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**Mobility Spaces – Learning Spaces - European Platform on Learning Mobility  
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*“Linking Youth Work and Learning Mobility- The Research Perspective”*

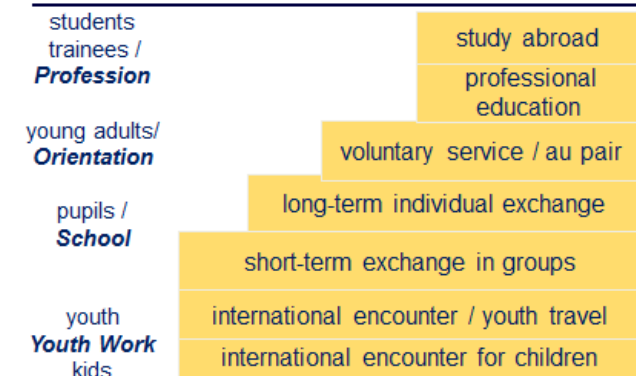
First, I would like to formulate some general definitions and describe some **specifics** of international youth work in Germany. Then I am going to name a few **core principles** of international youth work, taking into account the **development of pedagogical concepts and political aims** forming the base of international youth work in Germany. In a third part, I will summarize **research findings** on the effects of international youth work, and then I finish my speech by pointing out some of the **future tasks and challenges**.

You can distinguish different **forms of international youth work**: (1) group exchange or youth encounters (2) volunteer work and (3) the exchange of professionals in the field of youth and social work. Furthermore, it is distinguished between bi-, tri- and multilateral activities. The self-understanding of Germany as social democracy demands equal opportunities and participation in the „habits of internationality“ and mobility for young people from *all* social and educational backgrounds. It is a central task in social, youth and educational politics to realize and finance this ambition. And it explains why the infrastructure of international youth work is publically sponsored. International youth work conceptual includes international cultural policy, collaboration in youth policy, political and civic education as well as youth, leisure and travelling.

**A “model of mobility”**



**aims: education and experience ↔ global labour market**



Basically, we have two aims. First: education, experience and social learning. Secondly: learning about the global labor market. In each phase of life you have different forms of mobility either in groups or individual. There are always special non-formal organizations, which are responsible for a good quality of the programs of mobility and any stage has its own formats. Politics has to support mobility as a whole and should not privilege special formats and special organizations.

We also see **critical points** in the discourse and practice of mobility. 1. We should be aware of the fact that the concept of mobility is linked with capitalism and also implies for people to follow the labor markets needs. 2. We should avoid, that young people feel forced to be mobile at any costs and at any time. Young people must be ready for mobility. 3. Young people shouldn't be 'forced to mobility' especially through the labor market.

Over the decades, there have been developed some **core principles of International Youth Work**. These principles characterize especially youth work in non-formal educational contexts.

1. Mutual *recognition and acceptance*, which demands equality for all persons involved, as well as for organizations, groups, countries, states or nations. That also means equal recognition of *the partner country and partner organization*. The dominance of a well-financed organization from an rich country has to be avoided. There is no place for racism and hegemony. On the basis of recognition and partnership, cooperation can be sustainable.
2. The *cooperation* and the *success* of international youth work depends on various factors: a) the personality of professionals and volunteers, b) a cooperative attitude within the organizations / institutions, including a high level of flexibility and c) a common understanding regarding the aims of international exchange.
3. *Negotiation*, that means that no country, no pedagogical, political or economical idea or concept should be dominant.

The principles are in line with the basic moral principles of Europe, like human rights, Participation and democracy.

### **Research findings on effects of international youth work**

To sum up what we can conclude from different results, focusing on the *micro-level* of youth education: Almost all studies and reports show positive effects on the participants of international youth work in the field of social learning. Experiences made in international youth encounters or during voluntary service foster young people's personality and offers a distinct and unique room for the development of identity. International projects help to develop tolerance. All these effects confirm the idea of international youth work as an important part of non-formal education, youth work and youth policy. Therefore, we must ensure that all young people – independent from their socio-economic-background – can participate on mobility programs, independent of class, gender and race.

### **Challenges and tasks within the next years**

Following what I pointed out before, the participation of *all* young people will be one central task for the next years. A lot of programs and projects are already dealing with that. We have to avoid, that access or non-access to mobility creates new social distinctions. Also, we have to ensure that international youth work should not be

exploited as an instrument for employability. In recent years pedagogical concepts often have been dominated by the effort to link international youth work and the labor market. Finally, I want to stress the idea to strengthen the political and civic dimension of youth work. That means to encourage young people to get aware of political systems, educational and social systems and problems in countries and in Europe.

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