

## Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers

### Part II. Diversity of practice architectures

**Author:** Tomi Kiilakoski, PhD, Adjunct Professor

Correspondent to the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy

**Co-ordinator:** Tanya Basarab

#### **Youth Partnership**

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



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

*The content of this document, commissioned by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, is the sole responsibility of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of either of the partner institutions, the European Union and the Council of Europe.*



## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>2. On youth work and training</b> .....	6
<b>3. Theoretical framework: practice architectures</b> .....	8
<b>4. The practice architectures of youth work education</b> .....	11
<b>4.1. Cultural-discursive arrangements: how youth work is talked about</b> .....	11
<b>4.2. Material-economic arrangements: what are the resources of youth work education and employment</b> .....	18
<b>4.3. Social-political arrangements: the organisation of youth work</b> .....	21
<b>4.4. An analysis of different European practice architectures supporting youth work</b> .....	22
<b>5. An individual learner’s perspective: meaning, practice, community, identity</b> .....	28
<b>6. Conclusion and recommendations</b> .....	31
<b>References</b> .....	34



# 1. Introduction

Taj Mahal, a talented blues musician who has spent five decades exploring different musical cultures, from the desert blues tradition of Mali to Hawaiian music, was asked in late 2017 what he had learned from his adventures with different musicians from around the globe. He said: “What I’ve learned is that you never stop learning.” (Wolman 2017: 63) This answer is highly illuminating, not only because it shows how a musician locates him- or herself within a web of rich musical cultures, but also because it has a profound insight into the nature of learning itself. He is right. One never stops learning. However, one has to start somewhere.

How do you learn to be a youth worker? What kind of process is it, where does it start and how do social environments in different parts of Europe help youth workers flourish? What type of formal education is available? What is the role of workplace learning, peer learning or more generally learning by doing? What are the available educational paths that produce a competent youth worker who is able to work with and for young people in the network of other professions? There is no single answer in Europe, since the response depends on the national context for formal and non-formal learning in and about youth work.

Answering the question about how to learn to be a competent youth worker might begin by noting that in the process of learning any individual youth worker will become a member of a larger community of youth work, and while doing so he or she absorbs the knowledge, ethos, concepts and methodologies held dear by this community. This concept of learning has its background in the ideas of educational psychologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. According to them, the traditional concept of learning through acquisition – learning by internalising knowledge transmitted in the pedagogical process – misses the point. They feel that this conception is too individualistic and too concerned with the cognitive level. Instead, they suggest that learning is essentially a process of participating in a shared social practice. In this process, newcomers and experienced workers interact. They form a tight professional culture, which is an example of social entities that Lave and Wenger call “communities of practice”. We are all part of several types of communities of practice – some of them at home and some in professional settings. (Lave and Wenger 2011; Wenger 2008) In this view, learning to be a youth worker is about becoming a member of a professional community of practice and consequently being able to access the vibrant tradition which has been developed by youth workers and other members of the youth field “to be able to do their job and have a satisfying experience at work”. (Wenger 2008: 47)

This perspective emphasises the practical and the social constitution of practices. For an individual, learning means engaging and contributing to practices; for communities, it is about refining the practice and making sure that new generations of practitioners will emerge; for organisations, learning is about sustaining an interconnected community through which an organisation knows what it knows and thus becomes

effective as an organisation. (Wenger 2008: 7-8) By becoming a member of the shared community one learns methods and skills, shares the ethos of youth work, learns how to speak a professional language, engages in social practices and has different connections with young people, their parents perhaps, different citizens, non-governmental organisations, other professional cultures and local politicians – to name but a few.

According to this perspective on learning, the educational paths of the individual youth workers – as important as they are – are dependent on the larger community around them. Different communities around Europe have different resources. This clearly affects how individual youth workers are able to learn. In this report, the results of the research group of David Cairns, James O’Donovan, Madalena Sousa and Vesselina Valcheva are taken as a starting point of analysis. Needless to say, I am greatly indebted and grateful for the work they have done. I have drawn heavily on their results in analysing and structuring by theme the answers to the questionnaires sent to the national correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC) and relevant ministries, institutions and bodies. Respondents from 41 countries answered. United Kingdom (England) and United Kingdom (Wales) provided separate answers, as did Belgium (Flemish), Belgium (French) and Belgium (German-speaking). Therefore, this chapter examines 44 different “practice architectures” of youth work, which are referred to as countries or regions. I have examined the original questionnaires to identify patterns, trends, commonalities and differences in the countries and regions surveyed on the topics which were hard to interpret. Mostly this has been done when analysing how the public sector finances non-formal learning, whether there are identifiable and sustainable career paths in youth work and in looking at the different associations of youth workers. These results are analysed based on the concept of learning through participation: the analysis aims to point out the myriad frameworks of youth work education and learning in different European countries. To do this, I have applied the theory of “practice architectures” as developed by Stephen Kemmis and his colleagues (another rather heavy theoretical construction, I must warn my readers). This analysis probably does not do justice to individual countries or regions, partly due to the quality of data available, partly perhaps due to the choices I have made as a researcher. However, I hope this analysis sheds light on the different youth work models in Europe.

The report begins by briefly examining how the variety and complexity of youth work practices in Europe have been handled in research. After that, I will shortly describe the theoretical framework of practice architectures. This part is followed by a detailed analysis of how the three dimensions of practice architectures – “sayings, doings and relatings” – can be used to analyse the data on the educational paths of youth work. As a result, four groups of European practice architectures are identified. The report also reflects on the individual learning paths of youth workers.

## 2. On youth work and training

Anyone researching youth work from the European perspective will note the diversity and even complexity of youth work. This diversity was one of the starting points of the 1st European Youth Work Convention held in Ghent in 2010. According to the final declaration of this convention, the nature of youth work is often misunderstood because of its complexity and the different practical realities were underlined. Youth work was defined as a social practice between young people and the societies in which they live. As it has to deal with both changing cultures and needs of the young, and an ever-transforming society, it has had to accommodate and deal with a range of tensions generated by this relationship. (Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention)

However, the declaration also emphasised that while there is clearly diversity in youth work practices, there are also common characteristics of youth work. First, youth work provides space for association, activity, dialogue and action – characteristics that using educational lingo could be called being together and learning together through peer support. And second, it provides support, opportunity and experience for young people when they are transitioning from childhood to adulthood. These two perspectives, one emphasising the importance of being together at present and the other perspective of development and growth in the future would need to be guided by the principles of participation and empowerment, the values of human rights and democracy, and anti-discrimination and tolerance. (Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention)

The declaration emphasised the diversity in the education of youth workers as well. It stated that: “There may be no need for a homogeneous training system for youth workers.” (Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention: 4) However, it also underlined that youth work needed common frameworks such as competency descriptions. The importance of common training was emphasised, especially in the context of human rights (thus anticipating the increase in immigration of young people to Europe): “Youth workers need more advanced training in, and commitment to universal values in order to face the rapidly changing demands of diverse populations of young people. The training proposed must move beyond understanding the need for tolerance to the acquisition of knowledge and competencies around cultural diversity.” (ibid) The importance of youth work training and education was emphasised as a condition for quality youth work. According to the declaration, training in youth work needs to be both flexible and committed to core humanistic values.

The diversity and complexity acknowledged by the “Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention” are also manifested in the *History of youth work* series, which is based on seminars on the different histories and traditions of youth work in the member states of the Council of Europe. In the fourth *History of youth work* volume, researchers Marti Taru, Philip Coussée and Howard Williamson discuss the

differences in youth work in Europe. They begin by noting that “youth work” is an umbrella term to be used in high-level discussions. In contrast, the practices and environments of youth work are too diverse to be captured in a short definition. They continue by noting that even the first glance at historical narratives on how youth work has developed in different countries “quickly reveals that youth work has been strongly framed not only by social policies and internal developments, and in some sense predominantly, by the political system or state”. (Taru, Coussée and Williamson 2014: 130) The authors remain confident that youth work can be a tool for democracy, and that it can create an environment where young people learn a democratic and participatory world view, even if youth work is influenced greatly by societal and political conditions.

