Guide to establish an
Online Youth Platform

By Youth-R-Well.com, The Netherlands

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Introduction

This guide is meant to support beginning groups of young people with a rheumatic or musculoskeletal disease (RMD). We will go over the steps that lead to the setting up of an online platform for youth with RMDs.

It seems difficult for national organizations for people with RMDs to attract and support youth suffering from this disease. Youth prove to have different needs and desires, and for one, becoming a member of a patient organization is not very common among them. Yet this growing group of people is in need of information, support and recognition. Therefore the existence of an online platform is of vital importance in every country. It can form the foundation of a youth group as it will reach out towards youth in a manner that is attractive and very natural for them.

Goals of an online platform

There are three main goals that are supported by an online platform. The most obvious one is that it is possible to inform readers of what is happening and to give them information about health-related topics, about policies and opportunities. Yet an online platform can only be successful if it goes beyond informing youth. To attract youth to the website, it is important to provide other options: the possibility to interact with others. This can happen on two levels. First of all on a passive level, through which recognition can take place, for instance by reading experiences and tips from other youth with RMDs. Secondly interaction can take place through active involvement on the website, for instance by posting about one’s own ideas and experiences, and by meeting other youth with RMDs.

Any online platform has to keep these three goals in mind. All three support and reinforce each other and cannot be seen separately.

There are several advantages of an online platform compared to other forms of patient support. It is 24/7 available, there are no geographical barriers, the costs can be minimal and it allows passive and anonymous participation. Advantages that seem to be important and successful for young RMD patients who are in need of support. The peer support on an online platform has several empowering outcomes. People are better informed, they feel less alone in coping with their disease, self-management and coping are improved and they are more optimistic and feel more in control over the future.

Youth-R-Well.com

This guide is written by volunteers who have been involved in the organization Youth-R-Well.com, the Dutch group of youth with RMDs. Over the years they have gained a lot of experience with building, maintaining and developing an online youth platform, as well as with organizing events that take place offline. Youth-R-Well.com started in 2004 as a project of the national umbrella organization for people with arthritis, Reumapatiëntenbond. It is an independent organization since 2012. It consists of a board and several committees, all comprise volunteers who are all youth (16-29 year old) with a RMD. Youth-R-Well.com wants to connect young people with RMDs and motivate and challenge them. Youth-R-Well.com wants young people to stay positive and we support them in coping with their disease. The
mission of Youth-R-Well.com is to improve quality of life for young people with RMDs in The Netherlands.

We hope that this guide may provide helpful insights and tips that will help you to establish a successful online platform for youth.

Youth-R-Well.com

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Content
An online platform consists of three main goals: informing, interaction, and recognition.

These three goals can be facilitated in different ways. In this chapter we will discuss how this can be done and how Youth-R-Well.com facilitated this on the online platform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the disease</td>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>Column</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda with activities</td>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>Cartoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert of the month</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal (positive) stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reliable and up to date information improves well informed decisions.**

**To provoke interaction it is important to make an attractive and safe environment.**

**For passive users recognition can be empowering.**

**Informing**
An online platform can be a great tool to inform your target group. In case there is no adequate information available about different RMDs and treatment options, about ways to manage living and to get support from different sides, this information would be useful to include on the website. When you put information on the platform or refer to informative websites, make sure these are reliable sources. In the Netherlands there are already many other website with good information about this and also hospitals do a good job in informing patients. This is why Youth-R-Well.com doesn’t include very much information on the website.

It is possible to put the information directly on the platform, but also links to websites with good information can be useful. For example: websites of other non-governmental and governmental initiatives. Youth-R-Well.com has a page with different interesting websites. It contains for example links to other patient organizations, websites focusing on transition and organizations which can support students or employees with a disability.

One other way in which we provide information to our target group is by a column for the expert of the month in which we publish an interview with the expert. During that month visitors can ask the expert questions about their own problems around this topic. Not everybody knows their rights, and for what help they can ask the government or other institutions. This is one of the reason why we have a short inviting news article called ‘expert of the month’. In this article we introduce different specialists who tell them what they do and what is possible for young people with RMDs.
Another way of informing the youth is informing them about activities which can be interesting for youth with RMDs. For example a reading about a specific topic, such as pregnancy and the use of medication, or the possibilities for extra support while you are a student. Youth-R-Well.com collects all interesting activities and shows them in the agenda or in the news topic on the platform to keep the users informed about all relevant events. These activities can be events organized by Youth-R-Well.com or events organized by other organizations.

**Interaction**

Interaction is the basis for peer support. To achieve interaction on an online platform a forum is the minimum requirement and the easiest way in which peer support can take place. On the forum the people can easily share their experiences and ask each other questions about how to deal with challenges they are faced with as young people with a RMD. On a forum a critical mass of participants is needed to create interaction. Forum moderators play an important role in provoking interaction. They welcome new members, open topics in the forum and ask and answer questions. To get people to become active on the forum it is important to make an attractive and safe forum environment. Forum rules can be useful. Youth-R-Well.com has set some rules about the use of forum, for example that the forum can only be used by the target group, users should be respectful to each other and the forum is no place for advertisement.

