

# YOUTH WORK

**Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4**  
adopted by the Committee of Ministers  
of the Council of Europe  
on 31 May 2017  
and explanatory memorandum

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*et exposé des motifs)*

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# Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4

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of the Committee of Ministers  
to member States  
on youth work

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 May 2017  
at the 1287th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members, *inter alia*, by promoting a youth policy based on common principles;

Having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (adopted in 1950, ETS No. 5, subsequently amended and supplemented), as applied and interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights, and the European Social Charter (adopted in 1961, ETS No. 35, revised in 1996, ETS No. 163, and subsequently amended and supplemented), as applied and interpreted by the European Committee of Social Rights;

Recalling Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 of the Committee of Ministers on the youth policy of the Council of Europe;

Recalling the applicability of existing principles set out in relevant recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to the member States, in particular: Recommendation Rec(2003)8 on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people; Recommendation Rec(2004)13 on the participation of young people in local and regional life; Recommendation Rec(2006)1 on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development; Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education; Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education; Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8 on youth information; Recommendation



CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18; Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education; Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights; Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights;

Bearing in mind the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Recalling Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 1437 (2000) on "Non-formal education"; 1978 (2011) "Towards a European framework convention on youth rights"; 2015 (2013) on "Young people's access to fundamental rights"; and its Resolution 1885 (2012) "The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis", as well as the replies of the Committee of Ministers to these recommendations;

Recalling the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' Resolution 386 (2015) "Bringing down barriers to youth participation: adopting a lingua franca for local and regional authorities and young people", and its Recommendation 128 (2003) on "The revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life", as well as the reply of the Committee of Ministers to this recommendation;

Having further regard to the Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) which stated that the Council of Europe would further develop its unique position in the youth field;

Convinced that:

- the sustainability of European identity and the Council of Europe's core values (human rights, rule of law and democracy) relies on the creativity, competences, social commitment and contribution of young people and on their confidence in the future as well;
- government policies should support young people in realising their full potential as autonomous members of society, enabling them to develop life plans and exercise their democratic citizenship;
- 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;

Recognising the complexities and challenges of transition from childhood to adulthood and autonomy, as well as the decline in opportunities for young

people as a result of increasing unemployment, poverty, discrimination and social exclusion;

Being aware of the impact of the economic crisis on youth work provision in some member States;

Acknowledging the work undertaken by the Council of Europe's youth sector to support youth policies promoting human rights, social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and the active participation of young people, in particular through its European Youth Centres, the European Youth Foundation, its intergovernmental co-operation and co-managed statutory bodies and the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field;

Acknowledging the importance of achieving coherence and synergy with the efforts of all relevant stakeholders, including with the European Union, in the field of youth work;

Acknowledging the positive contribution of youth workers in all member States to empowering and engaging young people in developing inclusive, democratic and peaceful societies;

Drawing on the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (2015), entitled "Making a world of difference", which aimed to set a European agenda for youth work,

Recommends that the governments of the member States, within their sphere of competence, renew their support for youth work by:

1. ensuring that the establishment or further development of quality youth work is safeguarded and pro-actively supported within local, regional or national youth policies, as appropriate. Taking into account the diversity of youth work across and within member States, special attention should be paid to the need for strategies, frameworks, legislation, sustainable structures and resources, effective co-ordination with other sectors, as well as to related policies that promote equal access to youth work for all young people. Youth workers and young people should be actively engaged in any planned measures for implementation;

2. establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers that takes into account existing practice, new trends and arenas, as well as the diversity



of youth work. Stakeholders, including youth workers and young people, should be involved in developing this framework:

3. taking into consideration the measures and principles proposed in the appendix to this recommendation and encouraging providers of youth work to do the same;
4. supporting the initiative of the Council of Europe's youth sector to set up an ad hoc high-level taskforce of the relevant stakeholders in youth work in Europe, which can elaborate a mid-term strategy for the knowledge-based development of European youth work, in order to:
  - improve co-ordination of and access to youth work knowledge and resources at European, national, regional and local levels;
  - further support the exchange of youth work practices, peer learning and the creation of sustainable networks and partnerships;
  - stimulate co-operation within the youth sector and among sectors and fields of expertise wherever youth work takes place in order to reinforce ties, in particular between formal education and youth work and between public authorities, the private sector and civil society;
  - strengthen the dialogue between youth work, youth policy and youth research;
  - strengthen the capacity of youth work to respond to the changes and trends in our society and the emerging challenges faced by young people;
  - carry out a mapping exercise on existing education and training (such as vocational training and higher education) and existing systems for validation of competences for paid and volunteer youth workers;
  - develop a range of assistance measures to support member States in taking forward and implementing this recommendation;
5. fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work and their value, impact and merit;
6. supporting the development of appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work and by reinforcing the dissemination, recognition and impact of the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio in the member States;
7. promoting the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres as an example of good practice;

It further recommends that the governments of the member States:

- ensure that this recommendation, including its appendix, is translated and disseminated (in accessible formats) to relevant authorities and stakeholders, with a view to raising awareness of, and strengthening commitment to, the further development of quality youth work;
- examine, within the Committee of Ministers, the implementation of this recommendation five years after adoption.

