

Visible Value

Youth Partnership

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



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

The Mapping process and its results

The Mapping was carried out between April and October 2014. The EU-CoE youth partnership coordinated the overall process and commissioned two experts (Darko Markovic and Nicholas Paddison) for its development and implementation.

The collection of the existing recognition tools and practices was gathered through an open call for contributions disseminated through the EU-CoE youth partnership newsletter, as well as many other information channels, social media and youth work events. The expert team received in total **40 contributions** and based on previously agreed criteria, selected **23 tools and practices** for presentation in this version of the Mapping.

These 23 selected tools and practices do certainly not represent the complete picture of what is happening in terms of recognition activities in the youth field in Europe today. However, it is our hope that once online, the Mapping and its initial sample of tools and practices will become a source of inspiration and encouragement for other people to submit their contributions, thus constantly enriching the Mapping.

When looking at the tools and practices during the selection process, the team set some initial quality criteria that had to be met. It was important that all the **tools** in the Mapping:

- have a clear conceptual basis;
- have a clear structure;
- target a defined group of persons;
- are tangible;
- are transferable/adjustable;
- are related to a strategy;
- address a step-by-step process (e.g. a manual);
- can be tested (if possible);
- aim at being repeated/used several times and evolve;
- call for practice (are practice-related);
- can undergo an evaluation and/or revision process.

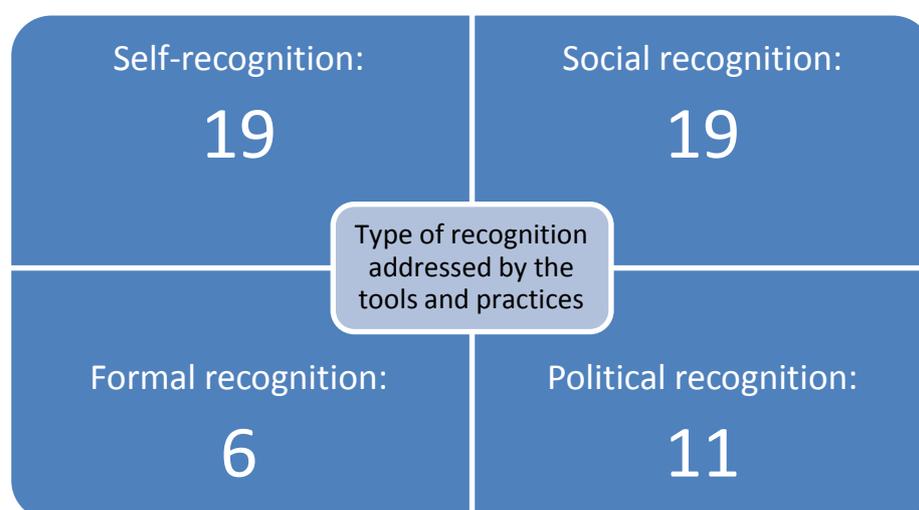
In relation to the recognition **practices** – without excluding the above criteria for the tools – it was acknowledged that the practice may take place only once, and may address a wider audience.

Within the 23 selected tools and practices there are tools from **17 European countries** (see list in the text box) and **4 European level tools** (Council of Europe, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, SALTO South-East Europe, and AEGEE-Europe).

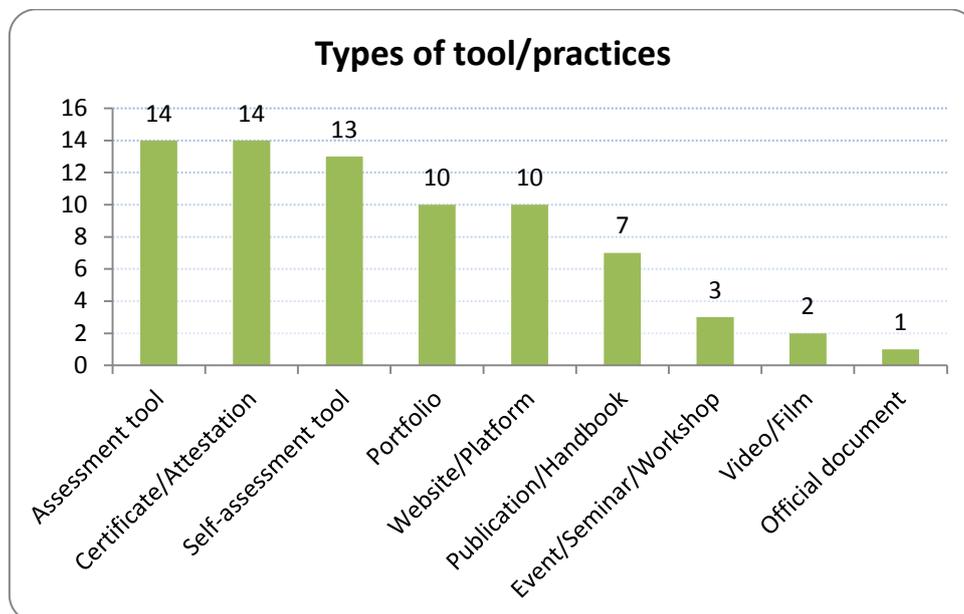
Tools and practices in the mapping study are coming from the following countries:

1. Austria
2. Belgium
3. Czech Republic
4. France
5. Macedonia/FYROM
6. Germany
7. Greece
8. Italy
9. Lithuania
10. Luxembourg
11. Portugal
12. Slovakia
13. Slovenia
14. Spain
15. Sweden
16. The Netherlands
17. The UK

