

RECOGNITION APP!

n°18

Coyote

JUNE 2012

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HELP:01

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



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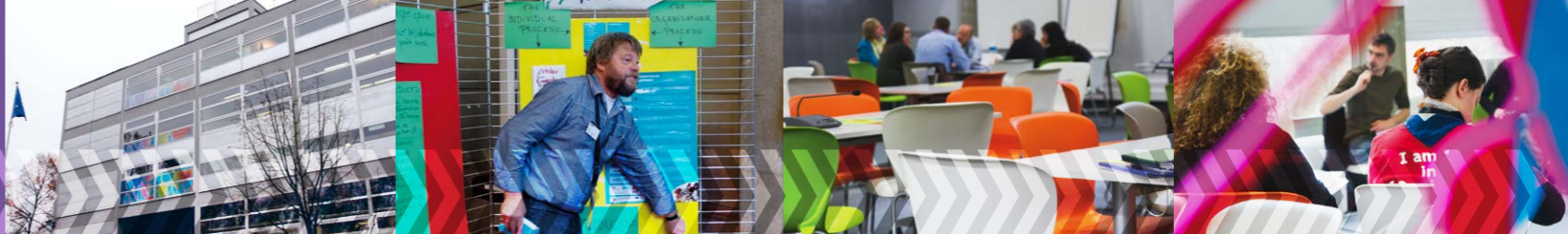
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Other portraits provided by the authors.



Edito

by Mark Taylor

On behalf of the *Coyote* editorial team

Hello readers!

If you look in the mirror, what do you see? What do you identify as being important? If others look into it too, does that change your perception? With this *Coyote* we introduce the *Recognition App* – a metaphor based on those little programs on your phone – which may help to get into the world of recognising non-formal learning in youth work.

Coyote has been raising lots of questions in recent issues and this time we encouraged our authors to formulate some answers, to dare to look into the future and illustrate where all this effort across Europe may lead us.

At the same time as we were choosing the different angles to explore for this issue, planning began for the symposium on “Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning in the youth field” to be held at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, so it seemed clear that the issues tackled there would form the backbone of our considerations here. You will find some great articles drawn from symposium participants and inputs that informed discussions. Even more information and conclusions from the symposium can be found here:
<http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>



Recognition – we have found – is as much about process as it is about product, so this issue also includes hints and tips and ideas amongst many others for:

- 🔗 setting up your own recognition strategy
- 🔗 improving ways to enrich self-assessment
- 🔗 getting into the job market and seeing youth work as a profession
- 🔗 combining the best of formal and non-formal education approaches
- 🔗 judging what have been the effects of the introduction of the Youthpass process and certificate
- 🔗 challenging ourselves to use the results of research.

Added to all that, we also get to look at new challenges in non-formal education and ask ourselves how babies could be involved in activities – a rich tapestry!

For the next *Coyote*, we shall be spreading the net even wider and attempting to answer the question: “What’s going on?”

Getting to the end of producing this edition has been quite an adventure, with lots of “ups” and “downs” along the way. We hope it has been worth it and that you find something to recognise as you go through the mirror!

Corrections

Some of the quotes in the article in *Coyote* 17 on “Volunteering in the revolutions” should have been attributed to Hatem Hassan and not to Taymour Senbel – our apologies to both concerned.



Viii! Very important inspiring inputs!

by Tarek Amraoui

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and Tatevik Margaryan

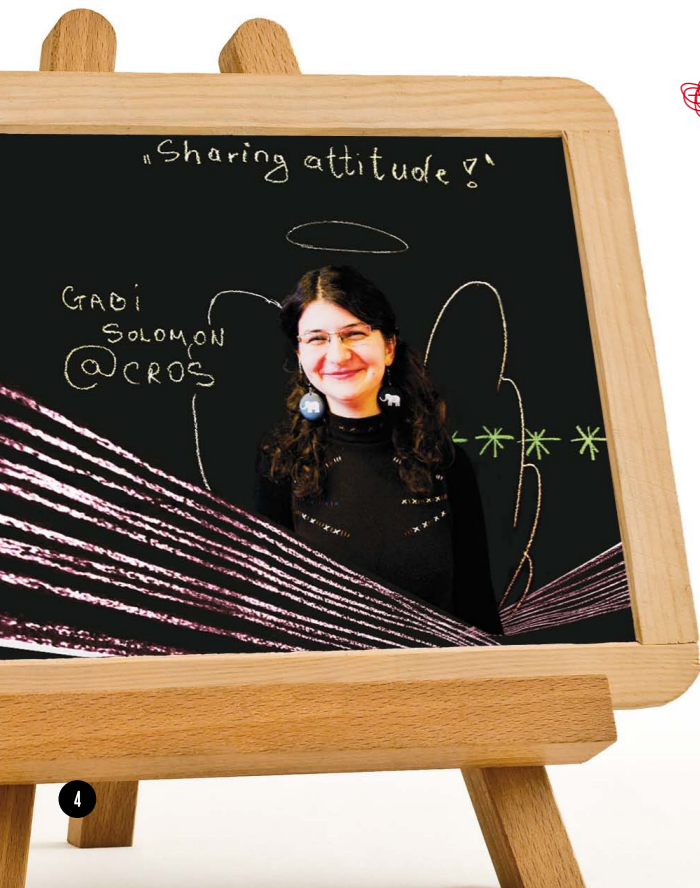
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Sometimes recognition starts with self-recognition, with our own appreciation of the value of our work and the impact non-formal learning has had on us and those around us. In the symposium, three exciting people were asked to share their Viii (very important inspiring inputs) about non-formal learning and youth work's impact on their life paths. You will find below some highlights from their stories.

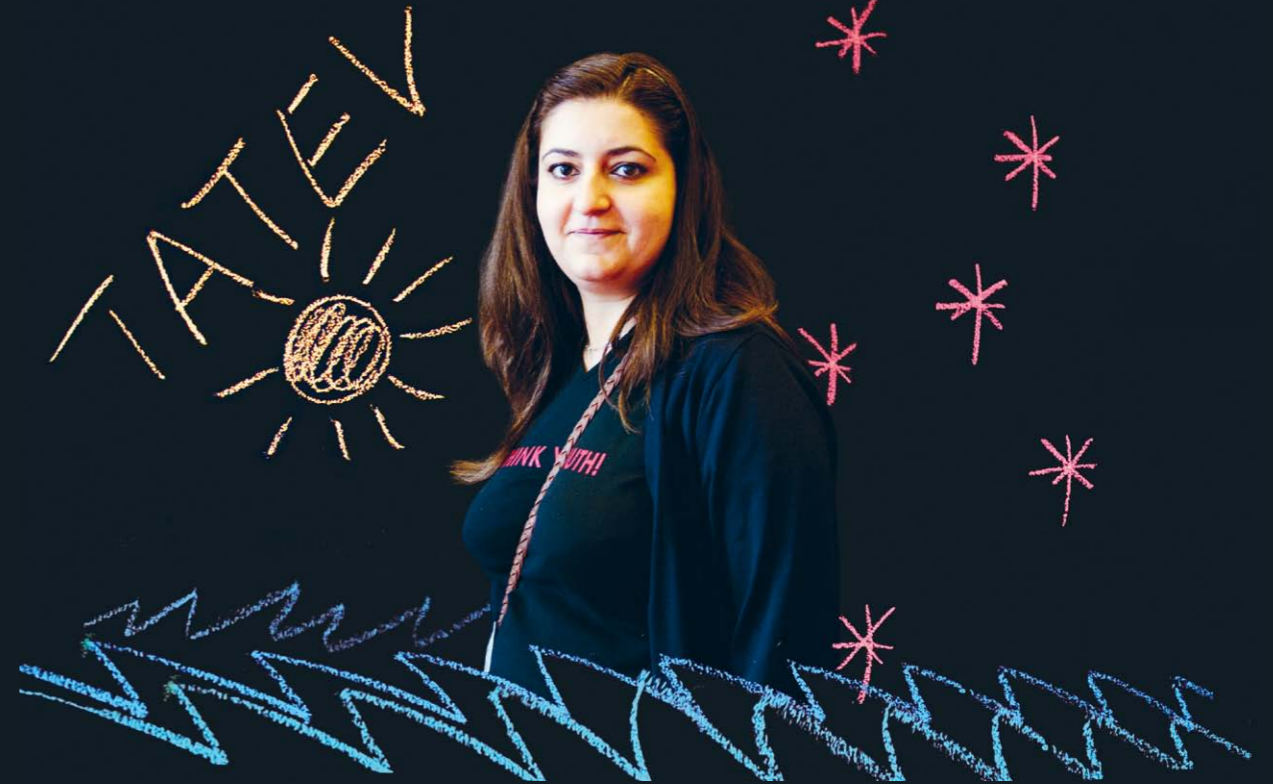


GABRIELA SOLOMON

Centrul de Resurse pentru Organizatii Studentesti (CROS)

Ten years ago, I started a youth project to prove to my parents that beautiful things are possible in Romania. It changed the way I understood reality; it gave me self-confidence and the possibility to meet other young people who are as passionate about education as I am.

Today, the alternative model of higher education that we are piloting at CROS (Centre for Resources for Student NGOs) combines the best of the non-formal and formal education worlds. We want to have a holistic approach to education and to train young people so that they are capable of living happy and fulfilled lives while discovering their talent and passions.



TATEVIK MARGARYAN

Freelance trainer

My involvement in non-formal education has certainly had a tremendous impact on me and the young people I work with. But this impact was multiplied and spread also to other people around me, first of all to my family. There was always evidence of this, however I really realised it after one of my projects when I arrived home and told my parents that I was going to marry an Egyptian Muslim. To understand the level of shock that my parents would experience, one should know that for an Armenian any Muslim is associated with the genocide. So it was very surprising for me that the first reaction of my father was that he was surprised I first mentioned religion and nationality to present this person! I was ready to marry an Egyptian and move to Egypt. And here again, I could not just live calmly in my comfort zone and decided I had to get to know the culture by living with my mother-in-law. And you know what? My everyday life is a process of intercultural learning and daily communication. I experience what

I teach as a trainer. And as my mother-in-law was also an indirect beneficiary of the work that my husband was doing (he is also active in the youth field), we have managed to build a relationship that makes me believe that intercultural dialogue is exactly what we have.

The last story in this frame happened just a week ago, when my mother-in-law wanted to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca but could not find an airplane ticket. She was very disappointed and was speaking with my mom about it. The next day, my mother-in-law got the call that there was a ticket for her. The same evening, when my mom called, I told her the news, but she proudly said that she was sure about it since she had been to church to pray for my mother-in-law to be able to do her pilgrimage. I started to laugh as it sounded so funny that a Christian prayed for a Muslim to go on the Hajj. But now I think that this is the inter-religious harmony that I would like to see for the whole society.

»»» Uiii! Very important inspiring inputs!



TAREK AMRAOUI
Euro-Arab Long-term Training Course, participant

I was born in France and my roots are Moroccan. I met with lots of difficulties in my life, for example I was always fighting with people when I was confronted with racism. A lot of my friends are in jail or in a bad situation because they didn't find their path. I've done a lot of bad things because I was angry, with lots of hatred inside me. Why hatred? You know, in France it's difficult for "French" people like us to succeed. For a long time I had an identity crisis. It was due to the fact that you have to choose between your French and Moroccan sides, but I could not! Today if someone asks me: "Do you feel French or Arab?", my answer is: "I am the two sides, and I have two cultures." It's like asking me to choose between my mom and my dad and that's impossible. Today I believe my double culture is more of an asset than a handicap and I am proud of it.

In terms of the impact of non-formal learning and youth work on my career, currently I am taking part in a long-term training course organised by the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States. In this context, I am developing a project that aims at working with young people who have fewer opportunities. Our goal is to enhance young people's awareness and involvement as citizens in civil society. This project is important for me because I'm from the same social environment as the young people who are targeted by this project. My goal is to defend and promote young people with fewer opportunities and migrant backgrounds. This intervention is dedicated to them!

INPUT



From Pathways to Pathways 2.0

by Hanjo Schild

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I don't think that I'm going too far when I say that the strategic discussions on recognition of non-formal learning and of youth work in Europe in the last six to seven years were very much influenced by two documents:

- "Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field" of February 2004 and
- "Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe" of January 2011.

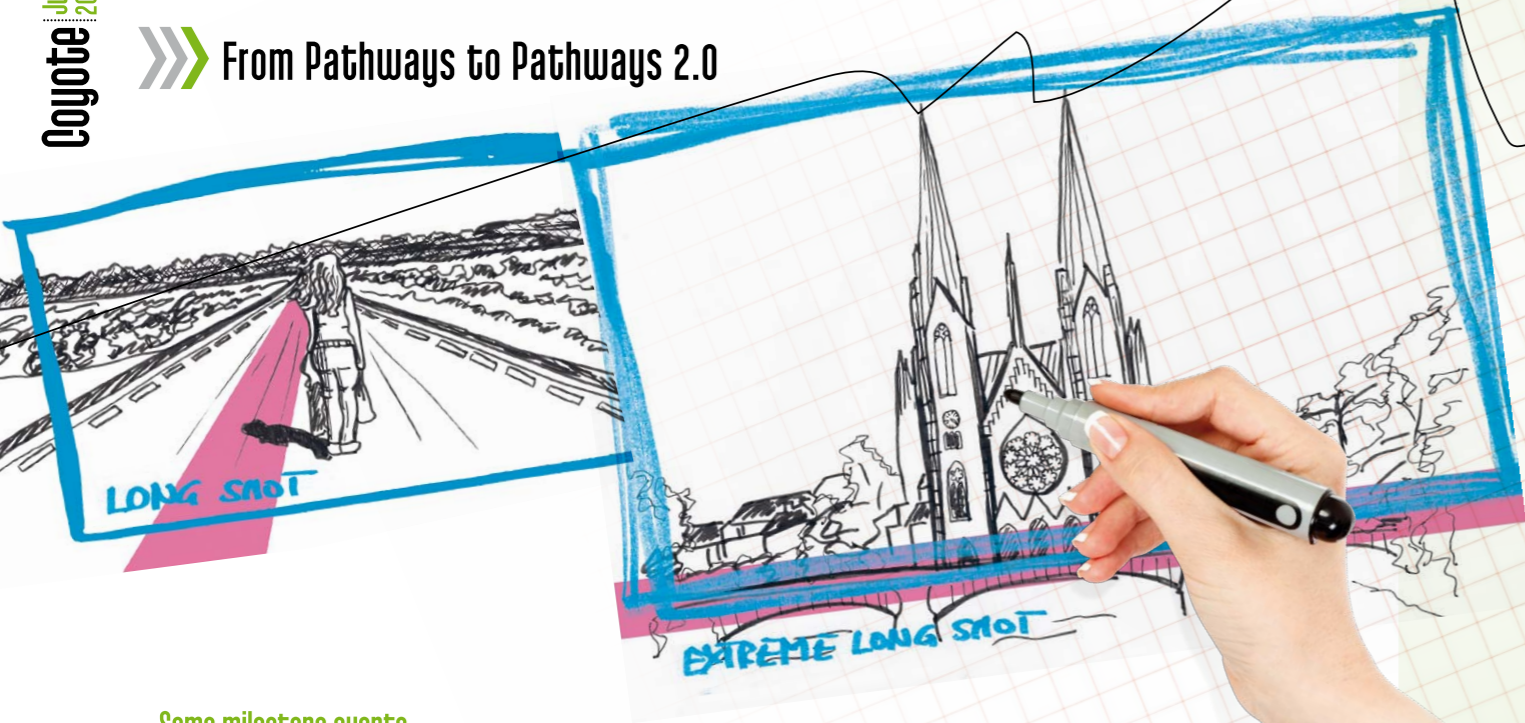
These working papers were not part of official institutional strategies but they were edited and published by the directorates responsible for youth in the European Commission and the Council of Europe respectively and the partnership between both institutions. The SALTO Training and Co-operation Resource Centre of the European Union's Youth in Action Programme and the European Youth Forum were also invited to be members of the editorial group of the second paper.

Since the publication of the first paper one can talk about a "pathways" process consisting of milestones that bring the discussion on recognition of non-formal learning in youth work forward. Coyote published a first reflection on this process in May 2006, under the title "Milestones for formal and social recognition of non-formal and informal learning in youth work".

In the framework of this article it is impossible to provide a detailed and chronological list of all the relevant activities, events, instruments and tools, or of political or other documents, which have stimulated and promoted the discussion on recognition. Instead I will focus on a few key events, political processes and decisions.



From Pathways to Pathways 2.0



Some milestone events

Out of many events focusing on recognition that were organised by various stakeholders in recent years, four were of particular relevance in terms of their contribution to the political process and the quality of reflection:

The first symposium on non-formal learning in 2000 at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, organised by the Directorate for Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe; it gathered together for the first time researchers, trainers, youth organisations and policy makers from the youth field to develop a common understanding of non-formal learning and define a strategy for implementation of a work programme in this field.

The “Bridges for recognition” conference in 2005 in Leuven, organised by the SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre, which brought together a wide range of practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders from the fields of youth work, formal and non-formal education and the labour market – this was the first event that looked beyond youth work, involving and facilitating the creation of strategic partnerships with other sectors in which non-formal and informal learning take place.¹

“Continue the pathways towards recognition...” 2008 in Prague, this event, organised by the Czech authorities, aimed at deepening the reflection and renewing the impetus in discussions and in political strategies to improve the social, political and formal recognition of non-formal learning, education and training in youth work activities. It also hoped to launch a political process, we called it the Prague Process, similar to those in vocational education and training or in higher education, but it did not really fly.

