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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on youth work policy in an empowering Europe

Delegations will find attached the abovementioned resolution, approved by the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport) at its meeting on 13-14 May 2024.

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States
meeting within the Council on youth work policy in an empowering Europe

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

RECALLING:

1. The values of the European Union enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).¹
2. That Articles 165(2) and 166(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) aim to support the development of quality youth work within the Union through concerted measures.
3. Articles 21, 23 and 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child².

¹ 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.'

² In particular the right to engage in play and recreational activities enshrined in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the correlating obligation of States Parties to respect and promote this right and to 'encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for recreational and leisure activity.'

RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND SET OUT IN ANNEX I, IN PARTICULAR THAT:

4. While youth work across Europe takes different forms and is associated with different perceptions, traditions, stakeholders and practices, the European Union has worked towards a systematic and sustainable approach to youth work development in order to create opportunities and optimal conditions for the development of young people as individuals, groups and generations and, at the same time, active and diligent actions to remedy exclusion, precarity and deprivation.³
5. The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 acknowledges that youth work plays an important role in empowering young people.⁴ It is supplemented by the European Youth Work Agenda of 2020, which establishes a strategic framework for strengthening and developing quality in, and recognition of youth work. Supporting quality youth work development, particularly at the local level, is a priority of the European Union and its Member States.
6. The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child recognises children's rights to participate and play.

³ For an overview of existing policy instruments that have contribute to the development of this systematic and sustainable approach, see, in the annex to this resolution, Schild, H., 'Mapping Existing European Youth Policy Strategies on Youth Work', a publication issued under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Field of Youth (2024).

⁴ In addition, the 11 European Youth Goals reflect the views of young Europeans on youth work that are of relevance to the present resolution.

7. The fight against social exclusion is one of the key commitments of the European Union and its Member States. Social exclusion damages the well-being of citizens and hampers their ability to express themselves and participate in society.

ACKNOWLEDGING:

8. The European Union's joint efforts through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps to strengthen social cohesion,⁵ promote the active participation and inclusion of young people, promote non-formal and informal learning and contribute to enhancing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field within the European Union.
9. The European Union's contribution to quality youth work development through the EU youth programmes, particularly through youth worker mobility and cooperation partnerships that also support strategic development of practices, pedagogy and tools, the European Youth Work Agenda and through the work of the Strategic National Agencies Cooperation (SNAC) partnerships Europe Goes Local and Democracy Reloading, the SALTO Resource Centres, among others.
10. The first, second and third European Youth Work Conventions and their final declarations, the efforts to strengthen the development and implementation of quality youth work within the framework of the European Youth Work Agenda through the Bonn Process,⁶ as well as the complementarity of the work undertaken within the Council of Europe in relation to youth work, as emphasised in the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

⁵ Recital 1 of Regulation (EU) 2021/817.

⁶ The Bonn Process is the process mentioned in the European Youth Work Agenda as the process for implementing that agenda.

NOTING:

11. The ideas and opinions of young people on means to strengthen the competences of youth workers to work with young people with fewer opportunities as expressed during the Belgian EU Youth Conference between 2-5 March 2024 in Ghent: young people stressed the importance of the promotion of professionalised youth work, recognising youth work and informal learning, and fostering inclusive spaces. In their opinion, this can be achieved through structural investments and trainings for youth workers, alongside ensuring capacity building and continuous dialogue between youth workers and stakeholders such as non-formal and informal educators. Additionally, young people highlighted that increased access to funding opportunities at the local level, youth-centered participatory budgeting, the provision of resources for mobile youth work, and formal recognition of volunteer youth work are essential steps toward safeguarding the rights of young people with fewer opportunities and to improving the awareness and competences necessary to create inclusive, safe spaces for young people.

12. The outcomes of the European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy that took place between 20-23 February 2024 in Brussels and its recommendations for action attached in Annex IV to this resolution. During this conference, it was expressed that ‘By investing in a robust and long term local youth work policy, based on intense dialogue and participation, local governments create concrete conditions for the optimal development of local youth work. Therefore, municipalities need a framework that gives contours and inspiration to create tailor made sturdy local support systems. Member States should invest to shape this framework together with local actors in a pan-European network.’ Furthermore, it was stressed that ‘there is a pressing need to sustain investments in more effective and efficient practices relating to inclusion, equality, participation, democracy and diversity. Local youth work and local youth work policy offer unique places to translate all these human values in concrete, hands on practices’.

