

Views of educators and youth work managers on the competences of youth workers

Working paper

Dunja Potočnik
Pool of European Youth Researchers
Institute for Social Research in Zagreb

Youth Partnership

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1. Introduction

This paper in its first part aims to present the main approaches to defining youth workers' competences and different frameworks that should enable efficient provision and learning about youth workers' competences. The second part will offer an overview of the existing competence frameworks and pathways to providing and obtaining youth workers' competences. The third part will present and interpret the data gathered via three surveys developed in the scope of work of the expert group for mapping the educational pathways of the youth workers¹, co-ordinated by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. The final part of the paper will analyse major challenges to provision, learning and recognition of youth workers' competences, with a list of the recommendations that could improve the current situation with regard to youth workers' competences. This volume of work was led by employing the Council of Europe Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers, an online tool that helps individuals, teams and organisations doing youth work around Europe to understand their competence and to develop it more effectively. On a level of wider European policies, work on this paper is led by the principles embraced by the Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention and Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, which emphasise that youth work contributes to the development of attitudes and values in young people as much as more tangible skills and competences. An added value of youth work in acquiring skills and knowledge is also recognised by the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work (Council of Europe 2017), which stipulates that "youth work makes an important contribution to active citizenship by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for civic engagement and social action".

2. Different approaches to youth workers' competences

Although competences differ across various professions, it can be said that there is a solid common basis of competences required from almost all adult citizens. Therefore, it is useful to consult the Eurydice publication from 2002, Key Competencies: A developing concept in general compulsory education, which elaborates on the criteria for selection of the key competences. Among those, the most important ones are 1) that the key competences must be potentially beneficial to all members of society; they must be relevant to the whole of the population, irrespective of gender, class, race, culture, family background or mother tongue; and 2) they must comply with the ethical, economic and cultural values and conventions of the wider society. The last two decades have been marked by pondering about the importance of the generic or transversal competences that are invaluable tools for

¹ I cordially express my gratitude to the colleagues in the Expert Group for critical thinking and advice given during the survey and writing of the paper.

successful action in highly volatile environments where purely subject-related competences are very short-lived. Some prominent generic skills are communication, problem-solving, reasoning, leadership, creativity, motivation, teamwork and the ability to learn.

Fennes and Otten in their 2008 study *Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work* note that “competences consist of an overall system of dispositions, capabilities, skills, and knowledge which are used to manage and master complex situations and tasks successfully” (p. 27). In regard to the competences of youth workers, it is important to differentiate between various levels of skills, knowledge and attitudes required in different types of youth work. Specifically, an ‘average’ youth worker that works with a young person rarely ever needs the special skills needed by the youth worker who works with marginalised young people, or by the youth workers in charge of project management. A quality system of youth work must be closely connected to a support system that can provide the different services needed to enable change; i.e. competence development, development of new methods, research, organisational support, etc. (European Commission 2015), which represents one of the foundations of the competence frameworks.

At the European level there are several proposals that aim to define and establish a framework for youth workers’ competences. The Final proposal on the Classification of Youth Worker Competences by YEU International (2012), which has resulted from the project *Certification of the qualifications of youth workers – road to greater recognition of youth work*, has been devised with the aim of providing a formal method of accrediting the qualifications of youth workers in NGOs. This proposal has developed qualification frameworks with the list of competences that would contribute to a fine-tuning of the competences required in the youth field with the European qualifications framework (EQF). It foresees two sets of competences, depending on the level of profession.

1) Junior youth worker (EQF 4-5)

1. An ability to organise workshops, educational or outdoor activities for young people.
2. An ability to transfer acquired knowledge and provide information to young people.
3. Support for the co-ordinator/senior youth worker in leading the team or group.
4. Assistance in co-ordinating youth projects.
5. Motivating young people to actively participate in community life or/and youth projects.
6. Ability to work effectively in a team.

2) Senior youth worker (EQF minimum 6)

1. An ability to self-organise his/her time, tasks, efficient time management; creating educational programmes based on the needs of young people.
2. Effective work in intercultural teams.
3. Advanced management of human and material resources.

4. An ability to map requirements and actors necessary for community development.
5. Create guidelines and procedures to ensure effective and efficient implementation of youth activities, initiatives and projects.
6. An ability to establish contact with different groups of young people and stakeholders working with/for youth.

A definition of the competences embraced by the Council of Europe consists of three interlinked dimensions: knowledge, skills and attitudes and values needed for performance of quality youth work. The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio Competence Framework, which is designed primarily to serve as a framework for self-assessment, encompasses eight functions of competences, with 31 competences in total. The competence functions recognised by this portfolio are as follows.

Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people

Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people

Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it

Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations

Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted

Function 6. Support collective learning in teams

Function 7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies / programmes work better for young people

Function 8. Develop, conduct and evaluate projects.

Parallel to establishing the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio, the efforts of Salto-Youth have resulted in a broad European Training Strategy in the Field of Youth, whose aim is to develop, based on the Competence Model for Trainers, a modular system to train trainers within the context of Erasmus+. During the expert seminar, held in 2016 in Vienna, the new ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally was introduced, reflecting on applying competence models in non-formal training strategies or formal curricula to train youth workers. This competence model consists of the following eight competences.

1. Facilitating individual and group learning in an enriching environment
2. Designing programmes
3. Organising and managing resources
4. Collaborating successfully in teams
5. Communicating meaningfully with others
6. Displaying intercultural competence

7. Networking and advocating
8. Developing evaluative practices to assess and implement appropriate change.

Youth workers are, as a rule, individuals who work with or on behalf of young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development to enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence. It is therefore of the utmost importance to provide enabling prerequisites and frameworks for their professional development through establishing and improving competence frameworks, self-assessment tools and tools for recognition of their role in society and their profession. The following section of this paper will present the results of the previous analyses of the existing competence frameworks, undertaken in co-ordination with the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

3. Results of previous analyses of youth workers' competences

The Expert Group for mapping the educational pathways of youth workers, during their meeting held in Brussels in May 2018, widely discussed the competences required by youth workers. T. Kiilakoski (2018) wrote the report "Early career perspectives for the education of youth workers" summarises the contributions of the experts from different European countries. In brief, it can be said that nowadays youth workers need a wide spectrum of skills. Among the crucial competences, communication skills and self-organisation were mentioned. Furthermore:

... building good relationships takes also other social skills like empathy, creativity and humour. However, interaction with young people also requires an ability to set borders between oneself and young people, so this is another important skill. Apart from being skilful in interpersonal encounters, being self-motivated and self-organised [were] seen as crucial features. ... The group also alluded to the idea that [the] youth worker profession was a lifestyle rather than a job. ... When discussing competences ... people said that the spectrum of competences has been widening. [In] earlier times, the spectrum of necessary skills was confined more to the area of relations and interactions between young people and youth workers. Nowadays the required spectrum of competences is wider because [of an] increasing number of regulations [the] youth worker needs to be aware of and adhere to, collaboration with [an] increasing number of other professionals [and the] higher significance of projects in youth work, which requires [the] youth worker to be able to prepare project applications and manage projects. Knowing who is who in [the] local municipality and how the municipality functions was deemed important because this knowledge enables youth workers to lobby [for] youth work.

The report of the focus group interview conducted for studying youth workers' educational and career paths by Petković and Taru (2018) suggests that in terms of subject area, the training of youth workers "... had [a focus on] general social and communication skills as well as [on] specific youth work methods. Some of the training [involved] youth work [basic] skills (like basic youth worker training), other were specific methods." The list of the registered areas of competences include the following.

1. Management of aggression, non-violent communication
2. Working with drug addicts
3. Social and communication skills
4. Street youth work
5. Project management
6. Event management
7. Group leading and management
8. Intercultural counselling, multi-cultural youth work.

"Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers" (p. 35-36) identified that competence frameworks appear to exist in only 20 of the countries included in the analysis (Table 1), with a further 20 countries that have initiated the process of defining the competences needed by youth workers.

The experts involved in the mapping, on the basis of the sample from 10 selected countries, identified two possible approaches to the competences needed by the youth workers:

- 1) ... the first focuses on the way competences are acquired through setting educational standards for professional education and training at degree level (Ireland, the Russian Federation), the specific content of training programmes (France, the French Community of Belgium, Serbia, Slovenia) or certifying the courses for youth workers (Austria).
- 2) The second focuses on the way competences are performed through defining professional/occupational/quality standards (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia the United Kingdom (England and Wales)), setting requirements for the results of youth work in law (like in Poland, where the 2011 law on supporting the family and the foster-care system defines very general criteria for the staff of day-care centres) or through other methods (as in Liechtenstein, where the competences of youth workers are defined in agreements between the municipalities and the Youth Work Foundation).

