

**xcelerate**

# 4th European **Youth Work** Convention

Final Report



Presidency of Malta  
Council of Europe  
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Last year I had the privilege of attending the 4th European Youth Work Convention in Valletta. There, I listened to young people, youth workers, policymakers and researchers from across Europe. We exchanged experiences, challenged perspectives and reflected together on the future of youth work.

What stood out most to me was the depth of commitment across the youth work community. At a time when our societies are facing profound social, economic and geopolitical changes, youth work continues to play a vital role in strengthening participation, inclusion and democratic engagement. The reflections captured in this report speak directly to this reality. They highlight both the opportunities and the pressures facing the sector today, from the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence and the risks of political instrumentalisation, to the challenges faced by youth workers themselves, including precarious working conditions and the need for stronger recognition of their role.

At its core, this report reaffirms the shared principles that underpin European youth work, like inclusion, respect, solidarity and equality. It also reminds us of something fundamental. Youth work is not something we deliver to young people. It is something we build together with them.

Youth workers play an essential role in helping young people navigate an increasingly complex world. They support the development of critical thinking, civic engagement, leadership and intercultural understanding. Just as importantly, they nurture the social and emotional skills that sustain strong communities like empathy, communication and the ability to resolve conflict. In doing so, youth work strengthens not only young people, but also the resilience of our societies and the vitality of our democracies.

The European Union will continue to stand firmly behind this work. Through the EU Youth Strategy, the European Youth Work Agenda, the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, and programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the European Commission supports the recognition, development and innovation of quality youth work across Europe.

Looking ahead, we must go further. The reflections and recommendations contained in this report will help guide our work as we prepare the next EU Youth Strategy beyond 2027. In this context, strengthening the recognition and support of youth work will be a key priority. We must ensure that youth work is better recognised, better supported and better integrated into the policies that shape young people's lives across Europe.

This report is therefore both a reflection of collective commitment and a call to action. It offers concrete recommendations for the European Commission, EU Member States and the youth work community. I remain fully committed to working closely with Member States, the Council of Europe, youth organisations and youth workers themselves to ensure that youth work continues to grow, innovate and thrive.

Because investing in youth work is ultimately an investment in our societies, in our democracy and in the future of Europe.

**Glenn Micallef**

*Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness,  
Youth, Culture and Sport*

## Foreword

Deputy Secretary General, Council of Europe



The 4th European Youth Work Convention – hosted in Valletta in May 2025 during the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – took place at a crucial moment for Europe. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, political and military conflicts, growing polarisation, the triple planetary crisis for climate change, pollution and loss of biodiversity, as well as democratic backsliding and economic and social pressures are affecting young people. Renewed attention must be given to all dimensions of democracy and the infrastructure necessary for democratic societies to flourish. Youth work is a vital instrument for rebuilding trust, supporting young people, strengthening social cohesion and contributing to the renewal of democracy – a key element of the Council of Europe New Democratic Pact for Europe.

Through the Youth Sector Strategy 2030 and the Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 on youth work, the Council of Europe champions quality youth work as a means for young people to learn, engage, and contribute to shaping peaceful democratic societies. In close co-operation with the European Commission through the longstanding Youth Partnership, we stand united in recognising, preserving and advancing youth work across Europe.

In the wake of the Reykjavík Summit of May 2023, the Convention reaffirmed the commitment of the Council of Europe to renew and reinforce democracy, human rights and the rule of law – principles that also lie at the heart of youth work in Europe.

The conclusions of this report reflect the dedication, passion, vision and commitment of hundreds of young people, youth work practitioners, policymakers and researchers to reinforce youth work and to make it even more inclusive. These conclusions were presented at

the 10th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth in October 2025, in Malta, where delegates reaffirmed member states' commitment to strengthening and advancing youth work and ensuring it remains a key priority through sustained support for youth organisations and youth work providers. The roadmap that follows offers valuable concrete insight into this collective effort and into the vision of a coherent European strategic approach to youth work policy, recognition and quality development.

