

 **xcelerate**

# 4th European **Youth Work** Convention

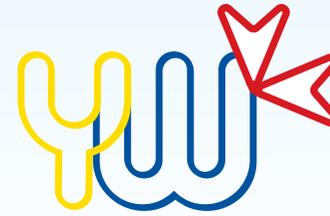
A guide for participants

Malta – 27<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025



Presidency of Malta  
Council of Europe  
May - November 2025

Présidence de Malte  
Conseil de l'Europe  
Mai - Novembre 2025



4th European  
**Youth Work** Convention

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A guide for participants

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the European Youth Work Convention hosting team. The work was commissioned by the European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of either of the partner institutions, their member states or the organisations co-operating with them.

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European Youth Work Convention  
Malta  
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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part 1 – Preparing for the European Youth Work Convention</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EYWCs: What Are They?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Other Key Processes</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>New Realities and Challenges</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The 4th European Youth Work Convention</b>	<b>8</b>
Context and setting of the Convention	8
Youthwork xcelerate	9
Format and programme of the Convention	10
Aims and outcomes of the Convention.	12
<b>Being a Delegate at the EYWC</b>	<b>13</b>
A Word about Managing Expectation	15
What happens after the Convention?	15
In a Nutshell	18
<b>Part 2 - Getting ready for the thematic workshops</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Insights into the themes</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Part 3 - Looking for more?</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Conventions and EYWA - background information</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Policy Documents</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Pedagogical Tools and Readings</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Podcasts</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Studies and Research</b>	<b>33</b>

**Part 1** of this Guide supports the preparation of participants for the 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention (EYWC). It briefly introduces the Conventions, their role, and their significance as a forum for advancing youth work in Europe. It provides an overview of the historical background of the first three EYWCs and the most important outputs and outcomes that contributed to shaping youth work policy and practice in Europe, particularly the European Youth Work Agenda. Additionally, it describes the concept and context for the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC, underlining its intention to build on past achievements and to define a roadmap comprising actions, initiatives, measures, and processes for future European youth work strategy.

The guide also clarifies the profile and role of participants and focuses on what will support their preparation for meaningful and successful participation.

To further support the participants, **Part 2** describes the main themes of the 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC and is structured thematically with guiding questions and possible resources to help participants prepare themselves for the convention.

**Part 3** consists of additional resources and references.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the booklet is content-focused preparation. All practical information and logistics are communicated directly or via the website <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/4th-european-youth-work-convention>

## EYWCs: What Are They?

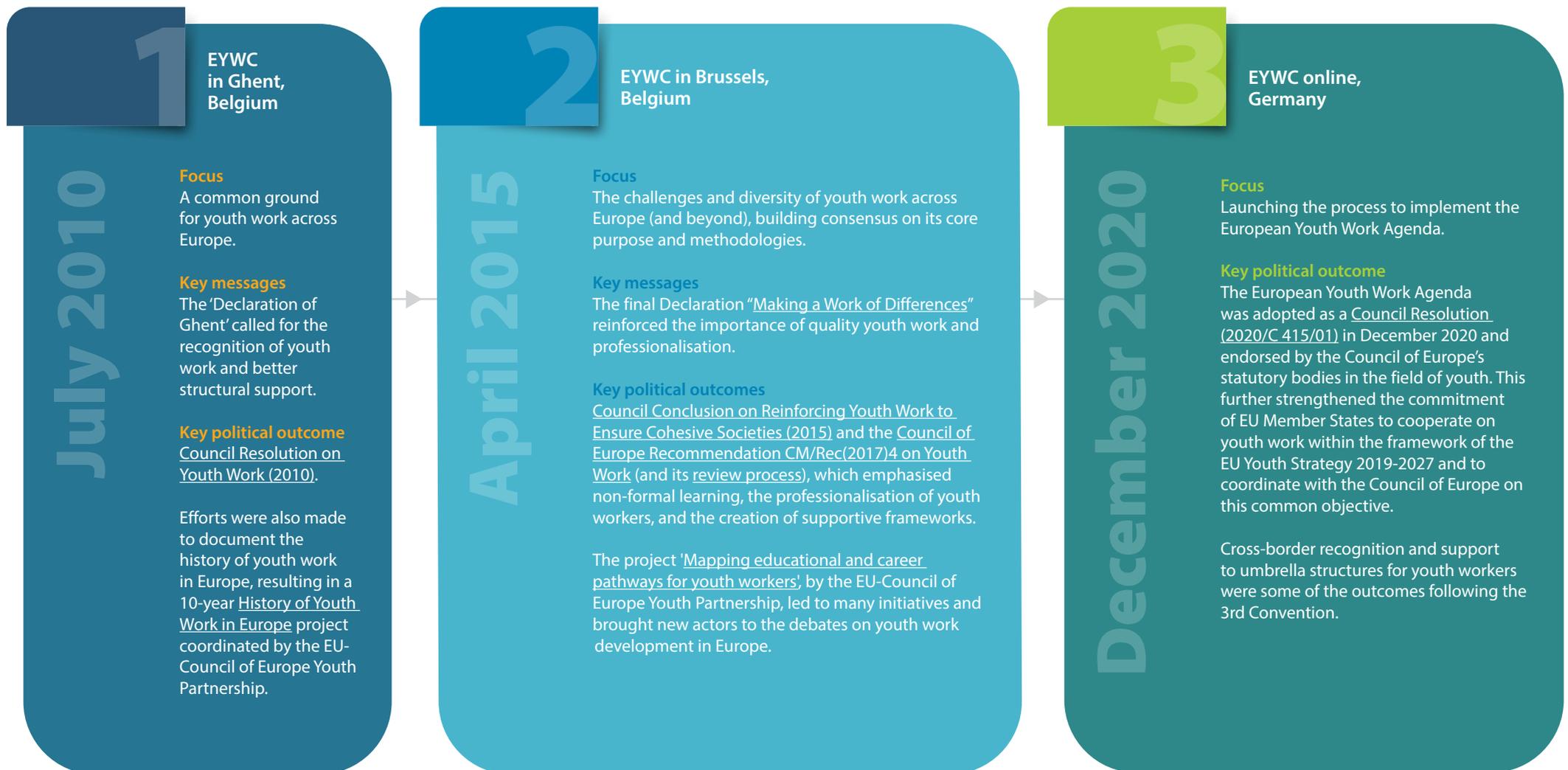
The European Youth Work Conventions (EYWCs), organised every five years since 2010, are important fora for youth work

stakeholders such as young people, youth workers, youth work providers, policymakers, trainers, networks and researchers to address youth work development and related topics, developing

a vision for the future of the field and its community of practice. They aim to promote and strengthen youth work, further develop its potential, and enhance its role in supporting and empowering young people.

