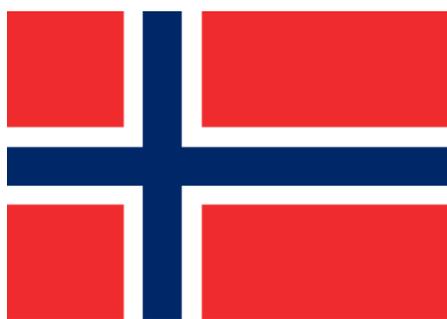


## Youth Partnership

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



# COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH WORK in NORWAY



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# 1. Context of youth work

## Historic origins and traditions of youth work in Norway

Youth work (professionals working with young people in non-formal/informal educational and/or activity settings) have traditionally been adults working (paid or non-paid) in the organisational, cultural and sports sector. Youth work in Norway has further been moved to grassroots level and “decentralised” to local municipalities which have a high degree of autonomy in youth policy and practice.

Youth work specifically needs to be seen in the context of the volunteer sector in Norway.

Volunteer organisations and different forms of volunteer work [dugnad, frivillighetsarbeid, lag, bevegelse], have long been a part of Norwegian culture and society.

The earliest joint and formalised volunteer efforts originate from the mid-19th century, particularly in the missionary, temperance and labour movements, but also in the fields of poverty alleviation, public education [folkeopplysning], cultural heritage [kulturminnevern] and outdoor recreation [friluftsliv].

The organisations affiliated with the labour movement grew in strength and numbers between the First and Second World War (1918-39). Norway saw a further increase and diversification of organisations post-Second World War, and an ever-increasing inclusion in government decision-making processes (Fauske et al. 2009).

The volunteer sector is seen as one of three crucial contributors to the rise of the modern welfare state in Norway post-Second World War (the other two being the social-democratic state and the commercial/industry sector (petroleum sector included)).

The expansion of the government’s responsibilities, moved into fields that had previously been run by volunteer organisations (Report to Storting No. 27 (1996-97)) – particularly in sectors of:

- health and social work;
- child and adolescence;
- culture, sports, and recreation;
- land conservation and environmental protection [naturvern].

The general tendency since the 1960s has been a substantial decrease of membership in organisations in general, and volunteer activity in particular. With that said, Norway has still one of the highest numbers of memberships in interest and volunteer organisations in the world.

“Youth” and adolescence was increasingly acknowledged as a particular and delimited stage between childhood and adulthood after the Second World War. This is reflected in the prevalence and targeting of services through “youth organisations” as well.

Municipal recreational services to youth were offered from the 1960s, particularly in the fields of

- sports;
- music and culture schools [musikk og kulturskoler].

The first municipal recreational youth club was established in 1953, at Hammersborg, in Oslo. Later, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Norway saw an exponential growth in municipal youth and recreational services (Fauske et al. 2009). By 1980, there were approximately 1 000 youth clubs. This number later decreased to 642 municipal recreational clubs in 2007 (and an additional 362 municipal culture and media workshops, and vacation clubs) (KOSTRA, [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)).

The youth volunteer sector has moved from being a purely recreational arena (mainly sports and outdoor recreation, and later arts and culture), to diversification into the education, political, interest organisation and protest movements (particularly from the 1960s).

As child and youth policy has moved from intervention to facilitation, the youth volunteer sector has equally moved from prevention (negative view on youth as potential delinquents in the 1950s and 1960s) into a field of service, facilitation, and education (seeing youth as a resource from the 1970s onwards).

## **Definition, profession and education**

Youth work as a professional category and educational route is less common in Norway. Youth workers are usually qualified as teachers, health workers, social workers [sosionom, sosialt arbeid], or working professionals through equivalent educational routes.

Norway does not have an official definition of youth work.

*What is the context in which youth work happens in your country today?*

Youth work happens for the most part at municipal level, and most often in the volunteer sector, organisational sector, and in the educational/health sector.

*What is on the public policy agenda in general that may affect young people and youth policy?*

Regarding youth work: nothing currently on the public policy agenda.

## 2. Strategic and legislative framework of youth work

Norway has no youth law. Norway has no designated legal framework that applies to youth work.

Norway has no singular youth policy, but rather substantial youth focus segments under each relevant sector (e.g. education, volunteering, sports, health).

