

## **Youth Partnership**

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



### **Journeys to a New Life**

### **Understanding the Role of Youth Work in Integrating Young Refugees in Europe**

#### **Expert Seminar**

*Brussels 23-24 November 2016*

#### **Concept paper**

*Venue: Council of Europe Office in Brussels  
85, avenue des Nerviens  
1040 Brussels, Belgium*

## **Background**

The large inflow of migrants and refugees to Europe, most of them young, has called for cross-sector integrated responses in the short, medium and long-term. So far the short-term approaches are more visible, with emergency work coordinated by UN agencies, stricter border control and security responses seen in European political documents, focus on first aid support from state and civil society actors. There is also emerging reflection on how to ensure a faster and more efficient integration of the immigrants, recognising their skills and qualifications, providing language courses, introductory courses to how things function in European countries, intercultural dialogue initiatives, as well as offering skills training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities. Housing and integration of refugees in communities is seen as a challenging issue. Last but not least, there exist an alarmingly large number of unaccompanied minors, who require protection, assistance and special care and attention.

In this context, the youth sector's bridge-building role is called to the forefront. It has the challenging task to develop mid to long-term responses, drawing on the knowledge, policy and practice developed in Europe over the years to help the big proportion of migrants, who are young people themselves, integrate in their new communities and participate actively in public life. Some activities under Erasmus+ Programme, such as the recently selected strategic partnerships are focusing on young refugees and the Council of Europe study sessions, statutory body statements and debates on the issue, including those with self-organised groups such as VYRE, are bringing forward youth sector solutions.

The EU-CoE youth partnership has initiated a process of gathering knowledge on the situation and integration of young refugees at the Symposium ([\(Un\)Equal Europe? Responses from the Youth Sector](#), which took place in Budapest on 30 May-2 June 2016. The analytical paper [A look at the "refugee crisis" across Europe: challenges, debates and projects](#) collecting national contributions across Europe from EKCYP correspondents was published in September 2016.

Under Objective 2.1 of the 2016 work plan, Follow-up to the European Youth Work Convention, the EU-CoE youth partnership proposed to analyse the role that youth work can play in supporting young refugees in Europe and to provide related evidence for enhancing youth policy and youth work practice. This analysis is meant to inform peer-learning among interested member states of the two partner institutions, helping them to better understand the current reality, the potential in coordinated intervention and to discuss adequate policy measures. It is also meant to inspire youth work practitioners and local authorities to adapt their youth work and policy responses to some of the challenges brought by youth migration.

## **Objectives and expected outcomes**

- To discuss 10-12 analytical papers on integration of young refugees and the role of youth work, involving young refugees, youth workers and the authors of the papers
- To share at least five case studies on the role of youth work in integration of young refugees and identify characteristics specific to this type of youth work
- To identify research themes relevant for policy-makers and practitioners in the field of youth and recommend follow-up initiatives
- To develop proposals on strengthening youth sector engagement with young refugees and on implications for the future agenda.

## **Participants**

25 participants, including researchers, youth workers, young refugees and policy makers.

## **Preparation**

Based on discussions in EU-CoE youth partnership events throughout 2015-2016, an open call for analytical papers on the role of youth work in the integration of young refugees was published in September.

A steering group of 5 people, including PEYR representatives, a young refugee activist, a researcher with extensive knowledge on the topic and a member of the EU-CoE youth partnership team met on 3-4 October to look at the proposals received, offer feedback and support in shaping up the final proposals. The group also discussed the main themes that should be covered in the seminar and beyond. They also planned the format of the seminar and identified speakers.

Exploratory meetings with young refugees and groups active in the Brussels areas were also held in preparation of the meeting.

The following **themes will be explored in the analytical papers:**

- Initiatives of NGOs facilitating refugee integration in the labour market in Turkey
- Young refugees finding their voice – comparison of participation provisions in legislation and what happens in practice
- Integration of refugee children in the schooling system in Greece – intercultural schools and the role of NGOs, non-formal learning and youth work
- Conceptualising youth work with young refugees – what is specific about such youth work (ex: dealing with trauma, conflict management...) and what should be put in place to support it
- Comparing expectations of young refugees and host community actors and looking at the role of information technology
- Developing a new discourse on refugee integration – cosmopolitanism vs. traditional perception of citizenship and participation
- Integration practices in Serbia developed by non-state actors and recommendations for the youth sector
- Perception of young refugees in Finland (public perception and the experiences of youth workers active in refugee centres)
- Refugee integration in different communities in Malta, based on case studies and author's research.

## **Follow-up**

A policy brief on the topic will be elaborated and it will be widely communicated together with the analytical papers. The results will be shared with the youth sector stakeholders through EKCYP, the newsletter and other dissemination channels. The EU-CoE youth partnership will continue identifying specific elements/dimensions of youth work with young refugees in 2017. Producing a Knowledge Book on the topic is planned.