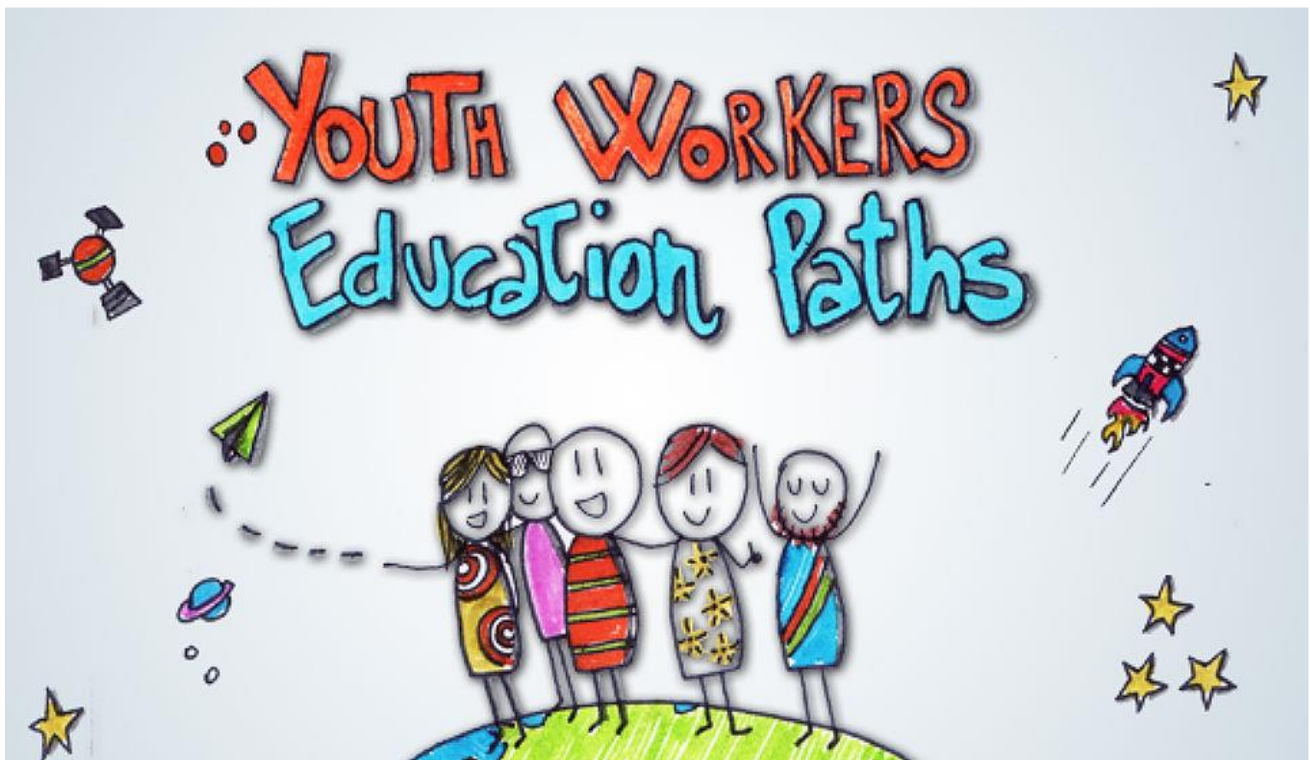

What do you see?
A look at youth work through the prism of sociology of occupations

Working paper

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

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1. Introduction

This paper seeks to situate our current understandings of the youth work status and developments in the framework of sociology of work and occupations. By doing this, it intends to shed some light on the status of youth work among other occupations.

What is **youth work**? There is no short answer to that question. To get a glimpse of how complex a topic youth work is, one might start with the chapter on defining youth work in the report on the value of youth work. The report maintains that youth work offers young people meaningful activities based on young persons' needs and interests. Through these activities, youth work aims at supporting young persons' personal development. Individual-level personal developments, in turn, are expected to effectuate changes at societal level. Importantly, the report acknowledges the significance of choosing a conceptual framework that is used for describing and defining youth work and that describes a range of theoretical models.[1] Youth work in European countries is believed to have a long history, going back at least to 19th century. It has developed from different origins and contexts, in connection with different target groups and for different purposes, it has been seen valuable per se and it has been supporting other organisations' work. The history of youth work includes examples of addressing poverty as well as nurturing the development of occupational skills, addressing physical health and social development; it includes faith-related as well as paramilitary organisations; it has focused on cultural development and also on nation building; the list is endless. The majority of adults and young people involved in offering youth work opportunities have been acting on a voluntary basis.[2] History of youth work past adds its share to complexities of youth work since the past is embedded in local and social realities, which have varied from country to country and changed over time. Hence, to some degree the complexities with defining youth work arise from historical backgrounds. To some degree, complexities associated with identifying exactly what youth work is emerge from the role of the welfare state and European institutions. And, to some extent, a comprehensive wording of what youth work is depends on the conceptual frameworks used for doing so. The next section takes a brief look at three definitions of youth work used by European institutions.

In the **European Union**, youth work appeared on the policy makers' radars some 30 to 40 years ago, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In its first decade, it had only a vague idea about youth and work experience, but since the beginning of the 1990s, a more articulated idea about how to provide young people with a developmental environment started to develop. The ideas have continually developed into clearer formulations and by the mid-2010s there was a range of European-level (policy-relevant) frameworks to describe quality youth work.[3] Youth work has also made its way in to core policy documents addressing young people in the European Union. The new EU Youth Strategy for the period

1. Dunne A., Ulicna D., Murphy I., Golubeva M. and James M. (authors), European Commission (editor) (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union", pp. 53-87: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf.
2. See the "History of youth work. Relevance for youth work policy today" series: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/knowledge-books.
3. Zentner M. and Ord J. (2018), "European Youth Work Policy Context", in: Ord J., Carletti M., Cooper S., Dansac C., Morciano D, Siurala L. and Taru M. (eds) "The Impact of Youth Work in Europe: A Study of Five European Countries", Humak University of Applied Sciences Publications, Helsinki, 56, pp. 17-31.

2019-2027 views youth work as "civic and socio-educational activities that give young people life skills and act as a bridge to society, especially for disadvantaged youth".[4]

Hence, youth work has been given a role in the development of society. Youth work experts have defined youth work in policy contexts as "actions directed towards young people regarding activities where they take part voluntarily, designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning", and youth workers as "people working in direct contact with young people, carrying out activities designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning".[5]

The above definitions apply to all different forms of youth work and also draw a line between youth work and other actions directed towards young people, such as sport and cultural activities.[6] The **Council of Europe** too has adopted a rather wide view of youth work, though it keeps its focus slightly more on young people. Though it recognises the social nature of youth work, it puts less emphasis on the social functions of the practice:

> Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.[7]

Side by side with the two large international organisations mentioned above, the co-operation programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, known also as the **EU–Council of Europe youth partnership**, needs be highlighted too because this structure has played a significant role in supporting the development of youth work in Europe. The promotion of youth work in Europe has been one of the two central themes of the partnership, with the other one being "better knowledge". The partnership maintains a rather broad understanding of youth work:

> Youth work is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature both by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of "out-of-school" education, as well as specific leisure-time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and is based on non-formal learning processes and on voluntary participation.