EYWCs usually gather between 300 and 500 participants from all over Europe.

### A summary of the conventions:



## Spotlight on the outcomes of the 3rd EYWC

The final declaration of the 3rd EYWC, “Signposts for the Future”, provides a vision and clear directions for strengthening youth work across Europe. It is a call to action for the youth work community of practice to take responsibility for the long-term and sustainable development of youth work at local, national, and European levels.

The declaration outlines eight priority areas, each focusing on one important aspect of youth work development in Europe.

### 1 Develop and expand the youth work offer (‘Growing youth work’)

This priority is aimed at strengthening the provision of youth work across Europe in a coordinated approach, where European policies and local policy-making play their role in guaranteeing a quality local youth work offer.

### 2 Quality development

This priority focused on quality development and called for better outreach, stronger cooperation, and improved access to existing youth work support structures.

### 3 A common direction for the youth work community of practice

This priority referred to the importance of developing a space for learning and sharing to help connect the youth work community, exchange good practices, and support development at all levels (local, regional, national and European). Moreover, it called for investing more in capacity-building to help youth workers engage beyond their context.

### 4 Beyond the youth work community of practice

Youth work does not exist in a vacuum, and the importance of cross-sectoral work to ensure that youth work is acknowledged and valued beyond its immediate community and to strengthen its role in broader social and policy frameworks was emphasised.

### 5 Promotion and recognition

This priority called for the development of a common language and narrative and a strategic and coordinated approach to help establish youth work as a recognised, valued and distinct field, as well as the building of existing European initiatives that improve cooperation and visibility.

### 6 Innovation and emerging challenges

Youth work needs to remain adaptable and resilient and be a reliable safety net for young people, especially in times of uncertainty and rapid change. This implies creating strong support structures based on evidence, innovation, and long-term strategic and systemic thinking.

### 7 Policy frameworks

Youth work needs to be fully embedded in youth policy to ensure that its role, needs, and support measures are reflected at all levels of decision-making and in policy-making processes. Stronger cooperation between the European Commission and the Council of Europe can help to align efforts and guarantee that young people and youth workers have a voice in making policies that affect them more relevant and effective.

### 8 A strategic framework for youth work development

Throughout the five-year process, which was referred to as the Bonn Process, a framework for strengthening youth work was provided. However, the success of implementing the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) depends on a stronger and more structured framework that safeguards continuous progress. The European institutions must align their commitment and create a joint action task force that will help create coherent and coordinated efforts to support Member States and youth organisations to deliver youth work.

The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027: “Engage, Connect, Empower” (2018) serves as the European Union’s framework for youth policy cooperation, aiming to engage, connect, and empower young people across Europe.

The Youth Sector Strategy 2030 of the Council of Europe (2020) reinforces the principles of the EYWCs, focusing on sustainability, equality, and the recognition of youth work’s value in fostering democratic participation and social cohesion.

## New Realities and Challenges

Youth work in Europe has evolved significantly since the last EYWC in 2020, responding to a rapidly changing world while facing its challenges. Although it has gained more visibility and recognition, the level of support remains inconsistent.

Young people today are dealing with new pressures, ranging from mental health issues and climate crisis to economic uncertainty and democratic challenges. Youth work’s readiness and capacity to prepare itself and respond will also impact their future(s).

## Financial and structural challenges

Despite more recognition thanks to the EYWA, youth work continues to face a lack of adequate financial resources and remains structurally vulnerable. Too many organisations rely on short-term grants, which create instability for youth workers and makes long-term planning difficult, impacting the consistency of their support for young people. Moreover, the constantly rising costs endanger the sustainability of youth spaces and services, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

## Navigating change and core values

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed youth work online almost overnight, opening new ways to connect but also creating new inequalities. Many young people, especially those in rural or disadvantaged areas or situations, struggled with reduced youth work offers, while youth workers had to quickly develop digital competencies to keep up. Today, the challenge is to balance face-to-face engagement with digital interactions while guaranteeing that online spaces are safe and inclusive.

## Civic engagement and political challenges

Youth work has always been about empowerment, fostering critical thinking, and giving young people a sense of agency. In recent years it has taken on an even stronger civic and political role, supporting young people in activism, democratic participation, and social justice initiatives. However, this work is not without challenges. Youth workers often find themselves in politically sensitive situations without adequate safety measures or resources, as their role increasingly overlaps with democratic engagement and peace-building efforts.

Across Europe and recently in several countries, youth organisations and young people are driving change. They have taken action to demand accountability, the application of the rule of law, and push for governance reforms. Beyond their usual work, youth workers must also support communities, healing trauma and rebuilding civil society, and making sure young people have a say in shaping both their present and future(s).

## The 4th European Youth Work Convention

### Context and setting of the Convention

The government of Malta will hold the 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention in Valletta from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025 under the Maltese Chairpersonship of the Council of Europe. Over 450 participants are expected at the Convention, including national delegations from over 40 countries, representatives from the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the voluntary youth sector and other youth organisations, as well as the wider youth work community of practice.

The Convention will be held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, the historic site of a hospital built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Order of St. John, located towards the tip of the Valletta peninsula with magnificent views over the Grand Harbour.

The Convention will be hosted and organised by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Research and Innovation, together with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (Malta's National Youth Agency) and the European Union Programme Agency (EUPA) for Malta, with the support of the Youth Partnership.

To prepare the Convention, a Steering Group, comprising representatives of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the National Agencies for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, and representatives of the youth work community of practice, was convened to advise on the programme and logistics for the Convention.

The 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC will seek to build on and advance the work of the EYWA, ensure both symmetry and continuity in promoting youth work policy development and implementation, and strengthening recognition and quality practice.



### Youthwork

The Convention's title, 'Youthwork xcelerate - A roadmap towards a European strategy for youth work policy development, implementation, recognition and quality practice' 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, with innovation and excellence as its hallmarks.

'Youthwork xcelerate' also means an active drive 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 creation of a youth work strategy that unites Europe through a shared vision for youth work development as reflected in the EYWA 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 at national, regional and local levels and to prioritise the steps required for the next five years.

