



# YOUTH WORK IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Guide to Recommendation  
CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee  
of Ministers of the Council of Europe  
to member States on youth work





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of the Committee of Ministers of the Council  
of Europe to member States on youth work

**Contributors: Nik Paddison, Snezana Baclija Knoch**  
**Editors: Mara Georgescu, Antje Rothemund**

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All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the Youth Department of the Council of Europe  
F- 67075 Strasbourg Cedex – France  
Email: [youth@coe.int](mailto:youth@coe.int)

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## Preface

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**R**obust European democracies and social cohesion rely on the civic engagement of all, including young people. In today's Europe, the support and spaces for young people that youth work creates are crucial if we want to give young people the best start in adult life they can have. During youth, the influence and support of family, friends and school is important – but we know that most young people need additional opportunities, support, resources and tools to develop their full potential as individuals and, moreover, as members of society and young citizens. Youth work is not the only source of support, but it is surely important, providing complementary opportunities, as well as enabling and formative experiences to young people.

— The Council of Europe has supported youth work for years. In 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation on youth work, Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on youth work (the recommendation), which is so far the only international policy document offering reference points, benchmarks, policy and quality standards for youth work. The recommendation represents for us a milestone. Our youth sector at the Council of Europe is fully dedicated to its commitment to make this recommendation a living instrument. We will support the implementation and review of the progress made by our member states on youth work in the coming years. We will also accompany

member states, support their youth work practitioners and build a solid knowledge basis about youth work in Europe. The evaluation for this recommendation is in-built, which means that we and our member states will have a roadmap for youth work development for years to come.

— This recommendation has created a very important political momentum in Europe for supporting, celebrating and promoting youth work. While many in the youth field understand youth work and the value it has for young people's learning and development, we need to do much more to make youth work known, understood and valued in all its diversity, creativity and serious commitment to serve young people's dreams, aspirations and needs. We need more examples of good practice and more peer learning between those willing to develop youth work. This publication is a step in this direction and it provides explanations of the measures included in the recommendation, examples of good practice and questions for reflection for those involved in youth work.

— I trust that this user-friendly guide to the recommendation will inspire and motivate many to put youth work in the spotlight and to advocate for its quality and development, from the local to the European level.

*Snežana Samardžić-Marković*

Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe



# Youth work in the spotlight

— Welcome to “Youth work in the spotlight”. This publication aims to guide readers through Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on youth work (the recommendation). This is the first internationally agreed policy document that focuses on youth work explicitly, its value for society and the way ahead for its quality development in Europe.

— This publication aims to bring the recommendation closer to its potential users: policy makers, youth workers, managers of youth work activities, youth leaders, educators of youth workers, youth organisations, and so on.

— Young people are involved in youth work throughout their transition from childhood to adulthood. Youth work offers young people a space for being young together, enjoying this life period and learning useful things in life, such as how to be an active citizen, how to live and work together with different people. For young people who experience difficulties such as exclusion or bullying, youth work and youth workers are in many cases a hugely important support factor.

— Before anything else, let’s place youth work in context. Read this testimony of young people and their experiences of youth work. It shows at a very personal level the value of youth work for young people.

## RALUCA’S TESTIMONY<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ This is not so much a story, it is more a testimony to the changes in me that have come about because of the youth work I have been involved in and the experiences I have received – youth work and non-formal education making changes in my perception, my way of thinking and my way of seeing things.
- ▶ Youth work brought into my life primarily a lot of very diverse friends. It made me broaden my views, it made me think outside the box. I learned a lot of interesting things about places, other people and myself. I became more tolerant, it challenged my creativity and it made me reconsider the way I see things. This experience brought independence for me and people around me,

playfulness in learning by doing, it made me improve my ways of being.

- ▶ Youth work made me richer in something more than money can buy. I believe that in this experience you can find who you truly are, because by offering yourself and putting yourself in service to others, you learn a lot from them and you help them to learn about themselves.

— What the recommendation does is to place youth work at the centre of public strategies, programmes, youth policies, youth organisations’ work and to highlight, on the one hand, what youth work is, and what youth work needs in order to reach its missions. Young people have a right to programmes responding to their interests, experiences, ideas and needs and in which they can learn, develop and shape their present and future lives. For this reason, youth work should receive public support. What the recommendation does is to spell out this support and encourage member states to put youth work in the spotlight in their youth policy. Hence, the recommendation reaffirms the value of youth work and the responsibility of policy makers to ensure the conditions for youth work to develop:

- ▶ the sustainability of European identity and the Council of Europe’s core values (human rights, rule of law and democracy) relies on the creativity, competences, social commitment and contribution of young people and on their confidence in the future as well;
- ▶ government policies should support young people in realising their full potential as autonomous members of society, enabling them to develop life plans and exercise their democratic citizenship;
- ▶ youth work makes an important contribution to active citizenship by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for civic engagement and social action.<sup>2</sup>

— With this publication, we hope to bring the recommendation and its content closer to all those who can, in different capacities, contribute to the development of youth work in Europe.

1. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/raluca-oancea>.

2. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.6.



# Introduction

## The publication

### Target group

**O**ur publication aims to reach different target groups that can make a difference for the present and future of youth work in Europe: paid and volunteer youth workers, youth work providers, those involved in policy making related to youth work, from both civil society organisations and public institutions, including local and regional authorities, educators of youth workers and the youth research community.

### Scope

— This publication explains the recommendation, particularly the actions and measures that member states should implement to support youth work, relating to the development, promotion and recognition of youth work. It gives examples of how youth work was developed in different contexts across Europe. It also asks questions and gives tips that should guide action for improving youth work.

#### What is, in fact, a recommendation?

— A Council of Europe recommendation is a formal and legal document that has been adopted by every government of the Council of Europe member states. It is a document that is presented before the Committee of Ministers (meaning a representative of every member state's government). It is agreed upon by consensus after discussion and debate.

— This particular recommendation was put forward in 2017, after being discussed with the ministries in charge of youth affairs in the countries of the Council of Europe and with many youth organisations and platforms, and it was adopted unanimously on 31 May 2017.

— However, a recommendation like this one only comes to life if people work with it, understand it, promote it, and use it to improve youth work.



### Spotlight on you!

- ▶ Do you use any other Council of Europe recommendations connected to youth work, for example in the planning, development and implementation of your work?
- ▶ International documents, such as this recommendation, are agreed in fora where member states discuss and approve them by consensus. These standards provide forward-looking principles and actions that member states can take, for example, in this case, to make sure every young person has access to quality youth work activities.
- ▶ These recommendations are useful tools for those involved in youth work to improve their work and to advocate for better youth policy.
- ▶ Check them here:  
[www.coe.int/en/web/youth/standards](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/standards)

### Structure

- This publication is structured in three parts.
- The Introduction briefly presents this publication, the recommendation and the work of the Council of Europe relating to young people and youth work.
- Part 1: “Youth work explained” explores the key contents about what youth work is, its principles and values, and its contributions to society and young people’s lives. It highlights the particular policy area of how the competences young people gain through youth work should be validated and recognised.
- Part 2: “The recommendations to member states explained” explores the actual recommendations, with examples and reflection questions.

### The recommendation at a glance

- The recommendation is structured like this:
  - ▶ Preamble
  - ▶ Recommendations to member states
  - ▶ Appendix, explaining the scope and purpose of the recommendation, definition and scope of youth work, its principles and measures.
- It is accompanied by:
  - ▶ Explanatory memorandum, giving more details to the previous content of the recommendation
  - ▶ Glossary.

— You can find the text of the recommendation and its different language versions here:

[www.coe.int/en/web/youth/adopted-texts](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/adopted-texts).

— All page numbers in the footnote references in this guide relate to the combined recommendation and explanatory memorandum available at [coe.int/en/web/youth/accessibility-of-activities](http://coe.int/en/web/youth/accessibility-of-activities).

## The recommendation

### Preamble

— The preamble refers to previous documents and standards relating to youth policy and youth work, for example: Recommendation Rec(2004)13 on the participation of young people in local and regional life; Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8 on youth information; and Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

### Recommendations to member states

— The recommendation section consists of nine actual recommendations to the member states' governments and a set of underpinning principles. It also lists a range of measures for member states to take into account when reviewing the situation of youth work in their respective countries. More importantly, the recommendation prioritises areas where action is needed to either safeguard or promote youth work in Europe.

— The recommendations are summarised below:

1. ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work;
2. establishing competency-based education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers;
3. the proposed measures and principles promoted as the norm for youth work;
4. setting up a taskforce to elaborate a strategy for the development of European youth work;
5. fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work;
6. development for the review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work;
7. promoting the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres as an example of good practice;

8. supporting the translation of the recommendation into other languages;

9. a proposed review process five years after its approval.

## Appendix

— Although it is called "appendix", this is a very important part of the document. It spells out the definition and scope of youth work as well as the principles of youth work: voluntary and active participation, equality of access, openness and flexibility, being rights-based, being inclusive, and being centred on young people, their needs and abilities. In addition, it mentions that member states secure the active participation of all stakeholders for the development and recognition of youth work.

— Several measures for improving youth work are specified here. The recommendation asks member states to first conduct an analysis of the youth work situation in their countries and create action plans and implement measures for further developing youth work. The measures that the recommendation mentions include:

- ▶ legal and political support;
- ▶ sustainable funding and structures;
- ▶ improved co-ordination across sectors and between the local and the national levels;
- ▶ a competency-based framework for the education and training of youth workers;
- ▶ appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work.

— Two further sections accompany the recommendation.

## Explanatory memorandum

— The memorandum explains the background and the drafting process of the recommendation. It looks at the Council of Europe's vision for youth work in Europe and further elaborates what the recommendation consists of. It closes with a paragraph on follow-up – both for the Council of Europe and the member states.

## Glossary

— This section provides an explanation for the key terms used throughout the recommendation.

## The Council of Europe's youth sector

— The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1949. It currently has 47 member states and has its seat in Strasbourg. Its main values and mission are human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe sets standards for its 47 member states, co-operates with its member states and civil society in the fields related to its main mission, and monitors human rights and the implementation of its standards in its member states.

— The Council of Europe also develops policy standards and guidelines in relation to youth policy in order to support its member states to have youth policies that aim to “provide young people ... with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society”.

— The Youth Department is part of the Directorate of Democratic Participation within the Directorate General of Democracy (DGII) of the Council of Europe. The department draws up guidelines, programmes and legal instruments for the development of coherent and effective youth policies at local, national and European levels. It provides funding and educational support for international youth activities aiming to promote youth citizenship, youth mobility and the values of human rights, democracy and cultural pluralism. It seeks to bring together and disseminate expertise and knowledge about the life situations, aspirations and ways of expression of young Europeans.

— The Council of Europe's co-management system is a living example of participatory democracy. It is a place for common reflection and co-production, combining the voice

of young Europeans and that of public authorities responsible for youth issues, leading to a sharing and evaluation of experience. Thanks to this dialogue, where each party has an equal say, ideas and experiences can be exchanged, in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect, giving legitimacy to the Joint Council on Youth's decisions. The voice of young Europeans is represented by the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), made up of 30 representatives of youth NGOs and networks. The representatives of ministries and bodies responsible for youth issues of the member states come together in the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ). The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) is the co-managed body which brings together the Advisory Council and the CDEJ. The Joint Council takes the decisions on the youth sector's priorities, programmes and budget.

— The Council of Europe devotes particular attention to the role of youth work in relation to young people's development, learning and integration in society. The Council of Europe has supported the quality of youth work in Europe for over 50 years through training programmes for youth workers, different youth policy recommendations and guidelines, numerous educational resources, campaigns, support for youth organisations' projects and partnerships with other entities, notably the European Commission. The Council of Europe instruments in the youth field complement each other to ensure a sustainable impact for young people.

— For the Council of Europe, the development of youth work in Europe is a key priority and the recommendation offers a way forward in this respect.

— For more information, see [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth).







Part 1  
**Youth work explained**



## Youth work explained

— What follows is a presentation of the main contents of the recommendation that explain youth work, its definition and principles. Most of the information reproduced here is based on the appendix of the recommendation and its explanatory memorandum.

— Before coming to the explanation of youth work, it is important first to analyse what is understood by “youth”. Talking youth work means talking youth – but how to define youth or a young person? In fact, there is no uniform definition of youth in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe; the definition of youth age varies greatly. Within the Council of Europe, a legal definition is used for a child/childhood, i.e. from 0-18 years, as suggested by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby a sociological definition is used for a young person/youth, i.e. it describes the age between dependent childhood and autonomous adulthood. In terms of age bracket this means the time from adolescence to the moment when a young person can live a self-sustained life. The upper limit of the youth age has been rising for years, owing to the length of formal education and to a later entry into work life, e.g. in the late 20s or early 30s.



### Spotlight on you!

- ▶ How do you define youth work in your country?
- ▶ How do you translate “youth work” in your language? Are there any disagreements on this?
- ▶ What elements of this definition appear in the youth work practice in your context?
- ▶ What stands out for you in this definition?
- ▶ Do you think it is important to have a definition for youth work? Why? Why not?
- ▶ Having elements for defining youth work has proven to help in recent years to better identify this type of activity with young people and build its identity as a sector. At national level, debates and discussions on definitions can be opportunities for the sector to better understand its profile and better position its advocacy.
- ▶ In a youth work structure, having time to discuss the meaning of the youth work done in that structure can be an important strategic moment, useful for example in better profiling the activities of this structure, or useful for setting up future objectives.



### Spotlight on you!

- ▶ Is there a definition of “youth” in your country’s legislation? If yes, how is it defined?
- ▶ What is the age bracket for the target group of youth work in your country?

