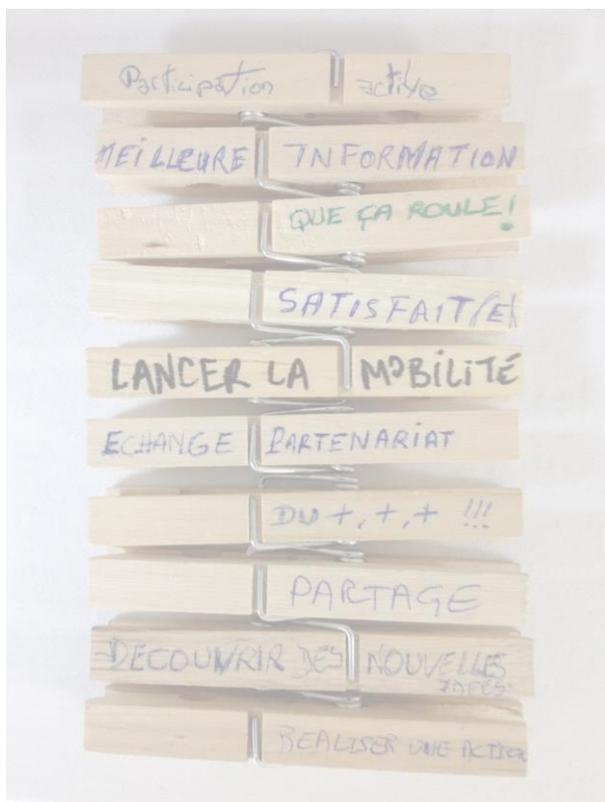


EXPERT GROUP
ON RECOGNITION OF YOUTH WORK
AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION:
INVOLVEMENT IN RELATED POLICY
DEVELOPMENT, STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

REPORT

2011 – 2015



Youth Partnership

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



THE CONTEXT

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 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 Programme* and, more recently, the [Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) (12/2012) or 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*, recently revised and renamed [The Youth Work Portfolio](#). Recently, in the frame of the so-called 'Strasbourg Process', the Council of Europe also decided to make recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education one of its priorities and has elaborated a series of proposals based on the *Plan of Action* developed by the participants of the *Symposium on Recognition* (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 Council of Europe, the above-mentioned European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers, the event [Bridges for recognition](#) (SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre, 2011), 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](#), ('Pathways Paper') to name 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, amongst which stand the support of the conference on the same topic in Prague in 2008 as part of preparation to Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU as well as the *Youth Work Convention* in July 2010 in Ghent, organised under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

A number of other stakeholders (such as the network National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres, European Youth Forum, etc.) have expressed the need for a more coordinated approach at European level, supported by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth (EU-CoE youth partnership).

As a first step, the Pathways Paper was updated by the EU-CoE youth partnership in cooperation with various stakeholders and partners becoming [Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe](#) ('Pathways 2.0'). The document identifies ten elements of a renewed strategy for a better recognition of NFL/E in the youth field.

Then, in order to respond to the need for a sustainable and co-ordinated development of recognition strategies as outlined in Pathways 2.0, an Expert Group was set up with the aim to promote, support and reinforce measures for the implementation of the elements defined in Pathways 2.0.

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 outcomes of the Symposium became the backbone of the work of the Expert Group on Recognition, in charge of monitoring the follow-up to the event and the implementation of proposed actions, including the 'Strasbourg Process'.

HOW TO APPROACH THIS REPORT?

Who is it for and what is it for?

The main aim of this report is to summarise the involvement of the *Expert Group on Recognition of Youth Work and Non-Formal Learning/Education* in related policy development, strategies and activities during the years 2011-2015; thus it serves supporting a wider understanding of what happens with regard to recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European level, and of who does what. It should be seen as an added value to help summarizing what happened over the last years, in particular since the ‘Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education’ in 2011, which is considered by many actors in the youth sector as *the* milestone event.

The report is addressed to experts and practitioners in the youth field, to policy makers and researchers.

Content

This report or overview of the involvement of the Expert Group on Recognition of Youth Work and Non-Formal Learning/Education, hereinafter ‘the Expert Group’, follows the same structure as the publication “[Getting There...](#)” (2013), itself based on the revised Plan of Action complementing the recommendations made in the Statement of the participants in the Symposium on ‘Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education’ (2011).

However, the overview in this document is by no means exhaustive and representative of *everything* that has been done by the individual members of the Expert Group with regard to recognition of youth work and non-formal learning / education. It only highlights processes the Expert Group has been directly or indirectly connected to or involved in. This also explains why in some cases the

follow-up of processes or documents referred to in this report are not stated extensively.

Hence, this report tackles the following dimensions with a particular focus on the involvement of the Expert Group:

1. **Political process:** explore the developments with regard to recommendations and priorities for recognition as identified and initiated by the European Union and the Council of Europe in their political strategies. It might also relate to actions undertaken at national levels.
2. **Promotion and campaigns:** explore the developments with regard to the visibility of youth work and youth organisations, to the actions and measures related to promotion of the 'Strasbourg Process' and to a number of side initiatives directly or indirectly linked to the overall recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education.
3. **Co-operation and partnerships:** explore the developments with regard to the youth sector's contribution to responses to the current challenges, mainly with regard to co-operation with employers. It might also relate to processes enhancing more dialogue in terms of needs and possibilities, and the importance of mechanisms supporting regular communication and partnerships with other stakeholders.
4. **Knowledge:** explore the developments with regard to actions focusing on mapping and compiling existing knowledge in youth work and non-formal learning/education, and to exploring mechanisms and networks favouring/strengthening the dissemination and use of the findings of any research and any breakthroughs in the field of youth.
5. **Quality:** explore the developments with regard to working towards a common understanding of and joint commitment to the quality of non-formal learning/education. This includes bringing together relevant stakeholders, practitioners, policy makers and researchers, and building on existing good practices to further promote the implementation of quality assurance in non-formal learning/education in youth work.
6. **Tools:** explore the developments with regard to the further development of existing recognition instruments, based on evaluation of the results made so far and respecting the 'complementarity principle'.

7. **Resources and support:** explore the developments with regard to policy makers and decision makers who are responsible for various policy fields. This includes youth work, education and training, employment, social cohesion and civil society.