WELCOMING:

13. The fourth European Youth Work Convention, which is planned in May-June 2025 in Malta, with the financial support of the Erasmus+ programme (Youth).

STRESSING THAT:

14. Young people are not a homogenous group, and thus have a multitude of identities and diverse needs, resources, backgrounds, life situations and interests. Young people's talents, strength, creativity, engagement, and commitment contribute to a prosperous, democratic society. They are one of society's strengths, as well as individual rights-holders and agents of solidarity and change. Many young people have shown a strong sense of resilience and continue to mobilise for their concerns, thereby contributing to positive change in society⁷. They should be recognised, enabled, supported and empowered in this role.
15. Young people across the European Union are facing a changing and complex society tainted by a variety of unprecedented developments and challenges: the global climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East and conflicts in other parts of the world. These circumstances and phenomena have an impact on the mental health and well-being of children and young people and have profoundly marked European societies in recent years with lasting effects.
16. The inflation and increase in living costs ensuing from the above challenges have a stark impact on the living conditions of children and young people, which may in turn lead to their poverty and disincentivise voluntary engagement in and impair access to youth work. Additionally, as disinformation, polarisation and dimmed trust in politics impact both the voices of children and young people and their active European citizenship, there is a need to revitalise democracy, in particular by safeguarding and creating civic spaces. Furthermore, various migratory phenomena can contribute, among other factors, to more diversity in European societies. These developments shape a societal landscape that reveals or emphasises inequalities further and are affecting young people's perceptions, engagement and position in society.

⁷ European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01); paragraph 17 of the conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth (2023/C 185/06).

17. At the intersection of culture, recreation and leisure time, education and learning, and social work⁸, youth work contributes to supporting, enabling and empowering young people. This helps them to navigate pathways to autonomy and define their position in developing surroundings, providing them with opportunities to reflect on challenges and helps them to make the most appropriate choices for themselves. In addition, participating in youth work activities is proven to be beneficial to the mental health and well-being of young people: they feel connected to one another, and forge a sense of belonging, solidarity and union in addressing key challenges of our societies.⁹ Youth work can therefore not only help young people develop the ability to cope with current challenges but also offers them learning opportunities and processes that help them to become more resilient and better equipped to face new and changing realities¹⁰.

AWARE THAT:

18. An empowering Europe needs emancipated, informed and engaged young citizens, believing in an open, democratic and peaceful society based on solidarity and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Youth work can support young people fulfil a role in building just, open and peaceful societies with commitment and enthusiasm. Due to its intrinsic nature and preventive strength, as well as its adaptability to changing circumstances, youth work can respond to societal challenges and is, at times, given a remedial role. However, youth work in all its diversity and with appropriate support can offer young people a specific, safe, emancipatory and unique environment in which to engage and connect.

⁸ Williamson H., Coussée F., 'Chapter 14 – Reflective dialogue: conclusions from the history project – 12 trilemmas for youth work', The history of youth work in Europe, volume 7, (partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, 2019), pp. 193-208.

⁹ As mentioned in the Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union (C/2023/1337), 'Youth work has a significant role on promoting the well-being of young people and in the prevention of mental health issues.'

¹⁰ In this regard, see, in the annex to this resolution, Williamson, H., Taking stock – Where are we now, Youth Work in a Contemporary Europe (October 2023), a publication issued under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Field of Youth (2024).

