

Concept Note

Context

The government of Malta, with the support of the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, will host the 4th European Youth Work Convention (EYWC) in Valletta, Malta, from 27 to 30 May 2025, under the Maltese Chairpersonship of the Council of Europe. A steering group was convened to advise on the programme and logistics for the Convention. It comprised, inter alia, representatives of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, National Agencies for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, and representatives of the youth work community of practice.

The Steering Group is the main platform for preparing for the 4th EYWC and offers a space for the regular exchange of ideas and information between the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the youth work community of practice. Throughout the past months, it has defined the Convention's form, aims, and objectives, advised on and helped steer its implementation.

The Steering Group held meetings in Brussels on 23/24 April 2024, and online on 4 July, 7 October and 19 November 2024 with the aim of preparing the theoretical framework for the Convention, a concept note which outlines the aims, content, processes and schedule of the Convention; and related issues such as the composition, profile and role of country delegations; background and preparatory research documents and visual identity and communications.

The Convention will be hosted by the Government of Malta, together with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (Malta's national youth agency) and the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) and with the support of the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. The hosts will be organising an enlarged seminar on the 29th-30th January 2025 in Malta with a larger number of stakeholders representing the youth work community of practice, as well as facilitators and rapporteurs, and meetings will continue online to ensure smooth preparations for the Convention.

Background

European Youth Work Conventions (EYWCs) have been a regular and significant forum (held every five years since 2010) mainly for youth work practitioners, but also involving other actors whose contribution is critical, such as policymakers, researchers, voluntary youth organisations and youth service providers with the aim of strengthening youth work development and identifying directions to further support the youth work field to strengthen the role of youthwork for rejuvenating and acting on democracy.

The work and declarations of the three previous EYWCs (2010, 2015, and 2020), other related EU and Council of Europe recommendations and resolutions, and the EU Council of Europe Youth Partnership research underpin, inform, and provide the knowledge base for the Convention in Malta.

The work is therefore framed around the outcomes of the three previous conventions: the 1st European Youth Work Convention held in Ghent in July 2010, the 2nd European Youth Work Convention held in Brussels in April 2015, and the 3rd European Youth Work Convention hosted online by Germany in December 2020. The projects and activities carried out by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership connected to youth work; the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, "Engage, Connect, Empower"; the Council of Europe "Youth Sector Strategy 2030"; the European Youth Work Agenda 2020/C 415/01 and the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec of (2017) on youth work inform also the process.

In particular, the Convention will seek to build on and advance the work of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) and ensure both symmetry and continuity in promoting youth work policy development and implementation, recognition and quality practice.

The process will also have regard to the following:

- the work and outcomes of the relevant Strategic National Agencies' Cooperations (SNACs).
- the European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy (February 2024, in Brussels) and its background documents - Mapping Existing European Youth Policy Strategies on Youth Work and Taking Stock. Where are we now?
- the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership projects related to youth work, including the Symposium on Visible Value: Growing Youth Work in Europe (2023).

The European Youth Work Convention

Youthwork **xcelerate**

A Roadmap Towards a European Strategy for youth work policy implementation, recognition and quality practice.

This reflects Malta's commitment to advancing the recognition and development of youth work across Europe. Positioned as a central hub in the Mediterranean, Malta represents a meeting point for different cultures and ideas, symbolising a place where new connections and strategic collaborations can thrive. The title "Youthwork xcelerate" encapsulates the urgency and momentum needed to elevate youth work to new heights, emphasising innovation and excellence.

The term "xcelerate" indicates an active push towards improving standards, recognition, and quality in youth work, aligning with the Convention's goal to provide a roadmap - comprising actions, initiatives, measures and processes - for the implementation of a youth work strategy that unites Europe through a shared vision for youth work development as reflected in the European Youth Work Agenda and the Council of Europe's Recommendation on Youth Work. The focus on a "youth work strategy" reinforces the idea that the Convention will be a forum and catalyst for promoting long-term, sustainable progress in youth work across Europe and to prioritise the next steps for the coming five years.

It also highlights Malta's role as a bridge between past conventions and future actions. It emphasises the urgent need to accelerate quality youth work practices in Europe so that these efforts are recognised and supported at both European and national level. It also aims to foster the development and well-being of young people across diverse contexts and ensure that youth work in Europe becomes and remains an essential, recognised and supported dimension of young people's learning and development towards active and responsible citizenship.

Outputs

- A roadmap - comprising actions, initiatives, processes and methods - for the implementation of a European strategy for youth work policy development, recognition and quality practice. This roadmap can feed into the preparations of the next EU Youth Strategy and can be incorporated into and become an integral part and pillar of future youth policy and strategies in Europe. Additionally, it can also inform and support youth work policy development and implementation, recognition and quality practice at Member State, regional and local levels.
- The draft report of the Convention, including proposed actions and recommendations, will be submitted to the Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conference between 8/9 October 2025 for endorsement and further action.

Outcomes

- Recognition that quality youth work can make a unique and vital contribution to young people's development, empowerment, well-being, and
- Support, strengthen and enhance other strategic policy programmes, initiatives and services for young people.

Themes and Methodology

The themes, methodology and format of the Convention will be informed and underpinned by three vertical themes and associated factors as follows:

Youth Work Core (Associated Factors) that will focus on core or essential features of youth work.

Youth Work Core	Associated Factors
Plenary	Workshops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common vision for youth work and its future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions and descriptions Ethics Quality and standards Recognition and visibility of youth work Monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact

Youth Work Environment (Associated Factors) will focus on young people, youth organisations, youth workers, trainers and leaders, programs and initiatives, and practice.

Youth Work Environment	Associated Factors
Plenary	Workshops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people - needs and aspirations, access, inclusion, participation, empowerment. <p>Where, when and how?</p> <p>With, for and by whom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth workers, education and training, their recognition, competencies, professionalism, working at a European/national/regional/local level, association and networking. Role of national youth councils, youth centres and youth organisations, including NGOs and CSOs. Volunteering, youth work providers, youth work trainers and youth-led youth work. Methodologies - tools, approaches and new technologies.

Youth Work Systems (Associated Factors) that will focus on the broader policy fields, support structures and social context in which youth work operates.

Youth Work Systems	Associated Factors
Plenary	Workshops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and strategy at European, Member State and local level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth work's interface and advocacy with other policy fields. State/NGOs: interface, strengths and weaknesses at local, regional and Member State level. State/Private and EU/EYF funding and resources - support mechanisms for youth work.

While the three vertical themes and their associated factors will determine the content and programme for the Convention, the process of discussion, consideration, and recommendations will be informed and underpinned by a horizontal theme.

Wittgenstein came to believe that the essence of language was in learning what other people are talking about from being in a community of successful language users.

Noise vs. Silence

Are we a community of successful language users?

Are there issues that we talk about too much and others we talk about too little?

What are the most important issues we most need to talk about?

Can we find a language to address these issues?

How can we transpose words into actions?

In terms of the **space** we occupy and experience in youth work and the broader human and social environment and

In terms of the **times** we live in - past memories and experiences gained and how we envision the future.

It is envisaged that the vertical thematic content and horizontal thematic process will inform all aspects of discussion at the conference. Based on the associated factors outlined above, there should be around 15 thematic workshops with a number of workshops under each theme. The workshops will explore and consider the content, and will discuss and decide on recommendations. It would be the responsibility of facilitators and rapporteurs to oversee and guide the workshops and summarise recommendations.