

Youth Partnership

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



COUNTRY SHEET

ON YOUTH WORK

IN ITALY



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1. Context of youth work

What are the historic origins and traditions of youth work in your country and if it is rooted in other realms (for example, educational, social or social pedagogy) how are boundaries of youth work defined? For example, has there been any research on the tradition and developments of youth work (many have been published in the **History series** part of the **Youth Knowledge Books**).

What is the context in which youth work happens in your country today, what is on the public policy agenda in general that may affect young people and youth policy?

In Italy, youth work (in Italian “Animazione socio-educativa”) is linked to the concept of “Animazione”, which comes from the “active pedagogy” of the theatre and the popular tradition. During the 1960s the Animazione appeared in Italy around the themes of creativity during the decades of the advent of schools for all, in response to the problems of the crisis of the traditional school. Then it shifted its attention from the field of compulsory education to the field of the local community, to society, to look for new responses to old political and cultural models.

During the 1970s the Animazione was a widespread practice, especially in Northern Italy, aimed at developing individual and personal skills of young people.

Since there are no defined boundaries for youth work, youth work has to be seen as a summary of expressions shaped by different traditions and frameworks and is used to cover a wide range of activities. Extremely different organisations are involved in youth work and it is difficult to determine exactly when “youth work” activities were introduced. Youth work “tradition” in Italy started at the beginning of the 1990s as a result of EU-funded projects. However, it has to be noted that even before that, well-established socio-educational and leisure activities were already offered by the church, parishes, Scout associations and several other third sector organisations at national, regional and local level. In the past decade, a key driver of youth work has been the EU policy priorities and, in particular, the associated funding programmes that encourage mobility and exchanges. Another important driver has been the creation of a Ministry of Youth and Sport in 2006, for the first time in Italy. In 2006, through the enforcement of Law No. 248 of 4 August 2006, entitled “Urgent measures for economic recovery”, the National Fund for Youth Policies was set up. The fund aimed at supporting, among others, culture, vocational training and social integration. Regarding the main trends of youth work during the last decade, the picture is mixed. The vast majority of youth work activities are delivered by the third sector rather than public institutions. Currently the emphasis is more on employment and education for young people. Furthermore, funds allocated to youth work activities have been decreasing over the last decade. The main reason is that the government priority is to tackle the emergencies currently faced by young people in the labour market and the problems related to the formal education sector. Regarding the areas of work that have grown in importance, non-formal education seems to have grown considerably. Given the steady reduction of budgets in the formal education sector, non-formal education paths tend to play a more important role for both the education and the support of youth.

The religious-based sector is a key player in Italian youth work. This is dominated by the Catholic educational spaces known as “parish oratories”, in which religious education is combined with recreational activities and initiatives in social volunteering. The Forum Oratori Italiani (FOI) was established in 2009 in order to support the development of 6 500 oratories operating at local level

in all the cities and small towns. Among the best known is the educational tradition inspired by St Giovanni Bosco and this is still carried out by the Salesian Society. Specific areas dedicated to informal education of young people are found within Azione Cattolica, the oldest Catholic association in Italy (founded in 1867). The largest Scout association in Italy, the Associazione Guide e Scouts Cattolici Italiani (AGESCI), is also explicitly Catholic, and gathers more than 180 000 members.

In the secular sector, non-Catholic Scouting in the form of the Corpo Nazionale Giovani Esploratori ed Esploratrici Italiani (CNGEI) has around 12 000 members. The Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana (ARCI) founded in 1957 is one of the largest national networks of cultural spaces engaged at political and social level. In 2016, ARCI numbered 1 088 451 members (Archi 2013). The national mission contains commitments to “new generations and youth creativity” (along with culture, welfare, immigration, environment, peace and international co-operation).

In Italy, youth culture is traditionally opposed to the establishment and to the dominant models of economic development. Since the 1970s, a number of self-managed social centres and spaces have been opened. They are characterised by autonomy from institutions, and promote culture and social actions.

In Italy, youth work is intended as a non-formal learning process aimed at promoting active citizenship among youth and solidarity among generations. Hence, these activities are always implemented outside formal education.

Data on the profile of youth workers are not available. The majority of youth workers are volunteers, trained through short courses or learning-by-doing.

At national level, there are no minimum qualifications standards for youth workers, although some regions introduced them. In addition, at national level, youth work is not recognised as a profession.