Notes on the report:

- Most of the texts presented in the report are either extracts from the reports of the meetings of the Expert Group and/or information extracted from the website presenting the given initiative the report refers to or of the organisation / structure / institution supporting it. The same applies to policy documents. Most of the content reflects information shared by the Members of the Expert Group themselves.
- Dates: the dates in brackets next to the main references throughout this report and in the different sections (dimensions above-mentioned) mostly refer to the period (year or years) of the involvement of the Expert Group, either in following the related development or in directly contributing to them.
- Hyperlinks: since this is meant to be a digital version, all references to processes or documents are embedded as hyperlinks.

Warm thank you to the other members of the Expert Group for their support in the elaboration of this report.

Gisele Evrard, February 2016

ROLE¹

As already explained and while taking into account the numerous developments at European level – at policy level and in the youth field – since 2001, two major actions led to the creation of the ‘Expert Group on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning / education’:

- The update in 2011 of the working paper *Pathways towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the youth field*, which became *Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning / education and of youth work in Europe*;
- The *Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning* in 2011.

During the Symposium, the participants agreed upon the main challenges and recommendations for further recognition strategies, and proposed concrete actions that could be considered by various stakeholders. To answer these needs and work towards a sustainable and co-ordinated development of the recognition strategy, the Expert Group has been set up. The objectives are:

- To develop measures for implementation of the elements outlined in the Pathways paper and as referred to in the outcomes of the Symposium;
- To link the different initiatives in the EU (European Commission and European Council) and of the Council of Europe to recognise and validate non-formal learning, such as the renewed EU Youth Strategy;
- Continue bringing together stakeholders and experts in the youth field, include other experts where needed, and support the exchange of expertise;
- To observe, collect, systematise and disseminate information about the developments and good practice on recognition at the European level;
- To develop information and promotional materials on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education, targeting the youth field and beyond.

¹ Extract from the concept note establishing the Expert Group, revised for the publication ‘Getting there...’

COMPOSITION

The Expert Group represents the different institutional actors as well as experts related to the field of recognition of non-formal learning/education in youth work. The Expert Group consists of representatives of the above-mentioned stakeholders and representatives of the fields of youth research, youth policy, and training.

The constitution of the Expert Group is as follows²:

- The Council of Europe, Youth Department;
- European Commission – Directorate-General Education and Culture, Youth Policy Unit,
- The European Economic and Social Committee – EESC;
- The network of National Agencies of the Erasmus+/Youth in Action Programme;
- The European Steering Committee for Youth in the Council of Europe – CDEJ;
- The Advisory Council of Youth in the Council of Europe – AC;
- The Pool of European Youth Researchers of the EU-CoE youth partnership – PEYR;
- The EU-CoE youth partnership secretariat;
- The European Youth Forum – YFJ;
- SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre;
- Trainer(s) in the youth field;
- Experts from related fields, e.g. formal education and social partners, upon invitation.

² The names of the members of the group at the time of this report are available in the appendix 1

Involvement of the Expert Group from 2011 to 2015

OVERVIEW

Since its establishment in 2011 till end of 2015, the Expert Group met on 10 occasions (twice a year):

- 19-21 January 2011
- 8-9 September 2011
- 16-17 February 2012
- 5-6 November 2012
- 29 January 2013
- 10-11 October 2013
- 3-4 April 2014
- 20-21 October 2014
- 23-24 February 2015
- 21 October 2015

Generally, the meetings followed the same structure:

- Recognition-related updates by each member;
- Follow-up of the Symposium (implementation of the 'Strasbourg Process');
- Potential initiatives and spaces to promote the 'Strasbourg Process';
- Forthcoming activities.

On ad hoc basis, guest speakers have also been invited to elaborate on certain issues.

In general terms the years 2011-2012 were mostly dedicated to the preparation and implementation of the *Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning* (November 2011) and to its follow-up, meaning to the revision and fine-

tuning of its Plan of Action. Later on, *Pathways 2.0*, the *Statement* of the participants of the Symposium and the revised *Plan of Action* would form the publication 'Getting There...' (2013).

The years 2013-2014 have focused mostly on mainstreaming the topic of recognition in various spaces and events, presenting/promoting the 'Strasbourg Process' and – as before – keeping all the members informed about initiatives – at policy level or initiated by the youth field – linked to recognition and/or where the Expert Group could have a contribution to make or a role to play.

Though continuing the process started during the previous years, 2015 also initiated the reflection process with regard to the working mechanisms, the structure, and the priorities of the Expert Group. This includes the composition of the Group as such. Indeed, the first exchanges highlighted that there might be no need to think about permanent members if more thematic type of meetings are envisaged. In this case, experts should be invited on a case-by-case basis. This discussion is to be followed up in 2016.

Moreover and two years after 'Getting There...', a small group composed of members of the Expert Group will once more look at the Plan of Action of the Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning of 2011, examining what has been done and what remains to be done. The results will be discussed in 2016. This may also lead to a larger survey in order to go beyond the European level and also explore what has been done at other levels and by youth-related structures (youth organisations, youth services, etc.)

2015 was also be the year of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (Brussels, 27-30 April) and of the 2nd Conference of the European Platform on Learning Mobility in the Youth Field (Istanbul, 7-9 October 2015), thus providing two important Europe-wide spaces to further promote the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education.

The 1st and 2nd European Youth Work Convention, the Council Resolution on youth work and its follow-up (2010 and 2015)

The outcomes of the 1st European Convention in Youth Work, which took place in Ghent in July 1020, led to the [Council Resolution on youth work](#) (2010), directly inspired by the '[Declaration of Ghent](#)', and which witnessed a great commitment and participation of the Youth Working Party in the process. What was new at the time of the Resolution was the fact that there is now a general agreement on the importance of youth work and that the Resolution talks about the actors, the target groups and the overall added value of it.

With regard to its immediate follow-up, a chapter on youth work has been included in the Youth Report, and the 3rd volume of '[The History of Youth Work](#)' has been published by the EU-CoE youth partnership (*note: volume 4 has been published since; volume 5 is shortly to be published*). There has been a commitment to exchange more information and good practices at different level, as well as to cooperate on a network level.

Undoubtedly, the 1st European Youth Work Convention and the Council Resolution played a predominant role in the establishment of the Expert Group, laying the foundations of its work and of the Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education.

Reciprocally, the Symposium also served as a reference not only in the preparation of the [2nd European youth Work Convention](#) in the framework of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe (held in Brussels, 27-30 April 2015), but also to its implementation through participating in workshops, with inputs and in supporting the event with a Coyote Magazine on the issue (in development at the time of this draft report). In view of the preparatory process, Prof. Howard Williamson drafted a conceptual paper - [Finding Common Ground: Mapping and scanning the horizons for European youth work in the 21st century – Towards the 2nd European Youth Work Convention](#) - identifying key challenges that served as a basis for debate and reflection during the Convention.