19. Barriers to engage in youth work activities persist and have been further exacerbated in recent years. In addition, societal pressure and changes in living conditions affect the engagement of young people, put a strain on youth work carried out with volunteers and lead to the emergence of and / or calls for new forms of voluntary engagement by young people.
20. Creating the necessary preconditions and space for young people to explore, experiment and enjoy being together in youth work, in particular through learning by doing, including playing and other non-formal and informal learning activities, is an inherent part of youth work. In this regard, the public space is organised for, used and shared by different groups for different purposes. Also, young people with fewer opportunities tend to have a different relationship with and degree of reliance on public space¹¹, therefore requiring reconsideration of how it is organised. This calls for further reflection on the design of public space, including on the question how to cater for the needs and habits of different groups, so as to create the necessary preconditions and spaces needed for youth work activities.
21. In order to gain further appreciation and recognition, the societal impact of youth work – including at the local level – needs to be made more visible and tangible. The recognition of youth work in society¹² remains an important challenge in Europe and is one of the aims of the European Youth Work Agenda. What is more, the recognition of skills and competencies acquired or developed through youth work needs to be further emphasised.

¹¹ M. Moris & M. Loopmans (2019) De-marginalizing youngsters in public space: critical youth workers and local municipalities in the struggle over public space in Belgium, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22:5, 694-710.

¹² Interpreted in accordance with the Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention – Signposts for the Future, Bonn, 10 December 2020, pp. 12-14.

22. To flourish, youth work needs to be prioritised at all levels, from local to regional and national to European and international. Quality youth work development can be achieved through a targeted policy and supportive measures at all levels, in a committed and sustainable approach. Local and regional authorities and youth organisations are closest to the daily lives of young people and play a crucial role in supporting the development of quality youth work.

AIM, IN THIS REGARD, TO ADDRESS THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK IN AN
EMPOWERING EUROPE BY:

23. Building further on existing policy measures, setting the parameters to enable youth work to position itself and adapt so as to support young people in their efforts to navigate their pathways to autonomy within new realities. This is to be achieved through the exercise of agency, participation and inclusion, and in a context of optimum well-being, political and civic engagement and a sense of self-determination.
24. Supporting the development of quality youth work¹³ and of youth work policy at all levels, paying due attention to the local level, which is closest to young people.
25. Making possible the creation of enabling environments¹⁴, in particular by co-creating these environments together with youth workers and young people, so as to ensure that youth work activities can be organised in public spaces in ways most suited to the needs of young people.

¹³ As described in the Annex on ‘Descriptions’ in this resolution.

¹⁴ As described in the Annex on ‘Descriptions’ in this resolution.

26. Ensuring equal access to youth work for all young people, including through outreaching youth work, for example by supporting networks between youth work and social work, as well as relevant stakeholders of other fields working with young people with fewer opportunities and the organisations representing them, where relevant.
27. Providing youth workers with the education, training and learning, competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and critical thinking) and resources needed to support young people's agency, judgment and navigational capacities in changing realities.
28. Facilitating and supporting new forms of voluntary and civic engagement, both physical and online.
29. Fostering societal appreciation and recognition of youth work¹⁵ in changing European societies.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, ADHERING TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, IN THEIR RESPECTIVE AREAS OF COMPETENCE AND AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS, TO:

30. Develop or further support a comprehensive youth work policy, as appropriate, in addition to a wider youth policy by means of encompassing frameworks and sustainable support and funding mechanisms for developing quality youth work, taking into account existing youth work realities and actors, and new, more experimental and innovative youth work practices. This youth work policy should build on existing policy initiatives relating to youth work, be evidence and knowledge-based and be developed further in close cooperation with the youth work community of practice.

¹⁵ As described in the Annex on 'Descriptions' in this resolution.

31. Support the development, implementation, evaluation and promotion of quality youth work at all levels, with due attention to the local level, and continue to support strengthening of the development, implementation and evaluation of quality youth work, particularly within the framework of the European Youth Work Agenda, where appropriate.
32. Make use of intersectionality as a means to identify and understand barriers and challenges faced by young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities, in accessing youth work, and take action to overcome those barriers. Policy measures and actions should be both preventive and responsive, so as to address the diverse range of young people's identities, barriers and challenges encountered.
33. Facilitate and incentivise youth-friendly information on and equal access to quality youth work for young people. Furthermore, through youth work activities, ensure that young people have equal access to and benefit from quality information concerning their rights, responsibilities and opportunities.
34. Facilitate and support new and innovative forms of voluntary and civic engagement, both physical and virtual, and provide resources, space and other forms of support for these new forms of youth work.

