

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



European Union
Union Européenne

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

Symposium on Recognition of Youth Work and Non-Formal Learning

GETTING THERE...

working together to

'establish **a common ground** for
a medium and long-term coordinated
strategy **toward** recognition of
youth work and non-formal learning
in Europe **with** the involvement of
actors and stakeholders from the
various sectors of policy concerned'.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORKING GROUPS

Final version

1. *The 10 Pathways elements: to keep in mind...*

The working groups (or workshops) of the Symposium will dedicate a day to each element of the Pathways paper (number 1 and 6 as well as 9 and 10 of the Paper have been merged). The tasks of the working groups will be two-fold:

- a) Exchange, contrast and reflect on the topic of their working group;
- b) Define an action plan to implement the related element within a common European strategy/political process.

Below you will find a recall of the contents of each element of the Pathways paper as well as a list a bullet points which represents, for each of the former, points to keep in mind/tackle while exploring the contents. The working groups will be provided with guidelines for their work and each group will have an input person, a facilitator and a rapporteur.

1.1 The role and visibility of youth organisations

Youth organisations and other providers of non-formal learning need to increase efforts to make the learning taking place in their activities and programmes clearer and more visible. First of all, a challenge remains for youth organisations to attract young people as volunteers and participants. Volunteering is sometimes seen as an unnecessary waste of time. The level of awareness of the benefits that volunteering brings to the society and the individual is insufficient. Therefore, recognition of learning needs to start within the organisation. The role of youth organisations is to increase social and self-recognition and to adapt and provide tools for assessment and recognition. Youth organisations can also contribute to enhance political recognition through active advocacy and participation in policy processes.

To keep in mind:

- What do youth organisations do? What is expected from them?
- Transferability of learning competences
- Political and social recognition of youth organisations
- Ways and mechanisms for recognition

1.2 Quality and Training in non-formal learning

There is still a lack of confidence regarding the effectiveness of non-formal learning and youth work activities, both within the youth field and society. If non-formal learning/education aims at being positioned in the political debates at a similar level as the formal education and training sector, quality assurance is an important element. Quality and quality assurance can also be instrumental for the further development of youth work providers who engage consciously in the design of their educational programmes. Another measure to assure high quality and to strengthen the conceptual idea is to provide and establish appropriate training opportunities at different levels. The quality standards in training activities of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, particularly in the programme of activities of the European Youth Centres, provide interesting starting points: these should be reviewed and complemented with new experiences, especially those integrating e-learning and blended learning approaches. Also the European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action programme plays a key role in this respect. Further, the process initiated by the European Youth Forum to develop a European Framework for the Quality Assurance of non-formal education by 2015 should be supported.

To keep in mind:

- Quality Assurance → link to providers
- Indicators
- Quality Standards
- The renewed European Training Strategy → the role of training in quality youth work

1.3 Knowledge on youth work and non-formal learning

The continued conceptual, practical and theoretical development of non-formal learning in youth work is essential for strengthening the capacity and the recognition of non-formal learning; this refers to research and practice. A coordinated strategy should be set up and anchored between research, policy and practice to deliver scientific and experiential knowledge. The strategy should compile existing knowledge, ensure an easy access to it for decision makers and youth organisations and identify gaps in knowledge and needs for further research. Experiences and approaches from other regions of the world and from other institutional actors (e.g. UN, ILO, World Bank) should be taken into account. An inventory on non-formal learning in the youth field could be updated and published regularly and the European Youth Report could provide a regular chapter on non-formal education/learning. The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) already provides relevant information on the topic and will further introduce a new feature on youth work.

To keep in mind:

- Research topics: what is needed/still missing + what type of research/study on NFE and youth work are necessary to enhance recognition?
- Mapping processes (information)
- Other practices and approaches in other international organisations
- How to present research and studies outcomes in the way which ensures recognition → visibility and reliability for non-formal learning (role of EKCYP, etc.)

1.4 Accessibility and transferability of recognition tools

Results of learning can be used in all different settings and for various purposes, be it in education or employment, civil society or for personal development. While diplomas and qualifications received in formal education serve as transfer documents, certificates of the youth field are lacking credit. Even instruments for assessing and validating competences acquired in non-formal learning in youth work (see Youth Worker Portfolio and Youthpass) that have been developed in recent times at European level are rarely recognised by formal education or the employment sector. After having successfully developed these tools it is time to evaluate them, to improve them where needed, to disseminate them and to identify needs for further instruments, e.g. for self-assessment, and other accompanying support measures.