#### **Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4**

##### **A. Scope and purpose of the recommendation – definition and scope of youth work**

This recommendation applies to youth work in all its diversity. It aims to encourage member States to develop their youth work policy and practice within their sphere of competence and invites member States to adopt a range of measures that will strengthen the necessary support for youth work at local, regional, national and European levels.

The age range of those who benefit from youth work provision should reflect the legal and constitutional framework and existing practices in each of the member States.

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

Despite different traditions and definitions, there is a common understanding that the primary function of youth work is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large.

Youth work achieves this by empowering and engaging young people in the active creation, preparation, delivery and evaluation of initiatives and activities that reflect their needs, interests, ideas and experiences. Through this process of non-formal and informal learning, young people gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need in order to move forward with confidence.



In order to facilitate these outcomes, youth work should create an enabling environment that is actively inclusive and socially engaging, creative and safe, fun and serious, playful and planned. It should be characterised by accessibility, openness and flexibility and at the same time promote dialogue between young people and the rest of society. It should focus on young people and create spaces for association and bridges to support transition to adulthood and autonomy.

It is acknowledged that youth work, often in partnership and co-operation with other sectors, produces a wide range of positive outcomes for individuals, their communities and for society in general. For example:

- it leads to critical reflection, innovation and changes at local, regional, national and European levels;
- it contributes to young people's well-being, enhancing a sense of belonging and strengthening their capacity to make beneficial choices;
- it supports positive and purposeful transitions in personal, civic, economic and cultural life, enabling the development of competences that facilitate life-long learning, active citizenship and labour market participation;
- it promotes the development of various skills such as creativity, critical thinking, conflict management, digital and information literacy and leadership;
- it enhances diversity and contributes to equality, sustainable development, intercultural understanding, social cohesion, civic participation, democratic citizenship and the upholding of the values of human rights;
- it strengthens young people's resilience and thereby their capacity to resist negative influences and behaviour.

These positive outcomes, in the face of the current challenges in Europe and the disproportionately negative effects on young people, underline the vital importance of member States ensuring access to quality youth work for all young people. The risks of not doing so could be significant.

Young people are a key resource in building a social and just Europe. Societies are at high risk of undermining stability and social cohesion if they allow the current difficult circumstances to create a "lost generation" of disillusioned and disengaged young people. Adequately supporting young people today, including through the provision of quality youth work, is an important investment Europe has to make for its present and for the future. Not doing so represents a loss of opportunity to strengthen contemporary civil society, a threat to

social cohesion and weakens the potential for dealing effectively with some of the major challenges of our time such as migration, unemployment, social exclusion and violent extremism.

## **B. Principles**

The recommendation builds on the existing values, principles and benefits of youth work as enshrined in the instruments referred to in the text above. The design and delivery of youth work are underpinned by the principles of voluntary and active participation, equality of access, openness and flexibility. It should be rights-based, inclusive and centred on young people, their needs and abilities.

As participation is one of the key principles of youth work, young people, youth workers, youth and other organisations providing youth work are recognised as active partners in the development, implementation and evaluation of youth work policy and practice.

Member States are encouraged to secure the active participation of all these stakeholders when taking forward the recommendations and the following measures.

## **C. Measures**

In establishing policies that safeguard and proactively support the establishment and further development of youth work at all levels, member States are invited to:

- i. provide an enabling environment and conditions for both proven and innovative youth work practices (including for example, sustainable structures and resources), particularly at the local level, while acknowledging that youth work benefits from regional, national and international opportunities and co-operation;
- ii. strengthen the role and position of youth work in order to facilitate cross-sectoral co-operation between youth work – whether it is provided by public authorities, the private sector or civil society – and other sectors, including for example: social care, health, sport, culture, formal education, employment services and criminal justice;
- iii. promote and support co-ordination between local, regional, national and European levels of youth work, thereby facilitating networking, co-operation, peer learning and exchange;



- iv. promote the recognition of the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding developed through participating in and delivering youth work;
- v. promote equal access to youth work;
- vi. promote the role of youth work by:
  - informing young people of their rights and of the opportunities and services available to them;
  - strengthening the active citizenship, participation and social inclusion of all young people, especially those who are at risk and marginalised;
  - broadening intercultural competences, European identity and international understanding among young people;
  - encouraging young people to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in their living environment;
  - addressing and preventing discrimination, intolerance and social exclusion;
  - enhancing non-formal and informal learning;
- vii. respect the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) doing youth work;
- viii. foster knowledge-based youth work that can respond to the changes and trends in our societies and the emerging challenges faced by young people;
- ix. encourage the use of research, evaluation and continuous follow-up in developing knowledge-based, quality youth work ensuring that mechanisms are in place to measure its outcomes and impact.

In establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers, member States are invited to:

- i. work with youth work providers and other stakeholders to develop a set of core competences (for example values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) that should be expected from youth workers;
- ii. establish frameworks, strategies, programmes and pathways for the education, training, capacity building and professional development of youth workers based on the agreed set of competences;

- iii. establish new, or further develop existing mechanisms for the documentation, validation, certification and recognition of competences, which paid and volunteer youth workers gain through their practice;
- iv. give increased support to implementing the existing and future European frameworks and agendas on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.



# Explanatory memorandum

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## I. Introduction

1. The recommendation represents a significant contribution to the advancement of youth work, through European co-operation. The youth sector of the Council of Europe has a key role to play in promoting quality youth work within broader youth policy development. It does this through intergovernmental co-operation and co-management activities under the education and training programme of the European Youth Centres, the European Youth Foundation and the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field. Agenda 2020 identified a number of priorities for the Council of Europe's youth sector,<sup>1</sup> and the work programme has included, for example: reviews of youth policy in member States; human rights education; and the development of a charter on participation of young people in local and regional life. Through these and other activities, the Council of Europe has established a persuasive understanding of the important role(s) youth work plays within contemporary youth policy.

2. The 2nd European Youth Work Convention took place in Brussels in April 2015 in the framework of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.<sup>2</sup> Its final declaration sought to give new impetus to youth work policy in Europe in response to the economic "crisis" since 2008 and the impact of subsequent austerity policies on the funding of both established and innovative youth work. Following the convention, the Joint Council on Youth agreed to draft the first recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on youth work.

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1. 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for youth (2008), "The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020".

2. The 2nd European Youth Work Convention: Similarities in a World of Difference (2015).



3. Young people are a key resource for Europe, but in many different ways a significant – and arguably growing – proportion of young people face pronounced, extended and multiple challenges. All need some level of support in strengthening their autonomy and capacity for “life management”. Many young people now enjoy opportunities enabled through, *inter alia*, new technologies and digital media, the expansion of educational opportunities, and access to information and mobility. However, they also face risk and uncertainty linked to qualification inflation, unemployment, precarious working conditions, conflict and war, threats to mental and physical well-being, information overload, debt and poverty, social inequality and exclusion, and a lack of suitable housing.

There have been simultaneous changes in social and political participation, the scale of early school leaving, inter-generational relations, unintended consequences of austerity and migration, and a growth in extremist perspectives and, occasionally, behaviour.<sup>3</sup> In its many forms, youth work has a valuable contribution to make in supporting young people to navigate these challenges, as well as a vital role to play in working with young people to tackle contemporary social issues and in the building of a social and just Europe.<sup>4</sup>

4. This explanatory memorandum provides some background information on the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on youth work. It sets out why the recommendation is needed and the problems it seeks to address. It outlines the risks of not taking action, emphasising the positive impact and central role that youth work can play in preventing and addressing social exclusion and in promoting the values of democracy and human rights. It describes the process of drafting the recommendation, demonstrating the inclusive approach taken. The explanatory memorandum provides a rationale for the various components of the recommendation and includes advice to support member States in implementing the full range of measures.

## II. The drafting process

5. Based on the information provided by the Secretariat, the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) agreed to prepare a draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work. Following discussions with members of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council

on Youth (CCJ) on the added value, purpose, content and methodology of the draft recommendation, a consultative meeting was held in December 2015. Early in 2016, a drafting group was established, comprising 4 CDEJ members, 3 CCJ members, 1 representative of the European Youth Forum (YEF), 6 representatives of youth work organisations (2 of whom working at a local and municipal level, 2 at European level and 2 from the network of the national agencies of the European Union's Erasmus+; Youth in Action Programme), 1 representative of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), and the General Rapporteur for the 2nd European Youth Work Convention. The European Commission's Youth Policy Unit provided valuable inputs throughout the drafting process, acting in an observer status.

6. The drafting group reported back regularly to the CMJ on progress in preparing the recommendation, and received helpful feedback and advice from a number of CMJ representatives. With assistance from the Council of Europe Secretariat, the group consulted on the preferred content of the draft recommendation with a number of Council of Europe bodies and stakeholders in the field and adapted the draft recommendation accordingly, responding positively to contributions and concerns.