35. Further efforts to facilitate, establish, co-create and, where possible, co-manage the enabling environments that are needed to ensure that youth work activities can be organised in public space in ways that are most appropriate to its beneficiaries, in particular by:

- a) Engaging young people in the organisation of public space, therefore making use of an inclusive youth perspective in the organisation of public spaces in order to allow for the creation of an enabling environment in youth work and for the creation and safeguarding of civic spaces.
- b) Further creating or supporting both physical and virtual accessible associative spaces for young people in which youth work activities can come to fruition and be promoted.
- c) Revitalising learning by doing, including playing through association ('la vie associative'¹⁶) within youth work. This can be done by creating a culture of useful playfulness, with a view to acknowledging and emphasising learning by doing, including playing as means of non-formal or informal learning contributing to strengthening young people's confidence in the social space and develop their creativity and social competencies. This contributes, in turn, to lifelong and 'life-wide' learning and the capacity to navigate various social contexts.
- d) Creating a participatory culture through the use of methods that are adapted to the matters concerned, the groups of young people involved, and the context in which the participation takes place.

¹⁶ For the concept of 'la vie associative', see Williamson, H., Taking stock – Where are we now, Youth Work in a Contemporary Europe (October 2023), pp. 111 and ff.

36. Work towards a bottom-up perspective by allowing local knowledge, experience and practice concerning the organisation of local youth work to inform the European level. This can be achieved, where appropriate, by providing municipalities and other local or regional authorities with resources, channels and platforms for exchange, to enable them to experience European identity, cooperate, and enrich the local level with a European dimension, for example, within existing EU programmes or by strengthening multilevel governance.
37. Step up efforts to create a level playing field for youth workers throughout Europe, aiming to calibrate youth workers' education and training across the European Union, with a view to establishing profiles and, where relevant, competencies comprising the knowledge, attitudes, skills, values and critical understanding that are necessary to deliver quality youth work. This common understanding could be achieved through the exchange of good practices across the European Union and should take into account existing competence frameworks and assessment tools, such as the European Training Strategy for youth work, the Youth Work portfolio and the Youth Pass.
38. Foster the education and training of volunteer and paid youth workers, in particular by furthering the implementation of the Council conclusions on education and training of youth workers, on smart youth work and on digital youth work. Additionally, further the recognition and validation of youth work by fostering the education, training, career prospects and pathways of youth workers, and provide information about and share available training opportunities.

39. Give further recognition to youth work as a means to assist young people in their transition to adulthood and autonomy, acknowledging that it has an intrinsic impact on its beneficiaries which deserves greater visibility.
40. Highlight youth work as a driver of inclusion by stimulating, supporting, documenting and showcasing the diversity in and of its participants, taking into account that young people are not a homogenous group, and thus have a multitude of identities and diverse needs, resources, backgrounds, life situations and interests.
41. Create conditions that allow civil society organisations at all relevant levels to engage more in cooperation at EU level so as to put youth work more prominently in the spotlight and to improve opportunities for young people and enhance quality and innovation within youth work at all levels.
42. Provide information about, coordinate and leverage the results of relevant SNAC projects and, when appropriate, incorporate them into policy plans.
43. Conduct or further research and collect, together with relevant actors, disaggregated data on the beneficiaries of youth work, youth workers, sustainability, impact and availability of youth work. In collaboration with policy makers, youth workers, as well as youth and youth work researchers, explore ways and develop means to measure both the intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes for and impact on beneficiaries through quantitative and qualitative research methods. This will enable youth workers to reflect on their work and showcase the outcomes and impact of their activities.