The 1st European Youth Work Convention, 2010 in Ghent, under the Belgian EU Presidency, made visible the various characteristics, needs, strengths and contributions of youth work to society. It looked beyond non-formal learning as a youth work practice to the various disciplines of youth work, facilitated dialogue among them and contributed largely to the social and political dimension of the recognition agenda. Thanks to the convention, youth work was placed high on the European political agenda; it contributed strongly to a conceptual discussion on youth work, its impact and value for society and individuals.

Some milestones in European political processes and decisions

Again, only a few political documents that have been published since the debates on non-formal learning started in the late 1990s can be mentioned here – those comprising key messages outlining the political priorities of two institutions, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, in relation to recognition of non-formal learning and youth work.

In the statements of Council of Europe bodies, non-formal learning through youth work activities is seen as complementary to formal education in the field of lifelong learning. Non-formal learning and youth work play a crucial role in promoting the core values of the Council of Europe and enhancing active democratic citizenship, voluntary engagement and social inclusion.

Consequently the statements ask for a two-fold strategy:

1. recognising, politically and socially, non-formal learning in youth work and making it a significant element of national youth policies;
2. developing effective quality standards and tools for the formal recognition of non-formal education.

The European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers, developed in 2006-07, is a – one could say – milestone/tool. It helps in describing experiences and competences that are relevant in non-formal settings via self-assessment and feedback and is adaptable to users’ needs and realities. A recent political document, “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020”



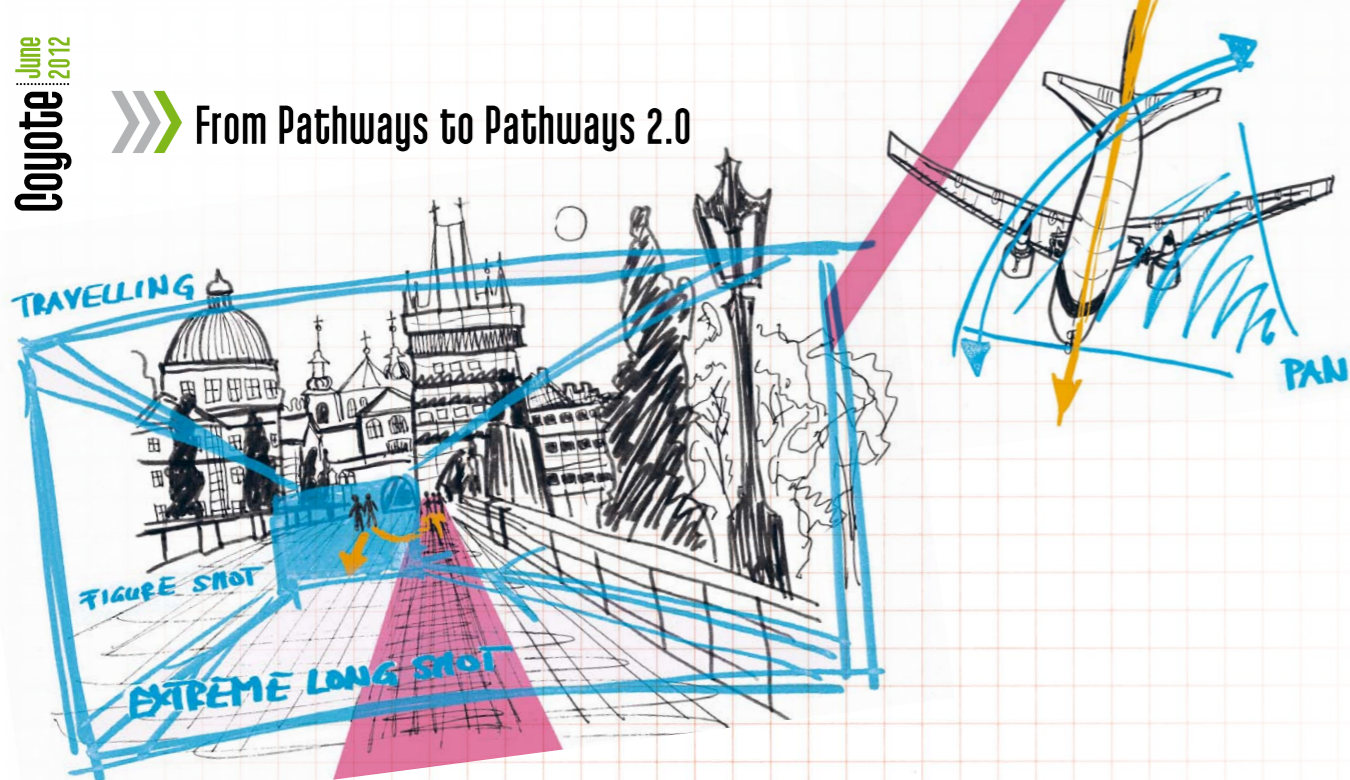
re-confirms that non-formal learning plays a crucial role for social inclusion by ensuring young people’s access to education, training, working life and social rights. Thus the promotion and recognition of non-formal learning should be at the core of priorities and activities.

Outside the youth field, the Committee of Ministers adopted in 2010 the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights. It acknowledges the important role of non-formal education in providing each individual with the opportunity of democratic citizenship and human rights education. It also highlights the positive role that NGOs play in this respect in promoting democracy, social inclusion and human rights.

In the European Union, recognition of non-formal and informal learning has played a prominent role since the 2001 launch of the White Paper “A new impetus for European youth”, in terms of policy development, tools and practice. It argues for a greater recognition of non-formal and informal learning and in particular greater complementarities with formal education and training. This policy was confirmed in 2006 with the Council Resolution on the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field, aimed at facilitating the understanding of what young people learn through non-formal learning. It encourages the development of comparable and transparent youth-specific tools which could be linked to those in the formal education and training field, such as Europass.



From Pathways to Pathways 2.0



Such a tool, Youthpass, was developed in 2005. It can be considered to be a tool for certifying participation in all Youth in Action activities, and the relevant SALTO centre is now exploring possibilities for its use beyond the programme. The Youthpass is a real milestone in terms of concrete tools for formal recognition, validation and certification.

Since 2001, when theAs regards the political agenda in the European Union today, the “Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field – investing and empowering (2010-2018)” calls for supporting non-formal learning by developing its quality and recognising its outcomes, complementarity with formal education and contribution to lifelong learning. The strategy to bring non-formal learning in youth work closer to the agenda of lifelong learning is even more evident in the “Youth on the Move” flagship initiative within the Europe 2020 Strategy; it proposes non-formal and informal learning as a way to expand life-enhancing learning for young people with fewer opportunities and/or at risk of social exclusion, and advocates for strengthening its recognition and validation.

The Council Resolution on youth work of November 2010 has a wider perspective: non-formal learning is an important, but not the only, discipline of youth work and competences developed through,

broadly defined, youth work need to be sufficiently valued and effectively recognised. It aims at enhancing the quality of youth work, the capacity and competences of youth workers and the recognition of non-formal learning in youth work. It advocates for further development of user-friendly tools for (self-)assessment of learners and documentation of competences of youth workers and youth leaders.

Since 2001, when the lifelong learning strategy was launched, the youth field has contributed to and profited from processes that were set up by the education and training sector in the European Union (and beyond), including the development of European instruments that promote quality, transparency of qualifications, mobility in learning and implementation of effective measures to validate learning outcomes, which are crucial for building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The future Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, expected in 2012, will take into account the challenges expressed by experts and stakeholders, such as guidance and information, reliability of instruments and trust of stakeholders. It will certainly give the subject of recognition a new dynamic and will be the next milestone.



Milestones in practice of youth work: quality development and support structures

Quality development and quality assurance of youth work and non-formal learning are at the heart of many youth work projects at European, national, regional and local levels. They are essential to building trust in youth work and its capacity to foster development of key competences.

In particular, the work of the Council of Europe in the field of youth was from the very beginning focused on the empowerment and capacity building of multipliers, youth leaders and trainers. The two European Youth Centres support this approach and a set of quality standards for education and training was developed for this purpose.

Specific training courses and long-term training for trainers organised by the Council of Europe, the network of the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme and SALTO resource centres, the European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership, the European Youth Forum and many youth NGOs must be mentioned here. Additionally, the European Youth Forum has been developing a strategy on quality assurance for non-formal learning, aimed at the adoption of a quality charter. At European level, youth work would not function without funding and support structures.

As regards the Council of Europe, the European Youth Foundation offers support to youth projects that empower young people and build the capacity of youth.

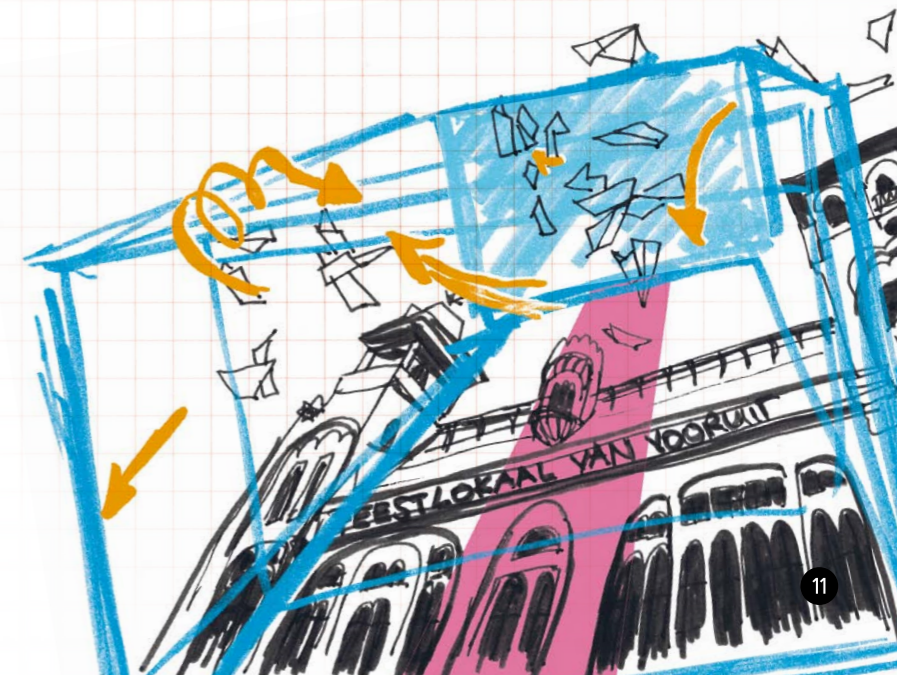
In the European Union and beyond, the Youth in Action Programme plays an extraordinary role in promoting youth work, its value and its recognition, socially, politically and formally. The national agencies and eight SALTO resource centres are key in that they allow this process to be as close as possible to stakeholders and beneficiaries and ensure good results, in particular at the national level. The interim evaluation of the programme in April 2011 drew very positive conclusions with regard to its relevance, added value, effectiveness and efficiency, in particular in terms of non-formal learning experiences. In this respect the programme must be seen as more than a milestone, it is a meadow where thousands of flowers blossom.

It is a challenge to safeguard the milestones identified here and to develop them further, as expressed in the symposium on recognition, as well as to provide youth work the space and the reputation that it deserves, in partnership on an equal footing with other sectors.

Reference:

1. For the report on Bridges, see:
<http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/bridges/Bridges2005/BridgesForRecognition/>

And for the recent key event also organised by the Resource Centre, Bridges to Work, in October 2011 in Antwerp a report will be available soon.





Finding your *own* recognition adventure

by Darko Markovic

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*An organisation from Greece is doing research on the value of youth non-formal education...
an organisation from Germany is developing a tool for making visible competences that are gained in cultural activities...
an organisation from Serbia wants to register youth workers in a national qualifications framework...
an organisation from the Netherlands is looking for ways to include learning outcomes from volunteering in the Europass...
They all found their own recognition adventure.
They all have set their own recognition goals and took action.
What about you?*

Perhaps you are doing a great job with your non-formal learning activities, but they are not valued by other institutions or you might be providing youth work that is not understood by your community. Perhaps you would simply like to help young people become more employable through participation in non-formal education. Yes, you feel the need for better recognition of what you do, but you might be wondering how to find it. If this is your case, this article will provide you with some useful guidelines for the process of setting up your own recognition strategy.

Before entering into strategic thinking, it is important to know that there are different forms of recognition: formal, political, social and self-recognition (as outlined in the "Pathways 2.0" article) and some of these might be more relevant for you than others. Think for a moment about what types of recognition you are looking for.

The recognition of non-formal learning and youth work is usually a long-term process and requires a strategy that is adapted to your own reality as well as a lot of persistence and flexibility on the way. If there is a will, there is a way!



Here are the 7 steps of how to set up your own recognition strategy:

1. Know your context

Do some research on the status of youth work and non-formal education in your community and country. This will help you make informed decisions and choose the best possible ways to work on recognition in your context. You might consider the following questions:

- What is the status of youth work in your community/country?
- Are there any laws on youth and/or youth work in your country?
- Are there any strategies dealing with youth and any national, regional or local policies dealing with "non-formal education" or "non-formal learning"?
- Is there any co-operation between the formal education sector (schools) and youth workers?
- Is there any connection between youth work and the employment sector?
- Are there any national, regional or local mechanisms and tools for recognition of learning outcomes (for example knowledge, skills and attitudes) of a youth activity?
- Finally, to what extent are youth workers themselves (including yourself) aware of the "educational value" of youth work?

2. Set your vision on recognition

Dreaming is the first step on the way to identifying the aims of your strategy. Our suggestion is to dream and dream out loud.

- ... allow yourself to dream and create...keep yourself from saying "yes, but"...
- ... enter the world of possibilities...feel free to imagine...
- ... in 10-15 years time...
- ... when youth work and non-formal education have received their recognition...
- ...What do you see?



There You Go

» Finding your *own* recognition adventure



3. Choose your recognition adventure

There is no way to recognition: recognition is the way! Indeed there is no given or ready-made road to recognition, it is a rather a path made while walking. This usually implies a long-term process that starts with selecting what you would like to have recognised, how and by whom. In other words, it is rather about finding your own recognition adventure that best fits the needs of your working context. While making your way, you will need to think about what aspects of youth work (“objects”) you would like to have recognised, and possible recognition mechanisms (from more social to more formal ones).

For example, you may wish to focus on the recognition of the educational value of youth work, on how non-formal learning is perceived by other stakeholders in your community and on the better visibility of competences acquired by young people participating in your activities. In this scenario, you may wish to work on “stakeholder understanding” of what youth work and non-formal learning are about; to establish links and start a dialogue with local formal education institutions, the employment sector or local governments. At the same time, you may wish to establish a tool for self-recognition of competences acquired by young people (such as a tool based on self-assessment). Finally, you could work on better visibility of these competences and benefits of participation in youth work through promotional films or even a simple research project. The scenario described above is outlined by the **blue** lines in the exercise.

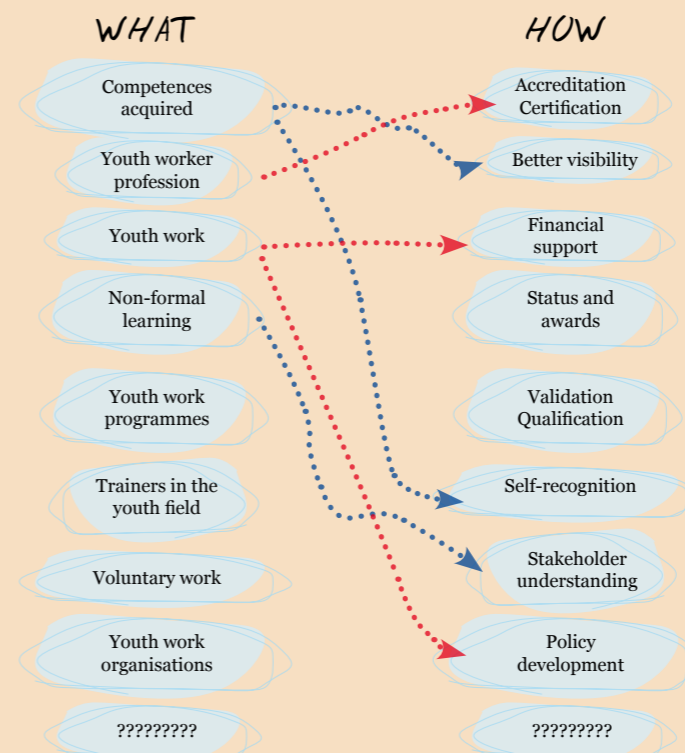
Another example could be that you wish to focus on the status of youth work and youth workers in your context. If you choose this road, you may wish to fight for better formal recognition of the profession of youth worker (through accreditation of professional youth workers and recognition of the occupational profile by national authorities), as well as advocate for the development of relevant policies (for example a strategy on youth work in your region or country). Eventually, this should also lead to more available funds for youth work activities from the local, regional or national authorities. This scenario is described by the **red** lines in the exercise.



What will your adventure be?

Exercise: Recognition objects and mechanisms

What is your way to recognition? Draw lines connecting WHAT you would like to have better recognised (on the left) with HOW you want it to be recognised (on the right).



4. Get to know the policies

Working on better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning is advocacy work that often aims at changes in relevant policies and formal decisions as well as establishing of new mechanisms. As for all other advocacy initiatives, it is not enough to form partnerships on the way; you also have to have sound knowledge and understanding of relevant policies that can strengthen your position. Understanding of policies of other sectors may help you in finding a “common language” and establish inter-sectoral partnerships at local and national levels.

For more information about European-level developments related to recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning in the field of youth, visit: www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/recognition/

5. Create partnerships

A partnership can be defined as a relationship between individuals or groups that is characterised by mutual co-operation and responsibility for the achievement of a specified goal. Depending on the type and scope of recognition you are advocating for, there can be a whole list of stakeholders that have a common interest in your goal and/or in your recognition process. For example, if you are advocating for social recognition of youth work, families, friends, civil society organisations, funders and the media could be some of your stakeholders. In the case of formal and/or political recognition, schools, universities, political parties, employers and vision setters could be on your list of stakeholders. For self-recognition, your stakeholders could be peers, educators, coaches and/or your colleagues.

