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Briefing note - theme 6

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European Youth Work Convention 2015 - Background paper for Theme 6: What kinds of education and training should be established for the development of professional youth work practice and ensuring quality and standards? Are there minimum requirements that need to be advocated to ensure sufficient professionalism?

The purpose of this paper is to provide food for thought on '**education and training systems**' and related **quality standards** and **pathways into youth work** within the context of the EYWC 2015, having in mind that main challenge for the European perspective is to accept the fact that no common definition of youth work exists and that youth work is not in all countries recognised as a profession. Nevertheless, the literature points to the fact that 'the **strength of youth work** is in its specific educational approach linked to pragmatist philosophy, reflective pedagogy and constructivism highlighting the importance of non-formal learning' (Siurala 2014: 13). At the heart of this approach is 'the intimate link between the learner and the social context, as well as the process through which this interplay becomes a conscious pedagogical activity'.

It is inevitable however to conclude that clarity of pedagogical and theoretical frameworks as well as concepts of youth and youth work heavily influence coherence and design of the education and training programmes for youth workers across Europe. This tends to be true for the youth work in general since 'it should be **more clear** on its specific tasks and outcomes, and should create **recognition** by showing its skills through working together with its key partners: Cross-sectorial services and programs are also an opportunity for youth work to make its competences more widely known' (Siurala 2014:25).

Although the recent studies show that tendency of gaining **better recognition** represents one of main **opportunities** of **youth work as a profession** in the EU (EC 2014:184), the **lack of clear frameworks** in terms of the professional development of youth workers (including volunteers) still remains one of its main **weaknesses**.

Structures of Education and Training of Youth Workers

As mentioned above, the **status of youth workers** in Europe is increasingly becoming understood as a **distinct profession** even though they may not have been formally trained. The literature points to the different **institutional settings and traditions** of youth work which are reflected by diversity of **education and training routes**.

The **overview of pathways to qualification** of youth workers presented here was taken from the IARD Study on T*he State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe* (2001) which has been revised and updated recently through *The Socio-economic Scope of Youth Work in Europe*

commissioned by the Youth Partnership (2013). In general, it can be concluded that majority of countries across Europe have a split system of education and training for youth workers that includes training for voluntary or employed youth workers, and professional studies at professional schools and universities. Youth work is not an independent course of study in most of the countries concerned but is rather included in careers such as social pedagogy, social sciences, educational sciences, social work or social administration.

Nevertheless, among the huge **variety of professional trajectories**, research findings (IARD 2001 Part IV: 134) point to some lines of **convergence and commonality,** such as:

- Degree of specialisation (representing the position of youth worker education and training among professional and academic disciplines). One line of convergence among the majority of countries concerned is that higher levels of training seem to be related to a lower level of specialisation of the training people working in the field. While majority of the EU Member States have specialised training for youth workers on a professional education level, in most of them at an academic level, youth worker training tends to be part of the bigger context of social work, social pedagogy or even the social or educational sciences. Youth-work specific routes in higher education have been established only in a few of the countries like in Iceland, Finland, Ireland, the UK and Sweden.
- Theory and practice (referring to the set of subjects which are judged to be relevant for the training of youth workers). Common grounds are reflected in the basic theoretical knowledge about socialisation of young people derived from the different social sciences: sociology, psychology, social policy, education. In most cases, the studies feature knowledge about target group related issues (youth, handicapped, women, migrants) or health related issues. On the technical level, subjects included in the courses vary according to weather youth work is designed as a standalone course or whether it is integrated into other disciplines. The training for youth workers on a professional education level tends to be more specialised and orientated towards a **practical education.** A common trend, at least at the higher levels of these pathways, is the integration of management and project management skills into the respective curricula. Compulsory job placements or practical exercises are also used to interlink theoretical and practical contents of training. Still, in most cases this approach is limited to the professional school and polytechnic level, while on the academic and university level practical elements are seldom found. Exceptions to this are university studies in Germany, Italy, Ireland and Sweden. In line with the trend of **integrating** working life experiences within the learning process there are many other tendencies which lead to the conclusion that in (academic) youth worker education 'the time is right to invest into a systematic learning process which links practice and theory'.
- Standardisation and Recognition (the degree of standardisation of youth worker training and the official recognition of the certificates acquired in these forms). On the voluntary level, almost in every country, a variety of short-term training has been developed. These courses are often organised by non-government youth organisations. However, only few countries have standardised systems of monitoring and certification of this kind of training. In some countries, roof organisations at a national or regional level coordinate these training activities, while the qualifications obtained in voluntary youth work are not