## Defining youth work and its principles

— Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people’s active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.<sup>3</sup> Despite different traditions and definitions, there is a common understanding that the primary function of youth work is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large.

— The recommendation acknowledges the variety and diversity of different forms and traditions that youth work has in the different countries in Europe. Youth work has also different histories throughout Europe and it is encompassed in different ways in policies at national level. However, despite this diversity, the recommendation identifies core values and principles of youth work. According to the recommendation, youth work needs to be based on certain values and principles, strongly linked to the foundations of human rights of young people, as follows:

- ▶ youth work is about enabling young people’s learning, development and integration in society;
- ▶ youth work promotes the active participation of young people within it and in society;
- ▶ youth work activities are socially engaging, creative and provide a safe space for young people;
- ▶ youth work is based on the voluntary participation of the young people;
- ▶ youth work seeks to be accessible and actively inclusive for all young people;
- ▶ youth work shows flexibility in its approaches and starts from where young people are, it is centred on the needs and aspirations of young people.
- ▶ youth work reaches its aims “by empowering and engaging young people in the active creation, preparation, delivery and evaluation of initiatives and activities that reflect their needs, interests, ideas and experiences”<sup>4</sup>

— In the recommendation, youth work is seen as something to be supported in the long term and strategically. While youth work supports young people in the here and now, its greatest strength is often in its long-term approach.

3. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p. 9.

4. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p. 9.

Funders, governments, municipalities and the general public want to see instant results, while youth work often takes young people on a long-term journey.



## Spotlight on you!

### Example from the local level in North Macedonia<sup>5</sup>

— The Centre for Intercultural Dialogue (CID) is a civil society youth organisation working to promote intercultural acceptance and active citizenship through capacity-building processes, education and youth work. It is based in the city of Kumanovo, in North Macedonia.

— Kumanovo has witnessed tensions and conflicts among the ethnic communities, mostly divided by the language they speak – Macedonian or Albanian. As a direct response to this, a need was identified for a space where everyone would feel welcome. CID established a youth support project in the municipality called “MultiКулти (MultiKulti) Youth Centre”. The main aim of this youth centre is to establish grounds for sustainable multi-ethnic co-operation by fostering intercultural learning and communication among children and young people.

— The youth centre is an open place. It offers bilingual non-formal education for everyone. To support and address the needs of young people and the communities, it was set up to provide a bilingual programme of workshops and activities (or even multilingual at times). This means that there are always two facilitators or youth workers – one facilitates in Albanian and the other in Macedonian. Through this model of working together and co-facilitating the youth work, young people become exposed to diversity and learn to live together appreciating multilingualism.

— MultiKulti provides a neutral platform where young people from different ethnic communities can follow joint activities. These include access to the first multicultural book cafe-library, an internet radio station, an arts and crafts programme, a recycling programme, a photography course, etc.

— The main results relate to young people being more open to living together with people from “the other” community, while at the same time being involved in positive leisure-time activities that help their learning and development. Through such a youth work approach, CID aims to create diverse, responsible and co-operative communities where young people contribute to social development and integration. This youth work approach promotes a common space where different communities live, learn and work together, and it is recognised as a step forward for social cohesion and peace.

### Youth workers

- ▶ Reflect on how the values and principles mentioned in the recommendation are present in your daily work with young people. For example, what are the mechanisms to make sure your work is inclusive?
- ▶ First, in order to become aware of the young people youth work is not reaching, a youth worker should try to find out more about the young people living in the area where the youth work activities take place. This can be done, for example, through surveys with the inhabitants, through school surveys, by walking and mapping the young people present in the neighbourhood and also by making links with other services, such as social services or the police, or with different associations in the area.
- ▶ Youth workers’ training does not always include training on human rights and anti-discrimination issues. If you haven’t received any training on this, consider attending one in order to develop your competence in working with young people on the basis of anti-discrimination principles.
- ▶ At national level, NGOs and public entities may also organise training and development activities for youth workers. At European level, the Council of Europe’s Youth Department and SALTO Youth regularly offer training courses for youth workers on inclusion. Check more here: [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth) and [www.salto-youth.net](http://www.salto-youth.net).

### Youth work providers

- ▶ How do you organise the provision of youth work so that it follows the principles mentioned in the recommendation? What could be improved?
- ▶ Youth work providers could make the principles and values mentioned in the recommendation explicit in their provision of youth work. This could mean including them in the mission of the youth centre or of the youth organisation, as well as developing the capacities of their teams of youth workers to make these principles “live” in the everyday youth work of the youth work structure. Furthermore, these principles could be also discussed with the young people themselves.

### Youth work training providers

- ▶ How are these principles included in the training of youth workers in your context?
- ▶ Have you considered providing training on inclusive youth work or anti-discrimination?

### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ In order to translate these principles in the policies concerning youth work, it could be useful to gain a better understanding of who gets access to youth work first of all, and, if there are inequalities of access, to address them by working with youth work providers to improve their practices. If there are groups of young people excluded from youth work, support and funding could be allocated so that they are better reached by youth work providers.

5. Source: <http://cid.mk/>.

- ▶ If youth workers are not competent on some of the anti-discrimination principles governing youth work, then training could be offered.
- ▶ In policy documents, these principles and values could be made explicit.
- ▶ Another possible step is to include the provision of access of young people to youth work without discrimination explicitly in the requirements for youth work providers in your area.

## The contributions of youth work

— The recommendation states that youth work, often in partnership and co-operation with other sectors, produces a wide range of positive outcomes for individuals, their communities and for society in general.

— For example:<sup>6</sup>

- ▶ it leads to critical reflection, innovation and changes at local, regional, national and European levels;
- ▶ it contributes to young people's well-being, enhancing a sense of belonging and strengthening their capacity to make beneficial choices;
- ▶ it supports positive and purposeful transitions in personal, civic, economic and cultural life, enabling the development of competences that facilitate lifelong learning, active citizenship and labour market participation;
- ▶ it promotes the development of various skills such as creativity, critical thinking, conflict management, digital and information literacy and leadership;
- ▶ it enhances diversity and contributes to equality, sustainable development, intercultural understanding, social cohesion, civic participation, democratic citizenship and the upholding of the values of human rights;
- ▶ it strengthens young people's resilience and thereby their capacity to resist negative influences and behaviour;

## The vision for youth work:

— Youth work is about cultivating the imagination, initiative, integration, involvement and aspiration of young people; it is educative, empowering, participative, expressive and inclusive. Through activities, playing and having fun, learning in non-formal and informal ways, campaigning, information exchange and guidance, mobility, volunteering, association and conversation, it fosters young people's critical engagement with their communities and societies. Youth work helps young people to discover their talents and to develop the capacities and capabilities to navigate an increasingly complex and challenging social, economic, cultural, ecological and political environment.

— Youth work supports and encourages young people to explore new experiences and opportunities; it also enables them to recognise and manage the many risks they face now and are likely to encounter in the future. In turn, this produces a more integrated and positive attachment to their own identity and future as well as to their society, contributing purposefully to broader current political and policy concerns: young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), health-risk lifestyles, lack of civic responsibility and violent extremism. Youth work engages with young people on their terms, in response to their expressed and identified needs, in their own space or in spaces created for youth work practice. Youth work can also take place in other contexts (such as schools or prisons), but engagement with it needs to remain on a voluntary basis.<sup>7</sup>

## SEVILAY'S TESTIMONY

- ▶ My name is Sevilay. I am from the northern part of Cyprus. Until I was 19, I was an antisocial person. The year I started university I met a guy who involved me in youth work. My first youth work involvement was through Youth Encounters for Peace groups. They were bi-communal groups that aimed to bring young people from both communities, the north and the south of Cyprus, in order to help them eliminate prejudices they had for the other community.
- ▶ At that time we were not able to pass from one part of the island to the other. There was only one bi-communal village where we could meet with our friends from the "other" side of the island. The conditions were difficult. I think that's one of the biggest reasons why I didn't give up, I was achieving what was difficult. Until I was 19 I had heard a lot of negative things about people from south Cyprus and now I was starting to co-operate with them! That was a really interesting experience for me.
- ▶ Being involved in these groups contributed a lot to my personality, I became more confident and I made more friends. I met friends that helped me get involved in international youth organisations through which I travelled to a lot of countries and deepened my knowledge of youth work. I even managed to organise an international training in the northern part of Cyprus which at the time was very difficult for political reasons. Youth work helped to make me who I am today and so I try to give something back through my volunteering with the youth organisation MAGEM.

6. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.10.

7. Explanatory memorandum of the Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, pp.20-21.

— There is at least one more role of youth work that needs to be mentioned and that is the role to respond to challenges and trends in the society that affect young people. In the recommendation, youth work is seen as having a continuous role in supporting and empowering young people. What this means in practice is that youth work needs to be adaptable enough to respond to the emerging circumstances and challenges, while at the same time not endangering or neglecting its other roles and provisions. Therefore, as stated in the recommendation, efforts need to be made to “strengthen the capacity of youth work to respond to the changes and trends in our society and the emerging challenges faced by young people”<sup>8</sup>

### Example from the European level

— The following example uses an approach based on good practices and individual stories of young people:

- ▶ How Youth Work Changed My Life:<sup>9</sup> over 20 stories from individuals who were either young people in youth work projects or youth workers or both. Each one shares the impact that youth work had on their lives.

- ▶ By identifying the gaps in provision of youth work that can lead to all the contributions of youth work as mentioned in the recommendation, advocates for youth work could start a longer-term advocacy plan. The recommendation could be used, in this case, both as a benchmark, as it gives many different examples of what youth work, when the quality conditions are met, can improve in the lives of young people, and as a tool for advocacy.

### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ What are the roles of youth work that youth policies in your context recognise? Is there anything missing?
- ▶ What kind of training or funding is there in your context supporting the roles mentioned for youth work? Could new training for youth workers be offered on topics that are mentioned above? Could new funding lines be offered to support the contribution of youth work in a certain area?
- ▶ What policy instruments are there to ensure that youth work remains relevant to society challenges?



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers and youth work providers

- ▶ What are the contributions that your youth work makes to the lives of young people you work with?
- ▶ Do you have any telling examples of how youth work changed something in young people’s lives? How could you use these examples to advocate for more support for your youth work?
- ▶ What kind of support do you need (training, funding, appropriate policies) to make sure you can help young people to develop in the ways mentioned in the recommendation?
- ▶ In your opinion, what are some of the contemporary challenges and trends in society? How is your youth work responding to them?
- ▶ What kinds of partnership could you develop in your community to make your youth work more effective?
- ▶ Powerful narratives about youth work can be, together with other forms of evidence, a really strong tool for advocating for youth work. Very often, advocates for youth work need to be ready to “prove” the value of what they are doing with young people. Whether these are life stories of young people or statistics showing how many young people developed their soft skills through youth work, it is important that youth workers and youth work providers prepare themselves to advocate for youth work having evidence to showcase this value.

### Young people and youth work

— The recommendation highlights three elements: the contribution of youth work to young people’s personal and social development, the development of their soft skills, and, related to what public authorities can do in this regard, it spells out the importance of recognising the competences young people develop through youth work.

#### Personal and social development

*Youth work helps young people to develop the skills and motivation for finding and pursuing constructive pathways in their lives. To this end, youth work is a critically complementary practice to formal education, to which all young people should have access and entitlement.<sup>10</sup>*

— The recommendation emphasises that youth work needs to act as a support for the transition to adulthood and autonomy.

8. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.8.  
9. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/compendium>.

10. Explanatory memorandum of the Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.19.

In navigating this transition, it is vital that youth policies put in place youth work programmes for all young people that could enhance their transitions, and support and empower young people.

— When young people are empowered, they are more likely to engage in activities for themselves as well as activities connected to society. Young people need enabling and formative experiences in addition to school, home and work life. These experiences can include: international mobility opportunities, school and youth exchanges, access to advice and information, counselling, guidance and coaching, knowledge and experience with new technologies and social media, opportunities for social and political participation, and so on.

— The recommendation highlights the need for policy to take a proactive role in supporting youth work that can value young people's inclusion and engagement in society:

*Young people are a key resource in building a social and just Europe. Societies are at high risk of undermining stability and social cohesion if they allow the current difficult circumstances to create a "lost generation" of disillusioned and disengaged young people. Adequately supporting young people today, including through the provision of quality youth work, is an important investment Europe has to make for its present and for the future. Not doing so represents a loss of opportunity to strengthen contemporary civil society, a threat to social cohesion and weakens the potential for dealing effectively with some of the major challenges of our time such as migration, unemployment, social exclusion and violent extremism.<sup>11</sup>*

#### ANA SILVA'S TESTIMONY

- ▶ This is an example of youth work encouraging young people's active citizenship. Ana Silva, a youth worker from Portugal, shared her project with young people. This was part of the ENTER Long-term Training Course of the Council of Europe.
- ▶ "The aim of the project was to establish a bank of volunteers through peer education. Young people from a disadvantaged neighbourhood were the ambassadors of this project and mobilised other young people and local entities to join in. A group of young people from a disadvantaged neighbourhood, commonly linked by risky behaviours, were challenged to participate in a three-day residential training course about volunteering. On this training course, 17 young people made their first contact with the concept of being a volunteer and the rights and duties that went with it.
- ▶ Once the training course ended, the young people defined strategies that could keep the group together and keep up their levels of motivation. The young people suggested that they have a meeting twice per month and regular volunteering work. Since then, the regular meetings have included several components:

team-building activities, non-formal education activities relating to human rights education, and the sharing of ideas and information about new projects. During these meetings, the young people started to become more aware of human rights as a whole, and have discussed more specific issues like discrimination, rights and duties, inequalities, poverty and social exclusion. As well as this, the young people have continued their voluntary work in the community."