In recent years the increased co-operation between formal educational institutions and youth associations has resulted in a common project aimed at promoting a more holistic approach for education (that is, education based on a mix of formal, non-formal and informal aspects). The aim is to facilitate the development of transversal skills among young people.

2. Strategic and legislative framework of youth work

In Italy there is no specific National Law on Youth. There are many laws aimed at young people in different fields, such as education, employment, health, culture, etc. Over the years, all regions approved one or more regional laws concerning young people, some with specific goals for young people, such as the implementation of citizenship rights, the promotion of personality development, social participation, youth associations, etc.

Youth policies started to be developed in the late 1980s by medium to large municipalities, above all in Central/Northern Italy through the so-called “Youth Plans”. Around the year 2000, regions started developing regional strategies and the third sector acquired a pivotal role in managing youth work.

Since the 1990s, youth associations, “co-operative sociali” (social enterprises) and informal groups of young people have been playing a key role in the innovation and experimentation of new practices. In this period, legislation (for example, D.P.R. 309/1990, Law No. 216/1991, Law No. 285/1997, Law No. 230/1998, Law No. 331/2000, Law No. 64/2001) established specific initiatives focused on supporting childhood, training activities, and also to combat the so-called “deviant behaviour”.

The first national Law No. 285/1997, entitled “Provision for the promotion of children and adolescents’ rights and opportunities” together with other regional laws provided funding for a great variety of projects. These educational projects are often the result of public–private partnerships.

Since 2011, due to the national spending review, many youth associations and groups have been raising funds from public and private foundations or from other public resources not related to the youth sector. In this context the Youth in Action programme played an essential role by supporting innovation in the youth sector, the development of soft skills, and providing youth workers with opportunities to co-operate with other European actors.

Since 2006, when the Ministry of Youth was set up (and later transformed into the Department of Youth and the National Civic Service) a National Youth Plan (2007), the Guidelines (2008) and a new National Youth Plan (2013) have been developed.

As of now, around 13 out of 20 regions adopted laws and recommendations on Youth Policy, but not specifically on Youth Work. At municipal level, Local Departments for Youth Policies promote different types of youth work depending on local needs, particularly in municipality-run youth centres.

In May 2016 Italy has adopted a reform of the third sector, social enterprise and universal civic service, which will have a significant impact on youth policies (Legge 6 giugno 2016, n. 106 “Delega al Governo per la riforma del Terzo settore, dell’impresa sociale e per la disciplina del servizio civile universale). The decrees of its implementation were approved in June 2017.

The reform introduces, among others, the Universal Civic Service, which aims at involving up to 100 000 young people per year. Participation is open to both Italian and foreign nationals legally residing in Italy.

In Italy a specific definition of youth work does not exist. The organisations that deliver youth work in Italy share broad youth work values which include: youth work should not be seen only as a way to provide instruments for the labour market; youth workers do not have to work only with problematic young people, they have to accompany and support all young people in utilising their potential; youth workers have to support the active participation of youth in the activities carried out at local level.

Youth work is not defined in any national law. In Italy “youth work” is intended as a non-formal learning process aiming at developing young people in terms of their citizenship, their integration in

civil society and increasing solidarity among generations. Hence these activities are always implemented outside of formal education.

Some regions and municipalities adopted the words “Animatore socio-educativo” to describe the profession of a youth worker, as many professional titles in Italy are defined by the regions and not centrally on a national level. In this link there is, for example, the description of the profile of “animatore socio-educativo” in the Region Liguria:
<http://professioniweb.regione.liguria.it/Dettaglio.aspx?code=0000000131>

There are also some references to the “youth worker” on the website of the National Agency for Youth: www.agenziagiovani.it/news/53-youth-workers

Other examples at regional level:

- Legge regionale 28 luglio 2008, n. 14 “Norme in materia di politiche per le giovani generazioni” – Regione Emilia Romagna:

<http://sociale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/entra-in-regione/coordinamento-regionale-infanzia-e-adolescenza/documenti/legge-regionale-n-14-2008-201cnorme-in-materia-di-politiche-per-le-giovani-generazioni201d>

- Legge regionale (Campania) 8 agosto 2016, n. 26 “Costruire il futuro. Nuove politiche per i giovani” – Regione Campania: www.fse.regione.campania.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/LR_26-2016_COMPL_LEGGI_REGIONALI.pdf

Youth workers consider youth work has the tool to help young people’s emotional and social development in an informal setting but through educational processes. They are conscious of the role of youth work in developing supportive relationships with young people, and opening minds to new learning experiences, in a context of confidence and empathy and of their own role in guiding and supporting young people in their personal, social and educational development to help them reach their full potential in society.