Norway's official youth policy/strategy is described in: The government's report on current and future child and youth policy initiatives 2015 ([The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2015](#)). The report describes areas within general policy of which the government focuses on the needs and rights of children and young people between 2013 and 2017.

There is no singular profession that works in the arena of youth work in Norway. As mentioned earlier, youth workers might be professionals or volunteers, civil servants or work for NGOs.

The various acts regulating youth work, may it be in the private, volunteer or public sector, have added amendments of various pre-screening measures prior to hiring child or youth workers. The pre-screening measures involve getting an ordinary, exhaustive or extended police certificate, depended on the nature of work that the youth worker will be hired to do.

The reader may go to the Norwegian Police's services overview to [read more about police certificates](#).

There is currently no national regulative norm, or dedicated regulation/statute to the hiring of youth workers. The leader of one of Norway's largest union (Fagforbundet) voiced concern about this [during a speech in August 2016 \[in Norwegian\]](#).

*How do youth workers themselves define youth work in your country/what do they understand by it?*

There is no coherent or agreed upon definition of what youth work is. Youth workers themselves most often define themselves by their professional degree/training: teachers, health workers, social workers, etc.

### 3. Recognition

According to the definition of [recognition](#) there is **self, social, formal and political recognition** of youth work and of youth workers (professionals or volunteers). What is the situation in your country on these different dimensions of recognition of youth work?

**Formal:** See below.

**Political:** No national regulative norm, or dedicated regulation/statue to the hiring of youth workers.

**Social:** Youth work is a professional category that is seen as inferior to those of teachers, social workers, or health workers. Untrained professionals [ufaglært] may also be someone who you would expect to find in the volunteer/organisational sector working with youth.

**Self:** Definition/recognition is most often by their professional degree/training: teachers, health workers, social workers etc.

*If there is a legal framework for the profession of youth work per se or embedded in other fields, please explain briefly and reference it.*

No legal framework.

*Is your country involved in any European or applying any national initiatives to support youth work (for example, Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio, Council of Europe quality label for youth centres, Erasmus + Youthpass, European Youth Capitals, Youth Friendly Cities, others)?*

As youth work happens predominantly at the municipal level, this segment describes the co-operative relations between the Erasmus+ national agency (NA) in Norway and the municipalities.

When it comes to informational meetings and trainings, the NA usually organises these in co-operation with regional authorities, in order to reach multiple municipalities. The NA has ambitions to increase the number of municipalities involved in Erasmus+: Youth in Action, and the general quality of the NA-municipal co-operation.

Since 2014 and the introduction of Erasmus+, the NA has not had enough resources to follow up municipalities sufficiently.

Representatives of the NA may be asked to do outcall visits:

- for informational purposes on the Erasmus+ programme;
- to consult and discuss project ideas;
- to consult technicalities and procedures.

Most communication with municipalities has been through e-mail and telephone, and the majority of the contact has been with municipalities that are already familiar with Erasmus+. The NA has increased its effort in promoting TCA activities (targeting newcomers) to municipalities – mostly through their multipliers working at regional level.

The main concerns regarding the co-operation between municipalities and NAs are that quite a few of the 426 municipalities are aware of the possibilities within Erasmus+, and even fewer are using the programme strategically. So far in Erasmus+, 28 municipalities have been involved in projects granted by our NA. That is only 7% of the total. Out of these 28, 9% have applied for (and been granted) more than one project in the period.

#### *How many projects with municipalities/municipal youth work exist?*

Since the introduction of Erasmus+ in Norway, between 10 and 21% of the granted projects each year came from municipalities (in total 53 projects). In addition, about 5% each year come from the regional volunteering centrals [Frivillighetsentralene]. These are often run on a co-operative basis between municipality and NGOs.

Most frequently projects have been run under Key Action 1 – youth exchanges and European Voluntary Service (EVS) – to a smaller extent in Youth Worker Mobility.

Since the introduction of Erasmus+ in Norway, including Round 1, 2017, the National Agency (hereinafter NA) has granted 53 projects (17%) coming from municipalities; 20 EVS, 27 Youth Exchanges, 7 Mobility of Youth Workers, 2 under Key Action 2 and 1 under Key Action 3.

As described above. The most strategic way of reaching youth is through the NA's co-operation with the regional authorities. The NA also has a network of approximately 30 local contacts/multipliers nationwide, many of which are employed by the municipalities.