To keep the forum orderly the forum of Youth-R-Well.com contains different topics under which people can start a new thread relevant to this topic. Threads placed in the wrong topic should be moved to the correct topic by the forum moderators, in this way it will be easy for new members to look up information relevant to them.

There are several ways how you can encourage people to start using the forum, for example many technical features on a forum like the possibility to have a personalized profile and see how many contributions someone made. Because it can be a big step for people to become active contributors on a forum we try to minimize the barriers. Youth-R-Well.com has experienced that the possibility to make use of the forum for free and the option to use the forum anonymously and passively helps to minimize barriers.

Other extensions of your online platform with interaction can be an online chat-room. This is not necessary, but it is a nice feature if possible. Youth-R-Well.com organizes a chat-evening every first day of the month. During these chat-sessions one of the volunteers is available for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of ‘experts of the month’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rheumatologist - About RMD’s and pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport expert – About the possibilities for sports for youth with RMDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic dean – About how to handle problems at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work expert – About work possibilities for youth with RMDs in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
questions and moderates the session. This chat-session is a nice way for youth with RMDs to get in contact.

Besides these options, interaction can also take place in many other ways. On Youth-R-Well.com people can for example leave comments beneath articles and asking the expert of the month questions. These are also nice ways of interaction.

Recognition
Many visitors of online platforms are passive internet users; they like to read stories from others, and interesting content but they do not participate in interaction. Although they do not participate, passive use of the online platform also has empowering outcomes. People are being better informed and can have improved acceptance of the disease [1]. For these people it is especially important to create an attractive environment. Everything must reflect the mission of the youth activities and interactions, this means a positive sound with the goal of handling with your RMD in a good way. And knowing you are not alone, more people are facing the same issues. Therefore recognition is very important on the online platform. By reading stories from others and reading how others managed to cope with the disease they will also be empowered. This can be facilitated by the forum and also by other interesting content. Youth-R-Well.com has two in-house columnists who write about the challenges they face being young and having a RMD. The columns always have a positive sound. Youth-R-Well.com also has a cartoonist who makes a monthly cartoon about his life with a RMD and other creative people who try to make the invisibility of the disease visible in a creative way with photography. People recognize themselves in these stories, cartoons and pictures, it is fun to read and it can give them insights in how to deal with specific problems.

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Starting a youth organization

This guide is about an online platform and although this is a virtual community, a formal organization is often needed. A youth organization can be an independent organization or part of a mother-organization, for example a national RMD patient organization. In this chapter the first steps to start an organization are explained. These steps consist of getting organized, having or starting a network, and making an action plan.

Getting organized

A first step to start any project is to get organized. It is possible to work and collaborate more informal, but a formal organization is most of the times necessary for organizing activities to guarantee continuity and follow-up. Often foundations only fund organizations with a legal entity. There could also be a possibility to start the online platform as a project within another organization, for example a national association for people with RMD's. Even then, organizing the group of people involved in the youth online platform will provide benefits for all parties involved.

Network

Networking in this stage is very helpful. It is important to have some good contacts to talk about the plans for the organization. Make sure to check what is already available for the intended target group and find out if there are similar projects run by other organizations or people you could collaborate with or learn from for the development of the platform.

Action plan

To get started an action plan is needed. This action plan needs to be in line with the needs, wishes and preferences of the target group and needs to contain:

- Description of the target group
- Find people who want to serve on the board
- Develop a mission and vision statement
- Aims and objectives of the online platform
- Name of the organization
- Corporate identity including a logo
- Identification of what is needed to build and maintain the online platform and a first work plan and division of tasks

To make an action plan conform the needs and interest of the target group it is very essential to involve the target group at an early stage and preferably to let them make the action plan. For this, it is essential to include a few committed young people with a RMD in the start-up of this project in order to make it successful. Of course these young people need to be willing to contribute to this online platform.
**Checklist starting an organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get organized</th>
<th>Start a new formal organization or start as a project within another organization.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Check what is already available for the intended target group and collaborate with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>A specific group of people where the organization is intended for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>A group of people, preferable from the target group, who are willing to contribute and take the lead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission and Vision</td>
<td>The things that you want to accomplish now and in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and objectives</td>
<td>The broad statement of desired outcomes and steps needed to accomplish this goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>People need to match the name with your organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate identity</td>
<td>Is the visual identity of your organization. For example the combination of colour schemes and designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and maintaining</td>
<td>Identify what is needed to build and maintain the platform. Make a first work plan and task division.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Human Resources**

In this chapter the human resources that are needed to make an online platform successful are mentioned. This is explained with as basis the experience we gained within Youth-R-Well.com.

