

Perspective on Youth Work Developments

BELGIUM (FLEMISH COMMUNITY) FACT SHEET

The 3rd European Youth Work Convention (EYWC) plays a key role in launching the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) as a strategic framework for further developing and strengthening youth work practice and policies in Europe. The goal of this fact sheet is to provide basic information about the perspective on youth work developments in a specific country. All information has been gathered from national contact points, reports or country sheets and profiles available online. The purpose of this fact sheet is to stimulate discussion before, at and after the 3rd EYWC among the members of the national delegations. This information is a suggestion only and a starting point for further development by the delegation when planning actions for implementation of the EYWA.

FACTS

Youth work as a recognised occupation: NO national structures, such as standard occupational profile. (The Flemish government recognises the role of youth work in society in general.)

Legislative framework for youth work: YES

Main youth work actors: organisations and associations

Highlights with regard to youth work development:

Flanders has always focused on positive youth work as an emancipatory instrument for young people rather than as an instrument for prevention.

STRENGTHS & SUCCESSES	CHALLENGES
<p>In 2018 a conference on Youth Work was held in Flanders under the title #Jeugdwerkwerkt (Youthworkworks), an agenda for the future of Youth Work (in Flanders). In a process towards this conference created together with the Flemish Youth Work sector, a common language about the value of Youth Work which contains the DNA of a youth worker, a shared mission statement and five challenges for the future. This agenda is continuously developed and will be followed up in 2021 and another big conference is planned for 2025. It could be a good example of creating an agenda for Youth Work on a national/regional level.</p> <p>.</p> <p>The Flemish government and society recognises the important role of youth work</p> <p>There is a youth house in almost every Flemish municipality</p>	<p>Volunteering: there is emphasis on the engagement of volunteers in Youth Work which is changing. This leads to a question of how can it be ensured that enough volunteers will still engage in youth work? This goes together with the importance of prioritising the perspectives and ownership of youth.</p> <p>Gathering good and qualitative knowledge on youth work (mapping, monitoring, knowledge-based approaches to use in training, but also in policy making to stress the value, impact and importance of Youth Work.</p> <p>Working on the recognition of Youth Work both on a national/regional level, and especially on a local level. Youth work policies should be embedded in and linked to broader youth policies. Small youth work organisations operating mainly in one municipality are mostly getting support from the local government. But if a youth work organisation has a wider reach or regional activities, but not enough to get support from the national/regional level (Flemish government), then they are somewhere in between, but cannot find easy support. This also raises the question how to support, recognise and give opportunities to 'new' youth work organisations.</p>

SUPPORT NEEDED

Creating a European Youth Work agenda has already been a good step. European level can be used to inspire the national/regional level.

Funding research, mapping, monitoring and creating knowledge-based approaches. An academic youth work research agenda investigating the social and individual impact of youth work should be supported.

To boost quality and innovation in youth work, peer-to-peer exchange of know-how and good practices among both paid and volunteering youth workers, should be facilitated and supported and structurally embedded in youth work policies, both within national borders as across European countries.

European legislation, regulations and grant mechanisms need to adopt a “youth (work) reflex”: they should be more sensitive with regard to how they affect young people and youth work. Policies should be screened systematically with regard to their impact on youth, paid and volunteer youth workers and youth organisations on the ground. Also, the administrative burden on youth organisations should be kept at a minimum.

GREATEST NEED FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH WORK IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS

- Establishing youth work as an essential part of youth policies;
- Strengthening the common ground of youth work (through co-operation between different institutions and stakeholders, between different levels and with other sectors);
- Supporting further development of quality youth work;
- Enhancing the promotion and recognition of youth work.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- EKCYP youth work country sheet: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/58820665/Flanders_youth+work_2019.pdf/3daa5b31-b292-afb5-2e86-5e08769f7a34
- Youth Wiki youth work chapter: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/10-youth-work-belgium-flemish-community-0>