It also highlights Malta's role as a bridge between past Conventions and future strategic actions. It emphasises the urgent need to strengthen and enhance quality youth work practices in Europe so that these efforts are recognised and supported at both European and national levels. 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, development and active citizenship.





VOICE

ECHO

SILENCE

### Format and programme of the Convention

The programme for the Convention comprises an opening plenary session, a series of roundtable discussions, thematic workshops and workshops on inspiring practices and European - level projects and initiatives. The thematic workshops will focus on three dimensions:

- **Youth work core:** A common vision for youth work and its future, which will focus on definitions and descriptions of youth work, values and ethics, recognition and visibility, quality and standards, and monitoring and evaluation.
- **Youth work environment:** Supporting young people by addressing their needs and aspirations, ensuring their access, inclusion, participation, and empowerment. This includes advocacy in youth work; the role of employed and volunteer youth workers and youth leaders and their education, training, and recognition, as well as youth work methodologies, tools, approaches and new technologies.
- **Youth work systems:** Policy and strategy at the European, national, regional, and local levels, covering the voluntary youth sector and youth work associations, networks, centres, and service providers. It also includes cooperation between state/public and voluntary sectors at different levels, state/public and EU/EYF funding and resources for youth work, and youth work's interaction with other policy fields.

The Convention will also provide a platform for a diverse range of projects and inspirational practices from Malta and other countries as well as from the European Commission, the Council of Europe Youth Department and EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership initiatives that mirror, complement and inform the thematic workshops.

The report and conclusions of the Convention will be presented to the Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conference in October 2025.

### The sound and the silence

The hope and expectations are that the Convention in Malta will fundamentally be about giving voice to and listening to the youth work community of practice: youth workers, youth

leaders, youth organisations and service providers who work at the coal face of youth work and interact with and support young people on a regular and ongoing basis. What are their hopes, expectations, aspirations, concerns and fears for the future of youth work as a professional practice that has meaning and value for young people?

Ludwig 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. Are we a youth work community of successful language users? Are there issues that we talk about too much and others that we talk about too little? How do we avoid group think and listen to dissenting voices? What are the most important issues we need to address? Can we develop a shared language to tackle them? How do we turn words into actions? How do we approach these questions in relation to the spaces we occupy, our experiences in youth work, and the wider human and social environment? How do we reflect on the times we live in, the memories and lessons we have gained, the emerging challenges we face, and our vision for the future?

The language of youth work is positive, fervent, uplifting, and aspirational. Much progress has been made over the past 20 years in Europe in promoting and supporting youth work, but the lived reality of youth work for its community of practice is more challenging. The sound often shuts out the silence.

Uncertainty, disappointment, and frustration can be features of that silence. Low policy priority, lack of recognition, inadequate education and training, poor employment opportunities, lack of parity of esteem with other professions, insufficient support structures and intermittent and onerous funding measures are too common a feature of youth work across Europe and the consequences they have for both youth workers and young people. The tendency for stakeholders in the field to work in silos inhibits mutual support in maximising the effects of available resources. Regional imbalances in youth work provision in Europe, while apparent and acknowledged, are rarely addressed. The voluntary youth sector is the backbone of youth work in Europe, yet in many countries, it often bears an excess burden, its potential untapped and capacity limited.



REFLECT

EXPERIENCE

LEARN



We must therefore focus on maximising our strengths, highlight youth work's unique role in empowering young people as individual and active citizens, how it can complement and reinforce youth policies in related fields, while at the same time developing youth work strategies that are clear, realistic, focused, prioritised and time bound.

#### **Aims and outcomes of the Convention**

The primary focus of the 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC in Malta will be giving voice to and listening to the youth work community of practice, articulating and arriving at conclusions that can provide the essential features, building blocks, measures and initiatives for developing and implementing effective youth work strategy. All stakeholders – policy makers, European institutions, Member States at national, regional and local level, National Agencies, the voluntary youth sector and young people – have varying roles and responsibilities in developing and implementing youth work strategy.

The next five years will see a new EU youth strategy, a new Multiannual Financial Framework, a new generation of European programmes, and a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy.

The Convention in Malta provides us with the opportunity to set out our strategic vision, priorities and objectives for youth work in Europe over the next five years and a roadmap on how they can be included in and become an essential pillar of all youth policy both at European and national level.

## **Being a Delegate at the EYWC**

### **What to expect?**

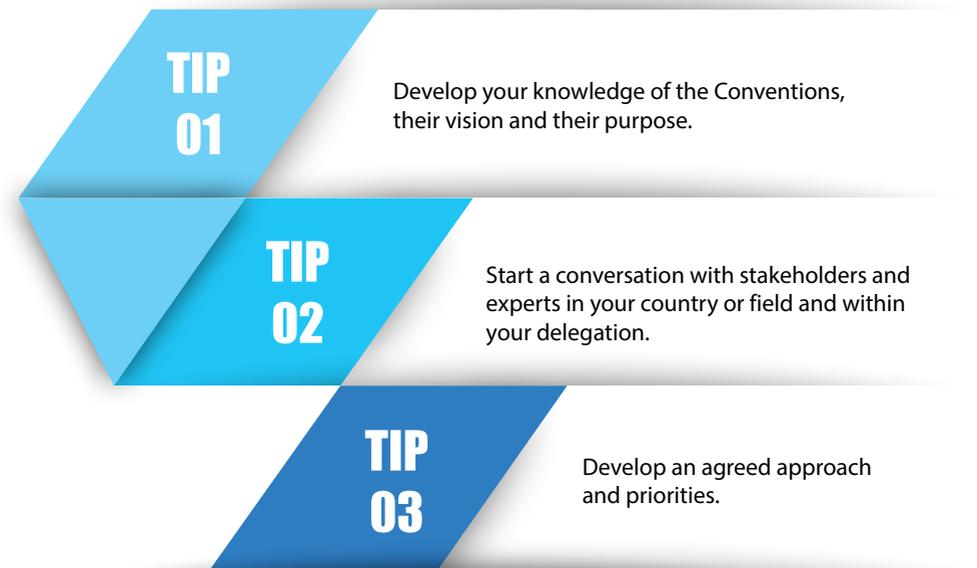
The 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC aims to be an inclusive, dynamic and collaborative space that contributes to shaping the future of European youth work. It will offer a cooperative environment with panel discussions, workshops and interactive sessions all designed around the key themes of this edition. You will join a diverse group of participants such as youth workers, youth leaders, youth work providers, policy makers, researchers, trainers, and other networks from your country and across Europe. Together with others, you can help shape strategic initiatives and future directions for the field of youth work and its community of practice. Hence, your active participation is warmly encouraged. The EYWC is also a unique opportunity to learn from each other on various approaches and practices while building or further developing European and international connections. Your contributions matter!