#### Spotlight on you!

##### Youth workers

- ▶ What are the main issues young people are facing in your community?
- ▶ In what ways are you supporting the personal and social development of the young people you are working with?
- ▶ What do young people gain from the work you do with them?

##### Youth work providers

- ▶ What is the relation of your structure to young people? Do you see them as beneficiaries, partners, people in need of help, rights holders, or something else?
- ▶ What instruments do you use to identify what young people learn through youth work in your structure? Do you have any instrument to make this learning visible, for example a portfolio or certificate?
- ▶ What are the opportunities for disengaged young people to access your youth work provision?

##### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ In your policy work, how would you describe the benefits of youth work?
- ▶ Has there been any research in your context providing evidence of what young people gain through youth work?
- ▶ What policies or programmes would be needed to make the impact of youth work stronger? What can be the role of funding, training and explicit policies regarding what the youth work offer in a given area should include in terms of activities and missions?

11. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, pp.10-11.

## Knowledge, skills and attitudes for civic engagement and social action

*Youth work makes an important contribution to active citizenship by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for civic engagement and social action.<sup>12</sup>*

— The recommendation highlights in several sections the role of youth work in relation to civic engagement. This means youth work has a formative role for young people as active citizens in society. The other aspect the recommendation highlights is soft skills.

— Young people can gain a wealth of skills by engaging in youth work. In the 2012 European Youth Forum's "Study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability",<sup>13</sup> soft skills are described as "other than the ones developed in the framework of formal education" and that include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility. The recommendation adds critical thinking to this list. This addition makes a reference to the reference framework of competences for democratic culture developed by the Council of Europe.<sup>14</sup>



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers

- ▶ Could you tell which soft skills young people learn when you are working with them?
- ▶ Do you discuss this skill development with young people? Why or why not? What could be the benefits of making these skills more visible for the young people themselves and for others in the community?
- ▶ Through putting in place a way of documenting and making soft skills visible, you can contribute not only to young people's self-esteem, but also to skills they will make use of, for example in a job. Soft skills are important elements for working in a team, for example, or solving conflicts, and these both contribute to young people's employability.

#### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ Are soft skills recognised and validated in your country/community?
- ▶ What kind of soft skills are being asked for in your country/community in the business sector or formal education sector?
- ▶ How could some of these soft skills developed by young people be made visible or validated?

#### MARKO'S TESTIMONY

- ▶ In a story titled "Miracles Happen",<sup>15</sup> Marko from Montenegro shares how he engaged in youth work activities at 14 and now many years later he can look back and see all the skills he developed.
- ▶ "I come from a small place in Montenegro and as a high-school pupil I didn't have a lot of opportunities outside of formal education to improve myself. As a pupil I wanted something that would improve me and encourage me to be creative, open-minded and to get new skills and knowledge. I started my youth engagement and youth work when I was 14. I was meeting new young people from my city who were also interested to explore more and to improve themselves more than other pupils.
- ▶ Today, many years after my first youth work engagement, I can say it is thanks to youth work that I have learned about social inclusion, the importance of youth activism, active citizenship, environmental issues, and a lot of other things besides. I became so much more open-minded, respecting and enjoying other cultures and working with people from different nations and indeed people from the whole of Europe. Also, I became more aware of environmental issues and I try to upcycle trash from my home."

## Recognition of competences young people gain through youth work

— As stated in the recommendation, youth work and non-formal and informal education are considered to be complementary to formal education. Young people gain a lot of different knowledge, skills and attitudes, which can have a significant impact on their behaviours and personal development. This can happen through planned and organised activities, but also in informal times in a youth organisation or a youth centre. In cases where a young person has been out of the formal system for quite some time, youth work can become the main source of competence development.

— The recommendation invites member states to invest in the recognition of competences gained through youth work and non-formal and informal learning on two different levels:

- ▶ promoting the recognition of competences developed through participating in and delivering youth work<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ giving increased support to implementing the existing and future European frameworks and agendas on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.<sup>17</sup>

— Different degrees of recognition are to be considered within this strand, varying from young people becoming aware of the competences they are developing all the way through to validation of these competences through certificates or portfolios, for example.

12. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.6.  
13. [www.youthforum.org/study-impact-non-formal-education-youth-organisations-young-peoples-employability](http://www.youthforum.org/study-impact-non-formal-education-youth-organisations-young-peoples-employability) p.18.  
14. For more information see [www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture).  
15. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/marko-pejovic>.

16. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p. 12.  
17. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, pp. 12-13.

### Example from the national level: Luxembourg

— In Luxembourg, there is a formal certification of competences gained through extensive voluntary work, an initiative of the Luxembourg Federation of Scouts and National Youth Service.<sup>18</sup>

— The “Attestation et Portfolio de l’Engagement” (engagement portfolio) is a tool providing assistance to youth organisations and youth movements through the development of an official document attesting to a young person’s engagement/commitment and competences acquired through non-formal education activities. It includes:

- ▶ the “portfolio” – a personal folder that allows the young person to keep track of the volunteer work experiences they have done; and
- ▶ the “attestation” – an official recognition mechanism of the competences acquired during a young person’s engagement as a volunteer.

— The development process of the engagement portfolio and particularly of the attestation started in 2004 at the request of the Luxembourg Federation of Scouts (FNEL). They contacted the National Youth Service with the request to have an “official” certification for young people engaged in their organisation, to enhance their engagement/commitment and to be able to have a certificate that could represent an added value when looking for a job. The National Youth Service took the request on board and initiated the development of a validation system for the competences developed by young people through their participation in voluntary work.

— The different phases of the production of an attestation are as follows:

- a. Interview with the person who requests the attestation in order to know the purpose of it. During this interview it is necessary to provide information about the attestation and the portfolio; clarify whether the “supplementary sheets” are to be submitted with the application (for the young people having developed and implemented a project autonomously, these supplements are compulsory);
- b. Consultation with the young person on the tasks and competences to highlight, and writing the application form (and if relevant, the supplementary sheets);
- c. Sending the completed application form to the National Youth Service;

- d. Verification and finalisation of the attestation by the National Youth Service, based on the documents received;
- e. Sending the attestation to the organisation for signature (by the responsible person in charge of the organisation);
- f. Sending the signed attestation back to the National Youth Service;
- g. Signature of the attestation by the minister in charge;
- h. Sending the attestation to the young person with a copy to the organisation.



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers and youth work providers

- ▶ Are the competences young people learn through youth work something useful for their lives later on? How?
- ▶ Is there any instrument of recognition of these skills in your structure? Why or why not?
- ▶ Does something similar to the Luxembourg example above exist in your country?
- ▶ If not, could you start an initiative to create something relevant for your reality? What would be your first step?

#### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ Are there policies in your context which aim to recognise the skills young people gain through youth work?
- ▶ If not, how could these policies be set up? How could you support the development or implementation of such tools in your community/country?
- ▶ Setting up a system of documenting young people’s competences learned through youth work can be useful for a number of reasons. For example, for youth workers, it can be useful to document the outcomes of their work.
- ▶ For those involved in policy or programmes on youth work, documenting these competences can be a step forward to showcase the value of youth work. Many options exist for doing so, from diaries young people can keep in a youth centre or story telling about what they learned in a project, to more complex portfolios.
- ▶ In relation to policy, the main complex measure has to do with setting up a system that recognises these competences, and could translate, for example, into a certificate young people can use later on, for example when applying for a job.

— Besides mechanisms in different member states, there are important initiatives and processes happening at the European level, which can serve as inspiration.

18. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/attestation-portfolio?inheritRedirect=true>.

- ▶ The EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning,<sup>19</sup> which came as a response to the economic crisis and which emphasises the need for the recognition of competences gained through non-formal and informal learning, since they can play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility;
- ▶ SALTO YOUTH Training and Co-operation Resource Centre/Erasmus+: “Youthpass”,<sup>20</sup> a recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth projects (within Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme). Youthpass is based on eight key competences for lifelong learning and the process facilitates issuing of a certificate based on self-assessment.

■ The compilation of tools and processes for recognition, “Visible Value: Mapping of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European and national levels”, offers numerous examples.

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19. European Commission (2014), “Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union”, Brussels; EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01).
20. SALTO-YOUTH Training and Co-operation Resource Centre/Erasmus+, “Youthpass”, available at [www.youthpass.eu/en/](http://www.youthpass.eu/en/), accessed 28 July 2017.

## Making youth work clear: the example of the Council of Europe’s Youth Work Portfolio

■ The Council of Europe’s Youth Work Portfolio is an online tool that allows youth workers to identify their competences and set up learning goals. Here is how the portfolio website visualises the aims of youth work:

■ Youth work usually has the following characteristics:

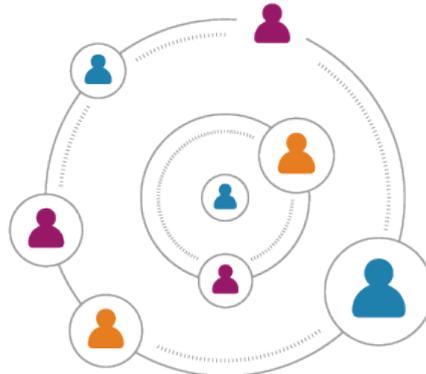
- ▶ Value-driven: youth work tries to serve the higher purposes of inclusion and social cohesion
- ▶ Youth-centric: youth work serves key needs and aspirations of youth, identified by young people themselves
- ▶ Voluntary: youth work is not obligatory, and relies on the voluntary participation of young people
- ▶ Developmental: youth work aims at the personal, social and ethical development of young people
- ▶ Self-reflective and critical: youth work tries to make sure it is doing its best to live up to its mission
- ▶ Relational: youth work seeks authentic communication with young people and to contribute to sustaining viable communities.

## WHAT IS YOUTH WORK FOR?

**ENABLING**  
young people to do the things they want to do together and individually

Providing young people with opportunities to **EMANCIPATE** and gain autonomy

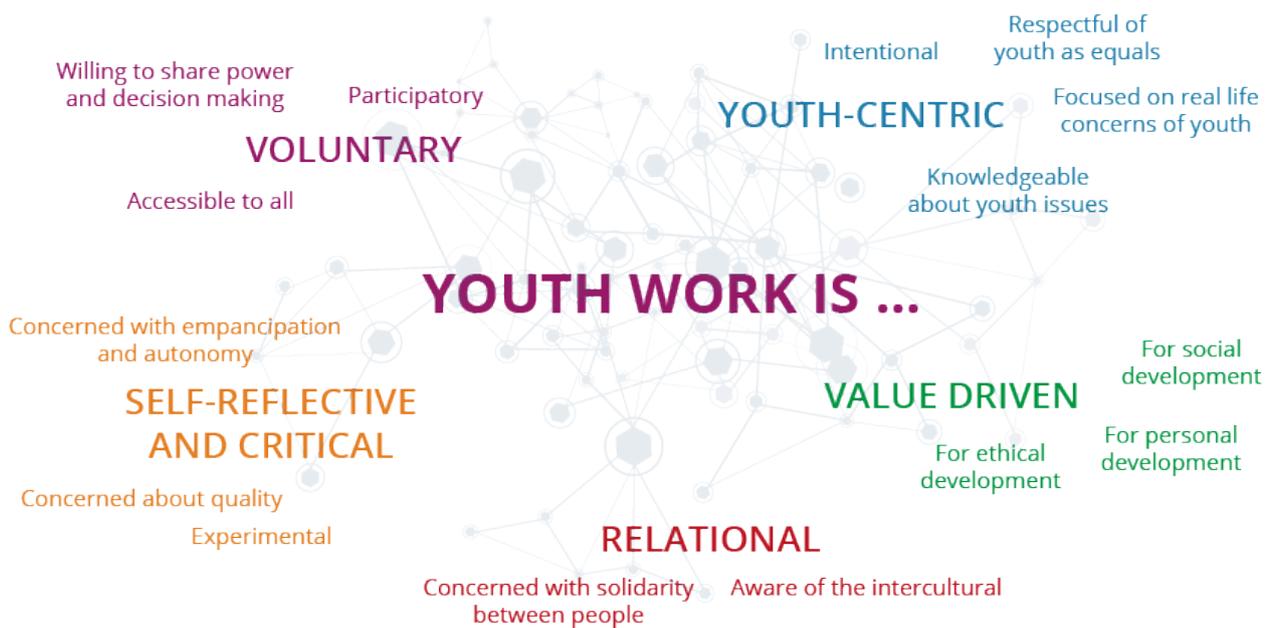
Providing young people with healthy and safe opportunities for leisure that they can **ENJOY**



**EMPOWERING**  
young people to change things they think need to be changed in their immediate surroundings and society

Helping young people to **ENGAGE** with power and policy

Providing young people with relevant and engaging non-formal **EDUCATION** opportunities that improve their competencies







Part 2

## The recommendations to member states explained



## Introduction

— The recommendations to the member states are first included in the main body of the recommendation (numbers 1 to 7) and further detailed in the appendix (letters a to i and a to d) and explained in its memorandum, as follows:

1. Development of policies for youth work:
  - a. an enabling environment for youth work (for example, sustainable structures and resources);
  - b. strengthening place of youth work in cross-sectoral co-operation;
  - c. promote co-ordination between local, regional, national and European levels of youth work, thereby facilitating networking, co-operation, peer learning and exchange;
  - d. promote the recognition of the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding developed through participating in and delivering youth work;
  - e. promote equal access to youth work;
  - f. promote the role of youth work for young people;
  - g. respect the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) doing youth work;
  - h. foster knowledge-based youth work that can respond to the changes and trends in our societies and the emerging challenges faced by young people;
  - i. encourage the use of research, evaluation and continuous follow-up in developing knowledge-based, quality youth work ensuring that mechanisms are in place to measure its outcomes and impact.
2. Establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers:
  - a. work with youth work providers and other stakeholders to develop a set of core competences (for example values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) that should be expected from youth workers;
  - b. establish frameworks, strategies, programmes and pathways for the education, training, capacity building and professional development of youth workers based on the agreed set of competences;
  - c. establish new, or further develop existing mechanisms for the documentation, validation, certification and recognition of competences, which paid and volunteer youth workers gain through their practice;
  - d. give increased support to implementing the existing and future European frameworks and agendas on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
3. Encouraging all youth work providers to take into account the measures in the appendix of the recommendation;
4. Supporting the setting-up of a Council of Europe ad hoc high-level taskforce which can elaborate a mid-term strategy for the knowledge-based development of European youth work;
5. Fostering youth work research;
6. Supporting youth work review and evaluation of impact and outcomes;
7. Promoting the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres as good practice.