Table 1: Competence frameworks identified by the mapping report

Country or region	Competence framework
Austria	The aufZAQ certification (since 2003)
Belarus	Educational Standard of the Republic of Belarus № 1-09 01 74-2012
Belgium (French)	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
Bulgaria	Suggested set of skills of the youth worker, suggested in the Official "Position of the Bulgarian National Youth Forum on Youth Work and Youth Worker"
Czech Republic	National project Keys for life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time-Based and Non-Formal Education National competence-based framework for youth workers in youth information centres (produced by Youth Department; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in 2008)
Estonia	Occupational standard of youth workers developed by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (2012)
France	Professional training is included in the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP)
Ireland	The National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work (NQSF) National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups
Italy	Competence-based frameworks are defined in regional repertories of professions
Liechtenstein	Agreements between the municipalities and the Youth Work Foundation
Lithuania	Competence development programme – five modules – for the Youth Worker Certificate
Malta	Competence descriptors for youth workers are included in the Code of Ethics under the Youth Work Profession Act (2014)
The Netherlands	Competence profile for youth work (2008)
Poland	The 2011 Law on supporting family and the foster-care system
Portugal	The National Qualification Catalogue
Romania	The Occupational Standards
Russian Federation	A draft version of the National professional standard for youth workers
Serbia	Passport of Competences developed by NAPOR
Slovakia	National system of professions National project KomPrax
Slovenia	National vocational qualification certificate for youth workers (2017)
UK (England)	Covered under the frameworks mentioned earlier
UK (Wales)	The Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS)

This mapping also reports that the national standards of competences differ from the Council of Europe definition. Therefore, the mapping classifies the competences into 20 groups and ranks them in accordance with how frequently they appear across Europe. These groups range from communication and presentation skills, knowledge of youth work ethics and recognising the needs of young people, via intercultural skills and financial knowledge, to knowledge on project management and evaluation.

The mapping concludes (p. 37) that less than half of the analysed countries have some kind of competence quality assurance framework, and when comparing the list above with the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio "... it becomes apparent that most of the competences included in the portfolio are to some extent mentioned in the national documents of the countries surveyed", with the exceptions of the competences listed under Function 1 and Functions 5-7. These functions cover one overarching component that can be

found in all actions performed by youth workers – addressing the needs and aspirations of young people – and two elements that require more proficiency in the youth field: evaluation techniques and policy and programme development.

The results of the mapping suggest there has to be some steps taken towards awareness raising about how to address the needs of young people in a quality manner. The second important element of youth work that should be more and better incorporated into the education and training offered to youth workers is planning and developing of the training in policy and programme development. And the component that is indispensable for quality youth work – evaluation of the activities and project – requires more thoughtful planning and embedding in training modules. As it will be shown later in analysis of the survey data, these insights will be backed up by testimonials about youth work trainers and managers in the field of youth.

4. Research on the competences of youth workers as seen by educators and employers (youth work managers)

4.1. Methodology

The methodological framework included three stages of the survey conducted on the purposive samples.

1. Two focus groups² – a national one held in Croatia in September 2018 and an international one (conducted in November 2018 in Ljubljana).
2. Ten interviews with youth worker educators and youth work managers³ supporting the Erasmus+ project Europe Goes Local, conducted in June 2018.
3. An online survey of youth work managers and educators from across the member states of the Council of Europe conducted in November 2018. The respondents were asked a set of questions on their professional experience, participation in non-formal learning and their assessment of the skills, knowledge and values that are taught to and acquired by young people, followed by their attitudes and insights on improving the conditions for quality training and learning of competences in the youth field.

The main aim of these three empirical steps was to gather and analyse insights and opinions from youth worker educators and youth work managers on the competences of youth

2. The focus groups were organised on the margins of the larger events and the composition of the participants was broader than initially planned; apart from youth work managers and educators, the focus groups also included researchers in the youth field.

3. Youth work managers are defined in a manner that includes youth leaders, project managers at civil society organisations, youth experts responsible for managing youth work at civil society organisations and public bodies, and civil servants.

workers, and to grasp some practices in providing and learning the competences required for practising youth work. A basis for the surveys is found in the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio. The surveys were initiated while keeping in mind the importance of these two groups of experts in shaping knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of youth workers. Youth worker educators and youth work managers can be found in very diverse organisational settings and with very different roles. By gathering their opinions and experiences on youth workers' competences we can contribute to an improvement in self-assessment, learning, training and overall capacity building in the field of youth.

Sample composition of the experts taking part in the qualitative surveys

Interviewees

Ten experts supporting the Europe Goes Local Erasmus+ project, from Austria (two interviewees), Belgium, Croatia (two interviewees), Denmark, Finland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden. In this group, eight experts hold a higher education degree, while two are still in formal education. By status, two interviewees were trainers and eight were youth work managers.

Zagreb focus group – Experts based in Croatia

Six participants took part in this focus group; five hold a higher education degree and one is still studying. Half of the group were trainers and half were youth work managers and trainers. Three participants had less than five and three had more than 15 years of experience in youth work.

Ljubljana focus group – International group of 22 experts

By the country of their primary youth work engagement, eight countries were each represented by one participant: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Kosovo*⁴ and Serbia, two participants came from Albania, Croatia and Slovenia, while “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Romania were represented by three participants. There were nine policy officers, six youth work managers, four researchers and three representatives of national youth councils. Seven participants had less than five years of experience, six had 5-10 years, seven had between 11 and 24 and two had 25 or more years of experience in the youth field.

4. *All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

4.2. Results: a profile of the respondents of the online survey

An online survey was administered by sending an invitation for participation in the survey to a list of around 160 youth worker educators and youth work managers, out of whom 108 accessed the survey. Eighty-two participants filled in the first part of the survey, with the questionnaire on their private and professional background. However, after introducing the questions on the competence framework, the number of respondents sharply decreased to 34 and for one question only 17 responses were collected. It means that the results of this survey are not completely conclusive, as the survey sample is small and majority of respondents only took part in some of the survey.

The majority of the respondents – 52% (43 respondents) – were female, 44% (36 respondents) were male and three of them (4%) chose to answer “other”. Almost half of the respondents were younger than 35: 9% were between the ages of 18 and 24, 40% aged 25-34, 20% aged 35-44, 18% aged 45-54 and 13% aged 55-64.⁵

The respondents came from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Hungary, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Kosovo*, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK (Figure 1).

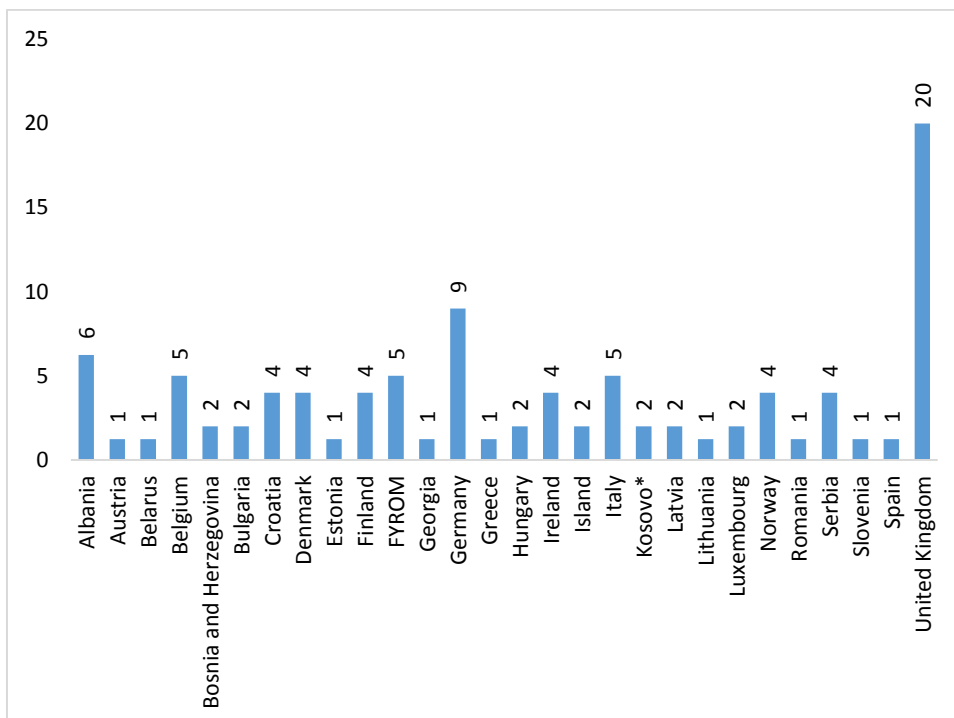


Figure 1: Primary country of youth work engagement (%)⁶⁷

5. N=82.

6. N=80.

It has to be noted that majority of questions were answered only by the respondents from Albania, Belarus, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Hungary, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Kosovo*, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway and the UK.

