

What becomes apparent is the overlapping between the title of “youth worker” and other professions that include working with young people. This is a common and recurring feature in the youth field. Not everyone who is working with young people has a degree in youth work and not everyone who has a degree in youth work or an associated degree is working daily with young people. Recognition of youth work and the value of the profession for a community are closely linked to a formalised educational path to it. By offering degree-level education to become a youth worker, the community offering it also awards status and recognition to the profession overall. On the other hand, formal education can also be motivated by other factors, such as regulation, increasing comparability and limiting the openness of a professional field. The youth work field is not and should not be simply a recipient of curricula and formally awarded recognition in the form of a degree, but rather a partner and driver of creating formal education opportunities for youth workers that resonate with the needs of young people in Europe.



Finland provides a vocational (upper secondary) qualification (120 study weeks) that can also be acquired as a competence-based qualification in youth and leisure instruction. Norway has a four-year course for training child and youth workers, comprising two years in upper secondary schools and two years in apprenticeships, while Sweden has a two-year course for recreation leaders, which is provided by the Swedish folk high schools.

Germany has a number of degree-level courses in social work with a focus on “youth work”, “child/youth work” and “youth in theory and practice of social work”. Courses in social pedagogy and social work in both Germany and Austria are paths into youth work as they are in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries.

Malta has degree-level courses specifically in youth work, mainly focusing on youth and community work. The country provides both a primary degree and master’s degree course as well as a course in youth ministry, which entitles the graduates to a youth worker warrant.

## Non-formal pathways

What sets youth work apart from most other fields is the ratio to which NFE is a part of the professional journey. Since a large proportion of youth work is done through NFE, the path of most youth workers includes lots of time in NFE activities as a participant and lots of training about NFE through NFE.

Where we can see a lot of differentiation across Europe is in who provides, who funds and who (if at all) accredits the competences gained through participation in NFE.

NFE learning opportunities are provided by state-supported bodies or institutions, by the voluntary youth sector, as well as by European support programmes. Often these are interwoven and interdependent, of course. A youth organisation, for example, implements a non-formal learning programme, which is financed by a nation state, a regional governmental body, or European programmes such as Erasmus+ or the youth programme of the Council of Europe. Some large youth organisations do have the resources to fund, implement and accredit their own learning paths (scouts, some faith-based organisations, large student-exchange