## Policies for quality youth work

### Introduction

— In the next section, we focus first on the measures related to youth work policy development (Recommendation 1), namely on:

1. **strategies, frameworks and legislation** that provide context for youth work and enable it to thrive and develop in a quality manner;
2. **sustainable structures and resources** making sure that both funding and other kinds of resources are allocated to youth work;
3. **effective co-ordination with other sectors** that have an influence on well-being and development of young people, ensuring a strong, holistic impact;
4. **related policies that promote equal access to youth work for all young people** because youth work provisions should benefit all young people and policies need to be in place to ensure that.

— The recommendation highlights that all these elements need to be present together for youth work to have a strong basis. Read the following example from Sweden to identify how these elements function.



### Example from the national level: Sweden

— In Sweden, work done with young people in their free time is predominantly discussed in terms of “leisure-time activities”, supposedly provided by “leisure-time leaders”. Few would use the term “youth work” and even fewer would mention participation and learning as its main components when describing it. In order to understand this situation and its consequences, some background is needed.

— In Sweden, arranging activities for young people outside school is voluntary for municipalities. However, most of them finance local leisure-time centres for young people. Since there is no university-based youth worker education, most staff have a two-year vocational training as leisure-time leaders (not specifically targeted at working with young people).

— Local youth policy is in turn very general. In 2002 SALAR (the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions) published a study on local “youth work” policies with the stunning title “Activities without a cause”! This, however, does not mean that there are no political expectations on the outcomes. The hidden agenda very often reads: “keep the troublemaking boys off the streets”.

— Taken together, this has led to “leisure-time activities” having low status, few resources and often dubious quality.

— In this context, KEKS, a network of 60 member municipalities around Sweden and three member municipalities in Slovenia, was founded in 2005 as a reaction to the above situation and is based on common measurable aims related mainly to participation and learning. The aims, however, also contain a description of the desired target group (e.g. gender balance) and some basic economic key figures (e.g. cost per activity hour).

— On the basis of these aims, KEKS has built a web-based system for documentation and follow-up of youth work, *The Logbook*, consisting of four parts:

- ▶ documentation of open youth work and group activities through both statistics and written comments, including the possibility to extract continuous reports on all material put in;
- ▶ an annual questionnaire to young people visiting youth centres, asking them questions relating to security, participation and other needs (in 2018 it got almost 7 000 answers);
- ▶ a questionnaire to young people who take part in projects or other group activities with questions about how and to what extent they have participated and learned new things;
- ▶ a template for collecting statistics and economic data regarding the number of visitors, costs, etc.

— At the end of each year, this information is compiled into a report for every youth centre and municipality where they can see their results, their development over time and how they compare to the average in KEKS. Based on an analysis of these results, they are able to set measurable aims for the next year, e.g. “we want to raise the index on participation from 70 to 80%”. This index is based on how young people have answered the project and group questionnaire. Other indexes, like the one on the number of activity hours produced by young people, are based on statistics from the documentation part of the logbook. The mission of KEKS is then to help its members to develop the competences, methods and tools needed to reach these aims.

— This system is today also used in Slovenia, Finland and Ireland and it has proved to be a great vehicle for

development. Staff, as well as local politicians, feel that they, for the first time, get relevant and constructive feedback regarding the quality of local youth work.

— The conclusions KEKS drew from this process are the following:

- ▶ young people’s active participation leads to learning and personal development and is thus the main vehicle for successful youth work;
- ▶ when youth work provides clear and relevant measurable aims related to the core values participation and learning, the policy makers will be more interested in youth work development;
- ▶ when youth workers can show a trustworthy follow-up on how young people perceive youth work in terms of participation and learning, there will be more political recognition and support;
- ▶ systematic documentation and follow-up is, at the same time, the main driving force for further development.

— For more information see [www.keks.se/keks-in-english/](http://www.keks.se/keks-in-english/) and [info@keks.se](mailto:info@keks.se).

## Strategies, frameworks and legislation

*When considering how to implement these measures, member States should pay special attention to the (prior) definition of a legal and programmatic framework and a national strategy on youth work. The strategy should include a robust assessment of needs, specific goals and objectives, measures to achieve those goals, a related action plan (with progress indicators), the target group(s) with age boundaries and details of specific populations (such as minorities and vulnerable groups), as well as details of a budget.<sup>21</sup>*

— While youth policy exists in different forms in most member states, the role of youth work in it is not always clearly stated or present. The recommendation highlights the needs for policy makers to recognise the place of youth work in youth policy and other legal documents, as one of the preconditions for quality youth work.

21. Explanatory memorandum of the Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.23.



### An example from Flanders, Belgium<sup>22</sup>

— Belgium-Flanders has a comprehensive and holistic system of strategies and frameworks. Some of its elements are outlined below.

— Flemish youth work policy is part of the “general” youth policy. Youth policy is based on the assumption that it is possible to implement a group policy: instead of focusing on one sector, the starting point is young people’s lives across the board, their needs and requirements. That is why youth policy permeates almost every other policy sector.

— The Division of Youth within the Department of Culture, Youth and Media is responsible for implementing the youth and children’s rights policy of the Flemish Government. It promotes and stimulates a rich and various offer of non-profit sociocultural activities for children and young people between 3 and 30 years old. It provides operational subventions and project grants to youth organisations, and supports and guides local authorities in developing their own local youth policy. Furthermore, it plays a co-ordinating role in developing the Flemish youth and children’s rights policy plan and in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in all Flemish policy domains.

— The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights includes legislation about the training programme named “Kadervorming”. Youth workers, both paid staff and volunteers, can obtain youth worker certificates following this programme. The certificates are awarded by the

Department of Culture, Youth and Media after completion of the training programme.

— There are four dimensions of recognition present in this legislation and in the “Kadervorming” training programme:

- ▶ Formal recognition: a certificate is delivered.
- ▶ Political recognition: non-formal education is recognised in legislation.
- ▶ Social recognition: social actors such as the youth sector and local authorities acknowledge the certificates.
- ▶ Self-recognition: the training programme (“Kadervorming”) contributes to participants’ awareness of their competences.

— Since 1 January 2013, the Flemish Parliament Act on a revised youth and children’s rights policy (*Decreet houdende vernieuwd jeugd en kinderechtenbeleid*) as amended has come into force. This Act describes the basic instruments to implement youth policy and specifies the conditions for accreditation and funding of a large number of private organisations and youth-related associations operating on a Flemish level (not organisations operating on a regional or a local level as these receive funding by the municipalities).

— Since the Flemish Parliament Act on local and provincial youth (work) policy came into force in 1993, steps were taken towards a decentralised and complementary youth policy. Since 2016, the municipalities are no longer granted funding that is specifically meant for youth policy. The funds are integrated in one overarching provision to local governments (Community Fund (*Gemeentefonds*)). The aim was to increase the integration of policy making across different sectors. It also strengthened the autonomous authority of the municipalities concerning youth policy.

— On 27 October 2018, the Flemish Government accepted the draft “Parliament Act supra-local youth work, youth houses and targeted youth work”. The Parliament Act stipulates that from 2020, youth work that is not directed at the whole Flemish community, but that does respond to Flemish Government priorities will be supported. The Parliament Act brings together different subsidy channels and supports youth work that reaches all young people. Thereby, attention was paid to recommendations of the Council for Culture, Youth and Media, the Flemish Youth Council, the social partners and the State Council. The draft will be submitted to the Flemish Parliament.

— The Parliament Act brings together different subsidy channels and is targeted at four groups:

- ▶ youth houses that are focused on Flemish youth policy priorities;

22. Country Sheet on Youth Work in Belgium (Flanders) (2017): <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/country-information-youth-work>.

- ▶ youth work with vulnerable children and young people. This and the previous example are funded by the Flemish Government/Parliament;
- ▶ supra-local<sup>23</sup> youth work with children and young people with a disability;
- ▶ inter-municipal co-operation that stimulates co-operation and networking between the local authorities and youth associations.



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers and youth work providers

- ▶ Is youth work regulated by law in your country or context?
- ▶ How can strategies and frameworks support you in your work?
- ▶ Get informed about the channels for making proposals regarding legal frameworks so that you can contribute to quality development in youth work.

#### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ What is the legal situation of youth work in your country? Is there scope for strengthening the framework for youth work in your country?
- ▶ Have you initiated changes in frameworks, strategies and legislation from the youth work community?
- ▶ Just like in the examples above, several of the strategies and frameworks put in place are the result of advocacy efforts for youth work. Advocates for youth work could be youth workers themselves and their associations, youth organisations and youth councils, youth work structures, researchers and so on. For advocates for youth work, the recommendation provides a long-term horizon of development in the field of youth work. As an advocate, you can use the recommendation provisions both for the analysis of the current situation in your context and for identifying the most important priorities for development of advocacy efforts.

## Sustainable structures and resources

— As we saw in the previous section, one way of ensuring sustainability is by having youth work clearly integrated into youth policy. The recommendation invites member states to:

*provide an enabling environment and conditions for both proven and innovative youth work practices (including, for example, sustainable structures and resources), particularly at the local level, while acknowledging that youth work benefits from regional, national and international opportunities and co-operation.<sup>24</sup>*

— Exploring the sustainability of youth work structures and resources further, the recommendation invites member states to create sustainable structures for youth work that include support for youth non-governmental organisations, welfare organisations and public services at regional and local levels.<sup>25</sup> Such sustainable structures would mean that youth work would be easily accessible to all young people and be allocated an appropriate budget to support its provisions and/or structures around it.

— Some of the ways to ensure sustainability for youth work are:

- ▶ financial support allocated in the budget for youth work provisions;
- ▶ financial support for ongoing, long-term youth work programmes;
- ▶ reconstruction and modernisation of buildings and equipment that would be allocated to youth work providers;
- ▶ open youth clubs;
- ▶ local youth offices;
- ▶ support for detached and outreach youth work, etc.

— The recommendation highlights that sustainability in youth work requires careful and strategic planning, based on needs assessment and the involvement of all stakeholders, including young people.

23. By supra-local we mean youth work at the level of a province, or in several municipalities.

24. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.11.

25. Explanatory memorandum of the Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.24.



### An example from the national level: Estonia<sup>26</sup>

— In Estonia, support for sustainable structures and resources has been decentralised to the level of municipalities, which support a lot of different youth work formats and activities.

— Organisation and provision of youth work is the responsibility of municipalities in Estonia. Therefore, budgets of local governments appear among important sources to finance youth work. Local municipalities support hobby education outside the formal education system and in schools, youth centres, youth projects, youth associations, youth camps, sporting events, and other forms of youth work. In many municipalities, open youth centres are central institutions for carrying out youth work. Youth centres are managed either by local government directly or by a private organisation that has been contracted by the municipality to provide youth work services. Local government often also maintains hobby schools (music, sports, art, nature, technology etc.), funding the management costs of buildings and personnel costs as well as the participation of youth in the activities. The majority of private organisations in the field of youth and youth work get most of their finances from local government.

- ▶ Focus on developing financial support allocated for youth work provisions on the local/regional/national level and local youth action plan (based on youth policy), which guarantees support for youth work providers. Consider involving all stakeholders whenever any provision related to youth work is being discussed.

— In addition to supporting the sustainability of youth work, the recommendation calls upon member states to respect the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) doing youth work, without political pressures and other influences from different levels within a country. Resources provided should be available for the activities being implemented and not be a source of influence over the direction in which those activities will be implemented. One of the ways to ensure this independence is by involving youth work stakeholders in different decision-making processes and bodies, including young people.



### An example from the national level: Finland<sup>27</sup>

— In Finland, local youth councils are mandatory and they enable young people to participate and influence youth work and youth policy at a municipal level.

— The Municipal Act, Section 26 – Youth councils states:

1. To secure the opportunity for young people to participate and exert an influence, the local executive must set up a youth council or similar group representing young people's views (youth council) and ensure the operational preconditions for it. A youth council can be shared by two or more municipalities.
2. Youth councils must be given the opportunity to influence the planning, preparation, execution and monitoring of the activities of the municipality's different areas of responsibility in matters of importance to the well-being, health, education, living environment, housing or mobility of the municipality's residents and also in other matters that the youth council considers to be



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers and youth work providers

- ▶ How is youth work integrated (or not) in youth policy in your context? What support is there and what support is still missing?
- ▶ Advocate for, and get involved in, any participatory planning or consultation process related to youth work. This will ensure that the voices of those managing or doing youth work is taken into account in policy and programmes.
- ▶ Reach out also to local or national youth councils to join forces when advocating for youth work.

#### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ Does youth work provision in your context respond to what the Council of Europe recommends?

26. Country Sheet on Youth Work in Estonia (2017): <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/country-information-youth-work>.

27. Country Sheet on Youth Work in Finland (2018): <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/finland>.

significant for children and young people. Youth councils must be involved in the municipality's work to develop children's and young people's participation and the opportunities for their views to be presented.

— The recommendation highlights another important part of this process and overall sustainability and quality, namely the youth worker associations or organisations. They give voice to youth work providers, support initiatives from the grassroots level and often put pressure on decision makers to ensure quality development of youth work. In some countries, it is the association of youth workers that have advanced the youth work profession the most and who are continuously working on quality. Most youth worker associations provide training and some also focus on promoting professional practice and generally recognition of youth work, including issues such as ethical codes and standards. The situation and status of these associations vary from country to country: in some countries they only include youth workers, in others they may include professions which are close to youth work.



#### An example from the national level: Malta<sup>28</sup>

— The Maltese Association of Youth Workers (MAY) was established in 1998. Its founding members comprised the first graduates of the first degree course (part-time) in Youth and Community Studies in Malta. In 1992, the University of Malta established an Institute of Youth Studies (now the Department of Youth and Community Studies) to provide training for those who wished to pursue a career as youth and community workers. Up until the 1990s, however, youth work was exclusively the domain of the voluntary sector and while the newly established Ministry of Youth and Arts published the first

document on youth policy in 1993, the state provided no material or financial support.<sup>29</sup>

- From the outset MAY had three primary aims:
  - ▶ to promote professional youth work practice with the ultimate aim of having it formally recognised as a profession;
  - ▶ to advocate youth work as a non-formal learning process for young people;
  - ▶ to engage actively with the relevant ministry, authorities and stakeholders with a view to establishing sustainable management, administrative and financial support structures for youth work and, consequently, enhanced employment opportunities for youth workers.

— In pursuit of its aims, MAY developed and published a Code of Ethics for Youth Workers in 2001. The association also applied for professional recognition from the Maltese Federation of Professional Associations, which resulted in youth workers being represented, along with other professional associations, on national consultative bodies in relevant areas of policy development.

— However, it was not until 2010 and the establishment of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, the National Youth Agency, that the state provided the sustainable management, administrative and financial support structures for youth work that MAY had long sought and advocated. As a consequence, youth work was formally recognised as a profession under the Youth Work Profession Act 2015.

— MAY was and is a youth work success story. It played a significant role in transforming youth work in Malta from a voluntary activity and service for young people into a fully state-supported, funded and professionally recognised discipline. However, there were bigger actors in this success story. From the outset MAY emerged from a clear, established and recognised education path: a university degree. It already had or soon acquired recognisable aspects of professionalisation. While the state took time to commit itself, its intervention in providing sustainable management, administrative and financial support was to prove decisive for the future of youth work in Malta.

28. Source: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/country-information-youth-work>.

29. Teuma M. (2018), "The past made us: perspectives on the development of youth work and social work in Malta", in Williamson H. et al. (eds), *The History of Youth Work in Europe*, vol. 6, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.



### An example from the national level: NAPOR in Serbia<sup>30</sup>

— The National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR) in Serbia was initiated in May 2008, as a reaction of civil society organisations to the absence of a legitimate national association of professionals in the area of non-formal education that would influence policy development and quality assurance mechanisms for its implementation at the national and local levels.

— The National Association of Youth Workers (hereinafter referred to as NAPOR) is a union of civil society organisations that embraces 68 member organisations delivering youth work in Serbia that lobby and advocate for better youth policies or initiate new policies. All the processes related to recognition of youth work at national level are done by and within NAPOR. The main areas relating to recognition are:

- ▶ development of three vocational standards in the area of professional non-formal education (1. Youth activist; 2. Youth work co-ordinator; 3. Specialist for youth work and policies) that are included in the National Vocational Qualification system (still to be officially published by the government);
- ▶ development of standards for non-formal education programmes in the youth field and a mechanism for its implementation ((re)accreditation process of youth work programmes based on eight standards) that ensures building necessary skills and life values of young people to take active participation in community development along with promotion of democratic principles;
- ▶ development of non-formal education curricula for two vocational standards in the area of youth work (1. Youth activist; and 2. Youth work co-ordinator) through which non-formal education providers gain standardised competences to be able to make a greater impact on youth empowerment;

- ▶ development of a mechanism for validation of previously attained competences for two vocational standards for non-formal education in the youth field;
- ▶ establishment of a pool of licensed organisations and trainers for delivery of multi-modular training for non-formal education vocational standards;
- ▶ establishment of a pool of mentors for validation of previously attained competences;
- ▶ creation of a tool for recognition of competences of young people gained through youth work programmes and non-formal education (passport of competences). The Ministry of Youth and Sports and other relevant actors from the public, private and civil society sectors co-operate in this process, developing the passport and aiming to improve youth employability.<sup>31</sup>



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers and youth work providers

- ▶ Is there such an organisation/association of youth workers in your context? If yes, what is its mission? If no, why not?
- ▶ If there is an organisation/association of youth workers in your country/community, you may consider becoming a member or at least following their work. As presented in the two examples, youth workers' associations can play a crucial role in advocacy and developments for youth work, and their strength relies on the people they represent. If there is no organisation, consider creating one!
- ▶ In those cases where such an organisation does not exist, other forms of networking and connecting can be put in place, starting from online groups to informal thematic networks.

#### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ Consider supporting the work of an association of youth workers. This could be an element for quality development. If among its missions, this association can also offer training and quality development tools for youth workers, its work can contribute to a better provision of youth work and better results for young people.
- ▶ Consider the role of structures for youth work, such as youth clubs or youth organisations. Assess first the situation in your context, whether the infrastructure and space for youth work are sufficient or evenly distributed in accordance with the needs of the youth population. Consider also that if some places do not have a youth club, for example, youth organisations could be supported to run programmes there.

30. [www.napor.net/](http://www.napor.net/).

31. Country Sheet on Youth Work in Serbia (2018): <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/country-information-youth-work>.

- ▶ One of the recurrent problems in this respect could be the uneven local youth work provision, for example in the rural areas there may be fewer or no youth work structures at all.
- ▶ An assessment of the existing structures is important in order to plan further developments and distribute resources more justly.
- ▶ If an association of youth workers exists, it can be a partner in supporting the creation of occupational standards or a curriculum for youth work studies.

### Effective co-ordination with other sectors

- The recommendation invites member states to:

*strengthen the role and position of youth work in order to facilitate cross-sectoral co-operation between youth work – whether it is provided by public authorities, the private sector or civil society – and other sectors, including for example: social care, health, sport, culture, formal education, employment services and criminal justice.<sup>32</sup>*

- Cross-sectoral co-operation or co-ordination with other sectors can take different formats, for example:

- ▶ ensuring that youth is part of the policy of other (related) sectors and/or that there is a “group policy” that encompasses several relevant sectors;
- ▶ establishing expert and/or working groups, composed of representatives of different sectors, as well as youth work providers and young people, in order to tackle either youth as a whole, or some particular issues;
- ▶ integrating efforts of different ministries or other relevant institutions in particular fields of action concerning young people;
- ▶ recognising other providers of youth work, such as public and private sectors (and not just civil society);<sup>33</sup>
- ▶ enabling concrete co-operation between youth work provider(s) and partner(s) from other sectors in order to address a certain topic or an issue concerning young people.

— The youth field and particularly those involved in youth work development can also learn from other sectors, which have developed cross-sectoral mechanisms of co-operation given their scope of work, for example the fields of advocacy or adult education.



### An example from Bilbao, Spain<sup>34</sup>

— Elkartea, in Bilbao, Spain, ran the project “Empowerment makes it possible!”

— The target group for the activity were workers and leaders from immigrant youth organisations and youth organisations working with immigrant young people, youth leaders active in youth organisations, community organisations of immigrants, sports clubs, cultural associations, and the formal educational sector.

— The activity consisted of a training course on anti-discrimination tools, with the focus on discrimination experienced by young migrants in the Basque country but also in other regions in Spain. The participants were introduced to the concept of discrimination, its types and expressions, as well as to analysis of its causes. Based on these understandings, the focus was on how to develop awareness-raising activities to fight discrimination and exclusion.

— The impact has been so strong on the participants that they have continued meeting and working together on local actions, cultural activities and seminars and conducting talks in schools. The group has become an activist and support group facilitated by the organisation Novisi Elkartea.

— The main focus was in bringing together fellow youth workers, leaders and activists from other youth organisations. This supported them in their openness to diverse approaches and new ideas. They were able to gain new competences from their peers who were working with different target groups with different needs and through this multi-agency approach they were able to develop innovative practices to support the work with disadvantaged young people.

32. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.11.

33. Explanatory memorandum of the Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.24.

34. <https://goo.gl/X3k7CB>.



## Spotlight on You!

### Youth workers

- ▶ What examples of good practice are there regarding co-operation of different sectors benefiting youth in your country/community?
- ▶ Have you tried reaching out to different sectors for the support in your activities (e.g. when addressing sexual and reproductive health, reaching out to the Ministry of Health, civil society organisation specialised in this field, schools, social workers, etc.)?
- ▶ Mapping who else works with young people in a given community can be a useful tool in many ways. If you co-ordinate with teachers or social workers, you may learn more about the experiences young people have and their family. If you know from medical staff some of the issues young people raise, perhaps you could offer some health prevention workshops and so on. Knowing more about other professionals and volunteers can be useful for you in your work, and at the same time can also offer others more information about your work and your role in the community.

### Youth work providers

- ▶ You can organise meetings and events where different relevant stakeholders in the field of youth would come together. You can include the wider sector, for example also medical staff that work with young people, social workers and teachers.
- ▶ While informing each other constantly can be a first step for co-operation, there can be more ambitious forms of co-operation, such as on specific projects or programmes.

### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ Is there a platform for co-operation with other sectors in your youth work reality? Have you been bringing together different stakeholders for sharing and exchange?
- ▶ At the national level, are there any ministries or agencies you may need to work with in order to support quality development in youth work?
- ▶ Mapping the interests of other stakeholders and your own may be the first step to find common ground on which to build projects or common initiatives. Another important step in this co-operation is the exchange of information on a regular basis. Furthermore, the development of trust relationships with other sectors, even though less measurable, is also important if and when a stronger co-operation process is to be rolled out.
- ▶ Despite challenges related to the resources and time that cross-sectoral co-operation needs, it may be of added value, because it brings:
  - the possibility of following similar missions together;
  - richer perspectives on youth-related issues;
  - the possibility to be creative and to learn from others;
  - the possibility to avoid making mistakes by learning from others when one is not an expert in a given topic or issue.
- ▶ The steps of this co-operation are mapping who is active out there, getting to know the other actors and entities and learning more about their work, creating a common vision or project for a partnership, identifying areas for co-operation and developing co-operation on the basis of agreed principles and practices.

## Related policies promoting equal access

Throughout the recommendation, the importance of all young people having access to youth work and its provisions is highlighted on numerous occasions. In order to be truly accessible for all young people, youth work needs to be continuously and proactively working towards reaching out to even the most marginalised of young people. In order for this to happen, explicit policies need to be in place to support and ensure it. For example policies:

- ▶ against discrimination;
- ▶ ensuring that different youth work entities have access to resources available;
- ▶ stimulating youth work programmes that include diverse groups of young people;
- ▶ ensuring that young people with fewer opportunities will be guaranteed extra support.



### An example from the national level: France

An action research organised in France allowed youth centres to analyse why fewer girls took part in leisure-time activities than boys and to find new ways of improving their access. This action research also made proposals for youth centres' activities to become more inclusive towards girls.

For example, one of the issues raised was that the sports activities offered in youth centres were seen as rather activities for boys than for girls, for example football. Another issue was the access to the youth centres for young girls, many of whom avoided public spaces which were perceived as either insecure or rather the spaces where boys hang out. Further aspects such as the gender stereotypes young girls and boys are confronted with from a very young age are also important. The preparation and training of

youth workers, who sometimes are not ready to use their “gender glasses” and make inclusive proposals for activities, can also influence the access to these activities for girls.

— The result of this is that starting from about 12 years of age fewer girls take part in leisure-time activities.

— The action research also made proposals regarding how youth centres can take steps towards more inclusive activities, for example by having a mixed team of youth workers, having good evidence about the situation of young girls and boys to identify why they take part or don't take part in activities, and taking positive steps for making activities more flexible to suit the situation of young girls in particular. For example, allowing girls to participate as a group in an excursion is more likely to lead to having more girls involved if access was only granted to individuals. Another idea was to propose activities which may be more interesting for girls, such as sports that are perceived as gendered (basketball instead of football) or dances. One of the ideas was also to reserve spaces for girls only.

— In general, this action research also showed that gender-inclusive spaces in youth centres need to be a mission accepted and promoted by all the staff and volunteers in a youth centre. The youth centres involved in the action research tested these proposals in practice.

— For more information see [www.centre-hubertine-auclert.fr/outil/pour-qu-activites-de-loisirs-riment-avec-egalite-participation-des-jeunes-filles-et-mixite-l](http://www.centre-hubertine-auclert.fr/outil/pour-qu-activites-de-loisirs-riment-avec-egalite-participation-des-jeunes-filles-et-mixite-l).