As regards the status of the respondents, 23% are youth workers trainers/educators, 38% are youth work managers, while 39% hold a status that is a combination of both.⁸ A large majority of the respondents had finished higher education (92%), only one (1%) had vocational schooling and 7% had completed general higher education.⁹

We can say that a significant share of the respondents belong to a group of highly experienced youth work experts (Figure 2); 30% of them have more than 20 years of experience in the field and 25% work in the youth scene 10-19 years. Further 26% have 5-9 years of experience and 19% reported on less than 5 years of working experience in the youth field¹⁰. A slight majority of respondents has more than 10 years of experience in the field, which has to be taken into account when interpreting the data, together with a technique used to gather a sample, which is more inclined towards the youth worker educators and youth work managers who work in the international setting.

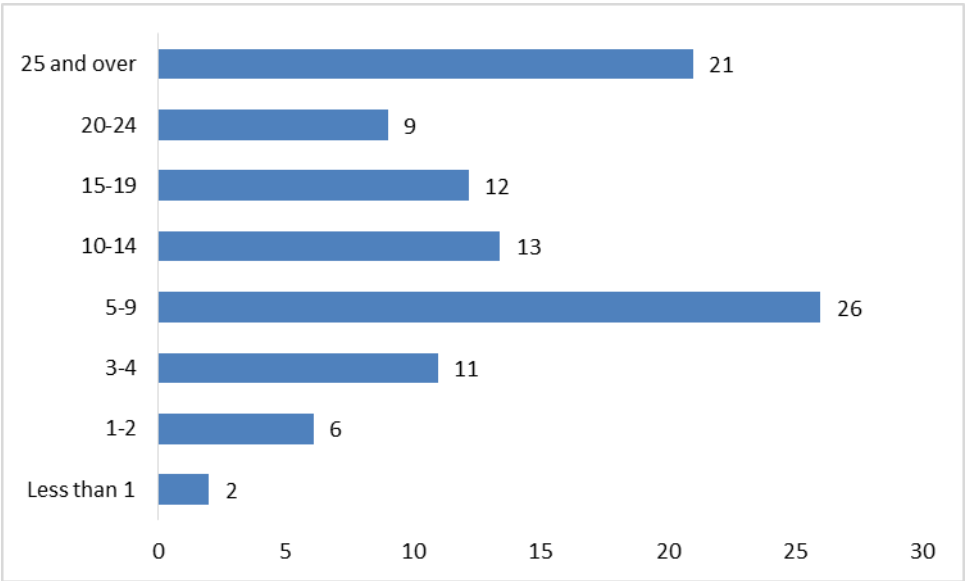


Figure 2: Years of experience in the field (%)¹¹

The years spent in non-formal education and training by the youth worker educators and youth work managers (Figure 2) who answered the online questionnaire do not completely

8. N=82.
 9. N=81.
 10. N=82
 11. N=81.

correspond to the responses to a question about the years of experience in the field (Figure 3). On average, the respondents have fewer years of non-formal learning (Figure 3) than what it counts for their overall professional experience (Figure 2).

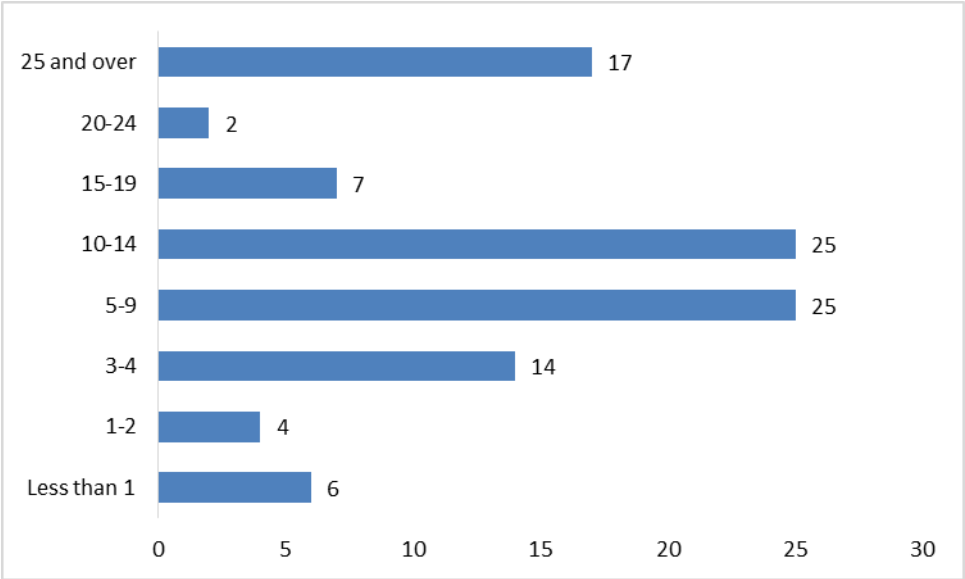


Figure 3: Years of non-formal education and training acquired by the respondents (%)¹²

Nonetheless, it can be said that the questionnaire was answered by highly knowledgeable experts as more than half of the respondents have over 10 years of acquired non-formal training, while only 10% of them have up to two years of non-formal learning in the field. Moreover, it has to be clarified that the answers to this question also depended on the respondents’ definition of non-formal learning. There are certainly youth worker educators and managers who did not regard peer-learning or “learning by doing” as non-formal learning, which can actually be considered very valuable forms of non-formal learning in the field.

4.3. Application of the competence frameworks and mapping the teaching and learning of competences

There are two core survey topics – the first relates to the application of the competence frameworks and mapping of the teaching and acquiring of competences, and the other encompasses identification of the major obstacles to successful teaching and acquiring of the competences required for youth work. This section will develop answers to a set of questions dedicated to the first topic. The first question in this section concerns whether the respondents know any of the competence frameworks: 86% of respondents had a positive

12. N=81.

answer and 14% negative.¹³ A question on whether the respondents have used any competence framework in managing or developing their organisation¹⁴ resulted in 63% answering positively, 31% negatively, while 6% responded with “not applicable”. When asked how they rate the importance of the competence framework for developing their organisation,¹⁵ with the scores between 1 (the lowest) and 5 (the highest), none of the respondents rated the importance with a “1” or “2”, whereas 12% rated it as “3”, 47% as “4” and 41% as “5”.

The topic presented in Figure 4 required from the respondents to try to assess the level of expertise of the youth workers they work with (with the scores between 1 – the lowest, and 5 – the highest), according to the European Youth Work Portfolio.

