



VISIBLE VALUE

SYMPOSIUM FINAL REPORT

31 May-1 June 2023, European Youth Centre Budapest



Marti Taru

with help from working group rapporteurs András Déri,
Marita Grubišić-Čabo, Anna Lodeserto, Sladjana Petkovic,
Dunja Potočnik and Guillaume Redig

Youth Partnership

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



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Executive summary

Context

The symposium took place midway between the **3rd European Youth Work Convention (EYWC) (2020)** and the **4th EYWC (to be held in 2025)**. One of the outcomes of the 3rd EYWC was the **European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA)**, which had been implemented for more than two years by the time of the symposium. This temporal context sets the stage for discussions and reflections on youth work development in general as well as on the progress made since the previous convention, while also shaping expectations for future developments leading up to the 2025 event.

Aims

The symposium served as a platform for the youth work community to **network, share resources, showcase good practices, discuss research, identify needs and reflect on trends in the context of Council of Europe and European Union initiatives**. The focus areas included the EYWA, its development and implementation, and an analysis of the Youth Partnership's role. The event aimed to strengthen the EYWA's implementation at different levels and gather feedback on initiatives by the Youth Partnership in order to draw practical conclusions. Also included were the youth work objectives, priorities and the required support in Europe, along with the expectation to collect ideas for the next EYWC.

Participants

The symposium involved about a **hundred participants** from various backgrounds, all closely linked to the Youth Partnership and European youth work. This included **60 youth work practitioners, 19 researchers, and 21 policy makers or policy experts**, with some participants holding multiple roles. In addition, the event was organised by a team of about 10 people. **High-level officials from the European Commission and the Council of Europe** attended (or contributed online), alongside delegates from the **Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) and the European Youth Forum**. The participants represented 31 countries, all members of the Council of Europe.

The past and present Youth Partnership

Established in 1998, the Youth Partnership has had a key role in advancing youth work in Europe, especially since 2022 when the Council of Europe and the European Commission decided to enhance their co-operation on youth work and assign a **stronger role to the Youth Partnership in supporting the implementation of the EYWA**. It has also supported policy makers and practitioners with **knowledge, evidence-based tools, and best practices** in youth work, and has facilitated the establishment of the network of the **Pool of European Youth Researchers**. As a platform, it unites actors from varied backgrounds and European countries to address youth sector challenges. Recently, the Council of Europe and the European Union have stepped up their recognition of the partnership's growing role in the implementation of European youth field policy.

The future of the Youth Partnership

The symposium showcased the **conviction of youth work practitioners** and the **support from partner organisations**, implying a **positive trajectory** for the Youth Partnership. This support derives from and parallels with the Youth Partnership's **clearly recognised competitive advantages** and its **significant role in the European youth field**. The partnership's **unique position** as an actor at the European level is marked by its capacity for **knowledge building** and **creating interconnections across administrative levels, countries, policy sectors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations**, especially those that are **youth-led**. This status has been attained through **time, effort** and a series of **initiatives which have proved successful**. The **present state of youth work** and the Youth Partnership serve as evidence to the saying that: **"The best way to predict the future is to actively shape it."** This process, with its inherent uncertainty, will likely continue in a similar manner in the future, potentially leading to **greater recognition** of the youth field and the work of the **EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership**.



Past and present European youth work

Four main themes were central in the symposium: the **recognition of youth work**, learning new skills within the context of transitioning from childhood to the status of active members of society, **supporting vulnerable youth** in their entry to the labour market and enhancing **youth democratic participation**.

In Europe, the **recognition of youth work** is complex, with substantial differences across countries and political and administrative levels. Although acknowledged in key European policy documents,[1] youth work often faces recognition issues at national and local levels. Unequal pay, limited career opportunities, the devaluation of youth worker roles, and insufficient communication about the benefits of youth work result in a continual struggle for fair recognition with other occupations. Yet, in the past five to 10 years, **positive strides** have been made in the recognition of youth work. The youth work scope has been expanding, especially through the rise of **digital and hybrid youth work** and in its role in managing recent crises. A shortage of opportunities for vulnerable youth was identified as a long-standing challenge.

The symposium adhered to the viewpoint and demonstrated that recognition should be seen in the round, encompassing **political recognition, societal recognition and self-recognition**. All these forms tie in with setting clear standards for youth workers and developing professional pathways, including the provision of educational opportunities. The importance of blending **formal and non-formal educational approaches** for youth workers was also underscored.

The workshops highlighted recognition of youth work as an important development, with examples from the UK and Serbia showing how youth work has been successfully integrated into institutions and policy. However, challenges persist in achieving professional recognition, as observed from the experiences of North Macedonia's Union of Youth Work and Romania's national agency (NA), with issues such as lack of visibility, absence of quality standards and the need for support at both local and national levels; in the case of Hungary, the term "youth worker" is missing altogether. The need for **documenting outcomes** was highlighted, recognising the existence of diverse methods but also emphasising a **scientific approach** in assessing the impact of youth work. Education and training were identified as crucial, with Ireland's NSETS[2] showcasing quality standards and collaboration across jurisdictions for **professional mobility and recognition of youth workers**. Altogether, the workshops depicted a strong momentum towards professional recognition of youth work through a **multi-pronged approach** involving professionalisation and service provision, education and training, integration with policy development, and **impact measurement**. Various initiatives and strategies, including those at **European level and by the Council of Europe and European Union**, are aimed at improving youth work and promoting its recognition.

[1] [EU Council Resolution on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda](#) (2020/C 415/01) and Council of Europe [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work](#).

[2] [The North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work](#).

The future of European youth work

The symposium emphasised the **proactive role of youth work in shaping society**. Youth work is viewed as an investment in younger generations, serving as a catalyst for nurturing hope, promoting equality and fostering a shared vision for a better future.

In anticipation of the future, the recognition of youth work was a key theme, with the expectation that it should be placed on a par with other professions that serve young people as a matter of priority. Achieving recognition was envisioned as a **two-way process**: on the one hand, the value of youth work is documented by **high-quality evidence** leading to inclusion in policy programmes, and on the other, its capabilities and impact are enhanced by inclusion in such policy programmes. Improvements in **self-recognition, societal recognition and political recognition** were deemed crucial in this process, in parallel with political will, government support, increased funding and **legislative backing**.

The need for **quality assessment and evidence of impact**, along with **regular research and monitoring**, was emphasised separately.

Advancements in **education and training for youth workers**, blending formal and non-formal methods, and increased tertiary degree programmes were seen as essential. This tied in with developing unified **occupational and educational standards** for youth workers.

Enhanced dialogue and active engagement between youth and policy makers were identified as important elements in fostering an environment of **civic engagement**. Pertinent to enhancing civic engagement was the provision of **enabling infrastructure** – youth centres and clubs, and equally, more inclusive practices. Also, improved **mental health support** for youth workers was seen as highly desirable.

The integration of **digital practices and artificial intelligence (AI)** in youth work was anticipated to evolve. The role of youth work in **crisis situations** and political disruptions, as well as its extension to individuals over 25 years old, were recognised as areas for future exploration.



1] Appendix 1.
[2] Appendix 1.

Part 1: Background, aims, participants and structure

Background

In terms of timing, a significant aspect that defines the symposium is its positioning at the halfway point between the 3rd European Youth Work Convention (EYWC) held in 2020 and the upcoming fourth convention scheduled for 2025. The framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA)[1] was developed based on the European Union's Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and the Council of Europe's Youth sector strategy 2030 and its CM/Rec(2017)4 Recommendation on youth work. Following the EYWC in 2020, this new framework was adopted by the December 2020 EU Council resolution on the EYWA [3], which notably suggests assigning a specific role to the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership in ensuring synergies and facilitating dialogue for youth workers. This temporal context sets the stage for discussions and reflections on youth work development in general and on the progress made since the previous convention, while also shaping expectations for future developments leading up to the 2025 event.

Aims

The processes mentioned in the previous paragraph provided a backdrop for the symposium, therefore influencing the expected outcomes of the event. Overall, the symposium was envisioned as a space for the youth work community to engage in networking, showcasing good practices, resource sharing, research discussions, needs identification, and in reflection on youth work trends in the framework of the Council of Europe and the European Union youth work initiatives and beyond. More concretely, the outcomes encompass a specific focus on the EYWA: initiatives and good practices on youth work development and the implementation of the EYWA; analysis of the Youth Partnership's overall work on the topic; strengthening the implementation architecture for the EYWA at European, national and local levels, and feedback on studies and manuals developed or were being developed by the Youth Partnership. At the same time, they also include more generally: practical conclusions on the objectives, the priorities and support needed for youth work development in Europe based on the latest research findings on youth work policy and practices, ideas for the next European Youth Work Convention and suggestions for the Youth Partnership and its partner institutions for better support to youth work development and the implementation the EYWA.

[3]EU Council Resolution on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01).

Participants

The symposium's themes were shaped by inputs and discussions from approximately a hundred individuals from diverse backgrounds, but closely connected to the Youth Partnership and European youth work. Among the participants, youth work practitioners were most represented, with 60 attendees. Representation from other sectors was lower: 19 researchers and 21 policy makers or policy experts. It is worth noting that some participants held multiple roles. In addition, the organising team of approximately 10 people should also be included in the participant count.

From an institutional perspective, the two partner organisations – the European Commission and the Council of Europe – were represented by high-level officials. The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), and the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) were each represented by several delegates. The European Youth Forum was represented by its president.

Symposium participants came from 31 countries, which are all member states of the Council of Europe.



Structure

The symposium's detailed programme can be found in Appendix 2. However, it is important for the reader to understand the main building blocks of the event, as outlined below.

The symposium opened with two plenaries on the first morning. High-level policy makers from the European Commission and the Council of Europe, as well as senior officials from other significant European youth field organisations, delivered their welcome speeches and participated in facilitated panel discussions. Upholding the values of involvement, participants also had the opportunity to express their opinions and discuss the topics at hand.

In the afternoon, a panel discussion, composed of a mix of practitioners, policy makers and an academia representative, took place to explore the current issues in youth work development. This was followed by parallel sessions of seven working groups.[4]

The first day concluded with a celebratory barbecue party, "Celebrating 25 years of success", which also served as an informal networking event.