### **Preparing for your role as participant**

Your role at the Convention will involve engaging in discussions, sharing experiences, and collaborating with other participants to shape the future of youth work in Europe. The EYWC's forward-thinking dynamic is an opportunity to advocate for innovative practices and enhance transversal skills in the youth policy field. You might expect that discussions address emerging challenges and highlight the need for comprehensive and systemic approaches to enable young people to develop the skills and capabilities to face societal challenges and cope in a rapidly evolving social and political context.

Participants play a key role, which is why your preparation and follow-up is so important.

### **Some tips:**



## 1 Develop your knowledge of the Conventions, their vision and purpose

The best way is to arrive well-prepared. This implies reviewing the outcomes of previous EYWCs (having at least an overview of the content of the declarations and resolutions). This will support your understanding of the developments so far and reinforce the impact of EYWCs. Youth work development does not happen in a vacuum. Consult the references to the EU and Council of Europe documents mentioned in this booklet.

A good understanding of the European Youth Work Agenda will also be very important since its implementation is also the basis of this fourth edition. Being informed about recent youth and youth work developments will further boost your ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions.

## 2 Start a conversation (with stakeholders and experts in your country or field and within your delegation)

Liaising with stakeholders, such as, local and national networks, the National Youth Council, the National Agency, a youth workers' association, your European Youth Work Agenda's national contact point (if there is one in your country), researchers and policy makers to gather insights on challenges and opportunities in youth work is important.

## 3 Develop an agreed approach and priorities

Develop a 'strategy' on how to engage as participants: identify spaces where exchanges and joint reflection could happen. Explore the guiding questions (see part 2 of the booklet) and consider them from the perspective of your youth work role, context and experience.

Is this too much? Is it your first EYWC? No worries, no one expects you to know all these processes and documents by heart, and this is why preparing with other representatives of the community of practice before heading to Malta is important, and where peer support plays a role. Having a general overview and understanding of these processes will be very helpful.

A few meetings with at least your national delegation will be extremely useful. This will further enhance your motivation and capacity to contribute.

## A Word about Managing Expectations

### Balance optimism with 'realistic' change

Participating in an event like the EYWC brings a strong sense of optimism—the feeling that this momentum can truly shape youth work. Sharing this space with more than 450 colleagues and peers makes the energy almost contagious. However, anyone who has been in such a setting knows that turning ideas into action is not always that simple. The best way to be prepared is to balance ambition with a clear understanding of what change can realistically happen within the European youth work landscape. This means zooming out, listening to the community of practice, and identifying what can genuinely be changed and channelled.

### Turn discussions into action

One of the biggest challenges, especially when working with documents, is the risk of getting stuck in endless debates over wording. Language is important, particularly in policy, but focusing too much on technicalities can lead to losing sight of the bigger picture. It is important to remember that youth work is about empowering young people and strengthening communities—not just refining documents. What makes the EYWC valuable is not finding the perfect way to phrase sentences but rather the ideas, strategies, and collaborations that emerge from it.

### Take into account the nature of European youth work policy

Another key point to keep in mind is that youth policy at the European level is often not binding. Instead, it relies on recommendations, guidelines, and voluntary commitments, which only make an impact if countries choose to implement them at national and local levels. It is also often a question of political will, convincing policy makers and leaders. Policy shifts in youth work do not happen overnight; they require long-term efforts, strong coalitions and partnerships at different levels to take effect.

### Drive your energy towards a real and lasting impact

Managing expectations means directing the energy of the EYWC into realistic and sustainable action: By doing so, the Convention can serve as a stepping stone towards meaningful and lasting change, paving the way for a European strategy for youth work.

## What Happens after the Convention?

### Bringing the EYWC insights back into your context

Often, participants return from an event like the EYWC with high energy, fresh ideas, and valuable new connections. But just as often, reality sets in. How can you ensure that what was explored and the outcomes do not fade away or stay in Malta? How can you bring the insights, debates, and possible actions back into your context?

A possible first step is for your delegation to meet and ensure that the knowledge and insights gained are not lost or remain solely with those present at the Convention. As part of your preparation, you might consider a report-back session - whatever format works best - with

other representatives of the community of practice who were not able to be in Malta. While waiting for the official report, a summary might help frame discussions:

These could support efforts to adapt the outcomes of the 4th EYWC to national and local realities.

### From words to action

The next step is to translate discussions into concrete action. What can be applied 'here and now'? And what informs you about tomorrow? Perhaps a new approach to youth participation could be tested in your community. Maybe the insights on youth work and youth work strategy development could support local advocacy efforts. Are there partnership opportunities that could turn into real projects?

Advocacy also plays a role. The EYWC's conclusions and declarations need policy backing, which means getting more decision-makers interested and involved. It is about making the case for why the ideas you bring back are necessary steps forward.