While diversity describes the state of youth work in different parts of Europe, highlighting what unifies youth work in Europe might be a better option when promoting its recognition. At the 2nd European Youth Work Convention in Brussels in 2015, the goal was to find common ground where all youth work stands. Approaching the question along the same lines as the first declaration, youth work was seen as creating spaces for young people and providing bridges in their lives. The bridge metaphor related to social integration of young people, especially young people at risk of social exclusion. The final declaration emphasised the relation of youth work to young people and the society in which they live, and identified digitalisation and cultural diversity as two main challenges.

Once again, the role of training in creating youth work praxis was emphasised. Training needs to combine theoretical perspectives and practical realities: “Training programmes need to demonstrate suitable mechanisms for ensuring the development of reflective practice.” (2nd Youth Work Convention Declaration: 5) Training should produce responsiveness to changes in the lives of young people. As with the 1st Youth Work Convention, the need to develop intercultural competences was highlighted. Also, an “emerging need for cross-sectorial education and training” (ibid.) was identified.

What all of these documents share is the idea of youth work providing spaces for young people to engage in peer activities, and consequently peer learning, and helping young people to find their place in their communities, in the labour market and in society in general. Youth work is about today and about the future. Training is needed to ensure that youth work practice is reflective enough and that it is able to adapt to the changes affecting societies. At the same time it is recognised that national contexts vary, and that the recognition of youth work needs to be put on the agenda in European countries and regions which have different strengths and points of development. Recognition is needed to ensure that youth work is able to fulfil its role in providing spaces for peer activities and bridging the worlds of the young to society and to local communities.



### **3. Theoretical framework: practice architectures**

As is evident from the previous chapter, the diversity of youth work has been seen as a key factor in European youth work. This diversity is explained by different societal and political contexts in different member states of the Council of Europe. The different conceptions of youth work, and the consequent place of youth work within the web of its different theoretical backgrounds and roles within the professional networks in public services and in civil society, are well noted. In this report, the theory of “practice architectures”, as developed by Stephen Kemmis and his colleagues, is used as a theoretical framework of the analysis. By using this theory as a starting point, a more coherent perspective on the position of youth work in different European contexts is hopefully achieved.

According to this theory, what an individual practitioner does and is able to do are shaped by a wide background of discourses, social and political practice, material facilities and available resources. Learning to be a competent youth worker in this conception is not a solitary affair. Instead it is a shared, communal and, in essence, an intersubjective thing. Practice is seen as historically formed and structured: it is influenced by local histories. Practice is structured socially as well, as it is influenced by social relations and interactions. Although there is an emphasis on a social background in this theory, in the end the question is about “what particular people do, in a particular place and time”; social practice “contributes to the formation of their identities as people of a particular kind, and their agency and sense of agency”. (Kemmis 2009: 23) By analysing how different practices are structured, one is able to pinpoint what learning paths are available for a given individual in a local setting. In this way, a theory of practice architectures can offer useful perspectives on the learning paths and processes in different European countries and regions.

The educational paths of any youth worker in any European country or region are shaped by the conditions which also shape youth work practice. Practice as a concept is distinct from mere activities, since it is constituted of shared social and material conditions. There are multiple links between the theoretical, practical and relational elements of practice. There is also an inherent moral element inside any practice: it is always value-laden; it aims for the good of individuals and hopefully humankind in general. A practice produces actions that have moral, social and political consequences. A “good” practice forms and transforms both the individuals involved in the practice and the worlds in which practices occur (Kemmis 2009; Kemmis et al. 2014; Salamon et al. 2016). Practice has the power to shape how individual practitioners do their work, how they think about it and what types of relations they form with other professions.

Usually the most visible form of any practice is what the practitioners do. In the case of youth work, one is easily able to describe, for example, how young people enjoy the company of their peers, participate and hang out in youth clubs; how counselling is offered on the internet; how outreach youth workers seek out

and proceed to empower young people in sensitive conditions; or how youth workers work with gangs. However, a practice is not about actions or activities alone. According to the practice architecture theory, there are three categories or three sets of conditions that mediate and enable the conduct of practices.

1. Cultural-discursive arrangements, or “sayings”, make possible the language in and about these practices. These shared, and often taken for granted, understandings that practitioners draw upon are used to describe, interpret and justify the practice (Kemmis et al. 2014; Kemmis 2009). This dimension is about professional vocabulary, professional recognition and theories of how good practice is organised.
2. Material-economic arrangements, or “doings”, refer to physical and economic realities which shape the practice. These resources make possible the activities undertaken in the course of the practice. They also enable the “doings” that are characteristic of the practice (for example, design of youth centres or other arenas of youth work, wages of the youth workers, economic status of youth work organisations, sustainable career paths available or not available in a country or a region).
3. Social-political arrangements, or “relatings”, concern social relationships and power. These resources make possible the relationships between non-human objects, people and professional cultures. In the case of youth work, it relates differently to children, social work, different professional cultures and colleagues in the field.

These different sets of practices are interrelated and even interwoven. According to a rather technical but highly illuminating definition by Stephen Kemmis and colleagues: “A practice is a form of socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), and when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings and relatings ‘hangs together’ in a distinctive project. This quality of ‘hanging together’ in a project is crucial for identifying what makes particular kinds of practices distinctive.” (Kemmis et al. 2014: 31) According to this way of thinking, it is important to be able to spell out how different conditions “hang together” in any given situation in any given practice.

How these conditions work together is always dependent on the particular history and socio-economic conditions. Practices are always located in particular sites and are influenced by the specificity of these sites. (Hardy, Rönnerman and Edwards-Groves 2017: 6) Analysing how different European countries or regions enable the educational pathways of youth workers is dependent on how different dimensions of the practice architectures actually interact.

When commenting on the outline of this project, Howard Williamson advised a reformulation of this rather heavy theoretical framework into simpler and more accessible terms. Following his sage advice the research questions can be formulated as follows:

1. Sayings/cultural-discursive dimension: how youth work is recognised, formulated, talked about and debated.
2. Doings/structural-occupational dimension: how youth work education is supported and how youth work can be a sustainable career.
3. Relatings/social-political dimension: how youth work is recognised, supported and organised so that it can relate to young people, the general public and other professional cultures.

These categories can be seen as prerequisites of successful, quality youth work (Agdur 2017) – there have to be ways of talking about the methods and goals of youth work, material and economic conditions for doing this type of work and professional ways of getting organised and relating to young people, the general public, civil society and other professions.

## 4. The practice architectures of youth work education

When analysing the first two conferences on the history of youth work, the research group concluded that: “The social (thus youth work) is always ‘under construction’ and it is impossible to reflect on youth work without linking youth work practice, policy and research to the social (pedagogical and political) context.” (Coussée et al. 2010: 130) This impossibility highlights the fact that the practice architecture of youth work is related to larger social settings, and also to concepts, thoughts and ideas about what should be done with the young in the society – and also what should be done with the society. According to the theory of practice architectures, one needs to add to this list the economic and material conditions of youth work.

The perspective of practice architectures underlines that anything youth workers are doing is always closely connected to sayings and relatings, that is, to the broader social, material, economic and discursive context surrounding youth work. Consequently, learning to be a youth worker is influenced by the social context as a whole and is dependent on existing practices. Youth work, like any other practice, cannot be considered outside of the social context which shapes it – and this social context is in turn, to some extent, shaped by youth work practice as well. Looking at educational pathways of youth workers through the perspective of practice architectures theory is one way of meeting the challenge of avoiding a narrow vision of youth work as methodisation and of describing youth work only through the activities and ways of working with and for young people. (Coussée et al. 2010) This is one theoretical approach to looking at the youth work context as a whole and having a systemic approach.

The following section will examine the educational paths of youth workers using the three categories described in Section III, namely sayings, doings and relatings. It analyses, first, how youth work is talked and thought about; second, how youth work is done on a professional basis; and third, how youth workers relate to each other through associations. This analysis is of course in no way conclusive: it is based on the data currently available, and will at best offer a rough sketch of different European frameworks. Nevertheless, it points out the considerable differences in practice architectures of youth work in Europe.