3. Recognition

Despite the existence and a relevant spread of youth work in the country, there is no formal recognition of it, also due to the fact that youth work results and practices are not completely visible, yet. A number of regulated professions in the sphere of education are recognised by the state in Italy such as professional educator, socio-cultural educator, community worker, social worker. In any case, they are not specifically focused on young people. The creation of a professionalised youth work training and certification system regulated by the state on the basis of specific accreditation systems, therefore, seems a challenge that the various associations and institutions in Italy are still failing to get.

What exists in Italy is that the different associations or organisations train their educators within their respective framework of values and background. Experience in the field is often the only pathway to learn and focus in youth work. Furthermore there is the national Law No. 328/2000, which integrates the functioning of the social services in Italy. This law gave the opportunity to regional laws to define professional profiles in social services. In this respect, a group of regions, such as Emilia Romagna, Piedmont and Lombardy, signed an agreement between 2004 and 2008, which means that regional laws recognise the value of youth work within the implementation of youth policies and the role played by youth workers. A good example is the Regional law implemented in Piedmont in 2004 (i.e. regional Law No. 1/2004). This law defines the minimum standards required to be considered a youth worker (*animatore socio-culturale* or *animatore socio-educativo*), the professional profile and access to the profession.

Recently, within the Erasmus+/YIA programme a project has been granted to revise the regional law on youth policies in Piedmont region which is considered to be a pioneer in Italy. Here is a summary of the project and the participative process of different stakeholders.

The project *GIOVANI A 360°* comes from the sharing of objectives between Rete Europa Piemonte and the Piedmont region. The common interest was to promote active participation and direct contact meetings between decision makers and young adults to address the youth population relevant issues, to build a path whose results will be useful to revise the regional Law No. 16/95 “Co-ordination and support activities for young people”.

The main objectives of the projects were: to improve the skills and key competences of young people, promoting their participation in democratic life and active citizenship; to encourage debate on issues concerning youth, promoting their active involvement in the discussion on the issues and priorities covered by the legislative review. The project was implemented by some Piedmont organisations working regularly with young people, also under the Erasmus+ programme.

Participants were around 300 young people aged between 18 and 28, gender balanced. Both young people with specific experience in certain sectors (culture, ecology, work, etc.) and others without specific experience were involved.

The preparation included informative campaigns throughout the Piedmont region, using databases of the partners, services dealing with young people, universities, etc. In each of the eight provinces of Piedmont were implemented 24 experiential workshops (1-2 days) with a specific theme: Environment; Job; Citizenship and legality; Intercultural; Entrepreneurship and new jobs; Housing; Social economy; Culture. The working method included: practical activities, debriefing, confrontation in order to identify needs and proposals for the debate with the policy makers.

The main activity of the project was the organisation and management of an event lasting two days, to promote the discussion between young people, policy makers and sector experts, based on reflections and suggestions already shared within the workshops and through the website. At least 100 young people were in presence and 200 remotely, through the use of the project website. The results were integrated into the proposal to revise the regional law.

As already said in Italy there are no minimum qualification standards for youth workers at national level. Overall, youth workers in Italy tend to have considerably different backgrounds (e.g. social work, psychology, sociology, sport instruction). Furthermore it has to be noted that the vast majority of people involved as youth workers are voluntary and therefore many of them do not have any formal educational background in youth work activities. There is a need to increase the professionalisation of the sector.

Regarding the availability of formal qualifications for youth workers, several tertiary education programmes provide such qualifications across the country. In particular, university courses in educational sciences provide qualifications for youth workers.

University courses usually last three years for the bachelor degree and two years to specialise.

Furthermore, there is a broad range of short and longer training courses organised by voluntary organisations. In some cases, these can be considered as further training for those starting to work as professionals in local youth policies without having appropriate qualifications.

The quality of these courses varies considerably and therefore they do not always contribute to the professionalisation of youth workers (many of them do not provide a recognised certificate). It would be relevant to introduce rules aiming at recognising the skills and the professional profile of youth workers and to develop minimum standards of qualification. It has to be noted that some steps ahead in this direction have been done.