The second day began with a panel discussion that showcased the value of youth work from the perspective of young people. This was followed by a "tool fair" style session, where participants could move between stalls and spend more time on topics of interest to them. After a short break, this session was followed by parallel sessions of eight working groups,[5] focusing on practical local and international examples of youth work and youth work development.

After lunch, an interactive plenary session took place where the focus was on practical conclusions regarding the objectives, priorities and support needed for youth work development in Europe. The symposium concluded with a panel discussion of leaders from European youth field organisations, introduced by remarks from the general rapporteur.



[4] Appendix 1.

[5] Appendix 1.

Part 3: Content and issues raised

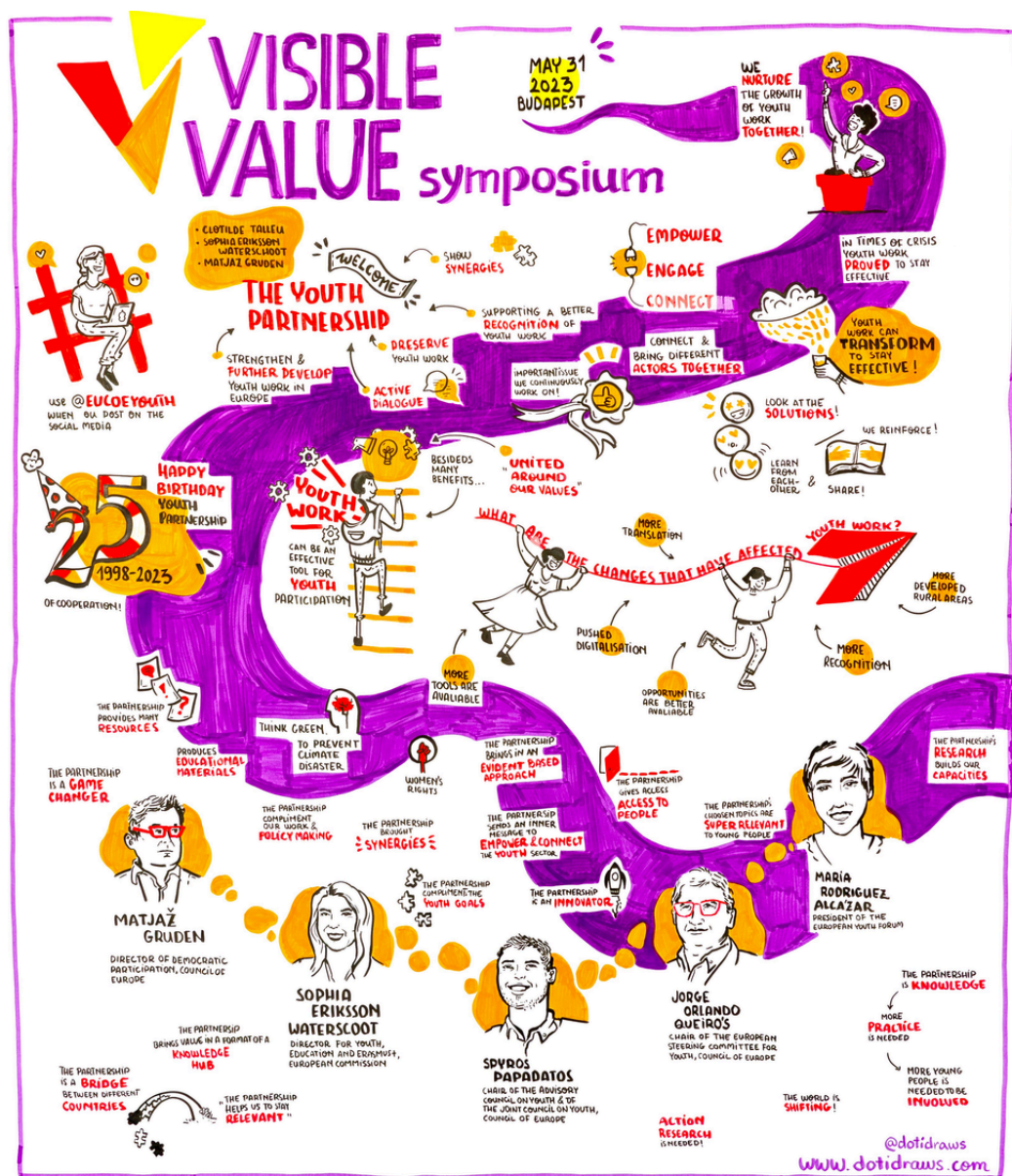
This report provides a summary of opinions, viewpoints and expectations expressed by various actors at the symposium. These have been organised into two main themes: The Youth Partnership and European youth work, each presented from two perspectives: past and present, and future. Within these four broad categories, a fine-grained analysis of the discussions and presentations from various sessions is presented.

Reflections on the past and present role of the Youth Partnership

The Youth Partnership, which was established in 1998, has undergone significant changes over the past 25 years. With the expansion of the European Union from 14 countries in 1998 to 27 in 2023, and the Council of Europe increasing its member states from 39 to 46 during the same period, the Youth Partnership's role and functions have evolved. While the organisation's history warrants further exploration, the participants of the symposium primarily focused on its current role in the European youth field and emphasised the importance of learning from past experiences. Over the years, the Youth Partnership has reached several significant milestones. Since 1998, it has actively worked towards strengthening youth work in Europe, with a particular emphasis on this area since 2022. The Youth Partnership has played a key role in providing evidence-based tools and facilitating good practice in policy contexts. By equipping policy makers and practitioners with knowledge and resources in the field of youth and youth work, the Youth Partnership aims to contribute to the advancement of the European youth agenda. Notably, the establishment of the network of youth researchers and its successor, the Pool of European Youth Researchers, have been crucial milestones for the organisation.

Additionally, the Youth Partnership serves as a platform for bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and countries to discuss and share challenges in the youth sector. In recent years, both the Council of Europe and the European Union have recognised the Youth Partnership's importance and have assigned it a more significant role in implementing their respective policies. The European Commission, in particular, has increased its support for the Youth Partnership to ensure the effective implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda (see also Youth Partnership 2022-23 work plan[6]). The Council of Europe, on the other hand, has emphasised the value of youth work in promoting democracy and addressing the needs of marginalised young people. This commitment is evident in their youth sector strategy for 2030, which includes a focus on youth work.

[6] [Youth Partnership \(2021\)](#), [EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2022-23 work plan, Summary](#).



Reflections on the past and present role of European youth work

Plenaries, participants' feedback and group discussions at workshops and guided interactive plenary sessions provided abundant information about participants' opinions and views on past and present youth work. Discussions often included elements of the future but for analytical reasons, the arguments and discussions related to the future are outlined in the next section of the report.

In the first sessions, four staple themes emerged: the recognition of youth work, learning new skills within the context of transitioning from childhood to being an active member of society, and the two sub-areas of supporting vulnerable youth in their transition to the labour market and enhancing youth democratic participation. As the symposium progressed, participants not only delivered more nuanced views but also broadened the spectrum of topics to be considered.

The issue of youth work recognition is complex in Europe and has a long history stretching back to the early years of the Youth Partnership (Council of Europe and EU 2004[7]). Differences between countries as well as across political and administrative levels of Europe are evident: some countries recognise youth work as an occupation, such as Estonia, Ireland and Finland, whereas others do not recognise it at all, such as Greece (for a conceptually broader and empirically grounded approach to the topic see Kiilakoski 2020[8]).

At European policy document level, youth work is recognised as a practice that meaningfully contributes to the lives of young people by supporting their personal and social development, as well contributing to society at large. As mentioned earlier, the situation regarding the recognition of youth work varies at national or local level, and in many countries youth work is not recognised as a significant practice compared to other similar occupations and professions such as teaching, social work and community work. Participants mentioned several issues in this regard such as youth workers often face unequal pay in comparison to their counterparts in other professions, their career opportunities are limited or virtually non-existent, and youth workers also feel that their tasks and rights are undervalued and downplayed in comparison to other occupations.

[7] Council of Europe and European Commission (2004), "Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training & learning in the youth field", Working paper: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261704/Pathways_towards_validation.pdf.

[8] Kiilakoski T. (2020), "Diversity of practice architectures: education and career paths for youth workers", in Taru M., Krzaklewska E. and Basarab T. (eds), Youth worker education in Europe: policies, structures, practices, Youth Knowledge #26, Council of Europe and European Commission: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261623/Web-PREMS-051920-Education-of-youth-workers-in-Europe.pdf>.

In terms of changes in the recognition of youth work, the dominant view expressed by participants was that progress has been made in the past five to 10 years. This viewpoint was complemented by the broadening scope of youth work, driven by the emergence of digital and hybrid youth work, as well as the positive role it played during recent crises (refugees and migrants, Covid-19, the ongoing war in Ukraine). However, participants also expressed less optimistic perspectives. They highlighted the lack of available youth work services for young people in vulnerable situations, insufficient communication about the positive effects and impacts of youth work, and the ongoing issue of youth work not receiving equal recognition compared to similar occupations. As mentioned earlier, these challenges are mainly specific to certain European countries, while in others, youth work is acknowledged as a recognised occupation. Additionally, a complex and contradictory interplay between the quest for youth work recognition and discontent arises when policy makers expect youth work to fulfil specific societal roles, leading to the perception of youth work as being instrumentalised. Such perception is rooted in value conflicts that have a long-standing history within the youth field.

The symposium emphasised the importance of discussing recognition in its broadest sense, as there are multiple types of recognition.[9] The main forms of recognition include political recognition, which refers to the role assigned to youth work in policy documents; societal recognition, which pertains to how various social actors, stakeholders and society as a whole perceive the role of youth work; and self-recognition, which reflects the views of youth work practitioners themselves regarding their field. All three forms of recognition are closely linked to the establishment of clear standards for youth work practitioners (see for instance a discussion paper by Karsten, Markovic and O'Donovan 2023[10]), as well as the potential development of professional pathways and educational requirements, particularly in cases where youth work is performed as paid work.

Regarding education and training for youth workers as a component of recognition, the symposium highlighted the importance of blending formal and non-formal approaches. It also emphasised the need to provide opportunities for youth workers to acquire a tertiary degree in youth work education and develop respective degree programmes. The opinions aired at the symposium accorded well with the efforts and initiatives at national as well as European level (for a broader overview, see Taru, Krzaklewska and Basarab 2020[11] and youth worker education and career paths expert group work outcomes[12] for developments in higher education, see peer learning activity on higher education of youth workers[13]).