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4. European Commission (2018), "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy", Brussels, 22.5.2018 COM(2018) 269 final. https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf.
5. European Commission (2015), "Quality Youth Work – A common framework for the further development of youth work. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States": http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf.
6. European Commission (2017), *Youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European union – Handbook for implementation*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
7. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 May 2017 at the 1287th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies), https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680717e78, accessed 23 May 2018.

This definition builds on five features of youth work:

- Voluntary participation of young people
- Listening to the voice of young people
- Bringing young people together
- Connecting to young people's lifeworld
- Broadening young people's lifeworld.[8]

Today, European public policy expects youth work to make significant, notable contributions to society, life and the well-being of different groups. The new EU Youth Strategy expresses this idea perhaps more clearly than the two other definitions introduced above. Though the ideas of hedonist aspects of well-being and being young together might be present, youth work nowadays is seen to have a role in supporting participation in the formal education system and in learning in non-formal environments, in the transition to the labour market, in addressing social exclusion, in supporting civic activism and participation and in helping young people to obtain healthy habits.[9] Also, violent radicalisation[10] and the social integration of refugees[11] appear among social issues youth work has chosen to address.
The shift can be associated with the development of the social investment state. While after the Second World War, most European nations enjoyed economic welfare secured by the state, the degree and nature of welfare provision started to change in the final quarter of the 20th century. At that time, new risks to welfare started to become more significant. The list of new risks included the obsolescence of skills and a higher probability of job loss for many parts of society and different age cohorts, uncertain returns from higher education, loss of earnings because of demographic reproduction, changes in the size and composition of families and a reduction of the capacity to provide "in-house" care. State capacity to address the risks was limited due to financial constraints, which in turn were corollary to liberalisation and globalisation[12]. The new risks to be addressed required new approaches from society, including changes in social protection systems. The new beliefs of what is a good and just society are outlined in the social investment state paradigm.[13] [14] In this paradigm, the balance has shifted from

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8. Webpage of the EU-CoE youth partnership. Youth Work, a very diverse field of practice: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-work1, accessed 17 December 2018.

9. See Dunne A., Ulicna D., Murphy I., Golubeva M. and James M. (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Case Studies": http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-case-studies_en.pdf.

10. Seminar "Youth work against violent radicalisation": https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-work-against-radicalisation.

11. Seminar "'Journeys to a New Life': an expert seminar on the role of youth work in integration of young refugees in Europe": https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/refugees-seminar; Workshops on the role of youth work in the process of inclusion and participation of young refugees: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/refugees-workshops.

12. Hemerijck A., Dräbing V., Vis B., Nelson M. and Soentken M. (2013), "European Welfare State in Motion", Neujobs Working Paper No. D5.2, pp. 1-11.

13. Holmwood J. (2000), "Three pillars of welfare state theory. T. H. Marshall, Karl Polanyi and Alva Myrdal in defence of the national welfare state", in *European Journal of Welfare Theory* 3(1), pp. 23-50.

securing well-being through the automatic provision of benefits to a range of measures focusing on activating people to take more responsibility for their well-being. The state is seen to provide directly or assure the provision of services that support the development of skills that were deemed necessary in labour market participation as well as for civic activism.[15] That means more spending on education (especially early childhood education), family policy (parental leave, family services like universal day care and preschool attendance), new measures focused on helping people find jobs (training, counselling and job placements) and preventative health measures. Youth work is believed to have a significant non-formal learning component and, hence, supports development of a range of skills that contribute to social inclusion. As such, it fits well into the new social investment state paradigm and there are good reasons to include it in public policy measures.

Volunteering and paid youth work

During most of its history, youth work has been carried out predominantly by volunteers in youth organisations and other organisations, which have (also) addressed young people. Together with the expansion of the role of the state at national level and the strengthening of the European Union at supra-national level, the significance of paid youth workers has been growing. To date, the distinction between paid and volunteer youth work has remained one of the most visible watersheds in the field of youth policy and youth work. While the new youth strategy by the European Commission makes no distinction between paid and volunteer youth workers, the Council of Europe definition mentions paid and voluntary youth workers separately and so does the definition used by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership.

The distinction between paid and volunteer youth workers is an appropriate one to make. Volunteering is a rather common practice in youth work today; the number of volunteers greatly outweighs the number of paid youth workers in the EU.[16] The situation, however, is not similar in all countries. On the contrary, the share of volunteer youth workers and their role varies significantly across European countries. In Ireland, the number of youth work volunteers in 2012 was 40 145 while the number of paid employment was 1 397, constituting thus only 3.3% of all youth workers.[17] In Scotland in 2017, the youth work sector had a workforce in excess of 80 000 and more than 70 000 of them were volunteers. Hence, only 10% or less of youth workers were paid youth workers.[18] In the Netherlands, the number of volunteer youth workers seems to greatly exceed the number of paid youth workers; exact numbers are

14. King D. and Ross F. (2010), "Critics and beyond", in Castles F. G., Leibfried S., Lewis J., Obinger H. and Pierson C. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State* (pp. 45-60), Oxford University Press, Oxford.
15. Soysal Y. N. (2012), "Citizenship, immigration, and the European social project: rights and obligations of individuality", *The British Journal of Sociology,* 63(1), pp. 1-21.
16. Dunne A., Ulicna D., Murphy I., Golubeva M. and James M. (authors), European Commission (editor) (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union", p.13: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf.
17. Indecon (2012), "Assessment of the economic value of youth work", National Youth Council of Ireland, Dublin, p.14: www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/Economic_Beneifit_Youthwork_2012.pdf.
18. Green L., presentation at the Youth workers education and work pathways seminar in Brussels, 31 May to 1 June 2018.

not available because there is no count of volunteers.[19] In Estonia, the situation seems to be the opposite. According to an online survey carried out in 2017 among youth workers, only 8% of youth workers were involved on a voluntary basis, 79% identified themselves as being employed full-time and 13% on a part-time or seasonal basis. The total number of youth workers in the country was not known, but was estimated to be approximately 7 000.[20 21]

The sheer numbers of voluntary youth work practitioners is one reason to make the distinction between paid and volunteer practitioners. Yet there is another reason too – this is the difference in tasks. In the public policy contexts, this difference is perhaps more challenging than the numbers alone. Using volunteers to perform certain activities and carry out certain tasks is a rather widespread and long-standing practice in society. It is also a very significant part of youth work as the history of youth work shows. In general, the tasks that volunteers usually perform are not the core tasks of an organisation but helping and supporting activities that help to carry out core functions and tasks. According to McAllum,[22] paid practitioners and volunteers differ on three dimensions. They differ on the degree of the requirements on and control of prior knowledge. In general, volunteers' level of knowledge is not controlled and checked prior to engaging in a practice while paid employment positions usually include control and prior knowledge. In professional posts, complex knowledge and specialist skills are assumed and this is controlled both before assuming a post as well as during practice. Second, in general there is a lack of regulation and control of volunteers' practice while paid professionals' practice is regulated and controlled by professional associations. The third differentiating factor between volunteers and paid practitioners in general is that volunteers are motivated by their wish to be involved in a certain activity while professionals are perhaps more task and career-oriented. Volunteers are often moved by the heart and personally invested in what they do while paid professionals are not or are to a notably lesser degree. The difference between volunteers and paid professionals may be less significant in the case of volunteers who engage in complex activities like, for instance, volunteers dedicated to firefighting, victim support services, or youth outreach programmes. Under these circumstances, the differences in knowledge, skills and control over practices between volunteers and paid practitioners are not significant.[23]