In practical terms, while setting up your recognition strategy, it is crucial to identify the stakeholders involved and to ask some of them to become partners or involved with a network.

6. Plan for change

It has been said that a poor plan is one that only lists the actions that should be taken; although poor, it is still a plan. A better plan is one that also identifies who does which action. An even better plan is one that lists the actions to be taken, identifies who does which action and also puts all of this into a time frame. Still the best plan is one that has all the above-mentioned elements with a good sense of flexibility.

No matter how it is organised, your recognition plan should involve the activities, the people in charge and the timing of the activity planned.

7. Act, monitor and adapt!

Take the actions according to the plan, monitor its results and be ready to adapt your strategy on the way. Be prepared for a long journey and remain open to learning along the way.

Good luck!

YOUR OWN
RECOGNITION
ADVENTURE



Finding your *own* recognition adventure

Bonus inspiration:

42 activity ideas for your recognition strategy

During the "Let's train: recognition of non-formal learning and youth work" training course which took place in November 2010 in Milocer, Montenegro, we asked the following question to a group of youth workers/leaders from different regions: western Europe, the Mediterranean, South-East Europe, eastern Europe and the Caucasus regions.

What are the top 42 activity ideas for recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning?

42 IDEAS FOR RECOGNITION

1. A publication about non-formal education/learning in your language
2. Collect and publish stories about non-formal education/learning
3. Research about non-formal learning in youth work
4. A video project about the value of youth work and non-formal education/learning
5. Make an inventory of youth work and non-formal education/learning providers
6. A seminar for various stakeholders about non-formal education/learning
7. Translate relevant policies and documents
8. Write an article in an education/youth magazine
9. A gallery of famous youth workers
10. A computer game for young people
11. Public debate (for secondary schools)
12. Youth worker awards
13. An Internet platform
14. A list of employers that recognise non-formal learning
15. A common Facebook page for youth work events

**BONUS
INSPI-
RATION**

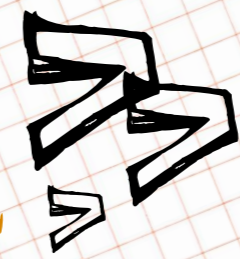


IDEAS (CONTINUED)

16. To have awesome training (like this one) for teachers
17. E-learning programmes about non-formal learning
18. A camp for kids of influential people
19. To live it and implement it myself
20. T-shirts with "I love non-formal education" on them for school kids
21. Festival of youth work/invite groups
22. TV and radio programmes
23. A film about different experiences of non-formal learning in Europe
24. Regular reports for web, TV, radio, adult or parental audience
25. Street action, flash mobs, circle in the street
26. Info points about youth work and non-formal education
27. An online network of students and volunteers to inform about non-formal education
28. A living library in universities and secondary schools
29. Slogans on stickers
30. Street art

42 IDEAS (... A BIT MORE)

31. A non-formal education fair
32. Concerts/theatre... about formal and non-formal education
33. Workshops for parents
34. Pressure on stakeholders
35. Billboards as road signs to non-formal education
36. A manual to libraries for teaching
37. Advocacy for strategy on non-formal education/learning
38. A campaign about youth work and non-formal education
39. Training for human resources managers about non-formal education
40. Training for people from education departments
41. A quest for non-formal education or treasure hunt
42. An energy drink "feel young, go non-formal"



Processing the "Strasbourg Process"

An interview by Darko Markovic

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and Manfred von Hebel

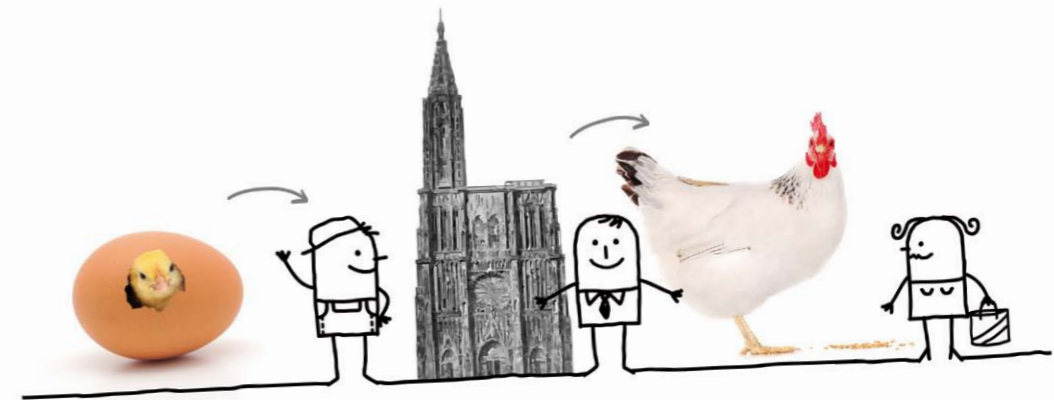
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Close to the end of the symposium on "Recognition of youth and non-formal learning" (Strasbourg, November 2011), the Coyote team interviewed Jan and Manfred who were both involved in the working group on political recognition. They share with the readers of Coyote their views about where to go with recognition of youth work and non-formal learning after the symposium, what the "Strasbourg Process" is and what could be possible follow-up activities at European and national levels.

Q: If you imagine the situation of recognition of youth work and non-formal learning in 2020, what would be the best-case and worst-case scenarios?

Jan: The best-case scenario in my opinion is that all the member states, but also all the states that signed the Cultural Convention, recognise that youth work and non-formal learning are important for the strengthening of democracy in all countries, but this is utopian. However, we are on the way. For example, the symposium is a good initiative to bring people together from different backgrounds and different countries and to take stock of what we have done. Let's hope that in every country we are doing the same exercise, setting up small symposia with different stakeholders: workers, employers, trade unions, social workers, civil society, etc. Today, as Hanjo (Schild) said in the opening session: "There are efforts, but not everybody is convinced." I am not pessimistic; it takes 10 years to introduce one idea! I can prove this with the case of youth work. I have background in youth work and I am convinced of its value. Still, in the White Paper on Youth you couldn't find the words youth work. There was non-formal learning which was linked to education, but it was not a priority. But 10 years later, after hammering the same nail, the Commission mentioned "youth work" for the first time in an official text when they announced the new Youth Strategy. And then it was easier for the Belgium Presidency to pick up this concept and to organise a convention and draft a resolution, and now there is no turning back. But it is not enough to work at just the European level; we have to do it also at the national level.



The worst scenario would be that European institutions become disinterested, but this would be kind of suicidal. I believe that even if we are not working on that, youth workers by themselves will prove its value every day, every weekend, by what they are doing. There will be always initiatives by volunteers and when society does not pay enough attention to recognition, the volunteers will re-invent it. So, I am not so pessimistic.

Manfred: Well, 2020 is not so far away when it comes to development of education systems because it is a very difficult process to change the system and change the minds of the people within this system. In this regard, we have already made some progress and when I look at the best scenario it would be that the overall understanding of non-formal learning and its recognition would increase. That means it should start with each individual being involved in non-formal learning activities that raise her or his awareness of potential learning outcomes. It is also something that challenges youth organisations to increase awareness of the important learning that goes on in their activities. But we also need a stronger, closer relationship and greater understanding in the labour market and in the formal education system. If this can be reached, if recognition could develop at individual, political and social levels, that would be a good scenario and something that we all can wish for. A bad scenario would be if we would keep the systems separate, a bit as they are now, because that would not help any of the actors.

Q: With regards to recognition, where are we heading now? What are the aims now for recognition after the symposium?

Jan: We have to define that together. In the opening plenary session, I said that it is very good to call it the Strasbourg Process. That means we expect commitments from the main stakeholders to have a legal text developed by the Steering Committee and Joint Council and adopted by the Committee

of Ministers, so that there is political backing. We need a core group to lead and guide the Strasbourg Process and guarantee that all the actions from the action plan are taken seriously and implemented. I like the model of "Statement – Action plan – Strasbourg Process – Legal text". I suggested also in the working group that in the EU youth report there is a chapter that defines the new topics that we as member states will ask the Commission to make priorities. We also need our own programme, Youth in Action, as our vehicle, and not Erasmus. We also need to take all the countries on board, because this is the tool we can use at the grassroots level as well.

Manfred: It was very important to have this symposium to take stock of developments, because we have had quite dynamic developments since the first "Pathways" paper in 2004. We have had developments in youth policy, in lifelong learning and there is an overall increase in attention that is dedicated to non-formal learning. But now we have to make these developments sustainable, put some life into them, spread the message and bring people together. So, the symposium was a very important milestone in these developments and now we have to see how to proceed. There are also very interesting developments in Germany and we see that this European debate on non-formal learning is really having an impact on the national development we have in Germany. We have very close co-operation between the Youth Ministry and the *Bundesländer*, which is not very easy in Germany, but they decided to co-operate in the field of non-formal learning. We can see that there is a European impact and European knowledge coming into this process and this is something I could imagine happening in other countries. And it is already happening, for example in the Czech Republic and others and there are many examples at the level of youth organisations. The task that we have at the European level is to observe these developments and create platforms for exchange, for further developments, for intellectual discussions, and to maintain contact with formal education.



Processing the "Strasbourg Process"

Q: What are the main challenges that we should deal with on the way?

Jan: We should not make the issue of recognition too complicated. It's not so complicated because youth work is the value and is valuable. We just have to recognise this. Those who have experienced youth work themselves know this. It might be difficult to describe, but it could be very important for one's personal development as a human being.

The other thing is when discussions are focused on citizenship and democracy, or nowadays on the labour market, then it becomes very complicated. Then you need some kind of standardisation or standards. When we are presenting ourselves in front of an employer, we know how to explain what we have learnt, like in schools, and what we know, but we are not used to presenting what we have done concretely. This is valuable for an employer to know what you have done in your life, what your contribution has been. We have to help young people to be architects of their own learning; nobody can oblige us to learn something. I think, in our education system, it's good that youth workers are kind of a mirror for young people, enabling them to know what their contribution was to the success of the project.

We need to keep youth work on the agenda because it is not obvious. It becomes obvious when London burns, or when Paris burns or when there are huge problems with the police in Brussels and Antwerp. Then youth is on the agenda, when we are focused on a problem.

Manfred: There are challenges on different levels, as we outlined in the symposium statement. It covers most of the things that we can see as challenges, but also as problems. One important thing is that we continue at European level with close co-operation between education and training on one hand and youth policy on the other hand. It is absolutely necessary that there is a close contact, mutual understanding and concrete co-operation for the upcoming Council recommendation. It is important to have a strong youth programme. We need the support of a strong programme to maintain policy co-operation. At a more practical level, it is necessary to create mutual understanding and a common language between different actors. We have to find ways to communicate and understand each other. And that would be an important step forward in terms of knowing more about non-formal learning, what it is able to achieve and how to recognise it.

Q: What should be the first few steps after the symposium?

Jan: First we have to establish the core group for the Strasbourg Process, then we have to inform everyone systematically: the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe in March, but also at the Directorate Generals' meeting in Denmark in April, the Committee of Ministers, the Committee of the Regions, the Parliamentary Assembly, Members of the European Parliament, the EU economic and social committee. We need to inform them of the outcomes of the symposium, our questions, our action plan and the support we need from them. And I think that we have to set up a dialogue with the trade unions at European level, with employers, but also with the educational system and the social system. We need to tell them what the Strasbourg Process is and what are the needs, expectations and concerns of youth workers, youth experts and youth policy civil servants. I like the term "Strasbourg Process". Everybody knows the Bologna Process, the Copenhagen Process, even outside the European Union. Why not the Strasbourg Process? It is a strong symbol, a strong message.

Manfred: Together with the statement, an action plan has been drafted by the participants of the symposium. It includes an enormous amount of different ideas on how to continue. Now the task will be to check all these proposals and prioritise them and make progress on some of the actions. There are many different levels: at political level, create working groups and coming together with different stakeholders, but also at the youth organisations level to start developments on understanding and awareness, maybe also further development of tools like the Youthpass and revision of the portfolio for youth workers. I am very positive that when we meet at the beginning of next year, we will be able to make an action plan that is very comprehensive, but also realistic.

Q: What is your message to youth organisations and youth workers involved in the process?

Jan: Never give up! It is a long way, it is not easy, but it is so valuable. It takes time to convince others who don't know about what we are doing during voluntary activities or youth work activities. Even in a couple, when one is in youth work

and the other isn't, it is difficult to explain to your partner why you are spending so much time doing it. I hope he or she would never give up the relationship, but it takes time. Also for your family, for your neighbours, it takes time to understand it. And we can't explain it very well... we are playing, having fun and meetings. My message is that it might take time, but don't give up! And one day you will see...

Manfred: The message, which is also for me, is that we are seeing a very positive development in youth work. We have never had such an awareness and general recognition of youth work at European level, due to European co-operation and the focus that has been put on the issue of youth work. So, we should really be aware of this and that it gives a lot of support to the work that is done in youth work. We should use this impulse; we should use this energy and this attention to show that there is very valuable and successful work in youth work, and very high levels of learning outcomes in terms of skills and competences. We should use the power in the debate at the moment for our personal and professional development.





Mirroring views from outside

by Darko Markovic
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When discussing recognition of non-formal learning and youth work within the youth field, very often we are too hermetic, with our own in-group dilemmas, challenges and implicit agreements. Therefore, it was very valuable to have several people at the symposium who could provide an outside view of what was happening during the event.



PHILIPP KLAUS
English literature and psychology teacher at Summerhill School, England

I came here as a complete outsider; it was strange and I had to learn a whole new vocabulary. It was a very steep learning curve to begin with and I feel I can now contribute more to the discussions than when we started on the second day. There are lots of things that I have learnt, one of the main things was the process that democratic schools are going through at the moment, where they are trying to lobby the European Democratic Education Community (EUDEC) council. We are facing the same changes in terms of recognition and in terms of non-formal learning, because democratic education is all about non-formal or even informal learning that happens and should be recognised. And in fact it should be equally important as all the academic learning happening in the classroom.

The focus is very important. We must keep the focus on helping individuals lead their lives in a successful and happy way, successful not only in an economic way, but so that they are content with what they do. And that does not depend solely on having the right job. There is so much outside of work that makes it worth being a human being. It is sort of a word of caution to not let the idea of employability influence the practice or influence all the good things that are happening, and not to forget all the potential novel approaches to life and novel ideas that come out of youth work or informal settings. It is also quite important to recognise education as being political, with its political side and its side of rebellion. If larger institutions, politics or the economy get involved, then suddenly it is more difficult to rebel or contribute to an area of dissent.



MIRROR, MIRROR



JEAN-PHILIPPE RESTOUEIX
Council of Europe Higher Education and Research Department

Considering the symposium from the perspective of higher education and my own background, there are several points that need to be further reflected and worked on. First, when we were speaking about recognition during the symposium, there were always these two elements: recognition of youth work itself and recognition of the non-formal learning/education process that goes through youth work and youth NGOs. These two issues are not exactly the same because you can have recognition in terms of the social and political impact of youth work which is different from the question of how an individual can have recognition of his or her learning outcomes from a non-formal education process be recognised in society. These are some things that need to be more clearly separated as such.

On the point of political recognition of youth work, I would say clearly that youth organisations and youth workers don't need to feel as if they are obliged to defend themselves all the time. Because, I believe, in a society with all the democratic challenges that we currently have, it is quite enough for youth workers and youth NGOs to say: "We exist and we play a role in democratic citizenship." *Punkt and basta*. There is no need to argue about this. This role is important for democracy, without even having to negotiate.

With regards to individual recognition of the learning outcomes for different purposes, there needs to be a dialogue between higher education institutions and youth work and youth organisations. Because when it comes to formal recognition,

whether I like it or not, in our society universities alone give formal recognition. So, if you want such formal recognition, you have to enter the dialogue on assessment and recognition, on the learning outcomes and on non-formal education processes. Another thing is that there could be a reflection on the contribution of a number of elements that are common to formal and non-formal education approaches. Here non-formal education can really share very important concepts such as learner-centredness, learning outcomes, soft competencies... where youth workers can say: "We have the experience. We know what we are talking about!" I am quite sure that even higher education institutions would have an interest in this. At the same time, youth workers should always keep in mind that recognition is mostly for young people to be better equipped and to have more tools to be able to build their own lives. Otherwise, the risk exists even for youth organisations to run into over-professionalisation and a technocratic approach to their own work. And then they will be lost, because there is no interest if youth organisations and youth workers see themselves only as providers and if youth organisations' validity will only be proved by helping young people to be better employed. In this case, this role should be played by state youth workers and youth institutions. We wouldn't need youth organisations anymore, because the role of youth organisations in a global, social and cultural framework is to be a space for freedom and self-development, where the human being should be at the centre. If youth organisations give up this, they do not need to exist.

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!

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

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

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 KVIRKLIENE

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.



Does recognition lead to jobs?

by Pieter Jan (PJ) Uyttersprot
ekilibro@gmail.com

This is not a scientifically researched article but just a bundle of thoughts and reflections based on my personal experience and stories of friends and colleagues that I have spoken with on the topic.

I also only speak about the youth work field and more specifically my experience refers to Belgian and French realities, where I have worked as a trainer in European non-formal education training programmes.

As a person with quite diverse experience in different forms of youth work, but without a diploma in youth work, I have depended on the recognition of my non-formal training as well as my work and voluntary experience.

I do have the impression that work experience is quite well recognised in youth work, but when we talk about non-formal training it is not at all the same, probably because it is not yet very well known.