**For and by youth with RMDs**

Working in support of, and with the help of young people with RMD’s is one the successes of Youth-R-Well.com. It is important most of the people involved in the working group belong to the defined target group of the online platform. Besides belonging to the target group it is also important the team has other qualities necessary to build and maintain the platform. Youth-R-Well.com and many similar organizations only or mostly work with volunteers. Working with young volunteers can be challenging and these challenges should be understood and thought about from the beginning. It might for example be more difficult to maintain continuity when working with (young) volunteers. The team needs to be committed and enthusiastic to be motivated for this project and it is also important they take responsibility for their work. They need to be willing to put in time and energy on a voluntary basis. Also other qualities are necessary and beneficial for the organization, such as writing skills, creativity, social skills, organizational qualities, technical skills, and moderation skills.
Board and working groups
Youth-R-Well.com has a board and four different working groups for different projects run by the organization. The board consists of approximately seven people: a chair, a treasurer, a secretary, and one board member leading one of the different working groups. Youth-R-Well.com has working groups for the (offline) events, PR, the website and the youth holiday week that takes place once a year during the summer. The working groups consists of several volunteers and one team leader, who is also a board member. Besides the board and the working groups there also is an advisory board. It consists of a few people who have knowledge and experience in the area of working with young people with RMD’s. These could for example be health professionals or experienced people above the targeted age group, for example a representative of the mother organization. They can advise the board whenever asked for or assist with regarding topics where the board feels not knowledgeable enough about.

Roles, responsibilities and tasks of all board members, volunteers and working groups are described in internal regulations. All working groups have their own action plan which describes objectives, best practices and all information needed to achieve the goals set for the particular group. It is a great tool for new volunteers getting acquainted with their responsibilities and in this way the challenge of continuity is being tackled. The action plans are updated regularly.

Online Platform working group
To keep the online platform attractive and up to date there is a need for several volunteers who are committed to contribute to the project regularly. There are several roles that need to be fulfilled by the working group. Not all of these roles need to be taken on by separate people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working group roles</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderators</td>
<td>There is a need for people who moderate the forum and the monthly chat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writers</td>
<td>People who write content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical people</td>
<td>People who place content such as news and articles. It is also necessary to have one or a few people who know how to work with the technical background of the website and are able to make changes in the structure and layout.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth-R-Well.com has a working group for these tasks and in addition to this working group also has voluntary contributors who are not part of the organization, such as the columnists and the cartoon artist. They send in their content and the working group makes sure this is placed on the website.

The most important part of the online platform is the forum. It is necessary to regularly read everything that is posted on the forum and to moderate if necessary. The volunteers from Youth-R-Well.com are encouraged to join in discussions, especially if they have experience
regarding a specific topic. The forum moderator monitors the communication activity, welcomes new people and keeps discussions alive. Moderation is needed if there are posts not complying with the forum rules, for example if someone is abusive, or if there is someone on the forum who does not have a RMD but is advertising something. Moderation can also be necessary if a topic is placed in a wrong section. The moderator moves discussions from one section to another to keep topics organized. The forum moderator can also start a forum thread, for example when the organization is curious about a specific topic and wants to know the forum users’ experience or opinion. Youth-R-Well.com for example once asked if there were people who were rejected by a school because of their RMD.

To make sure people are having a look at the online platform regularly it is necessary to keep it interesting and updated. There are also many people who are not actively contributing to the forum but are passive users. They like to read and have a look at interesting content. Therefore it is necessary to place content. It is possible to have different people for the different tasks, for example people who are writing content, placing the content and different people for the different sections on the website. Youth-R-Well.com is working with a schedule for most content. Every month new contributions are placed online. This consists of columns, cartoons, monthly interviews and other optional sections.
Technical background
In this chapter the technical background of an Online Youth Platform will be discussed. There are three things necessary: the domain name and web hosting, how to build the website, and the design of the website. Each subject will be explained in this chapter.

Domain name
The first thing to do when building a website is to register a domain name. A domain name is the URL people can type into their browser to get to the website. Carefully choose a domain name, because a domain name is not something that can be changed easily. It is something that is the identity of the platform and becomes an integral part of the Online Youth Platform. Domain names cost money each year.

The most important thing about domain names is that people can find the Online Youth Platform easily. So it should be a name that obviously has something to do with the platform. The name should not be too long. Some websites have URLs that are longer than necessary, in which way they make less sense. Also try to choose a domain name that can also be used on Social Media accounts as Twitter and Facebook. If the domain name has been chosen, it must be checked on availability. If the domain name is already used by someone else, you should think about another domain name. Youth-R-Well.com chose the name of the organization as the domain name. In this way the organization can be easily found and there is a unity in the manner in which the organization is perceived from the outside.