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19. Dunne A., Ulicna D., Murphy I., Golubeva M. and James M. (authors), European Commission (editor) (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union, Netherlands Country Report": https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/10059673/2014_EU_Youth_Work_Study_Country_Report_Netherlands.pdf/5cf53f68-8caa-a7e1-9874-5ee44d73f3dd.
20. Käger M., Kivistik K. and Tatar M. (2018), "Noorsootöötajate koolitusvajaduse uuring". Aruanne, pp. 18-19, http://mitteformaalne.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Noorsoot%C3%B6%C3%B6tajate-koolitusvajaduse-uuring-2017.pdf.
21. Rasmussen B., Presentation about Estonia at the seminar "Systems for formal and non-formal education and validation of youth workers", Brussels, 31 May to 1 June 2018: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-meeting-on-researching-educational-and-career-paths-for-youth-workers.
22. McAllum K. (2018), "Volunteers as Boundary Workers: Negotiating Tensions Between Volunteerism and Professionalism in Nonprofit Organizations", *Management Communication Quarterly* 2018, Vol. 32(4) pp. 534-564.
23. Ibid. pp. 534-542.

Indeed, voluntary youth work may have some extras for participating children and young people, simply because they ascribe volunteers different motivation from paid practitioners.[24] Nevertheless, the topic of task differentiation between volunteer and paid youth workers is more complex than how young people understand youth workers' motivation. Complexities start growing from the fact that young people differ by their background and, hence, have different needs. The question about voluntary and paid youth work becomes a question of whether paid and volunteer youth workers are equally capable of carrying out different tasks and functions that are required in public policy frameworks. In the Netherlands for instance, the needs of young people are addressed by three different kinds of service providers who carry out different tasks. Professional, paid youth workers target mainly young people at risk (10% of the youth population) and marginalised young people (1%); youth care specialists address young people with special needs (4%); and volunteer youth workers focus on the rest of the youth population. Professional youth workers involved volunteers in their activities, volunteers are not independent but work under supervision of professional youth workers.[25] In Estonia it is expected that all youth workers, acting either on a paid or volunteer basis, act in accordance with the youth worker professional standard. To support achieving this goal, a youth worker certification system has been introduced by the Estonian Youth Work Centre, which is a state organisation responsible for organising youth work. However, only a small fraction of youth workers have passed the certification exam – in June 2018, only 158 youth workers owned the youth worker professional qualification certificate (approximately 2.3%) and 2 213 owned a partial professional qualification certificate (approximately 32%).[26]

The issues of workload and work complexity were also brought out in the focus groups interviews with youth workers. A youth worker often has to perform like a one-man band: he or she must be able to navigate successfully the issues of traditional youth work (making contact with young people, organising their leisure time), social work (recognising and addressing young people from vulnerable backgrounds, designing interventions for them), project management (applying for funding, managing and reporting on projects) and general management (building alliances, writing development plans).[27] [28] This is rather challenging. In general, to perform all tasks and activities and comply with all requirements, a full- or part-time position is more appropriate than a volunteering role. At the same time, volunteers constitute the larger part of youth workers in Europe. Also, they have the personal skills and motivation to work with young people. Making effective use of both paid and volunteer youth workers requires an

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24. Hoogervorst N., Baren E. A. (van), Metz J., Roza L. and Meijs L. (2014), "Propositions concerning the use of volunteers to provide support to children and their parents", in: Karr L., Meijs L. and Metz J. (eds), *Volunteering and youth services. Essential readings on volunteering and volunteer management for social work, social policy and urban management*, SWP publishers, Amsterdam, pp. 91-106.

25. Dunne A., Ulicna D., Murphy I., Golubeva M. and James M. (authors), European Commission (editor) (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union, Netherlands Country Report": https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/10059673/2014_EU_Youth_Work_Study_Country_Report_Netherlands.pdf/5cf53f68-8caa-a7e1-9874-5ee44d73f3dd.

26. Rasmussen B. Presentation about Estonia at the seminar "Systems for formal and non-formal education and validation of youth workers", Brussels, 31 May to 1 June 2018: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-meeting-on-researching-educational-and-career-paths-for-youth-workers.

27. Taru M. and Petkovic, S. (2018), Report of the focus group interview conducted for studying youth workers' educational and career paths.

28. Taru M. (2018), Focus group interview with youth workers – Estonian report.

appropriate division of tasks and workload between both groups. Currently, the division of tasks between volunteers and paid practitioners in the youth work field is not clear and well described. It is a question that is awaiting serious attention from all stakeholder groups. The question about volunteer and paid youth workers is about what tasks both types of youth workers are expected to carry out. The case of the Netherlands makes the point – while volunteer youth workers have what it takes to support the development of the majority of young people, there are also categories of young people that require more skills, different motivation and more resources from people working with young people. These kinds of groups and associated tasks might be more effectively addressed by professional, paid youth workers.

Views on youth work development towards professionalism

The vocabulary of analysing occupations and professions has been used by quite a number of researchers for the analysis of youth work situations and developments.[29] [30] [31] [32] In general, there seems to be little doubt that the notions of profession, professionalism and professionalisation have some appeal for youth work. This suggests that concepts embodying the core of the sociology of professions are seen as an appropriate "language" or analytical tools to be used when discussing the situation of youth work in society.

The struggle for youth work professionalisation has quite a long history. It is perhaps Finland where youth work professionalisation took off first, immediately after the Second World War. By the mid-1980s youth work had reached semi-professional status but was not on the same level as professions like doctors, lawyers, teachers, psychologists or even social workers.[33] Arguably, youth workers in Australia and the USA have been seeking professionalism, since the beginning of 1990s in the former and since the beginning of 1970s in the latter.[34] On that road, youth work certainly has made notable progress, so much so that by 2004 Sercombe had expressed the opinion that "the fact is of course that youth work is

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29. Balzerman M. L. and VeLure Roholt R. (2016), "Youth Worker Professional Development", in: Pozzoboni K. M. and Kirshner B. (eds), *The changing landscape of youth work*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC, pp. 51-67; 55.
30. MacNeil C., Krauss S. E. and Zeldin S. (2016), "Voluntary association, youth voice, and collective action: youth work in places where there are no (professional) youth workers", in Pozzoboni K. M. and Kirshner B. (eds), *The changing landscape of youth work*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC, pp. 11-30.
31. Starr E. and Gannett E. (2016), "Credentialing for youth work", in Pozzoboni K. M. and Kirshner B. (eds), *The changing landscape of youth work*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC, pp. 31-49; 36-38.
32. Panagides P., Polydorou A., Paunovic M., Kaminska M., Akgul M. and Calafateanu A. M., "Research on Youth Work Studies in Europe": https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/10059673/KA2-Output1-Youth-Work-studies_Research.pdf/f32e6444-df83-9fe4-fd4d-99db15956ed4, accessed 19 November 2018.
33. Nieminen J. (2014), "The history of youth work as a profession in Finland", in "The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy", Volume 4: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8437152/H4_Finland.pdf/dda3d481-87c1-42ff-95c4-83fed0be14c0.
34. Emslie M. (2013), "Toward a youth work profession", *Child and Youth Services*, 34: 125-138.