Together with the vibrant community of youth work professionals and partners across Europe and our member states, the Council of Europe remains committed to turning the spirit and conclusions of this Convention into lasting change for young people and our democracies in the years to come.

**Bjørn Berge**  
*Deputy Secretary General,  
Council of Europe*



The 4th European Youth Work Convention, which was held in Malta in late May 2025, proved to be an intense, vibrant and energising occasion. The sense that we organisers had was that the over 500 participants comprising 42 national delegations and representing European institutions, voluntary youth organisations and the wider youth work community were enthusiastic, committed and vocal. To give voice to and listen to each other was the primary focus of the convention and half of the scheduled programme was devoted to small group workshops where participants could listen and contribute to discussions on a wide range of thematic issues and inspiring practices and projects.

That is not to say that there were no challenges for participants. The overarching theme of the convention “Noise vs. Silence” reflected long-standing and often unresolved issues in youth work policy and practice. The conceptual framework for the convention prefigured many of these issues: low policy priority, lack of recognition, inadequate education and training for youth workers, insufficient support structures and intermittent funding.

In some respects, there was an element of *déjà vu* at the convention. Uncertainties and hesitations as to what youth work is, or can or should be; the role of young people, youth workers and youth organisations; the supports needed from governments at national, regional and local level; and the contribution of the European institutions are issues that have for long loomed large over the youth work landscape.

I have often thought that these uncertainties and hesitations are the result of what might be described as the advocacy/practice dilemma or conundrum in youth work. Visually, I see them as two different flowers in an earthenware pot, each striving for light, water and sustenance. Each dimension can be characterised and understood by the different language it uses. Advocacy, empowerment, inclusion, participation, human rights, activism, define the youth work spaces we use to foster democracy and tolerance and combat authoritarianism and prejudice. Professional practice, goal settings, quality standards, key performance indicators, monitoring and evaluation define the youth work space we use to develop and implement strategies with a view to achieving definable outputs and outcomes.

We, in the youth work community, have become adept at juggling these two dimensions of youth work, while being conscious that they are not always easy companions. Like the flowers that compete for light, water and sustenance, so political advocacy and professional practice compete for visibility, recognition and resources. We are also adept at cherry picking. Too often we are distracted by the latest storm that erupts and sweeps across the youth work landscape, be it unemployment, radicalisation, climate change, mental health or AI. We can also be selective with regard to practice - a dash of quality assurance, a pinch of monitoring and evaluation, reviews masquerading as research.

One can question the accuracy of this portrait of youth work, but if only partly true, I am still convinced that it is not sustainable.



Advocating for and promoting democracy is both necessary and admirable. But in the not too distant past, youth work was used as a tool to advocate for and promote political ideologies in Europe that were far less benign and humane than liberal democracy. In the stark political divides of contemporary Europe, some on one side of the political divide view youth work as a threat to be harnessed, while some on the other side see youth work as a resource and supportive ally.

Fractured politics and culture wars present challenges for our youth work spaces, which need to be open to and accepting of all young people regardless of their political views, religious beliefs, cultural norms and lifestyle preferences.

But we may be over anxious in all this. Perhaps the advocacy/practice dilemma which has loomed over us is fading and giving way to a new dawn for youth work in Europe.

The past 20 years have seen a remarkable flourishing of youth work policy and practice at European, national, regional and local levels. Regular Youth Work Conventions are only one example of this dynamic. Despite this progress, however, there remains a stark divide in youth work provision across Europe. While many countries are proactive in supporting youth work, in many others, the voluntary youth sector largely bears the burden and responsibility.

However, this flowering of youth work policy and practice across Europe is a delicate plant. There is an urgent need to take action to ensure that it grows strong and vigorous and, crucially, is sustained and endures.

This convention, in its conclusions and roadmap towards a European Youth Work Strategy, provides the dynamic needed for growing, sustaining and ensuring the endurance of youth work in Europe.

As needed and important as a European Youth Work Strategy is, we must remember that it is but a means to an end. Outside the noise and energy of the convention was the silence of young people's everyday lives.

