EU-CoE Youth Work Reference Group

Mapping Youth Work Development 2026

5 November 2026

Youth Partnership

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

EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Mapping youth work development at the European level 2026

- Following the 4th European Youth Work Convention Conclusions and Roadmap. Looking through the lens of developing Youth Work Core, Environment and Systems

- EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership's Workplan – within 'Systems'

Through this study we aim to:

- Provide a structured **overview of initiatives and actors involved** in youth work development in Europe.
- **Identify gaps and overlaps in actions at European level** to support a coordinated approach to youth work development across Europe.
- **Inform decision-making processes and strategic planning** within the European Commission, the Council of Europe, member States, and other stakeholders.
- **Ensure wide dissemination of mapping results and insights** through the Youth Partnership's website and other communication channels.

Data Sources and Methodology



- European Reference Group meeting – 31st March-1st April 2026
- Survey open 13th May-19th June 2026 with 29 responses from 17 organisations or partnerships
- Desk research
- Roadmap status update was provided based on contributions from key contacts pp.4-6
- Data was analysed by coding responses according to keywords within the description of 'Core', 'Environment' and 'Systems' pillars.

Mapping Framework

CORE	ENVIRONMENT	SYSTEMS
Shared vision for youth work and its future	Addressing young people's needs	Policy and strategy
Definitions and descriptions	Access and inclusion	Cooperation for Development of youth work - within policy and strategy
Values and Ethics	Participation and empowerment and advocacy in youth work (for young people)	Range of settings
Recognition and Visibility	Advocacy in youth work (for youth work)	Cooperation between voluntary and statutory sectors (and the State and the field)
Quality and Standards	Role of youth work staff and volunteers	Funding
Monitoring and Evaluation	Education, training and recognition of youth workers	Youth work's interaction with other policy fields
	Youth work methodologies, tools and approaches	
	New technologies	

Findings

WHAT IS BEING ADDRESSED SUFFICIENTLY?
MAJOR FOCUS AREAS ACROSS THE BOARD

Core

- Quality and Standards
- Recognition and Visibility

Environment

- Education and Training of Youth Workers

Systems

- Policy and Strategy

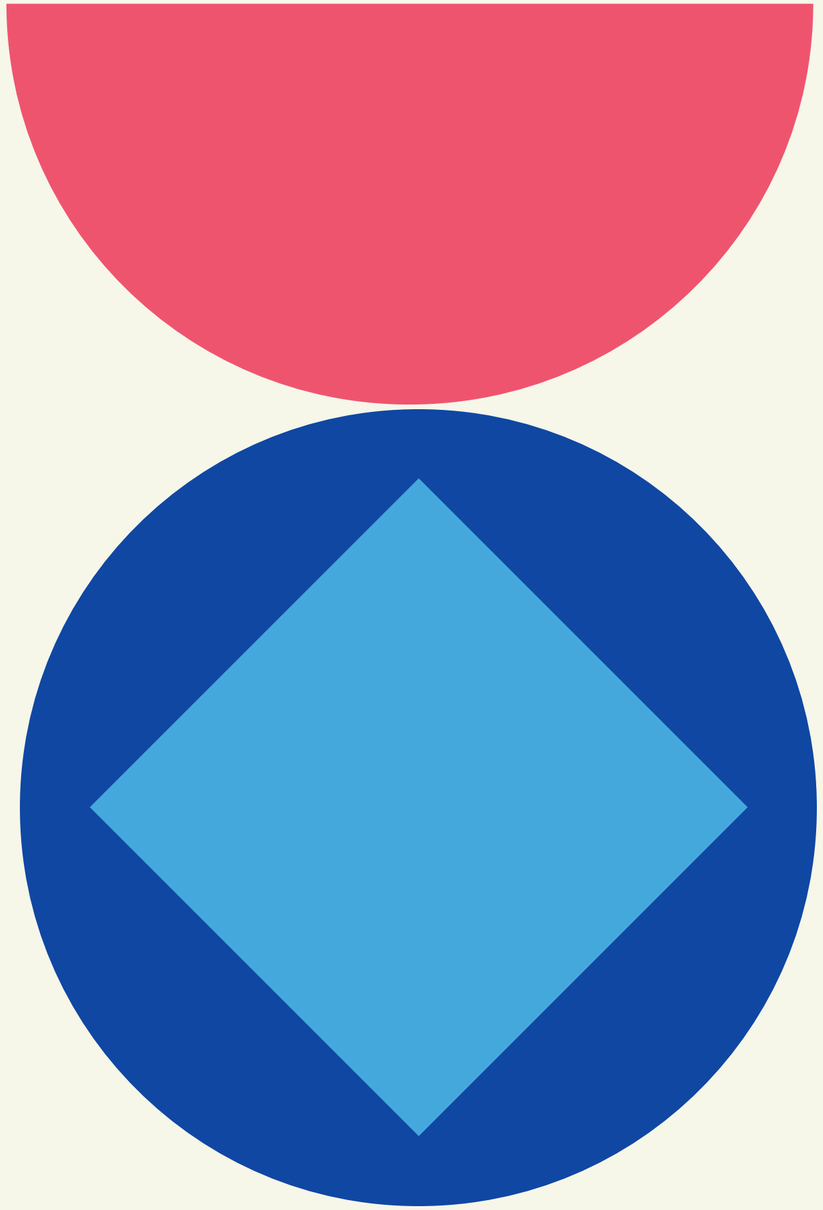


Where are the gaps?