recognised in the higher levels of youth worker training. Nevertheless, many training routes only allow students with practical experience in the field. Given the prevalence of in-house training, there is a need for greater external recognition of youth workers skills and competences, based on quality criteria against which skills and competences can be recognised. There are also some initiatives for clarification of common **minimum competence standards** for youth workers across the different organisations and roles.

- Furthermore, while **youth worker training** has been concentrated on the **skills and competences** of a youth worker facing the young people at the point of service, there is a growing expectation, and an increasing need for a youth worker who 'develops youth work on the local, county and state level; leads organizations, institutions and networks; supervises other youth workers and can help the organization respond to emerging challenges; adapt to crises and economic changes, respond to changing life styles and expectations of youth and develop new strategies and methods' (Siurala 2014:4). Overall, (academic) youth worker training should equip the students, in particular those who will work as 'developers, managers and experts', with a critical approach to current practices and provide understanding and examples for exploring practices which better meet the expectations and competences of today's youth.
- Professionalisation: Although the trend of **formal professionalisation** of youth work in Europe is identifiable, it is not universal across all EU countries. On one hand, professionalisation is understood and measured by the introduction of standards and practices within the field for youth workers alongside the availability of initial educational programmes offering recognised qualifications and continuous professional development opportunities. On the other, professionalism is not exclusively related to formal qualifications: rather volunteer youth workers integrate a professional approach to their work. Whilst there is evidence of some government support through training opportunities, recognition and validation of learning for youth workers, most commonly it is the youth work organisations themselves which are active in offering training or development opportunities for youth workers, as mentioned above.

The EU Youth Strategy (2009) states that 'despite being 'non-formal', youth work needs to be **professionalised further**' supporting the direction shift of youth policy from being *values driven* and based on leisure activities for young people towards more *targeted approaches*[1] which unsurprisingly results in more formal professionalisation and the professionalising of youth workers in order to meet multiple challenges while facing increasing **pressure** to both produce successful outcomes and evidence of that success (EC 2014). Interestingly, Lorenz (2009) and Sercombe (2009) describe various arguments both for and against the increasing trend towards professionalisation as being the '**professionalisation dilemma**'.

[1] This should be understood rather as a question of striking the 'right' balance, between '*generic'* and '*targeted'* approach, than insisting on the dichotomy.

Despite the context, there is a general need for **broadening** the access to qualification and professional youth work, since it has been characterised by a dividing line between professionals and volunteers in many cases. At the same time it is based on principles of participation and depends on credibility as a life-world oriented social institution. In this perspective it is apparently crucial that **access** to education and training, i.e. to qualifications and professional status in youth work, is **not restricted**. Therefore, European engagement in developing youth work and respective education and training must not neglect the potentials and experiences developed in this contexts by imposing professional standards taking their universal validity for granted.