Let us remember that the lives of young people are more varied, complex, colourful and rich than are dreamed of in the rarefied world of European institutions and Member State governance. Home, school/college, the workplace, love, relationships, food, drink, music, dance, films, sport, clothes, fashion, and social media loom much larger in the landscape of their everyday lives than politics, social inclusion or multiculturalism. In this context, we might visualise youth work as a translucent, comforting and energising white cloud anchored in the blue sky of young people's lives.

In the living spaces of youth work practice, I am convinced that, with the necessary investment and support as set out in the conclusions and roadmap in this report, we in the youth work community have the vision, the competence and the will to successfully deliver youth work based programmes, youth work initiatives and services that embrace, enlighten and enhance the many expressions of young people's humanity.

Freedom is a word that we rarely seem to use in youth work. But freedom is indivisible: if we want a free society, young people must be free. Not just free from want, neglect and indifference and from those that would seek to curb and suppress freedom, but free to charter their own course in life and shape their own destinies.

In a free, open and democratic society, young people - subject to the rule of law and the vagaries of life - are free to make their own decisions and choices in politics, religion, culture and lifestyle. Youth work cannot make these decisions and choices for young people, nor should it seek to encourage or nudge them towards making particular decisions or choices. What youth work can do is support young people to prepare for and make informed choices and decisions, and realise and take responsibility for the consequences of these decisions and choices for themselves, their communities and the wider society.

**Miriam Teuma**

*Chairperson of the European Steering Committee for Youth (2025)*



European Youth Work Conventions (EYWCs), hosted every five years, are platforms for youth work practitioners, policy-makers, researchers, youth work organisations and youth services to meet and exchange views on youth work development in Europe. The conventions are a key bridge between youth work policy and practice, a forum for debate and reflection on youth work development and for transferring knowledge and acquiring new insights and strengthening the role of youthwork for promoting and rejuvenating democracy.

Following conventions in Ghent 2010, Brussels 2015, and Germany (online) in 2020, Malta hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention from 27 to 29 May 2025 under its chairpersonship of the Council of Europe. The convention was hosted by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Research and Innovation together with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (Malta's national youth agency) and the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) for Malta and with the support of the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.

A Steering Group acted as the main platform for preparations for the 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention, defining the focus, objectives, and expected outcomes of the convention. The Steering Group comprised representatives of the European Union and the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), national agencies of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, SALTO Resource Centres, as well as of the community of youth work practitioners.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention (2020) resulted in a Final Declaration, "Signposts for the Future", which set out eight priority areas for implementation under a European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA). A number of processes and platforms have been established to support the implementation of the EYWA, such as the Steering Group coordinated by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, and numerous seminars and training activities to support stakeholders in interpreting and implementing the EYWA's priorities in national contexts.

The convention in Malta sought to build on and advance the work of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) and ensure both symmetry and continuity in promoting youth work policy development and implementation, recognition and quality practice. In this context, there was a particular focus on:

- the work and outcomes of the Strategic National Agencies' Cooperations (SNAC)• the European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy (2024 ) and its background documents, and
- the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership projects related to youth work, including the Symposium on Visible Value: Growing Youth Work in Europe (2023).

The EU Council Resolution on the European Youth Work Agenda (2020) established it as a strategic framework for strengthening and developing quality, innovation and recognition

of youth work. The EYWA adopts a targeted approach to further developing knowledge-based youth work in Europe and connecting political decisions with their practical implementation.

Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention, key initiatives and policy documents have been adopted at the European level to ensure both continuity and symmetry in promoting youth work policy development and implementation, recognition, and quality practice, supported by numerous projects and activities undertaken by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.

The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 “Engage, Connect, Empower” is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation, which fosters youth participation in democratic life, supports social and civic engagement, and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.

The Council of Europe’s “Youth Sector Strategy 2030” provides policy guidance and a broad political roadmap for the period 2020–23 and is the framework within which its Youth for Democracy Programme is being implemented. The strategy sets out the aim of enabling young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe’s core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Following the Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work, which was the first Europe-wide policy document on youth work, the Joint Council on Youth initiated a comprehensive review process in 2022 to assess the implementation and impact of the recommendation.