INVITE MEMBER STATES, AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS AND WITH DUE REGARD TO THEIR SPECIFIC NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, TO:

44. Support local authorities with providing information on and creating optimal conditions for youth work policies, resources, and involvement in youth work policies at other levels.
45. Ensure the independence of youth work and mainstream youth work across other relevant sectors, ensuring diversity and quality of youth work with a view to supporting young people in their transition to adulthood in changing times.
46. Facilitate or create favourable conditions by which young people of all backgrounds have the possibility to participate in the design of the public space and living environments.
47. Consider providing support for youth workspaces, for example through long-term and stable funding, and infrastructure – encompassing both indoor and outdoor facilities – in public spaces.
48. Promote the creation and use of quality-labelled physical and virtual spaces for youth work and cooperation with relevant institutions, such as the Council of Europe and its quality label for youth centres.
49. Promote learning by doing, including playing as a method for non-formal and informal learning as part of the regular youth work offer as a means to developing the life skills of beneficiaries of youth work.

50. Invest in building more partnerships between youth work and other sectors in order to reinforce the capacity for advocacy by the youth work community of practice and generate wider acknowledgment of youth work's contribution to the lives of young people.
51. Conduct, facilitate and support longitudinal and evidence-based research on the impact of youth work on young people and society.
52. Further support youth work administrations with the development and implementation of youth work policies and actions.
53. Facilitate and aim for simple administrative procedures for youth work organisations.
54. Facilitate and stimulate innovation in the youth work community of practice.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

55. Increase the focus on youth work policy development and encourage Member States to include, where relevant, the youth work dimension explicitly in their national youth policies and programmes, by facilitating exchange of best practices and capacity building of youth workers, young people and youth work organisations, as well as youth policy makers, in particular through the EU youth programmes.
56. Further promote synergies between the EU Youth Strategy, including the 11 European Youth Goals, the European Youth Work Agenda and the EU youth programmes.

57. Investigate the possibility to create dedicated policy experimentation actions within the EU youth programmes allowing Member States to establish strategic partnerships aimed at the development of quality youth work.
58. Within relevant initiatives, such as the New European Bauhaus, provide support or continue to support and incentivise the reshaping of public spaces to ensure that these are youth- and youth-work-friendly.
59. Explore the possibility to establish a strong connection between the New European Bauhaus initiative and spaces for youth work by integrating a youth perspective in the initiative, and to anchor the New European Bauhaus in EU funding opportunities, with a view to ensuring sustainable approaches to creating enabling environments.
60. Highlight the role of youth work in the green and digital transitions, in tackling demographic challenges, and create connections between youth work and other areas of interest to young people such as the climate, digitalisation, and employment.
61. Stimulate exchange and collaboration between the EU Youth Coordinator and the European Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, as well as other relevant European Commission coordinators, in order to give more visibility to youth work across EU policies.

62. In collaboration with the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth and other youth work stakeholders at European level, such as civil society organisations, consider possible avenues for assessing the possibility of introducing a European recognition mechanism or validation guidelines for youth work, based on systematic and structured follow-up combined with self- and external assessment, and an appropriate governance structure under the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.
63. Ensure continuity in youth work knowledge by sharing best practices, in particular via dedicated networks or online tools such as the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth, the Youth Wiki, the European Youth Portal, the SALTO resource centres, the RAY network and the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, or other relevant tools, and ensure the visibility of these networks and tools.
64. Structurally embed future youth work conventions in the EU youth programmes.
65. Raise awareness and facilitate access to the EU youth programmes, in particular through accessible formats that increase their attractiveness and simplify the costing and administrative rules.
66. Ensure adequate EU support for youth work activities, in particular by making EU funding, for example through existing EU youth programmes, including the conditions and process thereto, simpler, more attractive, and more easily accessible for youth work stakeholders at the national, regional, and in particular local level, in particular through the use of a micro approach and allowing experimenting. Also, improve the dissemination of information about available funding opportunities.

67. Where appropriate, strengthen the cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe through the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth in order to further support the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda through knowledge and evidence gathering and developing training tools. This could for example be achieved by:
- a) Considering coordinated and structural investment by the Partnership in steering the Bonn Process forward and ensuring synergies and connections between the partnership and other actors contributing to and supporting the Bonn process.
 - b) Invest in the development of quality youth work by identifying the sustainable structures and resources needed, where relevant by developing a common understanding on quality youth work through an evidence-based approach, setting up a network of diverse stakeholders and ensuring meaningful cooperation between them, increasing synergies, and assisting with the adoption of a coordinated approach to education and training of both paid and volunteer youth workers.
 - c) Promote enhanced collaboration by fostering increased interactions between youth workers and specialists from various relevant fields, thereby widening the range of youth work activities and fostering innovative practices.
 - d) Implement supportive measures to empower and strengthen youth work, as means to enable young people through democratic engagement and active participation.
 - e) In collaboration with trainers, educators and researchers, actively engage youth workers in shaping the development of quality youth work within the framework of the European Youth Work Agenda.
 - f) Explore ways to monitor the development of quality youth work throughout Europe through the creation of a youth work quality progress index.