It has been underlined that the Convention also aimed at supporting a different form of recognition of youth work not by clustering its various forms, but rather by highlighting their complementarity and therefore, their added value. As also stated in the [final Declaration](#), all forms of youth work provide an associative space for young people, as they provide bridges for young people to take next steps in their lives.

Following the Convention, the Expert Group confirmed having an observatory function and therefore identified, anticipated and recommended further actions, including to actively support the outcomes of the event, particularly with regard to the future *Recommendation on youth work* to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Several members of the Expert Group have been invited to take part in the consultative meeting that should lead to the adoption of such legal instrument; it took place in December 2015. Part of the follow-up of the Convention also includes securing the acceptance of the messages of the Declaration.

The planned *European Charter on youth work* which was on hold in view of the final results of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention is to be explored from the perspective of a possible role of the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities (since the final Declaration mentions a charter for youth work at local level).

Recognition was undoubtedly an important part of the event (being one of the challenges addressed) and was part of the final Declaration, which once again constitutes one of the basis of the legal-instrument-to-be. Hence, the 2nd EYW Convention might serve to identify the 'road to follow'.

The expert group on 'Quality systems of youth work in the EU Member States' (2014 - 2015)

As one of the outcomes of the focus of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU on quality youth work (and the [Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people](#)), an expert group on 'Quality systems of youth work in EU 28 member states' has been established. Its mandate was to examine the use of quality systems in EU Member States and explore how common indicators or frameworks may be developed for

specific types of youth work. The group has been discussing national experiences and considering ways of measuring quality in youth work.

Other comments converged towards the needs to create links between the work of that group and other advocacy initiatives, events, and projects aiming at recognition. Particularly, links between the work of the expert group and the [Study on the value of youth work](#) have been highlighted, especially when it comes to the need to harmonise glossaries (and hence support a better understanding dimensions of youth work) using as a basis the glossary in [European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy](#). The work of Eurofound on youth in transition and on inclusion, respectively young people not in employment, education or training has also been mentioned as tools to support advocacy processes.

Towards the end of its work and considering the variety of forms of youth work and the many different settings where it takes place, the expert group concluded that one single quality system that would be applicable to all kinds of youth work activities is not possible to build. Involved experts also underlined the interest of identifying what different tools would help to gather the knowledge needed to improve youth work quality. The set of tools to be used could then be decided on a case-by-case basis, according to the desired outcomes and the type of youth work it is supporting.

Thanks to the involvement of the European Commission and of the European Youth Forum in the work of the expert group on quality systems, the Expert Group [on Recognition] had the opportunity to be regularly updated and to contribute to the development of the final report of the expert group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States. The [report](#) was published in April 2015, followed by a call for tender for a study and handbook for implementation of youth work quality systems, to be done closely with practitioners (the results are expected at the beginning of 2017). It aims to help to enhance quality and thus the recognition of youth work as a crucial actor in the lives of young people.

Policy Paper on Youth Work (2014)

The European Youth Forum adopted in November 2014 its [Policy Paper on Youth Work](#). Through this policy paper, the European Youth Forum aims to outline more clearly its understanding of youth work. Furthermore, the paper aims to foster

political action by other stakeholders than the European Youth Forum in the field, especially institutional actors, towards creating an environment where youth work is nurtured and promoted. The paper also highlights what youth work means for the European Youth Forum, the link with non-formal education, and the positive impact on our society and on the individual. Through this paper the European Youth Forum wanted to spark a debate about the necessity of the youth sector as a whole becoming stronger at advocating for its own agenda, the agenda of the young people they work with, visions for society, and the importance of youth work in any healthy democracy.

A [graphic video](#) is being developed to explain the policy paper and takes into account the outcomes of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention.

The elaboration and publication of 'Getting There...' (2013)

The participants of the Symposium on Recognition (2011) 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.

After having published the [COYOTE magazine #18](#) focusing on recognition and in order to facilitate the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Symposium, the Expert Group proposed to gather Statement of the participants of the Symposium on Recognition, the updated Plan of Action for recognition, Pathways 2.0 as well as ideas, initiatives, and examples of tools and activities linked to recognition. All this information has been made available in the publication '[Getting There...](#)'.

The first draft has been elaborated by beginning of January 2013, followed by a feedback round until end of January 2013. The publication was finalised and published in November 2013. It is now the basis of the work of the Expert Group and what defines its meetings' agendas.

Policy Paper on Quality Education (2013)

The European Youth Forum adopted in November 2013 its [policy paper on Quality Education](#). The paper proposes a rights and principle-based definition to be adapted

to the context and the given system in which education is provided; it is therefore not a word-for-word definition of what quality education means. Moreover, it defines the driving principles behind the European Youth Forum's call for quality education, and further describes how they should be reflected in the key elements of the educational practice, namely the learner, educators and providers, the structures and environment, the process, and the content and outcomes. Quality education reflects a humanist approach to education; the education process is seen in its entirety and acknowledges the unique value and the complementarity between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning and of the different providers involved.

The paper now serves as a reference for the European Youth Forum's advocacy work on the right to access quality education. This policy paper also led to a round table organised in March 2014 at the European Parliament.

The European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group on the proposal of a structure of national reports on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2013)

Thanks to the fact that the European Youth Forum joined the European Qualification Framework Advisory Group (hereinafter the EQF AG, which brings together representatives from national authorities and other stakeholders to assist the Commission in the implementation of the EQF and to follow up the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning), the Expert Group had the opportunity to contribute to the provision of inputs for a proposal of a [revised] structure of national reports on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The proposal aimed at developing a common structure for a one-off report that each Member State should present to the EQF AG on the implementation of validation arrangements responding to the Recommendation by 2018. The revised structure was meant as a tool that helps countries in fulfilling their reporting commitment ensuring a minimum level of comparability. Countries could however also stress different aspects according to the different stages of development of their validation arrangements or their national priorities.

The national reports will feed into the evaluation of the action taken in response to

the Recommendation and the Commission report to the Council due by 31 December 2019 on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a possible review and revision of the Recommendation.

This process naturally links to the revised [European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning](#), and to the revision of the [European guidelines for validation](#), (for more information, please refer to the section on 'Tools').

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Recommendation 'Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge' and its reference to the 'Strasbourg Process' (2013)

The Parliamentary Assembly in the Council of Europe has adopted and published the Recommendation ['Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge'](#).