TCA activities are particularly promoted to the municipalities. The aim is to provide updated information on current courses offered, and targeting that information to those whom the courses will be of particular relevance.

When selecting participants to TCA activities, priority is given to youth workers from the municipalities.

As the main challenges to cooperating with municipalities, the NA lists the following. The use of Erasmus+ seems to be linked to single individuals who find the programme attractive in their work. A returning challenge is relating to organisational overturn, as the use of Erasmus+ is not picked up after previous presiders/contacts. This makes it difficult to have the municipal youth work use Erasmus+ strategically and long term. Potential solutions will require involvement of decision makers – not only the youth workers.

The mere vastness of the geography of Norway is also a big challenge when it comes to co-operating with municipalities. It is impossible for the NA to travel to all 426 municipalities. It can be a day's travel for them to come to Oslo. This means that some regions have less access to the NA than others. The national agency has recruited the above-mentioned multipliers in order to balance this inequity, but the multipliers are not paid, and have limited means for offering promotion and counselling.

In most of the municipalities, the budget for youth work is limited. This often means that youth workers are employed in minor part-time positions. Taking part in the information sessions or TCA activities could eat up their hours quite quickly, thus making it difficult to attend.

The NA sees a need to reach out to more people from the same municipality at the same time, in order for them to be able to pull together. The municipalities seldom have coordinating platforms to support the otherwise loosely connected municipal employees/Erasmus+ contacts.

*Is there any formal validation system of non-formal education and learning in youth work contexts implemented in your country?*

Norway has a designated route in upper secondary school, educating child and youth workers [Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderfaget]. This programme consists of two years of classes and two years of apprenticeship before the youth worker reaches examination [Fagbrev]. The programme has been popular, but unfortunately less than three out of ten candidates have gone the apprenticeship route [lærlingepraktis]. The remaining candidates have chosen for various reasons to qualify for further studies in higher education [generell studiekompetanse].

Up until 2014, the annual application numbers for this programme had been approximately 8 000. Ninety per cent of the applicants were girls. For more comments and facts on this programme, go to the research organisation Fafo's article on this topic [in Norwegian]: [Barne- og ungdomsarbeidere dropper fagbrevet](#).

Norway has no national youth work foundation, or institute of youth work funded by the country's public authorities.

HSBUA2 – Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderfag – enrolled students:

- 2 752 (2014-15)
- 2 780 (2015-16)
- 2 927 (2016-17)

See also [in Norwegian] [Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderfaget Vg3 / opplæring i bedrift \(BUA3-01\)](#)

## **4. Funding youth work**

Youth work at the municipal level is usually funded through direct employment. Youth work as a professional category is less common. Youth workers are teachers, health workers, social workers, etc.

The municipal ratio of funding (where earmarked funding is concerned) varies greatly. Municipalities are at liberty to allocate funding to local/present needs, as long as their appointed function as welfare providers is upheld by law.

It is a general tendency that the European level funding is at a minimum for local level activities and local level youth work. Generally, international funding sources for youth work activities in Norway are minimal.

Norway has no national programme supporting youth work.

## 5. Structures, actors and levels in youth work provision

### 5.1 State structures/public authorities deciding on or providing youth work

1) [The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research](#) [Kunnskapsdepartementet]

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for

- primary and secondary education and vocational training;
- tertiary vocational education;
- higher education;
- adult learning;
- research.

2) [The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training \(Udir\)](#) [Utdanningsdirektoratet – Udir]

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir) is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. The directorate is responsible for the development of kindergarten and primary and secondary education and vocational training.

Udir has the overall responsibility for supervising kindergarten, education and the governance of the education sector, as well as the implementation of acts of parliament and regulations.

Udir is responsible for all national statistics concerning kindergarten, primary and secondary education. On the basis of these statistics it initiates, develops and monitors research and development.

The objective of the directorate is to ensure that all children, pupils and apprentices receive the high quality education they are entitled to.

The two above-mentioned actors are working to the educational programme HSBUA2 - Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderfag (see description at the end of section 3).

The public authorities who deliver services in youth work are mostly found at municipal level, either directly through the municipalities themselves, or through the volunteer/organisational sector (or by co-operative efforts between the two).

### 5.2 National or local youth councils

Not involved in the planning, support and delivery of youth work.