Following the conference on “Local youth work and democracy” hosted by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in February 2024, Council Resolution on youth work policy in an empowering Europe was adopted with the aim of building on existing policy measures, and setting parameters to enable youth work to position itself to better support young people in their efforts to navigate pathways to autonomy.



The 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention was held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, the historic site of a hospital built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Order of St. John, located towards the tip of the Valletta peninsula with magnificent views over the Grand Harbour.

The Maltese archipelago of islands occupies some 31,000 hectares and is in the central Mediterranean, 80km south of Sicily, 284km east of Tunisia and 333km north of Libya. Malta is the world's tenth-smallest country by area and the most densely populated Member State of the European Union.

Given its strategic location in the central Mediterranean, a succession of powers - Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Aerogenes, the Knights Hospitaller, French and British - have ruled the islands and shaped their culture and society. Malta achieved its independence from the United Kingdom in 1964 and became a republic in 1974. It has been a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and the Council of Europe since independence, and became a Member State of the European Union in 2004 and adopted the euro in 2008.

Youth work in Malta has its roots in the efforts of the Catholic Church and its voluntary organisations, such as the Society of Christian Doctrine, Catholic Action, and the Salesians, all of which were established in Malta at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The British presence led to the formation of the Malta Scout Association, which applied for membership in the British Scout Movement in 1908.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, youth work in Malta remained a voluntary activity, the preserve of the voluntary youth sector. Up until the 1990s, the Maltese state had displayed little or no interest in youth work and provided no support, financial or otherwise. However, the decade was to usher in several significant changes in the state's attitude to youth work.

In 1992, the University of Malta established an Institute of Youth Studies to provide training for those who wished to pursue a professional career as youth and community workers. In 1993, a new Ministry for Youth and Arts was established and published the first document on youth policy. Malta's first National Youth Policy (1993) was followed by others in 1999, 2004 and 2010.

The establishment of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (national youth agency) in 2010 has had transformational consequences for youth work in Malta.

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh put in place administrative structures and operational procedures for the promotion and implementation of youth work practice and youth-related services, and is now the leading employer of professionally qualified youth workers in Malta. The Youth Work Profession Act 2014 gave formal professional recognition and status to youth workers, regulated the profession and determined the qualifications and conditions under which youth workers could acquire such recognition.

Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ has also, since its establishment, been instrumental in drafting, overseeing and implementing national youth policy in Malta.

The current national youth policy, *Towards 2030 - Reaching out to, working with, and supporting young people*, is being implemented over the period 2021 to 2030, and focuses on all young people aged 13 to 30.

*Towards 2030*, seeks to reach out to, work with and support young people in meeting the changing circumstances, present challenges and new opportunities that face them in the years ahead. The policy is embedded in and complements European youth policy, such as the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) and the Council of Europe's Youth Sector Strategy 2030 and builds on the success of the previous national youth strategy, *Towards 2020 - A shared vision for the future of young people* (2015-2020).

The policy's vision is of young people who are respected, valued and listened to and supported and encouraged in building fulfilling personal and social relationships and in developing their innate abilities and talents for the benefit of themselves, their communities and society.

The overarching values of the policy are respect, recognition, sustained support and solidarity, and these are underpinned by principles of responsiveness, access, participation, inclusion, integration, diversity, empowerment and equality.

The aims of the national youth policy are:

- to effectively support and encourage young individuals in fulfilling their potential and aspirations while addressing their needs and concerns, and
- to effectively support young people as responsible citizens who participate in and contribute to the social, economic, political and cultural life of the nation and Europe and in addressing global issues.

Achieving these aims is being pursued by:

Reaching out to, connecting with, and listening to the voices of young people

- in the community
- in the schools and other education/training institutions
- in the workplace, and
- through social media.

Empowering young people through the effective practice of youth work in

- regional and locally-based centres
- national programmes, projects and initiatives
- youth-led organisations
- cross-sectoral initiatives with voluntary, public and private entities, and
- European programmes.