## III. Why a recommendation on youth work?

### Why youth work?

7. Europe needs its young people, just as young people need Europe. Young people will contribute actively to Europe's democratic values and its economic prosperity. Young people have a responsibility to make this contribution, but in order to do so, member States have a responsibility to establish the conditions, opportunities and experiences for young people to flourish. Although this notion is now something of a cliché, young people need to be considered as a force for good and not as a problem to be solved. To this end, the Council of Europe is committed to an “opportunity-focused” rather than “problem-oriented” approach, one that extends and ensures young people's access to the social rights and entitlements that secure their full participation in society and supports the fulfilment of their individual potential and capacity to contribute to positive social change.

8. Youth research consistently reminds us that transitions for young people, for example from schooling to the labour market, from dependent to

3. Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, “United around our principles against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism”, 19 May 2015.

4. The 2nd European Youth Work Convention: Similarities in a World of Difference (2015).



independent living, and from families of origin to families of destination, have become significantly more challenging over the past generation.<sup>5</sup>

Transitions are more uncertain, take longer and are no longer linear; indeed, they are reversible, as in some circumstances young people return home after living independently or become parents before attaining economic autonomy.

9. Modern societies are, of course, characterised by many new opportunities for young people, represented by both physical and virtual mobility, but alongside such possibilities are new risks and vulnerabilities. In modern Europe, such risks are distributed unequally, both within and between countries, and increasingly experienced not just by young people in difficult circumstances but also by young people who would have previously been described as “ordinary kids” with reasonably promising prospects. The prospects for – arguably – a majority of European young people today are characterised by precarity, uncertainty and insecurity – a “generation sacrificed”, according to a debate held in 2012 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.<sup>6</sup>

10. For young people to realise their potential and make successful transitions, and eventually to take responsibility for their personal, civic and working lives, they need to benefit from a “package” of experiences and opportunities in their family lives, their learning contexts and their leisure time. Some young people manage to access the opportunities they want with the aid of family support, as well as through their determination and personal motivation. Many other young people do not have this sort of assistance available to them, and the support they need to access opportunities has to come from other sources – through provision by public authorities, especially at regional and local levels, and through NGOs or independent agencies established for this purpose.

11. The package that is needed is a mosaic of enabling and formative experiences in addition to formal schooling, such as mobility, exchanges, advice and information, counselling, guidance and coaching, engagement with new technologies and social media, and social and political participation. In effect, this is the “offer” that young people in the 21st century need to access one

5. See, for example: Furlong A. and Cartmel F. (1997), *Young people and social change: individualization and risk in late modernity*, Open University Press, Buckingham; Helve H. and Evans K. (eds) (2013), *Youth and work transitions in changing social landscapes*, Tufnell Press, London; Woodman D. and Wyn J. (2015), *Youth and generation: rethinking change and inequality in the lives of young people*, SAGE Publications, London.

6. PACE Resolution 1885 (2012), “The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis”.

way or another, if they are to both make effective transitions to adulthood and play an active part in civil society and the labour market.

12. One element of this mosaic is youth work. Young people learn through a variety of means across a spectrum of formality, but the learning needs of young people, particularly around the acquisition of what are often called “life skills” (such as critical thinking, teamwork, communication, problem solving and decision making), can often be met through youth work; namely, through planned and purposeful out-of-school learning that is aligned with the idea of “non-formal learning”.

13. Youth work takes many forms and is often celebrated for its diversity, flexibility and responsiveness, in relation to both different and changing circumstances and the aspirations of young people, and to new social and political challenges created or experienced by young people. But this diversity of youth work, from adult-led youth projects, clubs and programmes to youth-led self-governed youth organisations, also shares common ground: the desire to provide space for young people (a forum for young people to “be young”) and the simultaneous commitment to support bridges for personal development (a springboard for young people to “become adult”). Youth work helps young people to develop the skills and motivation for finding and pursuing constructive pathways in their lives. To this end, youth work is a critically complementary practice to formal education, to which all young people should have access and entitlement.

### Why now?

14. The objectives of this recommendation address some of the key priorities of the Council of Europe’s youth sector: encouraging member States to develop and strengthen youth work policies and practice. The recommendation also includes proposals for the youth sector of the Council of Europe to support member States in this task, maximising the positive contribution that youth work can make to Europe’s future through co-operation, peer learning and collaboration.

15. At a time when young people are required to make the best decisions possible in an increasingly unpredictable world, the development and delivery of youth work across Europe is increasingly variable. While some countries are

7. Williamson H. (2015), “Finding common ground: Mapping and scanning the horizons for European youth work in the 21st century – Towards the 2nd European Youth Work Convention”, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.



displaying commitment to youth work training, policies and practice, others have yet to make such commitment, or worse, in conditions of austerity, have reduced public spending on youth work. The consequence is that access to youth work – and the experiences and learning framework it offers – can be variable and sometimes unequal; there is an urgent need for essential commitment by some actors to support the development of quality youth work across Europe.