### 4.1. Cultural-discursive arrangements: how youth work is talked about

The first class of analysis consists of those forms of thought and language that make youth work recognised, understandable, interpretable and communicable both inside and outside the youth work profession. This requires looking at the different ways of recognising youth work at the national policy level, and also in professional discourse. The aim is to find out “what people say the practice is, as well as what they say while they are doing it and what they say about what they do”. (Kemmis 2009: 25) If youth work is

to exist as a distinct social practice there needs to be a way of communicating what the practice is about and how a competent (or, to use Aristotelian language and emphasise professional ethics, a virtuous) youth worker does his or her job. This is based on a shared tradition of youth work. “Each particular and each local form of a particular practice presupposes *distinctive arrangements of words, ideas and utterances – distinctive discourses* – which are characteristic of this or that particular kind of practice.” (Kemmis 2009: 25)

The analysis uses three sub-categories: is there legislation explaining what youth work is? Is there any method for assuring quality? Is there a competency description of youth work?

First, an analysis of legal recognition is offered. Some sort of law governing youth work obviously provides formal legal recognition, but it may also offer theoretical grounding as well. (Komonen, Suurpää and Söderlund 2012) According to the analysis of the educational pathways, not all the countries or regions examined provided legal recognition of youth work.

The second dimension concerns ways of evaluating quality in youth work. Setting quality criteria for youth work is based on the broader definitions of what youth work is and what type of outcomes it may produce in the lives of young people. As has been stressed, the most important thing would be to point out what is distinctive about youth work, and how it differs from other related fields, such as formal education (Agdur 2017; Taru 2017). It is out of the scope of this analysis to evaluate whether the set quality criteria in different European countries and regions actually reflect their youth work practices. Rather, the starting point is that there is a way of evaluating the quality and thus communicating, in some way, about the value of youth work.<sup>1</sup>

The third dimension concerns competency descriptions for youth work. The term competency refers to the ability of the individual to perform a task at hand. It is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that affect performance at a job, can be evaluated using pre-set standards and of course can be improved through training and education. (Hsieh et al. 2012) Having a competency description available is one way of describing what youth work is about and how youth workers should do their job. This way it can be counted as one of the discursive and cultural resources available for a youth worker. The “Declaration of the 2nd

---

1. I have adopted a positive interpretation on the quality systems as a way of explaining what youth work is about. However, critical remarks have been presented about the quality systems as new forms of “governmentality” and as relying on the instrumental rationality meeting the demands of the neo-liberal era. This is indeed an important point. \*There may be other ways of meeting these goals. For the purposes of this report, however, it is assumed that quality assurance systems and competency frameworks are indicators of the discursive basis available for youth work. However, to contextualise this, a quote by Jon Ord (2016: 176) is necessary: “More importantly ... the transformative and life changing outcomes of youth work, such as genuinely building confidence encouraging aspirations or facilitating changes in people’s beliefs about both themselves and the world around them, do not lend themselves to techne or ‘product’ approach. ... As a practice, youth work rooted in phronesis would be concerned with providing opportunities which necessarily contain a degree of uncertainty, fluidity and unpredictability.” Ord’s perspective emphasises that youth work should be empathically understood from inside, instead of explaining youth work as “a clear business idea”. (Agdur 2017: 346) Without taking sides in this debate, it should be noted that the analysis in this paper does not provide insight into how different national discourses enable youth workers to talk about their processes using a language perhaps based more on phronesis, as a lived and emergent practice. This limitation of the analysis begs further investigation.

Youth Work Convention” noted that in order to sustain the quality of youth work there needs to be a competency model for youth workers. (Declaration of the 2nd Youth Work Convention)

In the table below, all of these three dimensions are combined together to analyse the scope of the available discursive-cultural forms of youth work. If the country or region has youth work legislation, value 1 is given and if no such legislation exists, value 0 is given. The same applies for quality assurance and/or a competency framework for youth work. The three sub-categories are combined to create a sum variable, reflected in total points. The highest total point score is three.

The table below is to a large extent modified from that of the “Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers” report (See Part I at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/related-publication>) and is based mostly on the work done by the research group. I have accessed the original answers to check the information in cases I found hard to categorise. Some of the data clearly are -not on the same level and need a bit of interpretation. This means that country-by-country comparisons probably do not offer an adequate picture.

**Table 1 – The discursive-cultural arrangements of youth work**

Country or region	National/regional legislation	Quality assurance	Competency framework	Total points
Albania	0	0	0	0
Armenia	Concept of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Armenia (2014) Regulations of the Youth Workers’ Institution (2009) Youth Workers’ Training Programme (2015)	0	0	1
Austria	Federal Youth Promotion Act (2000)	The aufZAQ certification (since 2003)	The aufZAQ certification (since 2003)	3
Azerbaijan	Youth Policy of Azerbaijan Republic (2002, amended 2005 and 2007) Azerbaijani Youth 2017-2021 State Programme	0 (It is planned for the end of 2018.)	0	1
Belarus	On the Foundations of State Youth Policy (2009)	Employment agreements and local job regulations documents	Educational Standard of the Republic of Belarus № 1-09 01 74-2012	3
Belgium (Flemish)	Flemish Parliament Act (2012)	Specific funding conditions for national level (Flemish) organisations	0	2

Belgium (French)	Decree on the Conditions of Approval and Funding for Youth Organisations (2009)  Decree on the Conditions of Approval and Funding for Youth Houses, Meeting and Accommodation Centres, Information Centres for Young People and their Federations (2000)  Decree establishing the Youth Council in French Community (2008)	Training organisations need to have an accreditation from the Youth Service	A profile for the job (socio-cultural group leader) and the content of training courses, defined by the French-speaking Service for Professions and Training Courses	3
Belgium (German)	Youth Decree (2011)	Evaluation of youth workers – monitoring of their youth work twice per year, creating analysis of their achievements every five years and delivering concept for the next five years	no (planned in 2018)	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	Youth Law (2012)  National Youth Strategy (2012-2020)	0	Suggested set of skills of the youth worker, in the Official “Position of the Bulgarian National Youth Forum on Youth Work and Youth Worker” <sup>2</sup>	2
Croatia	National Youth Programme 2014-2017	0	0	1
Cyprus	National Youth Strategy 2017-2022	0	0	1
Czech Republic	National Youth Strategy 2014-2020	The “NGO recognised by the Ministry for providing quality youth work” award	National project Keys for life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time-Based and Non-Formal Education  National competency-based framework for youth workers in youth information centres (produced by Youth Department; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in 2008)	3
Estonia	Youth Work Act (2010)	Youth Work Quality Assessment Tool for local municipalities	Occupational standard of youth workers developed by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (2012)	3
Finland	Youth Act (2016)  Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy (2017)	internal frameworks developed by the organisations themselves; peer quality assessment method	0	2
France	Priority to Youth 2012-2017	compulsory registration of all vocational training	Professional training is included in the National	3

2. This is not an official legislative document.

		organisations with the Ministry in charge of Vocational Training and the Ministry in charge of Youth and Sports	Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP)	
Georgia	National Youth Policy of Georgia (2014)	(Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia is working on it).	0 (Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia is working on it.)	1
Germany	Child and Youth Services Act (1991)	Various quality assurance catalogues for different areas, such as: - Youth information - Eurodesk Germany Quality Catalogue - National Quality Standards to qualify for JULEICA	0	2
Greece	0	0	0	0
Iceland	National Law on Youth Affairs (2007)	Municipality of Reykjavik provides guidelines for quality youth work in after-school programmes for children and in youth clubs for teenagers	0	2
Ireland	Youth Work Act (2001) National Youth Work Development Plan (2009)	National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work	The National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work (NQS) National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups	3
Italy	0	0	competency-based framework are defined in regional repertories of professions	1
Latvia	Youth Law (2009) Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020	0	0	1
Liechtenstein	Child and Youth Act (2008) Ordinance on the Contributions to the Child and Youth Promotion (2009)	Supervision of the work of the Youth Work Foundation by the board of trustees and by the municipalities	Agreements between the municipalities and the Youth Work Foundation	3
Lithuania	Law on Youth Policy Framework(2003) National Youth Policy Development Programme (2011-2019)	0	Competency development programme, 5 modules for the Youth Worker Certificate	2
Luxembourg	Law on Youth (2008) Youth Pack (2012)	Quality Framework for Institutions Providing Non-formal Learning Opportunities (2016) introduced by the Youth Law	0	2
“The former Yugoslav Republic	National Youth Strategy 2016-2025	0	0 (initiatives that includes	1



