

Name or title of the recognition tool/practice:**Accreditation Commission in the Field of Youth Work****Developed by:**

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute

Short description:

The Accreditation Commission represents a state mechanism for recognition and quality assurance in youth work through accreditation of educational programmes for youth workers and youth leaders in Slovakia. The accreditation commission has the status of an advisory body for the Ministry of Education and has 11 members including representatives of the respective ministry and youth workers. Its founding was based on the 'Act of Youth Work Support'. The work of the commission is closely related to the larger national initiative called 'KomPrax – Competencies for Practice' aiming at the better recognition of competencies young people gain through youth work and non-formal education.

Type of the tool/practice:

Assessment tool, Certificate/Attestation

Recognition dimensions addressed by the tool/practices:

Formal recognition, Political recognition

Level of influence of your tool/practice:

National

Target group(s) for the tool/practice:

The direct beneficiaries of the Accreditation commission are youth work organizations and youth workers. Indirectly the practice impacts the young people participating in the youth work programmes delivered by the trained youth workers.

Background and the context of development of the tool/practice:

There was a need to ensure the quality in youth work in Slovakia. However, before 2009 there were no quality standards and related quality assurance mechanisms for youth work organizations (and their programmes). By adopting the Act of Youth Work Support in 2008, the Slovak government created the formal conditions for the establishing of a national quality assurance mechanism implemented by the Accreditation Commission (AC), established in 2009. The main role of the Accreditation Commission is to set specific quality standards for organizations which provide programmes of non-formal learning for youth workers and youth leaders in the Slovak Republic. The initiative to create the Accreditation Commission resulted from consultations between the respective Ministry and youth organizations during the process of preparing the Act of Youth Work Support. The main leader in this field was IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute, which promoted the idea to ensure quality of youth work.

Development process:

The initiative to create the Accreditation Commission resulted from consultations between the Ministry and the youth organisations during the process of preparing the Act of Youth Work Support. The main leader in this field was IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute, which promoted the idea to ensure quality of youth work.

Objectives:

Enhancing the quality of educational programmes for youth workers and youth leaders in the Slovak Republic.

Description of the tool:

The Accreditation Commission was established by the 'Act of Youth Work Support' with the main aim to enhance the quality of non-formal education programmes for youth workers and youth leaders. The commission has the status of an advisory body for the Ministry of Education in Slovakia and has 11 voted members who have a 3 year mandate. The members of the commission are representatives of the Ministry and experts in the field of youth work, social work, non-formal education, as well as educators, and members of non-governmental organizations and foundations. The profiles of the Accreditation Commission members are freely accessible on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute.

All interested providers of educational courses for youth workers and youth leaders can apply for the accreditation in 4 open calls per year. After each round of applications the Accreditation Commission meets and assesses the applications. Every application is considered by 2 members of the Accreditation Commission who are most familiar with the area of the proposed educational programme. They advise the Accreditation Commission on whether the programme should be accredited, accredited with some specific conditions or dismissed. The final say belongs to the whole Accreditation Commission in which a majority of all members must take a decision. When a programme is approved, it is listed in the website of the Accreditation Commission.

In order to get accredited each programme has to meet specific quality criteria as well as some administrative requirements (e.g. having an evidence of participants, training courses, etc.). Two weeks before the programme starts the provider needs to inform the Accreditation Commission about its beginning. If the Accreditation Commission considers it necessary an organisation can be monitored. In the case that it is found that an applicant is not providing an educational programme for which they gained accreditation, the accreditation can be withdrawn. The system of accreditation is closely related to a larger national initiative called 'KomPrax' which aims at the better recognition of competencies young people gain through youth work and non-formal education. The aim of this is to establish agreed standards of quality in youth work in order to verify and recognise the core competences that young people acquire through non-formal education activities and youth work.

Outcomes, results and impact:

Since it started to operate in 2009, there has been an increasing amount of accredited programmes over the years: 19 programmes in 2010, 27 in 2011, 11 in 2012, and 42 in 2013. As of 2014 there are more than 100 accredited programmes listed at the Accreditation Commission website and a significantly larger number of trained youth workers. However, the representatives of the Accreditation Commission still believe there is a necessity to continue promoting the accreditation procedure and motivate organizations to accredit their programmes to enhance their quality. One of their priorities for the following period includes the conversion of traditional Leisure Time Centres, established by municipalities, into modern institutions with an inclusive approach to young people. These locations would provide training and consultancy services for young people with a specific emphasis on vulnerable groups, in particular the young unemployed. In this context, the creation and validation (accreditation) of new types of programmes using non-formal education in youth work will be important.