## Co-operation between all levels and peer learning

— The recommendation calls upon member states to:

*promote and support co-ordination between local, regional, national and European levels of youth work, thereby facilitating networking, co-operation, peer learning and exchange.<sup>36</sup>*

— This measure complements the considerations related to the youth work field becoming more connected and working with other sectors relevant for young people. This mutual learning can be supported through platforms, regular meetings, joined projects between different levels or regions and also co-operation at European level. The recommendation makes specific reference to the following Council of Europe project.



### An example from the European level: the Quality Label for Youth Centres<sup>37</sup>

— An example of co-operation and co-ordination working for the benefit of young people is the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres, recognised in the recommendation as an example of good practice. In 2010, the European Steering Committee on Youth wanted to promote the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe as standard-setting examples of good practice. The concept was adopted and work began on putting it into practice. The Quality Label is specifically mentioned in the recommendation, because it includes a number of aspects that are highlighted in the recommendations to the member states. Standard setting is not just about having good facilities that meet certain criteria – although this is also important; it goes to something much broader than this. The Quality Label concept means a youth centre being a proactive part of its local community, of creating a partnership with local authorities, of being a leading force for the development and implementation of youth policy, and for sharing examples of practice on a European level.



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers and youth work providers

- ▶ Is your youth work open and accessible to everyone?
- ▶ Are there policies in place that promote equal access in your country/ community or your youth centre?
- ▶ Get inspired by the work of the National Youth Council of Ireland, which developed a comprehensive resource kit on Access All Areas – A Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector.<sup>35</sup> This tool can be useful for you to start a reflection process on access and inclusion in youth work in your area as well.

35. [www.youth.ie/diversity](http://www.youth.ie/diversity).

36. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.11.

37. [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/quality-label-for-youth-centres](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/quality-label-for-youth-centres).

— One of the criteria of the Quality Label is the development of quality in youth work. A key obligation for any Quality Label awarded youth centre is the pursuit for co-operation with local authorities for the development of youth policy. The Quality Label youth centres are in a unique position to be connecting youth work and local government. A Quality Label centre is expected to be a source of good practice and a leading force for the development of youth work locally, regionally and even nationally.

— For more information see [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth).

## Policies for the competence development of youth workers

### Introduction

— Quality youth work depends to a significant level on the quality of the interaction between the youth worker and the young person. This interaction needs competences that youth workers gain through training and education and later on through their professional and on-the-job development. The recommendation calls on member states to ensure that training and education opportunities are put in place for youth workers to gain the competences needed in their daily work with young people. Specifically, the recommendation calls upon member states to establish:

*a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers that takes into account existing practice, new trends and arenas, as well as the diversity of youth work. Stakeholders, including youth workers and young people, should be involved in developing this framework.<sup>38</sup>*

— A competence framework in youth work sets certain standards of what is expected from youth workers in terms of their knowledge, skills and attitudes and provides a basis for educational and training opportunities.

— The recommendation encompasses different steps with regard to the assessment and development of competences. It sets the foundation for a quality approach to the educational pathways of youth workers through the development of coherent frameworks for education and training.<sup>39</sup> The member states are invited to:

- ▶ together with youth work providers and other stakeholders, develop a set of core competences that would be expected from youth workers in the given context;

- ▶ based on the agreed set of competences, establish educational and training pathways for further capacity building and professional development of youth workers;
- ▶ establish and/or further develop processes and mechanisms for validation and recognition of youth worker competences;
- ▶ promote recognition of competences gained through youth work and give support to frameworks and agendas on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning at the European level.

— All stakeholders, and especially youth workers and young people, should be involved in the steps within a competence-based framework.

### Defining youth workers' core competences

— As the first step in developing a competence-based framework, member states should:

*work with youth work providers and other stakeholders to develop a set of core competences (for example values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) that should be expected from youth workers.<sup>40</sup>*

— To arrive at the set of core competences, member states can:

- ▶ become familiar with core competences that exist at the European level (or in other member states), get inspired or even “translate” them to their reality;
- ▶ build on already existing initiatives and process from the past and conclude developing the set of core competences;
- ▶ gather competences that are already formally or informally used in youth work practice(s) – by different organisations for example – and adapt it to the national reality;
- ▶ analyse core competences used in other related fields (like social work, for example);
- ▶ launch a wide consultative process among different stakeholders concerning the core competences.

— In order to prepare for choosing the most relevant and applicable option, research is needed to provide a baseline, identify the key partners and prepare a wide consultation process.

38. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.8.

39. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.12.

40. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.12.



### Example from the European level: the Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio<sup>41</sup>

— The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio “is a tool that helps individuals, teams and organisations doing youth work around Europe to understand their competence and to develop it more effectively. This tool can also be used by trainers, youth work managers and policy makers and generally all those interested in the topic of quality development and recognition of youth work.”

— As a foundation of the youth work portfolio, there is the portfolio competence framework. The competence framework is built around functions of youth work and encompasses two sets of competences:

- ▶ specific youth work competences – competences that make this field of activity unique;
- ▶ more general competences – competences relevant for other fields of activity but which are usually important for youth work.

— There are eight functions in the portfolio competence framework:

- ▶ address the needs and aspirations of young people;
- ▶ provide learning opportunities for young people;
- ▶ support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it;
- ▶ support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations;
- ▶ actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted;
- ▶ support collective learning in teams;
- ▶ contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies/programmes work better for young people;
- ▶ develop, conduct and evaluate projects.

— Each of the functions have a set of competences (from 2 to 5) and each of the competences has related knowledge, skills and attitudes and values.

— The youth work portfolio has served as an inspiration for a number of national competence frameworks, for example in Lithuania and Serbia. In the cases of these two countries, there was a process of adapting the portfolio to national realities and formulating the competence framework based on it.



### Example from the European level: ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally<sup>42</sup>

— The ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally is part of the European Training Strategy in the Field of Youth,<sup>43</sup> and it supports training and quality in youth work. As the name suggests, it is more focused on youth workers who are active on the international level.

— ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally consists of eight competences:

1. facilitating individual and group learning in an enriching environment;
2. designing programmes;
3. organising and managing resources;
4. collaborating successfully in teams;
5. communicating meaningfully with others;
6. displaying intercultural competence;
7. networking and advocating;
8. developing evaluative practices to assess and implement appropriate change.

— Each competence has four dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours, and a number of each of them are listed for the umbrella competence. The approach of the model highlights the role of behaviours. “Therefore, behaviour encompasses attitudes [and actions], knowledge, and skills. Through behaviour we can assess the competence level of the youth worker and whether it is sufficient for his/her work. In short: behaviour reflects the underlying attitudes of a youth worker.”<sup>44</sup>

— Both competence frameworks/models mentioned have a significant role to play in setting foundations for educational and training opportunities on different levels, as well as in recognition of competences gained through youth work. These will be further discussed in later sub-chapters.

41. Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio, Council of Europe (2015).

42. [www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3460/CompetencemodelForYoutworker\\_Online-web.pdf.pdf](http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3460/CompetencemodelForYoutworker_Online-web.pdf.pdf).

43. [www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3301/European%20Training%20Strategy%20in%20the%20field%20of%20Youth\\_en.pdf](http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3301/European%20Training%20Strategy%20in%20the%20field%20of%20Youth_en.pdf).

44. [www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3460/CompetencemodelForYoutworker\\_Online-web.pdf.pdf](http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3460/CompetencemodelForYoutworker_Online-web.pdf.pdf).



### An example from the national level: Austria<sup>45</sup>

— In Austria, aufZAQ developed the Competence Framework for Children and Youth Work. This competence model shows how people act competently in their work in children and youth work. It covers both open youth work and children and youth work in youth organisations. The competence framework is a translation tool from qualifications of children and youth work to the Austrian National Qualifications Framework (NQF). In turn, the NQF makes qualifications visible and comparable through the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) across Europe. In particular, the competence framework is part of the aufZAQ certification.

#### — The Competence Framework

- ▶ visualises competences of persons involved in children and youth work, making them comparable;
- ▶ encourages the development of essential competences – from which children and adolescents will benefit in the future;
- ▶ clarifies what youth workers do and which quality standards they follow within this work;
- ▶ promotes networking, co-operation, further development and mutual recognition of youth work providers, educational providers as well as related fields, such as social work in schools, health innovation and disease prevention;
- ▶ increases the quality of training.

— The Austrian Federal Ministry of Families and Youth, the Youth Departments of the Federal States of Austria and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano, South Tyrol, have commissioned aufZAQ to develop a standard for youth worker training compliant with the National Qualifications

Framework. Thereupon, the aufZAQ office developed the present Competence Framework for Children and Youth Work. In this way, aufZAQ contributes to the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning according to European and national strategies.

— Practitioners, experts, multipliers and stakeholders from various levels and sub-areas of children and youth work, as well as related fields, were involved in the development of the competence framework. The entire process was scientifically monitored by the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training. In addition, exchanges at the European level helped to incorporate the content of existing competence models into the process. In developing the competence descriptions in the field of children and youth work in youth organisations, all youth organisations at the national level were able to participate.

— There are different levels of competence, which are in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework. Here is a description of what youth workers at the indicated level should be able to do:

- ▶ Level II: Work with children/adolescents under guidance with some autonomy; Take responsibility for one's own actions; Be responsible for one's own actions, adapting under certain guidance one's own behaviour to common situations and circumstances in a pre-structured framework;
- ▶ Level III: Work with children/adolescents in simple situations autonomously and self-responsibly; Take responsibility for one's own actions consistent to the situation; Independently adapt one's own behaviour to the state and circumstances of common situations in a pre-structured framework;
- ▶ Level IV: Work autonomously and self-responsibly with children/adolescents in changing routine situations; Plan, carry out and evaluate projects; Independently adapt one's own behaviour to different situations and under varying conditions to the respective state and circumstances;
- ▶ Level V: Act independently and flexibly in varying and even unpredictable situations; Co-ordinate and manage projects and/or teams independently; Instruct colleagues in changing assignments; Participate in the professional development of organisational structures and/or pedagogical concepts;
- ▶ Level VI: Lead complex and comprehensive functional areas and/or projects independently and ultimately be responsible; Deal critically and responsibly with actions of colleagues as well as project and working teams; Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals, teams, organisational structures and pedagogical concepts or those of a similar nature.

45. [www.aufzaq.at/english/](http://www.aufzaq.at/english/).

- There are five different content areas:
  - ▶ enable, initiate and promote learning;
  - ▶ support identity development and approaches in coping with everyday life;
  - ▶ enable participation, represent interests;
  - ▶ act and interact consciously and responsibly;
  - ▶ organise and manage (projects).
- For more information see [www.aufzaq.at/english/#english](http://www.aufzaq.at/english/#english).



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers

- ▶ Which of the competences mentioned in the examples do you consider fundamental to your youth work practice?
- ▶ Have you been involved in the process of developing core competences in your youth work reality?
- ▶ How are you working with the core competences and using them for your professional development?
- ▶ Using a set of competences can be useful for different reasons: you can see what you need to be able to do as a youth worker, you can see what you need to learn or further develop and you can also feel stronger in your practice, because it is based on competent interventions.

#### Youth work providers, policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ How do you relate to the examples of different core competences for youth workers?
- ▶ If there are core competences defined in your country/community, how similar are they to aufZAQ? What is different?
- ▶ If not, what could be the process of defining the set of core competences for youth workers?
- ▶ Setting up a set of competences for youth workers is crucial in any process of development related to the training and education of youth workers (competences can provide a basis on which to build learning processes), recognition of youth work practice or professionalisation of youth work.
- ▶ In Europe there are nowadays both European inspiring practices on which you could base your reflection on this set of competences, as well as several countries which have sets of competences.
- ▶ The recommendation highlights the need for the process of setting up competences to be inclusive, involving in all moments paid and volunteer youth workers, and using youth research.

## Education and training pathways of youth workers

— The core competences serve as a base for educational and training pathways of youth workers. The recommendation invites member states to:

*establish frameworks, strategies, programmes and pathways for the education, training, capacity building and professional development of youth workers based on the agreed set of competences.*<sup>46</sup>

— Given the diversity of youth work practices, the routes for entering youth work and becoming a volunteer and/or paid youth worker vary significantly as well from one member state to another.<sup>47</sup> In some member states, there are specific programmes of youth work studies and/or vocational training for youth workers, while in some others youth work could be studied under broader social or educational programmes. In some member states there are publicly funded non-formal learning opportunities for youth workers and in some, non-formal learning opportunities are only funded by external donors, often through different European programmes. In addition, in some of the member states there are clearly identified career paths, which are complemented with on-the-job training and learning, while in others the career paths are not very present. When analysing the possible pathways, we are mostly focusing on three distinct categories:

- ▶ initial vocational education;
- ▶ tertiary/higher education;
- ▶ non-formal learning opportunities.<sup>48</sup>

— There are a number of member states in which higher education is available on youth work or related subjects.

#### Example from the national level: Finland

— In Finland youth work is supported in a diversity of ways, from legislation (since 1972), programmes, professional journals, curricula for training, research, expertise centres for youth work providing information and training, a quality framework for local youth work developed by Finnish municipalities, local descriptions of youth work by local government, social media groups, youth worker associations, to youth work statistics. In the Finnish context, young people are defined as under 29, and youth work mostly includes young people from 15 to 20, as well as more and more young adults.

46. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.12.

47. You can find out more about it in the Report "Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers": <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-meeting-on-researching-educational-and-career-paths-for-youth-workers>.