It asks for specific measures to be taken at European level, in particular to improve access to education for young people from disadvantaged groups. It also requests to encourage non-formal education and ensure greater recognition of competences acquired through non-formal learning, building on the proposals put forward by the 'Strasbourg Process'.

The European Steering Committee on Youth and the Advisory Council of Youth – both represented in the Expert Group – have played an active role in the development of this Recommendation and in promoting the 'Strasbourg Process'.

The background of the recommendation is to be seen in the perspective of the Council of Europe's decision to give priority to recognition of youth work and non-formal learning. Indeed, the Joint Council on Youth decided to make this topic a priority in the years 2014-15, to take ownership of the 'Strasbourg Process' and to allocate 5% of the annual budget of the Youth Department to the issue of recognition. The Joint Council of October 2013 put on its agenda the Plan of Action as developed in the Symposium on Recognition in 2011, in order to identify activities that could be taken up by the Council of Europe and its stakeholders. One of the proposals included developing a charter on youth work and non-formal learning/education.

The Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning - NFIL (2012)

On the 5 September 2012, the Commission adopted a [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). Immediately after, the European Youth Forum – member of the Expert Group - elaborated its reaction to the proposal (09/2012), followed by - amongst others -, the Opinion of the Youth Working Party (10/2012).

In a few words, the European Youth Forum's position paper called for incorporating the following recommendations to Member States³:

- Ensure the sustainable provision of quality NFE opportunities, including educational mobility experiences outside the home country and volunteering opportunities, by providing political and financial support to youth organisations and other NFE providers and promoting participation in the same;
- Ensure that quality NFE is provided to all citizens by supporting the development and implementation of Quality Assurance processes in NFE;
- Ensure that the unique nature of NFE is respected and enhanced through complementarity with other education systems;
- Ensure that Member States capitalise on the experience of the youth field in the development of self-recognition tools and practices;
- Ensure that coordination mechanisms between education providers and other stakeholders are in place that allow for regular communication and the sharing of expertise and recognition practices from each sector.

The European Youth Forum called on Member States to adopt a Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning that takes into account the above-mentioned considerations.

Following a number of 'general remarks⁴' to be taken into account while developing

³ More in the position paper European youth Forum's *Reaction to the Commission's proposal for Council recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning* (0664-12 EDU)

⁴ More in the *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning - Opinion of the Youth Working Party* (15040/12)

the final text of the Recommendation, the Youth Working Party also insisted on the youth specific elements of the proposed draft Recommendation:

- Important aspects of the involvement of the youth sector are missing and therefore, calls for a stronger reference to youth, youth work and Youthpass. In this context bridges between youth work and formal education should be established, where possible. In addition, the instruments of validation should be adapted to the needs of the target groups.
- The proposed draft Recommendation focuses too much on professional skills and employment. The value of individual development, active participation in society and overall social inclusion of all young people should be better considered.
- Vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged youth or young people with fewer opportunities are missing and should be better reflected in the draft Recommendation.
- The role of youth organisations, in particular regarding young people with fewer opportunities, in the validation process should be clarified and reinforced.
- The reporting should also involve the joint EU Youth Report and Renewed Framework for European Co-operation in the youth field (2010-2018).

During its meetings, the Expert Group's exchange on the draft recommendation focused on assessing the current draft text and the reaction of stakeholders. On top of the two position/reactions mentioned above, the German National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme, JUGEND für Europa, had also elaborated a series of proposals for improvement. With regard to the Expert Group, concerns were also expressed with regards to the definition of formal, non-formal and informal learning (mostly coming from a Vocational Education and Training perspective). Moreover, the Expert Group bemoaned that so very little further references to political developments in the youth field were made (e.g. the results of the Symposium on recognition of youth work and of non-formal learning, the Statement of participants and the Plan of Action).

The [Recommendation](#) was adopted – with relatively little changes - on the 20 December 2012.

European Economic and Social Committee's Opinions

In 2012, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), represented in the Expert Group, prepared its [opinion](#) on the Commission Communication [Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes](#) in which a gradually growing acceptance of the issue of Recognition is shown.

Another opinion dealt with the [Statistical tools for measuring volunteering](#) (in relation to the ILO Manual on measurement) with the aim of a better public authority recognition of this value and a regulation to harmonise measurement of this activity in EU countries (including possibility to add economic value to volunteer activities)

In the opinion on [Opening up Education](#) (Commission initiative to foster ICT use in education) where the EESC stressed the need for cooperation with other providers of education and learning.

Finally, in 2015, the EESC adopted Pavel Trantina's [Opinion on Validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning – a practical input from the organised civil society](#). This opinion summarized the concerns of employers, employees and other civil society organisations, such as youth and educational NGOs, regarding practical procedures for recognition/validation of non-formal and informal learning, and put forward proposals for practical solutions. Those should feed into the work of the Commission in 2015, in particular to the creation and implementation of the new version of Validation Guidelines. The EESC in this opinion, among others

- calls for support for all stakeholders, particularly social partners and other civil society organisations, to make them aware of the benefits of validation and enable them to participate actively in setting national qualifications frameworks and determining professional qualifications; calls on educational institutions, particularly secondary schools and universities, to promote the validation of skills and knowledge acquired through non-formal means. The EU has many examples of good practice in this field and these should be promoted;
- is convinced that collective bargaining and social dialogue between unions and employers could play an important role in the process of validating non-formal education and lifelong learning and it should be used as an instrument

to work on validating non-formal learning as an important contribution to the debate on employability and instruments to support it;

- considers that given the high rate of youth unemployment, opportunities for interaction between public and private employment agencies, volunteer organisations (particularly of young people) and employers should be supported;
- is therefore disappointed that the European Commission has suspended the preparatory work on the Europass Experience and calls on it to see this initiative through to completion.

2. Promotion and campaigns

Participation to the European Youth Forum's Roundtable 'Quality Education in Europe by 2019?' (2014)

In March 2014 the European Youth Forum organised a roundtable discussion, on the theme, 'Quality Education in Europe by 2019?' hosted by the European Parliament Intergroup on Youth, in Brussels.

The roundtable brought together representatives from both institutions as well as civil society organisations and provided an overview of the main gaps remaining in the accomplishment of a holistic approach to education.

The main outcome was the participants' agreement on the fact that the discussion on education should not only focus on formal education but also on vocational education and training as well as non-formal education. Partnerships with educational providers, including youth organisations, were identified as a key step to make lifelong learning policies a reality.