already a professional practice." However, he mentioned only very few countries where youth work was professional. Among European countries, only the UK, Malta, Finland and Ireland were mentioned.[35]

However, there is little if any evidence at all that youth work professionalisation would improve youth work practice. Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt,[36] having looked into the professionalisation of social work and teaching, reach the conclusion that "the pursuit of professionalization will not guarantee desired outcomes" and "what we can say with confidence is that the professionalization of youth work does not necessarily ensure quality practice". For them, increasing the quality of practice is paramount, leading them to ask: "what sort of processes can we create that identify quality and hone in on quality practice?". A similar line of thinking and similar concerns have been expressed by Maurice Devlin. He too is concerned mainly with the quality of services offered by youth work to society and less by the formal status of youth work. Judging youth work by the standards of service quality, he is convinced that youth work already is a profession because it is a useful practice in society. However, the question youth workers should answer is whether they want youth work to be a profession, which is clearly demarcated from other professions, or do they want youth work to stay as it is now, only partly legally defined and protected.[37] That the two goals – improving practice and impact and being more visible and recognised in society – need not be contradicting is seen in the case of Finland, where professionalisation improved both the quality of and access to youth work.[38]

2. Professionalisms

In sociological research on the division and organisation of work, four concepts have been used extensively in the development of explanations: **occupation, profession, professionalisation and professionalism**. **Occupation** means every activity, work, function or job that is the main source of someone's income. Occupational family or occupational group is a grouping of several similar occupations, or jobs, into more general categories. **Profession** has been seen as a specific type of occupation and it is common to speak about professional occupations. What sets a profession apart from an occupation? With a profession, the interrelated concepts of professional autonomy and social closure are associated. Professional autonomy denotes a high control of practitioners over the work they are doing. It is professionals themselves who decide about values, goals, quality criteria, methods, ethics, organisation of work, nuances of the body of knowledge and the transfer of knowledge in the education system; the rest of society has relatively little influence on that. Professional autonomy and control over practice rests on an assumption that only practitioners of a profession have access to this specialised

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35. Sercombe H. (2004), "Youth work: The professionalisation dilemma", *Youth Studies Australia* Vol 23, No. 4, pp. 20-25.
36. Johnston-Goodstar K. and Roholt R. V. (2013), "Unintended Consequences of Professionalizing Youth Work: Lessons From Teaching and Social Work", *Child and Youth Services*, Vol. 34, Issue 2, pp. 139-155.
37. Devlin M. (2012), "Youth work, professionalism and professionalisation in Europe", in Coussee F., Williamson H. and Vershelden G. (eds), "The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy", Volume 3. pp.177-190, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
38. Nieminen J. (2014), "The history of youth work as a profession in Finland", in "The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy", Volume 4: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8437152/H4_Finland.pdf/dda3d481-87c1-42ff-95c4-83fed0be14c0.

body of skill, and knowledge that no other is capable of assessing the quality of their professional performance. Social closure means that entrance to an occupation in the status of profession is restricted, often by imposing education and/or licensing requirements which set conditions that must be present before one is allowed to start practice. Professionals or practitioners of a profession enjoy a high status in society together with high remuneration for their job. Medical doctors are often seen as an archetypical profession. **Professionalisation** in this framework refers to the process of an occupation evolving towards a profession.

Professions – professionalised occupations – have not always existed; on the contrary, very few clearly distinct professions existed before the 19th century, even if people competent and skilled in a particular discipline have been valued in all societies. The first professional occupations were members of the clergy, physicians and legal professionals.[39] Contemporary thinking on occupations is even younger and its beginnings can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, both occupations and thinking about them have been in a state of change. It is only natural that also nowadays, both the world of work as well as analytical frameworks used for analysing work are changing. Work and occupations are subsumed in a range of changes in society: the increasing influence of external forms of regulation, which occur within a nation state (welfare state) as well as between different tiers of public administration (e.g. at the EU, nation state, ministry and municipality level), the increasing importance of audit and measurement, targets and performance indicators, the standardisation of work and exerting financial control over jobs, individualisation and competition, and increased co-operation between societal sectors. These factors have helped to shift the control over work from occupational organisations and collegial relationships to organisations where work flows, values, priorities and the organisation of work is controlled by managers and sponsors.[40] Amid these societal changes existing professions change, new professions emerge and develop, and established professions lose their autonomy and degree of social closure. For instance, one of the most established professions – medical doctors – has been losing its autonomy gradually. At the same time, adult educators in Europe are struggling for professionalisation.[41] These societal changes also constitute the context and development environment for youth work as an occupation.

Not only is the world of work ever changing, but thinking about work and occupations is in a permanent state of evolution. It is as a result of this process that it has been argued that drawing a solid line between occupation and profession is not justified and that the distinction between an occupation and a profession is not of a kind but of a degree. The concepts of profession as a (desired) endpoint in the development of an(y) occupation and of professionalisation as a process leading towards that endpoint have been considered outdated.[42] In contemporary thinking on work, the notions of professions and

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39. See Larson M. S. (1977), *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*, University of California Press.
40. Evetts J. (2014), "The Concept of Professionalism: Professional Work, Professional Practice and Learning", in Billett S. et al. (eds), *International Handbook of Research in Professional and Practice-based Learning*, Springer International Handbooks of Education, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-8902-8_2, Springer Science + Business Media, Dordrecht.
41. Berhardsson N. and Lattke S. (2011), "Initial stages towards adult educational professional development in a European perspective – some project examples", in Strauch A., Radtke M. and Lupou R. (eds), "Flexible pathways towards professionalisation. Senior adult educators in Europe", W. Bertelsmann Verlag, Bilefeld, pp. 21-35.
42. Evetts J. (2014), "The Concept of Professionalism: Professional Work, Professional Practice and Learning", in Billett S. et al. (eds), *International Handbook of Research in Professional and Practice-based Learning*, Springer

professionalisation have been complemented by the notion of **professionalism**, more concretely by three variants of it:

- Professionalism as a (normative) value
- Professionalism as a discourse
- Professionalism as professional project.

Professionalism here is understood as a way to describe the degree and quality of practice, and the creation of a culture of quality. The three different variants of it point to different aspects and different social mechanisms that define how specific features of professionalism come about. By introducing the notion of professionalism, we complement the idea that profession as a special kind of occupation is the desirable (endpoint) of development/evolution of an occupation with the three concepts/variants of professionalism. This is an improvement in analytical thinking as it offers better opportunities to focus on specific features of practice and on social mechanisms that demonstrate how the features come about, and how social and administrative environments influence those aspects. All three variants assume that occupations differ and are organised into hierarchical systems, maintaining that being “on top” of the pyramid is more desirable than being “at the base” of the pyramid. However, the three-variant approach differs in how the emergence of the hierarchy is explained and what nuances and details are highlighted. The earlier professionalisation model should not be abandoned entirely.[43]

2.1 Professionalism as a normative value

Professionalism as a normative value maintains that the value of occupations emerges from the specialist knowledge and skills that practitioners command and exercise for the good of other people, following professional ethics. Different occupations are valued differently in society, some are more valuable than others. Because professional practitioners command unparalleled expertise in providing certain services to society then only practitioners have the competence to evaluate their performance, the quality of the service they offer and other work-related aspects. Therefore, the control over practice, the evaluation of outcomes, identifying malpractice and dealing with underperformers is the task and privilege of the practitioners’ community only. This leads to autonomous communities of practice, which exercise control over practitioners through professional organisations. They also may liaise with the state to establish legal restrictions for entering the profession. A specialist body of (scientific) knowledge – its creation, updating and development and transfer through the education system – is one of the central tenets of this version of professionalism. The formal education system has other functions besides just the transfer of specialist knowledge and skills – in addition to this, formal education is seen as a method for socialising practitioners into professional ethics and integrating them into the body of practitioners. Though the specialist body of knowledge and skills and the transfer mechanisms play an important role in all concepts of professionalism, their role is most significant in this understanding of professionalism.