of Macedonia”			recommendations for basic competences/ responsibilities)	
Malta	Youth Work Profession Act (2014)	0	Competency descriptors for youth workers are included in the Code of Ethics under the Youth Work Profession Act (2014)	2
Moldova	National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020 (2014) Law on Youth (2016)	0	0	1
Montenegro	National Youth Strategy 2017-2021 Law on Youth	0	0	1
The Netherlands	Youth Act (2015) Social Support Act	0	Competence profile for youth work (2008)	2
Norway	0	0	0	0
Poland	0	0	The 2011 Law on supporting family and the foster care system	1
Portugal	Organic Law 123/2014 Organic Law 98/2011 Statutes – Ordinance no. 231/2015 Statutes – Ordinance no. 11/2012 National Catalogue of Qualifications Qualification No. 761337	0	The National Qualification Catalogue	2
Romania	Youth Law (2006) National Youth Policy Strategy 2015-2020	0	The Occupational Standards	2
Russian Federation	Decision of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation “On the Main Directions of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation” (1993) Federal Law “On governmental support of youth and children’s associations” (1995) “Fundamentals of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025” (2014) “A plan of activities for implementation the Fundamentals of State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation till 2025” (2015)	National educational standards for the Bachelor and Masters’ degree programmes in “Organisation of Youth Work” A draft version of the National professional standard for youth workers.	A draft version of the National professional standard for youth workers.	3
Serbia	Law on Youth (2011) National Youth Strategy 2015-2025 Action Plan for its Implementation 2015-2017	National quality assurance framework	Passport of Competences developed by NAPOR	3

Slovak Republic	Act No. 282/2008 Youth Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2014-2020 The Concept of Youth Work for 2016-2020 National Action Plan for Children	Requirements in the National Youth programs 2014-2020  Standards of volunteer management and recommendations for work with youth in the field of volunteering	National system of professions  National project KomPrax	3
Slovenia	Act on Public Interest in Youth Sector (2010)	0	National vocational qualification certificate for youth workers (2017)	2
Sweden	0	Common training plan/curriculum  The network, "Quality and competence in cooperation, KEKS"	0	1
Turkey	Decree Law on the Organisation and Duties of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (2011)	Directives on Procedures and Principles for Youth Leaders' and Sports Experts' Training, Development and Working.	0	2
Ukraine	Concept State Target Social Programme "Youth of Ukraine" for 2016 – 2020	0	0	1
UK (England)	0	National Youth Agency's Quality Mark  Organisations have developed own methods	Covered under the frameworks mentioned earlier	2
UK (Wales)	National Strategy for Youth Work in Wales 2014-2018	- Quality Standards for Youth Work  - Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales	The Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS)	3

Of the countries or regions, 12 have legislation, quality assurance systems and competency frameworks. Another 15 countries or regions score two points. These countries or regions (except UK (England), which has both quality assurance and a competency framework) have legislation and either a quality assurance system or a competency framework. For some of those countries or regions, this seems to be a deliberate choice. For this reason I would be tempted to categorise points 2 and 3 into the same group. Of the countries or regions examined, 13 have one point. The most typical model is a country with legislation but no quality assurance or competency framework. However, the case of Sweden, for example, demonstrates that a country or a region can have a well-developed and impressive quality assurance system but no national legislation. Some four countries or regions examined do not have any of the discursive-cultural resources examined here. It is clear that different countries and regions vary considerably in their resources on how to speak about youth work, how to think about it and how to recognise it. This affects the learning paths of individual youth workers as well.

In any scientific study, thinking about the limitations of the analysis is required. Therefore the following obvious limitations of this analysis should be pointed out. Important cultural and discursive resources are lacking. We do not know if there is a theoretical debate on youth work in a country or a region and if the professional discourse on what youth work is about informs the practice. Also, empirical research on youth work provides not only data, but also theories and concepts on how to approach youth work practice. Therefore, having youth work research that is accessible to youth workers would be an important part of the cultural-discursive resources. The question is also about the scope and richness of the professional vocabulary for youth work – it is in no way insignificant how youth workers are able to describe and discuss their professional ideas and ideals. (Forkby and Kiilakoski 2014) Therefore, analysis based on the data available in this survey will probably give only a partial picture of the youth work resources in any country or region. This mapping is in no way conclusive, nor is it likely to do justice to individual countries and regions and their traditions and current practices of youth work.

## **4.2. Material-economic arrangements: what are the resources of youth work education and employment**

Different resources make the activities undertaken in any practice possible. These physical, material and economic conditions affect the characteristics of youth work practice. (Kemmis et al. 2014) The most obvious example of this is that in some countries and regions youth work can be a long-term professional career with possibilities for career advancement, and in others it is mostly done on a voluntary basis.

The need to pay attention to material-economic arrangements has been emphasised by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation to member States on youth work (Committee of Ministers 2017). The recommendation emphasises the need to provide sustainable structures and resources, particularly at the local level. The need to provide youth work education is also underlined.

In the following analysis, the emphasis is on the questions of employability, training and education. The countries and regions are evaluated according to their educational possibilities. Education is divided into two categories: initial vocational education<sup>3</sup> and tertiary/higher education. In addition to this, attention is placed on non-formal learning opportunities. Within these areas the data provided are quite diverse. Most of the background information is available in the national languages, which means that as a researcher I am mostly forced to rely on the data provided by the national correspondents. According to the “Mapping the educational paths of youth workers and gathering knowledge on youth work” study, most of the countries and regions provide some sort of non-formal learning. However, evaluating plausibly the scope, quality or

---

3. Vocational education in the countries or regions examined is usually found in secondary education. Some countries in Europe have dual-sector education, where tertiary education institutions combine an academic approach with vocational education. In the countries or regions examined, Estonia, Germany, Finland and the Netherlands have universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) offering youth work education.

accessibility of non-formal learning is not possible based on this material. Therefore I have chosen to include the factor that is easiest to analyse, namely whether or not a state takes part in providing for non-formal learning. I have not taken into account money allocated by the national agencies. The data on the career opportunities also varied. I chose to integrate two sets of questions, the number of youth workers employed in a country or a region and identifiable career patterns. If the number of employed youth workers was low, I chose to interpret that there are no sustainable career paths (for example, the 120 youth workers employed in Malta). This question required analysing the questionnaires. The rest of the table is based on the work done by the research group.

**Table 2 – Economic-material arrangements for youth work**

Country or region	Vocational education	Tertiary/higher education for youth workers	Non-formal learning opportunities provided by public authorities	Sustainable /identifiable work career	Total points
Albania	0	0	0	0	0
Armenia	0	0	1	1	2
Austria	0	0	1	1	2
Azerbaijan	0	0	1	0	1
Belarus	1	0	1	1	3
Belgium (Flemish)	0	1	1	0	2
Belgium (French)	1	0	1	1	3
Belgium (German)	0	0	1	1	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	1	1
Bulgaria	0	1	1	0	2
Croatia	0	0	1	0	1
Cyprus	0	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	0	1	1	0	2
Estonia	1	1	1	1	4
Finland	1	1	1	1	4
France	1	1	1	1	4
Georgia	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	1	1	1	1	4
Greece	0	1	0	0	1
Iceland	0	1	0	1	2
Ireland	1	1	1	1	4
Italy	0	0	0	0	0
Latvia	0	1	0	1	2
Liechtenstein	0	0	1	0	1
Lithuania	0	0	1	0	1

Luxembourg	1	1	1	1	4
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	1	0	0	0	1
Malta	0	1	1	0	2
Moldova (Republic of)	0	0	1	0	1
Montenegro	0	0	1	0	1
The Netherlands	1	1	1	0	3
Norway	1	0	1	1	3
Poland	0	0	0	0	0
Portugal	1	0	1	0	2
Romania	0	0	0	0	0
Russian Federation	0	1	1	1	3
Serbia	1	0	1	0	2
Slovak Republic	1	0	1	1	3
Slovenia	0	0	1	0	1
Sweden	1	0	1	1	3
Turkey	0	0	1	1	2
Ukraine	0	0	1	0	1
UK (England)	1	1	1	1	4
UK (Wales)	1	1	1	1	4

Eight states or regions (Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, United Kingdom (England) and United Kingdom (Wales)) scored four points, as they have both vocational and tertiary education, public money for non-formal learning and sustainable and/or identifiable working careers. In these countries or regions youth workers have access to formal qualifications, take part in non-formal learning opportunities provided by the state as well as other sources and have identifiable career paths. This means that there are possibilities for long-term on-the-job learning. Six countries or regions scored three points. All the countries and regions belonging to this group have viable working careers and non-formal learning opportunities for youth workers provided by the state. They also have youth work education, either on a vocational or a university level.