During the roundtable, the European Youth Forum also presented its recently adopted policy paper on quality education. Several members of the Expert Group took part in the event.

The 'Education Week' of the European Youth Forum (2013 – 2014)

Since 2007, the European Youth Forum organises what was at first the 'Non-Formal Education Day', which later on turned into the 'Non-Formal Education Week', and finally into 'Education Week'. In 2013 and 2014, members of the Expert Group actively contributed to the content of these annual events.

The Education Week aims at supporting a dialogue and networking, with a focus on the European youth Forum's member organisations. The latest one - *Non-formal education: bringing bridges for quality and recognition* – focused on quality education, providing a space to advocate for the right of young people to quality education in Europe through an interactive and forward-looking exchange of

views/practices and discussions among all key stakeholders. Several members and/or structures represented in the Expert Group have participated (e.g. the EU-CoE youth partnership, the Council of Europe, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, and the EESC).

‘Seminar on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning’ (2013)

The seminar, organised in April 2013 by European Commission (Directorate-General Education and Culture) and Cedefop in association with the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU, provided the first opportunity for validation stakeholders from all relevant areas, to discuss and take a first concrete step towards putting elements of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning into action. It was developed as a working seminar targeted towards practitioners and policy-makers who are directly involved in validating non-formal and informal learning.

Several members of the Expert Group had the opportunity to take part in the seminar and contribute to its outcomes.

The presentation of the ‘Strasbourg Process’, including the Statement and the Plan of Action in the conference ‘Building Tomorrow’s Europe’ (2013)

[Building Tomorrow’s Europe](#) was a conference, which took place in Bonn in May 2013. It offered presentations, debates and about 28 workshops with input from committed practitioners, politicians, researchers and scholars on seven thematic areas drawn from European youth policy and youth work:

- Active European Citizenship;
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity;
- Youth Policy in Europe;
- Learning Mobility;
- Non-formal and Informal Learning;
- Young People’s Participation in Politics and Society;
- Professionalization of Youth Work.

These areas were designed to explore the impacts of the Youth in Action programme and its predecessors against the backdrop of JUGEND für Europa⁵'s 25-year history. The conference gathered experts and multipliers working in youth policy, child and youth services and youth work in Germany and the European Union, scholars and researchers from across Europe and to national and European policy makers.

The contributions of the Expert Group and in particular the 'Strasbourg Process' has been presented at the conference.

The presentation of the Statement and Plan of Action at the launching 'Conference of the Keys for Life II project (K2)' and 'Conference on recognition of Non-formal Education' in Prague (2013)

The recognition of non-formal learning/education has being supported further by – amongst others – a national project called [Keys for Life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education](#). It was a large-scale multi-annual project of the National Institute for Children and Youth that aimed at strengthening continuous training of persons working in this sector, thus improving the quality of leisure education and non-formal learning/education opportunities for children and young people in the Czech Republic. The project had several strands of activities ranging from research about the state of play of non-formal education and leisure education, through delivery of training, recognition of prior learning, to development of quality standards for organisations.

The target group of the project consisted primarily of the professionals working in schools and leisure-based educational facilities, children and youth NGOs leaders, as well as university and college professionals and institutions providing in-service education

As part of the follow-up of the project Keys for Life, a Round Table was organised to focus on quality and competitiveness: *quality* exploring self-assessment in youth organisations and *competitiveness* looking at the dissemination of the outcomes of the project such as the Personal Competence Portfolio (PCP) and the personal

⁵ JUGEND für Europa is the German National Agency for the EU's youth programmes since 1988.

development scheme for youth leaders in youth organisations. Parallel to that, Keys for Life and the PCP were also analysed in the frame of a Mapping Study coordinated by the Napor (Serbia) and written by a member of the Expert Group in the frame of a project aiming at developing a recognition tool for young people in Serbia.

The contributions of the Expert Group and in particular the 'Strasbourg Process' (with a focus on the Statement and Plan of Action as key parts of 'Getting There...') have been presented at the conference of the Keys for Life II project and at the *Conference on recognition of Non-formal Education* in Prague.

The participation in other events, e.g. the *Conferences of the European Platform on Learning Mobility* and in SOLIDAR's conference *Achieving validation of learning outcomes - best practices and the way forward to support the visibility of the 'Strasbourg Process'*.

The 1st Conference of the European Platform on Learning Mobility in the Youth Field (hereinafter EPLM) '[Mobility Spaces, Learning Spaces - Linking Policy, Research and Practice](#)', took place in Berlin in March 2013. It arose from an initiative supporting a broad networking of experts in the frame of the EPLM (now coordinated by the EU-CoE youth partnership). EPLM aims at facilitating a sustainable exchange between researchers, practitioners, as well as institutions and organisations involved in the youth field. Continuous co-operation between these parties produces an added value by furthering the development of learning mobility in the youth field, its visibility and its recognition. Jan Vanhee, representative of the European Steering Committee for Youth in the Expert Group, presented the 'Strasbourg Process' during a workshop focusing on recognition.

The 2nd Conference of the EPLM '[Learning Mobility in the Youth Field: Towards Opportunities for all Evidence, experience, discourse](#)' organised in Istanbul in October 2015 discussed recognition as one of the main themes even though the focus of the event was on inclusion. The 3rd Conference is planned in autumn 2017 and will tackle the issue of quality in mobility schemes, including links between formal and informal learning.

In October 2014, the final Conference of the project 'Building Learning Societies: Promoting Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning' called '[Achieving validation of learning outcomes - best practices and the way forward](#)' took place in Brussels, co-organised by SOLIDAR in cooperation with La Ligue de l'enseignement, and supported by SOLIDAR Foundation. A number of presentations by different stakeholders were made, including on the EESC work to promote validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, by Pavel Trantina, which also made some references to the 'Strasbourg Process'.

Other activities and information channels

Recognition related topics have been discussed and promoted on numerous further occasions, for example in training activities carried out in cooperation with the National Agency network. For example, in December 2014 the Italian National Agency hosted the international "Seminar on the value of Non Formal learning and validation/recognition of the competences acquired". In addition to contributing to such events, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre regularly introduces and explains developments related to recognition policies in its training activities.

Furthermore, recognition-related themes and developments are regularly introduced through the online information channels of the members of the Expert Group, for example through the newsletters of the youth partnership and of SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre (the latter is called Youthpass and Recognition).

