

Hmmm... continuing work on recognition? What for?

by the Coyote editorial team

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At the very end of the symposium in November 2011 we asked the representatives of the institutions involved, as well as a few other participants, why we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning. The following participants gave their messages to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process.

RUI GOMES

Council of Europe Youth Department



Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

The symposium is an important milestone, but it is not the end of the process. In fact, it helps us review the next milestones we'll try to reach and how to get there. So, in many ways, the work that should start after the symposium is extremely important for us. We'll take it seriously and give full relevance to what the participants expressed and proposed, and to which they committed themselves. I think the institutions and the Council of Europe also have to do their part, and that's what we would like to do.

What would be your message to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process?

Recognition is extremely important for youth work and youth workers. Obviously social recognition of youth work is also extremely important for us, because it is the acknowledgement of youth work and youth policy as a relevant area of public policy. Nonetheless, no matter how important recognition is, I think the most important aspect is the quality of the work we do with young people, in addition to how we continue with or without institutional responses to recognition. Those institutional responses will support what youth workers and youth organisations do, but the value of what they do is independent of institutional recognition. And that should be very clear.

RITA BERGSTEIN

SALTO Training and Co-operation Resource Centre



Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

Why work for better recognition? You are joking! I have the impression that we have only started to crawl. Someone in the symposium compared the recognition developments at the European level to a baby. At national level we seem to be just going into labour! So there is a lot to do, a lot to discuss, a lot to recognise, a lot to train, in order for the baby to become a grown-up. A grown-up who recognises learning and competences gained in whatever context (formal, non-formal and informal).

What would be your message to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process?

Challenge yourself and contribute to recognising youth work! It is not an easy task to see where the youth worker's place is in the recognition debates and how to deal with that. But it is worth thinking about how to recognise the work I am doing and how I can promote this further – either in a political way in my community or on an individual basis by supporting young people's development.

KATRINE KORSGAARD

European Youth Forum



Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

Because we have already come a long way and the symposium proves that there are many different stakeholders that take non-formal education and learning very seriously and see youth and youth organisations as the main providers of non-formal education. In the European Youth Forum our wish is to have non-formal education recognised at the same level as formal education. So they are complementary somehow; you can see education as holistic, with both non-formal education and formal education backing each other up.

What would be your message to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process?

(laughter) Continue working, ensure the quality of your work and have fun while you do it!

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There is a need for further recognition for youth work and non-formal learning, in particular beyond the youth sector itself. Young people gain valuable skills through their involvement in youth organisations, youth initiatives and other kinds of youth work at the local level. Gaining recognition for these skills is particularly important for young people with fewer opportunities, who may struggle in school or have maybe dropped out of the formal education system altogether. Recognition of these non-formal skills will raise their self-esteem and may help them get a job in the future.

It is very important that follow-up is linked with the EU process on validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, through an upcoming Council recommendation on this topic in 2012. We must avoid parallel processes that don't work together.

What would be your message to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process?

I would again stress that the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning is particularly important for young people with fewer opportunities. Youth organisations are an important arena for non-formal skills training, and have therefore a special responsibility to be open and inclusive. It is good to know that there are many organisations and youth workers out there that focus on exactly this.

FINN YRJÄR DENSTAD European Commission



Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

I think there are still a lot of things to be done. We have achieved a lot in the last six or seven years, but many things remain to be done, especially when it comes to political recognition of youth work and social recognition in the society at large. Therefore I think we have to continue our efforts.

What would be your message to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process?

One message would be that youth workers should be proud of the work that they do and be more self-confident about the relevance of that work. It is part of the process that in recognising the things we do, we can also tell those outside the youth field about what we do and the impact and the value that it has.

AGNE KVIRKIENE

Youth in Action National Agency, Lithuania

Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

Those who use non-formal education recognise its value, but very often those who make decisions are not aware of its impact. We still face challenges in proving the importance of non-formal education in the context of lifelong learning. We still need to work towards validation of competence assessment tools.

That's why, during the forthcoming Lithuanian EU Presidency, we are considering including recognition of competences gained through non-formal learning and volunteering as one of the main priorities in the youth field.

What would be your message to youth workers and youth organisations involved in this process?

Those people who work in non-formal learning should continue believing in what they are doing. They should recognise the value of their outcomes themselves, and try to find ways to gain support from others.



MARAM HASSAN ANBAR Freelance trainer

Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

One part of the recognition issue is knowing where we stand and what we have accomplished. So, definitely, if some things are already recognised, then you know where you stand and what your next steps should be. Recognition is also important because with youth work there are people involved with different target groups. For some target groups, especially young people at risk or with disadvantaged backgrounds, some sort of recognition that would support their learning process and help them to find a way to reach their goals, whichever direction they would like to go, might be useful because they don't always go through the formal paths of school, or a youth club or anything like that. So, that would be partially why some recognition is needed.



OZGEHAN SENYUVA Pool of European Youth Researchers

Why do we still need to work on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning? What for?

Although we have hope for increased self- and social recognition, political and formal recognition need further development and also need to be budgeted. There are many other programmes going on and other work that is recognised at formal and political levels. Sometimes youth work does not get what it deserves.