It has to be pointed out that the legislative decree number 13 of 16 January 2013 is making a step forward in this direction. It was adopted in order to define a set of rules aiming at enhancing lifelong learning both in a social and occupational perspective and at validating formal, non-formal and informal learning within the national system of skills certification.

4. Funding youth work

Funds for youth policy mainly originate from the European Programme Erasmus+. Other resources come from the national and regional levels, which provide the support for specific initiatives in the field of inclusion, employability, development of personal skills, culture.

At national level, the Department of Youth and National Civic Service provides funding for youth policies managed by non-profit organisations and by local authorities (regions, municipalities, etc.). However, no specific allocation is provided for youth work.

At regional level, youth work is dealt with in a very asymmetrical way. Some regions did not develop a strategy in favour of youth work. Others, such as Piemonte and Puglia are more advanced.

In 2004, Piemonte passed a law that recognises youth work as a profession within an integrated system of social services (L. R. n. 1/2004 “Norme per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali e riordino della legislazione di riferimento”).

Puglia recognises young people as “actors” and in 2006 through the programme Bollenti Spiriti (<http://bollentispiriti.regione.puglia.it/>) launched calls for the management of 151 youth centres known as “Urban Youth Laboratories”. Each laboratory has been set up in former public buildings such as schools, markets, barracks, which were renovated with a view to create spaces for art, exhibitions, meetings, new technologies, training, youth entrepreneurship, etc. The Urban Laboratories project was selected by the European Commission as Good Practice for the year of creativity and culture in 2009.

5. Structures, actors and levels in youth work provision

5.1 State structures/public authorities deciding on or providing youth work in your country

Within the Prime Minister’s Office, the Department of Youth and National Civic Service is in charge of co-ordinating youth policies under the guidance of the Minister for Labour and Social Welfare.

The Youth National Agency (Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani – ANG) is a public body in charge of the operational activities and of providing some support to youth work. It manages the Erasmus+ programme and specific agreements with regions and local authorities. Since its establishment in 2007, more than 110 000 participants took part in projects funded by Erasmus+ and Youth in Actions programmes.

5.2 National or local youth councils

The National Youth Forum (NYF)(recognised in 2004 by Law No. 311 of the Italian Parliament) is the only national platform for Italian youth organisations. It comprises more than 75 organisations,

and represents about 4 million young people from different sectors: students' organisations, associations working with non-formal education and mobility, youth departments of political parties, trade unions, religious associations, regional youth forums, sport youth organisations.

The NYF's aim is to give a voice to youth interests vis-à-vis political, social, economic institutions and civil society.

The Forum's strength lies in the wide variety of associations that joined it: student associations, youth parties, youth associations of professional and trade unions, associations involved in non-formal education, associations of different religious faiths, regional forums, sports associations, and so on.

The National Youth Forum is a member of the European Youth Forum (EYF) representing the interests of young Europeans vis-à-vis European institutions for the formulation of youth policies.

The objectives of the EYF are: sharing of experiences among youth associations; involving young people in the country's social, civic and political life and related decision-making processes; encouraging the establishment of regional, provincial, local and municipal councils and consultations with young people.

5.3 Youth and youth work NGOs

According to the National Institute for Statistics, in January 2017, the population aged between 13 and 30 years old (target of the Erasmus+ programme) amounted to 10 940 341 out of about 60 million people living in Italy.

a) Age range

In Italy the age range of youth is not officially defined. Youth programmes address different age ranges according to their specific target group. While the Erasmus+ programme involves young people between 13 and 30 years old, other national and local initiatives target young people with different age ranges.

According to the Italian National Institute for Statistics (www.istat.it/it/giovani), the age range for youth is 14-35 years old. The IARD Institute uses the ISTAT definition. However, in their annual report on youth the Toniolo Institute takes into account the age range 18-29.

b) Gender ratio

On 1 January 2017, males represented 51% of young people aged between 14 and 34 resident in Italy, while females were 49%.

c) Educational level

While reducing the gap, Italy is still under the standards of EU28 in relation to the goals concerning education even though the 2017 OECD analysis pointed out that the Italian educational system guarantees the gap reduction between social classes, equal opportunities and inclusion.

In particular only 23.9% of young people aged 30-35 completed tertiary education; only 73.8% of people aged between 25 and 34 completed secondary education. The participation rate to education and training of the age group 15-24 is 55.6% (www.istat.it/it/giovani/istruzione-e-formazione).