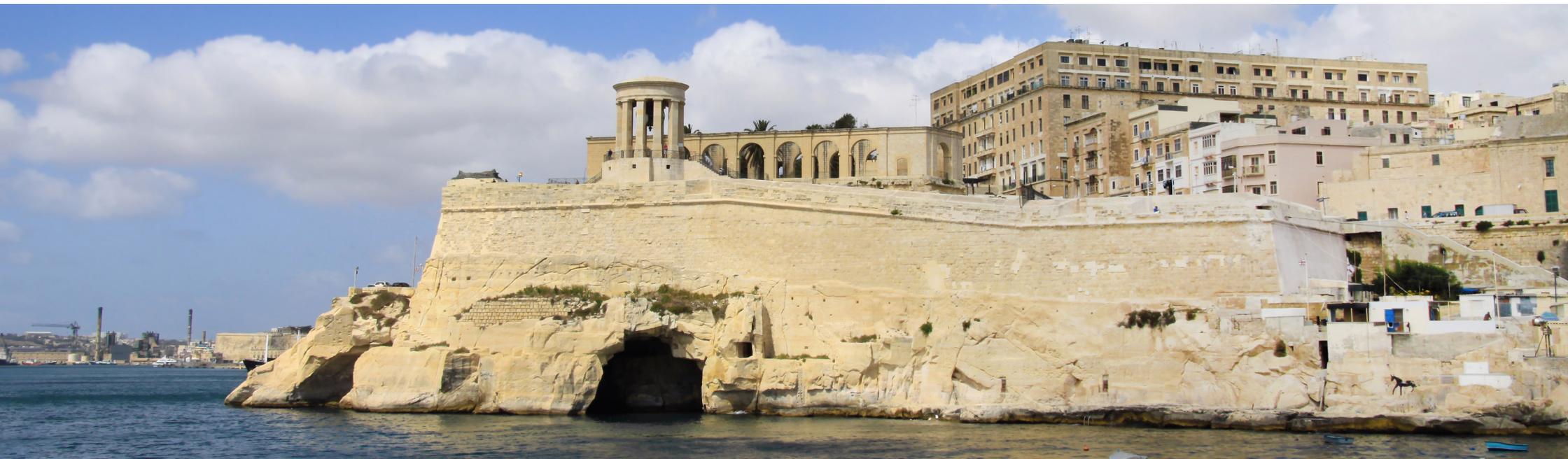
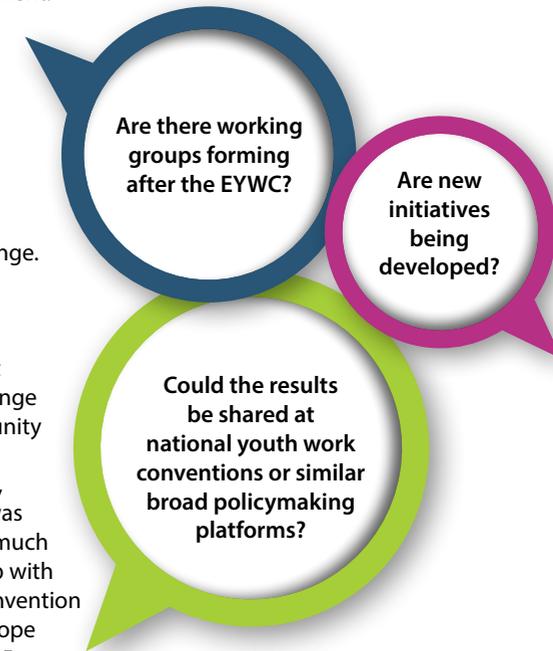
### Keep the momentum alive

Momentum is maintained by staying engaged - in your role, in your position, with what you have and what you can do. This is how a Convention becomes a movement. Keeping in touch with the participants you connected with can help preserve the energy.

Perhaps there are actions you can get involved in - even if they are not as big as a European strategy, they can still contribute to it. Being present in these conversations means being part of the change.

### The impact starts now

At the end of the day, the EYWC itself is not the impact - but what happens next is. Change in youth work takes time. While the community of practice can be fast to (re)act, policy and strategy has its own pace. Consistent effort, collaboration, and pushing forward what was initiated in Malta can turn into something much bigger. Make sure, for instance, to follow up with your Ministry on the conclusions of the Convention that will be presented to the Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conference in October 2025.



### An EYWC...

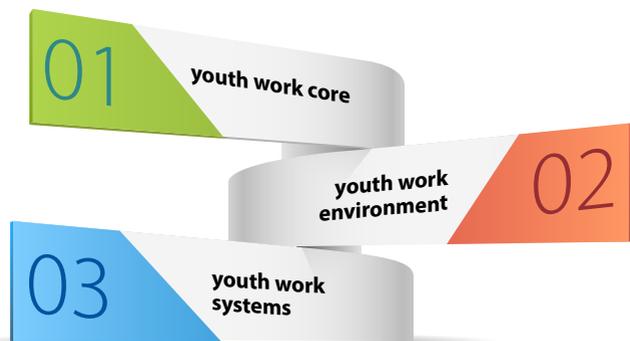
- ✓ **Is a policy-shaping opportunity:** the Convention provides a space for participants to contribute actively to the development of policy and strategies shaping the future of youth work.
- ✓ **Focuses on key themes** that support framing the future of youth work.
- ✓ **Is an inclusive forum:** the EYWC aims to include diverse voices by bringing together young people, youth workers, youth services, policymakers, researchers, and network/organisational representatives from across Europe.
- ✓ **Is a dynamic and collaborative environment:** as a participant, you are encouraged to engage actively in discussions, interactive sessions, and collaborative spaces to learn from each other's practices and approaches, promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding.
- ✓ **Is a platform for networking:** the EYWC also offers opportunities to build or strengthen European and international connections.
- ✓ **Requires preparation:** as a participant, you are expected to have a good understanding of historical processes and key documents, such as the declarations and resolutions from previous editions. Ideally, you should also meet with other members of your national delegation before and perhaps even during the EYWC.
- ✓ **Calls for a 'systemic mind':** because of their nature, EYWCs call for a systemic way of thinking, one that looks at the bigger picture and not only at local, regional, or national agendas and interests. EYWCs are spaces that address youth work as a field. Hence the need to zoom out and to be curious.
- ✓ **Requires some qualities:** curiosity, open-mindedness, adaptability, and a systemic mindset are useful qualities to support your engagement in the EYWC and in addressing the diverse and evolving landscape of youth work across Europe.

### An EYCW...

- ✗ **Is not a one-way experience:** you are not just a participant but an active contributor whose insights and participation help shape meaningful outcomes.
- ✗ **Is not a solely formal gathering:** the EYWC is designed to be dynamic, interactive, and participatory rather than rigidly structured and overly formal. Certainly, some parts must be, but it is a space that needs to live and vibe.
- ✗ **Is not limited to youth work experts:** even though policy-shaping processes are at the core of what EYWCs contribute to, the EYWC welcomes a broad spectrum of participants to ensure that the diversity in the field is represented as much and as well as possible.
- ✗ **Is not detached from broader contexts:** the exchanges and discussions will not be isolated but closely connected to wider societal, political, and cultural contexts that affect youth work.
- ✗ **Is not a standalone meeting:** the EYWC is part of a continuum, building on the outcomes of previous editions and contributing to the future of European youth work development. It also calls for a proper follow-up.
- ✗ **Is not a guaranteed policy changer:** while the Convention contributes to shaping youth work policy and strategy at the European level it depends on voluntary commitments, partnerships, and a will for national implementation.

## Part 2 – Getting Ready for the Thematic Workshops

The Convention will focus on three overarching youth work themes:



which will inform, underpin and be the basis for discussions in the plenary sessions, 15 thematic workshops and 30 workshops on projects and inspiring practices which will be presented during the Convention. The projects and practices will reflect the thematic workshops.