International Handbooks of Education, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-8902-8_2, Springer Science + Business Media, Dordrecht.

43. Saks M. (2012), “Defining a Profession: The Role of Knowledge and Expertise”, *Professions and Professionalism*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp. 1-10.

Youth work relevance

This view of professionalism emphasises the importance of a specialist body of knowledge and skills. This specialised body of knowledge and skills involves different aspects like building the knowledge base using scientific methods (or other methods, which seems to be quite a vital idea among some youth workers), communicating the knowledge to others in society and transferring the knowledge to entrants into the profession through the formal education system and training.

Earlier research has established that, subject-wise, the background to youth workers' formal education (or degree education) in European countries is diverse and, in addition to non-specialist training, comes mainly from six areas:

- Social pedagogy
- Social sciences
- Social work/social care
- Educational sciences
- Another area of education (e.g. nursing, finance, engineering)
- Youth work.

Youth work degree-level education is the dominant field of education for youth workers in a minority of European countries: Malta, France, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In the majority of countries, most youth workers have education from some of the other four areas. Non-specialist training is predominant in four countries (Portugal, Greece, Romania, Slovenia).[44] In Germany, university-level youth work studies are connected to social work and social pedagogy. At the level of vocational education, youth work specialists have often completed a programme for educators and child-care workers. Christian youth workers are trained in the theological education institutes and their programmes include hands-on practice of Christian youth work. In Croatia there are no university programmes on youth work but there are different university programmes for specialists who work with the young people. The programmes are built around social work, social pedagogy, pedagogy and primary education. In Scotland, there are BA degrees, a postgraduate diploma, an MA degree and PhD programmes in Community Learning and Development/Community Education.[45]

According to a survey carried out among international youth workers in the second half of 2018, almost half of youth workers have obtained either post-secondary or tertiary-level youth work degrees from a formal education system (48%). Another quarter had passed accredited or validated course(s) that did not lead to a degree and only 27% had not passed any of the courses. When we take a look at the education obtained outside youth work, we see that altogether more than 90% have obtained either a post-secondary or tertiary degree and only 4% have no specialist education.

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44. Dunne A., Ulicna D., Murphy I., Golubeva M. and James M. (authors), European Commission (editor) (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union" pp. 118-121. http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf.
45. Kiilakoski T. (2018), A paper based on the presentations and discussions of the Enlarged expert group meeting on researching educational and career paths for youth workers in Brussels, 31 May to 1 June.

Table 1. Highest level of education of youth workers

	In the area of youth work	Outside youth work
Higher education	42%	84%
Vocational education	6%	8%
Accredited or validated course	26%	5%
None of the above	27%	4%

Author's calculations based on a survey of youth workers. N=215. Weighted data.

As the survey shows, though the largest group of youth workers obtained their formal education degree outside youth work, the field of specialisation of approximately half of youth workers is either youth work or fairly close to youth work (Table 2). Knowledge and skills obtained in informal and/or non-formal learning, psychology, social work, education and teaching degree programmes can be used either directly when in contact with young people in youth work settings work or indirectly, for example when developing, implementing or managing youth work organisations, projects and programmes. The group of other subject areas (52%) was composed of different subjects ranging from social research to philosophy and agriculture. People with this educational background will need to go through a more thorough training in youth work in order to become youth workers.

Table 2. The education backgrounds of youth workers

Youth work	13%
Psychology	8%
Education, teaching, pedagogics	6%
Non-formal/informal learning, leisure, sports and management	12%
Social work	6%
Arts	3%
Other areas	52%

Author's calculations based on a survey of youth workers. N=215. Weighted data.

A focus group with youth workers conducted in Cascais in June 2018 showed that the overall level of education of youth workers was high: all group participants had acquired a BA or MA-level education, one even had finished two MA programmes. None of the group participants had studied the youth worker curriculum and none had a youth worker diploma or degree from a formal education system (vocational school or university). Instead they had studied different subjects, some of which were related in some way to youth work while others were evidently less relevant.[46] In the focus group conducted in

46. Taru M. and Petkovic S. (2018), Report of the focus group interview conducted for studying youth workers' educational and career paths.

June in Strasbourg, most of the participants held a university degree in youth work-related social sciences (psychology or pedagogy, for example). Some of the participants held a degree in subjects that were further away from youth work. Some of them had acquired specialist education in youth work from training courses.[47] The focus group with employers and youth work organisers emphasised the significance of training courses outside degree programmes.[48] Another focus group brought the importance of peer learning to the fore[49] and the dominant view expressed in the focus group held with representatives of youth organisations was that non-formal education and learning should be preferred over formal education when it comes to acquiring youth work skills. Group participants not only saw non-formal education and training as preferential, but also saw formal qualifications as an adjunct rather than a necessity for youth workers.[50] The table below summarises the findings of the survey and focus groups on the educational and learning background of youth workers active in international arena.

Table 3. Formal education and non-formal learning backgrounds of youth workers

	Level / amount	Study subject / Subject area
Formal education	High	Mainly not youth work-specific, partly from "neighbouring" occupations, partly from other subject areas
Training, non-formal learning	A lot	Youth work-specific

The survey and focus groups show that youth workers themselves and youth work organisers consider youth work education highly important. This is clearly seen in the youth workers' educational backgrounds as well as in opinions expressed during interviews. Despite the absence of formal requirements for acquiring specialist youth work education before starting out as a youth worker and despite limited opportunities to acquire such education, the vast majority has acquired some form of higher education qualification. Many have acquired this in areas closely related to youth work but some in areas that are further removed from youth work practice. As the report by O'Donovan et al. (2018) shows, youth work degrees from colleges and universities are available in relatively few European countries: out of 47 Council of Europe[51] countries, six have formal education degree courses in youth work, and 11 other countries offer programmes in youth work-related fields. Vocational and further education and training for youth workers are also provided by 17 countries, while eight countries provide

47. Georgescu M. and Petkovic S. (2018), The educational paths of youth workers. Focus group interviews.
48. Barta O. and Potocnik D. (2018), The educational paths of youth workers: Focus group analytical notes for the group of employers and organisers.
49. Kiilakoski T. (2018), A report of the group interview held in Mainz, 27 March 2018.
50. Report of the group interview held with council members of the European Youth Forum (EYF) at Management Centre Europe in Brussels on Friday 27 April 2018.
51. In the study, information was collected from 41 countries.

both degree and vocational courses. Non-formal education and training courses for youth workers are available in 39 of the countries surveyed.[52]

Taken together, it can be said that a high percentage of youth workers have not acquired specialist youth work education. At the same time, the findings from the focus groups and survey suggest that youth workers would be eager to learn, if there were more opportunities to do so. The results indicate the very high importance attached to non-formal learning and training courses outside the formal education system for the occupational preparation of youth workers. In fact, the results suggest that youth workers may perceive this to be more important for transferring specialist knowledge and skills than formal education. Against these survey results, the virtues of formal education also need to be kept in mind. In formal education, youth workers will acquire a solid base of knowledge necessary for successful youth work practice. And it needs be kept in mind that in contemporary societies formal education is one of the central attributes of a profession or a highly professionalised occupation. Also, the existence of research centres and knowledge hubs is characteristic of well-established and recognised occupations and professions. There are institutes, schools and research centres involved in producing high-quality knowledge about social work and education, two of the social policy fields, which are close to youth work. There are hardly any such research centres in the youth work field. Indeed, youth work itself is often taught by scholars who were educated and are working mainly in other areas like social work, education or community studies.

