

Visible Value



Mapping of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European and national levels

Background information

Since the endorsement of the White Paper *A new impetus for European youth*, adopted by the European Commission in November 2001, recognition of non-formal learning/education has become an important issue in Europe. It is mentioned in the *Europe 2020* strategy and its flagship initiative *Youth on the Move*; the *EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering*; the *Council Resolution on Youth Work*; the Erasmus+/Youth in Action Programme and its predecessor Youth in Action; the *Council Resolution on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* (12/2012); and the study *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union* (02/2014).

In the Council of Europe, the promotion of non-formal learning/education is a priority within *its Agenda 2020* on youth policy, notably as a means to ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life. The Youth Department works also on the development of quality standards in education and training activities and has published the *European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers*, currently under revision. Recently, in the frame of the 'Strasbourg Process', the Council of Europe also decided to make the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education one of its priorities. It has elaborated a series of proposals based on the *Plan of Action* developed by the participants of the *Symposium on Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education* (11/2011) and further developed by the Expert Group on Recognition.

Recognition of non-formal learning/education has been regularly on the agenda of European youth work since a first symposium was organised in 2000 by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe. Other key events and documentation marking this over the years include the above-mentioned Portfolio, the event *Bridges for recognition* (SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre, 2005), and the first edition of the EU-Council of Europe joint working paper *Pathways towards Validation and Recognition of Education, Training and Learning in the Youth Field*, to name but a few.

Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education was also the topic of various activities of the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. These include the support of the conference on the same topic in Prague in 2008 as part of the preparation of the Czech EU Presidency as well as the Youth Work Convention in July 2010 in Ghent, organised under the Belgian EU Presidency.

A number of stakeholders (such as the network of Youth in Action Programme National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres, the European Youth Forum, and the Youthpass Advisory Group, etc.) have expressed the

need for a more coordinated approach at the European level, supported by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

As a first step, the working paper *Pathways 2.0 Towards Recognition of Non-Formal Learning/Education and of Youth Work in Europe* (hereinafter 'Pathways 2.0') was updated by the EU-CoE youth partnership in cooperation with the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum. In the Pathways paper, ten elements of a renewed strategy for a better recognition of Non-Formal Learning/Education in the youth field were identified.

In order to respond to the need for a sustainable and co-ordinated development of recognition strategies as outlined in the *Pathways paper*, an Expert Group was set up with the aim to promote, support and reinforce measures for the implementation of the elements defined in the *Pathways paper*.

Moreover, as a follow-up and support to these initiatives, the EU-CoE youth partnership organised a *Symposium on Recognition of Youth Work and Non-Formal Learning* in November 2011 in co-operation with JUGEND für Europa and SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre. The Symposium aimed to establish a common ground for a medium and long-term co-ordinated strategy towards recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education in Europe with the involvement of about a hundred actors and stakeholders from the various policy sectors concerned.

The participants of the Symposium adopted a Statement and discussed actions leading to the implementation of concrete follow-up activities. They charged the Expert Group with fine-tuning and editing the draft Plan of Action and asked it to monitor its realisation. To facilitate the development and/or the implementation of their plans the Expert Group proposed to gather ideas and examples of tools and activities, either already existing or newly emerging ones. All this information is available in the publication 'Getting There', which brings together the papers mentioned above: the Pathways paper, the Statement and Plan of Action of participants in the Symposium. 'Getting There' is available on http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/7110668/GettingThere_WEB.pdf

The **initial Plan of Action** (November 2011), complementing the recommendations made in the Statement of the Symposium on Recognition, identifies a number of relevant actions and measures to be launched or supported at the various levels of youth work and youth policy in Europe (at European, national, regional and local level, and in all infrastructures that exist in the youth field, including in youth NGOs, in public services, and in the training, research and policy communities). **The revised version of the Plan of Action** (summer 2013) is based not only on the Plan of Action as defined by the participants of the Symposium but also on the draft further developed by the Expert Group. It takes into consideration current developments, events and initiatives as well as forthcoming ones, or proposes new actions and measures where necessary.

The *Mapping of existing tools and practice and the Compendium of testimonies/stories* are both direct outcomes of this Plan of Action and likewise other actions proposed, they are embedded in at least two of the seven headings of the Plan of Action: political process, promotion and campaign. The Mapping and the Compendium aim to more precisely respond to: **promotion and campaigns** and **knowledge**. Indirectly, working on those products also means to tackle one more 'area': **quality**. The objectives under this section include working on a common understanding of and joint commitment to the quality of non-formal learning/education. They also cover the bringing together of all relevant stakeholders, practitioners, policy makers and researchers. This section highlights the need to build on existing good practices in order to further promote the implementation of quality assurance in non-formal learning/education in youth work.