[9] Youth Partnership (n.d), About recognition: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/about-recognition>.

[10] Karsten A., Markovic D. and O'Donovan J. (2023), "Putting the puzzle pieces together: Towards a European recognition mechanism for youth workers", Discussion paper prepared for the symposium "Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe", 31 May to 1 June, 2023, Budapest, Hungary: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/0/Putting+the+puzzle+pieces+together+Draft+discussion+paper+for+symposium_20230522+amended.pdf/ded39c21-a788-3bfa-7996-7dc5b6fa55f6?t=1685462483632.

[11] Taru M., Krzaklewska E. and Basarab T. (eds), Youth worker education in Europe: policies, structures, practices, Youth Knowledge #26, Council of Europe and European Commission: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261623/Web-PREMS-051920-Education-of-youth-workers-in-Europe.pdf>.

[12] Youth Partnership (2019), Expert group on researching education and career paths of youth workers: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-researching-education-career-paths-youth-workers>.

[13] Youth Partnership (2022), [Peer learning activity on Higher Education of Youth Workers](#).

Discussion of the issues continued in workshops and interactive facilitated plenary sessions at the end of the first day (for workshop conveners' names, see Appendix 1. Presentation slides are available on the [symposium](#) home page). A significant number of sessions centred around the theme of youth work recognition, further emphasising the urgent nature of and active engagement in this field. The majority of workshops tackled the challenge at national or local levels but there were also a couple of workshops devoted to European level developments. The diversity and differences across European countries was mentioned repeatedly.

The workshop title “Consolidating the place of youth work alongside allied sectors in health, education, criminal justice and social care” expresses in a straightforward way the heart of the pursuit of recognition. In the workshop, participants discussed advocating for the recognition of youth work, treating it with equal importance to other sectors. This discussion followed the example set by the National Youth Agency (NYA) in the UK. The NYA was established in 1964 as an information centre for youth services, later becoming the National Youth Bureau in the 1970s, and the National Youth Agency in 1991. Today, it serves as a professional, statutory and regulatory body for youth work. The NYA's current activities include maintaining a register, offering new qualifications and apprenticeships, providing Covid-19 guidance, running a safeguarding hub and operating a Quality Mark initiative. They also offer the [Hear by Right initiative](#) and have a wide range of academic education and training offers. The session underscored the importance of the young person–youth worker relationship, characterised by its voluntary basis, unconditional positive regard, flexibility and an asset-based approach. This unique relationship is an effective tool for information gathering, enabling early and detailed insights, an agile response to issues, and facilitating the acceptance of challenge. Youth workers also play a role in supporting engagement with services and improving them. The session considered the potential utilisation of the young person–youth worker relationship across various sectors such as health, education, criminal justice and social care, while also acknowledging the challenges and opportunities inherent to this endeavour.

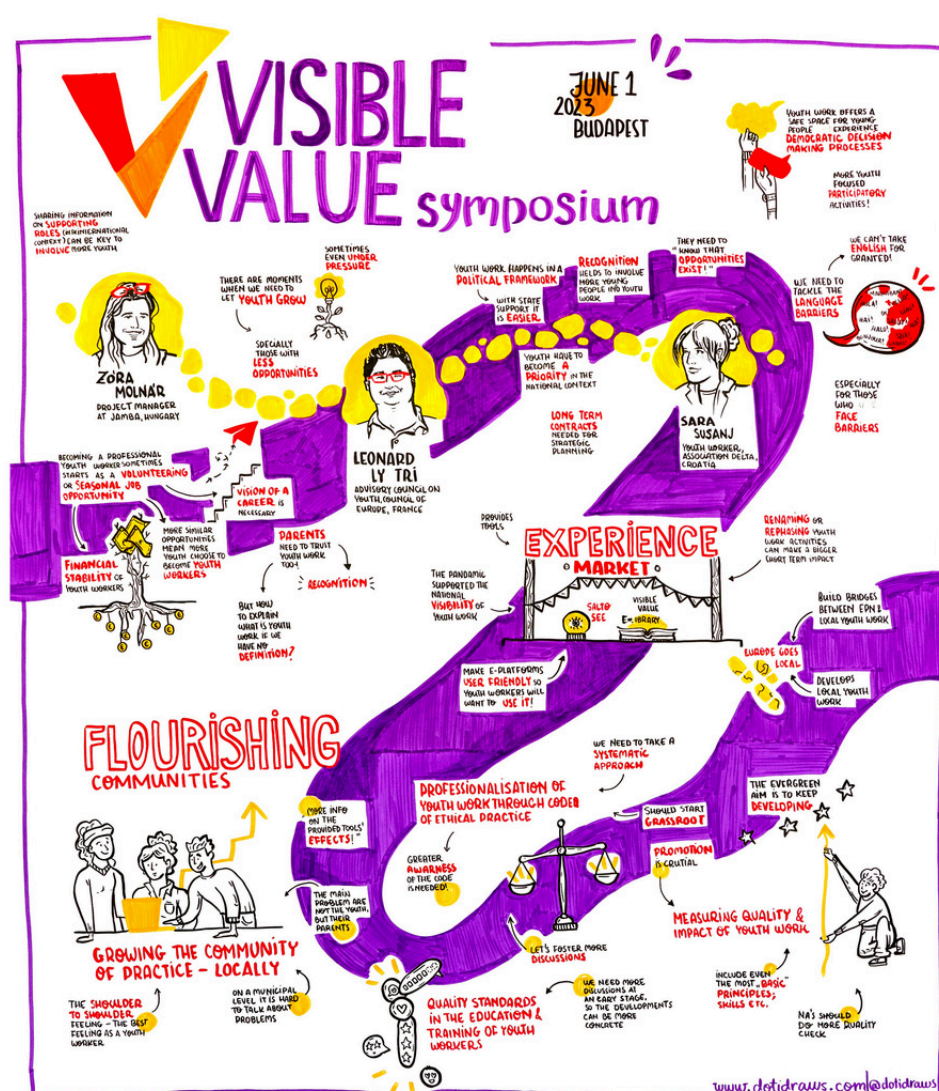
In the workshop “Youth policy development – supporting national processes”, Serbia's experiences in joint work between the government and non-governmental sectors in the field of youth work and public policies were addressed. More concretely, it focused on introducing a youth strategy in Serbia for 2023-2030, which was developed in a participatory manner in 2021-2022. One of the goals of the strategy was supporting, recognising and promoting youth work in Serbia within the wider youth policy framework, and fostering synergies at the European level. The main insights from the process included: a) Collaboration between government and non-governmental sectors is crucial for effective youth policy and youth work development; b) The involvement of young people in decision-making processes through the Youth Council strengthened the youth perspective in public policies; and c) Harmonisation with international standards and continuous monitoring of youth work impact are essential for its effectiveness.

In the session “Growing the community of practice on a national level”, participants focused on two initiatives. The first was the work of the Union of Youth Work on establishing youth work as a profession in North Macedonia. The second was about organising an annual youth worker convention in Romania by the national agency, in partnership with the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities. The conclusions of the session were: a) The visibility of youth work is a critical issue. Social recognition and quality standards for youth work are needed; b) Dedicated people are essential to maintain momentum between meetings; and c) The importance of local and national level support for youth work is high, as highlighted by representatives from various countries, including Moldova and Estonia.

The session on “Professional identity of youth workers” presented the first empirical data collection on the competence, values and professional identity of youth workers in Hungary. This study was initiated due to the lack of data on youth work practitioners and organisations in Hungary, where there is no official word for “youth worker” and no umbrella organisation. An online survey was used, and an outreach campaign secured data from 330 respondents. Formulating exactly what youth work is proved to be challenging. Key insights from the study revealed that:

- a) 42% of respondents had a professional education related to youth work and 10 years of youth work experience. 75% have a paid job, 21% are volunteers and 55% work in the NGO sector;
- b) 56% thought the primary focus of youth work is helping young people find solutions to their problems;
- c) The visibility of youth work in Hungary is perceived as low, with only 24% of respondents believing it is recognised;
- d) The importance of community and physical infrastructure in recognising and discovering youth worker identity was high;
- e) The international level is considered important, as 51% follow international developments in youth work; f) Those who have worked in the field for longer feel more confident and more satisfied with their work;
- g) The type of settlement where respondents resided was correlated with the perceived importance of critical thinking, which was more highly valued in larger cities;
- h) In open questions, respondents expressed the opinion that a code of ethics was needed.

The theme of professional ethics was addressed in the workshop “Professionalisation of youth work through codes of ethical practice”. The workshop addressed questions about the skills of youth workers in solving complicated ethical dilemmas using the youth work code of ethics in Australia, Estonia and Iceland. The codes of ethics are applied differently across the three countries where it forms the basis for practice in Estonia and Australia but is auxiliary in Iceland. The workshop used materials that were collected in an Erasmus+ KA2 supported project Strengthening the Professionalisation of Youth Work through Codes of Ethical Practice (CODE). The workshop concluded that: a) The main challenges related to professionalisation of youth work in these countries include specific education and training, commitment to professional service and recognition by society. A need exists for increased awareness of the code of ethics, particularly among those who have not received formal education in youth work. The code should be visible, practical, known among youth workers, and reviewed periodically to meet the sector’s changing needs and wider society; b) Reflection upon, regular reviewing and updating of the code of ethics was deemed critical. The coaching model GROW (Goals, Reality, Options and Will/Way Forward) was discussed as a tool to help youth workers identify their goals, assess their current situation, consider options, and plan for actions; c) Participants noted that codes of ethical practice in youth work vary across Europe, with some countries lacking such a code.



While values and identities are important, modern public administration and policy processes assume that the effects and impacts of interventions can be demonstrated and communicated clearly. However, interactions between evidence and decisions in policy processes are viewed as a highly complex domain. (see for instance Cairney 2016,[14] Fox et al. 2017[15] and Greve 2017[16]). Evaluation was addressed in the workshop “Measuring quality and impact of youth work”. The project Measuring Impact in Youth Work – Mission (Im)possible! is an initiative aimed at gauging the quality and impact of youth work. Led by the National Association of Youth Workers in Serbia (NAPOR), in collaboration with other European organisations, it seeks to create a methodical and robust approach to measure the impact of youth work on individuals and society. In the discussion, opinions about measuring youth work impact ranged from seeing it as vital to considering it impossible. It was stressed that measurements should be mindful of what is being assessed: impact, outcomes or outputs. There were concerns about the capacity of organisations to collect data, especially when resources are limited. A related concern was whether all or specific aspects of the programme should be measured. The project has collected examples and feedback from various European countries, showing that both quantitative and qualitative data is used. It was also pointed out that the assessment needs to be feasible for organisations and beneficial for the youth involved. The proposed approach for measuring the social impact of youth work is based on the Theory of Change, combining a controlled trial with pre- and post-test studies, and carried out at individual and community level. The initiative calls for further collaboration to establish a common methodology to measure the impact of youth work.