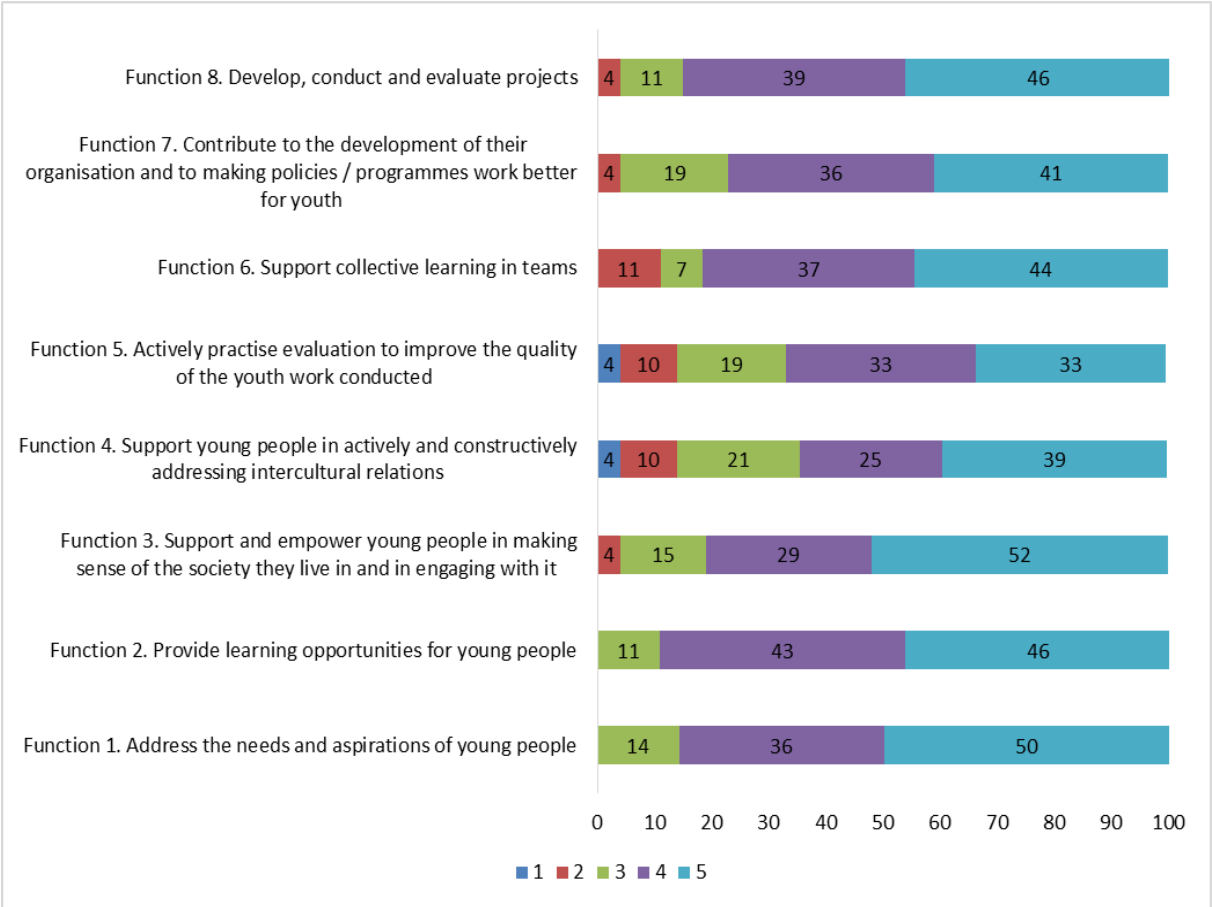


Figure 4: To what extent youth workers the respondents work with possess the listed skills, knowledge and attitudes (%)¹⁶

This portfolio is also used for different assessments in this entire section. Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of society they live in and in engaging with it is the one where youth workers seem the most proficient, followed by the Function 1. Address

13. N=35.
 14. N=35.
 15. N=32.
 16. N=34.

the needs and aspirations of young people, which is understandable as these areas of competence enable youth workers to work with young people on the most general, everyday level. The functions that is linked to the least expertise of youth workers – Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted – does not bring a surprise, as it requires knowledge of project work and more diverse experience in the youth field.

Unlike the respondents to the online survey, who were asked structured closed-type questions, participants in the focus groups were asked similar questions on a more general level. When asked to what extent youth workers the respondents work with possess the listed skills, knowledge and attitudes, experts from the Zagreb and Ljubljana focus groups acknowledged a level of expertise of the youth workers they work with. However, the participants highlighted certain areas of expertise for improvement that could be regarded as representative of all the competences in the youth field:

1. Ability to adapt to the needs of young people and listening to the young people.
2. Understanding of the methods that are to be used in project work.
3. Critical thinking.
4. Communication and presentation skills, especially in relation to outreach work.
5. Pedagogical and psychological skills.
6. Organising and devising a specific approach for specific groups like educators, youth workers, etc.
7. Self-assessment skills.
8. Evaluation skills.
9. Competences related to fundraising.
10. Skills required for project management.

The listed fields of competences correspond and can be translated to the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio and to the models and frameworks existing on the national level across the Council of Europe. It means that experts in the youth field have a general expectation of the competences possessed by youth workers; on the competences relevant to the quality delivery of youth work. This common understanding should be used for further development and for carrying out youth work at the national and international levels.

Figure 5 presents the data on self-reported training delivered to youth workers, with the scores between 1 (the lowest) and 5 (the highest) on each of the competence functions related to youth work, as defined in the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio.

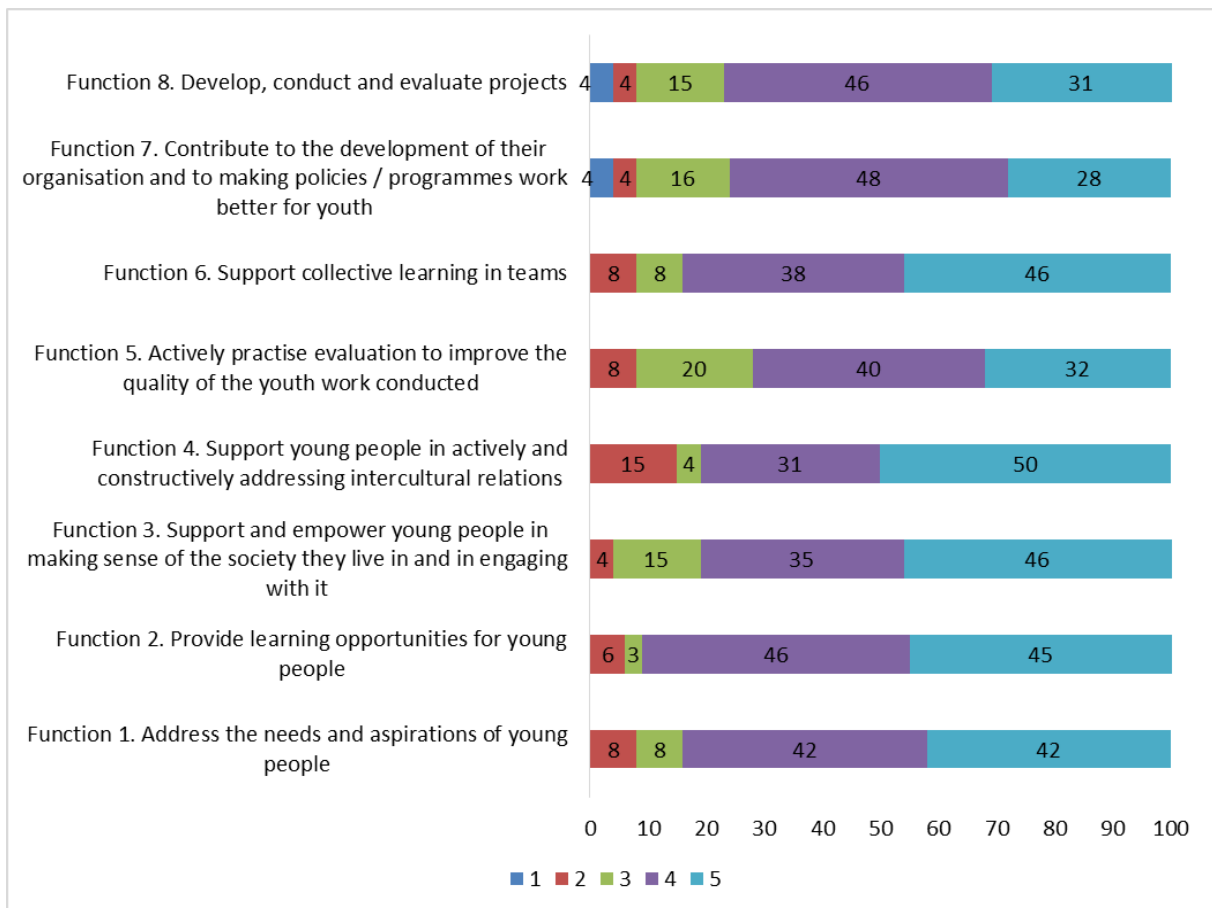


Figure 5: Self-reporting on the training delivered by youth worker educators and youth work managers (%)¹⁷

It is interesting to see that the competences under Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations, followed by Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it

and Function 3 . Address the needs and aspirations of young people and Function 6. Support collective learning in teams received most of the “5” scores. However, when ranking the positions by considering the sum of answers for “5” and “4”, Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people comes at the top, while Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted has been less exercised during the training of youth workers. We may conclude that youth worker educators and youth work managers have mostly acquired experience in training in the areas that can be subsumed under a title of “generic” competences that are required from youth workers on an everyday level. On the other hand, specialist competences, like evaluation and intercultural learning, require more knowledge and skills from the educators and are

17. N=34.

probably less interesting to youth workers who prefer to be involved in direct work with young people.

The following figure examines the competences taught during the training provided by the organisations currently working with the respondents of our survey. The data presented above show us a somewhat different picture than Figure 6, which implies that the overall interests of non-governmental organisations and public bodies differ to some extent from the experiences and activities of the youth worker educators and youth work managers. In other words, there is a single function that 50% of respondents marked as a “5” Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it – which was slightly less present in the training provided by the educators.