3. Co-operation and partnerships

The contribution of the Expert Group to the Council of Europe's 'Follow-up group' on recognition (2014)

In Spring 2014 the Joint Council on Youth of the Council of Europe adopted its Plan of Action on Recognition, extracted from the Plan of Action of the Symposium on Recognition (2011). It is to be implemented and monitored by a 'Follow-up Group' composed of European Steering Committee on Youth and Advisory Council members, representatives of the education department, the European Youth Forum, the EU-CoE youth partnership, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, and other practitioners and partners. The 'Follow-Up Group' met twice in 2014.

It is important to note that the adopted Plan of Action focused on the Council of Europe, meaning that even though links are to be made with other processes and initiatives, it concentrates on actions to be developed, implemented and monitored by the Council of Europe. Moreover, that Plan of Action has a special focus on the political dimension. The main focus of the Council of Europe's Plan of Action is as follows:

- A possible drafting process of a recommendation of the Council of Ministers on recognition of non-formal learning/education (an update of the 2003 one);
- The development of principles/guidelines/standards for quality in/of youth work.

The above also meant to develop activities to support recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education, e.g.:

- Include aspects of quality and recognition in the national youth policy reviews;
- Have one action day dedicated to youth work and non-formal learning/education (linked to the point 'Getting There...' focusing on promotion and campaign);
- Develop national pilot activities (e.g. based on or integrated in the Human Rights Education courses);

- Organise a conference to showcase recognition tools;
- Revise the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers;
- Develop quality labels in the field of training;
- Adjust the quality standards for non-formal learning/education for European Youth Centres and European Youth Foundation activities;
- Develop a training module on Quality Assurance.

The Plan of Action is developed and implemented in 2014-2015 and beyond.

The Expert Group sees the decision of the Joint Council on Youth as a very important one since it is also looking at non-EU countries, hence enlarging the scope of the work on recognition. The Council of Europe aims at using the experience of countries that have a long tradition of youth work and non-formal learning/education to support others where this is less present or developed.

The objective is for the Follow-Up Group to meet twice a year, ensuring sharing information about the progress made in between. The Expert Group highlighted the need to ensure synergies and complementarity, in order to a) avoid repeating processes and developing similar initiatives and b) using the strengths (possibilities) offered in the two groups to converge messages.

The 'Symposium on Youth Policy Cooperation in South East Europe: focus on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning' in Albania (2012)

The EU-CoE youth partnership, SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre in co-operation with other partners have organised in October 2012 in Albania [a Symposium on Youth Policy Cooperation in South East Europe: focus on recognition of youth work & non-formal learning](#). About 70 participants from all over Europe, particularly from South East Europe as well as Eastern Europe and Caucasus representing public administrations, research and youth work practice developed concrete (national) action plans. The event was considered to be very successful and produced results comparable to the Symposium in November 2011.

The 'Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning' (2011)

In 2011, the EU-CoE youth partnership organised a [Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning](#), in co-operation with JUGEND für Europa, the German National Agency of the Youth in Action programme, and the 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.

The Symposium and its related 'Strasbourg Process' became the basis of the work of the Expert Group and generated a series of initiatives, not only in the field of practice and research, but also with regard to youth policy.

The Symposium was also a source of inspiration for similar events at regional level (e.g. in South-East Europe / Eastern Europe and Caucasus in 2012).

Co-operation with other structures (on-going)

In 2015, representatives of organisations engaged the recognition and validation of non-formal learning from the point of view of lifelong learning and professional higher education, [\[EUCIS\]LLL](#) and [EURASHE](#) have been invited for an exchange of views on a future co-operation. A presentation of both organisations allowed the Expert Group to have a better understanding of their work, particularly with regard to recognition and to the link to the purpose of the Expert Group. Both organisations underlined their interest in being further involved, be it as a permanent member or on an occasional basis.

The study of Napor (National Association of Youth Workers) supporting the development of a recognition tool in Serbia (2014)

As a direct follow-up of the *Symposium on Youth Policy Cooperation in South East Europe: focus on recognition of youth work & non-formal learning* in Albania (10/2012), NAPOR with support from Ministry of Youth and Sports and USAID has initiated a process of development of a national level tool to recognise competences gained by young people in youth work. As the very first entry step in the process, Gisele Evrard, a member of the Expert Group, has conducted a comparative [‘Mapping study on EU practices in recognition of competences gained through non-formal learning in youth work for the employability of young people’](#) (01/2014). Along with the complementary [‘Study of the impact of non-formal education in youth work on acquiring competences for better employability of young people’](#) (02/2014) carried out by Sever Džigurski and Darko Marković, it served to inform the strategy and development decisions for the future recognition tool.

The ‘Youthpass impact study’ and the Youthpass evaluation event (2013)

The process of the [Youthpass Impact Study](#) started in 2012, commissioned by the European Commission and monitored by a Steering Group which included representatives of Youth in Action National Agencies, the SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, the Youthpass Advisory Group, the European Training Strategy Steering Group, the European Youth Forum and the European Commission, on top of the two experts in charge of the study, Marti Taru and Paul Kloosterman.

The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of Youthpass on the participants of the Youth in Action Programme and describe its role in:

- Supporting non-formal learning of individuals within the youth work sector;
- Documenting young people's and youth workers' learning processes and learning outcomes;

- Helping young people and youth workers to communicate obtained competences when undertaking further steps in their individual pathways, e.g. when applying for educational programmes or for a job.

Overall the results of the study were very positive: showing the impact Youthpass had on individual and social recognition of competences gained in Youth in Action projects, as well as serving as a catalyst for quality development in youth work and re-thinking non-formal learning. A short [animated video](#) has been created to show the major results of the study in an attractive manner.

The Youthpass evaluation event - [Youthpass in Action. Impact, practice and future](#) – took place in June 2013 in Brussels. The event targeted national and European policy makers, youth workers and youth leaders, trainers in the youth field, National Agencies, and other experts who are interested in and wish to contribute to the future implementation of Youthpass.

The aims of the event were:

- To learn about and discuss the results of the Youthpass impact study;
- To explore the good practices of using Youthpass;
- To develop recommendations for the future development of the tool and the surrounding strategy; and, last but not least
- To celebrate the Youthpass achievements

European developments with regards to Recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning within the field of youth (2012)

SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre continued to update its overview of [European-level developments related to recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning in the field of youth](#). The currently available overview reflects the state of affairs of December 2012 but a new version has been elaborated throughout 2014 and 2015 (to be published). The Expert Group has been an important source for the development of the overview.