- [14] Cairney P. (2016), The politics of evidence-based policy making, Palgrave Macmillan.
 [15] Fox C., Grimm R. and Caldeira R. (2017), An introduction to evaluation, Sage Publications.
 [16] Greve B. (ed.) (2017), Handbook of social policy evaluation, Edward Elgar.

Youth work outcomes, effects and impacts were also described in the session “The garden of insights: harvesting thoughts and challenges in youth work practice”. Here, traditional youth work methods were employed to articulate the perceived effects. Participants noted that while this method of impact assessment often retains effects that are undocumented, there is a growing readiness in the field to develop methods for measuring and documenting the tangible and intangible effects of youth work more accurately. When asked to complete the statement: “The value of youth work for me /i.e. for the participant/ is: ...” and state “Visible and invisible in youth work”, a variety of themes were articulated.

To the participants, youth work offers opportunities for personal growth and development within a supportive community. It fosters skills development, critical thinking and helps young people to realise their own values and potential. By offering life and career guidance, this also helps to instil an optimistic outlook on the future, preparing youth for various life challenges. Youth work provides a safe, inclusive environment for young people to explore, grow and be themselves. This safe space may not necessarily be a physical place but a supportive atmosphere that respects diversity and accepts individuals for who they are. Youth work offers young people consistent and unconditional support, and direct contact. It empowers young people and fosters autonomy, enabling them to shape their futures and communities. Youth work contributes to networking and connecting the right people to help each other. Networks may lead to collective action and this in turn may reinforce the idea that when individuals contribute to a collective effort, the overall impact is greater than what could be achieved individually. It provides opportunities for life-changing experiences and self-development, allowing young people to learn from others. The positive impact of youth work is manifested not only in participants’ happiness and enthusiasm, but also in youth workers for whom professional growth opportunities are valuable, and in organisations which can evolve and innovate. Initiatives such as the international Erasmus programme greatly enhance the scope of youth work, providing broader exposure and learning experiences for the participants. This type of satisfaction is eudaemonic, and it focuses on meaning and self-realisation and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning (Goswami, Fox and Pollock 2015[17]).

[17] Goswami H., Fox C. and Pollock G. (2016), “The current evidence base and future needs in improving children’s well-being across Europe: is there a case for a comparative longitudinal survey?”, *Child Indicators Research* Vol. 9, pp. 371-88.

The availability of specialised and high-quality education is pertinent both to the professionalisation of youth work as a practice and as an attribute of any recognised occupation and profession in a modern society. Youth work education standards were addressed in the workshop “Quality standards in the education and training of youth workers”. The session focused on the National Endorsement Standards for Education and Training Systems (NSETS) in Ireland, which was established in 2006 as a result of the National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007. NSETS’s vision is to create a world-class workforce for youth work in Ireland, and its mission is to contribute to better outcomes for young people by establishing and promoting standards of excellence for the education, training and development of youth workers. NSETS co-operates and collaborates across the two jurisdictions: Northern Ireland (UK) and the Republic of Ireland. It also collaborates with the Youth Work Educators Forum, enhancing the professional mobility of youth work graduates. The case of NSETS showcases how collaboration and co-operation across governments and youth work organisations results in well-recognised quality standards in youth worker education. Group discussion revealed the vital role of the quality standards in defining the role and identity of youth work and in promoting recognition and public awareness of the occupation. The session raised several questions about the necessity, existence and implementation of standards for youth work practice in different countries.

The practice of youth work was addressed in four workshops. The workshop “Youth work infrastructure development” explored the strategies behind the development of youth centres in Romania, particularly focusing on the idea of infrastructure that goes beyond physical space and includes creating youth-friendly spaces that serve as the basis for youth participation in society, as well as in policy and politics. Key insights from the workshop included the power of participation, not just consultation, in youth work. The Timișoara youth centre was highlighted as a model, by bringing attention to how decisions about its physical space – such as furniture and colours – were made by the young people themselves. The session also underscored the importance of sustaining activities, irrespective of participation numbers, and creating spaces where young people are not forced to attend but come voluntarily.

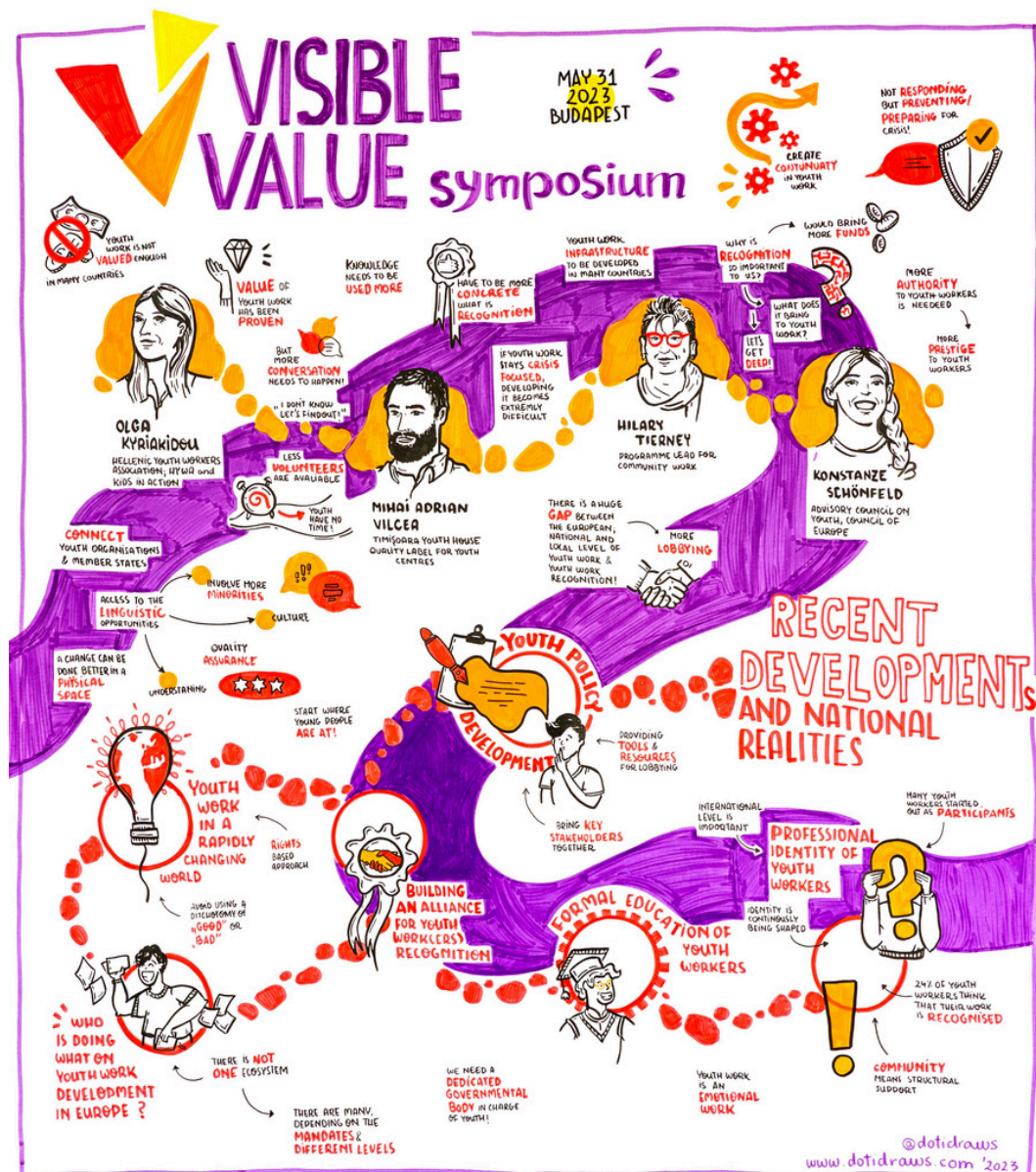
The session “Youth work with disadvantaged youth through experiential learning and street-based youth work” presented two initiatives. The first focused on street-based youth work and advocacy campaigns promoting its recognition. The second initiative was based on working with disadvantaged youth through volunteering and experiential learning, targeting youth with minority backgrounds or those living in foster care. A recurring theme was that trust plays a vital role in working with disadvantaged youth. It is crucial to allow them to be in charge and make them feel heard and important. It was noted that young people sometimes resist youth workers out of fear, which is not desirable or even acceptable. In such situations, starting with fun, short activities could be beneficial. Questions were raised about how to involve the whole community in changing perceptions and providing support for youth. Participants discussed the importance of service learning, where young people assess the community’s needs and implement activities involving as many community members as possible.

“Youth work in a rapidly changing world – facilitated discussion about challenges and changes” examined youth work’s role in guiding young people through local, national and global challenges. Privileged young people were perceived to be the majority who have access to organised youth work activities. However, youth work needs to reach out to more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mobile youth work is a potential way to connect with these hard-to-reach young people. Peer-to-peer youth work was suggested as a way to facilitate youth engagement, with the need for a more holistic approach to opportunities for young people. Multifunctional centres that serve different generations and offer free, confidential services could support people affected by changes.

“Youth work and peacebuilding in war, conflict, and fragile contexts” was discussed in a session that offered space for discovering two interrelated topics. “How youth work can function under full-scale invasion” was explored from the perspective of Ukrainian civil society. The peacebuilding angle was explored by asking: “How can we support youth to become sustainable peace leaders? What do they need to know and do in order to make a positive impact when peace and security is at stake? How can we improve peacebuilding by working in intergenerational and cross-cultural peace education and action efforts on a large scale?” These questions were explored in the workshop using examples and discussing options. It was believed that there will always be conflict, so the crucial question was how to deal effectively with conflicts. War was considered to be a global and important challenge facing humanity. For instance, in Ukraine a tank can enter a city in 15 minutes and in that timespan, all peacetime rules and regulations will be gone. The initiatives and projects presented during the workshop demonstrated that it is possible and appropriate to empower and mobilise young people to promote peace and challenge waging war.