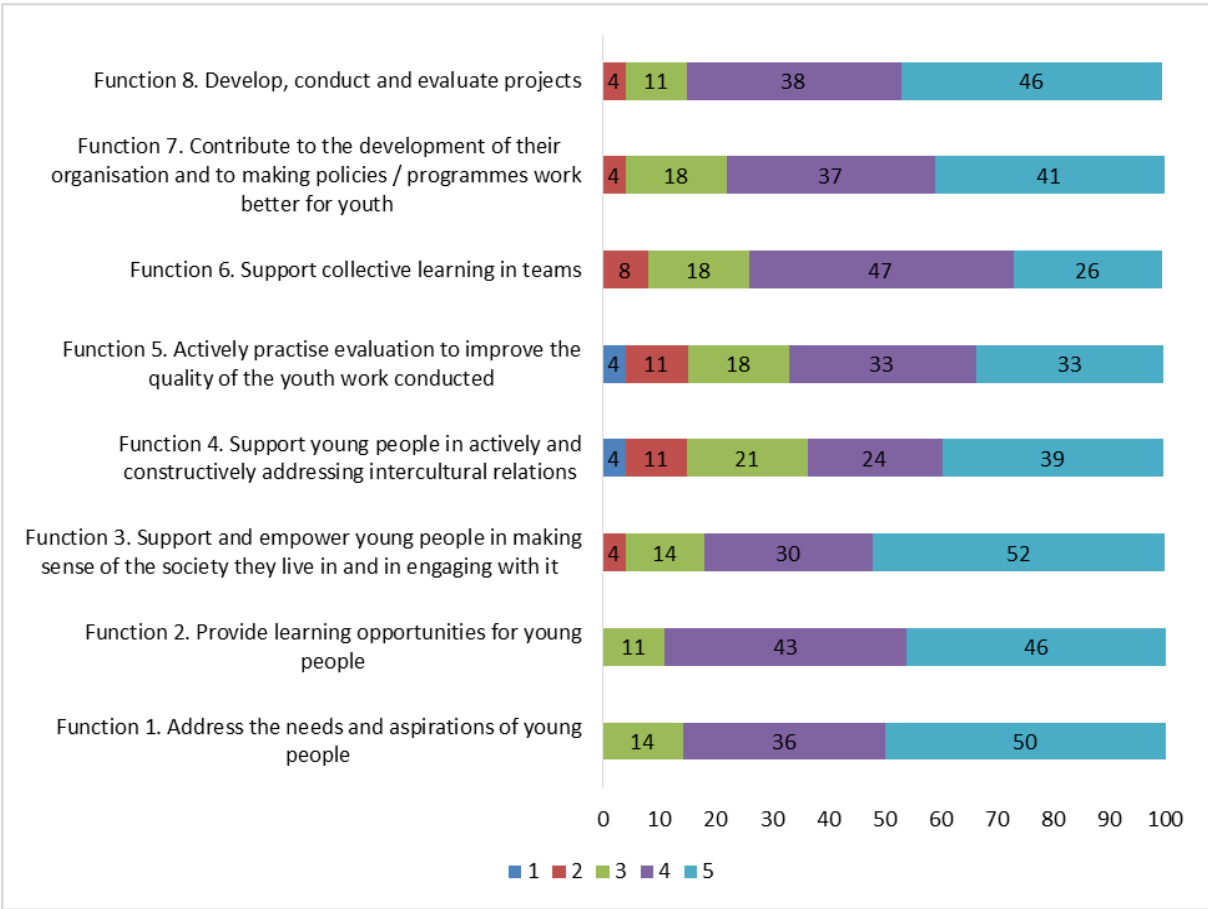


Figure 6: Training provided by the organisations the youth worker educators and managers currently work with (%)¹⁸

When adding together the “4” and “5” responses, the leading positions are held by Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people and Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people, which is more in line with the training experiences of the youth work educators and youth work managers who took part in the online survey. We can also

18. N=25-26, depending on a listed function.

note that the organisations providing youth worker education and the youth worker educators most probably have experience of training in the areas of their high proficiency, meaning that they may educate and ask for skills in areas they themselves are experienced and skilful in. However, as already said, the results of this survey cannot be completely conclusive due to a relatively small sample, though these insights can serve as a basis for remodelling training courses offered by the agencies in non-formal learning and delivered by youth work trainers.

Respondents from the focus groups identified the following areas of competences taught to youth workers via the organisations with which the respondents are currently associated, which, again, correspond to the frameworks of the competences developed at the national level and identified in the Council of Europe Portfolio:

1. Development of personal traits (e.g. enthusiasm, motivation, proactivity, social intelligence).
2. Intercultural skills and values.
3. Values important for youth work.
4. Communication and presentation skills.
5. Pedagogical skills – how to extract the best from a young person.
6. Knowledge of European projects.
7. Knowledge of the functioning of local, regional and national government.
8. Knowledge and skills required for inclusion of sensitive groups in the youth work.

The next steps in the analysis were to identify the opinions of the youth work educators and managers on the areas of the potential impact of youth work competence frameworks (Table 2). In total, 12 impact were identified, with raising the quality of youth work and setting the standards for youth work as the most prominent ones.

Table 2: Areas of potential impact of the competence frameworks in the youth field^{19 20}

Potential impact of the youth competence frameworks on the youth field	Number of responses
Raising the quality of youth work	5
Setting the standards for youth work and the role of youth workers	4
Development of competences	3
Help in evaluation and self-assessment	3
Professionalisation of youth work	3
Recognition of youth work and the youth work profession	3
Defining learning objectives in youth worker education and training	2
Helping youth workers and organisations to choose the themes they should focus on	2
Raising the visibility of youth work and youth workers	2
Defining ethical standards of youth work	1
Guidelines for the development of youth organisations	1
Raising self-awareness of the importance of the role of youth workers	1

19. N=29. The answers were of different quality and not all answers were strictly focused on the topic in this question.

20. “What impact do you think the youth workers’ competences frameworks listed above can have on youth work/the youth field?”.

Answers illustrating the impacts listed above include the following.

It may help youth workers to find answers to the question “what are you doing the whole day?”, which is often asked by people who do not know the field of youth work.

Having a set of competences gives a benchmark for setting professional standards and ensures that staff are committed to ongoing professional development within their respective roles. The competences also create a broad theme for focusing on ensuring that young people get the best possible support and focusing on the development of their skills, knowledge and attitudes. It strengthens youth work and aids reflective practice because staff can conduct their own analysis and reflective practice against the competences.

In my opinion we should look on it as a tool for reflection in order to not forget what youth work is all about. In that sense it would also be a tool for defining learning objectives for professional improvement.

The next question in the online survey asked the respondents whether they use or advise youth workers to use competence self-assessment tools. A positive answer came from 56% and 44% answered “No”. The question offered a selection of tools and instruments that might be used by youth work managers and educators and/or which experts might recommend youth workers to use for self-assessment (Table 3). Seventeen instruments were noted in this regard in the survey, with the Youthpass and the Council of Europe Portfolio sharing first place.

Table 3: Tools and instruments used or recommended by youth worker educators and youth work managers for competence self-assessment²¹

Tools and instruments	Number of responses
Youthpass	3
The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio	3
Competence framework developed in Bulgaria	2
“Core Abilities of Youth Workers NSETS”	1
A model developed by Finnish youth workers	1
NAPOR tools	1
NOS UK	1
Personal development plan	1
Reflection on the daily and monthly planners	1
“Quality Dialogue”	1
Salto-Youth ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally	1
Supervision plan	1

Table 4 lists the frameworks mentioned under the question on the competence frameworks used by youth work managers and educators. There are in total 22 frameworks recorded,

21. N=17. The answers were of different quality and not all answers were strictly focused on the topic in this question.

with three international ones, while the rest of the competence frameworks were developed and are being used at the local or national level.

Table 4: Competence frameworks used by youth worker educators and youth work managers²²

Competence frameworks	Number of responses
Nationally developed models (Bulgaria, Finland, NQF Ireland, Serbia - Napor, NOS UK)	8
The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio	8
Salto-Youth ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally	3
Competence framework developed by the local organisation	1
Leadership development model of AIESEC	1
Quality Management in Youth Information and Counselling - A Competence Development Framework	1

When explaining the answers provided in the table above, it should be said that different respondents had different understandings of the competence frameworks and that the responses related both to the competence frameworks and to some other frameworks that are not necessarily based on the youth workers' competences.

The youth worker educators and youth work managers were asked whether the tools used by them or being recommended for use to the youth workers have been developed at the international, national or local level.²³ The least popular – 29% – were those developed at the local level; the most popular – 38% – were developed at the national level; and 33% chose the instruments and tools devised at an international level.

Recognition of the learning outcomes has been analysed in the paper “Youth workers: Learning in non-formal contexts” (Potočnik, 2018), which is part of the mapping exercise organised by the youth partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Therefore, the recognition of competences will not be further discussed in this paper. Instead, only a brief note on the formal systems for obtaining youth worker diplomas will be inserted. An overview of youth studies in Europe, written on the basis of the Erasmus+ project, reveals that only in Estonia, Finland and the UK can there be found university studies dedicated to youth work. Other Council of Europe member states offer programmes that enable graduates to work in the youth field, like education studies, social work studies, sociology and psychology.