Yet specialist research centres for youth work could play a unique role in society because their expertise would be the production and communication of high-quality knowledge about the different aspects of youth work practice. Youth work research centres would contribute to the improvement of youth work practice quality and would increase the impact of youth work. They could become sites of innovative knowledge production. For instance, their research methods could include more participatory elements like in the project Evaluation and Communication of Youth Work in Europe[53]. Their capabilities could include also producing evidence that is recognised by others in society, including public administration and policy makers. Such research would be particularly beneficial for the development of voluntary youth work, since this field has received minimal research attention compared to the significance of volunteers in youth work. The research could support the development of knowledge-based models about the division of tasks between paid and voluntary youth workers.

2.2 Professionalism as a discourse

Professionalism as a discourse is an understanding that professionalism can be constructed and imposed on an occupation and on practitioners “from above”. In the contemporary welfare state, many welfare services are financed from a common budget, not provided on the basis of voluntary activities or market interactions. There are different arrangements for providing services paid for from the public purse –

52. O’Donovan J., Cairns D., Sousa M. and Valcheva V. (2018), Mapping Educational and Career Paths of Youth Workers report, p. 51, EU-CoE youth partnership.
53. The final publication of the project: www.researchgate.net/publication/327578922_The_Impact_of_Youth_Work_in_Europe_A_Study_of_Five_European_Countries.

services may be provided by public-sector organisations, but it is also quite common that not-for-profit organisations (NPO) or business organisations are contracted to provide such services. Of course, concrete arrangements differ across countries because they depend on the institutional set-up as well as on the history of the country. However, requirements of accountability, trust and transparency are inevitable, leading to increased regulation, audit and assessment.

Occupational groups often welcome this access to public resources. For practitioners this may mean an opportunity to continue their practice. Access to these resources comes together with increased control over practice because the provider of financial means expects to receive a certain type and quality of service, not just any service. In the case of youth work in Europe, financial and organisational support comes most often from the public sector. As practitioners may need to follow certain rules in order to be able to receive the support, their everyday realities may be different from the ideals contained in the concept of occupational professionalism, which entails autonomy of the expert and includes control over goals, values, processes and the organisation of work in general. Practitioners who are employed by large organisations or who are controlled through financing conditions actually may have very little autonomy. This managerial control constructs and imposes a certain version of practice on an occupation or occupational group, which they themselves, as experts in the practice and occupation, would have not chosen. Another concept is organisational professionalism – this highlights the fact that many practitioners work in large organisations, under the control of managers. Hence, their practices are constructed and controlled by their line managers. With reason, there is a term that refers to such practice – managerialism. The influence of organisations on occupations is significant, to the degree that some professions have been created by large organisations, not only transformed. Such professions include the emergent expert occupations, such as management consultancy, information management, advertising and PR.[54] [55] It could also be argued that youth work is influenced by such practices.

Youth work relevance

These understandings of professionalism – professionalism as a discourse constructed from above by policy makers and organisational professionalism; that is, practice significantly influenced by managers and financiers and which reduces the control of the pool of practitioners – turns the spotlight on to youth work's struggle against instrumentalisation. The instrumental aspects of the role of youth work are evident, for example, in the new European youth strategy, which sees youth work as a method, an umbrella term for informal and non-formal learning that is to support achieving policy goals and that emphasises the need to adapt to a changing social and technological environment.[56]

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54. Reed C. (2018), "Professionalizing corporate professions: Professionalization as identity project", *Management Learning*, 2018, Vol. 49(2) pp. 222-238.
55. Ackroyd S. (2016), "Sociological and organisational theories of professions and professionalism", in Dent M., Bourgeault I., Denis J. and Kuhlmann E. (eds), *The Routledge Companion to the Professions and Professionalism*, Routledge London, pp. 15-30. Cited by Reed C. (2018), "Professionalizing corporate professions: Professionalization as identity project", *Management Learning*, 2018, Vol. 49(2) pp. 222-238.
56. European Commission (2018), "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy", Brussels, 22 May 2018, COM(2018) 269 final: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf.

From the history of youth work we know that many large and powerful organisations have developed their own youth chapters where youth work is carried out on their terms, that is, in accordance with organisational values and practices. Churches, political parties, paramilitary organisations, professional organisations and hobby clubs are perhaps the most well-known types of organisations to have established youth chapters and/or youth organisations where work with young people is carried out in accordance with the values of the parent organisations. The list of such organisations is long and its history goes back to the very beginnings of youth work in Europe, recent decades have neither created nor reinvented this pattern. The increasing significance of the European Union may have placed certain accents here through supporting implementation of the ideas of the social investment state, which complement the ideas of the social welfare state, also in youth work. Increasing youth labour market readiness and supporting their transition to the world of work certainly have moved up on the ladder of youth work priorities. This might hold increasing support for as well as controls over youth work practice.

Some youth workers may perceive the tendency to increasingly define youth work through its social utility function to some degree as diverging from the ideals and values of youth work's occupational professionalism. These disconcerting ideas arise from the currents of different understandings of the nature of youth work and its role in society. Contemporary public administration systems, which increasingly value management by numbers, use target indicators and expect that effects and impacts can be demonstrated by figures, also impose similar practices on youth work. However, although there is a variant of youth work which is relatively well compatible with youth work's organisational professionalism and youth work as a discourse, there are also other understandings of youth work. The compatible youth work paradigm starts out from the needs of society. Within this paradigm, it is important to achieve the socialisation of a young person into a functioning social order; they not only need to respect the values that are deemed important but also must actively support them. Hence, it is only natural to expect that nowadays – in the 2010s – youth work contributes to tackling social issues such as reducing youth unemployment and school dropout rates, and aiding the social inclusion of young immigrants and refugees. However, it is important to note too that the history of youth work also includes the teaching of other values that were once cherished or expected in, for instance, authoritarian states, like patriotism and obedience. The theory of positive youth development[57] [58] and the Five Cs are examples of youth work concepts that are commensurable with this youth work paradigm.[59] [60] Concrete goals depend on time and place and are determined by policy needs, and therefore by issues and challenges a society is perceived as facing at a particular time. The list may include patriotism and ethnic identity, entrepreneurship and employability skills, socio-political activism, adherence to school rules,