16. There is much on which to build. One of the key reflections on the added value of this recommendation is that it is intended to promote and reinforce an understanding and awareness of, and commitment to, youth work as a key dimension of learning for living in the 21st century, and as a partner and contributor to some of the pressing challenges facing young people and Europe at the current time. Where youth work is better understood, it is celebrated for its contribution to both the personal development and enrichment of the lives of young people and to broadening and deepening the efficacy of those social and political aspirations.

#### **IV. A vision for youth work in Europe**

17. The need for this recommendation has been set out above. The significant and indispensable contribution of youth work both to individual lives and to social cohesion has been emphasised. The recommendation presents an ambitious agenda with an overall vision for youth work in Europe. It sends a strong message to policy makers and practitioners to continue to support and renew youth work in Europe and recognises the valuable role that the Council of Europe plays in formulating youth work-related policy.

18. The vision emphasises that youth work is about cultivating the imagination, initiative, integration, involvement and aspiration of young people; it is educative, empowering, participative, expressive and inclusive. Through activities, playing and having fun, learning in non-formal and informal ways, campaigning, information exchange and guidance, mobility, volunteering, association and conversation, it fosters young people's critical engagement with their communities and societies. Youth work helps young people to discover their talents and to develop the capacities and capabilities to navigate an increasingly complex and challenging social, economic, cultural, ecological and political environment.

19. Youth work supports and encourages young people to explore new experiences and opportunities; it also enables them to recognise and manage the many risks they face now and are likely to encounter in the future. In turn, this produces a more integrated and positive attachment to their own identity and future as well as to their society, contributing purposefully to broader current political and policy concerns: young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), health-risk lifestyles, lack of civic responsibility and violent extremism. Youth work engages with young people on their terms, in response to their expressed and identified needs, in their own space or in spaces created for youth work practice. Youth work can also take place in other contexts (such as schools or prisons), but engagement with it needs to remain on a voluntary basis.

20. This recommendation calls on member States to adopt a strategic approach pro-actively supporting the development of youth work based on the key principles that guide its practice. The recommendation calls on member States to create, within their sphere of competence, the conditions in which all young people can access a positive youth work experience regardless of their background, gender or location, and in which they can be supported to participate in civic dialogue and in the shaping of the decisions that impact their lives.<sup>8</sup>

#### **V. What does the recommendation include?**

21. Following a preamble which sets out the rationale for the recommendation and highlights a number of relevant existing instruments, there are a total of nine recommendations to the member States' governments. An appendix sets out the scope and purpose of the recommendation, the definition and scope of youth work and the underpinning principles, and lists a range of measures for member States to consider when reviewing the situation in their country and deciding on new measures to adopt. The recommendation prioritises areas where action is needed to safeguard and promote youth work.

22. The recommendation sets out a vision whereby all young people across Europe can benefit from an offer of youth work opportunities and experiences. Member States are encouraged to undertake their own situational analysis and to plan co-ordinated action in response to the issues arising, but the

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017.



recommendation draws special attention to the importance of establishing (where they do not yet exist):

- legal and political support;
- sustainable funding and structures;
- improved co-ordination across sectors and between the local and the national levels;
- a competency-based framework for the education and training of youth workers;
- appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work.

23. Member States are asked to support the Council of Europe's youth sector in convening a high-level taskforce of relevant stakeholders to develop a strategy for improving support for and co-ordination of knowledge-based youth work in Europe. This initiative seeks to maximise opportunities for collaboration and peer learning. Building on current structures, the primary goals of the strategy will be to inform and develop quality youth work and youth work policies across Europe.

24. Member States are strongly encouraged to adopt an inclusive, co-ordinated and focused approach in taking forward the nine recommendations and considering the measures in the appendix. Young people, youth workers, NGOs and other organisations providing youth work should be actively engaged with when developing policies to support the development of quality youth work. Member States are reminded of the key principles that should underpin the design and delivery of youth work provision, which include: equality of access and non-discrimination; voluntary and active participation; openness; flexibility; and the importance of provision being rights-based and, above all, young-person centred.

25. The specific measures which member States are asked to consider are linked to two of the substantive recommendations and cover the following:

- a. establishing policies that safeguard and actively support the establishment and further development of youth work at all levels;
- b. establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers.

These recommendations and the related measures are elaborated below.