The European Youth Forum's study 'The impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young people's Employability' (2012)

A study by the European Youth Forum in cooperation with the University of Bath and GHK Consulting on '[The impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young people's Employability](#)' has been presented in Brussels at the European Economic and Social Committee on 25 October 2012. The European Youth Forum's Press Release of the presentation event stated that through consultation with 245 youth organisations, a survey with over 1,300 young people and focus groups with employers from across Europe, this research assesses whether the competences and skills obtained through non-formal education in youth organisations contribute to the employability of young people. Amongst a series of topics, the study highlights that long-lasting and frequent engagement and participation in youth organisations brings high soft-skills development. Amongst the six skills mostly demanded by employers, five are also among those developed through involvement in youth organisations: such as communication, team work, decision-making, organisational skills and self-confidence. For young people who participated in non-formal education activities abroad, this includes also higher development of language, intercultural and leadership skills.

The study also lists a series of recommendations, such as the need to invest in Non-Formal Education. The quality of Non-Formal Education and the accessibility of it to all young people, as well as increased mobility, are crucial factors to increase the impact in employability of young people. Employment services, employers and recruiters must be aware on the benefits from young people's involvement in youth organisations, and the skills gained be taken into account in the recruitment process. Young people should receive career-guidance, coaching and support on how to efficiently make use of the skills in recruitment processes and better present the experiences and competences gained through non-formal education and volunteering experiences in youth organisations. The research provides '*long awaited evidence of the need for more political and financial investment in youth organisations to ensure that they can deliver quality Non-Formal Education, to more young people, thus providing more needed skills to more young people and ensuring a better access to the labour market*'.

The study was welcomed by the Expert Group who has, since then, referred to it in a number of its meetings and participation to external events.

The contribution of the Expert Group to the Council of Europe's consultation on the elaboration of a new Training of Trainers, TRAYCE (2014)

A consultative meeting was organised in May 2014 with experts and trainers working with the Education and Training unit in the Council of Europe to explore the recent developments in non-formal education with young people, particularly by making proposals for the concept, curriculum and format of a *training course of trainers in non-formal education* with young people, named TRAYCE, to be run by the Youth Department in 2015 and 2016 with the concern, amongst others, to tackle and further develop the quality standards in place (planned to be reviewed). The 'Follow-Up group' (see below) also monitors this initiative.

Close co-operation with the European Youth Forum on the issue of 'Quality assurance of non-formal learning in youth organisations' (2011-2014)

To support youth organisations in the process of becoming aware of their responsibility in the education of young people and to strive to ensure that the education they provide is of the utmost quality, the European Youth Forum developed in 2008 a [Framework for Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education](#) as a dynamic process to follow in all stages of any non-formal education project/activity to ensure it satisfies the requirements for quality.

The Quality Assurance Framework process aims to provide organisations with tools for growth and self-improvement, as well as to serve as a clear signal to external stakeholders and society that Quality Education is a priority for youth organisations and should be recognised as such. The Quality Assurance Framework developed by the Forum is inspired by quality assurance processes in other educational fields and by the experience of several youth organisations that have developed quality assurance mechanisms.

A [Manual](#) has been developed to support organisations in the implementation of the framework.

The Expert group has been following and supporting the work of the European Youth Forum with regard to the Quality Assurance framework and the related Manual. Up to today, the European Youth Forum continues working on Quality Assurance through providing member organisations with adequate support in – amongst other things – using the Manual. In 2014, ten more organisations have requested training on using the overall Quality Assurance framework.

The European Training Strategy dedicated to competence development - the *Competence Model for Trainers working at international level* (2013-2014), the *Set of Competences for Youth Workers working at international level* (in process), and the co-operation between actors in formal and non-formal learning/education

SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre has been also working on the [European Training Strategy](#), which has been renewed in April 2015. Within that framework, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre has been involved in:

- The development of the [Competence model for trainers working at international level](#). It has been finalised and was launched at the event 'Bridges for Trainers' that took place on 8-10 December 2014 in Bonn.
- A manual with examples of tools and methods to work with the competence model is being developed. Training activities are developed, based on the competence model.
- A similar process of development of a set of competences for youth working at international level has been drafted. An expert meeting will be organised in April 2016 to launch and explore it. In the process of conceptualization and drafting its content, the authors took into consideration some dimensions and outcomes of the 'Mapping of competences needed by youth workers to support young people in international learning mobility projects', published by EU-CoE youth partnership.

Contribution to the 'Mapping of competences needed by youth workers to support young people in international learning mobility projects' (2012)

A mapping of [Competences needed by youth workers to support young people in international learning mobility projects](#) has been finalised by Maria Carmen Pantea, member of the European Pool of Youth Researchers of the EU-CoE youth partnership. Its aim was to identify, to analyse and to map studies and other relevant information on competences in international youth work.

Ultimately, the mapping study also intended at supporting the development of a set of competences needed for working at international level and for supporting young people in international learning mobility projects.

The EU-CoE youth partnership's 'Mapping of Recognition tools and practices' and the 'Compendium of testimonies of the impact of youth work' (2014-2015)

'[Visible Value](#)' is a mapping study of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European and national levels, conducted from April till October 2014. The main aim of the Mapping is to contribute to the promotion of youth work, as well to share, transfer and multiply well-tested approaches and inspire further initiatives towards recognition at local, national and European level. In its first edition, the mapping has covered 23 recognition tools and good practice from 17 countries, along with an on-going invitation for other organisations/institutions/individuals to submit their tools and practices.

In parallel with the mapping study, an online [compendium](#) of stories 'How Youth Work Changed My Life' has been created. In its initial collection it contains 25 impactful stories shared by youth work participants and youth workers from various European countries. The compendium can be used as an important tool to demonstrate in a concise, informative and convincing manner the value of youth work and non-formal learning/education.

Both Mapping and Compendium have been published on the website of the EU-CoE youth partnership. Two experts have been in charge of developing those two tools: Nik Paddison and Darko Marković. An update and further elaboration of these tools is considered for 2016.

The regular updates on the Youthpass development, including the development towards the enlargement of the areas where Youthpass can be used as requested in the Plan of Action

Representatives of SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre in the Expert Group have been providing regular updates on [Youthpass](#) developments. It has been underlined that Youthpass has to be regarded as a *strategy*, not only as a certificate.

Youthpass is also a *process* of individual recognition that focuses on the awareness of the potential of learning within a specific project; it supports setting learning objectives and reflection on the processes and helps to document the learning outcomes.