22. N=20. The answers were of different quality and not all answers were strictly focused on the topic in this question.

23. N=21.

4.4. The youth experts' input: improving the support for training and learning of competences in the youth field

The diverse range of conditions, agencies and structures where youth workers learn and develop their competences and perform youth work requires an analysis of the experience of support youth workers receive for their activities. There is also a need to gather inputs that aim to give a more insightful and helpful picture that would direct decision makers and funders towards providing better conditions for the learning and training of youth workers. These components were a part of both our qualitative and quantitative surveys. The first question in this regard tackled opinions and recommendations for providing support in training and learning of the competences in the youth field.²⁴

One of the interviewees gave a response that resonates with several elements of youth workers' training provision, that is, about offering quality training, improving communication and outreach in youth worker training and developing courses that are more tailored to the dispositions and preferences of youth workers:

Youth workers should be given the choice to engage in quality opportunities for their further development, including training at local, regional, national and European level, as well as online support such as webinars and MOOCs. At the moment, there's a multitude of great training opportunities for youth workers out there, many of which the majority of youth workers are unfortunately unaware of. The way training offers are communicated to youth workers needs to be improved, including why they should develop certain competences or increase their knowledge on a certain topic. Moreover, as most international seminars, training and events are in English, many youth workers who do not feel confident with their English skills automatically reject the idea of going abroad for a training opportunity. Developing regional training courses (in northern European countries, southern European countries, etc.) might be helpful, but only by providing on-the-spot translation will you solve the issue.

Another expert pointed to the need for more structured teaching programmes in order to better recognise youth workers' competences:

A very important thing is that we need to have a well-developed curriculum recognised by public authorities. Not because I don't believe in the efficiency of non-formal learning (and as all youth workers, I think that non-formal learning is a really efficient way of adopting new knowledge), but because we need to have some formal recognition in society. One of the biggest problems regarding this issue (my opinion) is that we don't have clear boundaries for youth work, like how much we can enter into public education, the field of psychology, etc.

24. "How do you think youth workers could be better prepared and supported in order to deliver quality youth work?"

A lack of financial resources was addressed by several participants in the Zagreb focus group, and one of these experts worded it in the following manner:

More financial resources for single organisations so that there would be resources, time and more knowledge; we have difficulties in letting people go for extra training because of a lack of staff.

This reasoning is in line with the input from the Zagreb focus group:

Stable structural financing. Currently, youth work is project-based without viable financing, which depletes energy and consumes the time of the youth workers. There is not enough time left for acquiring competences and volunteering. The majority of time is spent on administration and fundraising.

A need for recognition and validation of the youth workers profession was also one of the discussed topics:

The youth work profession is not recognised in the national classification as an occupation.

Two participants of the Ljubljana focus group emphasised the need to remodel accreditation processes:

Evaluate and reshape the system of accreditation and the processes for gaining this recognition – not just basing it on one two-day-long training session.

Accreditation at the supervision level is superficial – training that lasts for a couple of days. Lifelong learning is important, plus checking whether the competences they have acquired a couple of years ago are still in line with the needs of the young people.

Co-ordination between various actors in the field, including co-ordination among donors in order to distribute financial resources in a more efficient manner, was also one of the important aspects discussed during the Ljubljana focus group:

Donor co-ordination – donors are giving money for the same cause. Good co-ordination between vertical structures and how the role of youth workers is recognised [is needed]. They still don't get the horizontal process of communication and how to reflect topics bottom-up.

Table 5 presents an overview of the ways of providing better support to youth workers in order to deliver quality youth work proposed by the respondents to the online survey.

Table 5: Ways of providing better support to youth workers in order to deliver quality youth work²⁵

Ways of providing better support to youth workers in order to deliver quality youth work	Number of responses
Better recognition and validation of youth work, especially on a national level	8
More diverse provision and better quality of the training modules	8
Defining clear roles for youth workers – setting the standards of youth work	5
Application of the evaluation tools/quality assurance frameworks	3
Providing better (structural) funding	3
Established national system of support for youth workers and leaders	2
Quality supervision	2
Access to quality formal and non-formal education in youth work	1
Advocating youth work/raising visibility of youth work	1
Long-term training courses for youth workers	1
More intercultural exchanges	1
Professionalisation of youth work	1
Providing an adequate infrastructure	1
Self-awareness – adopting the identity of youth workers	1
Simplification of the evaluation tools	1
Supportive local community	1
Use of evidence-based insights/databases	1

Answers illustrating the ways listed above of providing better support to youth workers in order to deliver quality youth work speak about a need to differentiate between administrative tasks and tasks more closely related to youth work. The youth worker educators and managers also called for more fair financial compensation for youth workers, for increasing their visibility and public recognition and for establishing more efficient national legal and policy frameworks for quality youth work:

Youth workers ... should be responsible for just delivering youth work and not for doing all the other administrative jobs. Also, they have to be paid well and have access to supervisors in order to have support when dealing with vulnerable or challenging groups of young people. Youth workers should be part of the system and we should lobby hard to make them visible. They should have continuous education on the topic since they have to reconsider and question their own involvement in youth work.

Established national system of support for youth workers and leaders. I think the legal framework would help a lot. By recognising youth work and setting standards the quality of youth work would definitely improve.

The next section will deal with the concrete support the organisations the youth worker educators and youth work managers work for provide on acquiring competences²⁶ (Table 6). A significant majority of the responses relate to the training which provides youth workers

25. N=29. The answers were of different quality and not all answers were strictly focused on the topic in this question.

26. “What support do you and/or your organisation/institution offer to youth workers with regard to acquiring competences?”.

with an opportunity to obtain new competences, while other modes of support include supervision of the youth workers’ activities, providing help to recognise skills and help with self-assessment.

Table 6: Modes of support offered to youth workers to acquire competences²⁷

Support offered to youth workers to acquire competences	Number of responses
Organising training	29
Regular supervision and co-ordination of activities	5
Opportunities for networking and peer-learning	3
Funding training and exchanges	2
Providing help in obtaining certificates	2
Providing tools and guidance for self-assessment and evaluation	2
Support in writing project proposals and project management	2
Dissemination of information on relevant youth work activities	1
Help from the pool of trainers	1

The following answers illustrate the ways support is offered to youth workers in acquiring competences.

We offer an educational programme for youth workers and youth leaders. Both programmes last for 11 months with a practical placement. At the end, those people who successfully finished received a certificate. For people who practise youth work, we also offer validation processes where they can validate and evaluate their gained skills and knowledge. For the organisation, we offer accreditation processes to ensure quality in youth programmes.

Our youth workers are frequently asked to participate in the writing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of different projects and training and are taking a direct part and an active role in the youth work provided by the organisation, thus deepening and enhancing their relevant experience and expertise.

The next level of analysis targeted requirements to be fulfilled at the organisational, local, national and European level with regard to providing youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work.²⁸

Youth worker educators and youth work managers who took part in the interviews gave very comprehensive responses, highlighting the need to improve conditions for the professional development of the youth workers.

What I noticed during my years as a youth worker is that youth workers rarely have the possibility to take several days off to attend an international training event or even a national meeting. They are busy organising activities, taking care of problems, managing a youth club, etc. So, to better support youth workers in delivering quality youth work, it is necessary to

27. N=29. The answers were of different quality and not all answers were strictly focused on the topic in this question.

28. “What could be done better at the organisational, local, national and European level with regard to providing youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work?”.

set the right conditions for them to focus on their development: for instance, considering the training as part of their working time and therefore being paid (for paid youth workers), having someone to replace them during the time they are absent and further incentives. Only by fully recognising their right to develop their competences will youth workers be able to engage in training activities that will have a positive impact on their work. For youth workers who are unable or not willing to travel, MOOCs and webinars are becoming increasingly attractive, as they allow you to increase your knowledge and competences in your own time and [at your own] pace. The negative side of online training is that the learning from peers component, the intercultural dialogue, the human experience is lost. Lastly, it is important that training opportunities are offered to youth workers for free or with little costs, which should anyway be covered by their employer or co-ordinating organisation.

Additionally, focus group participants identified important issues in policy making and providing basic prerequisites for performing youth work, referring to the inadequacy of financial means, of infrastructural capacities and of the co-operation between the public sector and civil society organisations.

The authorities lack capacities for managing youth policy and youth work.

Everything is pushed forward from the national to the local level, and the local level lacks infrastructure and support in developing youth policy and youth work. Youth work is regarded as a marginal topic that is in the way of more “serious” agendas.