Web hosting
After registering a domain name it is important to find a web hosting provider. ‘Hosting’ refers to where you place the website. Everyone can just build a website on their computer, but it’s pointless if it is never put online as no one but the builder will ever see it. So the thing to do after you have chosen a good domain name, is to find a web hosting provider. The web host is the company that houses the site and provides space to create web pages, scripts (forums, blogging), email addresses and more. Web hosting is possible at different levels. Most people prefer free web hosting, but a drawback to free hosting is that you do not always get as much space as you need later. Also some free hosting providers do not allow e-commerce or other types of content. Be sure to read all the fine print before putting the website on a free web host. Choosing a hosting company can be overwhelming with all the features they offer, but the majority of the companies offer the same. An option might be to start with one of the cheapest and upgrade later, if it is necessary. It is a good thing to see how the goals of your online platform are translated into specific features that you will need to implement in the website. According to your specific goals and needs, it will be possible to decide which type of web hosting you need.

Building the website
There are several things to determine before the website can actually be build. Who is going to build the website? Which system is going to be used for the website? If a company is going to build the website, what are the things you should pay attention to? To help solve these questions, each subject is discussed below.
Who is going to build the website?
There are roughly two answers to this question. The website can be built by yourself or it can be built by a company that provides Internet services. To build the website on your own, it is necessary to be familiar with HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). If you have a little knowledge of HTML and CSS, but you are not able to build the whole site on your own, you can chose to outsource it to a service company. There are enough companies that will want to build the site. In this way the website is built professionally and you know for sure that you did not do anything wrong building the website. However outsource building the website will cost a lot of money. So eventually the choice should be made who is going to build the website. Also not just one person should build the site. It is even better if there are a few people that can build the website together.

Whatever you decide - to build the website yourself or not - it is important to have a very clear idea on what your goals and preferences are regarding the website you are to build. Referring back to your desires and goals is important so that you can focus on incorporating your ideas, and meet with the whole working group regularly to discuss the progress in achieving your goals.

Which system to use for the website?
If you are going to build the website on your own or when you want to maintain the site in the future, the best option is to use one of the content management systems (CMS). A CMS is a system used to manage the content of a website. It allows the author, who may not know enough about HTML, to manage the creation, modification, and removal of content from a website without needing the expertise of a Webmaster. Another feature of CMS is that they allow individuals to use a template or a set of templates approved by the organization. So there is no need to build a whole new template. Of course you can still build a template on your own using CMS, but it is easier in the beginning if one can be chosen. Also other tools to create or modify Web content are within the CMS. So for example a forum is an available built-in tool within some CMS. Last but not least, a CMS indexes all data within an organization. Individuals can search for data using keywords, which the CMS retrieves. So all the data is stored in a logical way and the data can be found and retrieved easily.

There are plenty of options when it comes to picking a CMS. Here are the two most used CMS on the web: WordPress and Joomla.

**WordPress**

WordPress is by far the most popular CMS for blogging, and probably the most popular CMS overall. It is a great platform for beginners, because they have a quick installation and an ________________

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2 Content management system (CMS) definition (2011) accessed through http://searchsoa.techtarget.com/definition/content-management-system

excellent documentation. Documentation can be found online on nearly every aspect of customizing WordPress. WordPress also comes with built-in image and multimedia uploading support. Wordpress has probably the widest base of plugins and themes to choose from. Wordpress is a good option to use for blogging and other simple websites. It is very easy to use for people who need to update the website but do not have any technical background.

**Joomla**

Joomla is a very advanced CMS in terms of functionality. Getting started with Joomla is also very easy, it is very straightforward how the software works. Like WordPress, you can add just about any needed functionality with an extension. Joomla is not a good option for a webshop or very complicated websites, but for the Online Youth Platform it is a pretty good option.

There are several other CMS that can be used, such as Drupal and Alfresco. The most important thing is that the CMS has the plugins (the features you want to have on your website) that you need. The most important plugin is the forum. Other interesting plugins can be a slideshow, a calendar or social media plugins. There is a lot of information available about the different CMS. So if you are not convinced of using WordPress or Joomla or you want more information about the different CMS, just take a look at the information about CMS online.

Youth-R-Well.com chose to use Joomla. Joomla has the right plugins for an Online Youth Platform. Also Joomla is very easy to use and there is not much knowledge necessary about for example HTML and CSS.

This is how the administration panel of Joomla looks like:
It is easy to add new articles, adjust pages or change other settings of the website. So Joomla is a very good option if you want to manage the platform easily and do not have that much knowledge about HTML and CSS. Although you will still need a little knowledge about HTML and CSS for advanced options. Using a Joomla makes it possible for everyone to contribute to the website. If there is someone who can build the website, that person may not be necessarily involved in the future. By using such a system everyone with a little knowledge about HTML can take over the platform whenever they want.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wordpress</th>
<th>Joomla</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy to use</td>
<td>Harder to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best used for blog websites</td>
<td>Best used for community websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less functions</td>
<td>A lot of functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A company that builds the website**

Building a whole new website on your own can be difficult. An option is to outsource the building of the website. There are several things you should pay attention to when outsourcing the building of the website. First a decision should be made if the company is only going to build the website or also helps you with problems in the future. Also the company can build the website in combination with web hosting or maintenance of the website.