European perspective and quality standards

Independent of the structure of youth work in the countries and the different regimes, approaches and methods, it is obvious that **quality youth work** and certain **standards** are the basic, and these standards have to be reflected in youth work education and training. The Council of Europe strives for these standards in youth work and in youth work training since a long time. Offers from study sessions to long time Train the Trainer programmes focus on the further education of youth workers (volunteers and professionals alike). Already 2005 the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe developed quality standards for education and training (and reviewed these in 2007) supported by the Council of Europe. **14 criteria** were mentioned, among which some were predominantly applicable for Council of Europe training courses, but others can be transferred to other education resp. training plans:

1. A relevant needs assessment;
2. Concrete, achievable and assessable objectives;
3. The definition of competences addressed and learning outcomes for the participants;
4. The relevance to the Council of Europe programme and DYS priorities;
5. An adequate and timely preparation process;
6. A competent team of trainers;
7. An integrated approach to intercultural learning;
8. Adequate recruitment and selection of participants;
9. A consistent practice of non-formal education principles and approaches;
10. Adequate, accessible and timely documentation;
11. A thorough and open process of evaluation;
12. Structurally optimal working conditions and environment;
13. Adequate institutional support and an integrated follow-up within the DYS programme and its partner organisations;
14. Visibility, innovation and research.

Especially the first three bullet points have been considered for a quality definition of every education and training schedule. Certainly the aspired competences are connected to the objectives and the needs assessment.

Also the European Union aims with its Youth in Action Programmes (now in the Erasmus+ programme) on a professionalisation of youth workers by training programmes. The SALTO resource centres focus on exchange of good practise and opportunities for training and job experiences (especially regarding YiA activities). The Council of the European Union resolution on youth work (2010/C 327/01) invites the Member States and the Commission to:

- Enhance the quality of youth work, the capacity building and competence development of youth workers and youth leaders and the recognition of non-formal learning in youth work, by providing learning mobility experiences for youth workers and youth leaders.
- Develop and support the development of user-friendly European tools (e.g. Youthpass) for both, independent assessment and self-assessment, as well as instruments for the documentation of competences of youth workers and youth leaders which would help to recognise and evaluate the quality of youth work in Europe.
- Provide sufficient and appropriate European platforms such as databases, peer-learning activities, and conferences for the continuous exchange on innovative research, policies, approaches, practices and methods.

The mentioned exchange between different youth work practitioners is an important element that reflects the diversity of approaches and work for quality education in youth work in Europe. But the same resolution also tries to promote the employability and mobility of youth workers and youth leaders through a better knowledge of their qualifications and a recognition of the skills required from their experiences (Council resolution 2010/C 327/01). Thus the importance of work experience for example as volunteer is highlighted parallel to formal professional training and education. Furthermore it was asked to promote within the context of youth work the development of a systematic assessemnt of skills and competences.

The Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (2013/C 168/03) identifies not only priorities for quality youth work but also focuses on the prerequisites of this quality. And among these basic conditions – beside sufficient resources for the work – is also the training of youth workers. Also the expert group on quality of youth work mentions education and training of youth workers as one of the basic elements of good quality youth work.

But until now, **no common ground for quality of education** and training of those involved in youth work as volunteers or professional youth workers is defined.

That youth workers should have (at least basic) training to ensure quality standards in youth work seems to be out of question; but – as shown in the latest EC study on the value of youth work – not in all countries exist minimum standards of education for youth workers or specific training courses for youth work. The study points out: 'The status of youth workers is increasingly becoming

understood as a distinct profession but professionalism is not only about formal qualifications. Volunteer youth workers also integrate a professional approach to their work with young people. Youth workers are often qualified and/or specifically trained to carry out the activities they are involved with. Whilst there is evidence of some government support through training opportunities, recognition and validation of learning for youth workers, most commonly it is the youth work organisations themselves which are active in offering training or development opportunities for youth workers. Given the prevalence of in-house training, there is a need for greater external recognition of youth workers skills and competences, based on quality criteria against which skills and competences can be recognised. There are also some initiatives for clarification of common minimum competence standards for youth workers across the different organisations and roles.' (European Commission, 2014, 13).The study furthermore refers to the fact that different ways into the profession of youth work exist in many countries and that often neither minimal standards nor a recognition of youth work as profession exist.

The newest developments in targeted and general youth work ask for ever more training and **new skills of youth workers** that have to be acquired somehow: be it career counselling, health education, intercultural competences or knowledge of various religions and ideologies to counteract radicalisation based violence. It might ask for new methods for approaching young people in the digitalised world, or for interaction. And it asks for new skills and competences concerning structures, laws and administration.