At national level, the most relevant differences are related to territorial distribution (with southern and insular regions presenting low levels of instruction and higher level of early school leaving). When it comes to gender equality, nowadays young women possess levels of education and competences higher than their male peers.

d) Territorial distribution of young people

43% of young Italians live in northern regions; 19% in central regions; 38% in Southern Italy and islands.

Young people (14-25 years old) represent 20.4% of the total population in Northern Italy; 20.9% in Central Italy and 24.2% in Southern Italy.

e) Urban/rural ratio

According to Eurostat, 24.3% of Italians live in a rural area; 42.4% in an area of medium urbanisation; 33.3% in an area of high urbanisation (the data refer to the total population, not only to young people).

f) Socio-economic status

In order to describe the socio-economic status of young people in Italy, one could refer to the concept of "*degiovanimento*" for expressing a condition in which together with the decreasing of the young population, Italy is characterised by the lack of relevance of young people in the economic, political and social dimensions.

In March 2017, for the age group 15-24 the unemployment rate was 37.3% at national level, but reached 56.3% in southern regions; the inactivity rate was 48.5%; 25.2% were NEETs at national level and reached 37.4% in the south.

In addition, 63.5% of young people aged 18-34 still live with their parents (2016).

Among those aged 15-29 who are employees, 41.5% have temporary employments; 23.8% of those aged 15-29 are at risk of poverty.

The number of young Italians moving to other countries is increasing: in 2015, about 40 000 young people between 18 and 34 expatriated compared to 36.246 in 2014.

g) Migration and minorities

The migration and humanitarian crises in the European continent, coupled with the increase of migration flows, are posing new challenges to the European Union and to its member states, in particular in the Mediterranean area. During the last 20 years, the Italian Government has promoted initiatives aimed at dealing with migration and integration even before the refugee crisis occurred and the migration issue is central in the public debate (cf. Law No.40 of 6/3/1998, and Law No. 189 of 30/7/2002). Between the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s several projects

dealing with intercultural learning were spread all over Italy; it was a strong co-operation between schools and the third sector. Furthermore, with regards to the protection of minorities, public institutions and policy makers have promoted legislative action and specific programmes oriented to social inclusion (also through European programmes) and the fight against poverty (e.g. Law No. 15/3/2017, No. 33).

6. Forms and examples of youth work in your country

Youth centres (called *Centri di Aggregazione Giovanile*) are quite common in Italy, especially in urban areas. They used to be financed at national level, now they receive funding at local level.

Activities are predominantly focused on prevention and control of youth problems, according to the principle that young people should primarily be supported during their transition to adulthood.

In the Puglia region there are the Youth Urban Labs (*Laboratori Urbani Giovanili*). In Basilicata they are called Urban Vision (*Visioni Urbane*) and Art Labs (*Officine dell'arte*) in Lazio. The uniqueness of these spaces is represented by their attempt to provide learning experiences closely connected with practice and explicitly focused on interests, motivations, passions and projects for young people. The ongoing challenge for these new youth centres is that of breaking away from a dependence on public funding through the diversification of sources of finance (the sale of products or services, identifying donors and sponsors, public commissioning, crowdfunding, etc.), while avoiding management geared towards the market that could put their social mission at risk.

At the same time youth work has to deal with changes affecting the population at large, not only young people. The Web is changing the way people live and socialise. The challenge that youth work is facing is how to make these physical places (youth centres) attractive to be attended by young people and how to promote participation in general. Furthermore, it is not easy to make youth policies accessible for everyone, especially for youth with fewer opportunities.

This is why in 2017 the Youth National Agency adopted a National Inclusion Strategy and nominated an inclusion officer with a view to promoting the Erasmus+ programme, reaching out – through youth organisations and networking - to all young people and especially those with fewer opportunities.

There are several good practices in the field of inclusion, such as the experience of the organisation CEMEA del Mezzogiorno (*Centri per l'Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva*), that promotes “short-term EVS” among young people with difficulties (NEETs, early school-dropouts, prisoners, etc.). The organisation is also supporting the recognition of the credits acquired through the EVS programme (Youthpass) in schools, universities and institutions, such as the Juvenile Court. There are good examples of local municipalities working in close co-operation with youth workers and the civil society.