The **youth work core** embodies the essential features and foundational principles of youth work; the **youth work environment** enables practical implementation, while **youth work systems** provide the necessary support structures and mechanisms.

The thematic workshops will be the main forum where participants can consider, discuss and arrive at conclusions on the three overarching themes of the Convention. Each of the 15 thematic workshops will have a facilitator and rapporteur and will involve an introduction followed by a broad-based discussion on the relevant theme and deciding on and determining a number of conclusions that will inform, contribute to and underpin future youth work strategy at both European and country level.

To facilitate and stimulate discussion, participants in the workshops will be presented with guiding questions for their consideration, which will broadly have three dimensions:



The outcomes of discussions during the workshops and the conclusions will be incorporated into the report of the Convention to be presented at the Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conference in Malta in October 2025.

The following section of the guide provides:



Youth work core

This theme explores the fundamental aspects that define and sustain youth work as a field and as a practice. It is about confirming a coherent and shared understanding of youth work across Europe, restating its values, and ensuring that it can function within a framework of quality and ethics. This theme also seeks to strengthen the recognition of youth work within policy frameworks and society at large and to make sure that its impact is both visible and measurable. The youth work core is also a foundation on which youth work systems and environments are built and, therefore, interconnected, shaping the identity of youth work and affirming its role in supporting young people's development.

The **five thematic workshops** are:

- 1 Definitions and descriptions of youth work** - Reaffirming a common vision and understanding of youth work across diverse contexts.
- 2 Values and ethics in youth work practice** - Ensuring that agreed ethical standards guide youth work practices.
- 3 Recognition and visibility of youth work** - Enhancing the recognition and visibility of youth work within policy and societal frameworks.
- 4 Quality and Standards** - Strengthening quality assurance and standardisation in youth work.
- 5 Monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact** - Realising the importance of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of youth work.

Guiding questions for reflection on the youthwork core theme

What are the strengths and weaknesses of definitions/descriptions of youth work? Are they understandable to people outside the youth work field?

Can we come up with a clearer vision of what youth work is or what youth work can be, and its unique qualities, i.e. a clearer description for everyone to understand?

To what extent do European values inform and underpin youth work practice, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?

What does recognition mean for you? Are some forms of recognition more important than others, and why?

How can enhanced visibility lead to greater support and resources for youth work initiatives?

What do you think are the essential features or tools of any quality framework, system or standards?

What measures/actions need to be taken to ensure that youth work quality and standards are embedded in future youth work strategy and practice?

What is your knowledge and experience of monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact on young people in your country or organisation?

## Possible resources

The Youth Work Strategies Manual (to be launched at the Convention) explores effective ways to advocate for youth work at both local and national levels and offers a comprehensive collection of accessible resources designed to support reflection and action.

*Growing Youth Work in Europe: Results of the 'Mapping European Youth Work Ecosystems' Study* examines the development of youth work across Europe, focusing on the essential features of youth work, including common visions, definitions, ethics, quality standards, recognition, and visibility.

*Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together: Study on Models for the Recognition of Youth Workers' Competences in Europe* explores various models for recognising youth workers' competences, contributing to a common understanding and formal recognition within the youth work sector.

The web space *Visible Value: Recognition of Youth Work* explores practices and strategies to enhance the visibility and recognition of youth work across Europe, emphasising its social impact and policy relevance.

The report of the *Value and Recognition of Youth Work Conference* (4-7 December 2023, Zagreb) examines the progress and challenges in recognising youth work across Europe, highlighting key discussions, policy developments, and strategies for strengthening its impact.

## Youth work environment

The youth work environment focuses on the ecosystem in which youth work operates, including the community of practice, the programmes, and the principles and approaches that shape it. This theme highlights advocacy and giving a voice to young people in youth work practice; and the role of employed and volunteer youth workers, youth leaders and youth-led youth work in fostering meaningful engagement and empowerment of young people, particularly in changing and challenging times and contexts. The effectiveness of youth work relies on the resources, tools, and frameworks available to ensure sustaining high-quality practice. A proper and well-functioning youth work environment must provide spaces for youth participation, professional development, and innovation. This theme also addresses the role of volunteering, youth-led initiatives, and digital transformation in improving the effectiveness of youth work.

The **five thematic workshops** are:

**Young people, their needs and aspirations and how youth work can support and empower them** - Understanding and responding to the needs of young people.

**Advocacy in youth work** - Giving young people a meaningful voice and role and facilitating their active citizenship.

**Youth work as a profession** - Strengthening the professional development of youth workers.

**Volunteering and youth-led youth work in youth organisations** - Supporting volunteering and youth-led initiatives.

**Methodologies, open and targeted approaches and new technologies in youth work** - Integrating innovative tools and approaches to improve youth work effectiveness.

## Guiding questions for reflection on the youthwork environment theme

What in your opinion and experience is unique and distinctive about youth work and its value for young people?

What are the main challenges in promoting advocacy, and how can they be addressed in future youth work strategy?

What education/training, competences, and recognition do employed youth workers need to meet these challenges?

Is the professionalisation of youth work a realistic or desirable option?

What are the main challenges facing volunteer youth leaders? Are they the same challenges for employed youth workers?

What education/training, competences, and recognition do volunteer youth leaders need in meeting these challenges?

Is youth work for all young people or only the most in need? Can we achieve a balance, and what would it mean for future youth work strategy?

What are the advantages/disadvantages of digitalisation in youth work practice?

## Possible resources

*Insights into developing the youth work environment* is designed to support change makers at national and local levels as they carry out an assessment of where youth work stands and how to plan the way forward. This publication includes a short background, good practice examples, as well as questions for reflection, guidance and checklists.

*Technology and the new power dynamics: limitations of digital youth work* offers some analytical perspectives on the limits of digital youth work. The discussion reflects on the practical implementation of digital youth work and the underpinning philosophy and values of youth work.

*Young Humans Make Change, Young Users Click: Creating Youth-Centered Networked Social Movements* explores how youth-led social movements use digital platforms to organise and mobilise, highlighting what young activists use in various cultural contexts.

*Meaningful youth political participation in Europe: concepts, patterns and policy implications* explores the evolving landscape of young people's engagement in democratic processes across Europe. It examines the barriers and opportunities for youth involvement in politics, offering insights into innovative participation models and policy recommendations to strengthen democratic inclusion.