48. "Diversity of Practice Architectures. On Education and Career Paths for Youth Workers in Europe – An analytical report"; Tomi Kiilakoski, Partnership Between European Commission and Council of Europe (2018).

— Youth work is supported through state support. Municipalities are mainly responsible for youth work and NGOs and parishes also have an important role. Generally, youth work happens in youth centres and youth clubs in municipalities, as well as in, for example, low threshold services for NEETs and online.

— Youth work education has been central to youth work development in Finland and youth worker education is available at different levels of education. In Finland, youth work education is embedded in the social context, in education and youth work policy. The comprehensive education of youth workers began in 1945 in Civic College (later the University of Tampere), where the main subject was “youth education”.

— In Finland there are no official or required qualifications for youth workers. There are several pathways for becoming a youth worker, through formal education (vocational and general) and adult education. In addition, there are non-formal learning opportunities available.

— At vocational level there is, for example, a vocational degree in Education and Instruction/Youth and Community Instructor of 185 ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (3 years)) crédits.

— At universities of applied sciences, different types of degree programme are available, such as the degree in civic activities and youth work, at the end of which one can earn the title of Community Educator, Bachelor of Humanities. Those who hold a bachelor's degree and have at least three years of work experience in the field can apply for the master's degree programme (degree title: Community Educator, Master of Humanities).

— Through general education, at Tampere University there is a Bachelor and a Master of Social Sciences, a possibility to specialise in youth work and youth research. Moreover, a possibility to specialise in youth research as part of doctoral studies became available in 2016. The studies are organised at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, as part of the doctoral programme for social sciences.

— In terms of vocational education, there are significant efforts in different member states and there are a variety of approaches to it.<sup>49</sup> To illustrate this diversity, we have included some examples here, but this is not a comprehensive list.

## A number of further examples from across Europe of higher and vocational education

— England and Wales in the United Kingdom have a comprehensive provision at pre-professional level for youth support workers and there is a clear education path for youth workers from certificate level to master's degree and postgraduate level.

— In Estonia, youth work is taught in the universities of Tallinn and Tartu. In Tallinn, there is a higher degree in youth work and a master's degree in youth work management. In Tartu, there is a higher applied sciences degree in youth work and a degree in leisure-time manager-teacher. These degrees have curricula in accordance with the occupation standard for youth workers.

— Luxembourg provides a three-year course, Educator (*Diplôme d'état d'éducateur*).

— The Netherlands provides vocational training for the “pedagogical staff member in youth care” and “sociocultural worker”.

— In Germany training can be undertaken in vocational schools (*Fachschulen, Fachakademien, Berufsfachschulen, Berufskollegs*) for educator/child care worker (*Erzieher/Erzieherin*) to diploma level, and some faith-based vocational training is also available. Regarding higher education, there is a diploma in social pedagogy at the universities of applied social sciences.

— France provides diplomas (*Carrières sociales option animation sociale et socio-culturelle*) in 14 University Institutes of Technology (*Instituts Universitaires de Technologie*). Certificates of professional aptitude are also accredited by the relevant ministry, with a focus on youth, non-formal learning and sport. National diplomas, outside higher education, are awarded by the state (*diplômes jeunesse et sports*), but the training is mainly provided by third sector organisations (*associations de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire*).

— Portugal provides training for youth “technicians” at Level 4 in some 17 accredited institutions.

— Norway has a four-year course for training children and youth workers (*Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderfag*) comprising two years in upper secondary schools and two years in apprenticeship.

— Sweden has a two-year course for “recreation leader” (*Fritidsledarutbildning*), which is provided by the Swedish folk high schools.

49. Report “Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers”: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-meeting-on-researching-educational-and-career-paths-for-youth-workers>.

— In terms of certified training opportunities for volunteer youth workers, one example stands out and that is Juleica from Germany.

— The German Youth Leader Card (Juleica) is a uniform nationwide ID card for voluntary youth workers. It serves as a legitimisation and as a certificate of qualification. In addition, the Juleica is supposed to signify the social approval of voluntary engagement.



— Juleica was introduced in 1999. It was supposed to revive its predecessor certificate which had been forgotten about in a number of places and to encourage responsible persons of youth policy to implement or upgrade support facilities for voluntary youth leaders.

— Each Juleica holder must have passed a standardised training. This training comprises at least 40 lessons and aims to teach youth group leaders how to deal with children and young people and to enable them to responsibly carry out activities with them. For example, training issues are:

- ▶ defining and forming of groups: recognising and forming group processes, decision-making and participation models, reflection of group situations;
- ▶ supervisory duty, liability, insurance: legal status of child and youth leaders, responsibility (significance and scope of supervisory duty, sexuality and supervisory duty, legal consequences in case of failing supervisory duty), liability and liability limits, insurances, Youth Protection Act;
- ▶ organisation and planning: programme development, programme realisation, management;
- ▶ development processes in childhood and adolescence: psychological, cognitive and social development, physical development, special aspects of personality development;
- ▶ life situation of children and young people: everyday life of children and young people, sociocultural differences, gender-specific socialisation requirements, handling of exemplary fields of experience and problem issues;
- ▶ role and self-conception of child and youth leaders: personality development, leader competency, capacity for teamwork.

— The Juleica not only serves youth group leaders as a proof of entitlement to participants and their parents but also to public authorities and non-governmental institutions (e.g. authorities in the fields of youth, health, culture, information and counselling centres, police, consulates).

— Furthermore, it should also serve as a credential for youth groups and their leaders to make use of various rights and benefits (e.g. release from school lessons for youth leaders, reimbursement of loss of earnings, fare reductions, permission to camp with the group, support in planning and financing offers of youth work, visits to cultural events and leisure facilities, exemption from charges when borrowing media and devices from picture libraries, obtaining materials and services).

— These special rights and benefits are granted by all public and non-governmental institutions who are interested in the promotion of voluntary engagement of youth group leaders.

— The legal basis for the Juleica is an agreement of the Youth Authorities of the Land Governments. This agreement regulates the introduction of a uniform nationwide card for youth leaders and stipulates minimum requirements and some conditions for handing out the Juleica.

— The Juleica may be handed out under the nationally applicable condition that the person:

- ▶ is at least 16 years old;
- ▶ is permanently voluntarily engaged with a youth organisation (youth association, voluntary or public youth services);
- ▶ has completed a training according to the regulations currently in force;
- ▶ holds a valid first aid certification.

— The 16 German states have set further details in their individual respective state regulations. Therefore, the conditions for an application for a Juleica may differ from state to state according to their individual regulations.

— The training is decentralised organised by youth associations and bodies responsible for youth services. The content of the training complies with the guidelines of the individual state regulations. In addition to the training, youth leaders have to complete a first aid course.

— The Juleica is applied for by the youth association for which the youth leader is working or where he/she attended the training. After a successful completion of the training the association fills in an application form which is uniform all over Germany. In a next step the application is approved by the local youth office.

— A nationwide online portal compiles the most important information around the Juleica, offers an exchange forum for Juleica holders, as well as practical tips for working with children and young people and contains a database of privileges for Juleica owners.

— For more information see [www.juleica.de](http://www.juleica.de).



## Spotlight on you!

### Youth workers

- ▶ What kind of formal or non-formal training have you received to do youth work? At the local/national level, but also European (Youth Department of the Council of Europe or SALTO Youth offers or others)?
- ▶ How do you see the link between educational and training opportunities and quality in youth work?

### Youth researchers

- ▶ Have you been involved in mapping of educational and training pathways of youth workers in your reality?
- ▶ Have you considered conducting a study on the needs for an educational and training pathway among the youth workers?

### Youth work training providers

- ▶ How do your offers create a bridge between the needs of youth workers and defined core competences?
- ▶ Have you explored different approaches to training of youth workers at the European level?

### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ What could be possible ways of ensuring different educational and training priorities for youth workers?
- ▶ Have you been involved in exchange of practice with civil servants and youth work providers from other member states?
- ▶ Which of these categories are present in your youth work reality:
  - vocational education for youth workers;
  - tertiary/higher education;
  - non-formal learning opportunities;
  - other forms, mixing some of these with, for example, learning on the job, etc.?
- ▶ From what exists, possible avenues of development can be envisaged, depending on who intends to develop training and education for youth workers and how the general educational system in your context is structured.
- ▶ Developing, for example, a diploma at university for youth workers may be a long and complex process and the lack of a professional standard may lead to dilemmas as to what to focus on first and foremost. Despite this complexity, if the priority is given to having formal education for youth workers, there needs to be a clear roadmap towards that development, starting from the reality of youth work in a given context, moving on to what the final results need to look like and linking also to the professional standard the future youth workers will link to at the end of their studies.
- ▶ There may already be steps in relation to non-formal education of youth workers, mostly led by non-governmental organisations or European entities. A possibility may be to envisage stronger connections between the formal and non-formal sector and include in youth (work) studies a strong youth work practice element.
- ▶ Whichever path this development may take in your context, consider also peer learning with other countries that have already experienced such a process or consider the Council of Europe's assistance to its member states.

## Validation and recognition of youth worker competences

### Member states are invited to:

*establish new, or further develop existing mechanisms for the documentation, validation, certification and recognition of competences, which paid and volunteer youth workers gain through their practice.<sup>50</sup>*

Validation exists to make visible and valued competences developed by youth workers regardless of whether that happened within education and training or during their practice. Validation needs to include both paid and volunteer youth workers. Some steps in the process might vary, given different career paths; nonetheless, all youth workers should be entitled to have their competences validated and recognised. Besides validating youth worker competences outside of education and learning pathways, they also lead to wider recognition of youth work as a profession.

In some of the member states, validation and recognition are co-ordinated on the state or municipal level. In some others, this is "outsourced" to other youth work bodies, such as associations of youth workers, youth councils, training centres, etc.

### Example from the national level: France

In France, associations play a key role in the development of youth work: they can recruit youth workers to organise collective receptions of minors but also to offer socio-educational actions throughout the year to the population of their districts. Some associations or structures of popular education also train those who will work in the field of youth work. These associations, which also serve as training centres, are accredited as "centres for youth and popular education" (JEP) by the ministry in charge of youth. Young people can find the list of organisations authorised to prepare youth work diplomas on the institutional website of the ministry in charge of youth.

The Youth Activity Leaders' Certificate is a certificate that enables the holder to lead activities for groups of children and adolescents on a non-professional, occasional basis at youth centres (such as leisure centres). Every year, the Department of Education, Youth and Sport organises a general BAFA (Youth Activity Leaders' Certificate) training session, in partnership with the Institut de Formation, d'Animation et de Conseil (IFAC) in Nice.<sup>51</sup>

### An example from Flanders, Belgium

Les Scouts and the Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen have developed Scout Leader Skills,<sup>52</sup> a tool which helps their 25 000 volunteer leaders and managers to evaluate the skills they have acquired during their scouting experience,

50. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.12.

51. Country Sheet on Youth Work in France (2018): <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/country-information-youth-work>.

52. <https://scoutleaderskills.lesscouts.be/en/home>.

to better understand them and to determine how best to use them in their personal and professional projects. They can be interpersonal, functional or attitude-related skills. They are what have come to be known as “soft skills”, in contrast with the more theoretical or technical “hard skills”.

— Scout Leader Skills is the answer:

- ▶ to the current situation, in which volunteering and non-formal education are increasingly recognised and soft skills are becoming more valued;
- ▶ to the fact that, as leaders, we are not always aware of the skills we have acquired throughout our volunteer experience; and
- ▶ in particular, to our wish to thank leaders and managers for the 600 hours they spend every year on average to help children and teenagers to realise their full potential, both during their time with the scouts and afterwards.

— Scout Leader Skills is a questionnaire which asks you about leadership situations you have already been through and lets you define your personal profile. This assessment can be a yardstick of personal progress if repeated every year.

— An important step in the validation and recognition of youth worker competences is the process of self-assessment. Self-assessment allows youth workers to understand what is required of them, it contributes to the overall quality of youth work and it creates a clear bridge to validation of their competences, as well as further educational pathways for their development.

— A number of tools and processes for recognition can be found under “Visible Value: Mapping of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European and national levels”.<sup>53</sup>



### Spotlight on you!

#### Youth workers

- ▶ How often do you assess your competences as a youth worker?
- ▶ Do you actively seek for feedback from others (your “employers”, peers, young beneficiaries)?
- ▶ Did you go through the process of validation and recognition of competences? What benefits can you see from this process?

#### Youth work providers

- ▶ Do you include self-assessment and external assessment in your support for youth workers?
- ▶ Did you start/join the debate around validation and recognition of youth workers’ competences in your country/community?

53. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mapping>.

### Youth work training providers

- ▶ What is the place of validation of competences acquired through youth work practice in your training programmes?
- ▶ How can you link your programmes to existing validation and recognition processes at the national and European level?

### Policy makers and civil servants

- ▶ Did you start/join the debate around validation and recognition of youth workers’ competences in your country/community?
- ▶ As many youth workers may have first practised youth work with young people, gaining a lot of experience, and only later joined other formative offers, how could you ensure that the recognition of their status as youth worker takes into account this experience and competences?