The topic of recognition of non-formal learning is at the centre of the Italian youth workers' attention. The following projects financed by Erasmus+ should be mentioned among the good practices:

- **Lunaria 2014 I'VE – I Have Experienced. Recognition and validation of volunteering through peer support and open source tools.**

A partnership of 12 countries brought together youth volunteering organisations from 12 countries (Italy, Belgium, Spain, Finland, France, Czech Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Serbia, Korea and Mexico), two research institutes and two volunteering networks (the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations and the Italian Volunteering Centres Network). They carried out a co-operative pattern on the production of intellectual outputs to better edit the set of tools of an innovative recognition system, supported by activities implemented to ensure an evidence-based approach, thanks to the piloting of methodologies and products with volunteers in 12 countries. A desk research and a field survey were produced to develop the recognition system by experts, youth workers and trainers.

- **Uniser 2015 European Badge Alliance**

This started from the idea that the existing recognition tools are not sufficiently oriented towards the needs of young people; key competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning, namely through mobility, by young people needing to be more valorised, youth workers lack of competences regarding innovative approaches on recognition; co-operation among institutions at regional national and European level needs to be reinforced and there is a scarce integration of (non-formal and informal learning) NFIL recognition with formal education, vocational education and training (VET) sector, and labour market. Therefore, the European Badge Alliance is a project aimed at innovating the recognition, validation and communication processes of key competences acquired by young people in NFIL contexts, with particular reference to learning mobility, in order to increase their personal and professional development, their participation in learning and their employability.

- **“EaSY - Evaluate Soft skills in International Youth volunteering”**

This is a 31-month project launched by the Federation of Christian International Voluntary Service Organisations (FOCSIV) to foster the assessment of transversal skills coming from non-formal learning, in particular from Youth International volunteering. In recent years the number of young people having international volunteering experiences has particularly increased thanks to different national and European programmes, such as the European Voluntary Service, the National Civic Service in Italy, the Service Civique and the Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale in France and the Voluntary missionary service in Portugal. Notwithstanding, these experiences are recognised as highly formative for youth, as young people have a lot of difficulties in having such competences recognised in the labour market. Steps forward towards the recognition of professional skills both at national and European level have been made, while nothing has been done about soft skills recognition so far, even if competences like Flexibility, Team work, Problem solving and Leadership are essential to guarantee effective job performance and active citizenship at social

and economic level. In order to contribute to soft skills recognition coming from Youth International volunteering experiences, FOCSIV, Foundation Faith and Cooperation (FEC), Portugal and European Guild (La Guilde Europeenne), France with long-term experience in that field and the Association of Professional Psychologists of Italy (Elidea), co-operate in the present project. The project aims at elaborating a model of soft skills assessment coming from Youth International volunteering and grading.

7. Quality standards

In Italy a clear professional profile for youth worker does not exist but it is encoded in the profession of educator or social and cultural animator. Consequently, there are no quality standards guiding youth work in Italy. The Italian National Youth Agency, which is funding organisations providing non-formal education pathways through the Erasmus+ programme, ask for reports that can give an overview of the applied quality in the implementation of the projects.

Some organisations spontaneously refer to the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio, Council of Europe quality label for youth centres and the European Youth Forum Framework for Quality Assurance of Non-formal education.

Regional and local administration have their own internal system of monitoring and assessing.

The oldest and more structured youth organisations have internal quality assurance systems in place.

8. Knowledge and data on youth work

As already said there are no researches at national level but only local and international. They are not widely disseminated nor well-known by youth workers as they are academic products or recent publication that would benefit from wider dissemination.

1. Evaluating youth-work: youth centres as places of non-formal education and participation (2010-2013) (Morciano D. (2015), *Spazi per essere giovani. Una ricerca sulle politiche di youth work tra Italia e Inghilterra*, Franco Angeli).

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the specific functioning of youth work in youth centres as places that young people attend on an ongoing basis during their spare time (centre-based or indoor youth work).

The research includes a series of studies designed to investigate the specific mechanisms of youth participation in youth centres. Theory-based evaluation was selected as a particularly effective model for evaluating “complex interventions” such as youth centres. In particular, studies of youth centres as places for participation stemmed from the choice of a public programme aiming to involve young people both in terms of their design and management.

2. Innovazione nelle politiche giovanili: il caso del programma Bollenti Spiriti in Puglia (2015-ongoing)

Assessment of the action named “Principi Attivi” on the basis of different evaluation studies:

- a) an exploratory study, a document review, about all finalised projects funded by “Principi Attivi”;
- b) a quantitative study on all youths involved in the “Principi Attivi” call of 2010, with the aim to assess results and mechanisms after three years from the conclusion of the funded projects;
- c) a qualitative focus based on case studies;
- d) a quantitative focus which compares a subgroup of funded projects with a subgroup of not funded projects.

3. Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union Country Report, *Italy* (European Commission 2014).

4. Thinking seriously about youth work and how to prepare people to do it, (Youth Partnership Edition 2017), *Youth work in Italy – Between pluralism and fragmentation in a context of state non-interference* (Daniele Morciano).

5. Campagnoli G. (2010), Terzo settore, e organizzazioni giovanili: situazioni e tendenze di percorsi, interventi per e con I giovani, Investire nelle nuove generazioni: modelli di politiche giovanili in Italia e in Europa, Editore Provincia Autonoma di Trento – IPRASE del Trentino, Trento.

6. Bazzanella A. (2010), La condizione giovanile in Italia: una rassegna, Investire nelle nuove generazioni: modelli di politiche giovanili in Italia e in Europa, Editore Provincia Autonoma di Trento – IPRASE del Trentino, Trento.

7. Bonizzoni and Pozzi (2012), “The relational integration of immigrant teens: the role of informal education”, *Italian Journal of Sociology and Education*, Educational Section of the Italian Sociological Association.

9. European and international dimension of youth work in the country

Erasmus+ mobility remains the best-known and appreciated action, but also the one that is most effective and responsive to the needs of young people, as it affects individual characteristics (acquired skills, improved skills, transformation of reference organisational models) and has a real importance for the curriculum and the career prospects of the subjects involved.

The added value of the programme must be more visible both at the level of the systems to which it refers and on the social and cultural level: mainstreaming actions are increasingly effective and aimed at promoting both tangible and intangible results and products, about the power that the

programme can have on the growth and change of individuals who animate it and on the system to which they belong.

The lack of recognition of youth work has a negative impact on the level and development of competences in this sector. As a result, the career path is not clear and there is a lack of professionalisation of youth workers.

The challenge ahead is to improve recognition and validation of acquired skills, dissemination and exploitation of results, access to all materials and documents produced in Erasmus+, and to progressively extend the international dimension.

As already said, the legislative decree was adopted in order to define a set of rules aiming at enhancing lifelong learning both in a social and occupational perspective. It aims also at validating formal, non-formal and informal learning within the national system of skills certification.

10. Current debates and open questions/policies on youth work

1. As mentioned before there is no clear a definition of both youth work and young people in Italy. It is difficult to determine sector trends at national level since the vast majority of activities are carried out at local level.
2. The need of a national law to clearly position the role of youth work in Italian society.
3. Youth workers are facing two different kinds of problems which are related: on one hand, the lack of recognition at institutional level, and, on the other hand, the lack of career prospects for people currently working as youth workers.

The creation of a professionalised youth work training and certification system regulated by the state on the basis of specific accreditation systems, therefore, seems a challenge that the various associations and institutions in Italy are still failing to establish.

There is a need to increase the professionalisation of the sector.

4. The lack of recognition of youth work has a negative impact on the level and development of competences in the sector. As a result, the career path is not clear and there is a lack of professionalisation of youth workers.
5. The financial constraints due to the crisis have reduced the ability of local associations to implement effective activities. On the other hand, the challenge for youth work in general is breaking away from a dependence on public funding through the diversification of sources of finance (the sale of products or services, identifying donors and sponsors, public commissioning, crowdfunding, etc.)
6. However, it is important that the EU is perceived as an important player in the overall promotion and support of young people and not only as a funding organisation.

7. There is yet no systematic cross-sectoral co-operation even if the Erasmus+ programme helps to create specific projects or activities for co-operation. About youth NGO and youth workers, it is important to support the development of networking activities between them. There is currently a national network which needs to be further developed. In this regard the efforts of the Italian National Youth Council to implement regional and local platforms might increase the information and communication process. This process should be strongly supported by local NGOs and youth associations delivering services at local level. Filling this gap might be the first step for a better recognition of the importance of youth work in Italy, which may result in increasing the professionalisation of the sector.

8. In the absence of a definition, the range of activities that can be considered as youth work in Italy is wide. This means that little evidence is available on the overall outcomes and impact of youth work. We still need efforts to make the outcomes of the programme visible, for example through the international researchers' network RAY, which is providing evidence-based results to be spread within and outside the programme.