*Youth worker education in Europe. Policies, structures, practices* looks at how youth workers are educated and trained across Europe. It explores different approaches, challenges, and policies, sharing best practices and recommendations to improve youth worker education and support their role in working with young people.

## Youth work systems

Youth work systems examines the broader structures and policies that enable youth work to develop and grow. It underlines the need for a systemic approach, acknowledging that youth work does not operate in a vacuum but, instead, within a network of interdependent and interconnected policies, support structures and frameworks. Having a strong youth work system means that European, national, and local policies need to align and connect with other sectors such as education, employment, and social inclusion. The theme also explores the sustainability of youth work, and that necessary support structures and funding mechanisms are in place. Going for a system-thinking approach can help create coherence between policy, practice, and the realities that young people face.

The **five thematic workshops** are:

- 1 The voluntary youth sector** – Supporting and strengthening the crucial role of the voluntary youth sector in many parts of Europe.
- 2 Youth work associations, networks, centres and service providers** - Recognising the role that youth workers' associations, networks, youth centres, and service providers play in supporting youth work.
- 3 The state/public and voluntary sectors at the national, regional and local levels** – How can the two sectors cooperate and work together to strengthen youth work at the national, regional and local levels?
- 4 State/Public and EU/European Youth Foundation funding and resources for youth work** - Ensuring sustainable funding mechanisms and support structures.
- 5 Youth work's interaction and relationship with and other policy fields** – How can youth work support related policy fields such as education or employment and how can these policy fields provide opportunities for promoting the values of youth work?

## Guiding questions for reflection on the youthwork systems theme

What are the main challenges facing the voluntary youth sector, youth organisations and youth work associations, networks, centres and service providers?

What are the essential resources, capacities and supports that the voluntary youth sector needs to meet these challenges?

What are the essential resources, capacities and supports that youth work associations, networks, centres and service providers need to meet these challenges?

What are the positives and negatives of interaction between the state/public sector and the voluntary youth sector at the national, regional and local levels in your country?

What are the main challenges facing greater cooperation and partnership between the two sectors?

What are the main problems with current state/public and European funding and support? What measures/ actions need to be taken in future youth work strategies to tackle these problems?

Is there an overlap or mismatch between state/public and European funding and support and how can these be more aligned to maximise their impact in future youth work strategy?

What is unique about youth work that distinguishes it from other youth and related policy fields such as education and employment? What can it do for young people that other policy fields cannot?

## Possible resources:

*The Youth Policy, Youth Work and Youth Research Essentials* series provides concise, research-based insights into key topics in youth work, youth policy, and young people's participation. These publications offer practical guidance and critical analysis to support policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in strengthening the youth sector across Europe.

The video *YOCOMO - About Systems* introduces the concept of systems thinking in youth work, emphasising the importance of viewing organisations as interconnected entities. It highlights how adopting a systemic perspective can enhance the effectiveness and adaptability of youth work practices.

The video *A Systemic Approach to Change* explores the benefits of perceiving organisations as living systems. It addresses questions about organisational health, energy flow, and adaptability to change, offering new perspectives on challenges and obstacles to transformation.

*Visible value – Growing youth work in Europe*, aims to support interested parties to boost youth work development in their countries, starting with analysing the situation, identifying objectives to advance, actors to cooperate with, and challenges which may arise in the implementation process, as well as finding inspiration through how others have approached these challenges.

## Part 3 – Looking for More?

This section lists additional resources that can provide useful insights and background information on European Youth Work Conventions and connected youth work developments. While not exhaustive, these resources can support understanding the broader context and specific details of youth work and youth work in Europe. The list is organised by type of document.

### Conventions and EYWA-background information

- *Interview of Marvic Debono, EUPA, about the 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC.*
- *Overview of all the European Youth Work Conventions*, webpage, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.
- JUGEND für Europa, <https://www.bonn-process.net/> is a website dedicated to the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda, which aims to strengthen and further develop youth work across Europe.

### Policy Documents

- Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council *on youth work policy in an empowering Europe* (2024) emphasises the role of youth work in supporting young people to become more autonomous within new realities, calling on Member States, the European Commission, and relevant stakeholders to support the development and practice of quality youth work and youth work policy at EU, national, and local levels.
- Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council *on inclusive societies for young people* (2024) emphasise the importance of facilitating active participation and inclusion of young people in their communities and democratic life, highlighting the need to improve their mental well-being and living conditions through inclusive measures and youth work.
- *Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move'* - learning mobility opportunities for everyone (2024) outlines measures to enhance and broaden access to cross-border learning experiences across all educational sectors, aiming to make such opportunities more inclusive and attainable for a diverse range of learners.
- *European Charter On The Participation Of Young People In Local And Regional Life* (update 26/11/24). The revised Charter serves as a comprehensive framework guiding local and regional authorities in Europe on policies and practices to enhance youth participation in democratic processes and community activities.

- *Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills and competences* in education and training (2023), which emphasises the importance of equipping all citizens with essential digital skills to participate fully in society and the economy, aligning with the goals of the European Year of Skills.
- *Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development* (2022) emphasises the pivotal role of education and training in achieving the European Green Deal's objectives by integrating sustainability into all levels of learning.
- *Belgian EU Presidency Report* (2010). This report reflects on the Belgian EU Presidency's efforts to bridge children's rights and youth policy, addressing various youth work issues and contributing to Council Conclusions and Resolutions.