### **Establishing policies that safeguard and pro-actively support the establishment and further development of youth work at all levels**

26. With regard to its "historical" evolution, youth work manifests itself in many different ways. While some countries have built and sustain a solid structure for youth work, others face substantial cuts, while yet others are still developing and establishing youth work.<sup>9</sup> Such disparities are regrettable, research studies have provided evidence of the value of youth work and the benefits that it brings for young people as well as for society at large.<sup>10</sup> At European level, certainly, there seems to be consensus that the value and impact of youth work justifies sufficient political and material investment; however, what happens at various subsidiary levels – national, regional and local – is still open to debate, and youth work support for young people remains varied and disparate.

27. Implementation of the proposed measures will assist in providing all young people in Europe with equal opportunities, regardless of the country in which they live; it will support young people in their transition to adulthood and help them in finding a place in society. It will contribute to the fostering of democratic values and social cohesion, and the strengthening of civil society. Youth work also plays its part in economic development, by enhancing educational achievement, employability and entrepreneurship.

28. When considering how to implement these measures, member States should pay special attention to the (prior) definition of a legal and programmatic framework and a national strategy on youth work. The strategy should include a robust assessment of needs, specific goals and objectives, measures to achieve those goals, a related action plan (with progress indicators), the target group(s) with age boundaries and details of specific populations (such as minorities and vulnerable groups), as well as details of a budget.

29. The implementation of youth work policy should take into account:
- the importance of participation, both of young people and other stakeholders;
  - knowledge – research, experience and practice;

9. See the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth (Youth Partnership) five-volume series on the "History of youth work in Europe", available at <http://jip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>, accessed 28 July 2017.

10. See, for example, European Commission (2014), "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union", Brussels.



- the importance of a dual approach – taking specific action in the youth field and mainstreaming youth by applying cross-sectoral co-operation with other policy sectors;
- subsidiarity – creating sustainable structures for youth work through youth NGOs, welfare organisations, and public services at regional and local levels.

It is also important to recognise that providers in the public or private sectors as well as those from civil society can deliver youth work.<sup>11</sup>

30. In the past, both the Council of Europe and the Council of the European Union have adopted several political decisions and supported European initiatives for the development of youth work in Europe.<sup>12</sup> With regard to the impact and sustainability of such European strategies and measures, the co-operation of both institutions in the youth work field is of utmost importance. The partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth has strengthened and developed co-operation, fostering synergies between the youth-oriented activities of the two institutions. The specific themes of the current partnership agreement are participation/citizenship, social inclusion, recognition and quality of youth work.<sup>13</sup>

**Establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers.**

31. As explained earlier in this explanatory memorandum, one of the strengths of youth work is the diversity of the concepts, actors, formats and scope of activities. However, a common ground of what constitutes quality youth work

11. There are a number of resources to assist with implementation, for example: European Commission (2014), *op. cit.*; and the 2nd European Youth Work Convention: Similarities in a World of Difference (2015).

12. The 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (2008), "The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020; Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights; Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights; Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field (2010-2018) (2009/C 311/01); Resolution of the Council on youth work (2010/C 327/01); Council conclusions of 14 June 2013 on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (2013/C 168/03); Conclusions of the Council on promoting new approaches in youth work to uncover and develop the potential of young people (2016/C 467/03).

13. For more information on the Youth Partnership, see <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>.

in Europe needs to be better articulated and understood if the contribution which youth work can make is to be maximised. Recognition of youth work, non-formal and informal learning is a priority within the Council of Europe's Agenda 2020 and in the framework of what is referred to as the "Strasbourg process".<sup>14</sup> Member States are invited to give increased support to implementing this agenda. There are growing expectations of youth work in the context of wider "youth policy", and delivering on these expectations depends to a large extent on the competences of the practitioners involved. Paid youth workers invariably work alongside much larger numbers of volunteer youth workers, and both need training. Opportunities for youth work training do not yet exist everywhere in Europe.

32. The routes for entering youth work and the youth worker profession vary. In some countries, there are specific programmes of youth work studies or vocational training for youth workers. Elsewhere, those interested in a career in youth work may study under broader social or educational programmes. In some member States, there are no systems or few opportunities for the recognition and validation of youth worker skills and competences.

33. Defining the core competences for practising youth work in different contexts and developing coherent frameworks for the education and training of youth workers in these competences should help to ensure a certain quality. Having a competency-based framework for those who practice youth work will clarify what is required of youth workers and what beneficiaries can expect, and will help to determine successful approaches to training, professional development and capacity building.

34. Establishing youth work qualifications will improve transparency regarding the competences of the people involved or wishing to become involved in youth work; this will also facilitate the development of appropriate curricula for youth work studies. European agendas for co-operation and policy development can reinforce progress, offer possibilities for a better overview and exchange about the situation and the necessary priorities, and provide opportunities for constructive dialogue with all the relevant stakeholder groups.