INVITE THE YOUTH WORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TO:

68. Further encourage young people's societal engagement.
69. Ensure the provision of youth-friendly information, and equal and safe access to and participation in youth work activities for young people.
70. Create an enabling environment for the development and recognition of quality youth work and engage the dialogue with all relevant partners to optimise public spaces for youth work practices for the benefit of young people.
71. Increase awareness of the importance of continuously working on the resources and competencies of youth workers¹⁷ and develop mentoring and training programmes for aspiring youth workers and youth workers already in the field.
72. Raise awareness among youth work organisations and youth workers of the importance of contributing to policy-related matters and support their acquisition of competencies needed for making that contribution.
73. Further efforts to enable youth workers to invest in innovation and emphasise that international practice, for example through participation in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, is one of the possible avenues to innovation.

¹⁷ In line with the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01).

74. Promote the recognition of youth work at societal level and aim to remove barriers to this recognition and continue investing in partnerships with other relevant policy sectors, such as health and well-being, environment and climate, education and training, international cooperation and European values, employment and inclusion, as well as with local and regional authorities and stakeholders to consolidate youth work as a societal partner.
75. Strengthen and develop networks of youth work organisations to foster collaboration and coordination in the development of quality youth work and foster more interaction and collaboration with other players in the youth work field, in particular local and regional authorities, as well as more coordination and collaboration within the community of practice to create a strong youth work ecosystem.
76. Invest further in the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda and in contributing to future youth work conventions as means to further the development of quality youth work, at all levels.

INVITE ALL ACTORS INVOLVED IN EUROPEAN COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN THE YOUTH FIELD¹⁸ TO STRIVE TO:

77. Establish synergies, cooperation and coordination with civil society organisations active in the field of youth and youth work.

¹⁸ 'Building on the experiences and decisions of the cooperation in the youth field in the past years, the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 aims at tackling existing and upcoming challenges young people are facing all over Europe. The EU Youth Strategy provides a framework of objectives, principles, priorities, core areas and measures for youth policy cooperation for all relevant stakeholders with due regard for their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity. Relevant stakeholders are, amongst others, the EU Member States, the relevant European Union institutions and other international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, local and regional authorities, youth councils, youth organisations, organisations working with young people, youth workers, youth researchers and civil society actors as well as structures of the programmes Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps and their successor programmes.' Resolution on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01).

Political background

European Union

- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union (C/2023/1337),
- Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion (2022/C 495/03),
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU strategy on the rights of the child (COM(2021)142 final),
- Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on safeguarding and creating civic spaces for young people that facilitate meaningful youth participation (2021/C 501 I/04),
- Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01),
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on raising opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas (2020/C 193/03),

- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Digital Youth Work (2019/C 414/02),
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on education and training of youth workers (2019/C 412/03),
- Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01),
- Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01),
- Council conclusions on smart youth work (2017/C 418/02),
- Council Conclusions on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential life skills that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life (2017/C 189/06),
- Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being, and social inclusion of young people (2013/C 168/03),
- Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01),

- Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on youth work (2010/C 327/01),
- European Commission white paper, A New Impetus for European Youth (COM(2001) 681 final),
- Conference on the Future of Europe – report on the final outcome (May 2022).

Council of Europe

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)9 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the active political participation of national minority youth,
- Resolution CM/Res (2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030,
- Congress of local and regional authorities, Youth work : the role of local and regional authorities (CG-FORUM(2021)01-02final),
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth information,

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

- European youth work policy goals analysed: The role of the EU-CoE youth partnership in the interplay between the European Union and the Council of Europe (2021).