[There is] a basic need is to create a system of co-operation and acceptance with the local authorities, they have to ... support the youth workers. The second thing is that we have to create a sustainable mechanism to give them the space to work where they are living. The [money] is in the large towns and everyone is moving there, there is nothing left at the municipal level. Even at the national level, good practice is at the local level. We have to support the ... regional and local level.

Infrastructure comes first – youth centres/clubs or even mobile youth clubs. To have a car to be able to reach rural areas. Those have to be provided by the authorities and also by the NGOs who have facilities. To make the youth workers feel more close to the NGOs or some structure.

We have everything on paper ... and the government just copies and pastes everything from other countries. They just do it because the European Commission is asking them to do it.

The online survey was, among other things, aimed at gathering proposals for improvements in providing youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work (Table 7). Modes of improvements listed in the table 7 can be acknowledged as an upgrade of the support offered to the youth workers that were named in the table 6. Several out of a total of 40 responses caught the attention more of the youth work educators and managers. The first is the need to help better recognise youth work at the national level, which can be regarded as one of the youth work components that needs particular attention and harmonisation at the European level. The need to help better recognise youth work at

the national level is followed by a corresponding element – developing the standards of youth work at the local/national level, and more diverse provision and better quality of training modules. Table 7 presents an extensive list of proposals, and is accompanied by citations illustrating the proposals for improving the learning of the competences required for quality youth work.

Table 7: Proposals for improvements at the organisational, local, national and European level with regard to providing youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work²⁹

Proposals for improvements at the organisational, local, national and European level with regard to providing youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work	Number of responses
Better recognition and validation of youth work, especially at a national level	9
Developing standards of youth work at the local/national level	5
More diverse provision and better quality of training modules	5
Providing better (structural) funding, especially at the local level	4
Devising a European framework of competences or a charter	3
Establishing formal educational systems for youth work	2
Establishing regional co-operation for youth work and youth worker training	2
Providing fair financial compensation for work of youth trainers	2
Providing support at the local and regional level	2
Advocating youth work/raising visibility of youth work	1
Application of the evaluation tools/quality assurance frameworks	1
Better inclusion of marginalised groups and minorities	1
Better supervision and mentorship	1
Certified programmes for acquiring youth work competences	1
Inclusion of young people and youth workers in the design and implementation of projects in the field	1
Long-term training courses for youth workers	1
More diverse provision and better quality of training modules	1
More online courses	1
More partnership and peer-learning events	1
More research insight into youth work	1
Online training in quality standards, evaluation and other tools	1
Opening youth centres	1
Political recognition of youth work and better cross-sectoral co-operation	1
Professionalisation of youth work	1
Providing facilities for training	1
Providing tools and guidance for self-assessment and evaluation	1

The following are answers illustrating the ways of improving at the organisational, local, national and European level the provision of opportunities for youth workers to obtain competences for quality youth work: improving the infrastructure and financial means to assure sustainability and establishing regional platforms for youth work.

29. N=28. The answers were of different quality and not all answers were strictly focused on the topic in this question.

In order to ensure sustainability, we have to lobby hard for the opening of youth clubs and centres. We should also learn how to do that because results show we are not good at it ... Also, we should not forget that youth clubs and centres are not just chairs, tables, computers and space, they should be more than that. If young people are not designing the space and programmes, then they will not feel it is their space. Youth workers who know and practise this will not be [have problems in providing] quality youth work or [motivating] youth to be active in the programmes.

In my opinion it will be good to have some regional platform for youth work, because what we have learned from the past is that regional initiatives on various topics made fertile ground for building the national infrastructure. This regional initiative with strong political and financial support from the EU and Council of Europe could have the best synergy effect on the youth work in the South East Europe.

The online survey also attracted useful proposals with regard to the harmonisation of youth worker training and recognition of their qualifications:

As well as youth work competences, maybe there should be an international or pan-European youth work qualification or kite mark so all European universities running youth work training courses are accredited or have a framework which is recognised across all countries.

There was also one slightly provocative observation and a question to consider when devising systems for validation of youth workers' qualifications that pertain to the need to invest more effort into accreditation:

“Youth worker” is a problematic title as anyone can be called a youth worker (volunteer, session worker, full-time employees) – the title doesn't demonstrate the competences held. Should there be a national register of qualified workers, or a different title given and used for different positions (although how would you avoid people from using this title)?

This last citation also indicates there is a need to better regulate youth work and set the standards for learning and training in the field of youth and youth work performance and assessment. However, a notion of “regulation” often contradicts the very nature of the youth work and those who work in the youth field, and those who have the power to initiate or set frameworks must be very cautious of the danger of over-regulating the field. It would be counter-productive and instead of contributing to quality youth work and its social and political promotion and recognition, it could result in the erosion of some already good practices and hinder further improvements in the youth field.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Youth worker educators, youth work managers and youth workers are indispensable to quality youth work. The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth decided to engage the Expert Group on mapping the educational

pathways of youth workers in gathering insights on various dimensions of the youth workers' professional profiles – from the educational pathways, recognition of competences and profession, via ethics, to non-formal learning and the competences as seen by the youth worker educators and managers. The surveys of youth worker educators and youth work managers were conducted between June and November 2018 by organising two focus groups, 10 interviews and an online survey. Although the results of these surveys cannot be completely conclusive due to the relatively small samples, the insights gathered via them should inform different stakeholders of the experiences and opinions of youth worker educators and youth work managers on some aspects of the training of youth workers and their competence proficiency. An added value of the surveys concerns the collecting of proposals for improvements in training and the learning of youth workers.

Almost 90 per cent of the respondents are aware of at least one of the competence frameworks and two thirds of them use these frameworks in their work. It is interesting that among the youth worker educators and youth work managers included in the survey, slightly more than half use or advise youth workers to use competence self-assessment tools. Two thirds of these frameworks were devised at the local or national level, while only one third related to international frameworks. These two findings indicate there should be more effort invested in the promotion and recognition of both the national and international competence frameworks.

The first question directly addressing the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio helped us to find out that youth worker educators and managers believe youth workers hold the highest degree of proficiency in Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of society they live in and in engaging with it and in Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people, while Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted, according to our respondents, presents a challenge to average youth workers. This is understandable as the competences under the two first-ranked functions represent the core of the “everyday” work of youth workers, while the latter is being performed by a smaller share of youth workers and probably only occasionally.

Respondents from the focus groups and interviews were asked to identify the most important areas of competences required for the quality performance of youth work and. in total. 10 areas of competences were reported, where each of these areas can be translated into “Youth portfolio: youth work competence”³⁰. They can also be translated into the frameworks existing at the national level across the Council of Europe, which means that youth worker educators and youth work managers have common expectations about the competences relevant for the quality delivery of youth work. These common expectations towards the competence frameworks should be used for further development of quality youth work at the national and international level.

³⁰ www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-competence

Self-reported training delivered to youth workers and training organised by the organisations the respondents currently work with were also of interest for this empirical analyses. Nonetheless, we have to treat these results with some caution as they might be biased towards skills areas the organisations and the youth worker educators are skilful at, which may not accurately reflect the needs in the youth field. The results indicate that the competences under Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it and Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people represent a core of the training experiences of the respondents, while Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations related to an area where youth worker educators and youth work managers are the least experienced in training. It can be suggested that youth worker educators and youth work managers have mostly acquired experience in training in the areas that can be subsumed under the title of “generic” competences required by youth workers on an everyday level. Contrary to this, specialist competences, like evaluation and intercultural learning, require more knowledge and skills from the educators and may be less interesting to youth workers. These insights correspond to the results of the assessment of the competences of youth workers; according to their trainers, youth workers seem to have more competences in the areas that are actually covered by the training delivered by the respondents.

Results on the experiences of training organised for youth workers by the organisations the respondents currently work with are somehow different; there is a single function with a majority of the highest rankings – Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations. Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people and Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people are also well placed, which corresponds more to the training experiences of the youth work educators and youth work managers who took part in the online survey.

When asked what about the areas of potential impact of the competence frameworks in the youth field, the respondents indicated that raising quality of youth work, setting the standards for youth work and the role of youth workers, development of competences, and recognition of youth work and the youth work profession are the most prominent potential impacts of using the competence frameworks. Personal knowledge and recognition of the competence frameworks imply that on average each respondent recognises one or two competence frameworks, the majority of which were developed at the international level, while the local or national frameworks were listed by 10 youth worker educators and youth work managers.

Proposals for improvements at the organisational, local, national and European level with regard to providing youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work represent the core topics of the survey. The answers indicate that better recognition and validation of youth work, especially on a national level, absolutely “wins”, as

it gathered the most single answers. However, as pointed out by S. Bohtinger (2007) and T. Kiilakoski (2015), in order to avoid rigid formalisation of these recognition in the youth sector, there should be carefully established balance between formal recognition and awarding certificates for a short-term volunteering. Recognition and validation were followed, with an equal number of responses, by developing standards of youth work at the local/national level and more diverse provision and better quality of training modules. After them, providing better (structural) funding, especially at the local level, and 25 other methods were proposed by the respondents. These methods span from providing better supervision and mentorship to political recognition of youth work and better cross-sectoral co-operation.