Thirteen of the countries or regions scored two points. The most common feature is that these countries or regions do not have sustainable career opportunities for youth workers, but have a formal education programme for youth work and provide non-formal learning opportunities. Eleven countries or regions scored one point. For the majority of them, this means they provide non-formal courses funded by the public authorities. Another six countries or regions scored zero points.

There are limitations in this analysis as well. An important part of economic-material arrangements is the physical facilities for youth work. Current analysis completely ignores this dimension. Also, the question of

non-formal opportunities is analysed in a very approximate manner, even though there is ample evidence that this dimension is very important in the professional growth of youth workers. (Fusco 2012) Mentoring, coaching and networking through different courses, programmes and projects obviously affect learning paths. (McGuire and Gubbins 2010) However, having access to education on youth work, public funding for professional development and career opportunities is obviously a factor that influences the practice of youth work in a significant manner.

### 4.3. Social-political arrangements: the organisation of youth work

The third dimension of practice architectures is “relating”, which is interpreted very broadly. This dimension affects how youth workers relate to children and young people, parents, the wider public, but also other professionals and youth work colleagues. These arrangements influence what type of relations there are. They also create social solidarity. The themes of power and solidarity affect how youth workers relate to other fields. (Kemmis et al. 2014; Salamon et al. 2016)

This dimension cannot be studied thoroughly using the data available. One way of analysing would be to examine how existing legislation and policy programmes enable multi-professional co-operation, and what professional cultures are seen as related to youth work. After analysis, I fear that this task cannot be achieved using the data available. Therefore, only one dimension is analysed: is there an association for youth workers? This clearly provides only a thin perspective of the overall social-political arrangements affecting youth work. I have examined the question by looking at the questionnaires.

**Table 3 – Associations for youth work**

Country or region	An association for youth workers / youth work communities	Country or region	An association for youth workers / youth work communities
Albania	0	Greece	1
Armenia	0	Iceland	1
Austria	0	Ireland	1
Azerbaijan	0	Italy	0
Belarus	1	Latvia	0
Belgium (Flemish)	1	Liechtenstein	1
Belgium (French)	1	Lithuania	1
Belgium (German)	1	Luxembourg	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	1
Bulgaria	0		

Croatia	0
Cyprus	1
Czech Republic	1
Estonia	1
Finland	1
France	1
Georgia	1
Germany	1

Malta	1
Moldova (Republic of)	0
Montenegro	0
The Netherlands	1
Norway	0
Poland	0
Portugal	1
Romania	0
Russian Federation	0

In the analysis, I have adopted a different strategy than that of the research group. I have chosen to include all the organisations mentioned by the national correspondents. Their reports include both organisations of youth workers and organisations that promote co-operation between different youth institutes (for example, Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation (KOKEN) which offers training for volunteers at youth clubs). Of the countries or regions examined, 27 responded that they have some sort of organisation. I assume that having an association is an indication that there is communication within the youth field of the country or the region and consequently that the communities of practice within youth work engage in peer learning, in developing shared practices and helping to increase the flow of ideas, experiments, practices and learning experiences. Therefore this can be counted as one feature of practice architectures that contributes to learning paths.

#### **4.4. An analysis of different European practice architectures supporting youth work**

As has been noted above, there is considerable variation across different European countries and regions in how youth work is talked about and recognised, how it is supported through providing formal education, how resources are allocated to non-formal learning and career paths and how youth workers relate to each other through associations. These different features form a picture of social and institutional conditions that affect the learning paths of youth workers.

In the table below, these findings are combined using the three categories analysed in the preceding chapters. The column at the far right represents a sum variable on the strength of the practice architectures supporting youth work, and on the educational paths available.

**Table 4 – Summary of the findings**

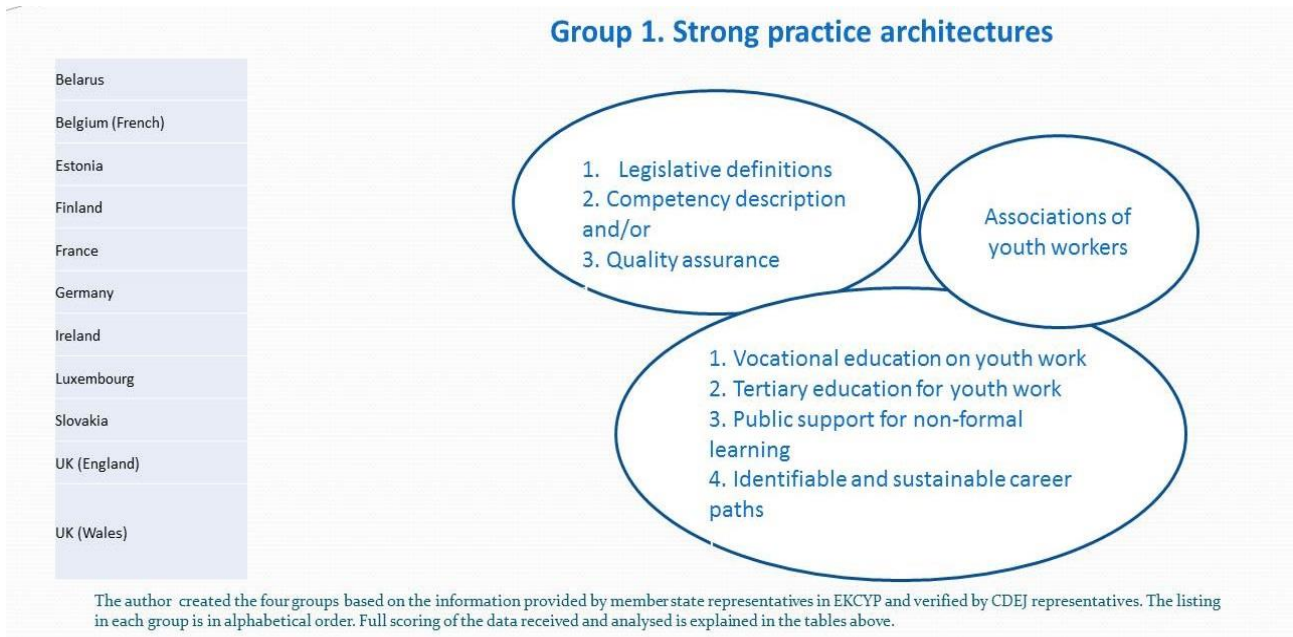
Country or region	Recognition of youth work; categories of youth work	Formal learning, economic support for non-formal learning and career paths	An association for youth workers / youth work communities	Total points
Albania	0	0	0	0
Armenia	1	2	0	3
Austria	3	2	0	5
Azerbaijan	1	1	0	2
Belarus	3	3	1	7
Belgium (Flemish)	2	2	1	5
Belgium (French)	3	3	1	7
Belgium (German)	2	2	1	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1	0	1
Bulgaria	2	2	0	4
Croatia	1	1	0	2
Cyprus	1	0	1	2
Czech Republic	3	2	1	6
Estonia	3	4	1	8
Finland	2	4	1	7
France	3	4	1	8
Georgia	1	0	1	2
Germany	2	4	1	7
Greece	0	1	1	2
Iceland	2	2	1	5
Ireland	3	4	1	8
Italy	1	0	0	1
Latvia	1	2	0	3
Liechtenstein	3	1	1	5
Lithuania	2	1	1	4
Luxembourg	2	4	1	7
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	1	1	1	3
Malta	2	2	1	5
Moldova (Republic of)	1	1	0	2
Montenegro	1	1	0	2
The Netherlands	2	3	1	6
Norway	0	3	0	3
Poland	1	0	0	1