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57. Benson P. L., Scales P. C., Hamilton S. F. and Sesma A. (2007), "Positive youth Development: Theory, Research, and Applications", in: Damon W. and Lerner R. M. (eds), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, pp. 894-941.
58. Snyder F. J. and Flay B. R. (2012), "Positive Youth Development", in Brown P. M., Corrigan M. W. and Higgins-D'Alessandro A. (eds.), *The Handbook of Prosocial Education*, Rowman and Littlefield, New York, pp. 415-443.
59. Geldhof G. J., Bower E. P., Mueller M. K., Napolitano C. M., Callina K. S., Walsh K. J., Lerner J. V. and Lerner R. M. (2015), "The Five Cs Model of Positive Youth Development", in Bowers E. P., Geldhof G. J., Johanson S. K., Hilliard L. J., Hershberg R. M., Lerner J. V. and Lerner R. M. (eds), *Promoting Positive Youth Development. Lessons from the 4-H Study*, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, pp. 161-186.
60. Ramey H. L. and Rose-Krasnor L. (2012), "Contexts of Structured Youth Activities and Positive Youth Development", 6 (1), pp. 85-91.

and/or other goals. An important takeaway point from here is that goals, values and the organisation of youth work practice is to a significant extent imposed on youth work "from above", by managers and policy officers who finance youth work activities, and not decided collegially by youth work practitioners.

However, other youth workers find using the methods of youth work for addressing social problems inappropriate and perhaps even counterproductive. The "In defence of youth work" movement is a good example of these views.[61] An alternative, process-based paradigm of youth work maintains that youth work is about providing young people with a developmental and supportive environment on their own terms, starting from the needs and individual situations of each young person. Youth work has to support the development of this young person. What exactly the outcomes of such youth work are is impossible to know and predict in advance because young humans and the youth work process is too complex to be predictable. Proponents of this approach maintain that, in fact, there is no need to know this.[62] [63] In this paradigm, the young person is given centre stage and treated on an equal footing as adults.[64] While it is hard if not impossible to predict youth work outcomes, it is still an organised and planned activity.[65] This standpoint does not necessarily tally with the concept of profession as a discourse; because the starting point is different, discrepancies between youth workers and policy makers' perceived needs and wants arise.

The increasing package of interventions in the lives of young people, in their socialisation and transition from childhood dependencies to independent and contributing members of societies, comes together with resources for implementing those interventions. A variety of resources are increasingly being allocated to the youth field and youth work, ranging from organisational and local-level budgets to national or European programmes like Erasmus+ and structural funds. These resources are available for both paid and volunteer youth workers.

The emergence and development of youth policy may bring along another shift that will shape youth work – a shift towards the increased integration of services that address young people. By definition, collaboration is central to the youth field.[66] This trend is emerging and developing because of increasing support from the public sector and the public sector's general shift towards co-operation.[67] Current public policy developments and priorities certainly encourage collaboration in the youth field further, as

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61. In defence of youth work homepage: https://indefenceofyouthwork.com/.
62. Ord J. (2016), *Youth Work Process, Product and Practice. Creating an authentic curriculum in work with young people*, second edition, Routledge, Oxon, New York, pp. 146-168.
63. Belton B. (2014) "Professionalizing Youth work: A Global Perspective. Criteria for Professional Youth Work, Its Principles and Values", in Belton B. (ed.), *"Cadjan – Kiduhu". Global Perspectives on Youth Work*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, pp. 3-22.
64. Sapin, K. (2009). Essential Skills for Youth Work Practice. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
65. Kiilakoski T. (2015), "Youth work, Volunteering, Recognition and Employability. Defining and recognizing competences", Report on Desk Research: www.alliance-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/IVEDesk-Research-Report-Output-1.pdf, visited 11.2.2019.
66. Nico M. (2017), "A primary look at secondary data – CSYP in official documents", in Nico M. and Taru M. (eds), *Needles in haystacks. Finding a way forward for cross-sectoral youth policy*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp. 13-32.
67. Taru M. (2017), "Integrated youth policy – Riding the wave of cross-sectoralism", in Nico M. and Taru M. (eds), *Needles in haystacks. Finding a way forward for cross-sectoral youth policy*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp. 33-44.

the new European youth strategy puts co-operation, both cross-sectoral and vertical, at the heart of the youth field:

> Cross-sectoral cooperation should be reinforced at all levels of decision-making searching synergies, complementarity between actions, and including greater youth involvement. Member States should encourage youth and other stakeholders to set up joint initiatives, for example in education, employment, digital, sport, sustainability and international cooperation, using the full potential of EU funding.[68]

At the level of addressing the needs of a young person through youth work, co-operation often means collaboration between specialists, opening one-stop shops where youth workers make the first contact with young people, making youth work necessary and useful for other organisations and specialists. There are good examples of public-sector-supported collaboration formats where youth workers work together with specialists of other occupations. Ohjaamo[69] in Finland is an example of a "one-stop shop" where youth workers together with other specialists work in low threshold youth guidance centres. Another example of youth workers working together with other specialists is the youth Prop Up programme in Estonia.[70] In these two collaboration formats, paid youth workers participate. Whether such collaboration would work equally well for paid and volunteer youth workers is a question which has no definitive answer for now. Since both of the examples target a category of young people which includes those who are not the easiest to help, this may require specific skills and resources that may be unavailable to volunteers. However, this does not necessarily mean that volunteer youth workers cannot participate – rather it is a question about the division of roles and tasks.

2.3 Professionalism as a professional project

The concept of profession as a professional project emphasises the agency of professions in achieving market power and social standing.[71] The concept grew out of developments in the liberal societies of the United States and the United Kingdom where the role of state was relatively weak compared to that of continental Europe. Hence, there was more "space" for and a higher need to take more responsibility for well-being by professional associations. This variant of professionalism maintains that professional groups' development is motivated by professionals seeking to establish a monopoly for their service in a society to put them in a better position to influence control over work, including professional autonomy and remuneration. Moreover, a professional group in a monopolistic position may have the power to influence and even "captivate" the state so that its monopolistic position in society and control over the conditions of service provision becomes more undisputed. As such, the notion of a "professional project" has somewhat negative connotations and meanings as it is associated with a struggle for the power and well-being of a professional group rather than for the good of the whole of society. It is maintained that

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68. European Commission (2018), "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy" Brussels, 22 May 2018, COM(2018) 269 final, p. 9, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf.
69. Service homepage: http://ohjaamot.fi/etusivu.
70. Homepage of the programme, https://tugila.ee/support-program-youth-prop/.
71. Muzio D., Brock D. M. and Suddaby R. (2013), "Professions and Institutional Change: Towards an Institutionalist Sociology of the Professions", *Journal of Management Studies,* 50:5 July 2013*:* pp. 699-721.

practitioners' intentions and activities are motivated by the wish to gain a monopolistic position in society and at the same time to secure access to resources and high social status. In terms of social closure, this variant of professionalism comes close to professionalism as an ideology and value variant. However, instead of providing more value through better services, here we see a focus on establishing organisational power. The concept maintains that the development of specialist practices is significantly influenced by these motivations.