## Development of youth work at European level

— Out of all the recommendations, Recommendation 4 is the one most directed towards European youth work development. It includes:

- ▶ supporting the initiative of the Council of Europe’s youth sector to set up an ad hoc high-level taskforce of the relevant stakeholders in youth work in Europe, which can elaborate a mid-term strategy for the knowledge-based development of European youth work, in order to:
  - improve co-ordination of and access to youth work knowledge and resources at European, national, regional and local levels;
  - further support the exchange of youth work practices, peer learning and the creation of sustainable networks and partnerships;
  - stimulate co-operation within the youth sector and among sectors and fields of expertise wherever youth work takes place in order to reinforce ties, in particular between formal education and youth work and between public authorities, the private sector and civil society;
  - strengthen the dialogue between youth work, youth policy and youth research;
  - strengthen the capacity of youth work to respond to the changes and trends in our society and the emerging challenges faced by young people;
  - carry out a mapping exercise on existing education and training (such as vocational training and higher education) and existing systems for validation of competences for paid and volunteer youth workers;
  - develop a range of assistance measures to support member states in taking forward and implementing this recommendation.

— For more information about the taskforce of the Council of Europe on youth work see [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/task-force](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/task-force).

### An example of the taskforce's results

— In one of its meetings in 2018, the high-level task force defined proposals for promoting identity and belonging in the youth work field in Europe. They mentioned:

- ▶ an online platform on youth work in Europe to share information, newsletters, a knowledge database, resources, maps, good practices, creating partnerships, search opportunities;
- ▶ a campaign to promote youth work in Europe or a European youth work week;
- ▶ networks on those involved in promoting youth work in Europe;
- ▶ further recognition of youth work as a field of work for paid and volunteer youth workers;
- ▶ regular European Youth Work Conventions;
- ▶ national fairs, congresses, conventions on youth work as national meetings of the youth worker community of practice;
- ▶ a regular (every two years) European Youth Work Academy for experts in youth work and research;
- ▶ continuous professional development to strengthen quality, competences and ethics of youth work and youth workers, systems for training, mentoring, supervision, coaching, etc.;
- ▶ co-operation at European level with representatives of local and regional authorities, such as the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to strengthen youth work at the local level.

— This recommendation provides a horizon of development activities that are already ongoing at European level or under development. For example, it highlights the role of developing knowledge about youth work, and specifically about the education and training of youth workers. This has been a project undertaken by the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth starting in 2018, which allowed for a country mapping as well as for in-depth analysis of several aspects related to education and training of youth workers.

— For more information, see <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/home>.

— This recommendation also highlights a number of transversal elements needed for the development of youth work, namely the dialogue between youth work, youth policy and youth research, based on the idea that practice, policy and research feed each other, and each of the “corners” of this triangle is meaningful in its own role for the others and for the quality of youth work.

— Moreover, Recommendation 4 focuses on sharing of experience and peer learning, with the support of the so-called assistance measures of the Council of Europe for its member states.

— For more information on the assistance measures, see [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/support](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/support).

### Research as added value

— The recommendation foresees the following in relation to how member states can foster research:

*fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work and their value, impact and merit.<sup>54</sup>*

— In other parts of the recommendation is highlighted the role youth research needs to have for development processes in youth work. Youth researchers, in the recommendation, are seen as important in processes relating to youth work policy. It is highlighted that whenever policies on youth work are being discussed, practitioners, policy makers and researchers need to be involved. A European example in this sense is the EPLM (European Platform for Learning Mobility) which brings together practitioners, policy makers and researchers<sup>55</sup> working together on a specific aspect, learning mobility of young people, and making proposals for how to develop this further in mobility programmes Europe-wide.



### Spotlight on you!

What does research cover in the context of the youth sector? Below are a selection of answers to this question. What would you add?

- ▶ Understanding young people better;
- ▶ Understanding how youth work can support them in their situations;
- ▶ Understanding the reality of young people's needs;
- ▶ Understanding youth workers better and exploring their needs;
- ▶ Understanding the communities in which young people are a part;
- ▶ Understanding societal issues and how these impact on young people;
- ▶ Offering evidence for formulating strategies and action plans for youth work in a given context;
- ▶ Identifying the gaps in relation to youth work, for example groups that have less access to youth work, etc.;
- ▶ Supporting the sustainability of youth work provisions, through the process of analysis of youth work practice;
- ▶ Supporting innovation in youth work.

— In the recommendation, research is indicated as useful for looking at the value of youth work and its impact. These two aspects, value and impact, are still often questioned, either by policy makers or funders. In several countries, the wider public may have little or no understanding about youth work. In this respect, research can be useful, providing evidence of the change youth work brings to young people and the wider society. Research can also help demonstrate the impact of youth work, for example by analysing the skills young people have developed in youth work, or the long term changes youth work brought to their lives.

54. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.8.

55. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/european-platform-on-learning-mobility>.

— Advocates for youth work may find in youth research an ally for advocating support for youth work. Research can offer arguments for these claims for support.

— There are a number of research examples that work at the European level:

- ▶ through the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, there is the Pool of European Youth Researchers.<sup>56</sup> This body represents an initiative for evidence-based policy making in the field of youth, pulling on expertise from both the European Union and the Council of Europe;
- ▶ there is also RAY,<sup>57</sup> which stands for “Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme”. RAY produces evidence to better understand the processes and outcomes of youth work. The main aim of RAY is to promote international youth work and youth learning mobility in a way that is understandable and accessible. Its primary focus is to contribute to evidence-based policy development in the youth sector and as an outcome of that to see developments in youth work.

#### Example from the national level: Finland<sup>58</sup>

— The Finnish Youth Research Network produces multi-disciplinary research information and participates in discussion in society, offering perspectives for practical work with young people and for the fields of administration and politics. They have a particular focus, addressing topical phenomena that concern young people. Their research covers topics that are familiar to and acknowledged by society as well as themes that are ignored or marginal.

#### Example from the national level: Luxembourg<sup>59</sup>

— The “Youth Research” group in Luxembourg investigates the situation of young people from an interdisciplinary perspective with a multi-methodological approach. The research activities encompass topics such as school-to-work transition, social engagement, citizenship, migration, leisure activities and identity. The research projects have an academic and international orientation, and are strongly connected to the national context of youth policy and practice. One concern of the group is to maintain an ongoing connection between policy and youth work.

— Besides the research activities, the main tasks of the group consist of documentation, evaluation, and consulting. They are co-funded in part by the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth.

— These examples and the recommendation itself point out an important aspect relating to youth research policies: whenever youth research is absent, policy makers have a responsibility to support it. From the two examples from Finland and Luxembourg, we can also highlight that having platforms of youth researchers dedicated to youth matters or to youth work can be a useful approach in making sure that there exist communities of researchers that can co-ordinate in relation to how best to contribute to the youth field. This implies going beyond only ad hoc research on youth work, to having communities and groups of researchers.



#### Spotlight on you!

- ▶ Are you aware of any research relating to youth work in your context? Who carries it out?
- ▶ How do you use youth research in your advocacy for youth work?
- ▶ What could be some of the themes or aspects of youth work in your context on which there should be more research?

### Evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work

— The recommendation specifically explains that evaluation is needed for continuous development in quality and to be able to measure outcomes and impact:

*supporting the development of appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work and by reinforcing the dissemination, recognition and impact of the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio in the member States.<sup>60</sup>*

— Evaluation can be useful for a number of reasons:

- ▶ showcasing the impact that youth work has for young people and communities;
- ▶ showcasing how youth work can be worth supporting towards policy makers and funders;
- ▶ as a learning exercise, in order to improve the quality of youth work.

56. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/peyr>.

57. [www.researchyouth.eu/](http://www.researchyouth.eu/).

58. [www.youthresearch.fi/research](http://www.youthresearch.fi/research).

59. [www.en.uni.lu/recherche/flshase/inside/research\\_domains/youth\\_research\\_context\\_and\\_structures\\_of\\_growing\\_up](http://www.en.uni.lu/recherche/flshase/inside/research_domains/youth_research_context_and_structures_of_growing_up).

60. Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4, p.8.



## Methods and approaches to evaluating the impact of youth work

— There are many ways of evaluating the work being done and to measure the impact. For example, one approach is based on identifying stories and good practices. Stories and examples not only inform us of what has happened, they also inform us about how an impact was made, they describe the approach of the youth worker, the activity and the organisation.

### An example from the European level<sup>61</sup>

— For example, the publication “Working with Young People: the value of youth work in the European Union”<sup>62</sup> shows that there are three main areas where young people benefit from taking part in youth work activities in the medium to long term – meaning not turning up for just one workshop or youth club session but taking part over several weeks and or months. It states that young people:

- ▶ develop certain skills and competences;
- ▶ strengthen their network and their social capital;
- ▶ change certain behaviours.

### Example from the national level: Luxembourg

— In Luxembourg, the quality standards of the youth centres are supervised by the National Youth Service through a review of the documents (concept, the logbook and activity reports) and interviews with the educational staff (once a year). The interviews address the concept, the specific objectives and the priorities of the youth centre. The results form the evidence base for deducing strengths and challenges. Besides this internal evaluation, there is also an external evaluation to assess the entire programme.

### Example from the national level: Estonia

— In Estonia, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Youth Work Centre monitor and co-ordinate the youth work field at the national level. The ministry and other respective authorities commission independent evaluation research of youth work activities and use the results to improve them. At the local level, local municipalities use youth work quality evaluation systems to assess and improve provision of youth work service.

### Examples from the European level

— The following examples use an approach based on good practices and individual stories of young people:

- ▶ Practices of Human Rights Education with and by young people:<sup>63</sup> examples of Human Rights Education in practice through youth work, you can explore the different examples through a series of key words. Each of these examples has a short chapter on the impact of the youth work taking place;
- ▶ Roma Youth Participation:<sup>64</sup> projects all over Europe exploring the work of Roma youth organisations and the impact they are having through youth work with a specific focus on participation. Each example shares its outcomes.

### Example from the national level: the United Kingdom

— In the UK, the youth worker network In Defence of Youth Work produced a publication titled “This is Youth Work – Stories from Practice”. Each story shares specific examples of how the life of a young person has been impacted and in what way.

— Another approach to evaluation relates to using research and quantitative as well as qualitative evidence. These can provide a deeper understanding of impact, perhaps at a larger scale in a given context, than individual stories of young people. What follows are examples of different types of evaluation in relation to the development of youth work:

- ▶ **Quality Youth Work: A common framework for the further development of youth work. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States**<sup>65</sup>

61. “Working with Young People: the value of youth work in the European Union”, p.140: Coburn (2011), “Building social and cultural capital through learning about equality in youth work” in *Journal of Youth Studies* vol. 14, no. 4, June 2011, pp 475-91.

62. [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf).

63. <https://goo.gl/LDhdUJ>.

64. [www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/roma-youth-participation-in-action](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/roma-youth-participation-in-action).

65. [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf).



## Spotlight on you!

— This report explores the concept of quality development in youth work and how to develop it. It looks at what indicators are and how to develop them in order to measure the impact and outcomes of the work: “The function of indicators is to be points of reference in relation to which reality can be compared, analysed and assessed.”<sup>66</sup> The publication goes on to describe that as a result of using indicators there can be developments in quality tools and quality systems for the implementation of youth work;

► **Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union**<sup>67</sup>

— “Although youth work has greater recognition and visibility today in comparison to the past, there is still much to be done as there is a need to recognise youth work for the contribution and value it has in the lives of young people.”<sup>68</sup> The study drew on different sources of youth work related literature, the writers mapped different national contexts of youth work, consulted various stakeholders, and analysed existing good practice. This particular study highlights the competences that young people can gain as a result of youth work (previously mentioned in this publication). It looks at how such studies feed back into youth policy development, especially in areas such as education and training opportunities for young people, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, volunteering, social inclusion, and young people and youth mobility;

► **Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education Manual**<sup>69</sup>

— This manual was developed by the European Youth Forum as a support tool for the implementation of the framework for quality assurance in non-formal education.<sup>70</sup> The manual explores eight steps for developing quality youth work projects in the context of non-formal education:

1. Preparation
2. Kick-off meeting
3. Developing and shaping indicators
4. Feedback on indicators
5. The event
6. Report
7. Feedback meeting
8. Reflection and eventual changes within the organisation

### Youth workers

- How do you evaluate the impact and outcomes of your work? What benefits does evaluation bring about?
- Is that something that you have adopted as a regular routine or when demanded by your manager or, for example, funders?

### Youth work providers

- How do you include research or evaluation reports to inform your strategic vision and action plans for youth work?
- Do you have a strategy for evaluating impact and outcomes of youth work?
- For youth workers and youth work providers, evaluation could be a useful exercise, both in terms of learning and development (what we are good at, what we need to improve). Evaluation needs indicators and in the field of youth work, just like in other fields, the way in which indicators are defined may lead to very different results. In the field of youth work, given the centrality of the young person, indicators could focus on what young people learn from youth work and the contributions youth work makes.

### Youth researchers

- Are you involved in evaluating the impact and outcomes of youth work in your reality?
- Do you connect with researchers in other member states, share experience and perhaps undertake common initiatives? Is there a platform for regular exchange with researchers in your youth work reality?
- You could check the work of the EPLM – European Platform for Learning Mobility, which brings together practitioners, policy makers and researchers.<sup>71</sup>

### Policy makers and civil servants

- How do you demonstrate the impact and outcomes of youth work provisions in your reality?
- Do you join forces with other youth work stakeholders in order to measure impact in a strategic and ongoing basis?
- What types of indicators are youth work providers supposed to report on, if they receive support from public funding? How are these indicators set?

66. “Quality Youth Work: A common framework for the further development of youth work”. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, p.25.

67. [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf).

68. “Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union”, p.5.

69. [https://issuu.com/yomag/docs/nfeqa\\_manual\\_single](https://issuu.com/yomag/docs/nfeqa_manual_single).

70. “Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education. A framework for youth organisations”, p.6.

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