35. When developing the core competences for youth work, the importance of skills, knowledge, and attitudes needs to be kept in mind. Workplace learning will need to feature in the education, training and qualification frameworks

14. Youth Partnership (2015), "Expert Group on recognition of youth work and non-formal education: Involvement in related policy development, strategies and activities – Report 2010-2015", Strasbourg and Brussels.



# Glossary<sup>16</sup>

## Citizenship/active citizenship

Active citizenship stands for an active engagement of citizens with democratic processes and institutions, exercising their rights and responsibilities in the economic, social, cultural and political fields of life. In the youth field, much emphasis is on learning the necessary competences through voluntary activities. The aim is to improve not only the knowledge, but also the motivation, skills and practical experience of young people to become active citizens.<sup>17</sup>

## Employability

Employability refers to the set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment, stay in employment and to be successful in their chosen occupations. Employability of individuals depends on:

- personal attributes (including adequacy of knowledge and skills);
- how these personal attributes are presented on the labour market;
- the environmental and social contexts (incentives and opportunities offered to update and validate their knowledge and skills);
- the economic context.

Young people represent a quarter of the world's workforce, but they are almost three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. One of the main reasons is the low employability of young people, since they usually have to deal with underdeveloped skills, early school leaving, lack of formal contact with employers and formal education that does not match market needs. Therefore, a special focus should be placed on overcoming the difficulties which young

that are devised, as many youth work competences are developed when working in the field. When implementing the suggested measures, the diversity of youth work practices will need to be acknowledged, in view of all the different actors, experts and practitioners engaged in the process. It will be challenging to agree on the required or desired competences for youth workers, but close co-operation between the relevant stakeholders is essential.

36. There are several examples in Europe – both at European and national level – of systems, processes and instruments which potentially offer (at least partial) solutions to the challenges described above, and which can also inspire national processes.<sup>15</sup> Such processes and instruments relate both to formal and non-formal education sectors as well as to training, recognition and qualification practices.

## V. Follow-up

37. As much as this legal instrument is important, what happens afterwards is critical. Without a concrete follow-up, strong communication and solid promotion, this Committee of Ministers recommendation may not reach the intended audience. Member States should institute a follow-up which strengthens accountability but also supports the progressive realisation of the measures contained in the recommendation through dialogue, learning, practice exchanges and other forms of developmental collaboration. A seminar to review progress after three years would provide an excellent opportunity for the CDEJ and CCJ to take stock of progress and provide further support and direction to member States, as required. If confirmed, such a seminar would constitute a step that could help and inform the Committee of Ministers when examining the implementation of this recommendation five years after adoption.

15. See, for example: European Commission (2014), op. cit.; EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01); SALTO-YOUTH (2014), "European training strategy I: a set of competences for trainers working at international level"; SALTO-YOUTH Training and Cooperation Resource Centre / Erasmus+, Brussels; SALTO-YOUTH (2013), "Reinforcing links: experiences of cooperation between the formal and non-formal sector in training youth workers"; SALTO-YOUTH Training and Cooperation Resource Centre/Erasmus+; Youth Partnership (2014), "Visible value: mapping of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European and national levels"; Strasbourg and Brussels: Council of Europe (2015), "Youth work portfolio", available at [www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio), accessed 28 July 2017; SALTO-YOUTH Training and Cooperation Resource Centre/Erasmus+, "Youthpass", available at [www.youthpass.eu/en/](http://www.youthpass.eu/en/), accessed 28 July 2017.

16. Other terms appearing in the draft recommendation on youth work are defined in the on-line glossary available at <http://bjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>, accessed 28 July 2017.

17. Adapted from Stuzala L. (2005), "A European framework for youth policy", Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg; and Council of Europe (2016), "Competences for Democratic Culture: glossary of key terms", DGII/EDU/DCID(2016)4, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.



people face when entering the labour market and the issues they encounter when trying to remain there. Enhancing young people's employability skills is certainly an essential mechanism for better promoting their employment and their active inclusion.<sup>18</sup>

### Knowledge-based youth policy

A greater understanding and knowledge of youth is of paramount importance for policy making in the youth field. In order to meet the needs and expectations of young people, policies should be based on comprehensive knowledge and well-researched understanding of young people's situation, needs and expectations.

A knowledge-based approach to policy development is imperative particularly in the context of rapidly evolving realities and permanently fluctuating circumstances of younger generations in Europe. Youth research plays a vital role in generating knowledge and understanding of youth policy development. Thus, youth research and exchange between researchers and policy makers are essential to a knowledge-based policy approach.