Youth work development at European level was tackled in two workshops. The workshop “Building an alliance for youth work(ers) recognition – The process of creating a European association representing youth workers” focused on establishing the European Alliance of Youth Workers Associations (AYWA) as an umbrella association representing national associations of youth workers and youth work providers. It highlighted the aims, objectives and progress of the alliance, emphasising its potential impact on advocating for youth work recognition, promoting well-established national youth work policies, implementing quality standards, and fostering professional development. The workshop concluded that a) The establishment of the alliance fills a gap in the youth field by representing and providing a voice for youth workers; b) The alliance can support and mentor the establishment of national youth workers associations and foster co-operation with youth institutions and associations at national and European levels; c) Beyond formal and political recognition, the alliance aims to work towards social recognition of youth work and youth workers.

The workshop “Who is doing what on youth work development in Europe?” presented the findings and collected feedback on a research project titled “Mapping European youth work ecosystems”. The study aimed to identify European actors implementing the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) and what they do in this context. The session highlighted gaps and weaknesses in moving the EYWA forward. The research revealed issues with lack of clarity, awareness, ownership and civil society participation. Much work remains to be done to bring together diverse partners and build trust in working towards a common vision. An ecosystem for youth work cannot be built in a top-down fashion without substantial work at all levels. Monitoring and creating ownership of EYWA implementation depend on member states’ commitment to the EYWA, and currently both the political will and civil society response are lacking. In the end, the following question was posed: “Will the mapping lead to recommendations and action, or will it just remain a description of the current system?”



Presenting the Council of Europe and European Union youth work-related initiatives and achievements was also an essential objective of the symposium. Therefore, besides sharing views and information at the panel discussions, a round of parallel small-group sessions were dedicated to the topic on the second day in an open space format titled “Blossoming futures: sharing resources for empowering youth work in Europe”. The sessions included the following:

- Youth Work Strategies Manual: The development of this new manual by the Youth Partnership is at an early stage, and the workshop outlined what had been done in the first phase of the work. It also gave participants the chance to talk about their specific contexts and to share suggestions on how a useful output could be produced.

- Visible Value e-library: The Visible Value e-library of the Youth Partnership is dedicated to the recognition of youth work. This open session was an exploration of the web page content and a discussion about the concept of recognition and how it is understood in the community of practice.

- Thinking and Action Kit for developing the youth work environment: The session presented the content and ways of using this issue of Insights by the Youth Partnership on developing youth work environments. Some specific exercises from the publication were simulated and tested.

- The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio: The session presented the tool that helps youth workers, youth leaders and youth organisations across Europe to understand their youth work competence and to develop it more effectively. It also included the latest developments about improvements and expected updates.

- The European Academy on Youth Work: The session presented updates on this project co-ordinated by the Slovenian NA and related resources, including the Futures Foresight research project, a training module on innovation and visuals/infographics of the study on innovation.

- Europe Goes Local and the Changemakers Kit: This practical session presented the project Europe Goes Local and the Changemakers Kit, a tool that supports and promotes quality development of youth work based on the European Charter on Local Youth Work which contributes to advocacy efforts and recognition.

- “Putting the puzzle pieces together” – Towards a European Recognition Mechanism for youth workers. In this session the discussion paper based on the mapping study on cross-border recognition of youth workers’ skills and competences was presented. The study includes proposals for a new European instrument, and the session was an important occasion to discuss participants’ feedback.

- Youth work in the spotlight: The Council of Europe’s youth work recommendation and its review process: At the session, the Council of Europe’s youth work recommendation and the preliminary results of its review process were presented, followed by a discussion on the impact and possible future developments.

Reflections on the future of youth work

The future of youth work was primarily discussed in parallel sessions and in facilitated interactive plenaries by youth work practitioners. It was also touched upon, to a lesser extent, in the plenaries involving high-level policy makers on the first day. This indicates a distribution of work in the development of the youth field. Youth work practitioners serve as the driving force, generating ideas and initiatives, while policy makers act as channelling, framing and facilitating actors in the process.

Many of the themes that emerged when assessing youth work past and present, as outlined in the previous section of the report, also carry over to future expectations associated with youth work. The idea encapsulated in the phrase “The future can not be predicted, but futures can be invented”^[18] emphasises the crucial role of human agency in building the human society as it is at every moment. This idea resonates with the discussions and provides a thought-provoking perspective on the proactive role of youth work in shaping the future. Indeed, the prompts and questions posed to participants such as “What is needed to recognise youth work?”, “The next big thing in youth work will be ...” and “The objectives of youth work in Europe for the next five years” most explicitly address the future and express the maxim.

To begin, youth work was widely perceived as an investment in the younger generation and, consequently, the future of society as a whole. It serves as a catalyst for nurturing hope, promoting equality and fostering a shared vision for a better future for all individuals. Participants expressed the expectation that the recognition of youth work should position it on an equal footing with other professions working with young people in the years ahead. This extends the issue of recognition from the past and present into the future. Recognition in the practitioners’ community is seen as a two-way process: in one direction, the understanding is that youth work itself should provide evidence of its value; in the other is that inclusion in policy programmes should enhance the capabilities of youth work, thereby augmenting its impact. In order to boost the standing of youth work as an occupation, self-recognition, societal recognition and political recognition were mentioned. The need for wider societal acknowledgement of the importance and value of youth work was highlighted. Political will and government support are needed for youth work recognition, for increased funding and for embedding it in legislation and in policy programmes. Adequate resources, especially funding, are essential to support youth work infrastructure and services at all levels; it also includes appropriate pay scales.

[1] According to QuoteInvestigator, the phrase first appeared in a 1963 book by Dennis Gabor, who would later win the Nobel Prize in physics. Among the many versions of this phrase, perhaps the most widely known is ‘The best way to predict the future is to create it.’ This version is attributed to US management guru Peter Drucker, although he was not the first to use these words.

Assessing youth work quality and providing evidence of youth work impacts is necessary, in particular for quantitative demonstration of youth work's effectiveness. Evaluation is also necessary for improving its effectiveness and efficient resource allocation within and for youth work. Regular research, consistent monitoring and a focus on a practice-research-policy dialogue can help to maintain and elevate youth work standards and outcomes. Quality knowledge and access to relevant research is expected to support youth work practitioners, yet this information needs to be provided in an accessible way.

Likewise, advancements in education and training for youth workers, which blend formal and non-formal methods, are expected. This also entails an increase in tertiary degree programmes. The development of a unified understanding of standards within the occupation, going beyond the current fragmentation characterised by different governance systems and overlapping responsibilities, as well as a standard for youth work education, are necessary. Opportunities for training and professional development must be made available to facilitate growth in the field.

The need for enhanced dialogue and engagement between youth and policy makers was identified as a key interest area. Young people should be encouraged to participate actively and co-create their experiences, fostering an environment that promotes civic engagement and facilitates targeted outreach activities. With civic engagement and political involvement being integral, youth work must adapt to evolving socio-political landscapes and develop a more politically conscious stance. This process entails creating civic spaces for active youth participation within their communities and in broader society.

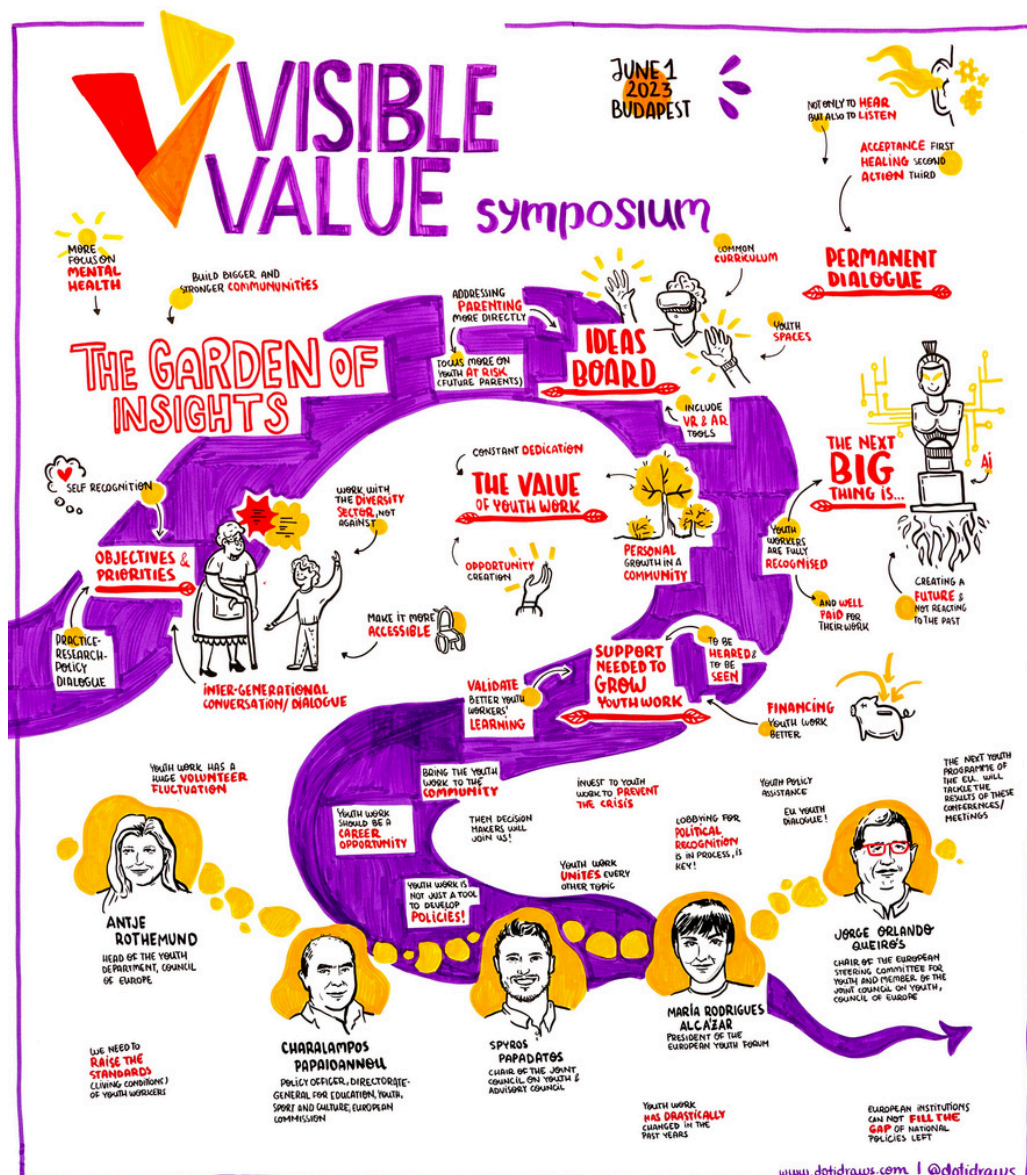
The previous point aligns with a future vision characterised by a push for more youth centres and clubs, providing additional physical spaces for young people to engage in youth-related activities. More spaces and improved infrastructure could also facilitate interactions between youth and society, and policy makers. In youth work infrastructure, maintaining high-quality standards that ensure safety and foster learning and development should be prioritised. Emphasis should also be placed on improving the mental health of youth workers. By emphasising equity, equality and intergenerational dialogue, a more supportive environment for both youth workers and the young people they serve can be built.