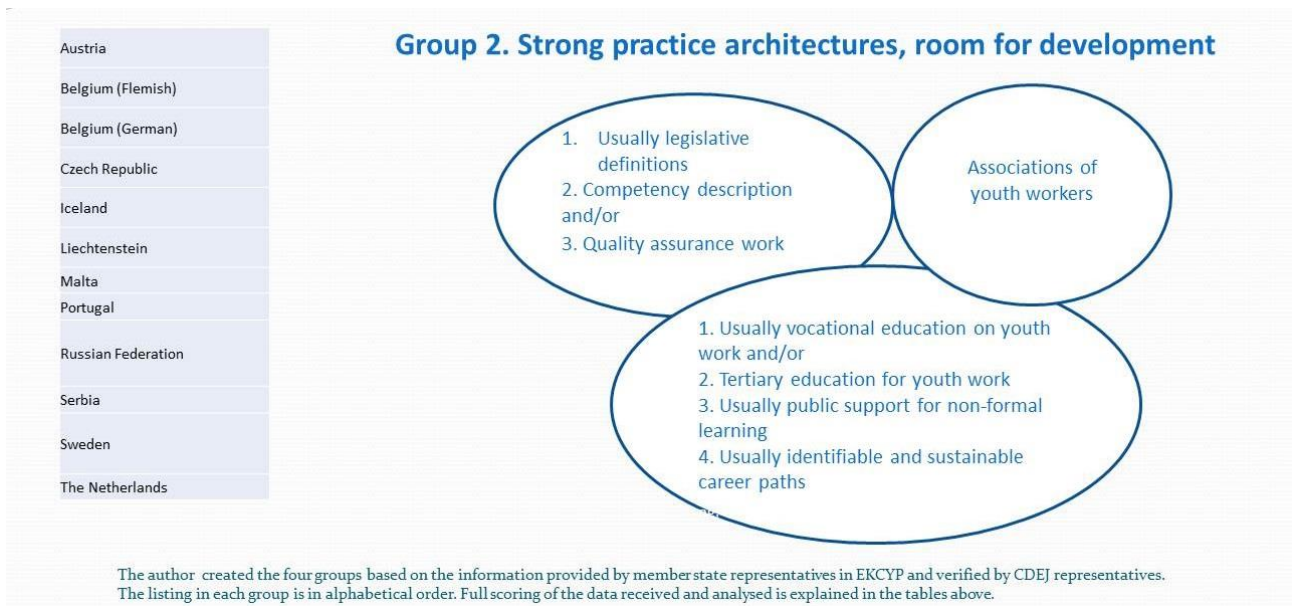
Portugal	2	2	1	5
Romania	2	0	0	2
Russian Federation	3	3	0	6
Serbia	3	2	1	6
Slovak Republic	3	3	1	7
Slovenia	2	1	1	4
Sweden	1	3	1	5
Turkey	2	2	0	4
Ukraine	1	1	0	2
UK (England)	2	4	1	7
UK (Wales)	3	4	1	8

The above table shows the variation in the practice architectures of youth work. Some of the countries or regions have plenty of supporting structures that most likely produce strong practices which help youth work to blossom. Some countries or regions lack even the basic infrastructure for promoting professional youth work. Educational pathways available in different parts of Europe vary accordingly.

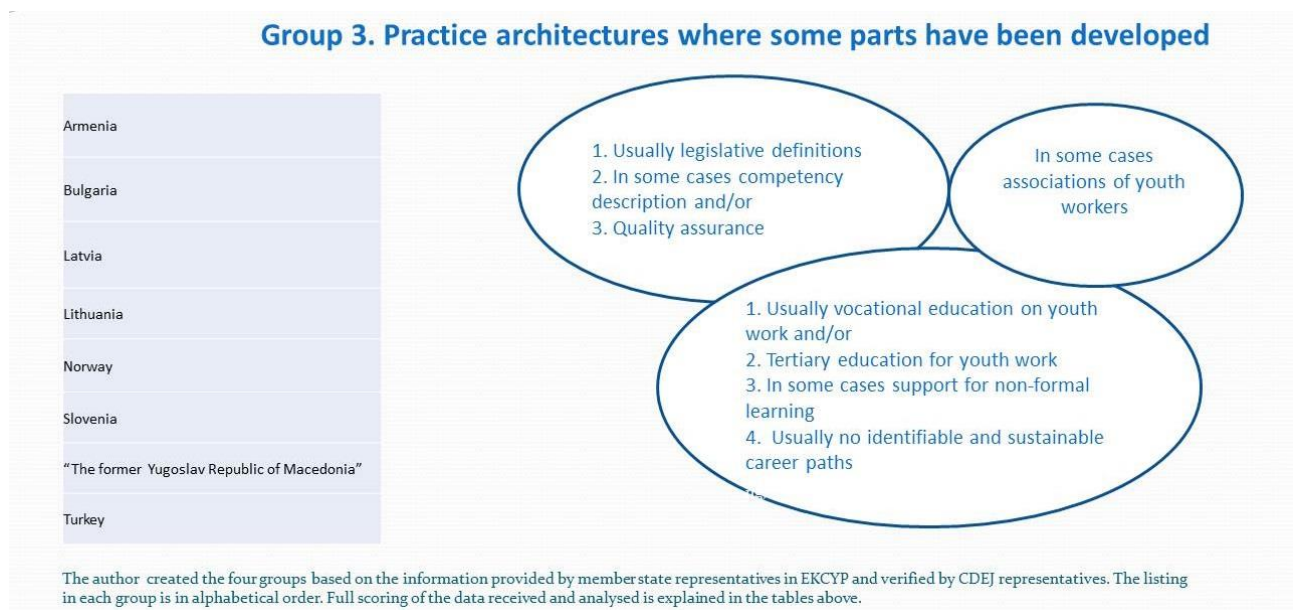
Any categorisation of data is always somewhat arbitrary. The nature of the data available affects how different structures of youth work can be examined in this report. It is also likely that different respondents understood some categories differently. Due to this, some of the countries or regions could be lower in this ranking than might be expected. Therefore, the categorisation based on this analysis should be approached with caution. Bearing this in mind, I would suggest the following interpretation. Countries or regions that have results of 7 or 8 have strong practice architectures supporting youth work education and probably youth work in general. Of the countries and regions examined here, 11 belong to this category. Most of them are located in the northern part of Europe. Countries or regions ranking from 5 to 6 have strong practice architectures as well, but they may be lacking some important elements which should be established in the future. There are 12 such countries or regions. Countries or regions with results of 3 to 4 have developed some parts of the practice architectures, but would most likely benefit from creating stronger structures for youth work. There are eight countries or regions that belong to this category. Countries or regions with results from 0 to 2 are only starting to develop their youth work structures and will probably benefit from learning from other European countries or regions. There are 13 such countries or regions. While the analysis is most likely not going to do justice to individual countries or regions and there might be misunderstandings in interpreting the data, the overall analysis in categorising these European countries or regions in four categories could be helpful in analysing how strong practice architectures are in different corners of Europe.



The first group (strong practice architectures) comprises 11 countries or regions: Belarus, Belgium (French), Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovak Republic, the United Kingdom (England) and the United Kingdom (Wales). All of these countries or regions have legislative definitions and have either a competency description or quality assurance, if not both. They all have public support for non-formal learning and identifiable career paths. There is formal learning on youth work and half of them have both vocational and tertiary education for youth work. They also have associations for youth work.



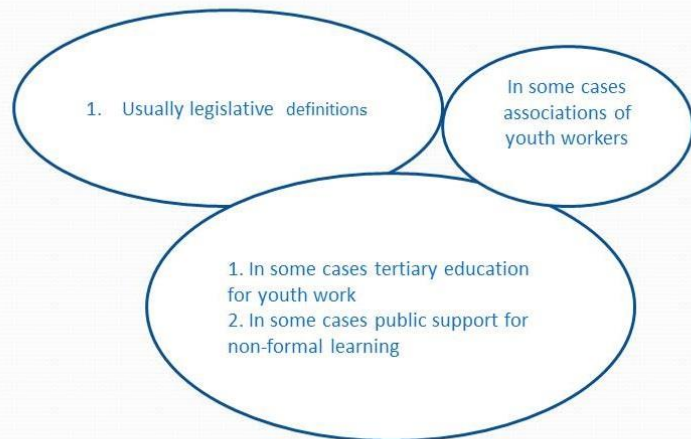
The second group (strong practice architectures, room for development) consists of Austria, Belgium (Flemish), Belgium (German-speaking), the Czech Republic, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Sweden. These countries and regions, except Sweden, have legislative definitions. They also have a quality assurance system or competency description, if not both. These countries or regions usually have either vocational or higher education for youth work. They also usually have public support for non-formal learning and usually have sustainable career paths. They all have associations of youth workers.