My experience showed me that the situation is already very different in Belgium and France, so I can imagine that it is very country specific. In the case of my two countries, differences exist mostly in the legal systems for children and the protection of young people, which make it possible or not to recognise non-formal education or experience.

In France, there are many more rules and laws concerning youth work, so youth workers are required to be more skilled in these rules, while in Belgium there is, in my opinion, greater trust in volunteers and youth work in general so they can also trust more in people. I also feel that the government does not have the urge to go and control everything, which makes youth work more youth centred and spontaneous. I believe that there should be laws and rules, but over-regulating has not done a lot of good for youth work in France.



I recently read a Belgian article about what employers find important on a CV and one of the highest-ranked items was experience in youth work (such as Scouting) because they assume you have a set of social skills, organisational skills and leadership skills.

In France, the system is different and recognition is present in society as people appreciate the work done, but when it comes to finding a job the system only accepts people with a certain level of certification.

At the moment I have managed to create my job as a freelancer, because I didn't find a fixed job in an existing structure. Recognition was not enough. It seems to be enough for working for a short time on projects, but when it comes to sustainable work it's a different story.

So for example, I can give training to youth workers and teach at the university (never with a fixed contract) but I cannot do the work my students will do in the future.

Both in Belgium and France, there are systems that can give you a diploma based on experience, which makes me believe that the system is slowly moving in a positive direction and this also means that society recognises that school isn't everything! BUT this doesn't mean that they recognise non-formal education, they speak about experience.

The whole question of recognition is also very complicated; we want to be treated on equal ground with the formal system, which is in my opinion very tricky as you

have to compare a centuries-old accepted learning system with something as new and under development as the non-formal training system.

In non-formal training we need to be well aware about what we can and what we cannot do. I strongly believe that both formal and non-formal education systems have strong points and are also not suitable for everything. So we need to co-operate better and learn from each other and not feed into the competition as this would result in all of us losing and making all our good efforts from the past pointless.

I think that one of the main factors of the lack of, or not enough, recognition is the fact that even though youth work uses non-formal education and learning, the framework of youth work is not at all loyal to the principles of non-formal education. I mean that youth work is like most other fields that are part of the larger labour market and therefore it also has a hierarchy to be followed, not always centred around young people, and often not really participative. So these beautiful principles are often forgotten because youth work organisations also need to answer to institutions, systems, laws and so on which make it difficult to hire or give a place to someone who is "not-qualified".

As a result of this I have seen on several occasions that associations or others play it safe and will choose someone who has the formal education certification instead of the person who does not.

» Does recognition lead to jobs?

When looking at the future, I am as well a bit worried when I see some of the trends that are happening around me.

For many reasons I see a lot of subventions being cut. Financial means for youth work are less and less which means that there are fewer and fewer jobs for youth workers.

Because of this, youth workers are often doing less and less actual youth work and are instead spending a lot of time looking for subventions and writing applications and reports instead of being with young people.

This is, in my eyes, a scary evolution because if the job description changes in a more administrative direction it also means that people with higher education are supposed to have more skills in researching and writing than people who do not have this certification, so I do not see the future as very bright.

This also leads to a system of jobs based on projects without any long-term vision, thus a continuation of reacting to problems and not working with a vision of prevention, anticipation and long-term solutions. We end up with fewer and fewer jobs and people with more and more precarious jobs.

A last contradiction I would like to point out because of my experience with international youth work is that both the Council of Europe and the European Commission are promoting the recognition of non-formal education but I have never seen a permanent job opportunity within these institutions where experience or the fact of having participated in training courses is enough to apply! They do not have youth workers working for them, but I think a good example should also be given, and not only asked of member states.

So at all levels we should do what we say and not only say what we would like others to do!

To conclude, youth work is for me an integral part of society and it should have the place it deserves. Only if we manage to get and keep it there, can we go further towards having it recognised for its strengths. So I strongly believe that we need to keep on fighting, as we are doing. However, we might need to rethink our strategy because I often feel that the message does not come across. I like to compare it to how society looks at young people and says: "Yes, you are important. Yes, you are the future... but when it comes to budget decision making we will still decide for you because we know what is best." In the adult world, youth workers are the young people!

I strongly believe that recognition can and should lead to jobs, but in order to get there we need to have those jobs and we need to ensure that youth work stays youth work and keep on saying what we say even if no one likes to hear it.



Deciphering recognition

by Athanasios Krezios (Sakis)

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Political recognition of non-formal education and learning seems to be going well at the European level. Documents and instruments are in place, as are systems and procedures. Nevertheless, the process of recognition was not meant to test the capacity of European institutions to organise, but to help young people to develop their personalities, active citizenship and employment prospects. The thoughts that are laid out here reflect my practical experience as a youth worker and trainer but also as a thinking (and thoughtful) individual.



1 How much recognition do we want?

There are jokes from across the globe that involve three people from different countries; you know them, don't you? They are rather global and admittedly, along with laughter, they use stereotypes and exaggerations. The quality of this article won't increase if I tell any so I'll skip them for now! However, they give me an idea about how to start!

Think: You have reached the age of retirement as a youth worker. You have dedicated yourself to recognition of non-formal education and learning. In your last flight, on your way to be awarded by the "High Commission on Recognition", the plane's engines fail and the pilot needs to land near an island. The hippie in you thinks it's a great idea to stay on that island for the rest of your life! However, in one hour, help will reach you and everybody will be saved. There are three people you have befriended: one is a parent of a young person you know, another one is a politician and the other a businessman. Who would you talk to for this one hour, knowing that you still have one last deed to do for recognition? You can choose only one person... who?



I wish I could hear your answers!

Many non-formal learning and education-based youth projects happen every month and every day! If we agree among us, as practitioners, where we should start (indisputably, we shall reach out to all three "categories" mentioned above at some point, somehow) so that we can have, for example, all projects tuned in such a way that their special character is maintained while parents, businessmen and politicians participate, contribute, or at least become recipients of well-prepared information. Imagine: 1 000 projects in a year; 1 000 or more of these with increased awareness and maybe appreciation! But we need an agreement for that, and dedication.

Or...

We maybe need none of the above! We only need cool, innovative ideas, systematic application and good financial management skills! Stacey (the name is random, the story 100% real) joined the newly formed amateur dance group that was practising in the local youth club when she was 16. It was so interesting for her to streamline her energies into something creative and healthy; something that reinvigorated her "sense of belonging" to a community, a feeling lost during the years of deprivation in her neighbourhood. The group did projects and gave performances. It became known in the neighbourhood and beyond, not only for its aesthetic achievements but also for helping young people to develop initiative, teamwork, leadership and other skills. Stacey is now working at the youth club supporting the group's work and development. Full time. Full stop.

And she is not the only one! Eduard did his European Voluntary Service (EVS) in 2005 in Greece. He had some previous experience in organising

non-formal learning-based youth camps around Barcelona but EVS was the turning point in his life, in all aspects. Returning home after his project, he put a plan together to get involved in youth work and policy, as a way to utilise his "European experience". Now, and for some time, Eduard is: a youth worker for the Municipality of Vilanova i la Geltru, advisor for youth policy for political parties in Catalonia, president of a youth NGO, consultant for organisational management and a great example of how far non-formal education and learning experiences alone can take you!

To all youth work practitioners out there! Get your keyboards warmed up by typing down all those stories you come across. They are so needed!

2 Where are we now?

European institutions have probably never thought of the above riddle or heard Stacey's and Eduard's stories. They have definitely, though, done good work in putting the need for recognition in different documents. All bodies, without exception, of the two major European institutions this magazine is supported by have "papered" recognition! It would take a page just to mention titles, so please have a good look at the "Pathways 2.0"¹ document! I would also point out the Agenda 2020 of the Council of Europe² and the "Renewed frame-work for European cooperation in the youth field, 2010-2018" of the European Union.³ In both, the need to further recognise learning outcomes (and the learning providers) achieved in non-formal education and learning activities is explicitly mentioned and member states are invited to do more and to do better.

A good presentation and analysis of the existing instruments and "state of play" of recognition is available elsewhere in the magazine, so get to that!



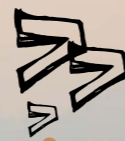
3 Explaining it to others (but, have we agreed among ourselves?)

When in the training room, I avoid speaking about laws! Recognition for participants starts from their own achievements, whether it's something they have learnt from participating in an online community or in a youth initiative. It doesn't take long to realise that a large part of what they know is from processes outside the ones they would automatically think of. These are processes in which they engaged voluntarily, thus supporting the finding that "... it is now well established that learning and compulsion do not mix very well since humans exhibit a much higher learning efficiency when learning is voluntary".⁴ Then, of course, their reflections are brought in line with the existing framework, namely the "8 Key Competences". This can happen with the company of others ("mirrors", "bodies", you name it!) and illustrative examples by the trainers. So, I'd say, the way I have found that works the best is to let participants discover that there is much more in them to be valued and recognised in terms of learning achievements than they thought and then to link this with the existing framework, processes and strategies.

But, how do the others do it? I've been in sessions where discussions were trapped between the concepts of learning and education, and others that were almost promising that jobs would be waiting for Youthpass holders as soon as the training room door was opened. I cannot imagine at the moment how we, practitioners, can manage to be congruent with reality and participants' expectations while in line with each other when introducing recognition and what comes along with it. I can only suggest that our efforts to make participants and the society around us recognise the value of non-formal education and learning should be inspired by the notions of *libido sciendi* (the desire for learning). Curiosity, the desire to understand, know or discover, remains one of the deepest drives in human nature⁵ and we should aim at creating "educable people, well prepared for a life of learning".⁶

Interesting story:

After finishing a presentation on recognition of non-formal education and learning and their impact in social mobility, a high-ranking official of the Council of Europe, full of enthusiasm and positive feelings about his new discovery and with a very good will to understand more, asked me: "Out of 100 youth participating in these activities, how many get a job?" It showed to me, at least, that the more we open up to different audiences, the more prepared we will be with answers and responses.



4 Radical views

From Ivan Illich's *Deschooling society*⁷ to the imaginary scenario depicted in "School's over",⁸ it is evident that learning as we (used to) know it is being challenged. The more society and its actors (including yes, parents, businessmen and politicians) are convinced that there is much to be learned and valued outside the classroom, the more ICTs develop, the more people move around the globe, the more likely it is that institutions of the past will be replaced by action bearing the ideas of sharing, interdependency, symmetry, networking, self-directness and assessment, community, diversity, active participation and learner-centredness. Still, it remains to be seen how much these ideas are shared between people from different disciplines and if learning requires re-thinking from scratch or simply adjustments. The dialogue has already started!

5 Where do we go from here?

For most of us practitioners, it goes without saying that there is more training and more information, more practice and more support, more evaluation and reporting needed.

Some suggestions:

- 👉 **A network of non-formal education and learning practitioners promoting their role as providers of valuable learning.** It should strive to achieve consultative status in decisions related to its field. Such a body is definitely needed both for strengthening the identity of the community of practice but also as a specialised advisor to processes undertaken by policy makers.
- 👉 **The reinforcement of existing work through publications, seminars or online spaces.** No need to reinvent the wheel. There has been a lot of conceptual work and practice and someone needs to tidy up!
- 👉 **Whether it is with parents, businessmen or politicians, keep talking to those with no connection to the field!** After some expected initial frustration it becomes an interesting game!
- 👉 **A documentary film.** Documentaries give a certain credibility to the subjects they explore. It's about time! There has been work in the past from which inspiration can be drawn.⁹
- 👉 **Partnerships!** Start local; connect with authorities, trade unions, employment services or parents' associations. The work of JES (www.jes.be, www.c-sticks.be) can be an inspiration.
- 👉 **Keep doing what you love and keep loving what you do...** and the rest will come naturally.

Pink Floyd's Keep talking kept me company and also inspired the heading of the last section.

1. "Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe", Strasbourg and Brussels, January 2011.
 2. Council of Europe (2008). Agenda 2020, www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/ig_coop/agenda_2020_EN.asp. Date accessed 22 October 2011.
 3. Council of the European Union (2009). Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), OJ 2009/C 311/01, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:311:0001:0011:EN:PDF>. Date accessed 22 October 2011.
 4. OECD, Center for Educational Research and Innovation – Brain and Learning, as quoted in: Miller, R. et al. (2008) *School's over: Learning Spaces in Europe in 2020: An imagining Exercise on the Future of Learning*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the EC.
 5. Faure, E. et al. (1972) *Learning to be – The world of education today and tomorrow*, Paris, Unesco.
 6. Coombs, P. H. (1968) *The world educational crisis – A systems Analysis*, New York, Oxford University Press.
 7. Illich, I. (1971) *Deschooling society*, London, Marion Boyars.
 8. See note 7.
 9. See www.my-learning.gr.





Self ≠ on your own

Self-assessment as a consistent part of a truly learner-centred approach

by Peter Hofmann
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Have you heard about the European Qualification Framework (or EQF) in the jargon of those who know? No? (Not yet – have a quick look here: http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/home_en.htm) Basically it is an attempt to put the presentation skills workshop of a local secondary school and a master's degree in international law into the same reference system – with the desired aim that all over the EU, at some point, all learning outcomes no matter how formal, informal or non-formal their educational context can be attributed with the qualification label "Level..." (1 or 2 or 3... up to Level 8).



I am not mentioning this to argue whether such a framework makes sense or is realistic. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the EQF is comparing learning outcomes and not the content of different educational activities (like when comparing restaurants you do not consider the menu but how you feel once you have eaten something from the menu). This is an aspect the institutional promoters of the EQF consider a very important innovation and do not hesitate to highlight in all their publications about it.

Last year I attended a conference in Brussels on how to include non-formal education into the EQF, or to be precise into the national qualification frameworks. Listening to the presentations – referring to theory as well as practice – I became more and more curious about the "learning-outcomes focus". Who assesses those learning outcomes and how? Naively I asked a presenter from Ireland, where they have a lot of experience with a national qualification framework, if there was self- or external assessment in place. With a slightly puzzled look on her face she replied that there has to be a certain degree of external assessment involved for it to be valid!

There we are – there is increasing acknowledgement that people learn valuable things in all kinds of contexts and forms but exactly what they have learnt we have to tell them; or at least if they know we have to check. In other words there is not sufficient trust in what the learner identifies as his or her learning outcomes.

FRAMEWORK

Why is this so? Well, obviously traditional patterns in formal education have shaped our thinking about learning and its assessment. Where would we end up if everybody just went out into the world declaring what s/he thinks s/he has learnt and is therefore able to do. Shocking! Anarchy! We need to control this! In a university class I am running on lifelong learning, during a discussion about the value of learning acquired outside formal education contexts, a student said: "Well, I understand you can learn soft skills like this but for the real professional qualifications you need formal education to certify your learning – how otherwise would 'clients' know if this person is really qualified?" When I questioned why she was so sure that a person who has a university degree is qualified for a job she argued, "well after so many years of studying..."

Do not get me wrong! I am not lobbying for replacing testing or external assessment in all educational contexts by self-assessment procedures, believing this would solve all our problems. But I do argue that self-assessment of learning outcomes has a huge potential if it is a consistent part of an educational approach which is truly learner-centred and promotes principles of trust and support rather than checking and control. We can trust that each learner knows best what s/he needs to learn – and can effectively pursue his or her learning objectives when supported by peers as well as a mentor.

Let's clarify at this point how we understand the prefix "self-" in this context – before images appear of ego-centric learners doing it all on their own. It is about responsibility – self-assessment in this context refers to the fact that the learner is responsible for identifying (and documenting) his or her learning. Based on the assumption – which has been confirmed to be true many times in the courses we run using this approach – that learning identified through a self-assessment procedure leads to more conscious and consequently more sustainable learning.

"The Self-Perception Inventory (note: this is a self-assessment tool based on a competence profile for trainers) turned out to be a very helpful tool. I filled it out in the 1st seminar and came back to it in the 3rd and it helped me realise my learning achievements, but also the fields that I didn't find important before, but where I now see the need for some improvement. And the other way around: things I found important at the beginning lost their relevance. So, it really showed that learning is not linear and that it depends a lot on where you are at a certain point and that 10 months later, it can change/evolve into something different."

These are the thoughts of a participant of the SALTO course "Training for Trainers for European Youth Projects" (see: www.salto-youth.net/tot).

Self-assessment in such an educational approach has to be evidence based: "What makes you say that you have learnt this?" This evidence would be a combination of self-perceptions and feedback from others in relation to specific experiences that are considered by the learner to be learning moments. Therefore any learning outcome would not be the result of only self-perception.

A truly learner-centred educational approach respects the fact that in any educational activity participants have different starting points (prior knowledge, experiences, competences, etc.) – and when given the chance they develop differentiated learning goals. It is only logical then that the learning outcomes at the end cannot be the same for all participants. How that goes together with a certain level each participant should have reached according to the EQF system, I do not know. This brings us back to an often neglected piece of wisdom that human learning and education cannot – and should not – be forced light-heartedly into standardised schemes especially if appreciation of diversity is an underlying value.

Last but not least, self-assessment of learning outcomes as a consistent part of a truly learner-centred educational approach supports the development of the "learning to learn" competence, which is essential for lifelong learning. The key in this respect cannot be the infinite accumulation of certificates but rather learners who are confident in identifying their learning needs, know how to follow them up, are competent in assessing the outcomes and who belong to a community of autonomous learners supporting each other.

Self-assessment is like painting a picture of your learning where feedback, self-perception, observation, reflection and experience make up the colours.