The future vision of youth work also includes more inclusive practices and a growing focus on mental health in youth work. The emphasis should be on ensuring that participation in youth work is available for all, including those in rural areas and in minority groups. Efforts should be made to leave no one behind, including reducing language barriers that hinder participation in international youth work and learning mobility.

The integration of digital practices in youth work has begun and is expected to continue evolving. Innovation and digital transformation emphasises using digital technologies and also AI to augment youth work. This could mean implementing digital platforms for expanded reach and using AI for learning experiences.

The role of youth work in crisis situations and political disruptions is anticipated to grow in importance.

Also the extension of youth work to individuals over 25 years old is one strand to explore.



Reflections on the future of the Youth Partnership

Interestingly enough, no explicit statements were made, nor expectations expressed regarding the future of the Youth Partnership. However, based on the perspectives shared by high-level policy makers, representatives of other European organisations and participants' brief remarks at the symposium, the absence of discussion can only be interpreted as "innocent conviction" on the part of youth work practitioners and unwavering support from the two partner organisations. There were no indications of discontinuation of the working plan of the Youth Partnership which typically covers a two-year period and has to be renewed biannually. On the contrary, representatives from partner organisations and other entities praised the Youth Partnership, emphasising its role in European youth policy and youth work, and highlighted its competitive advantages in these areas. This repeated emphasis on its value and the positive feedback provide a solid foundation for extrapolating the Youth Partnership's recent activities into the future. In the 2022-2023 work plan, youth work has taken a central role.

Public policy and administration, which also encompasses European youth work and the Youth Partnership, are subject to constant flux and gradual change. Beginning well before the symposium in 2023, youth work has been gradually gaining recognition in European policy documents. Prominent institutions such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe now recognize its value for young people and society as a whole. In response, they have increased their recognition and support. However, there is still much work to be done for youth work to be on a par with other policies, professions and occupations that support young people.

Currently, the Youth Partnership is seen as a unique actor at the European level, with distinct competitive advantages such as knowledge production and the creation of connections between administrative levels, countries, policy sectors and organisations. These attributes make the Youth Partnership valuable for the youth field and society in general. Achieving this status has required time and effort. The evolution of youth work and the Youth Partnership can be likened to the expression "Back to the future" that accords well with the expression introduced earlier "The future can not be predicted, but futures can be invented". It captures the notion that progress in youth work and the Youth Partnership has been achieved through a series of initiatives and decisions that initially held no guarantees of success. Nevertheless, many of these initiatives have proven successful, resulting in the acknowledgement of youth work in key European youth field policy documents and institutions, and the recognition of the Youth Partnership as a valued partner by various European institutions, organisations and initiatives.

The phrase “Back to the future” suggests that this ongoing process, with its inherent uncertainty, will likely continue in a similar manner in the future, potentially leading to greater recognition of youth work across different levels. Furthermore, the present state of youth work and the Youth Partnership serve as evidence that “The best way to predict the future is to actively shape it.” At the same time, it would be advisable to further reflect on the Youth Partnership’s past achievements while critically examining its role in supporting greater utilisation of the rich existing knowledge for both policy and practice. It is also necessary to consider what support youth policy, youth work and youth research would need for the creation of more entry points for newcomers into the youth field in order to facilitate increased European co-operation.

Participants’ feedback

We are fortunate to have included in the report the feedback from some of the participants who attended the event. Approximately every fourth participant (n=26) shared their thoughts, impressions, opinions and ideas with the organisers through a feedback survey that was conducted after the symposium. Below are answers to the question: “To what extent, in your opinion, did the symposium achieve its specific objectives?”

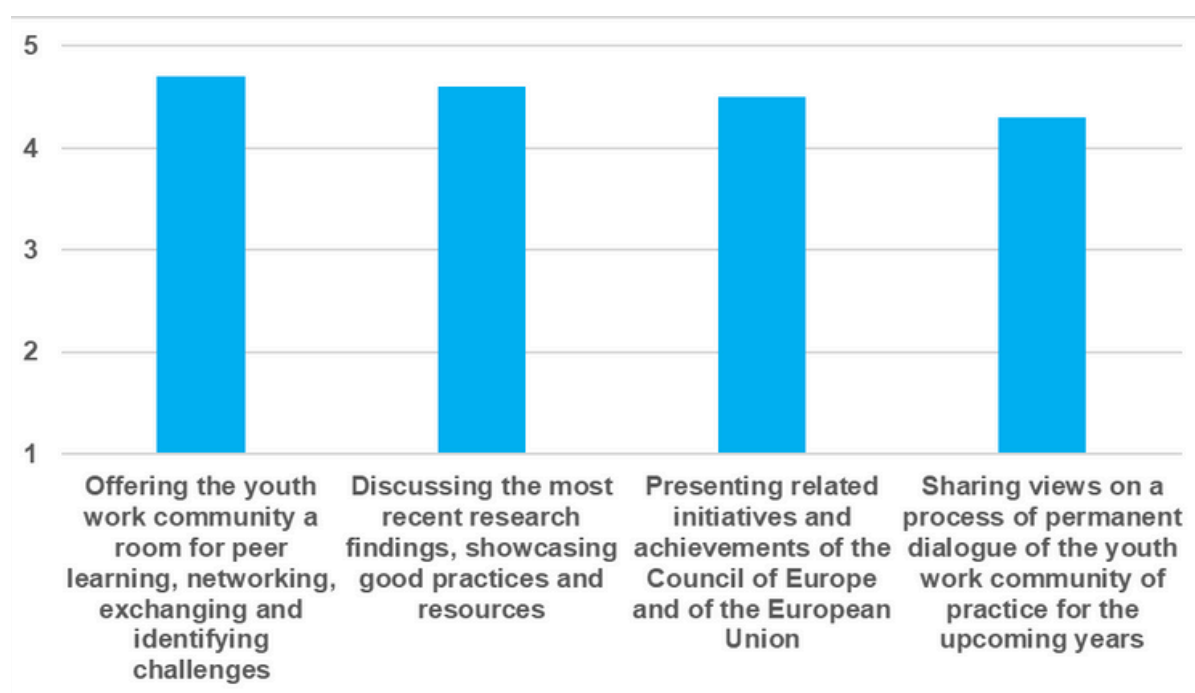


Figure 1. Participants’ opinions about how well the symposium achieved its specific objectives

Some of the respondents also shared comments about the achievement of the symposium objectives. Three broad categories emerged:

- The topics covered were relevant and interesting.
- There was enough time for reflection and discussion, even though one participant suggested that the symposium could have been longer to allow for more in-depth discussion of the topics.
- The symposium was well organised and professional.
- Some participants would have liked more practical steps for establishing in institutions the knowledge developed by the Youth Partnership.

When asked to name the strengths of the programme, responses from respondents fell into five categories:

- The programme brought together a diverse group of youth workers, policy makers and researchers from all over Europe.
- This diversity of participants created a rich and stimulating environment for discussion and learning.
- The programme covered a wide range of topics related to youth work, including best practices, challenges and future trends.
- The discussions were well facilitated and allowed for a lot of interaction between participants.
- The programme was well organised and ran smoothly.

The key takeaway from responses to the question, “What could have been done differently in the programme?” was that participants wanted more in-depth discussions on European youth work themes, longer workshop sessions and additional opportunities to share their experiences. Participants expressed their willingness to spend more time in each workshop and a desire to attend a greater number of workshops than the programme allowed. While this could be seen as a critique, it also highlights participants’ high level of interest in the workshops. However, not all feedback was positive. Concerns were raised about the environmental and financial implications of the symposium. Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with a panel discussion, a desire for more diverse meal options, and the need for reliable internet availability.

Overall, the survey results suggest that the programme was a success. Participants were impressed by the networking opportunities, the diversity of the participants, the variety of topics covered and the quality of the discussions.

Part 4: Summary

The two days of the symposium were bustling with plenaries, working groups, networking and discussions. In order to draw substantive conclusions about the event's outcomes, a specific framework is necessary. The objectives outlined for the event offer a suitable and effective framework for this task. Below, the event is looked at through the prism on event objectives.

- Objective: Offering to the youth work community of practice a room for peer learning, networking and exchanging on youth work development and the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda; and identifying the challenges faced and the support needed.

Overall, the symposium provided the youth work community with ample opportunities for peer learning, networking and discussion about youth work development. Judging by the dynamic interactions and conversations both during sessions and breaks, participants made the most of every second they had to interact with individuals from other sectors, levels, countries, and even those within their immediate vicinity.

In relation to challenges and support, the issue of recognition stood out most prominently. In relative terms, it received the most attention from various angles and in different forms. Broadly speaking, youth workers feel that society, policy makers and, not surprisingly, practitioners themselves lack a clear and uniform understanding of their activities and contributions to society. This may be due to the diversity of the field; there are so many varied approaches and outcomes that even youth work practitioners themselves may struggle to maintain an overview of what is going on and what services are available. A key component that is intertwined with youth work recognition is youth worker training and education, which combines formal and non-formal learning opportunities, with a particular emphasis on developing degree education opportunities.

- Discussing the most recent research findings on youth work and showcasing good practices, promising initiatives and resources developed by the Youth Partnership and participants and their organisation.