However, knowledge-based youth policy includes more than results achieved by the scientific community; it also refers to the experiences of those working with and for young people. Knowledge includes data, facts and figures, evidence and experience from various sources, both from the scientific community and civil society as well as from policy makers.<sup>19</sup>

### Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily the sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or

18. Brewer L. (2013), "Enhancing youth employability: What? Why and How? Guide to core working skills," International Labour Organisation, Geneva: Resolution concerning human resources training and development, 88th Session of the General Conference of the International Labour Organisation, 2000; CEDEFOP (2011), *Glossary: quality of education and training*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

19. Adapted from "Knowledge based policy: Better understanding of youth policy framework," Partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

curriculum subjects. Non-formal learning and education – understood to be learning outside institutional contexts (outside school) – is the key activity, but also the key competence, of youth work. Non-formal learning/education in youth work is often structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support, and it is intentional. It typically does not lead to certification, but in an increasing number of cases, certificates are delivered, leading to a better recognition of the individual learning outcome.

Non-formal education and learning in the youth field is more than a sub-category of education and training, since it contributes to the preparation of young people for knowledge-based society and civil society.<sup>20</sup>

### Youth participation

The Council of Europe's Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003), states that:

participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.

Furthermore, two dimensions of participation can be distinguished:

- direct participation, where political decisions are influenced directly and structural links to political decision-making processes are enabled;
- indirect forms of participation reach out to citizens and encourage them to support certain issues and positions, also enabling discussions, opinion-building as well as campaigning.<sup>21</sup>

### Recognition

In general, the term "recognition" has multiple meanings. In the European youth field, it refers to the position of non-formal learning and youth work in legal and public administration systems, and in society at large.

20. Chisholm L. (2005), "Cheat sheet on recognition terminology," in SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion Resource Centre, "Bridges for recognition: promoting recognition of youth work across Europe", Leuven-Louvain, and Youth Partnership (2011), "Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe", Strasbourg and Brussels.

21. Youth Partnership (2014), "Analytical paper on youth participation – Young people political participation in Europe: What do we mean by participation?", Strasbourg and Brussels.



There are four different kinds of recognition:

- formal recognition means the “validation” of learning outcomes and the “certification” of a learning process and/or these outcomes by issuing certificates or diplomas which formally recognise the achievements of an individual;
- political recognition means the recognition of non-formal education in legislation and/or the inclusion of non-formal learning/education in political strategies, and the involvement of non-formal learning providers in these strategies;
- social recognition means that social players acknowledge the value of competences acquired in non-formal settings and the work done within these activities, including the value of the organisations providing this work;
- self-recognition means the assessment by the individual of learning outcomes and the ability to use these learning outcomes in other fields.<sup>22</sup>

## Youth policy

The purpose of youth policy is to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competences needed to be actors of democracy and to integrate into society, and in particular which will enable them to play an active role in both civil society and the labour market. The key measures of youth policies are to promote citizenship learning and the integrated policy approach.<sup>23</sup>

## Youth sector

The youth sector refers to the areas in which youth activities are performed, usually specified in the general goals of the national youth strategy or other strategic document(s) in the youth field. Youth sector activity is organised by young people or youth policy actors, undertaken with the aim of improving the position of young people and their empowerment for active participation for their own benefit and for the benefit of society. The youth sector comprises a diverse range of government institutions, NGOs, agencies, private practitioners, volunteers, programmes, services and other actors that work with young people or have been established to benefit young people.

22. Youth Partnership (2011), “Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/ education and of youth work in Europe”, Strasbourg and Brussels.  
23. Sturala L. (2005), “A European framework for youth policy”, op. cit.

The international youth sector is a complex web of relationships between governmental, non-governmental and international institutional actors with programmes run for, by and with young people in support of the active contribution which young people can make to their societies and of “good governance” in the sphere of youth policy making. It seeks to promote effective evidence-based action by governments and other relevant actors (for example, international non-governmental youth organisations, international institutions, the research community) to address the needs and concerns of young people in terms of human development and civic, political, and social participation.<sup>24</sup>

## Youth transitions

Youth transitions refer in a wider sense to the transition from dependency to independence and living as a full member of society. This involves moving out from one’s parents’ home and establishing one’s own household, cohabiting and raising children, and moving from the education system to the labour market.<sup>25</sup>

## Youth work

See the definition in the appendix to the draft recommendation itself (part A).

## Youth workers

Youth workers are people who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts, typically focusing on personal and social development through one-to-one relationships and in group-based activities. Being learning facilitators may be their main task, but it is at least as likely that youth workers may take a social pedagogic or directly social work-based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions are combined with each other. There can be paid or volunteer youth workers.<sup>26</sup>

24. Youthpolicy.org (n.d.), “International youth sector: overview”, available at [www.youthpolicy.org/mappings/internationalyouthsector/overview/](http://www.youthpolicy.org/mappings/internationalyouthsector/overview/), accessed 28 July 2017.

25. Eurofound (2014), “Mapping youth transitions in Europe”, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

26. Adapted from Chisholm L. (2005), “Cheat sheet on recognition terminology”, op. cit.



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