SELF-PERCEPTION





The role and visibility of youth organisations in recognition

by Sandra Kamilova
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Non-formal education – Why are we talking about youth organisations here? The reason is clear and concrete: youth organisations are the main providers of non-formal education and it would be just illogical to treat them separately from non-formal education topics. Youth organisations should be directly involved in the process of recognition of non-formal education and it is obvious that policies towards non-formal education will lose their role and aim without them.

KEY ROLES OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Youth organisations as providers of non-formal education have several roles and purposes, the most important of which can be summarised as follows:

Role 1: assuring quality

Being the main provider of non-formal education, youth organisations must themselves ensure the quality of the activities they offer. There is no point in recognising something bad, is there? However, it is quite difficult to speak of concrete actions when dealing with such a wide and multilevel concept as “quality”. In its policy paper on non-formal education (NFE), the European Youth Forum provides us with a definition: “The quality of NFE in youth NGOs is the degree to which selected needs of society and of learners are reached and addressed”,¹ upon which youth organisations can build their activities. Quality gives them their reason for existence and being in demand. The recognition of

non-formal education can only be achieved where there is quality.

Role 2: contributing to the policy-making process

Policies of higher education cannot be discussed without universities, as they are one of the most concerned parties and should be treated as such. Therefore it should be considered as normal that questions of recognition of non-formal education are discussed with youth organisations. And youth organisations from their side should assume the responsibility to be active and represent the field with the aim of being treated as serious partners in the policy-making process and making beneficial contributions. Political decisions can't be made based only on theory and observations – practical input from real involvement and experience plays an enormous role here.

Role 3: keeping the discussion going

It is possible that among all the other topics which decision makers are dealing with, the question of non-formal education will not appear to be a high-priority topic where attention and energy are directed. Here is another area where the role and initiative of youth organisations are important: they should maintain the ongoing discussion and involve not only decision makers, but other stakeholders as well. It would be a smart move to put non-formal education into the context of lifelong learning to create a link between different actors. Together it is possible to discuss the question of whether and how different actors within the lifelong learning system can make each other better. Non-formal education fits perfectly in this context.

Role 4: mapping the benefits of non-formal education

Who can really map the benefits of non-formal education better than the main providers themselves? Probably nobody. That is why youth organisations have to show and explain to directly involved participants, as well as to indirectly involved stakeholders, the concrete benefits of non-formal education. It should be clear which skills are acquired with non-formal education programmes and how can they be transferred to other fields, keeping in mind that formal procedures and exams should be kept out of the field of non-formal education. Youth organisations have to play a key role in raising the awareness of society by demonstrating the additional value they create – if they won't, no one is going to do it for them.

VISIBILITY - AIM, TOOL OR RESULT?

“A little bit of everything” would be too easy and too boring an answer here. In terms of the visibility of non-formal education and the process of its recognition, it should be said that visibility alone can't be the aim. The aim in this context, as it was already discussed, is first of all quality, which because of its

importance rises above other possible goals. Taking visibility as an objective before quality is ensured, at least at a minimum level, would make no sense or even hurt youth organisations by drawing attention to their weaknesses. Is visibility a tool? In some sense, but not the only and most direct one as visibility alone won't lead to quality, to recognition and to wider understanding of non-formal education in society.

It should rather be said that visibility is the result of hard efforts made by youth organisations. As it was mentioned before recognition comes with quality, then it can be said that visibility comes with recognition. To achieve this, youth organisations should keep in mind their key roles in the context of non-formal education, and after successfully fulfilling them, the visibility will come.

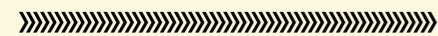
Youth organisations might not have the capability to achieve a high level of visibility on their own, which is why support from different stakeholders is important. So, from one side, policy makers should involve youth organisations in discussions as equal partners so that society as a whole can accept them as serious actors. From the other side, relevant media channels (for example, youth magazines) should not underestimate the contributions of youth organisations but should put them at the top of the agenda.

CONCLUDING NOTE

Recognition of non-formal education is a multi-dimensional process which can find a place within interactions between different actors of society. Among these actors, youth organisations have the main responsibility and their efforts should contribute to fulfilling needs of the society and individuals and helping them to make more conscious choices. Although recognition of non-formal education is quite a young concept and is still in progress, it is already obvious that youth organisations are on their way!

1. European Youth Forum “Policy Paper on Non-Formal Education: A framework for indicating and assuring quality [0009-08]”, adopted by the Council of Members, Extraordinary General Assembly 2-3 May 2008.





Recognition of youth work as a profession

by Nik Paddison

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1.1 Getting ready for the future

Youth work, a strange and often diverse something that many of us do all over Europe – and as well the world! I recently conducted a training course on youth work skills and began the opening session with the question: “What is youth work?” After a short silence and participants looking at me like I was stupid or something, the reply came back, “work with young people” – (note to self, learn how to better structure questions). Yes, I guess it is, but is it not so much more as well? After all, school teachers work with young people, sports coaches work with young people, parents work with young people, well kind of. Could we say that each of these areas is also youth work? Youth work is difficult to pin down to a single clear and acceptable definition. Filip Coussée, in Coyote 16,¹ develops the argument that only if we define young people as a single concept can we define youth work as a single concept. This is virtually an impossible task when it is a group of people from the same country, add numerous other countries with their different cultures, traditions and attitudes to this discussion and we start to have a real mess or an amazing diverse concept...

This article will explore the difficulties and issues surrounding the recognition of the profession of those who work with young people, it will not try to define it. I started with this opening paragraph to highlight that we are talking about the recognition of the profession of something that is not easily “boxed” and is not even called youth work in many countries. Our mutual levels of non-agreement extend to something as basic as what age is a young person; in some countries you are a young person from the age of 11 years, in others 16 years; in some countries you are a young person up to the age of 24 years and in others 30 years. Perhaps this is part of the problem, how to give recognition to something that even those who do it cannot agree completely upon what it is!

Around Europe, yesterday and today

Around Europe we have different histories and traditions of work with young people. In the United Kingdom, youth work goes back to the mid-19th century. The original basis was either to Christianise the young people or prepare them to be fit enough to work in the factories or fight in the wars.² The former communist countries of central and South-Eastern Europe had things like “Pionir” and “Omladinski” for children and young people. In what was Yugoslavia, Omladinski activities consisted of work camps for young people that provided cheap labour for the government to build highways, railways and tunnels and a free holiday away from home for the young people. In France, the singular concept of youth work does not exist; work with young people comes under various titles like social animation, animation, and pedagogy. Filip Coussée, in Coyote 16,³ explores the contrasts of north and south Europe, already “professionalised” versus volunteer-based youth work, the pedagogical approaches versus the labour market approach.

As frustrating as all these differences may be on one level, on another it does mean that youth work remains with bits outside of the “box”. It’s quite nice being part of something that is a little indefinable, rather than something that can be neatly packaged.

Are we professional or...?

Doctors, airline pilots, police officers, social workers, all go through years of training to be professionals in their field. Most professions are placed in tidy boxes with strict boundaries to show if you are in or not. Youth work seems to break most of the rules. Imagine arriving at the airport one day and

hearing: “Good day ladies and gentlemen, our pilot for today is Darko Smith, he is a volunteer pilot from Strasbourg in France, he has no training and no qualification but he is enthusiastic and has a natural ability when working with planes. He started off as a passenger and now after many years of hanging around planes and airports he wants to give something back and have a go at flying. Please fasten your seatbelts and get ready for takeoff.” Of course this is a ridiculous comparison, I use it simply as a provocation for thinking about what we do and what recognition can mean. Yet this is how many young people end up as volunteer youth workers, attending youth club/project workshops and sessions, spending half of their adolescent life involved in a youth organisation. Through natural progression they become a volunteer youth worker. It is also something that we encourage through active participation, from being a sheep following the others to making decisions and choices, from following the youth workers’ lead to being the leader – a volunteer youth worker in many instances!

Youth work is this and yet it is also...

Youth work as a profession is so broad and vast and encompasses so many people and approaches. Most countries do not have strict structures and boundaries of who is and who is not a youth worker. Work with young people can be conducted by a couple of parents and an older young person in the village, using the house of someone because no other space is available. Work with young people can be conducted by voluntary organisations employing workers who may or may not have a recognised qualification. Work with young people can be studied at doctorate level and the work conducted at managerial level in municipalities or with government ministers deciding on national policy.

Think inside the box

Is this current Europe-wide push for recognition and professionalisation of youth work a way to contain youth work in a box and therefore control it? I don't mean this in a conspiracy theory sense, merely that something that is concretely defined and recognised automatically becomes more controlled. Is that so bad? Could it be a good thing to control those who call themselves a youth worker, a way to ensure quality in our profession and weed out the do-gooders who actually do more harm than good! Recognition would mean our governments and the public around us appreciating better what we do as youth workers. On the negative side it could mean youth work being structured in such a way that only the "professionally" qualified could do it.

In the UK I ran an NGO youth project working with young people excluded from school. A key part of our work was the co-operation of the schools, in the beginning nearly every school in the city refused to co-operate with us. We were seen as something not serious, if we were social workers we would automatically have respect and co-operation. As NGO youth workers – and only me in the team actually qualified – we were not seen as professional. It took one year to gain the confidence of the schools, by the end of year two we were co-operating with nearly every high school in the city, various social services teams, the police and probation services. At the end of year three, we were regularly being called by the courts, probation service, social services and schools to help them with young people they could not deal with or who were extreme cases and needed the best possible support work. At the end of year three our money ran out and we closed. This work was carried out by people who were not qualified in youth work, who were not really qualified in anything, except that they understood the fundamental principles and values of work with young people. It was not about the authority and control; it was about building relationships with the young people they worked with; it was about building trust and listening to these young people.

So here is a double twist. Recognise the profession, put it in a box and my two main workers would not have been able to work for me with the many young people whose lives they changed. Recognise the profession and we would not have lost a year trying to convince people we could do what we said we could do, and we would not have had to close because funding would have been easier to access. I know I am painting a black and white picture and reality is never like this, I simply want to emphasise the point.

I was talking with a friend from France about this concept of recognition recently. She talked to me about Social Animation which received official recognition during the 1960s. This was in many ways a great and exciting step forward, finally there was recognition that this work was necessary, that society as a whole needed this work to be done. However over time for many individuals, projects and organisations, the values related to the work fell away and the all-dominant consumerism and need for governmental quotas to be filled to justify spending and resources took over. The work became a job, the quality of the work became focused on simply doing what needed to be done, producing numbers to prove the worth of the funding. The values related to the people being people with people's needs, to a great extent, disappeared. Something similar can be said of youth work in the UK despite the likes of Mark Smith⁴ writing about this issue 20 years ago in *Creators not Consumers*. As a parallel, in the Balkans, social work has a terrible reputation; it is seen as being full of workers who don't care about their work or the client. It's just a job, just a workplace where the client is an object and not a person. The fault of attitude does not lie only at the feet of the social workers. Those I know personally who are studying at university to be social workers are full of enthusiasm and ideals. Social work as a state-run institution, at least in the Balkans, seems to suck all the energy and idealism out of its workers. Could this be the fate of professionalised youth work?

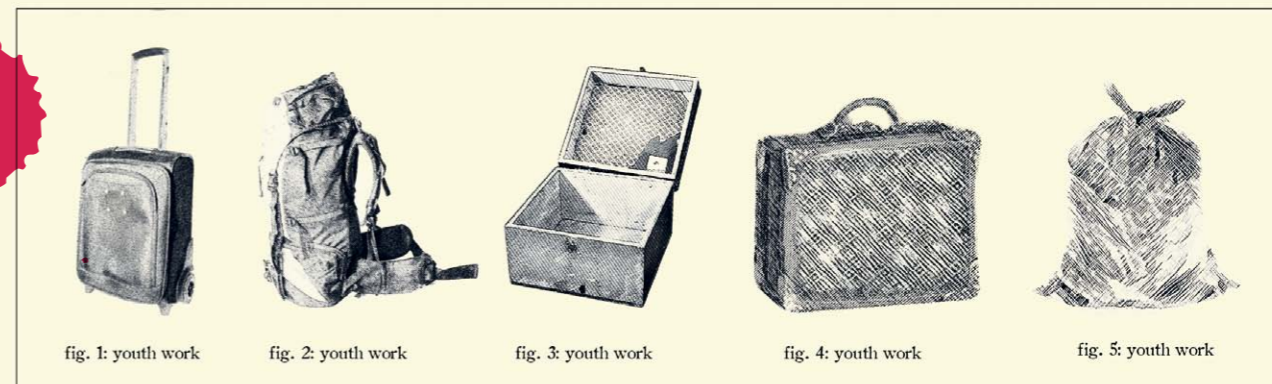


fig. 1: youth work

fig. 2: youth work

fig. 3: youth work

fig. 4: youth work

fig. 5: youth work

On a more positive note, today things are being challenged in France. Many *animateurs* are looking for the sense and values behind their work, where the empowerment of the communities and young people they work with are more important than playing number games. Yes, many organisations are still involved in consumerism but a few at least are starting to challenge this. There are signs of re-educating, not only themselves but the communities they work with as well, in the values of what they do and the values of non-formal education that are a key part of the whole.

To be or not to be?

Youth work has up to now had a middle ground of recognition in the UK, it is called the "maintained sector". There is social work which is in the statutory sector, meaning it has to be provided by law, and there is the voluntary/NGO sector which does not come under the responsibility of the government. As the "maintained sector", youth work is optionally provided by most municipalities in the UK, but there is no consistency in how this is done or which part of the municipality it comes under. Some have an actual youth service, while in others it is under leisure or sports or even education. Recently in the UK there has been talk at governmental level of the professionalisation of youth work. This has been both welcomed and rejected. Welcomed because of the recognition youth work will gain, meaning a youth worker will have the same level of recognition as a social worker or teacher. One of the practical fears is that if this happens then the salaries of youth workers would need to be standardised and raised in order to be in line with social workers and teachers. Great news for the youth workers, not for the organisations that employ them! Some youth work positions do have

fairly decent salaries but these are either high-up positions, (not usually having much direct contact with young people), or from the biggest of the NGO sector organisations that have substantial amounts of money. Most employers of youth workers are small NGOs that would not be able to meet the salary demands of the next generation of youth workers. This is not a simple situation, to recognise or not to recognise that is the question!

Recognition happening!

In the Western Balkans, the concept of youth work has been introduced, (or re-introduced if you include the former communist youth activities), over the last 15 years mostly by foreign humanitarian organisations. I was a part of one for many years teaching a youth work course. The youth work varied in quality across the region. The money was used and abused and then the humanitarian organisations started to leave, taking their money with them. I understand this moving but what I struggle with is that so much of the work that was started died out when the aid agencies left. Even those agencies that worked hard to establish the projects they created as independent NGOs, seem to have not succeeded. Many youth organisations I know of in the Balkans, that I have worked with, are no longer doing direct, face-to-face youth work, or if they are, they are limiting it. The reason: mostly money, there is no tradition of philanthropic giving in the Balkans, especially to small little NGOs. The concept of youth work as a profession does not exist in most of these countries, so the government, local or national, sees no need to support the employment of youth workers or the continuation of youth work. As a result some organisations fold, others close their youth clubs, sack their youth workers and change their focus.



Recognition of youth work as a profession



They are still doing great work but the youth work disappears. OK, this is not being very optimistic. In reality there are still many exciting and amazing youth organisations doing fantastic face-to-face youth work. But it is not easy when there is no recognition of the profession and no understanding of what it is. If there is no recognition in these countries then there is no actual job position. In an NGO I work with in Macedonia, one of the youth workers is registered as a bar man, another as a secretary. They cannot actually be employed as a youth worker because the job does not exist by law.

In Serbia, in 2011, a great step forward was achieved. The National Association of Practitioners of Youth Work (NAPOOR) and the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS) succeeded in pushing through parliament a law recognising youth work as a profession/vocation.

One of the practical results of recognition is that NAPOOR, in close co-operation with MoYS, has created a set of standards which will form part of the quality assurance for youth work in Serbia. Both organisations are negotiating on how these standards for youth work programmes can be officially recognised and implemented. One aspect of this is that if an organisation wishes to receive funding from MoYS for youth work activities, it must agree to and be able to deliver youth work at the quality standards that have been set. NAPOOR itself has begun a process of assessment of member organisations to ensure their quality of work against the soon-to-be-accepted national standards. The next step in Serbia will be the introduction of mechanisms for the validation of competences of the youth worker. These have already been developed by NAPOOR.

In Lithuania, in the autumn of 2010, the government decided to recognise, at least to a limited extent, work with young people by youth workers. The Lithuanian Association of Non-Formal Education developed a youth work course on a national level for new youth workers and tackled the issues

of how to assess existing youth workers. I worked with them on both aspects. However the second issue became more interesting for me: how do we recognise someone who has been working for years with young people? Probably they are highly skilled and competent with great values for work with young people but have never been on an educational course on how to be a youth worker! The association took this into account and developed a competences assessment programme for existing youth workers. I am sure it's not perfect but at least it is in place to recognise the professionalism of work that is being done without the burden of insisting that someone attend university and gain a bachelor degree.

With regard to the work of organisations in Serbia and Lithuania, I understand the importance of safeguarding the work with young people and ensuring quality but is there a danger of strangling the work with too many rules and regulations?

Regardless, this is really a fantastic step forward, not only for Serbia and Lithuania but for all the countries of their respective regions. If youth work as a profession can exist in these countries then it sets the precedence, meaning the other countries of their regions can follow suit.

Seeking that illusive something!

In Macedonia, myself and some colleagues concluded that a perfect model does not, (in our limited knowledge), exist. But we did recognise that various countries had excellent elements in their recognition of the profession. CreACTIVE from Skopje and Kavadarci are working with others on the process of recognition. The Centre for Intercultural Dialogue from Kumanovo, again with others, are building models of youth work practice for youth centres. Both organisations want to explore as many different models as possible, to take the best and then develop their model, not just adopt something from France or the UK because it already exists. Things are moving.