In the concluding remarks it should be emphasised there is a certain level of knowledge about the competence frameworks devised at the local, national and international level, although it cannot be said that this level is satisfactory. More efforts and financial resources should be invested in promoting and recognising the competence frameworks, as well as in further developing the existing ones and devising new specialist ones (e.g. for working with vulnerable and marginalised youth). The competence frameworks should be fine-tuned to the needs of contemporary young people and recognise changes in society and in different communities of young people. No less important, development and improvement of the competence frameworks should be accompanied by promotion and recognition of the youth worker profession and fair financial and status compensation for their efforts.

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Europe Goes Local

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Salto-Youth

Salto-Youth expert seminar (Vienna, 2016)

SEE Youth Work Seminar (Ljubljana, 2018)

The Competence Model for Trainers

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio

The Expert Group on mapping the educational pathways of youth workers

Annex

A) Questionnaire on youth workers' competences. Survey of the educators and employers (youth work managers) – semi-structured interviews

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Country of current youth work engagement:
4. Years active in youth work:
5. Your current status (please tick as appropriate):
 1. Trainer/educator
 2. Youth work manager
6. What is your highest formal education qualification? (Tick as appropriate):
 1. Vocational education
 2. General high-school education
 3. Higher education (bachelor's or higher)
7. What is the field/subject of your formal education?
8. How many years of non-formal education and training do you have?
9. How many years of experience do you have as a trainer?
10. How many years of experience do you have as a youth work manager?
11. How do you think youth workers could be better prepared and supported in order to deliver quality youth work?
12. What could be done better at the organisational, local, national and European level to provide youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work?
13. Please add any other comment or proposal you may have with regard to youth workers' competences.

B) Questionnaire on youth workers' competences. Focus groups with educators, employers (youth work managers) and decision makers (focus group held in Zagreb)

1. Country of the current youth work engagement, years active in youth work and current status (a trainer or a youth work manager):
2. Highest formal education qualification:
 1. Vocational education
 2. General high-school education
 3. Higher education (bachelor's or higher)
3. Please explain what kind of competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) the organisation you are working with provides to youth workers and is it done in a formal or non-formal manner? State to what extent you take part in provision of these competences to youth workers.
4. Please try to identify the most important competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) your organisation requires from youth workers.
5. Please try to assess to what extent the youth workers who you are working with possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes the organisation you are working with requires for majority of projects.
6. Please try to identify what are the most deficient competences in regard to those possessed by the average youth worker working with your organisation.
7. How do you think youth workers could be offered better conditions for acquiring and recognising required competences?
8. What could be done better at the organisational, local, national and European level to provide youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work?
9. Please add any other comment or proposal you may have about youth workers' competences.

C) Questionnaire on youth workers' competences. Focus groups with educators, employers (youth work managers) and decision makers (focus group held in Ljubljana)

1. Country of current youth work engagement, years active in youth work and current status (a trainer/educator, a youth work manager, combination of the first two categories, or a decision maker)
2. Highest formal education qualification:
 1. Vocational education
 2. General high-school education
 3. Higher education (bachelor's or higher)
3. Please explain in what areas of competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) the organisation you are currently working with has organised training for youth workers, and if it was done in formal or non-formal manner. Please state to what extent you have taken part in this training.
4. Please try to identify the most important competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) your organisation requires from youth workers.
5. Please try to assess to what extent the youth workers who you are working with possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes the organisation you are working with requires for majority of projects.
6. Please try to identify what are the most deficient competences with regard to those possessed by the average youth worker working with your organisation.
7. Please state your expectations in relation to the impact of youth workers' competences on youth work/the youth field.
8. Do you use or advise youth workers to use competence self-assessment tools? What kind of tools? Have they been developed at the international, national or local level?
9. How do you think youth workers could be offered better conditions for acquiring and recognising required competences?
10. What support do you and/or your organisation offer to youth workers for acquiring competences?

11. What could be done better at the organisational, local, national and European level to provide youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work?

12. Please add any other comment or proposal you may have about youth workers' competences.

D) Questionnaire on the youth workers' competences. Survey of the educators and employers (youth work managers) – an online survey

1. Gender:

2. Age:

3. Primary country of your current youth work engagement:

4. Number of years you have been active in youth work:

5. Your current status (please select the most appropriate):

3. Trainer/educator
4. Youth work manager
5. Combination of both

6. What is your highest formal education qualification? (Please select the most appropriate):

4. Vocational education
5. General high-school education
6. Higher education (bachelor's or higher)

7. How many years of non-formal education and training do you have?

8. Do you know at least one competence framework on youth work?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Have you used any competence framework in managing/developing your organisation?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

10. Please write the names of the competence frameworks you have used in your work. In case you have not used any competence framework, please move on to the next question.

11. How important do you feel competence frameworks are for developing your organisation? Please rate the importance by ticking one number between 1 (the lowest) and 5 (the highest).

1	2	3	4	5
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12. In this question we would like to ask you to assess to what extent you possess the listed skills, knowledge and attitudes. Before answering, please check the list of competences in the Council of Europe Youth Work Competence Portfolio. Please rate each function by ticking one number between 1 (the lowest) and 5 (the highest).

COMPETENCES IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH WORK COMPETENCE PORTFOLIO	GRADES				
Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it	1	2	3	4	5
Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations	1	2	3	4	5
Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted	1	2	3	4	5
Function 6. Support collective learning in teams	1	2	3	4	5
Function 7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies/programmes work better for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 8. Develop, conduct and evaluate projects	1	2	3	4	5

13. In this question we would like to ask you to assess to what extent the youth workers who you are working with possess the listed skills, knowledge and attitudes. Please assess the most frequent case or a cross-section of the youth workers' skills, knowledge and attitudes. Before answering, please check the list of competences in the Council of Europe Youth Work Competence Portfolio. Please rate each function by ticking one number between 1 (the lowest) and 5 (the highest).

COMPETENCES IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH WORK COMPETENCE PORTFOLIO	GRADES				
Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it	1	2	3	4	5
Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations	1	2	3	4	5
Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted	1	2	3	4	5
Function 6. Support collective learning in teams	1	2	3	4	5
Function 7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies / programmes work better for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 8. Develop, conduct and evaluate projects	1	2	3	4	5

14. In this question we would like to ask you to assess to what extent have you personally covered the listed skills, knowledge and attitudes when delivering training to youth workers. Before answering, please check the list of competences in the Council of Europe Youth Work Competence Portfolio. In case you have not delivered any training, please move on to the next question.

COMPETENCES IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH WORK COMPETENCE PORTFOLIO	GRADES				
Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it	1	2	3	4	5
Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations	1	2	3	4	5
Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted	1	2	3	4	5
Function 6. Support collective learning in teams	1	2	3	4	5
Function 7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies / programmes work better for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 8. Develop, conduct and evaluate projects	1	2	3	4	5

15. In this question we would like to ask you to assess to what extent the organisation you are currently working with has organised youth worker training covering the listed skills, knowledge and attitudes. Before answering, please check the list of competences in the Council of Europe Youth Work Competence Portfolio. In case the organisation has not organised any training, please move on to the next question.

COMPETENCES IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH WORK COMPETENCE PORTFOLIO	GRADES				
Function 1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 2. Provide learning opportunities for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it	1	2	3	4	5
Function 4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations	1	2	3	4	5
Function 5. Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted	1	2	3	4	5
Function 6. Support collective learning in teams	1	2	3	4	5
Function 7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies / programmes work better for young people	1	2	3	4	5
Function 8. Develop, conduct and evaluate projects	1	2	3	4	5

16. What impact do you think the youth worker competence frameworks listed above can have on youth work/the youth field?

17. Do you use or advise youth workers to use competence self-assessment tools?

18. In case your answer to the previous question is positive, please list the kinds of tools you have been using/advising others to use.

19. Have those tools been developed at the international, national or local level?

1. International level
2. National level
3. Local level

20. How do you think youth workers could be better prepared and supported in order to deliver quality youth work?

21. What support do you and/or your organisation/institution offer to youth workers about acquiring competences?

22. What could be done better at the organisational, local, national and European level to provide youth workers with the opportunities to obtain competences for quality youth work?

23. Is there an ethical framework in your organisation? Are there courses you know about that focus on moral reasoning and ethical issues in youth work? Have you ever attended such a course?

24. Please add any other comment or proposal you may have about youth workers' competences.