GAPS BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE AND EUROPEAN AND LOCAL LEVELS

“While European commitments on youth work have significantly advanced in recent years, challenges remain in ensuring consistent follow-up and implementation across countries. Youth work recognition, support structures and policy frameworks continue to vary considerably between national contexts. In many cases, commitments agreed at European level are not sufficiently translated into national policies, funding mechanisms or long-term development strategies.”

“we must develop local, regional and national youth policies if we really want to develop youth work as such and make significant change. It will not work the other way around. To this end European institutions should put more emphasis on supporting the development of local, regional and national youth policy, that should then develop local youth work.”



Where are the gaps?

- Policy/Practice and European/local
- Volunteers
- State and voluntary sector youth work
- Role of the youth worker
- Beyond the EU youth programmes
- Are access, inclusion and equity becoming embedded or still specialist?
- Research
- Funding
- Workforce conditions
- Young people's influence – on these developments
- Accountability and ownership of the Roadmap

Where are the key connections?

Potential Overlaps
- Recognition ecosystem
- Quality ecosystem
- Training and resources

Coordinated Action
- Communication Action
- Connecting European and local levels

Cooperation
- SNACs – within youth work
- SNACs – with other sectors
- Collaboration for youth information
- Collaboration around collective action and professionalisation

Recommendations

Volunteers and NGOs

Explore further data sources on support for volunteer led youth work.

Ask respondents to consider whether projects are aimed at and accessible by the voluntary sector. What might be needed to improve access and recognition of the voluntary sector in their context?



Recommendations

Equality, Equity and Inclusion

Explore the reach of European level developments in countries that are not programme countries and youth work within programme countries where Erasmus+ does not have the same reach or impact or infrastructure role – Network of National Correspondents

Delve into whether anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice is being built in to ‘Core’ developments like quality standards, and set an expectation that this should be the case.

Recommendations

Progress and Impact

Develop Monitoring Progress Indicators through a process led by the Youth Partnership, incorporating data from research.

Accountability and Policy Drivers

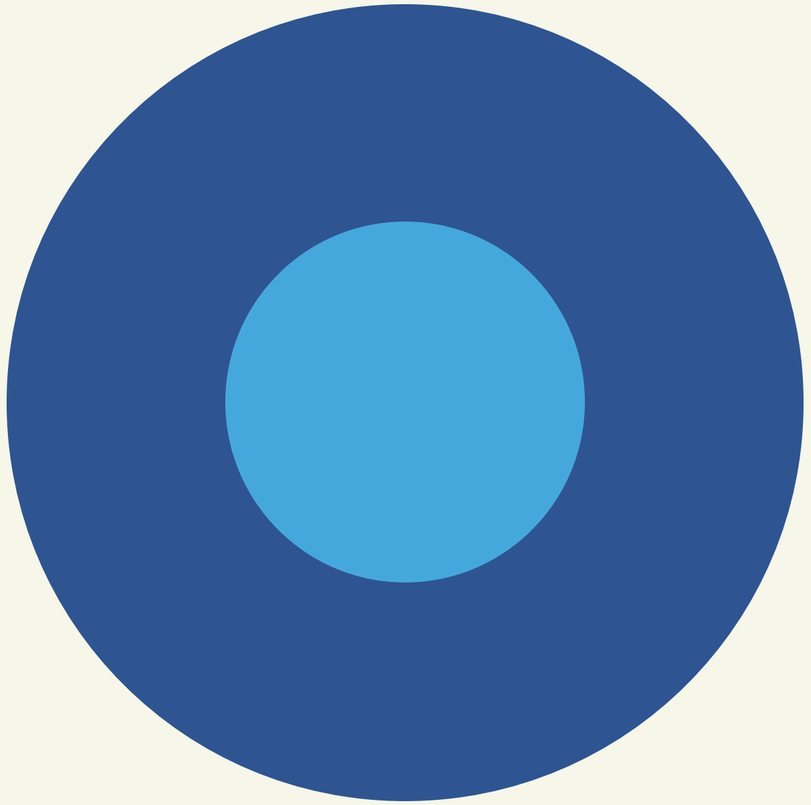
Clarify or develop accountability arrangements for progress on the Roadmap and Convention conclusions to maintain implementation and policy momentum.

Discussion

Clarification Q&A

Feedback on presenting the study (content and structure)

Anything important missing



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