### **5.3 Youth and youth work NGOs**

Norway has no youth work organisation, or youth organisation directly addressing issues connected to the profession of youth work.

### **5.4 Other relevant actors**

N/A.

## 6. Forms and examples of youth work in your country

Norway favours formal learning over non-formal/informal learning. This is reflected in all of the youth policy arena, including the way youth work's status and prevalence as a professional category is disfavoured. Even if there is a designated educational route in upper secondary school for child and youth workers, youth work in non-formal and informal learning environments is often done by formally untrained personnel [ufaglært arbeidskraft] or personnel trained as social workers or teachers/pedagogy/specialised pedagogy degrees. Youth work in this capacity is not a particularly prevalent profession (as a meaningful category to discuss), and therefore not a very pressing political issue.

With that said, youth work (as delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes) happens in:

- the organisational and volunteer sector;
- sports and organised recreational activity [friluftsliv];
- municipal services catering to youth in their free-time settings – either delivered by the municipalities themselves, or by partner organisations/volunteer organisations.

*Are there specific forms the state encourages or supports more and why?*

Formal educational settings are favoured before the non-formal/informal educational settings.

Other professional qualifications are favoured before youth worker's degree: e.g. teacher, educators, social worker, nurse or health worker, or equivalent.

Learning outcomes in the formal setting are more controlled, and can be more easily measured, evaluated and altered by desired outcomes.

*Is there support for youth work targeting specifically young people with fewer opportunities? If yes, who supports it and who carries it out?*

Yes, and particularly through the youth clubs, and in sports and organised recreational activities.

This is supported by the local municipalities, and grant schemes provided by state actors addressing challenges offered by marginalisation and intersectionality/discrimination.

See: Youth Wiki Norway, and [4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#).

*Please give three examples of successful youth work practices representative of youth work in your country?*

### **Youth clubs and houses [fritidsklubber, ungdomsklubber, ungdomshus]**

Youth clubs [ungdomsklubber], youth houses [ungdomshus] and equivalent municipal free access services to youths, are usually funded and managed by municipal administrations, and staffed by municipal employees and volunteers.

Some youth clubs are also owned and managed by private, sports or religious organisations.

The size and scope of the services, level and form of activity, ownership, opening hours, etc. vary from municipality to municipality.

It may be a local community house [bygde/grendehus] offering a youth disco once a month, to a professionally driven youth house with designated youth health and counselling services, offices for interest organisations, concert and black box localities for bands and theatre groups, and so forth.

Examples of more professionally/large-scale driven youth houses are often found in the larger metro areas:

- Riverside Youth House [[Riverside ungdomshus](#)], (Oslo)
- X-ray Youth Culture House [[X-Ray Ungdomskulturhus](#)], (Oslo)
- Eighteen Eighty Youth House [[Attenåtti Ungdomshuset](#)] (Bergen)
- Metropolis – Youth Culture House [[Metropolis – de unges kulturhus](#)] (Stavanger)
- Tvibit Youth House [[Tvibit ungdomshus](#)], (Tromsø)

To exemplify: The Tvibit Youth House offers the following:

- Office and youth deliberation space for the Municipal Youth Council [[Ungdomsrådet – Tromsø kommune](#)]
- Youth health clinic [[helsestasjonen](#)]
- Film/director centre for youth [[Filmveksthuset](#)],
- International movie festival ([NUFF](#))
  - Exchange project between Norway, Kenya and South Africa [[Screen](#)]
- Youth developmental project with Tromsø's twin city Gaza City/Palastine [[Palestinaprojektet](#)]
- Performance stages and band rehearsal facilities [[musikk](#)]
- Entrepreneur/project development services [[Prosjektvugga](#), [Yoghurt](#)]
- [Mádji](#) – a group for Sami youth and culture
- Office for LGBT youth [[Skeiv ungdom Troms \(SkUTr\)](#)]
- Inter-municipal co-operation with the youth houses [Bula](#) (Balsfjord Municipality) and [Credo](#) (Karlsøy Municipality)
- Co-operation with [Kulta](#) [in Norwegian], a centre for stage performance and production training

Tvibit delivered a report to the Ministry of Children, Equality and Inclusion in 2012 on the establishment of a National Knowledge Centre on Youth Work and participation [[Nasjonalt kompetansesenter for ungdomsarbeid og medvirkning \(NAKUM\)](#) – in Norwegian]. The report also referred to other countries' establishment and experiences of similar centres:

- [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (ENTK)
- [Allianssi](#) [in Finnish] (Finland)
- [Participation works!](#) and [National Youth Agency/The Institute for Youth Work](#) (Great Britain)

- [The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society \[Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor\]](#) (Sweden)

The national youth club organisation: [Ungdom & Fritid](#) (Youth & Free-time) is a national, non-profit organisation, which has approximately 600 youth clubs, 50 000 youth club members and 2 500 employees. The organisation arranges seminars and courses within the field of youth work – both for young people as well as for professionals and volunteers.