The question would be: What are the standards in youth worker training and education?
Which elements have to be involved, which way is it provided, how **theory and practice** are combined and what kind of certification it provides is unclear and open to discussion.
A main question is therefore: **Where are commonalities in different forms of youth work that** can define basic elements of youth work training?
Another approach could be - all youth workers should be trained in all forms (youth clubs, organisations, information etc) and then specialise in one?

Recently a workshop on training on youth work was opened with the question "What super powers do you wish for as a youth worker?"[2] to focus on the personal needs of youth workers as thoroughly as on the skills needed for youth work. The answers ranged from being invisible, to being everywhere at the same time and from speaking all languages to mind-reading and thus immediately understanding the real needs of the young people. But until now youth work courses do not offer training in these special skills.

It is worth mentioning that in all aspects two main **approaches to education and training standards** are reflected: firstly the both, practices and theory based approach to the training regarding content, methods, target groups and framework of youth work and secondly the values on which youth work per se is based. Brooker points to the fact that youth work by and large focuses on two strands, i) positive youth development and ii) therapeutic care. But she also notice a

[2] POYWE – Professional Open Youth Work in Europe, In the seminar "Reflections on expectations of youth work in Europe" the workshop on training was facilitated by Mick Conroy and Dick Smit.

change in youth workers training in the past from more practice oriented approaches to a rather theory and competence based.

Youth Work Regimes

A hypothetical comparative typology of national constellations of youth work reflects similarities and convergence among the Member States concerned in regards to their dominant concepts of youth work and related objectives, but also methods, issues, settings, and education and training pathways. It has been created within the European framework (IARD 2001: Part IV 138)[3], representing four types of, so called - '**Regimes of Youth Work'.**

- **Universalistic/Paternalistic –** in Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland) youth work is developed as a civic infrastructure addressing young people as citizens, and providing universal access (open youth work) encouraging participatory structures. At the same time the state has a strong interest in educational objectives (especially in health prevention) where majority of innovation happens through peer education. Youth work is mainly focused on Leisure, Counselling and Health /Prevention, and implemented through following action fields: Youth clubs, Youth associations, Cultural youth work, Sports and Recreational activities, Participation, Unemployed youth, Prevention of social exclusion, Integration of immigrant youth, Youth information. Education and training systems for youth workers is marked with dominance of higher education (mainly social pedagogy), and parallel recognition of informal pathways (training for voluntary workers by non-profit organizations, and Church) resulting in having Social Workers, Social Pedagogues, Cultural Animators, and finally professional Youth Workers as main 'practitioners'.
- **Liberal/Community based** - community-related approaches and 'open youth work' method are (hopefully) still important aspects of youth work identity in the UK and Ireland. In these countries characterised as liberal welfare states youth work has been developed in somewhat 'universalistic way' and based on (at least so far) a high commitment of local authorities to provide an infrastructure of youth clubs. The lack of national support and interest enables a strong community-orientation. Main focus of youth work is on Leisure, Community Work, and Marginalised Youth, implemented through Youth associations Youth centres, Personal social services. Education and training routes into youth work in this context lead mainly through higher education (youth and community work degrees) resulting in professional Youth Workers being involved in youth work practice. Still, there is also a strong focus on broadening access to education.
- **Conservative/Corporatist -** In countries with a conservative welfare state (Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, The Netherlands*)* a more corporatist structure of youth work can be found. While, on the one side there is strong interest of the state of providing socialisation towards the standard biography, the sociopedagogical

[3] Based on Esping- Andersens typology of welfare regimes (1990), and later model of Duncan Gallie and Serge Paugam (2000).

aspects are as important as in Scandinavian countries but with a different focus. On the other side this objective is delegated to voluntary actors which to a high extent are incorporated into local, regional and national administration. The context of youth work is focused on Leisure, Counselling, and Marginalised Youth, while main action fields are: Extracurricular youth education, Open youth work/clubs, Sports, Target group orientated youth work, Youth associations and participation, Youth social work, International youth work, and Youth counseling. Educational pathways into youth work lead through: Social Work (and Cultural Animation) qualifications on professional education, and higher education level. As the result, apart from the professional Youth Workers, Social Pedagogues, and Cultural Animators are mainly involved in 'youth work'.