In June 2013 the Youthpass Impact Study has been published and presented in the event 'Youthpass in Action' in Brussels (see point 4. Knowledge). Following the introduction of the new Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme in 2014, the continuous content adjustments and technical developments of the Youthpass website and certificate have followed accordingly.

Finally, in this period, steps have been made towards testing the possibilities of Youthpass outside the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme. The test phase of the use of Youthpass beyond Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme has started end of 2014. Reflection on how Youthpass can be adapted and applied at national level is on-going, particularly in Estonia and Latvia.

The revision of the Council of Europe's Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers (the 'Youth Work Portfolio' – 2014-2015)

The revision of the Council of Europe's *European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers* was finalised in 2014, following a testing phase of the revised version and a launching event/seminar of experts which took place in November 2014, titled 'Unfolding youth work: Seminar on the recognition of competences of youth leaders and youth workers: launching the European youth work Portfolio, a tool for the assessment and development of youth work competence'. The final version of the revised [Youth Work Portfolio](#) was launched at the 2nd European Youth Work convention in Brussels in 2015. It is now online (in English and French) and in 2016, Member States of the Council of Europe will be approached to translate it into their own national language(s).

The Recognition online platform (in process)

Following the dynamic developments and growing contents in the EU-CoE youth partnership's work and its online space dedicated to recognition, it shared its

intention to develop a comprehensive online platform about recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education. The idea is to have a moderated space for exchange and debates, integrated in the EU-CoE youth partnership website or hosted elsewhere. 2016 might see the first developments of that platform, to be followed by a testing year. The first steps should prioritise providing a space rather than focus directly on debates since the latter would require more efforts.

The Expert Group on recognition would be a relevant partner in the development and running of the platform.

The revision of the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning and the European Guidelines for validation (2013-2014)

A regularly updated overview of validation practices across Europe, the [European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning](#), compiled in cooperation with the European Commission, provides an overview of validation arrangements in European countries. Recognising that society at large has a vested interest in using all available skills, national and regional authorities and sectoral bodies have introduced many arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning in the past ten years. Yet information about how such learning is identified, documented, assessed and certified is, in most countries, not easily accessible. The European inventory aims to address this weakness by making information on current practices – including examples from selected sectors – available to everyone working in the field. The inventory covers all countries taking part in the EU 2020 cooperation process (further information provided here: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>).

So far the inventory has been updated five times since 2004. The last update was made in [2014](#).

The request for inputs to the European Inventory – shared thanks to the involvement of the European Youth Forum in the *European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group*, tackled:

- Multi-level Governance;

- Early school leaving;
- Methodologies;
- Guidance and counselling;
- Raising awareness;
- Existing research on validation; and
- Private sector

The contributions received after the call for feedback have been passed on to CEDEFOP and GHK, in charge of preparing the country reports. The European Youth Forum also offered to contribute to the review through their National Youth Councils, which has been welcome and appreciated.

The 2014 update is based on the work of a large network of national experts, extensive review of documents, interviews with key stakeholders. The Inventory has undergone robust quality assurance checks by external experts and members of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group. Outcomes include:

- 36 reports (covering 33 countries);
- 8 Thematic studies;
- 2 Case studies;
- A Survey of projects on validation;
- A Synthesis of main findings;
- An Executive Summary.

A light update of the inventory will be published in 2016 with five thematic reports, including one on youth work with questions related to validation opportunities in the youth sector. A full update of the inventory is expected in 2018.

In the framework of the *European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group on the proposal of a structure of national reports on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning*, the process of the revision of the European Inventory is also linked to the revision of the [European guidelines for validation](#), which identify main challenges facing policy-makers and practitioners, pointing to possible ways to respond to those challenges. They are intended as a practical tool, providing expert advice to be applied on a

purely voluntary basis. Their impact relies exclusively on their relevance and ability to add value at national or local level.

Recognition in the Council of Europe

Following the Parliamentary Assembly in the Council of Europe's adoption of the Recommendation '[Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge](#)', the European Steering Committee on Youth and the Advisory Council of Youth – both represented in the Expert group – have played an active role in the development of this Recommendation and in promoting the 'Strasbourg Process'. As already explained under point 'Political process', the background of the recommendation is to be seen in the perspective of the Council of Europe's decision to give priority to recognition of youth work and non-formal learning, making this topic a priority (years 2014-15), to take ownership of the 'Strasbourg Process', and to allocate 5% of the annual budget of the Youth Department to the issue of recognition (also years 2014-15).

Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme

2014 saw the start of what used to be called 'the new generation of programmes': Erasmus+. The main aim of the [Erasmus+ programme](#) is to boost skills and employability, as well as modernising Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven-year programme will have a budget of €14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to current spending levels, reflecting the EU's commitment to investing in these areas. Erasmus+ brings together seven existing EU programmes in the fields of Education, Training, and Youth; it will for the first time provide support for Sport.

Erasmus+ intends to:

- Provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad;
- Support transnational partnerships among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe;
- Support national efforts to modernise Education, Training, and Youth systems. In the field of Sport, there will be support for grassroots projects and

cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism;

With regard to its 'youth chapter', Erasmus+ aims to improve the key competences, skills and employability of young people, promote young people's social inclusion and well-being, and foster improvements in youth work and youth policy at local, national and international level.

Appendix 1

Members of the Expert Group until the end of 2015:

- The Council of Europe, Youth Department, represented successively by Rui Gomes and André-Jacques Dodin.
- The European Commission – Youth Policy and Programme Unit, represented successively by Barbara Zupan, Fabienne Metayer, and Corinna Liersch and Ellen Durst.
- The European Economic and Social Committee – EESC, represented by Pavel Trantina.
- The network of National Agencies of the Erasmus+/Youth in Action Programme, represented successively by Manfred von Hebel and the representative of SALTO T&C RC.
- The European Steering Committee for Youth in the Council of Europe – CDEJ, represented by Jan Vanhee.
- The Advisory Council of Youth in the Council of Europe – AC, represented successively by (following AC's mandates) Camellia Nistor, Mihai Floran, and Paddy Hennely.
- The Pool of European Youth Researchers of the EU-CoE youth partnership – PEYR, represented by Ozgehan Senyuva.
- EU-CoE youth partnership secretariat, represented by Hanjo Schild, Gisele Evrard, Tanya Basarab, and Davide Capecchi.
- European Youth Forum – YFJ, represented successively by Maarten Coertjens and Laura Lopez-Bech.
- SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, represented by Rita Bergstein and Kristiina Pernits.
- Trainer in the youth field, Gisele Evrard.