

What are the competencies taught and do they prepare well youth workers to practice afterwards? Is a work placement foreseen in the formal education curriculum, for example?

Youth work is taught in two different universities – Tallinn and Tartu – regarding the last one we have two separate colleges that have youth work curriculums. In Tallinn University, there is higher applied sciences degree on youth work and master’s degree on youth work management. In Tartu University Narva college, there is higher applied sciences degree on youth work, and they are currently in the process of compiling the bachelor’s degree in youth work, and it is waiting for approval. In Tartu University Viljandi cultural academy, it is taught Leisure Time Manager-Teacher, which is also considered as a part of youth work.

All of the youth work curriculums have to be in accordance with the occupational standard for youth workers. Still, only Tartu University Narva college has completed the procedures, which confirm, that the curriculum covers all competencies of the standard, and graduates receive a mark on their diploma, that the curriculums is in accordance with the standard. They will receive so-called lifelong professional qualification certificate that proves that they have all the preconditions fulfilled in order to handle work on youth field. All other universities are in the process of doing that, but this takes time. In Tallinn University, I have combined the work field applying process of professional certificates into the studying process, so the students will have the possibility to apply for a certificate after finishing the course.

The competencies in the occupational standard are – youth work organization, management, communication and cooperation in the field, ensuring a safe environment, developing youth field, professional self-development, and recurring competencies (including youth worker ethics, language and computer skills, other necessary knowledge). More or less, all the universities cover those competencies, which should prepare the youth workers for the practice. All universities have work placement in the curriculums in different fields (e.g. youth camp, local municipality, youth groups, projects, etc.). The practice takes up to 30% from the curriculum. From all three curriculums of applied higher sciences, 40-50 people per year graduate from youth work in total.

Degree	University	Name of curriculum	Length of studies/part or full time	Number of graduates
Masters	Tallinn University	Youth Work Management	2 years – PT	6 since 2017
Graduation diploma (AHE)	Tartu University Viljandi cultural academy	Leisure Time Manager-Teacher	4 years – PT, FT	341 since 1999
Graduation diploma (AHE)	Tartu University Narva college	Youth Work	4 years – FT, PT	52 since 2008
Graduation diploma (AHE)	Tallinn University	Youth Work	3 years - PT	104 since 2015
Bachelors	Tartu University Narva college	Youth Worker	3 years – FT	NONE, will be opened in 2019

The last occupational standard was created and confirmed in 2017, so the competencies listed in the report may differ a bit because of the new standard having a bit differently set competencies. Basically, only the names of competencies or activities have changed, but the content has remained the same mostly. Main thing added was connected with smart youth work.

If there is a Vocational Education and Training path, please explain it also briefly.

No vocational education exists in youth work in Estonia. Training paths are connected with the NA of E+, who is responsible for the ESF program “Developing trainings of youth workers”, which has many different topics youth workers need for their work. The training activities include:

- long-term developmental programs, which are based on different youth field workers specialties, working environments and developmental needs;
- thematic training activities, which support the development of youth worker competencies on priority topics (e.g. 2018 the priority is smart youth work);
- training activities that support the regional development in the youth field; the activities support the development of inter-municipal youth services;
- trainings supporting internalization that strengthen the youth work practice with international knowledge and skills.

The second part of this program is connected to developing the youth work training field, e.g. developing methods, materials, youth work magazine MIHUS, training of trainers, etc.

All the activities taking place 2015-2018 are funded 100% by the structural funds in total of 1 898 601 euros, from which 85% (1 613 811 euros) comes from European Social Funds and 15% (284 790 euros) from the national structural support.

There are approximately 34 courses annually on national, regional or local level with 1500-1600 participants.

In addition, there are other NGOs offering trainings for example for youth camp workers, where around 600 people are getting trained each year.

Are there numbers that you can refer to or percentage? Is there a national register of youth workers?

We have around 7000 youth workers in Estonia. There is a register of youth workers, who have professional qualification certificates. Youth worker professional qualification – 158 people with valid certificates. Partial professional qualification certificates – 2213 people. Both of those numbers are growing, because the application rounds are still running. The Estonian Qualifications Authority manages the register and it is open and visible for everybody. Unfortunately, not all certificates are visible, because the applicants have the freedom to choose whether it is visible or hidden.

Youth workers can work in various settings or structures in Estonia – local municipalities, (open) youth centres, hobby schools (hobby school is like a music school, sports school, etc. where a young person can concentrate on one topic), hobby activities in schools (e.g. chess club, math club, etc. that takes place in the school environment), youth associations, youth council, youth camps, working camps, etc.

The youth workers usually become youth workers on three occasions:

- 1) they participated in youth work as they were young and active;
- 2) they studied youth work or a similar field and decided to work with youth;

3) by accident.

If non-formal paths are available, who validates them?

It can be considered as non-formal with the professional qualifications of youth workers. It is not mandatory to have the qualification (in most municipalities), but there are more and more people applying for this and municipalities are recognizing the certificates already more and more (e.g. certificates ensure funding, written into the youth work service standard, higher salary, etc.). The commission made by Estonian Youth Work Centre, who is the awarding body, validates all of the youth worker competencies. We validate throughout the process all kind of learning – non-formal, informal and formal. The applicant just has to prove that the experience is there, no matter the place, time or way of obtaining it. There are many youth workers, who are working, but do not have any formal education, and professional certificates are a good option for some of them. They will be able to confirm their competencies and show to others that the work done by them is good. The validation process goes by the occupational standard competencies, which are assessed individually. The certificate that is issued afterwards is formal and official, recognized all over Europe as well, but the process of assessment considers a large amount of non-formal and informal activities. The condition of applying is to prove that you have the competences needed and described in the occupational standard and to be at least 18 years old.

We have issued altogether 195 certificates starting from 2010, of which 48 was just added this year. The numbers have gone up, because of some municipalities who have created quality assurance measures and demand those certificates or youth work education, otherwise the organization will not get any funding. The partial professional qualifications issued for camp counselors and directors, are mandatory in Estonia for all youth camps starting from 7 days (with overnight stay). Those we have around 3000.

Is there cooperation between formal and non-formal education actors? If yes, what are the issues they focus on in their dialogue?

The EYWC and the universities are doing a great deal of cooperation between each other. All the youth work curriculums consider the occupational standard of youth worker (more or less). EYWC participates in all sorts of working groups dealing with youth work curriculums and we also invite universities in our working groups. The main topics or issues:

- master's degree on youth work management – updating the curriculum;
- update of occupational standard;
- bachelor's degree on youth work – creation of new curriculum;
- assessing the accordance to the occupational standard;
- etc.

Are there other stakeholders involved in education and on-the-job support?

The Estonian Youth Workers Association, The Estonian Association of Open Youth Work Centers, Foundation Archimedes Youth agency, Estonian Youth Council, municipalities are usually involved of all sorts of cooperation on education or certificates of youth workers. On-the-job support is offered by the youth workers association by coaching – all youth workers can contact them if they need help in everyday work, supporting personal and professional development, setting goals and reaching them, etc. They have a bank of coaches, which was created in cooperation of The Estonian Youth Workers Association and The Estonian Association of Open Youth Work Centers. In addition, they also offer co-vision for groups of youth workers, who have similar working environments and tasks.

Is there any tension or difference between paid and voluntary youth workers?

As most of the youth workers are paid, then I don't have any idea of any tension between the volunteers and paid workers. Probably the volunteers do a lot and may think that they also deserve being paid for all that work, but I am not sure it causes that much tension that it would show.