Descriptions

Quality Youth Work

‘Youth work’ is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental, sporting, and political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. It can be considered as a specific and unique approach within a broader spectrum of pedagogical and educational systems (education, welfare, prevention, justice, training, employability, etc.), often supported or created by governments. It 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 involves 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. Its primary function is to play an important role in the personal and social development of young people, in their participation in society and in the transitions they go through. Youth work creates spaces for association and bridges to support young people in the transition to adulthood and autonomy¹⁹. These spaces and bridges help its beneficiaries find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large. Youth work practice has proven itself to be a concrete and inviting milieu for active democracy and civic engagement. Youth work thus plays a crucial role in supporting the voluntary and constructive engagement of young people. It also establishes an environment characterised by useful playfulness in which young people can enjoy being together. This environment strengthens young people’s creativity and social competencies, especially with regard to democratic co-existence and solidarity. European youth work activities open opportunities to experience a European dimension and thus equip young people with competencies needed in the development of the European sense of belonging, as well as in a globalised world, while fostering international understanding and peacebuilding. Youth work activities at all levels therefore have positive societal effects, contribute

¹⁹ As concluded in the declaration of the second European Youth Work Convention.

to the physical and mental well-being of young people, and assist the revitalising of democracy and in coping with global challenges.

Youth work is created for, with and by young people. They need to be empowered as co-owners and co-designers of their youth work, project or association. Youth workers, both paid and volunteers, ensure the realisation of these spaces and support peer-to-peer activities.

Youth work aims to be open to all young people, including those with fewer opportunities, such as those in rural, remote, peripheral and less-developed areas and outermost regions, and those whose full political and social participation is at risk due to individual or structural disadvantages or discrimination. Youth work aims to be a driver of social inclusion. Youth work activities benefit young people and, where relevant, children from an early age.

Enabling environment

Youth work should benefit from an enabling environment that is actively inclusive and socially engaging, creative and safe, supportive of learning, fun and serious, playful and planned. This environment should be characterised by accessibility, including in rural, remote, peripheral and less-developed areas and outermost regions, as well as openness and flexibility and should also promote intercultural and intergenerational dialogue. This enabling environment is based on adequate, well-balanced and varied support systems, structures and infrastructure, created and implemented in close collaboration with the youth work community of practice. Additionally, it is shaped together with young people and youth workers, for the needs of the beneficiaries of youth work, in particular by giving young people and youth workers a say in designing, co-building, co-managing and operating in public spaces.

Societal appreciation and recognition

Societal appreciation and recognition emphasises youth work's societal contribution and roles, including among others its preventive effects, its role in the green and digital transitions, in promoting, practising and thus revitalising democracies, in tackling demographic challenges, its role in community building, in teaching norms and values, in contributing to young people's self-reliance and general well-being, in promoting constructive and solution-driven attitudes, in amplifying the voices of young people, in helping shape a youth policy adapted to the realities and needs of young people, and in forming engaged citizens.²⁰ This appreciation and recognition also acknowledges that participating in youth work activities among other things fosters social inclusion, and help to build inclusive, cohesive and peaceful societies and ensures that opportunities to take part in youth work activities are available, accessible and visible.

²⁰ In 2010 it was established that 'youth work also can have added social value because it can: promote social participation and responsibility, voluntary engagement and active citizenship; strengthen community building and civil society at all levels (e.g. intergenerational and intercultural dialogue); contribute to the development of young people's creativity, cultural and social awareness, entrepreneurship and innovation; provide opportunities for the social inclusion of all children and young people; reach young people with fewer opportunities through a variety of methods which are flexible and quickly adaptable. Youth work therefore plays different roles in society and can contribute to youth related policy areas, such as lifelong learning, social inclusion and employment. Youth work, whether it is undertaken by volunteers or professionals, has a considerable socio-economic potential — as it can produce economic activity, provides infrastructure, create economic benefits and increases (youth) employment. The labour market can benefit from the personal and professional skills and competences acquired through youth work by both participants as well as youth workers and youth leaders. Such skills and competences need to be sufficiently valued and effectively recognised.' Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on youth work (2010/C 327/02).