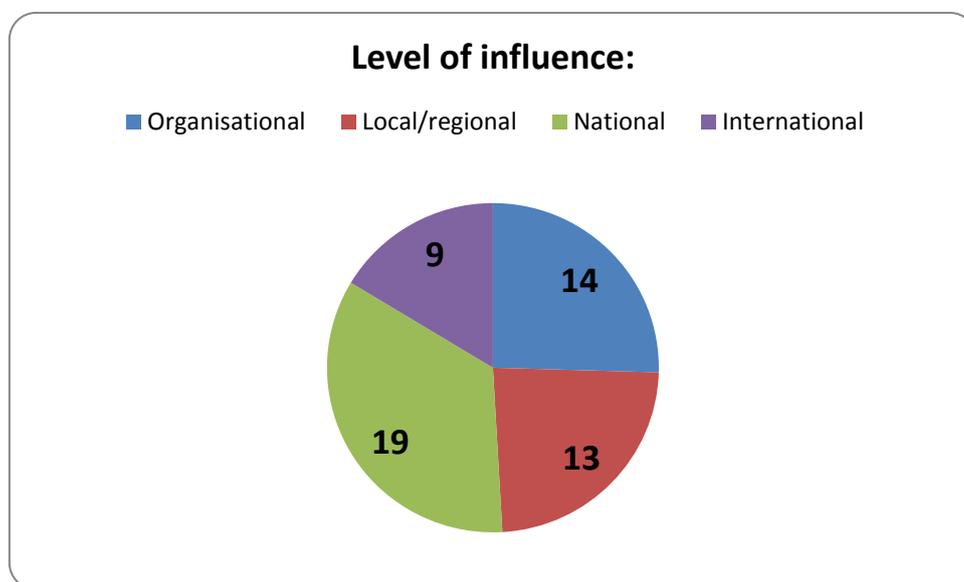
According to *Pathways 2.0*, the recognition of non-formal learning/education tackles 4 different aspects or dimensions: self, social, formal and political recognition. In reality, it is rather seldom that some tool or practice addresses only one dimension **but rather two or more recognition dimensions at the same time**. This is no surprise considering that working on the recognition of non-formal learning/education and youth work often requires a systemic approach, addressing various stakeholders coming from 'within' or from 'outside' of the youth field. As seen in the image below, the majority of tools and practices focus on the self and social recognition; almost half of the selected tools tend to have an impact on the political level; and finally, very few of them are engaging in formal recognition.



With regard to the types of tools and practices in the mapping study, very few of them belong to a single category; most of the tools and practices are a combination of several types of recognition ‘activities’, either by the very nature of their design or simply due to the fact that in many cases these tools and practices are part of an overall recognition strategy that involves various types of activities and approaches.



In terms of the level of influence, most of the tools and practices are addressing several levels, be it organisational, local, national or international. As shown in the chart below, all four levels of influence are well-presented in the selected tools, where there is a stronger national than international focus.



Although the selected tools and practices for the EU-CoE youth partnership’s Mapping cannot offer a comprehensive picture but rather a random sample of items in this field, some possible trends can be recognised:

- **Going online:** there is an increasing trend for recognition tools and practices to be transformed from their original paper-versions to digital and online versions (e.g. Nefiks booklet in Slovenia, or the Council of Europe’s Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers). They are usually hosted at specially designed web platforms. At the same time, a number of the newly developed tools and practices are online based by their nature.

- **Competence-based recognition:** there is a growing trend towards the development of specific competence frameworks that serve as a basis for self-assessment and/or assessment of competences gained in the youth field. Sometimes already made frameworks are built into the tools (e.g. European framework of key competences for lifelong learning). More often these frameworks are being negotiated on with other stakeholders (e.g. formal education, employers, etc.), serving as a translation tool and increasing the relevance of the tools and practices outside the youth field.
- **Importing and redesigning the existing tools:** the field of recognition does not always come up with something completely new; in many cases innovation means adjusting already existing approaches to the context of youth work and youth organisations. These other practices might originally come from different fields and situations (e.g. the Europass mobility certificate used to recognise national level voluntary work), or simply be inspired by developments in other sectors (e.g. Unique learning badges inspired by Mozilla badges)
- **Assessment or self-assessment:** There are a variety of approaches towards the dilemma of what kind of process(s) should be built in the recognition tools. In the case where the tools are having a stronger quality assurance focus, the originators are more inclined to use assessment rather than self-assessment approaches. When it comes to recognition of learning outcomes, some tools clearly opt for assessment done by the organisers - a combination of self-assessment and assessment (usually in terms of peer or organisational validation of the self-assessment made). However, some other tools are solely self-assessment based, either supported by the tool itself or by competent support staff.
- **Open access:** although some of the tools are clearly inseparable from their organisational or programme context (e.g. Youthpass in Erasmus+/Youth in Action Programme, AEGEE internal validation tool, Scout Leader Skills, etc.), there are more and more tools with an 'open access' approach that can be used either by individuals (e.g. Nefiks in Slovenia, Keys for Life in Czech Republic, European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers of the Council of Europe, etc.) or by organisations (e.g. OSCAR in Belgium, Unique Learning Badges, etc.) to work on the recognition of non-formal learning in various contexts and activities.