The third group (practice architectures where some parts have been developed) is the smallest, and consists of eight countries: Armenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Turkey. They usually have legislative definitions. In some cases, they have a competency description or quality assurance. They usually offer formal education for youth work. In some cases, they have public support for non-formal learning. Usually there are no sustainable career paths. In some cases, there are associations of youth workers. Of all the countries belonging to this group, Norway is different from the others in that it has formal education, public support for non-formal learning and identifiable career paths, but scores zero points in other dimensions.

## Group 4. Practice architectures in need of development

Albania
Azerbaijan
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia
Cyprus
Georgia
Greece
Italy
Moldova (Republic of)
Montenegro
Poland
Romania
Ukraine



The author created the four groups based on the information provided by member state representatives in EKCYP and verified by CDEJ representatives. The listing in each group is in alphabetical order. Full scoring of the data received and analysed is explained in the tables above.

The fourth group (practice architectures in need of development) consists of 13 countries: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania and Ukraine. These countries most likely have legislative definitions. There are no competency descriptions or quality assurance. There is higher level education in some cases, and public support for non-formal learning in some cases. There are no identifiable career paths. In some cases there are associations of youth work.

The four groups described above all provide different opportunities to learn how to become a youth worker and develop in the profession. The higher the number of structures available, the more opportunities there are for youth work. Also, it has to be emphasised that important dimensions are lacking and the picture provided by the analysis is far from complete. Perhaps the best way to interpret these results is to think of them as different models of how European states promote youth work. Interpreted this way, they show that possibilities, available resources and opportunities to function as a recognised profession vary considerably.

## **5. An individual learner's perspective: meaning, practice, community, identity**

The analysis preceding this section has been carried out by closely following the national reports, written mostly by correspondents to EKCYP, and has been based on the work done by the research group that produced the "Mapping the educational paths and careers of youth workers" report. In this section, I will offer some theoretically informed interpretations of what the different practice architectures could mean for learning on the individual level.

The first point concerns the nature of education itself. Since the 19th century there has been the criticism that learning is narrowly equated with formal schooling. In the 1970s, thinkers such as Ivan Illich and Carl Bereiter emphasised that learning is a human activity that is continuous and is in no way restricted to schooling. Ivan Illich wrote that most learning is not the result of instruction, but rather a result of unhampered participation in meaningful settings. (Illich 1981) This perspective emphasises social and communal aspects of learning. Learning is about taking part in an activity. While one does not need to share the scepticism of these writers towards the impact or even the necessity of formal learning, their perspectives are still valid in pointing out that much of our learning happens outside schools. Educational paths are about schooling and formal learning, but not exclusively. In a larger sense we need to take into account the wide variety of educational contexts and educational settings. This perspective is embedded in the theory of practice architectures.

"We believe the term "education" in English is corrupted, because today, in anglophone usage, it is too often used to mean "schooling" (the activities that routinely go on in different kinds of "educational" institutions that may or may not be educational). Common usage obscures and threatens to erase the important distinction between education and schooling, with the consequence that the philosophical and pedagogical origins and competing intellectual traditions of education as a discipline, field and profession begin to become invisible." (Kemmis et al. 2014: 26)

As is clear from the above, the educational paths of youth workers are shaped by processes inside and outside educational institutions. Educational paths inside formal education help one to access the information, concepts, methods, ideas and values already held by the professional community. For this reason, formal learning is an integral part of the practice architectures that support youth work. Of course, it is not enough to produce competent workers. According to Dana Fusco (2012: 225-26), one important aspect of learning the craft of youth work comes through the lived and applied experiences that teach us the fluidity of human growth. Adopting a perspective of learning through participation will shed light on how youth workers learn. According to the analysis there are considerable differences in the practice architectures for youth work, even where there are formal learning paths available.

The above analysis offers a general view of the practice architectures of youth work. According to a social theory of learning, as developed by Etienne Wenger, learning through participation is the way people learn how to be competent workers. In this theory, an individual is seen as an active participant in the practices of social communities, and his or her professional identity is constructed in these communities. People continuously create their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. According to Jon Ord, the totality of youth work can be seen as a community of practice because youth work has shared practices, meanings and identities (Ord 2016: 220). A community of practice in youth work supports learning if: *i.* there is a social recognition for youth work; *ii.* there is a possibility for lifelong learning in formal, non-formal and informal environments; *iii.* there are professional associations and networks. This in turn shapes professional learning paths.

Wenger describes learning as having four dimensions. First, there is a dimension of meaning, which is defined as an individual and collective ability to experience life and the world as meaningful. (Wenger 2008: 5) In the context of educational paths of youth workers, this means having discursive resources to talk about youth work, to understand it and to find it important to oneself and to society. The collective dimension in this article has been examined from the perspective of legal definitions, quality assurance mechanisms and competency descriptions. It would be too mechanistic, however, to suppose that having these would by itself help individuals learn. These available resources need to be experienced as meaningful by youth work communities and by individual youth workers. There is a clear need to research further how well these resources support the learning of individual youth workers.

The second dimension of learning is practice. People learn by doing, and this happens when they engage in activities. This is due to shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action. (Wenger 2008: 5) By doing something together people can learn a craft. In the educational paths of youth workers, this dimension requires that something is recognised as youth work and there are arenas of doing youth work together. If youth work is about being responsive to youth (Fusco 2012), one clearly has to have opportunities to learn about these ways of working for and with young people in different settings. The richer the practice architectures, the more they provide opportunities to engage in different ways of doing youth work.

The third dimension of social learning is community, which is characterised by learning as belonging. This dimension is about “social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable competence”. (Wenger 2008: 5) When taking part in a community one learns to appreciate youth work, justify it, defend it and point out its benefits in cross-sectoral co-operation. Youth work communities come into being if youth work is recognised as something that has a recognisable form and ethos. In the educational paths of youth workers this means that individuals have to be able to attach themselves to a larger youth work community. This too can be supported by having recognition,

common definitions, material resources, organisations and possibilities of learning both inside and outside the formal education system. While the data of this survey do not permit me to draw conclusions about individual countries or regions, I think it is fair to say that the differences in practice architectures certainly must mean that the opportunities for joining youth work communities are vastly different in different parts of Europe.

The fourth dimension of learning is identity – learning as becoming. Learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities. (Wenger 2008: 5) In this dimension of learning, the educational path of a youth worker produces the feeling that one can say to herself or himself: “I am a youth worker, in the community of other youth workers.” What youth workers are able to do and to be is framed by the practice architectures of a specific country or region. Sometimes they can view youth work as a lifetime opportunity, sometimes as something that needs to be fought for or something that may not be economically sustainable. To become a youth worker is to be able to join a community of youth workers and in this process, develop an identity as a youth worker.

The four dimensions of learning – meaning, practice, community and identity – all demonstrate how educational paths are at the same time individual and communal. These processes are shaped by the existing practice architectures within European countries or regions. The purpose of this report was to look at these inside the boundaries of countries and regions. Luckily there are many ways of co-operating with other youth workers all around Europe, becoming members of larger European communities of youth workers and finding meaning and identity in joint projects. Therefore, European or global educational paths should be examined as well. This is outside the scope of this work, but the fact needs to be stated: shared frameworks of meaning can be created by working together as a European community of youth work practice.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

This report has provided an analysis of patterns, commonalities and differences in the educational paths of youth workers in Europe. The analysis was based on the “Mapping the educational paths of youth workers and gathering knowledge on youth work” study, the results of which were further analysed to compare different countries or regions in three dimensions: discursive, material-economic and social. The theoretical framework was based on theories of social learning, in particular the theory of practice architectures as developed by Stephen Kemmis. These three categories were combined to create different groups of European youth work pathways. Results of the analysis show that there are considerable differences in different European countries and regions.

According to the analysis, the 44 countries or regions examined can be classified in four different groups. Some 11 countries or regions have strong practice architectures supporting youth work education and probably youth work in general. Another 12 countries or regions have strong practice architectures as well, but they may lack important elements which could be developed in the future. Eight countries or regions have created some parts of the practice architectures but would most likely benefit from establishing stronger structures for youth work. Finally, 13 countries or regions are only starting to set up their youth work structures and would probably benefit from learning from other European countries.