## Pedagogical Tools and Readings

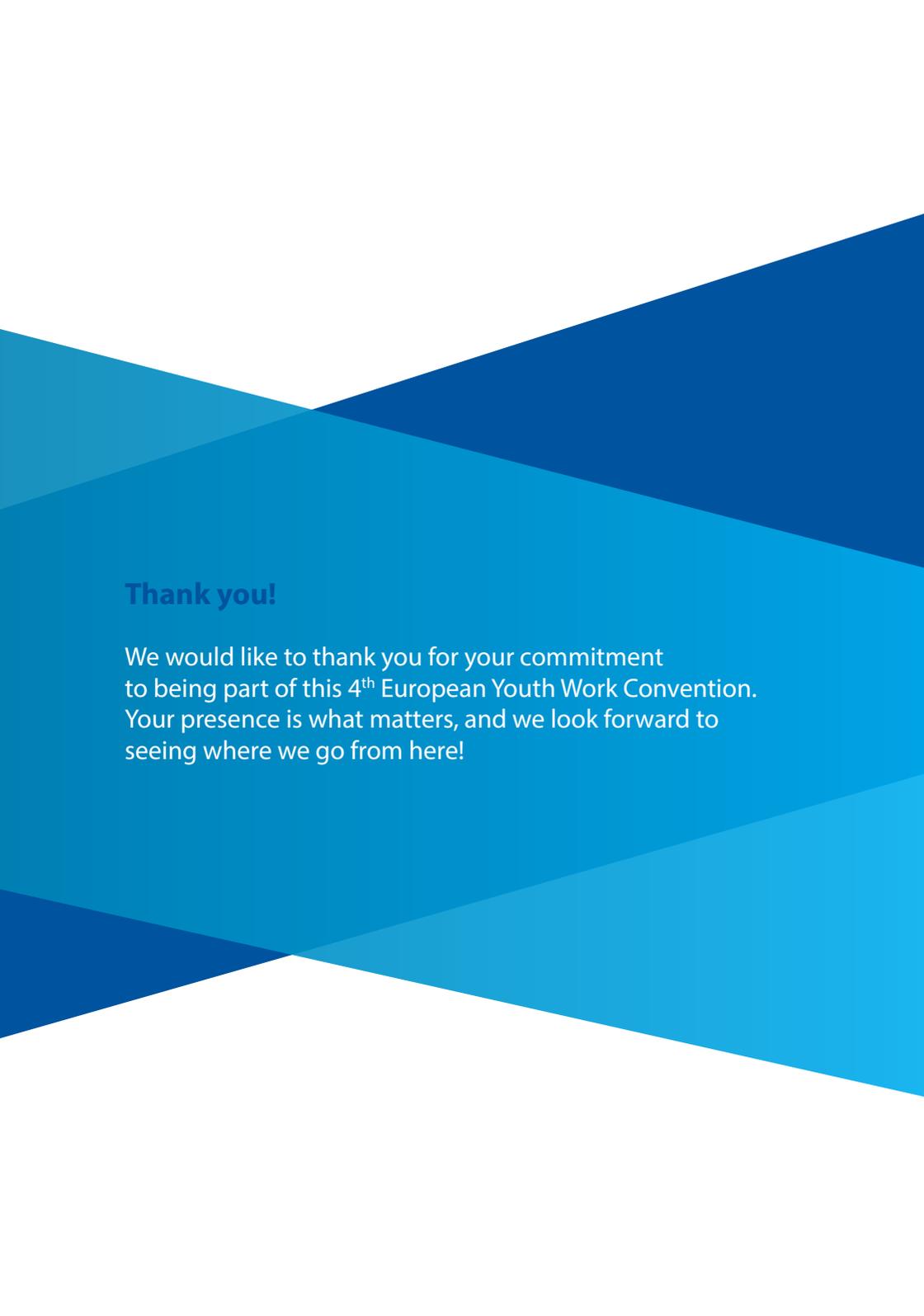
- Ajsa Hadzibegovic, Nedeljka Borojevic and Olga Kiriakidou (to be published in 2025), *Advocacy tools for youth work development*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. A set of practical tools for advocacy to be used by all actors in the youth field.
- *Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio* (2006, revised in 2015). A self-assessment tool designed to help youth workers and leaders evaluate and develop their competencies, aiming to enhance the quality of youth work across Europe.
- *Illustrations on youth work*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.
- *MOOC on Youth Work Essentials*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. An online course designed to introduce and deepen understanding of youth work, its principles, and its role in policy and practice across Europe.
- Neringa Tumėnaitė (2020), *Greening the Youth Sector: Sustainability Checklist*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. A guide designed to assist youth event organisers in incorporating environmentally sustainable practices into their activities, promoting continuous reflection and adaptation for the well-being of our planet.
- The *European Charter on Local Youth Work* (2017) developed in the frame of the project 'Europe Goes Local,' aims to contribute to the further development of local youth work by stating which principles should guide it and how different aspects of it should be designed to meet these principles.

## Podcasts

- *Podcasts Under 30'*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. A series of short, insightful podcasts by the Youth Partnership covering key topics and developments in youth work, policy, and education. See in particular the one on the *4th European Youth Work Convention*.

## Studies and Research

- Ilona Evelyn-Rannala, Jelena Stojanovic, Marko Kovacic (2022) *European youth work policy goals analysed*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, examines and compares youth work policy goals and objectives of the EU and the Council of Europe, identifying common traits and gaps to assist in creating more operational plans for the implementation of youth work policy.
- Alena Ignatovitch, Max Fras, and Tanya Basarab (2020), *Youth Work in Eastern Europe: Realities, Perspectives, and Inspiring Initiatives*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. This publication explores the state of youth work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, offering insights into definitions, implementation, financing, education, training, methods, quality standards, and infrastructure, complemented by over 20 inspiring initiatives.
- Marko Kovačić and Lana Pasić (2018), *Youth Work in South-East Europe*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. This study provides a general overview of the situation of young people and youth work in South-East Europe, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia, ahead of the regional peer learning seminar on youth work and youth policy.
- Hanjo Schild, Nuala Connolly, Francine Labadie, Jan Vanhee, Howard Williamson and other contributors (2015), *Thinking Seriously About Youth Work: And How to Prepare People to Do It*, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. This publication delves into effective methodologies and frameworks for youth work in Europe.
- Hanjo Schild (2024), *Mapping Existing European Youth Policy Strategies on Youth Work*, Flemish Government, Department for Culture, Youth and Media. The document provides a comprehensive analysis of European youth policy documents related to youth work, identifying possible key themes, objectives, and areas for future development.
- Howard Williamson (2024), *Taking Stock – Where are we now? Youth Work in Contemporary Europe*, Flemish Government, Department for Culture, Youth and Media: The document provides an in-depth review of the evolution of youth work in Europe, reflecting on its current challenges and opportunities in the context of broader societal changes. It synthesises historical milestones, key policies, and strategies and offers a roadmap for youth work policy development and its practice in an evolving Europe.

The left side of the slide features a decorative graphic composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent blue shapes. These shapes are primarily triangles and quadrilaterals in various shades of blue, ranging from a light sky blue to a deep navy blue. They are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some shapes appearing to overlap others. The overall effect is a modern, abstract design that frames the text on the left.

## Thank you!

We would like to thank you for your commitment to being part of this 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention. Your presence is what matters, and we look forward to seeing where we go from here!



Presidency of Malta  
Council of Europe  
May - November 2025

Présidence de Malte  
Conseil de l'Europe  
Mai - Novembre 2025



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