uploaded primarily in English can be further disseminated via the translated version.

This proactive and collaborative approach will stimulate the community not only through the informal recognition of its own work, via the addition of variations and translations of the uploaded tool, but will also foster the added value represented by the process of co-creation of a tool for learning.

Innovation in the Toolboxproject technology is already visible in its user-friendly dimension and in some other ways that will expand the existing structure. In addition to the website that will be closely interfaced with social networks to allow users to be directly in contact with the uploader/contributor/translator of a tool in case of need, an App (application) for the most common smart phone operating systems is also in the works. The uploaded tools will not only provide a method that can be used in an activity session, but the take&give approach will stimulate the possibility of obtaining peer support in designing the possible working agenda.

The assumption is that, as happens with open source software, the free share approach behind Toolbox will evolve into what can be defined as an open content tool (content that commits users to the right/duty to develop more uses than those currently planned). The primary characteristics and commitments for using the tools are set out in the "4Rs Framework":

1. Reuse - reuse the content in its unaltered form
2. Revise - adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself (e.g., translate the content into another language)
3. Remix - combine the original or revised content with other content to create something new (e.g., incorporate the content into a mash up)
4. Redistribute - share your revisions or your remixes with others (e.g., upload a copy of the new content to the Toolbox).

A re-organisation of the tools for learning currently present in 3 main categories (exercises/activities, energisers & icebreakers, documentary resources) comes up beside the possibility for the Toolboxproject CMS to offer a prioritised list of results linked to the research query, showing first the tools that have been most visited by other users, with more contributions or translations, having more comments and higher rates. This search feature mediates a qualitatively increased search system based on a tool classification carried out by the learning community. In other words, the Toolbox platform empowers the learning community to self-evaluate its tools, making this action explicit and useful for any search query.

All these improvements will be available soon, after a testing phase involving the learning communities participating in the last 5 Tool Fairs. More than 500 trainers, officers and educators, all motivated to share and develop it further, will contribute to fine-tuning the tool before opening the new Toolbox to the more than 15 million visitors of SALTO-YOUTH.NET website.

## ToolBox in German

The German National Agency offers a toolbox on its website (<http://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fortbildung/methodenbox/> <sup>[2]</sup>) dedicated to non formal education tools in German, from 5-minute icebreakers to simulation games lasting several hours, all of them linked to the thematic area European dimension. Methodenbox Europa is an online database with more than 80 tools in German organized into 11 tool types: discussion/debate; simulation; creative techniques; information/mediation; quiz; group dynamics; diversity; game; warming-up (energizer); perceptual exercise; media. It has an open character, continuously developing through user

contributions: new methods can be added, older methods can be commented on and the link can be shared through social networking. A registered user can also choose to be notified when other comments have been added, which should encourage dialogue and exchanges. It should be noted that the use of the methods uploaded comes with some important restrictions: use is only allowed while respecting *“the given objectives, the existing framework of the target audience and the users’ own abilities”*.

#### ToolBox in Romanian

**Nonformalii Portal** ([www.nonformalii.ro](http://www.nonformalii.ro) [3]) is a Romanian portal dedicated to non formal education. Since its launch in 2012, the portal has become a real reference point for the non formal education field Romania, covering not only in methods, activities and useful resources, but also giving updated information about Romanian non formal education contexts, programs and events. With an attractive graphic design that translates the non formal education imaginary while keeping the creative play mode connected to important key words and concepts, the web platform is a source of inspiration for those passionate about NFE, while also aiming to enlarge this community. Anyone can contribute to the website content, by adding or developing non formal education tools in Romanian.

This portal offers also the unusual possibility of intervening directly on the original tool uploaded and changing it, after acceptance by the administrator. Full of images and videos describing non formal education tools, alongside well organised information, the portal has been a necessary answer to the growing interest for non formal education in Romania. The mission to raise awareness about non formal education concepts, experience and learning outcomes is concretized by the possibility of having concrete examples of methods or resources. They do not always coincide with the definition of a tool for learning as given by SALTO working group. The portal functions also as a principle source of communication regarding non formal education projects and events, facilitating and increasing the participation and involvement of youngsters and older people, encouraging them to become active actors in the field. The portal is still under construction so not all the sections have been yet finalized. It foresees the creation of a section for a non formal virtual community, a virtual interactive space for all those involved in or interested in NFE, aiming at the recognition of contributions in the field. *Nonformalii* was born as a result of the NONFORMAL (Networking On New Forms Of Recognition and Mainstreaming Active Lifelong Learning) project, promoted by the Foundation for Civil Society Development in collaboration with ANPCDEFP (Romanian National Agency for European Programmes in the field of Education and Professional Training) and the Institute for Science Education in Romania.

#### ToolBox in Switzerland

The Swiss branch of C.E.M.E.A. - Training Centres for Active Education Methods - offers the example of an online database gathering different methods and activities in the field of active education, in both Italian and French ([http:// www.cemea.ch/users/bd/index.html](http://www.cemea.ch/users/bd/index.html) [4]). The database is an archive of hundreds of files describing organisational and theory aspects and activities of various kinds (environmental activities, songs and dances, expression, games, manual activities). Useful drawings/sketches accompany the written descriptions where necessary, adding further information for the tools’ implementation. The database serves as a tool for group leaders, educators, teachers and other operators leading activity sessions for children and adolescents, in workshops, holiday centres or schools.

#### ToolBox of Participation Projects

SALTO YOUTH PARTICIPATION has created an online compendium (<http://yic.salto-youth.net/> [5]) of

projects realized within Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2) and Youth Democracy (Action 1.3), which reflect best practices. It contains a collection of hundreds of projects carried out by young people all over Europe. A very simple structure makes best practice projects available to anyone looking for inspiration or searching for partners. It facilitates fast search through various key elements and offers contact details, useful for additional in-depth analysis directly with the person(s) who implemented the project.

**Tags:**

[SALTO Toolbox](#) [6], [Tool Fair](#) [7], [Multilingual](#) [8], [EuroMed](#) [9], [Training](#) [10], [Non-formal Education](#) [11]

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**Source URL:** <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/salto-toolbox>

**Links**

- [1] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/andrea-messori>
- [2] <http://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fortbildung/methodenbox/>
- [3] <http://www.nonformalii.ro>
- [4] <http://www.cemea.ch/users/bd/index.html>
- [5] <http://yic.salto-youth.net/>
- [6] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/tags/salto-toolbox>
- [7] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/tags/tool-fair>
- [8] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/tags/multilingual>
- [9] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/tags/euromed>
- [10] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/tags/training>
- [11] <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools-for-learning/tags/non-formal-education>