To be a recognised profession do we have to be “educated” according to the formal system? If in the UK youth work gains official recognition then in the future anyone wanting to be a youth worker would be required to have a bachelor degree. What about the many great and amazing young people who become inspired to work with young people themselves but due to societal circumstances or their learning styles have little or no high school education and so really have little chance of gaining a bachelor degree? Do we now discount them because they are not “intelligent” enough? A great youth worker and good friend from Scotland gets really frustrated about the education of youth workers. He sees the education process as academically and intellectually stimulating youth workers but rarely teaching youth workers about the fundamentals and values of youth work. He sees potential future youth workers becoming intellectualised, formally educated robots looking for management positions and not seeing the bigger picture – the young people. His mantra is all about building relationships with the young people, something most of the youth work courses are not very good at teaching. I would include the one I taught in the Balkans region in this as well.

I am making a number of assumptions here and yet for many of our countries this is the direction that recognition is taking. Does recognition equal formal qualification? In most of the Western Balkans we have put the two together. In 2011 the bachelor degree in community youth work was supposed to have started in Macedonia, it has

already been running in Serbia for three years at least. It has been established in at least one university in Kosovo.⁵ The status in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina is still uncertain. Are we somehow contradicting our own principles? Youth work in the Balkans is tightly connected to non-formal education, and yet we run down a path of recognition that demands formal qualification. Perhaps we sweeten the cake by insisting that the formal courses be conducted using non-formal education methodologies, but that does not change the reality.

Final questions and challenges

Will recognition improve the quality of the work of youth workers? Maybe, but I don't know for sure if that is so. Will recognition bring greater respect for youth workers? Probably, but do we actually really need greater respect to do the good work we are already doing? I guess it would be useful!

The questions remain, how do we remain accessible for people from every part of every community to be able to be youth workers and yet maintain quality assurance? How do we gain recognition of the profession without over-professionalising what we do and losing the heart and soul of youth work? How do we gain recognition without insisting that everyone who even thinks about working with a young person ends up having to do a bachelor degree? How do we gain recognition for youth work without having to tidy it up to fit in a neat box? Recognition is important, but at what cost?

Article written with thanks to: Vanja Kalaba, Duncan Dunlop, Solene Bouyaux, Dragan Atanasov, Ivana Davidovska, Laimonas Ragauskas.

Notes

1. Cousse, F. (2010) “Youth Work, a Social Practice!”, *Coyote 16*, p. 32.
2. Smith, M. K. (1999, 2002) “Youth work: an introduction”, *The encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/youthwork/b-yw.htm, Date accessed 17 November 2011.
3. Cousse, F. (2010) “Youth Work, a Social Practice!”, *Coyote 16*, p. 32.
4. Smith, M. (1982) “Creators not Consumers”, *The encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/archives/creators/index.htm, Date accessed 20 November 2011.
5. All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



Quality standards in non-formal education

What's new?

by Ruxandra Pandea

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As youth workers, we are convinced that the work we do with and for young people is making a meaningful contribution to their lives. For the recognition process, it is fundamental to be able to show the contribution made by non-formal education, the quality of the sector and the criteria by which we measure this. Also because, maybe more importantly, it's the core of non-formal education as such to search for ways to offer quality learning experiences to young people and to constantly look for ways to improve the learning offer.

Based on the practice of the Council of Europe Youth Department, a document was elaborated to synthesise the quality standards and related criteria for the activities organised by the Youth Department in 2003, and it is revised regularly. There are 14 standards with corresponding criteria for evaluation of the quality of an activity to be used by all those involved, starting with staff, trainers and consultants, partner organisations and participants. They cover all the stages and aspects of an educational activity.

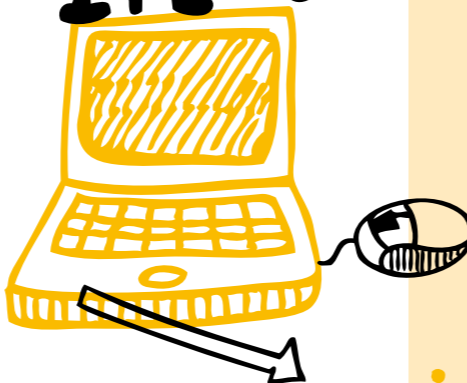
However quality standards and criteria are not only documents to refer to when discussing quality, they are part of the daily practice and reflection that the education team needs to bring alive within the activities of the youth sector.

People, processes and end results are all equally important in non-formal education. The attention given to all of these aspects is fundamental in ensuring quality in non-formal education. But can we prove it? Document it? Show it? Ensure it? Deal with lack of quality? All these are good old questions, but what's new?



ABC

1+2=3



learn

EDUCATION



IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT QUALITY

Quality standards and criteria have been elaborated for the use of in-house educational teams and the staff, but also for trainers and partner organisations when working with the Council of Europe. There are also guidelines for participants to evaluate their learning experience. While the document is neither new nor unknown, what it misses is the practice of explicitly reflecting on the guidelines in relation to specific activities with different teams at different moments, particularly planning to increase awareness and knowledge about the activities. The practice often relies on the educational advisor ensuring that the planning and the activity reflect the criteria, rather than the different teams discussing them. While trainers are asked to evaluate activities against quality criteria, teams of study sessions did not do it explicitly until this year. In the educational team, we are hoping that highlighting the standards and criteria in the evaluation phase will encourage teams to reflect upon them in different stages.

Assessing quality is a matter of perception, especially in a highly intercultural environment, so it is clear that it will not be understood in the same way by all the partners involved, bringing even more arguments to the fact that reflection be explicitly included in the process of planning.

This explicit discussion is even more important when new aspects appear, on a more frequent basis, to which the quality standards and especially their criteria, as developed, do not necessarily fit: e-learning, mentoring and coaching and field projects.

Quality standards in non-formal education – What's new?

NEW TERRITORIES TO CONQUER

Since 2005 e-learning has become a constant feature of all long-term training courses of the Youth Department, and more recently is also becoming a feature of different one-off courses. Social media has rightfully also become part of the learning process. This new learning environment and methodology, which spans over longer periods of time, requires specific competences from trainers and learners. It is not always clear how to respect the principles and core values of non-formal education and how they are to be implemented.

A study and a seminar were recently organised by the Youth Department to start working and provide a space for different e-learning providers to share their experiences on the topic.

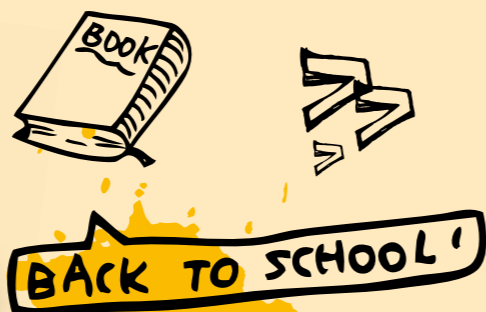
E-learning is often used in a blended learning context in the Youth Department. It aims to support participants' learning development in between two residential seminars and to support their work in their learning environments. High expectations are placed on e-learning, and rather strong disappointments come up, especially in respect to participation in activities. The meeting and the study concluded that several areas of learning need to be approached differently.

The learning environment needs re-evaluation. We often focus on the online side of it, while forgetting that participants are embedded in their local reality, and learning within a course is often "in competition" with daily life and work. There is no need to question priorities, but giving more

options to the learner to shape his or her tempo, learning path and options, rather than insisting on a task-based, time-framed approach might lead to a different dynamic.

Learners and trainers are equally unprepared for e-learning. They cannot readily estimate the time it will take or the technical competence required to manage the learning in one or another environment. The offer of training courses for youth trainers in e-learning is rather limited in Europe, and this is an area that the meeting suggested the Youth Department should take a lead in. In terms of developing learners' competences, suggestions were made to better assess and communicate what e-learning entails and to take into account, when designing e-learning units, that the learning is double sided.

While non-formal education is rich in terms of methods and methodologies applicable for face-to-face encounters, we are unbelievably poor or not creative in using the new opportunities offered by technological development. Webinars, video chats, use of video, shared presentations, Twitter and Facebook integration, collaborative tools, not to mention mobile learning are areas that we still need to integrate into our daily practice. The training course on new media in youth work opened new paths, and while its lessons are still to be transformed into practice, it would be interesting to keep the conversation alive within the trainers' community.



THE FUTURE

To answer these new challenges, the Youth Department plans to continue working: a course on e-learning is to be organised in the coming year and the e-learning platform will be open for the use of study sessions in order to further stimulate and learn from each other. The work on quality standards and criteria for e-learning is to be elaborated further.

Emerging topics and methodologies of delivery in non-formal education will require more and more co-operation with other sectors on a daily basis (namely when working on new media) and will likely become a requirement for success for different activities.

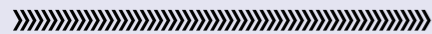
Long-term training courses also involve more and more the features of coaching and mentoring. These have become professions in their own right; they have also become constant features in youth work. The definition of a one-to-one relationship in a training course needs attention at two levels: firstly at a general level, reflecting what is the role of the feature in the general development of the course; and, secondly, between the two persons involved. Often enough, this relationship is either subject to abuse or lacks limits. We all have stories of chasing participants to have a mentoring meeting or having to deal with issues that went beyond our role in mentoring meetings. Perhaps, before standardising the practice in the youth field, we need to create useful guidelines and contracts to save both sides from a feature aimed to support learning but which becomes a burden.

Field projects implemented by participants are also a feature of long-term training courses. For projects like Youth Peace Ambassadors, they are an important contribution to the success of the project overall. Teams often face challenges to create and implement quality criteria that are both reachable and realistic within participants' realities, but that reflect as well the practice in the Youth Department. In other words, are the standards elaborated for the European level applicable at local level? Looking at the 14 standards, none seems unreasonable for the local level. What seems to be more of a challenge is to document these experiences and learning and to incorporate this learning into the youth policy at European level.

THE QUALITY STANDARDS

1. A relevant needs assessment
2. Concrete, achievable and assessable objectives
3. The definition of competences addressed and learning outcomes for the participants
4. The relevance to the Council of Europe programme and Youth Department priorities
5. An adequate and timely preparation process
6. A competent team of trainers
7. An integrated approach to intercultural learning
8. Adequate recruitment and selection of participants
9. A consistent practice of non-formal education principles and approaches
10. Adequate, accessible and timely documentation
11. A thorough and open process of evaluation
12. Structurally optimal working conditions and environment
13. Adequate institutional support and an integrated follow-up within the Youth Department programme and its partner organisations
14. Visibility, innovation and research

(more here: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Training/Study_sessions/2007_Quality_standards_educ_training_en.pdf)



How non-formal/informal education can complement formal mainstream education

by Dawn Rees

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Traditional methods of learning are not suited to everybody. Often mainstream education does not meet the needs of many of our young people, which can lead to them leaving education early, repeatedly with no qualifications, which can frequently act as a barrier to maintaining sustainable well-paid employment.

Research has demonstrated a strong link between disadvantage and low educational attainment and found that attainment in Wales at age 14 and 16 is generally behind other countries and regions of the United Kingdom.

Some of the reasons the research identified for this low attainment included disengagement from secondary schooling; it also identified that interventions targeting these issues can add up to 14% value in terms of positive outcomes.

If we are to reduce child poverty in the longer term, young people will have to be educated out of poverty, providing them with the confidence, skills, knowledge and wherewithal to make the most of the opportunities available to them. Growing evidence demonstrates an increasing gap between educational achievers and non-achievers in south Wales.

In order to try to combat this issue, in Rhondda Cynon Taf in Wales, we looked at a number of interventions that could be used to stem the effects of non-engagement and non-participation of young people that were becoming habitual in many of our valley's communities.

Following research and analysis, the Pathways to Progression Project was developed in 2009, and

aimed to better prepare and support young people to enter the world of work and compete effectively in the labour market by providing them with enhanced employability skills. The project identified a number of interventions that have been designed to enable young people to have access to flexible, rounded learning programmes that encompass generic life and work skills, basic skills and opportunities to improve their confidence and self-esteem.

One of the interventions initially piloted is "Step-UP", which is the National Open College Network (NOCN) suite of qualifications called Skills Toward Enabling Progression (Step-UP). They have been developed as a direct result of learners' and Welsh educational providers' needs. It meets the requirements of a number of key Welsh educational policies such as Learning Pathways 14-19, Extending Entitlement and Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes.

Through the awarding body Agored Cymru (formerly OCN Wales), the Step-UP qualifications consist of an innovative range of credit-based pathways, part of the new QCF (Qualifications Credit Framework), which have been designed to accredit a wide range of activities engaged in by learners aged 14 plus. Activities can be carried out in a range of settings, both formal and informal.



What can it be used for?

- Learners from 14 and over
- As an alternative to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
- To prepare learners for:
 - progression into vocational training;
 - independent living and employment as well as supported employment

As part of the pilot, the Youth Accreditation Team were approached and they agreed to co-ordinate the delivery of the pilot in partnership with Agored Cymru, schools and other providers and to provide the central administrative management of accreditation and become external contributors for schools.

Whilst teachers are best placed to deliver Step-UP within the school environment, there is a need to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to do so. External contributors can enhance delivery, however, ownership of the planning, delivery, monitoring and review of Step-UP needs to remain with the school. External contributors would be in a position to provide advice, support and positive challenges to schools regarding the delivery of the programme, whilst providing direct, proactive, responsive, needs-led support to teachers.

Ferndale Community School led the way in developing and delivering Step-UP as part of the pilot, initially introduced in September 2009, it was quickly reported that Step-UP was having a positive school impact. The "usual suspects" of causing disruption were suddenly engaged in activities and felt part of the school for the first time.

Some quotes from young people taking part:

- The work we are doing really helped me with my behaviour.
- It is much better in Year 10 than Year 9 because the course I am doing is just excellent.
- This year, I feel much better because I feel I am part of a team and my manners are much better.
- I think the course has been good because I am much better behaved and I don't mind coming to school because I enjoy the work.
- The course is awesome and I really like it. It helps me with my attendance and behaviour.

- It's better in Year 10 than in Year 9 because of the course. We do more team work and I enjoy the work because I can do it.

Demand for Step-UP has exceeded all expectations and is currently being rolled out across all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Benefits for schools:

Step-UP meets the needs of a number of policy areas. It is constructed using "Basic Skills", PSE and vocational elements; it has the opportunity to engage and motivate learners to identify their individual and personal strengths for progression in achieving qualifications that may lead to further education or work-based learning and prepare them for the transition into adulthood. Indeed, the Education Act (1996) states that "all students, wherever they are learning, must receive a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life".

Step-UP will contribute positively to the following:

- reducing the number of young people leaving full-time education with no qualifications;
- improving the proportion of 16 year-olds progressing to further full-time or work-based learning;
- reducing the number of 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- providing a positive focus on achievement where young people's success is celebrated;
- supporting young people's capacity to be more independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process;
- impacting positively on basic skills, workforce skills and sustainable employment;
- providing vocational taster opportunities that will lead to further progression into vocational areas of education or employment;
- better linguistic understanding, given its availability in English and Welsh.

Non-formal learning – is this the best approach for us to tackle child poverty in the future? We think it is.



Knowledge-based or civil society?

Can recognition of youth non-formal learning aim at both?

by Darko Markovic

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“Despite all visibility and undisputed success rates, the youth work record in education, training and learning is easily overlooked or simply made a subcategory within education by decision-makers and stakeholders in established fields such as education and vocational education and training. But, youth work is more than a sub-category of education and training. It has to be seen for its own sake, but also for civil society purposes. Hence, the youth sector has to constantly reemploy strategies for recognition in tune with social changes and new overall educational objectives such as the preparation of young people for a knowledge based economy, for lifelong learning and for civil society.” (‘‘Pathways’’ paper, 2004, emphasis added)

Lisbon Process... Copenhagen Process...
Prague Process... Common European principles...
Common guidelines... Recognition... Validation...
Europass... Youthpass...

Without any doubt, the field of recognition and validation of non-formal learning seems to be one of the most dynamic policy and practice development fields of the past decade. And the youth field has joined the wave strongly, seeing its own benefits within the bigger picture. Today it is clear that working on recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field means working with other sectors and other stakeholders, joining the lifelong learning agenda and overall European efforts in becoming a knowledge-based society. However, despite its great educational value, as the ‘‘Pathways’’ paper expresses clearly, youth work could not be treated purely as a sub-category of education and training; it prepares young people not only for knowledge-based society, but also for – civil society. And there we have an interesting situation. No matter how much we believe in lifelong learning as a great idea (as I personally do), the ‘‘Pathways’’ paper encour-

rages us to critically examine our practices and safeguard the political and citizenship-building role of youth work. What do I mean by that? Inevitably, working on better recognition brings a bit more formalisation to the field, along with quality assurance mechanisms. One could argue that recognition and quality are two sides of the same coin, and I would certainly agree. However, assuring quality is a sensitive issue, due to its natural connection to some kind of control mechanism. This is a sensitive point. To illustrate this I would like to share a story I heard from a friend of mine. He told me that his country’s ministry for youth affairs, in the name of quality assurance, wants to establish a system of accreditation of all youth work programmes and projects. Only after the accreditation process is over could these non-formal education activities be done with young people. Wow! One could say that this approach would easily work in the field of education and training, but what about the civil society aspect of the youth field? Indeed, we should be aware that when asking for better state recognition, we don’t get pure state control!