Different dimensions of practice architectures are examined separately. However, they are dynamic mechanisms. Different constituents of practice architectures – laws, regulation, competency descriptions, availability of education, sustainable career paths, availability of non-formal learning and other important aspects such as physical settings or professional literature that are not examined in this study – “hang together” (Kemmis et al. 2014) and form a totality. Evaluating the interlinked totality in a local context is likely to be required to better understand the realities in different countries or regions.<sup>4</sup> To cite only one example, sustainable and identifiable career paths are examined in this study from the viewpoint of economic and material arrangements. In reality, they also influence “sayings” by making it possible to talk about youth work as a profession and “relatings” by giving access to different cross-sectoral networks, for example school-based youth work. Therefore the lack of certain elements in the practice architectures might actually mean that the dynamic effects are lost.

Some countries or regions have developed strong structures which can support the learning of individual youth workers and youth work communities. On the other hand, the situation in some European countries or regions is more challenging. The report concludes that there is a need for sharing good practices in youth work and learning from them.

---

4. I am grateful to Hannu Heikkinen and Kathleen Mahon for pointing this out.



The analysis in this report gives only a partial picture of the practice architectures of youth work. As illuminating as comparing countries and regions this way can be, there are dimensions that are important for learning paths which cannot be examined based on the approach chosen for this study. Further research is recommended to cover the following topics.

- The actual career paths of youth workers are only touched upon in this study. On-the-job learning is vital to one's professional development. Understanding what types of career paths (sustainable, cumulative/short-term, precarious) different practice architectures make possible is likely to shed light on how youth workers learn and develop as individuals and communities.
- Studying the quality, scope and availability of non-formal learning in different countries and regions cannot be done reliably using the data of this study. A different methodology might be needed. In a context of lifelong learning, opportunities for sharing ideas and learning new things based on one's own motivation are important. Understanding the possibilities youth workers have for non-formal learning makes the picture about educational paths more complete.
- The relations dimension could not be covered properly in this study. One aspect of this is the relation of youth work to other professional cultures. How is youth recognised as a partner? What types of professional networks are formed and what is the role of youth work in these networks? Do youth workers work in isolation or together with other professionals?
- The links between different topics covered in the analysis should be analysed further. Of particular importance is the connection between formal youth work education and the structures of youth work practice. What are the possibilities for learning in versatile environments (on the job, at the institution, virtual platforms, peer learning)? How is on-the-job learning integrated into curricula of youth work education?
- Some aspects of studying the educational paths are likely to require qualitative interviews with youth workers from different backgrounds. This way the meaningful learning experiences and contexts as experienced and lived by youth workers could be explored.
- An important aspect of the practice architectures of youth work is the knowledge about the living conditions of the young. If young people are engaged as the primary clients in their social contexts (Sercombe 2010: 27) in the process of youth work, youth work requires knowledge about young people. Different methods for producing research about the young and their connection to youth work should be studied to gain a better understanding of how youth work relates to young people and their social networks.

In terms of policy, the following recommendations pursue the aim that the “establishment or development of quality youth work is safeguarded and supported within local, regional or national youth policies”. (Committee of Ministers 2017)

- The results show that support for youth work infrastructure, training and practice varies considerably. The resources allocated to youth work are not sufficient in all the examined cases. National governments should make efforts to secure sufficient funding for youth work.
- Some countries or regions have developed a strong discursive basis for youth work. This includes creating legal definitions of youth work, developing quality assurance methods and explaining competency frameworks. The legal basis should be supplemented with descriptions of what youth work is and what it contributes to society. Efforts should be made to establish descriptions of quality youth work and a competency description for youth workers.
- Learning possibilities for youth workers vary considerably. In some countries or regions, formal education for youth work should be further developed. This should be combined with access to non-formal learning so that learning paths for youth workers support lifelong learning on an individual level and create reflective practices on a communal level. Training should be offered to voluntary and professional workers alike.
- In about half of the examined countries or regions there are not yet sustainable career paths for youth workers. Creating an effective system for funding youth work is required to enable youth workers to have sustainable careers and to create learning networks and communities based on their continuing careers.

## References

- Agdur J. (2017), "Assuring the quality of youth work", in Schild H., Connolly N., Labadie F., Vanhee J. and Williamson H. (eds), *Thinking Seriously About Youth Work – And how to prepare people to do it, Youth Knowledge # 20*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp. 341-46.
- Committee of Ministers (2017), Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work. [http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/5384011/CM+Rec+2017+4+Youth+Work\\_eng.pdf/a3e83354-3e63-4cbf-8327-b3cfb0a07892](http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/5384011/CM+Rec+2017+4+Youth+Work_eng.pdf/a3e83354-3e63-4cbf-8327-b3cfb0a07892), accessed 1 October 2018
- Coussée F., Verschelden G., Van de Walle T., Medlinska M. and Williamson H. (2010), "The social and pedagogical identity of youth work – Learning from two history workshops", in Coussée F., Verschelden G., Van de Walle T., Medlinska M. and Williamson H. (eds), *The History of Youth Work In Europe, Vol. 2*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp.137-47.
- Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention (2010), available at: [http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1663184/declaration\\_1st\\_european\\_youthwork\\_convention.pdf/877e42b1-b916-49c0-bc58-6ca6c2d61fb7](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1663184/declaration_1st_european_youthwork_convention.pdf/877e42b1-b916-49c0-bc58-6ca6c2d61fb7), accessed 1 October 2018.
- Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (2015), "Making the world of difference", available at: [http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8529155/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration\\_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8529155/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85), accessed 1 October 2018.
- Forkby T. and Kiilakoski T. (2014), "Building capacity in youth work. Perspective and practice in youth clubs in Finland and Sweden", *Youth & Policy* 112, pp.1-17.
- Fusco D. (2012), "Framing Trends, Posing Questions" in Fusco D. (ed.), *Advancing Youth Work – Current Trends, Critical Questions*, Routledge, London, pp. 216-31.
- Hardy, I., Rönnerman and Edwards-Groves, C. (2017) "Transforming professional learning: Educational action research in practice", *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3), pp. 421-441.
- Hsieh S., Lin J. and Lee H. (2012), "Analysis of Literature Review of Competency", *International Review of Business and Economics Vol. 2*, pp. 25-50.
- Illich I. (1981), *Deschooling Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.
- Kemmis S. (2009), "Understanding Professional Practice: A Synoptic Framework" in Green B. (ed.), *Understanding and Researching Professional Practice*, Sense, Rotterdam/Taipei, pp. 19-38.

- Kemmis S., Wilkinson J., Edwards-Groves C., Hardy I., Grootenboer P. and Bristol L. (2014), *Changing Practices, Changing Education*, Springer, New York.
- Komonen K., Suurpää L. and Söderlund M. (2012), "Johdanto – Kehittämisen arvo ja itseisarvo" ["Introduction– The value and the intrinsic value of developing"] in Komonen K., Suurpää L. and Söderlund M. (eds), *Kehittyvä nuorisotyö* [Developing youth work], Finnish Youth Research Society, Helsinki, pp. 7-20.
- Lave J. and Wenger E. (2011), *Situated learning – Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- McGuire D. and Gubbins C. (2010), "The Slow Death of Formal Learning: A polemic", *Human Resource Development Review* 9(3), pp. 249-65.
- Ord J. (2016), *Youth Work Process, Product and Practice – Creating an authentic curriculum in work with young people*, Routledge, London.
- Salamon A., Sumsion J., Press F. and Harrison L. (2016), "Implicit theories and naïve beliefs: Using the theory of practice architectures to deconstruct the practices of early childhood educators", *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 2016 14(4), pp. 431-43.
- Sercombe H. (2010), *Youth Work Ethics*, Sage, London.
- Taru M. (2017), "A Three-Dimensional Youth Work Evaluation Model" in Schild H., Connolly N., Labadie F., Vanhee J. and Williamson H. (eds), *Thinking Seriously About Youth Work – And how to prepare people to do it*, *Youth Knowledge # 20*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp. 347-53.
- Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H. (2014), "Youth work in connection to policies and politics" in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H. (eds), *The History of Youth Work Vol. 4*, Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 125-36.
- Wenger E. (2008), *Communities of Practice – Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Wolman B. (2017), "Man of the World", *Mojo*, Issue 288, pp. 58-63.