- **Mediterranean/Sub-institutionalized**[4] **-** In the South of Europe (Italy, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Malta) a clear responsibility of youth work (as part of local youth policies) can be identified through the provision of counselling, support and even training and employment opportunities. The focus of youth work is therefore mainly on Youth Transitions, Youth Information, Youth unemployment, Prevention of Social exclusion/marginalized groups, Counselling, and Leisure. Context and main issues addressed by youth work is linked to recognition of the increase of risks of social exclusion connected to rising youth unemployment and the mistrust of young people towards bureaucratic structures of employment service and training institutions. Main action fields of youth work are: Education, Cultural youth work, Leisure time orientated youth work, Youth information, Career services, Open youth work, Social care, Sports, International youth work, Youth associations and participation, Recreation and leisure services. Education and training pathways are marked with process of development of voluntary (non-governmental organizations and associations), as well as professional courses (regional professional schools for socio-cultural animators) and higher education level (degree in Social work and social education like in Spain). Apart from Youth Policy Professionals, 'youth work' is mainly delivered by Social Workers, Cultural Animators, Social Pedagogues, and Social Educators.

Finland

Sharing most of the characteristics of the **Universalistic/Paternalistic** Youth Work Regime (as mentioned above), the youth work in Finland has been developed within comprehensive policy and legislative framework. The Government of Finland implements variety of measures in order to improve the recognition and support the development of governmental and non-governmental youth work in line with the Youth Act (2006), the Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy (2006), and the Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012-2015.

The Youth Act (72/2006) section 7, for example, states that **youth work** and youth policy are part of **the local authority's responsibilities,** while the implementation of youth work shall be the

[4] Whilst Esping-Andersen referred to southern European countries as conservative (due to the corporatist role of the Catholic or Orthodox Church) Gallie and Paugam rather stress the considerable loss of (sociocultural) relevance and influence of the Church which has lead to a deficit or vacuum of regulation (2000).

responsibility of local authorities, youth associations and other youth work organizations. **Local youth work** and youth policy should consist of educational guidance, facilities and leisure opportunities, information and advisory services, support to youth associations and other youth groups; sports, cultural, international and multicultural youth activities; young people's environmental education; and, where needed, youth workshop services and outreach youth work (Amendment 693/2010) or other forms of activity suited to local circumstances and needs.
The Youth Act 2010, states furthermore that 'for the planning of **cross-sectoral cooperation** between local authorities and for the development of implementation, the local authority shall have a youth guidance and service network with representation from local education, social and health care services, youth administration and labour and police administration' (Youth Act 72/2006, amendment 693/2010).

According to The Child and Youth Policy Programme (2007–2011) attention is paid to the number of youth workers in youth facilities, their **level of education** and the length of their employment contracts. Co-operation between municipal administrative sectors is developed in order to reach young people in danger of being excluded from educational communities through youth centres. In the recent year however the focus has been in developing young people's information and counselling services, outreach youth work and multidisciplinary youth work and in contrast the development of youth centers has been **forgotten** in terms of supporting social inclusion. Still, youth services also pay special attention to opportunities for **minorities** to participate and impact youth related operations.

In addition, **professional youth work education** and/or research is provided at upper secondary, university of applied sciences and university level. The state funds research and development work in the field of youth and youth work. Among other, specialized training in culture, new media and intercultural competences for youth workers are included in the university of applied sciences curriculum's covering different themes e.g. cultural youth work, web based and multicultural youth work. The identification and recognition of competence acquired through nonformal learning increases the effectiveness of the education and qualification system and an individual's motivation and progress during training and working life. Education legislation **enables** the identification and recognition of competence and skills not acquired through formal training. However, the procedures and effects of such identification and recognition vary. The assessment of competence is considered to be difficult.