Secondly, if I understand it well, civil society is not supposed to be only the means to make up for the failures and shortcomings of the state (for example, its compensatory function in the social sector). Although it often plays this compensatory role, it should rather be a corrective mechanism towards more social justice and participative democracy. In order to do that, civil society organisations (including youth organisations) have to be able to play a ‘‘watchdog’’ role, remaining at a critical distance and maintaining relative (if not absolute) independence from state structures. Being the watchdog assumes developing a set of competences in action, including critical thinking, policy analysis, advocacy skills, negotiation, etc. Needless to say, the youth sector is potentially a wonderful arena for development of these competences, thus preparing young people to take an active role in civil society. Non-formal education in this context is a tool to help young people not to accommodate, but to transform the society.

So, what should we do in terms of recognition? Personally, I’ve never been in favour of ‘‘either-or

thinking’’ and believe it is all a matter of goodwill and awareness of both practitioners and policy makers. Knowing that the good questions point the way, I am not suggesting any solutions, but rather leaving the following questions as food for thought:

- ◆ In the process of policy developments on recognition, how do we manage to ensure that the civil society aspect of youth field is not jeopardised by other objectives and institutional agendas, but that it is rather nurtured and valued as one of the core ingredients of youth work?
- ◆ What kind of youth structures do we need in order to create equal dialogues with other, usually more powerful, stakeholders?
- ◆ When developing further recognition practices, how do we ensure that these tools would effectively recognise the essential civil society competences developed by young people through youth work at local, national and European levels?
- ◆ What should be the means to value better the ‘‘civil courage’’ of young people and youth organisations actively contributing to transforming their societies?

Over 120 000 Youthpasses issued – So what?

by Rita Bergstein

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and Laimonas Ragauskas

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Laimonas:

When I saw the title, I thought: “Wow! So many?!” The exclamation point is for the excitement over the scope of the Youthpass, while the question mark stands for wondering.

Here I must ask myself several questions:

- ❖ What does that really mean for young people/youth workers/politicians?
- ❖ What value can be given to a document that certifies non-formal learning experience and outcomes?
- ❖ What can we, practitioners of non-formal learning, do in order to provide good value to the Youthpass?
- ❖ What does it all mean in terms of wider recognition of non-formal learning among formal education providers, employers and others?

To answer the first question from my own perspective – what does this number mean for me – I would say it means that 120 000 people can prove their non-formal learning experience not only through words, but also with a document. Unfortunately, official papers are still an important matter, especially for governmental structures where experience comes only after all the papers (meaning diplomas, certificates, etc.). It also means for me that at least 120 000 people stopped and thought about their own learning process and learning outcomes, which is a value in itself. I believe it gave more weight to their experience in Youth in Action projects and gave them more self-confidence when explaining to others that such learning is not just about having fun, but also personal growth. I believe that the Youthpass helped young people to get some level of recognition of what they do among their friends, parents, teachers and hopefully employers.

What do you think?

Rita:

Let me correct you already! In the last 14 days 10 000 more certificates have been awarded, so we have already reached 130 000 – it is getting to be a real success story!!!

I totally agree on the value of the Youthpass for young people themselves! And this is still one of the biggest aims we had in mind when developing it: young people who are aware of their learning in the project and who are able to talk about it. This is what we now call “individual recognition”. Interestingly enough a lot of project organisers, youth workers, youth leaders and even trainers are asking for the Youthpass ... so at least on an individual level there is significant value.

But when one asks about all other stakeholders, then indeed questions remain.

Does the Youthpass have this high value for young people facing disadvantages when they apply for a job? Yes, we have some individual success stories but in general how do employers accept the Youthpass? (This is the question we receive most often!) And the answer is not that easy. I would like to explain why. The question here is which employers are we talking about? Are they big global players who need highly qualified and well-educated young people? Depending on the human resources department, they will take non-formal learning experiences into account or not, and of course if they do young people will be able to sell themselves and their experiences in the best possible way. So we are talking about small- and medium-sized companies, with and without human resource departments, and sometimes we talk about the butcher around the corner. So how can we encourage the acceptance of the Youthpass, non-formal learning and youth work? When are the good moments? Where are the best areas? Do you have any ideas?

Laimonas:

I just got this vision of a butcher saying to a young candidate employee-“Hey bro! This is your knife and that’s how you should cut this piece!” When I observe what young people are aiming for after good (!) non-formal learning process, I can’t really imagine too many people are going for very low-profile jobs. I see young people gaining a lot of self-confidence, courage to dream, ambition to meet new challenges and get a job with higher levels of responsibility, freedom for creativity and not too much hierarchy. The process of reflection and the educational pathways for obtaining the Youthpass add valuable awareness of what the young person has gained.

Concerning the acceptance of the Youthpass, I think it is starting to have a certain critical mass of people who are clear about their achievements and the competences they possess. When such people go to employers and are able to speak out and support what they say with tangible proof such as the Youthpass, acceptance will happen.

Rita:

You are maybe right about the butcher. What I hear a lot from young people facing disadvantages, after a “good and successful” non-formal learning experience, most of them go back to a formal learning programme (even if they were drop outs) to finish it. Interestingly enough, during non-formal learning experiences something happens that makes them use formal education instead of being “abused” (maybe totally wrong word here) or not knowing what they are there for! And maybe then they are on their way to becoming ambitious young people and citizens who hold their lives in their own hands.



YOUTH PASSES

Over 120 000 Youthpasses issued – So what?

I see a lot of opportunities for the support of non-formal learning, youth work and the Youthpass. Of course the recognition of international youth work as such is the core topic and the recognition of the Youthpass is an entry, a catalyst or a motor – we will see! In this regard the number of 130 000 Youthpass certificates counts a lot! I experienced it myself. This is no longer a tool that has to prove its existence and people are impressed by this number. So in my opinion the number is an entryway for discussions on the value of non-formal learning and youth work.

Here I'd like to continue our discussion on what it means for youth workers/leaders to use the Youthpass and especially its potential for awareness raising and the learning dimension of a project.

Laimonas:

First of all I think the existence of the Youthpass motivates young people to enter a reflection process. They know it won't stay just among young people and youth workers/leaders, but that the learning process and outcomes will be visible in the document, officially registered and recognised by the European Commission. For youth workers, it means they can get young people more easily on board for a learning journey and they can back up their good educational intentions with the Youthpass. It also gives greater confidence to youth workers when they have to explain the value of international youth work to parents, teachers and partners of young people who would like to get involved.

Apart from the benefits, I see certain responsibilities that should be taken by youth workers. First of all the youth worker or youth leader is the one to spread the message about the value of non-formal learning and the meaning of the Youthpass. It could start at first in the nearest neighbourhood, community, town, etc. No public relations campaign can substitute the word of mouth from a person who is trustworthy and reliable, and deals with youth on a daily basis.

Rita:

What you described is a perfect start for a recognition strategy for me: having a good experience, learning lots of things, raising awareness about

it with young people and youth workers/leaders and then using it for the purpose of guaranteeing funds and further resources (such as space to meet), contributing to the development of the local community and society and caring for a broad approach to education. The highest value again here can be reached at local level and in the immediate environment of young people. But of course even bigger projects for developing policies in this area are possible. By the way, we are currently working on a publication which deals exactly with the development of recognition strategies for any context. It is based on a training course which happened under the "Let's..." strategy of the regional SALTOs. It will be published very soon and will be available at www.youthpass.eu.

Now let's get back to some initial questions and one of them is related to political recognition – what does it mean for politicians to start thinking about the value and the way of recognising youth work and non-formal learning as well as to guarantee and provide enough resources?

Laimonas:

Here I would like to rephrase the question: "What should be done by us, practitioners, so that politicians might start thinking about non-formal learning and its value?" We need to make sure politicians come to visit our projects or we go to them; we make them aware how many valuable things are happening and the value non-formal learning and youth work create. The Youthpass and existing EU support documents help us to back up our work and gain recognition at the very local level. Usually young people and their work speak for themselves; we just need to make sure they are visible and understandable for others!

Going from here, I spoke about the need to increase the number of people who have the Youthpass and the need to make the world (or nearest community at first) know about things we do. For the last three years, I have found myself thinking how the Youthpass (and outcomes of the non-formal learning process) can be more accessible, more usable, more visible and "shareable" on social networks and other virtual spaces. What can be done in this direction?

Rita:

Yeah, I agree and not surprisingly we are currently working on an information strategy which should include some of what you described and I see as well users being the ambassadors for the Youthpass and doing something with it in their own contexts. This will guarantee its future existence.

So far our main focus has been on developing the Youthpass instruments and strategy further, but more on the educational side. By the end of next year we will hopefully have an external impact study about the Youthpass, so that we finally know if we have reached our aims and where there is room for doing better... Let's see and let's cross our fingers for the future!

Laimonas:

I actually let myself dream of the possible developments of the Youthpass in the near future. I let myself be influenced by various aspects of life today and have a session of "what if". By this I invite readers to think of lots of other ideas for developing and promoting the Youthpass.

For a few years I have been thinking of possibilities to link the Youthpass with Europass. What if Europass, like the Youthpass, could be based on a central database where various data from other passes, such as a language or mobility pass, link together into one document? So far it has felt like the Youthpass does not have clear links (also information wise) with Europass, but perhaps it could make sense because the latter is much more known by now.

What if a virtual platform could expand and serve not only for generating the Youthpass but also providing online tools for young people and youth workers to reflect on their learning outcomes, to map them, to relate to specific activities they undertook, and later on to use this information for entering learning outcomes to the Youthpass?

Considering all the IT and mobile technology developments there are online or with smartphone apps, which could be used by participants of Youth in Action daily for reflecting on the learning process and outcomes. What if these could be linked with the virtual Youthpass platform and personal learners' profiles, which would allow us to generate the Youthpass based on data entered through those apps?

Moving from technologies to the recognition field, officially one can see that the Youthpass is an initiative of the European Commission. What if the European Commission would give some bonus points or priority for people having the Youthpass, when announcing vacancies for jobs or internships? We speak so much about recognition of employees and therefore the Commission should be the first one to set an example for others. If all the youth-related institutions and departments continue requiring higher education degrees, the recognition of non-formal learning won't go too far. What if the Commission or national agencies gave equal importance to both types of learning in reality, and not only in documents?

Rita:

Great ideas, Laimonas! I would love to see some of them become reality. Let's see the future developments. For sure we will support the sustainable existence and use of the Youthpass. But we definitely need more political support on all – European and national, and even regional, levels – to make further recognition steps! I hope that the results of the Youthpass impact study the Commission is undertaking in 2012 will bring fantastic results for the support of further existence! And then we will have good energy to develop the Youthpass further!

Note

Since this article was written, the number of Youthpasses issued has increased to 151 876 (as of 7 May 2012).



About learning by leaving, and getting it recognised

by Søren Kristensen

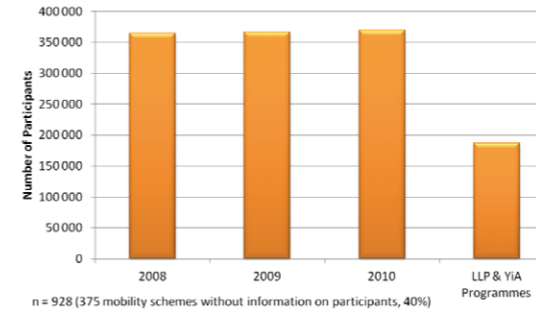
soren.kristensen@technemail.dk



The recognition of skills and competences acquired in a non-formal or informal context is a complex issue, but an extra layer of complexity is added when the learning experience takes place abroad. Such is the complexity, apparently, that many do not even seem to make an attempt. This is one of the conclusions of a recent study on “learning mobility” in Europe in which I participated as an expert! The study aimed to identify and gather data from mobility schemes, except for the EU action programmes, and to identify important trends, strategies and policies on mobility and mobility-related matters at national and regional levels.

The study contains many interesting findings, but as usual with such exercises, for every answer it provides, it also raises new questions. The following are some reflections on the issue of recognition of transnational, non-formal and informal learning on the basis of both findings and questions from the study.

The recognition of learning acquired in a non-formal or informal context is not in itself an infrequent occurrence. In all European countries, the “accreditation of prior experiential learning” (APEL) is an important issue, and provisions range from institutional practices to legislative measures. Along with recognition, we also find many tools for documenting (“making visible”) knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside of the formal educational system. These tools and practices are developed for use in a national or even a regional context, however, and we have only found a very few examples that are developed specifically for use with transnational activities, or which expressly include transnational activities as one aspect of their use. This is somewhat surprising since learning mobility is a widespread phenomenon both as part of formal education and training and in non-formal and informal contexts: we identified close to 1 000 mobility schemes, and participation rates here more than match the statistics of the EU action programmes (LLP and Youth in Action).



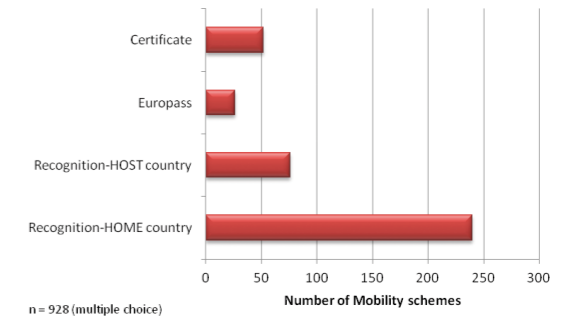
And this is not even the total picture: we did not look into the mobility that is undertaken outside of dedicated mobility schemes or as individual mobility, and we don't know how many people this involves. One national level survey (from Belgium)² indicates that more than half of all young people have participated in some form of learning mobility! Why is it that recognition and documentation are apparently not more of an issue? Offhand, one might think of two obvious explanations, but both of these are inadequate if we examine them just a little bit more in detail.

1. The existing tools developed at national level are appropriate also for transnational experiences

There is no doubt that at least some of the existing tools for recognition and documentation (for example, for volunteering) are also used for cross-border experiences, even though we did not find a lot of evidence for this. However, this raises the question as to why we should organise cross-border activities at all, if the skills and competences we include in the documentation are the same as those that could be obtained in a national context. More specifically, are these methods sensitive enough to capture the potential “added value” in terms of learning outcomes arising from the transnational framework in which they have been implemented?

2. Existing instruments at European level, Youthpass and Europass, are sufficient to cover the needs

The study only covered mobility schemes outside the EU action programmes, and at present the Youthpass is only available for activities (such as youth exchanges or cross-border volunteering) inside the Youth in Action Programme. It therefore cannot cover the needs of learning mobility outside of this framework. The Europass is open to all users and for all types of learning mobility, but it is apparently not very widespread, and only a few programmes indicated that they were using the Europass in any systematic way. Since the launch of the initiative in 2005, some 200 000 Europass mobility certificates have been issued, which is only a fraction of the actual number of people involved in learning mobility activities. We did not investigate the causes for this lack of uptake among practitioners, however.



So far the findings of the study, the main object of which was to find and describe the activities of mobility schemes and to identify important trends, strategies and policies, dealt with many other issues besides recognition. There was not enough time to go systematically into the intriguing questions as to why recognition and documentation do not seem to play a greater role in non-formal and informal learning mobility. So I shall try and make a few stabs at possible explanations. I should underline that this is based on mainly anecdotal evidence.

Notes

1. “Study on mobility developments in school education, vocational education and training, adult education and youth exchanges” EAC 2010-1356.
2. See http://cimo.multiedition.fi/eNewsletter4/euroguidance_eng/2010/april/gostrange.php.

»» About learning by leaving, and getting it recognised

One important aspect deals with problems in connection with the validity of the mobility experience as a learning environment. Many schemes formulate their learning objectives in grandiose, but rather vague, terms of “intercultural understanding” and “employability”, but have difficulties in connecting these with the actual practices. As a result, that learning seems to become a matter of faith rather than documentation. For example, how does a four-week stay abroad lead to increased intercultural understanding, and what indeed are the competences that make up this concept? Many activities and schemes lack precise formulations of learning objectives coupled with detailed strategies – in the shape of quality management procedures – for how they can be obtained. A clearer understanding of mobility as a pedagogical tool and not least a clearer coupling of objectives and means differentiated according to the many types of learning mobility would facilitate documentation and recognition.

Another issue in connection with validity is the reliability of the learning experience – in other words how we can prove that the experience was an authentic one, and that stipulated learning outcomes (especially when they are difficult to measure) were indeed met? Most methods use some kind of triangulation method, where achievements are documented through statements from organisers both at the sending and the receiving end. There are, however, types of informal learning activities where there is no sending organisation, and therefore (but also for pedagogical reasons) self-assessment from the actual participant is also included in many methodologies. In a transnational context, an additional compli-

cation arises in the language issue, which is not just a matter of simple translation. Learning is arguably one of the most culturally sensitive areas, and terms that on the surface are identical may nevertheless cover quite significant nuances of meaning according to the cultural context in which they are used.

This is not to detract from the skills and competences of the operators that organise learning mobility, but their resources are often limited and they are not recognition professionals. Sometimes learning and learning processes are considered to be by-products in relation to their actual mission. To put recognition and documentation on their agenda, they must have access to user-friendly material available in the languages of both the sending and the hosting organisations and to information and guidance on the implementation of the methodologies. Moreover, these must be differentiated according to the various types of learning mobility. This task is arguably best tackled at European level because of the inherent transnational character of the activity and the need for a common terminology, and here we already have two tools for the documentation of skills and competences: Europass and the Youthpass. Youthpass – developed especially for non-formal and informal learning – is currently the one that best answers the needs as expressed by the practitioners, and it would therefore be logical to make this available also to activities outside of the Youth in Action Programme. In the longer run, however, it is hardly tenable to have two partly overlapping European instruments, and it makes sense to merge them into one common tool, making sure to retain the best of the two approaches. This is the challenge for the new European Skills Passport, which was quite recently proposed by the European Commission.



