



# We have had a dream- At and after the 2015 Convention

By Hanjo Schild and Marta Medlinska

*We've had a dream. A dream where all young people in Europe can find somebody trustworthy (and somewhere safe and welcoming) to talk, encourage and challenge them at times, but not judge or instruct. Namely youth workers, (professional in approach even if not always paid), who are understood and supported. Our dream is that youth workers have the mandate to work with different young people, not only those labelled according to some restrictive funding schemes; that they have fun together, experience, discover, and live through something authentic, or just feel they belong and matter.*



WE NEED TO BUILD BRIDGES  
BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND OTHER SECTORS

Illustration by Vanda Kovács

This is not unheard of. It exists. We were all living proof of the value of youth work in one way or another, beyond keeping young people “off the streets and preventing them from making trouble”. We were more than 400 and we all wanted to go forward together. Some of us even proposed making youth work obligatory and schools – optional. Well, that might not serve our cause... In any case, we had aspirations.

The road from aspirations to action does not have to be wearisome and winding, but it often is. We already have quite a bit of it behind us. What steps come next, in the direction designed by the consensus on shared ideas of what youth work is, whom it involves and how? Do we all have the same reading of that consensus? Who has the power to take which steps?



I THINK IT'S ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE  
TO FIND A COMMON GROUND  
WITH SUCH DIVERSE  
BACKGROUNDS

Illustration by Siiri Taimla



## Before the European Youth Work Convention 20??

We've found common ground. And it's now time to find a solid foundation on which we can build a common house. What is crucial in this endeavour is youth work policy that defines further needs, potential answers and strategies and steers the next political steps. It must also consider the challenges that many young people are facing, such as youth unemployment or precarious work, educational failure, discrimination, social exclusion, marginalisation, violence or conflicts. Youth work and related areas in care and welfare systems are being given, and are ready to take, more responsibility, but it must happen in a serious manner, under fair conditions and with realistic expectations; sufficient resources and support must be granted.

Drafting the envisaged recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will be key in this process. But this will not be enough; the identification of minimum standards for youth work and the definition of principles or guidelines for youth work policy will lead us a step further in building this common house.

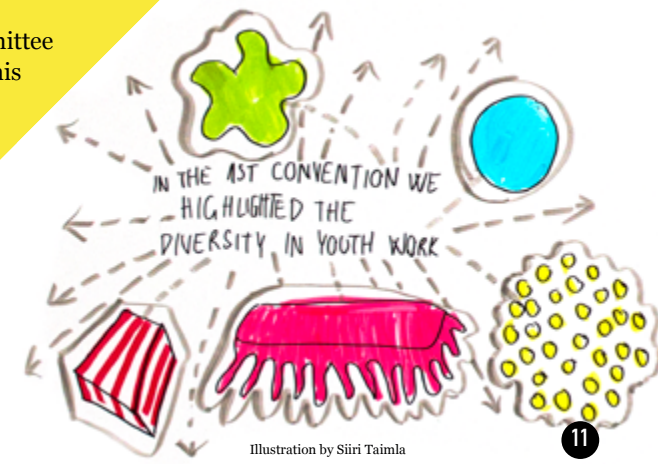


Illustration by Siiri Taimla



## What is the roadmap to such a scenario?

First of all it needs a strong coalition of all involved parties, young people and their associations, youth workers and youth leaders, civil society actors, people working in welfare organisations, policy makers, researchers, public administrators, people in related fields with impact on youth... The dynamics and networks resulting from both the 1st and 2nd European Youth Work Conventions will provide a solid basis to give the youth work sector a new impetus.

Second, it needs institutional support from and involvement of bodies implementing youth policies, for example, in the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities or the Parliamentary Assembly and in the European Union, the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and the Social and Economic Committee, and the Directors General in charge of youth issues in the two institutions and their youth-related structures, such as the Joint Council on Youth and the Youth Working Party, which already support the cause.



Illustration by Aline Rollin



Illustration by Vanda Kovács



Illustration by Aline Rollin

Third, additional supportive activities should pave the way for future joint actions and a better understanding of what youth work is. Just to share some examples: reflections on the history of youth work will continue by providing insights into countries and regions but also into specific aspects of youth work, such as the histories of supranational youth movements. The European Union-Council of Europe youth partnership will publish a youth knowledge book on theories and concepts of youth in Europe, based on the exchanges in the 2nd European Youth Work Convention and the Think Tank "European Youth Policy" will discuss in its next meeting how policy can promote and support youth work. Other initiatives will follow and be implemented by all interested parties.

As the Director General for Democracy in the Council of Europe, Snežana Samardžić-Marković put it in her closing speech at the 2nd European Youth Work Convention: "Our aim is to present the results of this new recommendation to the 3rd European Youth Convention; wherever it takes place, we will be happy to support it."



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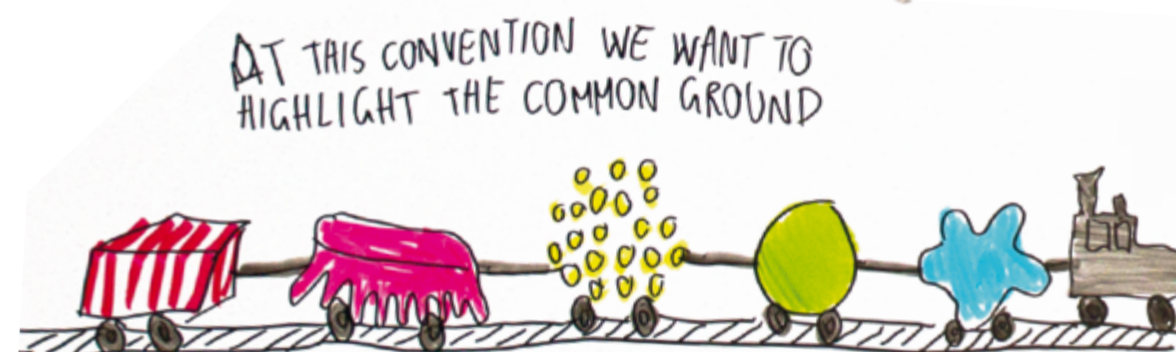


illustration by Siiri Taimla