UK

Youth work is largely seen as a community task as described above and thus the education is regularly also provided as a higher education degree in Youth and Community work. Youth work focuses mainly on young people with fewer opportunities and thus has both a positive youth development and a social work approach. To become a fully-qualified youth worker in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, there is the need to hold a qualification that is recognised by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

To be granted a professional youth worker status, students have to finish at least an Honours Degree (three years) recognised by the National Youth Work Association (NYA). But also Bachelor courses exist in Youth and Community work and further postgraduate courses leading to a Master degree are offered in a number of universities. These Master programmes are either in youth studies or more focused on social work. These courses are offered by universities or colleges of higher education. Especially in England many undergraduate courses have been recently discontinued due to the austerity cuts for public authorities during and after the financial crisis leading to less employment chances for youth workers.

Furthermore training also exist for volunteers, these Youth support Workers receive training at level 2 certificate or level 3 certificate (according the national qualification plan) or diploma in youth work practice, for people who work with young people using youth work principles and practice. The level 2 is available from the age of 16, level 3 from 18. Also apprenticeships offer a way into youth work practice. It is an opportunity for gaining a youth support worker level 2 certificate in youth work practice and at the same time real working experience. Many employers in the field of youth work now offer this way to experience.

The main content of any youth work training focus on basic methods, developmental psychology and pedagogy.

Germany/Belgium/Austria

The approach to youth work in the German speaking countries (as well as in Flanders) is rooted in voluntary youth and youth lead organisations on the one hand and on social work for young people on the other. Thus the education and training for voluntary youth workers traditionally takes place also in the youth NGOs and associations themselves. The recognition of these trainings via official certificate is still a work in progress. The way into professional (employed) youth works leads via higher education institutes (colleges) or universities where regularly socio-pedagogy, social work or socio-cultural work are the titles of courses leading to diplomas or BAs.

In Austria the aufZAQ programme certifies trainings courses in youth NGOs if they provide quality pedagogy training for youth leaders in the organisations. Beside this initiative the federal regions in Austria offer basic training courses for youth workers. Various degrees for social worker are available: it can be a university degree, university degree of applied sciences, vocational training, additional qualifications for sociologists, psychologists, social management professionals etc. It seems that it depends on the degree of responsibility in a position and type of occupation which determines the necessary type of degree. (EU, 2014)

In Belgium (Flanders) no formal youth worker qualifications do exist, youth workers, both professional staff and volunteers, can obtain youth worker certificates after completion of an approved training programme. The certificates are issued by the Ministry in charge of youth. The trainings are generally delivered by the youth NGOs and are assessed and approved by the Ministry. An academic way to youth work is also available, since three universities offer Bachelor programmes. In the German speaking Community voluntary youth workers can obtain certification

from the Government of the DG, additionally a further training programme for professional and voluntary youth workers was established. (EU, 2014)
In Germany many routes into professional youth work exist, but mainly socio-pedagogy and social work are typical education routes. The education and training can be offered on university level, leading to a BA, as dual education on professional academies in strong combination with practice, or a pre-service training on universities. Volunteers in youth organisations can qualify via the so called juleica (the abbreviation for JugendleiterInnencard – youth leader card), certifying specific competences gained.

Beside the education and training it is also important whether youth work is recognised as a profession at all, which does not hold in the mentioned countries, but youth work is part of other professions (e.g. of socio pedagogues in Germany).

Spain

Acknowledging and sharing most of the above mentioned characteristics of the ***Mediterranean/Sub-institutionalized*** Youth Work Regime, the priority has been given to recognition of the different career profiles existing in the youth field through the system of professional qualifications. The value of non-formal learning has been promoted through recognition of the professional competences acquired through non-formal training (based on the Royal Decree 1224/2009, the Government established the procedure and requirements for assessment and accreditation of professional competences acquired by individuals through work experience or non-formal Training).