Research is a beginning, not an end

by Adele Vaituleviciute
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and Musa Akgul
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Have you ever done research? Have you ever read about any research in the youth field? With the youth field facing upcoming changes, the importance of knowledge-based research and studies in this area is becoming more and more relevant. Research helps to establish facts and new conclusions that can be used in different areas. Real numbers, facts and results that can be measured help in practice. Much attention is paid to planning and doing research in order to receive the most informative results. The next step should also be taken into consideration: how to use the research results.

How to use research?

Do you ask yourself this question when planning a research project? To be honest, when we planned research in the past, our plans often ended with the “summary of the results”. But we should not forget that the results are not the end, but the beginning. Naturally, a question arises: “What happens after the research?”

- A.** You can put it in your drawer and forget about it.
- B.** You can be proud of yourself for five minutes because you have found something very interesting, and then forget about it.
- C.** You can use it in many different ways to benefit the work you are doing.

We have chosen answer “C”, however it might sound too abstract. Here are some tested, practical examples.

In the Youth Express Network (Y-E-N) we decided to “measure” the impact that our work has on young people (we organise international training programmes, seminars, etc.). It was important for us to see if we were going in the right direction. So we did research about the impact of international youth gatherings (let’s call them that) on young people.

We got the results: our work is approved. We shared the results with our members. And they started using them when applying for youth exchanges, international training programmes, study sessions, etc.

92% of participants say that taking part in an international project helped them to take personal or professional initiative.

Research is a beginning, not an end

The applications looked more serious.

Imagine you are an expert evaluating an application for an international youth project. Which sentence would look like stronger evidence for you?

A. "This project will provide a better future for young people because they will learn a lot."

B. "As the research shows, 92% of the interviewed young people say that taking part in an international project helped them to take personal initiatives. It is expected that after this project young people will be empowered to take actions for their own future."

Y-E-N and its members used the results from the research when applying for projects.

The research helped explain why the international youth project for a concrete topic should be organised and what added value the participants will get. Here are a few examples of the projects: a long-term multi-measure project "You(th) are the Champions" applied for by Y-E-N to the executive agency was approved; "Turkish-Armenian Youth Dialogue" was applied for by a member of Y-E-N, many indicators from the research were used and the project was approved.

Motivation has increased.

These results helped us motivate young people to take action at local and international levels. Imagine you are a young person who has never thought of volunteering. You are worried about your future in the labour market because competition is very intense. Then you see research results saying that 90% of young people who attended international youth events found a job easier. Now you are more motivated to take part in national and international youth events and even start volunteering.

When presenting the aims and objectives of an activity in a training course, what words and phrases do you use to engage the participants? Have you ever tried to use research results? If not, try it! Do not forget that putting some numbers "on the

76% stated that being part of an international youth activity has contributed significantly to improving some of their personal skills.

table" can be more realistic and convincing than listening to the stories from your friends' friends. "Not so long ago I was working in a local school in Turkey for a project called 'Youth Civic Engagement'. Volunteering for most of the students seemed useless and boring. They did not see the reason to start any kind of activity, but some quotes from the results of the research project 'Youth Impact' strengthened my arguments. I don't know if that was a turning point, however five of them are now very active volunteers in three different youth associations."

You can contribute to the policy-making process.

Can you imagine how important a person you might become?

In order to meet the needs and expectations of young people and to influence policy makers, our work should be based on strong evidence. What if you have the power to decide on the future of youth programmes and you receive research results showing what contributes to young people's personal development, which competences they gain after international youth projects and even more concrete results such as "one out of two participants stated that participation in international projects increased their sense of European identity". Would it help you to make a decision?

It contributes to the recognition of competences gained through non-formal education.

So far, we (youth workers, volunteers, young people, etc.) have the Youthpass as a tool for the recognition of skills gained in national and international activities. We, as youth workers, are still facing challenges. Instead of shouting and arguing how useful and important youth projects are, let's provide knowledge-based evidence – these could be research results. Let's increase the number of these research projects in order to contribute to the process of recognition of competences gained through non-formal education. It is an important need expressed by thousands of young people during national consultations.

80.9% of the participants said that through the project they have learnt more about European cultural diversity.

Help your family, friends and other people around you understand the importance of, and your interest in, youth work.

You can come from a youth exchange, a seminar or a training course with a big smile, hundreds of pictures in your camera, new friends on Facebook and long, long stories about your experiences. But would that be enough for the people around you who are not in youth work? Try to use a phrase from research stating, for example: "International youth projects increase the interest of young people in different social issues and problems." Would it make your life easier?

These were just a few efficient examples from the Youth Express Network and its members. Try to think who else could benefit from research. Who could be interested? What could be other ways to use research? For sure you will find at least few other answers that you can also share with us.

"It helped me to be more confident to speak in English."

Significant positive impact on the lives of young people in terms of better understanding towards individuals coming from other cultures.

Y-E-N

The Youth Express Network is an international association of youth organisations that has been working since 1993 for the inclusion of young people in Europe. It federates 30 youth organisations from 18 different countries. Y-E-N works with and for different target groups, according to the needs of its members, from homeless young people and African immigrants to young people having problems at school as well as Roma youth. For more information see: www.y-e-n.net.

YOUTH IMPACT

After years of experience, the Youth Express Network decided that research should be conducted in order to look at the different aspects of impact of international activities on young people.

Recently, many youth organisations have witnessed decreases in funding opportunities for their activities and have had to prioritise the use of resources. This has meant that certain activities have become difficult to justify, including working internationally, without evidence of effectiveness.

The Youth Express Network submitted an application to the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe for the research project entitled "Youth Impact". Upon the acceptance of our project application, a long and thorough process started.

The research was conducted in two stages: 1. quantitative (200 questionnaires from 38 countries were analysed); 2. qualitative (7 focus groups (52 participants in total) in 7 different countries were organised).

Ah, 2011, some things you might have considered...

by Mark Taylor

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“Marker” is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate, questions and a certain regard.



Babies in training, seminars, meetings...

Don't know about you, but I have noticed with great delight an increase in the numbers of babies as participants in various events over the past year. Some of them are not only participating but are also even unofficial members of organising teams. So I wonder if we are really taking them into account in our pedagogical approaches (if we put into practice our claims to be participant-centred, etc.). Are their needs assessed at all? Do we take their possible inputs into account? Apart from some jolly photos, do we record any of their contributions? Some of them seem to learn a lot during different activities, including an increased (intercultural) social competence – is this recognised by anyone? Apart from socially and informally of course... As this year is promoted as the European Year of Intergenerational Dialogue, it could be a nice challenge! And looking towards the future, it is a little-known fact that “Erasmus” rhymes with “Apfelmus” (stewed apple, a favourite baby food) so we could have a think about making Erasmus truly for all.

Jogging the memory

As my sporty frame becomes ever more refined, I find it stimulating of a morning to head out into the local neighbourhood for a run before jumping into work sessions. To call it a “run” is actually an exaggeration; it is more of a rolling jog which lasts usually up to an hour. During this time, all sorts of thoughts buzz through the head and can even lead to inspiration for an article (like this part of this one). Highlights in the jogging sphere have seen me sweating nicely this year through some great places:

- next to the Atlantic Ocean, where I noticed increasing nausea as the fumes of the nearby boiling seafood industry made themselves felt!
- through a pine forest, seemingly full of dogs looking for a human meal, but good fun all the same
- slipping and sliding along an icy track trying hard to avoid the massive 4x4s which careered past this lone jogger
- whooping round a real track used by high-level athletes who could only laugh at the sight
- a never-ending road straight to the Mediterranean sea and back again

What memories have you been jogging recently?



Forget the photos, let's go cartooning!

Do photos capture the atmosphere of an event for you? We have discussed before about the explosion of digital snap shots being shared at the end of courses – they are nice to have, but... So it was something quite special for me at the Tool Fair in Tallinn to watch a team of two young artists from Estonia, Siiri Taimla and Tanel Rannala, otherwise known as Joonmedia. They watched what was happening and distilled the essence into a series of swiftly and skillfully drawn cartoons. Each day they would add more cartoons to their display which was seen by all participants and gave rise to many discussions and explanations. A real addition to the event!

Cartoons used by kind permission of Joonmedia and the Tool Fair organisers.

For more, go to their websites:

Joonmedia: www.drawingmedia.blogspot.com

Tool Fair 6: <http://toolfair.eu/tf6/>

The spirit of Peter Lauritzen lives on

Reading through the articles to appear in this issue, I'm struck time and again how much Peter Lauritzen's influence continues to be felt long after he sadly left us in 2007. (There are two books recommended below and a great appreciation of him in *Coyote 13*). Without him, for example, there would have been no “Pathways” paper (which gave such a tremendous boost to the development of strategies for recognition). Recently I came across the work of education scientist, Sugata Mitra. You may have heard of his “The Hole in the Wall Experiment” in which children from the poorest of backgrounds teach themselves how to use computers without any outside help.

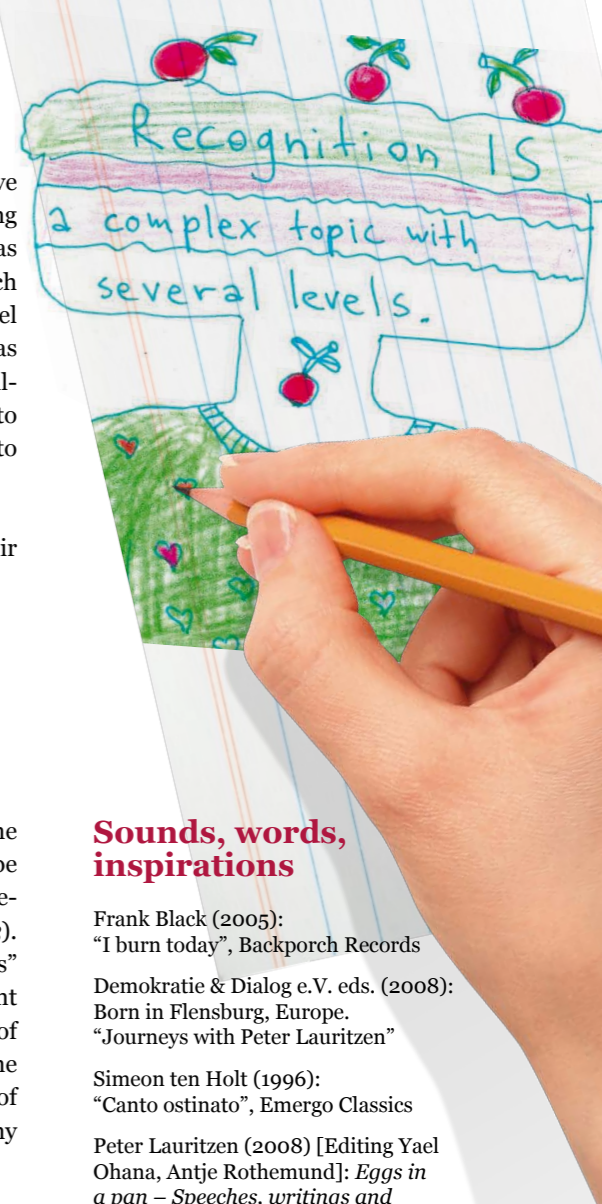
www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/sugata_mitra_the_child_driven_education.html

Have a look at his TED talks – those who knew Peter might recognise a kindred spirit as Sugata Mitra talks passionately, clearly and with wonderful humour.

And finally

Thanks to those who write or give informal feedback – we are considering awarding badges. Back to thinking about silence, we are wondering about posing the following question in our next workshop: “In which language are you silent?” After the curtain closes we go into the possible pataphysics of poppy seeds in *galette des rois*.

(Thanks to Kateryna Shalayeva for photos of her son Alexander!)



Sounds, words, inspirations

Frank Black (2005): “I burn today”, Backporch Records

Demokratie & Dialog e.V. eds. (2008): Born in Flensburg, Europe. “Journeys with Peter Lauritzen”

Simeon ten Holt (1996): “Canto ostinato”, Emergo Classics

Peter Lauritzen (2008) [Editing Yael Ohana, Antje Rothemund]: *Eggs in a pan – Speeches, writings and reflections by Peter Lauritzen*, Council of Europe Publishing

Julien Norwood (2004): *Les Oiseaux du Muséum – Voyages à travers les collections*, Delachaux et Niestlé

Antonio Tabucchi (1994): *Pereira Maintains*, Canongate Books Ltd (original in Italian *Sostiene Pereira*)

Rummelsnuff (2010): “Mandy”, Out of Line records

(Gratitude for the tips to Gav, Paul, Jean-Noël, Kristiina and Manfred)





Notes on contributors

Adele Vaituleviciute comes from Vilnius where she works in a consulting-training company. She is also a trainer and a board member of the Youth Express Network.

Athanasios Krezios (known as Sakis) has been involved in youth work since 1997 and is the initiator and co-author of "Here2Stay", a handbook for the social recognition of non-formal learning in Greece and maintains the web site, www.my-learning.gr, with resources on the topic.

Darko Markovic comes from Belgrade and is a trainer, psychologist and psychodrama therapist, and owner of Inn.Side – people and training. He is a passionate developer of strategies for better recognition of non-formal education and learning at national and European levels. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Dawn Rees comes from Wales and has been a youth worker for over 20 years, starting off as a centre-based worker, then a detached worker and now specialises in non- and informal education.

Gülesin Nemetlu Ünal is a freelance trainer and consultant currently working under the label of her learning design office called tekne. She is based in Istanbul.

Hans-Joachim (Hanjo) Schild has been living in Strasbourg since summer 2005 and works in the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

Laimonas Ragauskas lives in Vilnius and is a freelance trainer in the area of non-formal learning and training for various youth work organisations as well as local and European institutions and has been conducting qualification courses for youth workers and training trainers.

Mark Taylor is a trainer and writer and is grateful to be part of both the Unique network and via Experientia (the International Academy of Experiential Education) as they make life challenging and even a joy. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Marlies Pöschl is a visual artist currently based in Vienna. She also works as a freelance media designer and film operator. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Musa Akgul lives in Izmir and has been involved in youth work since 2001 at the local and European levels with AEGEE and Local Agenda 21 project. He currently works as a freelance trainer-expert and is vice president of Youth Express Network.

Nik Paddison currently lives in Montenegro, in a small town called Herceg Novi. He works as a freelance trainer, writer, consultant and copy editor. He is involved in the development of national youth worker training programmes and certification of youth workers both in the Balkans and Lithuania.

Peter Hofmann lives in Vienna and has been involved in training and learning in the field of non-formal education and European Youth Work for over 10 years.

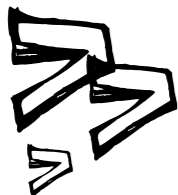
Pieter-Jan Uyttersprot moved from Belgium to France as a trainer and is an active member of ENOA (European Network of Animation) and E Ki Libro, a local French association working on quality in education and youth-work-related issues.

Rita Bergstein lives in Cologne and is currently working for the SALTO Training and Co-operation Resource Centre with a main focus on the Youthpass and recognition of non-formal learning.

Ruxandra Pandea is Educational Adviser in the Council of Europe's Youth Department. She comes from Romania and is currently based in the European Youth Centre, Budapest, and concentrates on training developments.

Sandra Kamilova is working in the field of internationalisation of higher education in the Archimedes Foundation (Estonia). She is a foreign affairs officer in the Estonian National Youth Council and is a member of the European Youth Forum Working Group on Non-Formal Education.

Søren Kristensen is a Danish freelance researcher specialising in learning mobility.



The Adventures of Spiffy

Mark Taylor • The Big Family

N° XXXXX
[sic]

Spiffy re-opens detective agency

Softly softly goes the world of Spiffy ...

Oh Pestalozzi's pyjamas, it is a wonderful world my friends!

But, what's this? What's going on?

Detective Spiffy sends his trusted friends into the fields to find out.

Reward
for tool lost at Tool Fair

Last seen wandering the streets of Tallinn at dawn looking for a good home for learning. Replies to Spiffy Detective Agency.

The reports come in...

People are saying terrible things...

You won't believe it!

Someone or something has stolen youth work!!!

The investigation begins in earnest

We must leave NO stone unturned!

Look UNDER "intergenerational dialogue"!

Look INTO anything you can recognise!

Who researches the researchers? Call for papers!

New conference organised in partnership with different partnerships. Phenomenological ephemera needed to complete programme.

Will Spiffy's detective agency find youth work again? Will a Dutch philosopher be able to help them? See next time's thrilling adventure of Spiffy...



"Coyote - a resourceful animal whose blunders or successes explain the condition of life in an uncertain universe."

(In: Jack Tresidder, *The Hutchison Dictionary of Symbols*, 1997)

Coyote is a magazine addressed to trainers, youth workers, researchers, policy makers and all those who want to know more about the youth field in Europe.

Coyote wants to provide a forum to share and give new insights into some of the issues facing those who work with young people. Issues relate to diverse training methodologies and concepts, youth policy and research, and realities across this continent. It also informs about current developments relating to young people at the European level.

Coyote is published by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. The main activities of the partnership are training courses, seminars, and network meetings involving youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, researchers, policy makers, experts and practitioners. Their results are disseminated through different channels including this magazine.

Coyote can be received free of charge (subject to availability; please contact: youth-partnership@partnership-eu.coe.int) and is available in an electronic format at: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>

Coyote is not responsible for the content and character of the activities announced in this magazine. It cannot guarantee that the events take place and assumes no responsibility for the terms of participation and organisation.

Coyote aims to use a form of English that is accessible to all. We aim to be grammatically correct without losing the individuality or authenticity of the original text. Our aim is that the language used in the magazine reflect that used in the activities described.

Some articles are offered by contribution and others are commissioned specifically by the editorial team in order to achieve a balance of style and content. If you have an idea for an article then please feel free to contact the editor.

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