Youth-R-Well.com has a contract with a company that delivers internet services. The contract not only includes the realization of the website, but also the web hosting, the design of the logo of Youth-R-Well.com and maintenance of the website. It is a contract for the following years.

To give an idea about the contract, the realization of the website includes:

- A website that is easy to manage;
- The ability to place a variety of content on the website, including information pages, blogs, messages, movies, twitter messages, other social media integrations, ability to give a reaction on a page;
- A new forum;
- A user registration with the ability to create and maintain a profile;
- A chatbox;
- A newsletter module, coupled to the user registrations;
- A website that is properly navigable on all browsers and mobile devices.
The web hosting, design of the logo and maintenance of the website are in the contract, but the realization of the website is the most expanded concept in the contract. The company needs to know what exactly you want to be part of the website. Otherwise they cannot build a website that meets your desires. This is also important for the design of the logo. Web hosting and maintenance of the website are more common cases that don’t need that much information.

If you choose to hire a company, you should get sponsors to finance the contract. Without sponsors you cannot outsource building the website. You can read more about sponsors in the chapter about finances. Outsource the building of the website is a good investment if you want a good Online Youth Platform, and do not have enough knowledge to build it yourself. Also it is an investment for several years, so once it is built you can use the website for a long time. In this way you get a good website right away.

Website design
A part of the technical background is the website design. What does the website has to look like? Which colors will be used? What has to be on the frontpage? Which topic has to be where on the website? These questions will be discussed below.

Overall design
There are several things that should be on every page of the website. The overall design consists of the logo of the website, the menu bar and the footer. Most websites have the logo on the top of their website, on every page. In this way it is always clear on which website you are. Youth-R-Well.com has also the logo on top of its website.

Besides the logo it is important to have a good menu bar. This menu bar should be visible on every page. Youth-R-Well.com has a horizontal menu bar, but a vertical menu bar is of course also possible. The menu bar should consist of the different subjects of the Online Youth Platform. So Youth-R-Well.com has “Home”, “Info”, “News”, “Events”, “Young and Rheumatic disease”, “Young and Practical”, “Support”, and the “Forum”. All the different subjects and sections can be found in these eight buttons. These buttons should not have a name that is too long or too complicated. The “Forum” button is only visible for people who have an account and are logged in. In this way the forum is separated from the other subjects that are visible for everyone. This is also done for privacy reasons for the members.
The footer is the last thing for the overall design. In the footer important data is summarized. Youth-R-Well.com has “Colophon”, “Disclaimer”, “Privacy”, “Contact”, and “Important data” in the footer. Also the builder of the website is shown in the footer. It is also possible to put these buttons somewhere else, for example under “Info”. But Youth-R-Well.com has chosen to show these in the footer. The most websites have by all means “Contact” in their footer. In this way everyone can quickly find the “Contact” page.

There are several other options for a design. As mentioned before, the menu bar can be vertical. Also the buttons don’t have to be buttons but can also be just the words. Everything can be changed. However it is important to have the logo, the menu bar and the footer. These three will stay visible at every page.

Front page
The front page, also sometimes called the home page, is the most important page of the website. Whenever someone goes to the website, the first thing they see is the front page. If the front page is not attracting, the visitor will not click further. The content of the front page should consist of the most important things of the Online Youth Platform. The things that can help your front page brighten up are discussed in the way of showing what the front page of Youth-R-Well.com looks like.

Slider
The first thing you see on Youth-R-Well.com is the slider on the front page. This slider consists of the newest things that happen on the website. It consists of the things we want people to notice. So for example when there is a new column, a little piece of this column is put into the slider. An important thing is that there is always a picture next to the text in the slider. There shouldn’t be too much text on the front page, so pictures will brighten up the page. The whole text of for example the column, can be read on another page. The last thing to mention about the slider is that it moves. Movement can definitely be a thing that you want on the website.
Welcome box
After the slide, there is a welcome box shown on frontpage. This box contains information about Youth-R-Well.com. It tells what you can find on the online platform, for who the platform is and how you can use the forum of the platform.

Article boxes
When you scroll down the front page, there are four boxes shown. These boxes consist of information that is not shown in the slider. The first box is “Latest News”, where the latest articles are shown in a list. The second box is “Events”, which shows a calendar with the upcoming events. The third box is “Latest column”, which consists of the latest column. The fourth and last box is “Droogbrood” which is the title of the comics made by one of our volunteers. For publishing content it is necessary to give the articles relevant names. Google uses these names to measure the importance of your website. So if your titles are relevant to the searcher on Google, your website will appear sooner.