The National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications in Spain sets and regulates qualifications and establishes the related training, as well as the reference for the accreditation of professional skills acquired through work experience or non-formal training[5]. In line with the vocational training system, the development of **professional qualifications of the youth work** skills is integrated:

- within the **education system**, in the three degrees of vocational training which content is in process right now: Advanced Technician in Socio-Cultural and Touristic stimulation (vocational training higher degree), Advanced Technician in Socio-Cultural and Touristic training and stimulation (vocational training higher degree), Technician on Natural Environment and Leisure Guide (vocational training medium degree);
- within the **system of training for employment**, where there are three professionalism certifications in process (official instrument for qualifications in the work field that certifies training for the performance of a work): Stimulation of educational leisure time activities for children and young people Certificate (level 2), Youth Information Certificate (Level 3),

[5] In May 2011, three new professional qualifications were published in the State Official Gazette (BOE) that were related to the work being done by youth agencies: 'Management and coordination of educational leisure activities for children and young people'; 'Stimulation of educational leisure activities for children and young people'; and 'Youth Information'.

Management and coordination of educational leisure activities for children and young people Certificate (level 3). In the near future the launching of the process of **recognition** of professional competences acquired by work experience related to these three qualifications is foreseen.

In addition, various measures have been implemented in order to realize the full potential of youth work and youth centres in addressing **social exclusion** and **youth unemployment,** as well as to increase knowledge and awareness of youth workers and youth leaders of **health** issues/prevention**, counselling, youth mobility and volunteering,** while promoting specialised training in culture, new media and intercultural competences for youth workers.

Greece

Despite the lack of policy framework, institutional definition and recognition of 'youth work', various evidence show that it **does exist as a social practice** in Greece, constituting an integral part of educational and welfare work and playing a role in supporting safe and healthy transitions to adult life for young people. The range of activities often described as 'youth work is extensive but mainly focused on leisure-time activities. The great variety of activities on offer within the sector means that intensive work is needed in order to define common categories, including the defining lines between different forms of professional practice and issues of professional distinction. Link to this is a fact that 'youth work' in Greece involves a complex network of providers, community groups, NGOs, and local authorities supported by a large number of adults working as full-time or part-time paid staff or unpaid volunteers (52% of "youth workers" are employees and 48% are volunteers). 'Youth workers' in Greece are mainly social workers (including social cultural workers), cultural animators, and social pedagogues (European Commission/Council of Europe 2013: 31). The data show that most are professionals with a higher level of education, while the rate of professionalisation in the field of educational or social services is higher than in other areas of youth work.

In this regard, the Council of Europe International youth policy review team was concerned that the concept of 'youth work' seems to be confused with work that is done with young people by a range of professionals, although to some extent, there is already a sense of an emergent youth work profession that, if facilitated properly, could have a transformative effect on the motivation and engagement of youth and youth work in Greece. Nevertheless, the recognition and visibility of youth information and youth work as well as the organisation of youth (information) worker training in Greece clearly needs further attention. The level of education and training of youth workers is unsatisfactory due to the lack of youth work-specific academic and training programmes within the Greek educational system. The international review team recommends that there should be further development of skilled youth work contact and communication in order to persuade young people to become involved and to support their participation in various structures and activities. This can make a significant difference with regard to the level and quality of youth engagement.

Overall, various sources emphasize **the need to advance the recognition agenda** at national and local level, as a means to add to the validation of the competences acquired by young people

through youth work and non-formal learning, as well as to give the sector the means necessary to further develop quality work. Along the same lines, it is reasonable to conclude that **joint youth policy and youth work responses** to current youth issues across Europe are required. Although the transition process concerns youth work and youth policy primarily, it does not exclusively concern the youth sector – it is a shared responsibility with other policy areas, such as formal education and labour policies. To be able to address increasing risks and opportunities, 'youth policy' has to be designed so it represents a conscious and structured cross-sectoral policy of the youth field, which aims to co-operate with other sectors and co-ordinate services for youth – involving young people themselves in the process (Williamson 2002).

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