Definitions

Youth work community of practice²¹

In the field of youth work, the youth work community of practice should be understood as a group of people, professional or non-professional, who share the same interests in resolving an issue, improving their skills, and learning from each other's experiences. The youth work community of practice comprises stakeholders at all levels from local to European level, such as: — youth workers and youth leaders; — youth work managers; — project carriers; — accredited and independent youth work organisations; — trainers; — researchers; — educators of youth workers; — local communities and municipalities; — National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps; — youth representations and young people and — policy-makers for youth. All the actors in the youth work community of practice have, within their respective spheres of competence, different mandates, roles and capacities for the further development of youth work.

Play

For the purpose of this resolution, learning by doing, including playing is a means of non-formal learning contributing to strengthening children's and young people's confidence in the social space and to develop their social competencies. Play is an essential activity for children and young people, encompassing physically active play and competitive games, as well as imaginative, exploratory, and social behaviours vital for their well-being, health, and development. The diverse forms of play preferred by different age groups, including young people exploring their identities, are crucial for their transition to adulthood and sense of belonging.²²

²¹ See Annex II to the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01).

²² United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment n°17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (article 31).

Other resources

- Schild, H., ‘Mapping Existing European Youth Policy Strategies on Youth Work’, a publication issued under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Field of Youth (2024),
- Williamson, H., Taking stock – Where are we now, Youth Work in a Contemporary Europe (October 2023), a publication issued under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Field of Youth (2024),
- 3rd European Youth Work Convention (Bonn, 2020) – Final Declaration,
- M. Moris & M. Loopmans (2019) De-marginalizing youngsters in public space: critical youth workers and local municipalities in the struggle over public space in Belgium, Journal of Youth Studies, 22:5, 694-710,
- 2nd European Youth Work Convention (Brussels, 2015) – Final Declaration,
- 1st European Youth Work Convention (Gent, 7-10 July 2010) – Final Declaration.

Key findings of the European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy held between 20-23 February 2024 in Brussels during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, by Dr. Guy Redig (Rapporteur General):

1. Local youth work (1) offers an extraordinary environment to practice democracy and inspire pathways to an active engagement in society – with the strong conviction to give children as soon as possible chances to participate and (2) articulates the key characteristic of local youth work as a place where young people enjoy being young together, because play and playfulness are conditional for the development of many other positive effects, like learning and sharpening different competences, engagement in various democratic practices, the ability to take responsibility and accountability and (3) bridges to many other pedagogical interventions like education, social and cultural work.

2. By investing in a robust and long term local youth work policy, based on intense dialogue and participation, local governments create concrete conditions for the optimal development of local youth work. Therefore, municipalities need a framework that gives contours and inspiration to create tailor made sturdy local support systems. Member States should invest to shape this framework together with local actors in a pan-European network. This framework can be inspired by the notion “creating space” to be conceived as mental²³, physical²⁴, political space²⁵ in a long term perspective²⁶, and should include efforts to optimise the qualities of both volunteer and professional youth workers.
3. The European Union and the Council of Europe, already active and stimulating local youth work (policy), can enlarge and intensify their efforts on this behalf by further investing in networking, exchanging practices, stimulate surveys (among others by their Partnership on Youth) and so contribute to a common ground on the framework for local youth work policy.
4. There is a pressing need to sustain investments in more effective and efficient practices on difficult but priority goals like inclusion, equality, participation, democracy and diversity. Local youth work and local youth work policy offer unique places to translate all these human values in concrete, hands on practices, and in this way transforming slogans into good practices.

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- ²³ Mental space: knowledge, understanding, recognition and respect for local youth work as a specific offer in the leisure/free time of children and young people, which only can be created through systematic and open dialogue.
- ²⁴ Physical space: providing suitable indoor/outdoor square meters for young people as an important part of the population (public) and especially for youth work initiatives (private).
- ²⁵ Political space: translate the needs of young people and local youth work in a robust system of governmental support, by subsidies, services, coaching, developed through active participation.
- ²⁶ Space in time: execute these policies for recognition and support in a long term perspective.