Twitter plugin
The last thing on the home page is the Twitter plugin. The Twitter plugin shows the latest tweets of @YouthRWell. In this way Social Media is incorporated and shown on the front page.
# Checklist Technical Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domain name</td>
<td>Define a domain name and register it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web hosting</td>
<td>Look for a company that can host your website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website builder</td>
<td>Build the website on your own or look for a company that can build your website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website system</td>
<td>Do you want to use a CMS system? What CMS system you are going to use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall design</td>
<td>Design the overall design of your website. What are going to be the subjects of your menu bar?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontpage</td>
<td>Which functions are you going to use on the front-page?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text and contrast</td>
<td>The text needs to have strong contrast against the page background. This makes the text more readable for color-blind and low-vision users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright clearance</td>
<td>Make sure you use materials that are copyright free or created by yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionality</td>
<td>• The web page and media components has to function correctly on the most important operating systems and the different browsers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The used plug-ins need to be supported by the most important operating systems and the different browsers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When using external URL’s, it is nicer if they open in a new window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigation</td>
<td>The site navigation is clear and consistent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations

The general goal of public relations is recognition of the platform by your target audience. Public Relations (PR) includes informing the audience and partners and to persuade them to have and maintain a certain view about your organization. PR should lead to more traffic to your online platform. There are two different kinds of audiences you target your PR on. First off all this is the target group: youth with RMDs. The other is people who are in contact with this target group and should know what the platform has to offer, for example the health professionals and rheumatologists. There are various ways you can inform people about your platform. The ways that we discuss here are through PR materials, people, media, and events.

PR materials for target group
A common activity to achieve the goals of PR is to design and spread out PR materials, such as flyers, business cards, pens, and for instance pill boxes. You can have PR materials for your target group and for people in contact with the target group.

Message
Before designing PR materials it is important to target the audience. What interest do they have? What kind of people are you designing the PR for? For the Online Youth Platform intended here, it should be kept in mind that the target audience is a young group of people who all have a rheumatic disease. So the PR material and the message should interest them. What kind of interest do these people have? The most common thing is that they are looking for recognition. One of the most important things for young people with RMDs is to know that you are not they only one who has a rheumatic disease. Another thing is that they are looking for an organization for particularly young people. Most organizations focus on much older people and one of the strengths and success of this Online Youth Platform is that they will only meet young people with a rheumatic disease. You want to let people know what your platform is about. It is important to have your message clear before designing with your PR material.

Banner, flyer and posters
Youth-R-Well.com has designed several materials to promote the platform. First of all we have a banner we use on events. We also have posters and flyers. These all contain the same catchy message “Are you the only one with rheumatism? Apparently not!” A flyer should consist of a brief summary of what the platform is all about. The best thing is to use a catchy headline on the flyer. Reading the headline, the reader should directly know what your platform is about. Youth-R-Well.com did also put their contact information on the flyer. However it isn’t necessary to put all your business card information like your physical address on there. The most important thing is your name and your website address. A flyer also consists of the logo. For Youth-R-Well.com we designed our PR materials in the colors of our logo. On the next page you can see our flyer. We printed the flyer on A5 paper, a proper size for a flyer. These materials are all for our target group. Youth-R-Well.com uses these materials on events and sends them to hospitals, so the youth can get these from their rheumatologist or other health professionals.
Other gadgets
Other than these materials Youth-R-Well.com also designed pens and pill boxes. Choosing the Youth-R-Well.com PR materials we thought of materials that they could use. It is the best thing if the PR material is used every day. If the product is not useful people will throw it away instead of using it and eventually go on your platform. People are more interested in useful PR material, and the more they use the material, the more they will see the name of the platform and will have the intention to go on there. The outlook of the PR material is also important. If it looks nice, people want to have it and your message becomes more interesting. Youth-R-Well.com chose in the beginning to go for pens. Pens are useful and one of the most cheapest PR material. Youth-R-Well.com has also designed pill boxes, which have the logo of our organization on it. These pill boxes are useful, because in this way you can take your pills easily with you. We thought that these pill boxes are an answer on what the
audience we wanted to reach wants. It is PR material that is especially made for our audience and our organization, and not as standard as a pen. Youth-R-Well.com thinks that the best PR materials are a combination of these two, a standard pen and some special PR material as a pill box.

Youth-R-Well.com has also designed little books that contain bundled stories of one of our column writers. The booklet is called #lolreuma, written by Marijn Sikken. Young people with RMDs like to read these stories, they recognize themselves in it. In addition these books are also great to spread around for a broader audience to create more awareness about the impact of RMDs on young people. We often heard people enjoyed reading it and it helped them to better understand what barriers youth with RMDs experience. These stories were all previously published on our website. However, this PR material was only possible in a later stadium of the organization. It was sponsored separately as an independent project.