To keep in mind:

- Plus and minus of existing tools (not only in the youth field): what works and what doesn't?
- Their use and impact
- Transferability of European tools to national realities
- Quality criteria

1.5 Reinforce the political process at European level

If the youth field wants to create and to follow a visible political agenda it needs stronger commitment and a reinforcement of the political processes, in particular at European level but as well by Member States. In Education and Training respective policies are based on the lifelong learning strategy, the Bologna process promotes Higher Education as the Copenhagen/Bruges processes does for Vocational

Education and Training. In the Czech EU Presidency event on recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field in Prague 2008 the youth sector proposed to launch a Prague process for recognition of non-formal learning. This process never really took off. Supported by recent political developments in the field of youth work it is now time to fully start such a process involving European institutions, Member States, youth NGO's, trainers, youth workers / youth leaders and researchers.

To keep in mind:

- Transferability of education and training processes (Bologna, Copenhagen) to youth work and non-formal learning (the Strasbourg Process) → for LLL and youth policies
- Where do we stand? Role(s) of each "body" (EU, CoE, and other civil society / providers of non-formal learning/education)
- Link to the Commission's Recommendation on the promotion and validation of informal and non-formal learning
- Closer cooperation between CoE, EU and member states

1.6 Link to LLL strategy and vice-versa

The youth sector must find a common ground to further define and implement strategies for recognition of youth work. The whole sector of youth work is concerned, diverse disciplines, various methods and approaches, comprising all forms of learning as well as all forms of recognition, be it formal, social, political. There must be a common understanding of what should be recognised, how and by whom, and ranges from concepts of self-recognition to measures of making results of youth work visible.

Also, the communication and co-operation with the lifelong learning, respectively formal education and the vocational education and training sector, ought to be improved. At European Union level a link should be established between the Open Methods of Coordination in education and training and the youth field. Also in the Council of Europe a dialogue with other educational policies e.g. Higher Education and/or Human Rights and Citizenship Education should be deepened. It must be made sure that the education sector recognises learning in youth work as a value in itself and communicates on an equal level as it does within the formal education sector. In the European Union, the Youth on the Move initiative can be the overarching policy framework that can bridge the two policy fields. The future European Skills Passport should, among others, record skills acquired in youth work and facilitate validation through appropriate procedures.

To keep in mind:

- Place of youth work and non-formal learning in LLL
- Recognition of prior learning (for/by higher education)
- Recognition/validation of youth work/professional experience
- Teaching youth work in formal and higher education
- Terminology
- Indicators
- Youth on the Move, Lifelong Learning, Ministerial Conference, European Steering Committee for Youth, etc.
- Communication and Cooperation culture

1.7 Involve stakeholders of the employment sector

The labour market needs work force skilled with a set of key competences among which soft skills play an increasing role. Problem solving, intercultural skills, team spirit, creativity etc. are exactly the competences that young people acquire in non-formal learning schemes of youth work. While in the political debates a lot of attention is dedicated to 'validation' of non-formal learning outcomes at the

work place (and in formal education and training), the impact of learning in youth work activities is constantly undervalued, particularly on the side of employers. A common understanding and language should be developed in order to provide the employment sector with appropriate information on the potential of non-formal and informal learning in youth work. And youth work needs to identify its potential of providing competences for the labour market; at the same time it must be made clear where the limits of this role are.

To keep in mind:

- Outcomes of the *Bridges to Work* conference
- Do we speak the same language?
- What competences are relevant to the employment sector + how to describe/document them?
- Truths and Myths: The role of youth work “versus” the one of higher education and employability.

1.8 Associate the social sector and cooperate with other policy fields and with stakeholders of civil society

Youth work is positioned between education, civil society and the social sector. Even if the links of many youth work activities to the social sector seem to be quite strong, the relationship is in general often still weak. This is specifically true for the relationship of some disciplines of youth work such as open youth / community work and leisure time activities to youth social / welfare work and youth care. The different disciplines of youth work, even if part of the same sector, don't know much about each other. Youth social work often is closer to the social sector than to the youth field. This is proven also when looking at providers of youth social work which mostly are welfare organisations, in rare cases they are youth organisations. A minimum requirement would be the building of strategic partnerships and much better information systems between the various fields.

In the last years the youth sector has steadily grown towards a considerable part of the third sector, in terms of resources invested and size of the work force and thus strengthened its socio-economic scope. Today it is a strong pillar of civil society, together with other stakeholders and NGO's, and it has increased links to other policy fields, which have an impact on youth work such as education, sport, intercultural dialogue, urban and rural policies, intergenerational dialogue. The players in these sectors should be seen as natural strategic partners for the youth field. The volunteer sector, cultural and environmental organisations, human rights organisations, information and counselling services, sport organisations etc., all are part of the third sector and share similar interests. The recognition of youth work (and of the work of the neighbouring sectors) can be increased through a closer cooperation between them.

To keep in mind:

- Youth work by other civil society organisations → focus on social ones
- Non-formal learning/education practices and recognition
- How is learning recognised in the social sector? – similarities and differences of professional pathways
- How is volunteering recognised in the other sectors/fields?
- The need for better cooperation with different actors in different fields

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