During the symposium, several recent and ongoing research projects were presented and discussed. At the European level, the study on the youth work ecosystem is particularly notable, as it provides a much-needed overview and insight into organisations involved in the EYWA. Perhaps even more significantly, participants acknowledged the value of research and evaluation for the development of youth work at national, local and organisational levels, as expressed in parallel sessions. In plenaries, the Youth Partnership received praise for providing high-quality and policy-relevant information for partner institutions, as well as for other actors in the youth field. This was seen as one of its main competitive advantages. This fact itself demonstrates that research continues to be regarded as a crucial and integral part of European youth work.

- Objective: Presenting related initiatives and achievements of the Council of Europe and of the European Union.

As the symposium clearly showed, the Youth Partnership stands side by side with the two large partnering organisations, suggesting and justifying inclusion of its activities in this association. Under the auspices of the Youth Partnership, several European youth work initiatives are being developed and carried out, including the Youth Work Strategies Manual, Visible Value e-library and [Thinking and Action Kit](#) for developing the youth work environment.

The Council of Europe enables and keeps up to date the [Youth Work Portfolio](#). The Council of Europe adopted the [youth work recommendation](#) in 2017 that is now going through a review process.

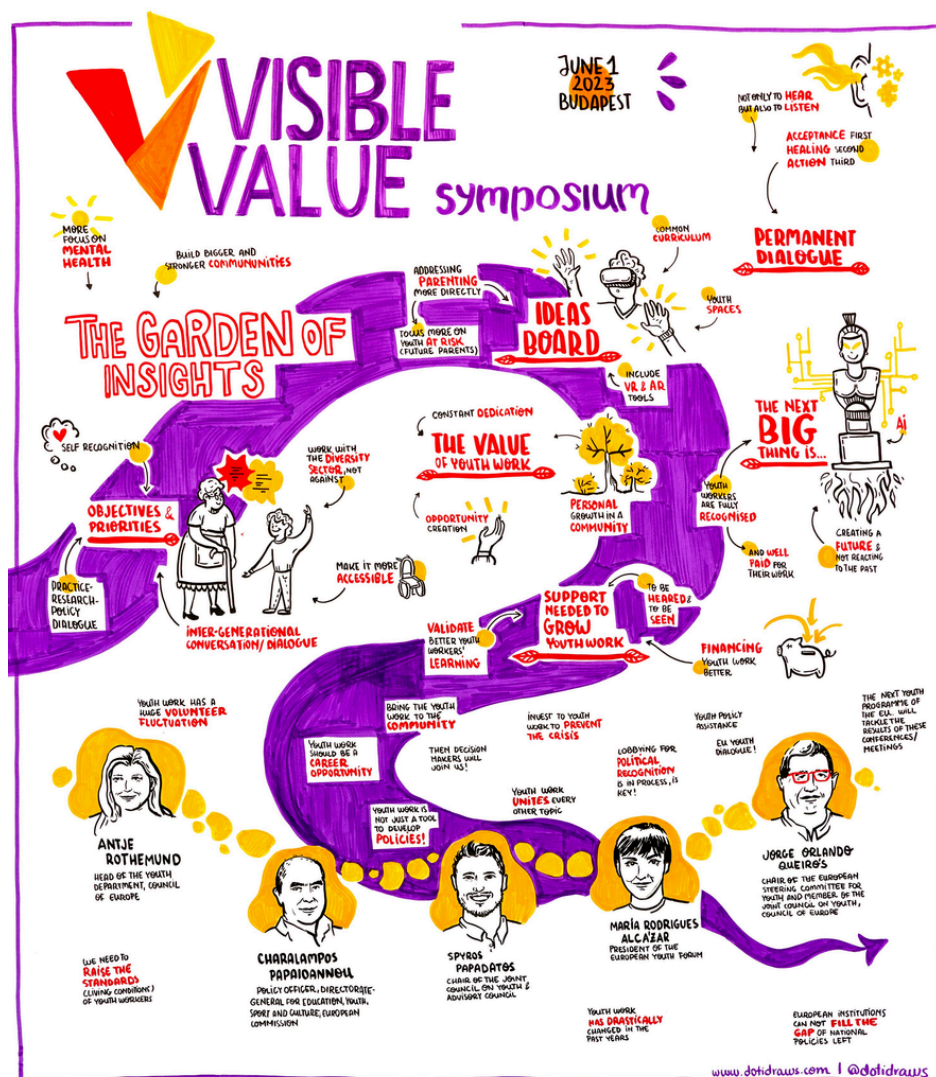
Several European youth work activities, supported by the European Union, were presented at the symposium. They include the [European Academy on Youth Work](#) and [Europe Goes Local](#) and the [Changemakers Kit](#) which are supported by the [EU Erasmus+ programme](#). The [EYWA](#) and [EU Youth dialogue](#), which are parts of the EU Youth strategy, are supported by the EU directly.

Objective: Sharing views on a process of permanent dialogue of the youth work community of practice for the upcoming years.

Participants' views on the characteristics of a permanent dialogue were gathered during a dedicated session, and other sessions indirectly contributed to this goal too. In brief, continuous dialogue should involve ongoing engagement among various stakeholders, promote inclusive and equitable communication, and adopt an action-oriented approach.

- Objective: Initiatives and good practices on youth work development and the implementation of the EYWA.

Implementation of the EYWA was addressed specifically in a workshop dedicated to the research project “Mapping European youth work ecosystems” which aimed to identify European actors implementing the EYWA and their initiatives. The session highlighted the current gaps and weaknesses in moving the EYWA forward. However, youth work initiatives and good practices were presented in all workshops (for workshop descriptions, see the section “Reflections on the past and present of roles of European youth work”). All the workshops delivered content that is highly relevant in the context of developing European youth work. Furthermore, the content of many workshops can be considered significant from multiple perspectives. For instance, one workshop demonstrated the importance of using research in youth work development, while also emphasising the significance of community development among youth workers. Another workshop highlighted the value of cross-national collaboration and underscored the importance of values in youth work. In essence, each workshop provided several valuable insights for youth work development, each revealing different aspects when viewed from unique angles.



- Objective: Analysis of the Youth Partnership's overall work on the topic.

The analysis of the Youth Partnership's work on the EYWA took place during the first two plenaries. High-level European policy makers and representatives of European youth field organisations and statutory bodies expressed their views about the Youth Partnership's activities. When it came to evaluating its activities within its area of expertise, their feedback was unanimously high in its praise. In addition, this positive view extended further, as the Youth Partnership was hailed as a good example of collaboration between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and even a change-maker in this respect. None of the participants expressed criticism towards the Youth Partnership. Adding to that, a Compendium of background readings on all partnership youth work-related publications and resources was also prepared, which forms the basis for further analysis.

- Objective: Strengthening the implementation architecture for the EYWA at European, national and local levels.

Several workshops made valuable contributions to the process by providing information, good practice and ideas for strengthening youth work practices. To name several, the workshops on youth work infrastructure ("Youth work infrastructure development"), youth work quality standards ("National Endorsement Standards for Education and Training Systems (NSETS) in Ireland"), social and political recognition ("Consolidating the place of youth work alongside allied sectors in health, education, criminal justice and social care in the UK"), professionalisation of youth work through codes of ethical practice ("Professionalisation of youth work through codes of ethical practice"), and youth work integration into wider policy processes ("Youth policy development – supporting national processes") provided examples of good practice for youth work development from different angles. The study "Mapping European youth work ecosystems" is expected to provide valuable long-term input to the Europeanisation of youth work. This study takes a conceptually novel approach to European youth work development by explicitly addressing the interplay between different actors and administrative levels in European youth work. The significance of the European level has been steadily growing, reaching new highs only in recent years, which has led to the need to explore the topic from this perspective. Therefore, the conception of this project signifies that the processes of Europeanisation, encompassing both vertical (top-down and bottom-up) and horizontal interactions have become increasingly significant in the youth field (see, for instance, Grunhüt 2017,[1] Mtchedlishvili 2018[2] and Radaelli 2004[3] on Europeanisation). This marks the increasing integration of the youth field into (European) public administration system(s). However, in terms of value for youth work professionalisation, increasing its effectiveness and leading to recognition, every workshop needs to be considered valuable.

[19]Grunhüt Z. (2017), "Concepts, approaches and methods on Europeanisation – a meta-analysis", Eastern Journal of European Studies Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 157-76: https://ejes.uaic.ro/articles/EJES2017_0801_GRU.pdf.

[20]Mtchedlishvili D. (2018), "Theorising Europeanisation in European literature: conceptualisation and operationalisation", Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 79-91.

[21] Radaelli C. M. (2004), "Europeanisation: solution or problem?", European Integration online Papers (EIoP) Vol. 8, No. 16.

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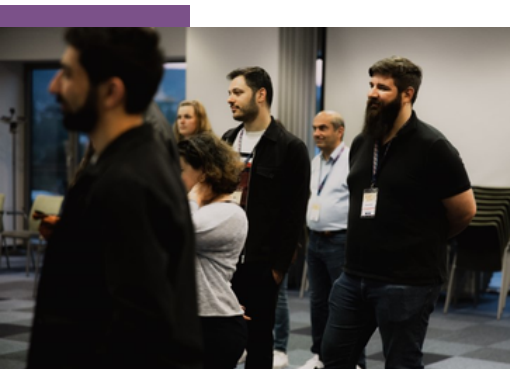
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- Objective: Practical conclusions on the objectives, priorities and support needed for youth work development in Europe based on the latest research findings on youth work policy and practice.

The achievement of recognition has been a recurring theme in various contexts. In practical terms, this entails taking steps towards increasing government support, integrating youth work into legislation and government programmes, and securing more accessible funding. Political recognition could be manifested through the mainstreaming of youth work, which would enhance its social recognition and demonstrate a strong conviction in its value for both society and young people. In modern public administration systems, extensive knowledge and a research-based background play a crucial role in gaining recognition. Developing youth work as an occupation requires reliance on generally recognised, well-researched and proven practices. Establishing and enhancing occupational quality standards, and educational and professional pathways for youth workers are undoubtedly essential paths to pursue. Additionally, investing in the development, expansion and implementation of youth work quality and impact assessment mechanisms is another avenue that warrants exploration. Youth work should also address pressing issues in society such as youth mental health and well-being, social inclusion, crises management, youth transition from childhood and dependence on the parental household to adulthood and active participation in society.