PR materials for people in contact with target group
Besides these materials Youth-R-Well.com also designed a brochure and business cards to give to other people than the target group. We give this to health professionals and other organizations to inform them about Youth-R-Well.com and leave our contact details. These materials are used by representatives from Youth-R-Well.com. A business card should contain only the most important information. This includes the name of the platform, the address, the website URL and the e-mail address. It is also a good idea to put the logo on the business card. A business card should not be too complicated with too much information, but should be kept simple. A brochure contains the most information of all PR materials discussed. A brochure consists of a lot of information of the platform, the goals and plans of the
organization. What is your platform? What are you doing with this platform? What does your platform look like? What are the different things people can read on your platform? It is important that the brochure not only consist of nonstop text, but for example also consists of pictures of the people behind it and screenshots of the platform. Youth-R-Well.com again used the colors of the logo in the brochure. We used a lot of photos to keep the brochure interesting. We explained all the possibilities Youth-R-Well.com has for youth with a rheumatic disease.

People
Recognition of your platform can be achieved by personal conversations. One of the ways in which Youth-R-Well.com uses this method is by making sure that medical doctors refer their patients to the platform. Medical doctors see most of the youth with a rheumatic disease. Most of the youth with a RMD need to go to a rheumatologist sometime a year. If these doctors know about your platform, they can inform their patients about it, especially patients that ask about organizations for people with a rheumatic disease. Not only the medical doctors can help you inform your target audience about your platform, but also the hospitals where the medical doctors are working. The hospital can put your flyers, brochures or other PR material in the waiting rooms. In this way people who are not informed by their medical doctor, will know about your platform by seeing it in the waiting room. Youth-R-Well.com sends PR-packets to the hospitals, which includes a brochure, flyers, posters, books, and pens. Sometimes hospitals even ask for more flyers and books.

Web-links
Another way of recognition of your platform is to put links of websites. There are a lot of websites already about rheumatic diseases or websites about other important things that could relate to your platform. Often these websites already reach a large group of youth. You can send these people an e-mail with information what your platform is about and ask them if they can put a link to your website. Youth-R-Well.com made a list with all the important websites for youth with a rheumatic disease and asked them if they could put a link on their websites. Not all websites responded, but some actually put a link on their website. In this way you can reach more of your target audience.

Media
Another means of recognition of your platform is media. Media consists of newspapers, (youth) magazines, TV, but also social media such as Facebook and Twitter. If your platform is mentioned in the media, there is a larger chance that young people with a rheumatic disease will know about your platform. Newspapers, magazines of patient organizations and TV are a lot more difficult to reach than social media. However social media needs a lot of energy and time to make it successful.

Youth-R-Well.com has a list of all the newspapers and magazines that are interesting for our target audience. It can be challenging to contact newspapers and magazines with our story. Journalists mostly have a specific subject they need to write about and contact us for a story when they for example write about young people with chronic diseases. The same goes for TV. So newspapers, magazines and TV are very nice ways of showing your target audience that
you exist, but it is a big challenge if journalists don’t have a topic in mind that fits with your online platform.

Events
Another element of public relations is to present the Online Youth Platform on events. These can be events where youth with RMDs are attending, such as events from patient organizations, or other stakeholders, such as conferences for medical doctors. Going to these events can be useful to reach your target audience in another way. Socializing with other organizations, stakeholders and health professionals can lead to young people being referred to your online platform. Youth-R-Well.com makes a list at the beginning of the year with all the possible events we could go to. From this list we choose the events that are most interesting and possible for the volunteers to go to. This list gives structure in choosing which event to go, because you can see at what time of the year the event takes place. So at the end it is important to go to events, because personal conversations on events work great.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Checklist Public Relations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target audience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PR Materials</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content of the PR Material</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach audience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Media

Social media is a very good way to reach youth with a rheumatic disease. All youth are on social media these days. Social media is also a great tool for networking with other organizations and specialists. There are different types of social media you could use, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube.com. Youth-R-Well.com uses Facebook and Twitter at this moment. We want to expand to LinkedIn and Youtube.com, but this takes a lot of time to do it right. Also Instagram is a nice social media platform if you have photo or picture related content. Social media is an easy way to spread out news, reach persons who don’t look often at the website and promote content of the online platform.

Social Media Strategy

Before you start using social media it is important to think of a strategy on how you are going to use social media channels and which channels you are going to use. What are the goals of the social media? What and how often are you going to post? What does your audience like? These are all questions you have to think about when you start using social media. Good content on your social media lead to conversations and these in turn lead to relationships. This is the overall objective of using social media. This makes it important to not just post any random content, quality trumps quantity.