Youth work relevance

This concept of professionalism highlights the importance of a unification of practitioners – "united we stand strong", or even "United we stand, divided we fall". Youth work is a field of practice consisting of a multitude of methods, which address different social challenges, target different groups of young people and are expected to contribute to a range of social policy goals. Many activities are divided further by the voluntary/paid youth worker divide. While methodological variety can be seen as a strength of youth work, it also has been seen as a challenge in itself and the desire for increasing unity and reducing variety within the youth work field is clearly present in the Declaration of the 2nd European youth work convention:

> There is certainly no easy path to finding common ground. Contemporary youth work practice encapsulates street work, open work, project and issue-based work, self-organised activity through youth organisations, youth information, exchanges and more. … Within this diversity, which in some respects should be celebrated, the quest for common ground may appear to be elusive, yet it is an imperative task if the role of youth work is to be better defined, its distinctive contribution communicated, and its connections with, and place within, wider policy priorities clarified.[72]

The development of a common framework for youth work quality[73] and a charter on youth work[74] testify to the attempts to increase (methodological) unanimity in the youth work field. It is a top-down initiative. The concept of practice architectures deems important three aspects of a practice – sayings, doings and relations, and maintains that these three aspects are historically and institutionally embedded in society. Applying the concept to youth work, Kiilakoski[75] classifies Council of Europe[76]

72. "Declaration of the 2nd European youth work convention. Making world of difference", Brussels, 27-30 April 2015: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8529155/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85.

73. European Commission (2015), "Quality Youth Work. A common framework for the further development of youth work. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States": http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf.

74. Europe Goes Local homepage: www.europegoeslocal.eu/european-charter-on-local-youth-work-overview-of-the-first-consultation-round/.

75. Kiilakoski T. (2018), "Diversity of practice architectures on educational and career paths for youth workers. An analytical report".

76. In December 2018, 47 countries belonged to the Council of Europe (www.coe.int/en/web/portal/47-members-states). Questionnaires were sent to the national correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) (there were 42 correspondents, nominated by the member state ministries: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/ekcyp-correspondents) and relevant ministries, institutions and bodies. Respondents from 41 countries answered. The United Kingdom (England) and United Kingdom (Wales) provided

countries into four categories according to the level of “practice architectures”. He concludes that approximately 25% of the countries belong to the category where there are “Strong practice architectures” and another 25% of countries belong to the category that features “Strong practice architectures, room for development on certain level”. This leaves the remaining 50% in the categories “Practice architectures where some parts have been developed” and “Practice architectures in need of development”. Roughly similar findings are presented in the paper by O’Donovan that describes youth worker networks and organisations in Council of Europe countries.[77] According to this report, youth worker organisations are functioning in 24 countries and absent in 17. In addition, youth worker networks, NGOs and youth organisations’ networks are present in 10 countries. The main function of the networks and organisations as presented in the report is to support youth work practice in the countries. And there are also three pan-European networks. All in all, the report leaves an impression that countries differ notably in terms of how (well) the organisations fulfil this function. While in some countries youth worker organisations seem to be strong and serve their members’ interests well, youth workers in other countries probably cannot enjoy a similar level of support. In addition, the report gives the impression that the level of youth worker organisations is relatively low at national and European level. After all, only 10 countries with developed youth worker networks and organisations is not many. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that there are only three European-level organisations that unite youth workers.

Compared to teaching occupations and also to social work, the degree of development of youth worker organisations in many if not most European countries is relatively low. One of the reasons is probably the relatively wide variety of youth work methodologies. When organisations are based on a concrete youth work method or historical heritage, then this necessarily leads to a relatively high number of organisations, which means increased fragmentation in the field. Another reason might be associated with the fact that not all youth work is performed by youth workers, but also by those in other occupations. These people might have joined their own professional organisations and have weaker motivation to join youth work organisations.

3. Summary

Youth work as a practice has been and is in the process of development and change, like other occupations. This is only normal. Changes within and around youth work occur in and are caused by changes in the organisational, administrative and social environments where youth work operates. The ideas of the social investment state, where investment in young people occupies an important position, are influencing the policy environment where youth work operates. Within this perspective, youth work gains a more significant function in society as policy makers expect youth work to contribute to youth socialisation and the transition from dependence on parents to independence, to becoming active and

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separate answers, as did Belgium (Flemish speaking), Belgium (French speaking) and Belgium (German speaking). Therefore, the paper examined 44 different practice architectures of youth work, which were referred to as countries and regions (Kiilakoski T. (2018), “Diversity of practice architectures on educational and career paths for youth workers. An analytical report”).

77. O’Donovan J. (2018) “Youth Workers in Europe - Associations, networks and support”.

contributing members of society. Policies of social inclusion and, in this context, measures addressing vulnerable young people from less advantaged backgrounds play a special role.

One of the features that influences the development of youth work is a high share of voluntary youth workers. The question that is waiting to be seriously addressed is: "What should the division of work between volunteer and paid youth work practitioners be so that it has a positive influence on young people and on society at large?" This issue has been given notice but, to date, there is no consensus on what the way forward should be.

The paper introduced three concepts from the sociology of occupations – professionalism as normative value, as a discourse and as a professional project – and employed them to describe youth work. Each of the three perspectives highlights different aspects and also points out different opportunities for youth work.

The occupation as a value perspective highlights the significance of specialist knowledge. Indeed, specialist knowledge is indispensable when it comes to providing high-quality services. Knowledge is not static; on the contrary, it is constructed by different actors in the context of evolving circumstances. Also, the knowledge base of youth work needs permanent development, renewal and updating. For knowledge creation, specialist youth work research institutions would be appropriate. For transferring the specialist knowledge, study programmes within formal education and non-formal learning environments are inescapable. The distinction between degree programmes and short training courses helps also to meet the different needs of volunteer and paid youth workers. From the sociology of occupations perspective, the institutions responsible for creating and transmitting high-quality knowledge are at the heart of highly professionalised and recognised occupations.

Looking through the occupation-as-a-discourse lens shows us that youth work could benefit from an increased investment of public funds in youth-related social challenges and issues. By its very nature, youth work commands expert knowledge on how young people think and behave. Youth workers also possess skills to support young people. Increasing investments in young people create a window of opportunity for youth work, which can use its expertise to contribute to achieving various policy goals. Supporting youth participation in education and finding employment are perhaps the most common ones, but there are more. Through providing this support, its role in society will also be better recognised. However, as this perspective suggests, this comes at some "cost" – youth work, which has its own ethos as well as goals and standards, must adapt to the needs of other policy areas. A very important aspect here is the differentiation between voluntary and paid youth workers – public policy programmes need to be used in a way that will support the development of integrated youth work communities of volunteer and paid youth workers.

The concept of occupation as a professional project emphasises the agency of professions in achieving social standing. It also highlights social closure aspects, despite not having been deemed important by researchers who have addressed youth work professionalisation before. Nevertheless, this variant of professionalism also involves professional autonomy and self-management. For a higher internal control, a way ahead could be the increased collaboration between youth worker organisations. Co-ordinated actions would also increase the negotiating power with stakeholders and partners. Youth work is

internally a rather heterogeneous family of occupations consisting of different methodologies, addressing different target groups and supporting the achievement of different policy goals. Establishing a single strong umbrella organisation has been, and still is, a challenge. However, building alliances would be an imperative for a family of occupations, which aims to gain a more recognised social standing. Establishing professional codes of conduct, ethical standards and educational requirements also lead to an increased distinction from other occupations and a clearer definition of youth work as a distinct, highly professionalised occupation. Naturally, both paid and voluntary youth workers must be motivated to support and contribute to these processes.