The organisation

- produces relevant literature;
- trains professional youth workers;
- offers help and advice to member and employees of youth clubs.

This organisation is a member of the Nordic Federation of Societies for Youth and Leisure Clubs (UFN) in the Nordic region and a member of [the European Confederation of Youth Clubs \(ECYC\)](#).

### **Examples of good practices**

Each year, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs appoints a committee, and elects a “Municipality of the year” that has demonstrated “A successful initiative and strategy in developing an environment in which children and youth can thrive, develop, and participate” [\[Nominer Årets barne- og ungdomskommune\]](#).

Each year the municipalities are invited to attend a conference on child and youth policy initiatives and facilitation. It is at this conference the winner of the round of nomination is announced.

Candidates for the “Municipality of the year” may be nominated by

- other municipalities;
- child and youth organisations;
- local and regional child/youth councils; or
- other/equivalent consultation bodies/channels that the municipalities/counties offer for children and youth.

*Do you have examples of digital/online youth work developing?*

**Ung.no** [\[Young.no\]](#)

[Ung.no \[in Norwegian\]](#) is the most extensive and most visited informational web page in Norway for young people. The web page is hosted and operated by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, on behalf of the Ministry of Children and Equality.

The web page has subsections that particularly address the rights of the child, where children and youth can post their questions and concerns. Each question will be answered by directorate staff, or referred to a more appropriate recipient should the

question or concern need additional attention, or the child/young person have additional questions.

Main target groups addressed: the target group is youth between the ages of 13 and 20 years.

## **7. Quality standards**

The county governors and their offices are the central government's representative in the 19 counties of Norway. Their responsibility is to check and make sure that the municipalities solve the tasks appointed by the central government according to set standards, and by law. The municipalities are the main providers and employers of youth workers.

The municipal administrations also need to report (and are monitored by) ministerial or executive agency actors if they receive funding from specific grants or schemes, or solve specific tasks assigned to them by the ministry/executive agency.

## 8. Knowledge and data on youth work

No continuous documentation, but a literature review undertaken by researchers Mona BRÅTEN and Anne Hagen TØNDER in 2014.

Mona Bråten og Anna Hagen Tønder. Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderens stilling i arbeidslivet. Fafo-notat 2014: 10 [The child and youth worker's position in the Norwegian labour market. Fafo-brief 2014: 10]. The reader may contact the researchers directly for elaborations and further information.

[www.fafo.no/images/pub/2014/10197.pdf](http://www.fafo.no/images/pub/2014/10197.pdf) [in Norwegian]

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## **9. European and international dimension of youth work in the country**

It is a general tendency that the European level funding is at a minimum for local level activities and local level youth work. There are equally few, if any, international dimensions to youth work in general in Norway, outside the formal educational system.

The Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme is the main programme promoting exchanges of youth outside of formal educational programmes and exchanges. The NA's activities are further described under section [3. Recognition](#).

Norway supports the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, but is currently not undertaking any actions described in the set of recommendations to support youth work in Norway further.

## 10. Current debates and open questions/policies on youth work

[Ungdom og Fritid](#) ([The national youth club organization – description in English](#)) is a national, non-profit organisation organising the over 600 youth clubs in Norway.

Ungdom og Fritid is currently lobbying for legal and national standards for the establishment and operation of youth clubs and youth houses, including the hiring of youth workers, e.g. through mandatory screenings of candidates and their criminal records.

Ungdom og Fritid is also working on the establishment of a college level training programme for youth workers. Currently, Norway only offers this option at upper secondary school level. Read more above on the programme [HSBUA2 - Barne- og ungdomsarbeiderfag](#).

Ungdom and Fritid can be contacted at [post@ungdomogfritid.no](mailto:post@ungdomogfritid.no).