Content

Before you start on any social media platform it is important to first collect some content and pictures. You will need to have at least a profile picture and background picture, put most important information about your organization on the social media platform and already have some content for the first posts for at least two weeks. To get inspired about what to post you can check out other related organizations. It is important to find out what content your followers find interesting. This is something you have to find out while using the social media platform. To start you can think about what you would like to read yourself (if you are from the target group) or consult some young people with RMDs about this. What would you be interested about to read on social media, why would you like a page? It is good to try out different content in the first few weeks when using social media and check your statistics regularly to find out what your followers find interesting.

What in general works well on social media is the use of images and brief posts with a fifty character headline and a three sentence body with an active voice. Pictures will increase your likes and interaction. With links in your posts you will increase the reach of audience, but it does not increase your likes. This is because these posts with links will also appear in Google. This can increase traffic to your social media and your website.

When using Facebook you should make a page for your platform where people can like your organization, instead of a person's Facebook. The platform is an organization and not a person. Youth-R-Well.com posts the same things on Facebook as on Twitter. But Twitter is also used to retweet other tweets and the formulation of the posts most of the times is also slightly different. Although we mostly post the same content on Facebook and Twitter, Facebook has a different audience. Facebook is mostly for reaching the target group and their families and friends, while twitter is also to reach other organizations, charities and
companies. On Twitter it is important to use hashtags. To make good use of these hashtags it would be good to find out what hashtags are used that are related to your organization and what your audience likes. Youth-R-Well.com posts interesting things for youth with a rheumatic disease. We also post things that we add on our website, such as new columns, new strips, or other news. Below an example of what we post on our social media.

On Facebook it is also possible to promote your Facebook page to reach out to more people and get more followers. Youth-R-Well.com did this a few times, and we eventually get more than 100+ likes from promoting our page.

Using statistics
To find out what and when you should post you should look at the statistics of the social media channels. You can see characteristics of your audience, what time your audience makes use of social media, how much people you reach with your posts and what kind of posts are liked most. For example, Facebook has some great statistics tools. Youth-R-Well.com found out posts in the evening are most effective and posts on Sunday have the most interactions. After the first few weeks you use social media you should have a good look at the statistics and see who your audience is (is this your target group?) and when they are online. Find out what posts work best and why this content is successful. Try to create more of these successful posts.
# Checklist Social media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media strategy</td>
<td><strong>Define goals of your social media and make a first plan of action.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look and feel</td>
<td><strong>Using we/you or it?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose social media channels</td>
<td><strong>For example Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile and background pictures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect content</td>
<td><strong>Collect content for at least two weeks. What content will your audience like?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning of content</td>
<td><strong>What and how often are you going to post?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create social media accounts and make first posts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use hashtags #</td>
<td><strong>Use relevant hashtags which your audience like to use. Check which hashtags are often used in the context of your content.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get followers</td>
<td><strong>Let people know you are on social media; a campaign could work to get more followers, for example: ‘like our page and you can win a prize’;</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the statistics and evaluate</td>
<td><strong>After 2 or 3 weeks check the statistics and look what content works best and who your audience is. Is your content relevant enough? Is it unique, interesting and shareable?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finances
This last chapter consists of information about the finances of an Online Youth Platform. There are different kinds of costs involved in constructing an Online Youth Platform. The costs that are the most important are the technical costs, costs for public relations, and costs for the board.

Technical costs
First of all the technical costs. There are costs for the domain name and webhosting. As said in the previous chapter on technical background, these costs can vary a lot. Most people prefer free web hosting. A drawback to free hosting is that you do not always get as much space as you need later. Also some free hosting providers do not allow e-commerce or other types of content. An option might be to start with one of the cheapest and upgrade later, if it is necessary.

Another type of costs for the technical side of a platform is costs for building the website. If you have a little knowledge of HTML and CSS, and you are not able to build the whole site on your own, you can chose to outsource it to a service company. Outsourcing to build the website will cost a lot of money.

Finally there can be cost of maintenance of the website. Youth-R-Well.com has chosen for a company to help with technical problems. But outsourcing technical maintenance of the website brings extra costs. Also the volunteers involved with maintaining the website will have to meet and discuss their goals and approaches. It might be necessary to train (new) volunteers. Therefore you need some overhead for training and costs of travel.

Public Relations
As seen in the PR-chapter, there is money necessary to develop PR material as flyers and brochures. How much money you need depends on what kind of material you want to develop. As told before, it is important to have some business cards, some flyers, and some brochures. You can choose to start printing these in small quantities. The best way to go about this, is to write a project proposal for a specific plan you have, for instance to make a brochure. In it you specify the costs for design, writing, printing and distributing the brochure.

Organizational costs
Last but not least, there are costs involved with the board. The youth who are running the online platform are volunteers. They should only have to put effort into the platform, not money. The group with youth should be able to get together to discuss the platform. Costs involved with a gathering are travel expenses and expenses for food and beverages.