- Objective: Concrete suggestions for the Youth Partnership and its partner institutions for better support to youth work development and the implementation the EYWA.

The study on “Mapping European youth work ecosystems” recommends exploring ways to enhance the sense of ownership among national and local youth work actors. Given the lively discussions and intense networking observed at the symposium workshops, it is evident that youth work at national and local levels is vibrant, dynamic and filled with motivated individuals interested in collaboration. Therefore, the challenge lies in harnessing this energy and activism to accomplish the desired goals.



- Objective: Ideas for the next European Youth Work Convention.

The symposium, in essence, reaffirmed that the activities and direction of both the Youth Partnership and the European youth field community align with the expectations of partner organisations, the European youth work practitioners' community and other stakeholders. Moreover, these directions have been proactively designed and proposed by the bodies mentioned in the last sentence. Fine-tuning the operational model could be one of the themes for the next convention and in terms of concrete issues, several candidates emerge from the symposium results. It is unlikely that by 2025 youth work will have achieved the desired level of recognition and professionalisation, indicating that these issues will remain as relevant, if not more so, as they are now. This also includes issues of evaluation and value demonstration, youth worker training and education, as well as broadening the scope of youth work, such as digital youth work, youth work responses to societal crises and outreach to vulnerable youth. Another emerging theme is of an organisational nature: the co-ordination of European initiatives in the context of the EYWA and, more broadly, in the multilevel contexts of Europe where exchanges between the European, national and local levels are crucial. There is some dissatisfaction with the dominant top-down approach, and questions have arisen about the perceived lack of ownership when implementing European initiatives in national contexts.

As a general conclusion, it is fair to state that over its 25-year tenure, the Youth Partnership has delivered substantial value for European institutions, the youth work community at both European and national levels, and for young people and society as a whole. The two core areas where the Youth Partnership has made the most impact are:

- a) generating expert knowledge on youth, youth work and youth policy, and
- b) building bridges between institutions, organisations, policy makers, experts and countries.

Similarly, youth work has been evolving and has gradually become recognised as a field and community of practice that provides value to young people and society at large. However, there is still a considerable distance to cover in achieving the level of recognition that similar fields enjoy.

The current situation warrants a question: is the current state of development alarming, normal or has youth work even been evolving too fast? Let us provisionally compare youth work with some of the occupations that sometimes are likened to it such as career councillor, social worker, community worker, teacher and sports coach; the list is not exhaustive. These occupations have been evolving for well over a century. Given that in many countries the occupation of youth worker has been evolving for a shorter period, there is no reason to be dissatisfied with the current state or pace of its development.

From another perspective – in terms of social policy frameworks – youth work, both as a practice and an occupation, falls under the broader domain of welfare policies. Education, social protection, community work, and other related areas, are also part of the realm of social welfare policies. Across countries, there are significant differences in the ways in which welfare is provided and institutions are structured. One of the generally recognised classification schemes distinguishes different regimes in Europe: liberal (for instance the UK), continental conservative (Germany, Austria), southern (Italy, Spain), Nordic social-democratic (Sweden, Denmark) and post-Soviet welfare (Poland, Hungary). This scheme is useful primarily from an analytical perspective. While it provides a broad-brush picture, it is important to note significant differences within each country group. However, in terms of providing welfare services to young people, the institutional structures largely mirror those in place for the general public (Chevalier 2016[22]). Therefore, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach for European youth work from the welfare provision perspective. In each country, youth work must be integrated with or adapted to the specific contexts. Despite Europeanisation processes potentially reducing variety within the European Union (an organisation itself in constant evolution), regional, national and local specifics are likely to persist. Recognising these differences should be one of the starting points in the development of European youth work.

The next steps on the path to achieving recognition, and also increasing integration into welfare institutions and policies, will be driven by the energy of youth work practitioners at the national and local level. Nevertheless, the co-ordinating and supporting role of the Youth Partnership, which is committed to supporting youth work, is equally vital and cannot be overlooked. In a large voluntary international organisation like the European Union, and even more so the Council of Europe, there needs to be a careful balance between bottom-up and top-down exchanges, with perhaps more attention paid to national and local actors.

[22] Chevalier T. (2016), “Varieties of youth welfare citizenship: towards a two-dimension typology”, *Journal of European Social Policy* Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 3-19.

Appendix 1: Workshop titles and conveners

Recent developments and national realities

16:30-18:00, 31 May 2023

Youth policy development – supporting national processes	Snežana Klašnja, Alicia Holzschuh
Youth work in a rapidly changing world – facilitated discussion about challenges and changes	Zara Lavchyan, Ajša Hadžibegović
Who is doing what on youth work development in Europe?	Dragan Atanasov, Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll
Building an alliance for youth work(ers) recognition – the process of creating a European association representing youth workers	Federica Demicheli, Jelena Stojanovic, Olga Kyriakidou
Formal education of youth workers	Gubaz Koberidze and Hilary Tierney
Youth work infrastructure development	Mihai Adrian Vilcea
Professional identity of youth workers	Barnabás Gulyás

Blossoming futures: sharing resources for empowering youth work in Europe

10:15-11:15, 1 June 2023

The Youth Work Strategies Manual	Howard Williamson
Visible Value library on the recognition of youth work	Nik Paddison
Thinking and Action Kit for developing the youth work environment	Ajša Hadžibegović
The Council Europe's Youth Work Portfolio	Sulkhan Chargeishvili
SALTO South-East Europe Resource Centre – supporting the development of youth work in the region and beyond	Sonja Mitter
Europe Goes Local and the Changemakers Kit	Judit Balogh
Study on cross-border recognition of youth workers' skills and competences	Andreas Karsten, Jim O'Donovan
Youth work in the spotlight: the Council of Europe's youth work recommendation and its review process – impact and future developments	Clementina Barbaro, Frederike Hoffmann-van de Poll

Workshops offered and led by participants on practical local and international examples of youth work and youth work development

11:30-13:00, 1 June 2023

Growing the community of practice on a national level	Dragana Mitrovikj and Irina Lonean
Professionalisation of youth work through codes of ethical practice	Heili Griffith
Quality standards in the education and training of youth workers	Shirley Donegan
The Council Europe's Youth Work Portfolio	Jelena Stojanovic, Gubaz Koberidze
Measuring quality and impact of youth work	Sonja Mitter
Consolidating the place of youth work alongside allied sectors in health, education, criminal justice and social care	Kevin Jones
Youth work with disadvantaged youth through experiential learning and street-based youth work	Árpád Bárnai and Karolina Panušková
Youth work and peacebuilding in war, conflict, and fragile contexts	Nataliia Yaroshenko and Dr Phill Gittins

Appendix 2 : Symposium programme

VISIBLE VALUE

Growing youth work in Europe

31 May-1 June 2023, European Youth Centre Budapest

Day 0: Tuesday, 30 May

17:00

Welcome and registrations

19:00

Dinner

20:30

Rooted in relationships

Informal welcome and networking event

Day 1: Tuesday, 30 May

09:00 - 09:30

Fertile ground

Tea, coffee and networking

09:30 - 11:00

Making the invisible visible

Opening plenary

Official welcome

Getting to know each other and introduction of the programme and team

Growing youth work in a changing world (exchange in buzz groups)

- **Clotilde Talleu**, Manager of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth
- **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, European Commission (online)
- **Matjaž Gruden**, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe

11:00 - 11:30

Break

11:30 - 13:00

Growing together: celebrating 25 years of the Youth Partnership

High-level plenary exchange

Video message from **Bjørn Berge**, Deputy Secretary General, Council of Europe

- **Matjaž Gruden**, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe
- **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, European Commission (online)
- **Spyros Papadatos**, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), Council of Europe
- **Jorge Orlando Queirós**, Chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Council of Europe
- **María Rodríguez Alcázar**, President of the European Youth Forum

Group photo

13:00 - 14:30

Lunch Break

14:30 - 16:00

Value(s), challenges and changing conditions: perspectives from the community of practice

Plenary session – panel discussion on issues pertinent to youth work development today

- **Olga Kyriakidou**, Hellenic Youth Workers Association – HYWA and Kids in Action
- **Mihai Adrian Vilcea**, Timișoara Youth House (FITT) Quality Label for Youth Centres
- **Hilary Tierney**, Associate Professor and Programme Lead for Community Work and Youth Work in the Department of Applied Social Studies in Maynooth University, Ireland
- **Konstanze Schönfeld**, Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), Council of Europe

16:00 - 16:30

Break

16:30 - 18:00

Growing youth work in Europe – Recent developments and national realities

Parallel sessions – 1st round

Presentations and exchange on initiatives to advance youth work development on European and national levels

18:00 - 21:00

Barbecue party – Celebrating 25 years of success

Celebration, dinner and garden activities

Day 2: THURSDAYS, 1 JUNE

09:15 - 10:15

The value of youth work – Perspectives of young people

Plenary session

- **Zóra Molnár**, project manager at Jamba Hungary Foundation
- **Sara Sušanj**, youth worker, Association Delta, Croatia
- **Léonard Ly Tri**, Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), France

10:15 - 11:15

Blossoming futures: sharing resources for empowering youth work in Europe

Parallel sessions (open space) – 2nd round: sharing tools, initiatives of institutions and their stakeholders, and exchange with participants

The Council of Europe's youth work recommendation, the Youth Work Portfolio, Europe Goes Local, the European Academy on Youth Work and resources and projects of the Youth Partnership

11:15 - 11:30

Break

11:30 - 13:00

Fertile minds, flourishing communities

Parallel sessions – 3rd round: workshops offered and led by participants on practical, local and international examples of youth work and youth work development

15:30 - 16:00

Break

10:15 - 11:15

Branching out and growing stronger together

Interactive plenary

Remarks by Marti Taru, general rapporteur

Bringing insights for future policies

Panel discussion

- **María Rodríguez Alcázar**, President of the European Youth Forum
- **Spyros Papadatos**, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), Council of Europe
- **Jorge Orlando Queirós**, Chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Council of Europe
- Antje Rothemund, Head of the Youth Department, Council of Europe
- **Charalampos Papaioannou**, Policy Officer – Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission

Conclusions and inspirations from the symposium

Remarks by the graphic facilitator

Evaluation

Closing words by the Youth Partnership

19:30

Dinner

@eucoeyouth



<http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>
youth-partnership@partnership-eu.coe.int

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. <http://europa.eu>

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