In seeking to achieve the aims of the national youth policy, Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ adopts and implements a strategic youth work approach.

*Towards 2030* sets out eight Strategic Goals and accompanying actions that are being implemented over the period 2021-2030

- To listen to and support the voices of young people and raise awareness among young people of issues that impact their everyday lives and provide youth information.
- Conduct research on the lives of young people to ensure a knowledge-based policy approach.
- To further facilitate young people's transition to adulthood.
- To provide proactive and responsive regional, local and schools-based supports and services that enable young people to learn, work in and contribute to their communities and the wider society and create an environment that fosters equality, inclusion, educational and economic opportunity, and democratic participation and accountability.
- To support a wide range of national programmes, projects and cross-sectoral initiatives for young people that promote and foster their well-being, creativity, cultural and artistic expression and innovation and engagement in addressing global issues for sustainable development.
- To promote and facilitate cross-sectoral initiatives with the voluntary, state and private sectors that adopt an integrated and cohesive approach to meeting young people's needs and fulfilling their aspirations.
- To further enhance and develop effective youth work practice.
- To ensure effective coordination and cohesion in the implementation of the national youth policy and maximise its potential for supporting young people.

Overarching responsibility for implementing *Towards 2030* rests with the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, while Aġenzija Żgħażaġh is responsible for strategic planning, implementation and day-to-day operational matters.

The implementation of the national youth policy over the period 2021-2030 is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis through Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's annual reports to ensure that it continues to be relevant and responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people.

*Towards 2030* is being implemented in tandem with and in support of European youth policy and is also supportive of international youth policies.

Listening to and supporting the voices of young people, raising awareness among them about issues that affect their daily lives, and providing youth information are also key features of *Towards 2030*. This is achieved through the Youth Information One Stop Shop (YIOSS), an official website, as well as through social media and initiatives such as *Youth Worker Online*, which facilitate ongoing physical and digital engagement with young people.

The Maltese government has been proactive in this regard through its amendment of the electoral law in 2018 that allows 16 and 17 year olds vote in local, national and European elections. It also allows 16 and 17 year olds to stand for and be elected to local councils.

Implementation of the national youth policy, *Towards 2030*, continues to see significant

increases in the number of new initiatives and projects undertaken and in the number of young people participating.

The increasing cooperation between Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and schools and other educational institutions, particularly in civic education and personal and social skills development, is further strengthening the links between formal education and non-formal learning for the mutual benefit and reinforcement of both.

Underpinning this development is the number and scope of cross-sectoral initiatives now underway. In 2023, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh partnered or cooperated with almost 50 government ministries, state entities, NGO and CSOs, ensuring a truly cross-sectoral approach in addressing the needs and aspirations of young people. A wide range of cross-sectoral programmes, projects and initiatives in the visual arts, music, literature, photography, broadcasting, film-making, lifestyles, composition, entrepreneurship, environment, and citizenship also continue to be built upon.

This broad and varied cross-sectoral approach is also evidenced in the number of young people being reached. In 2023 alone, young people in Malta (youth population 113,000) on over 75,000 occasions directly participated in or benefited from Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's programmes, projects, initiatives, financial supports, facilities and services, in addition to the over 1m visits to its online platforms and website in search of information, services and other supports.

Government support for voluntary youth organisations under the national youth policy has also substantially increased. In 2022, voluntary youth organisations registered with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh received over €100,000 in financial support. In 2023, financial support for voluntary youth organisations increased fourfold to over €500,000.

Youth work strategy and practice are the driving engine in implementing youth policy in Malta. Youth work is seen as the process employed through which non-formal learning can come about. It is a planned learning programme, project or activity aimed at the personal, social, cultural and political development of young people based on their voluntary participation and on mutually respectful and supportive relationships between young people and adults and built on a strong working relationship between the individual young person and the youth worker.



### 3.1. Youthwork xcelerate

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The convention's title, 'Youthwork xcelerate - A roadmap towards a European strategy for youth work policy development, implementation, recognition and quality practice' reflected Malta's commitment to advancing the recognition and development of youth work across Europe<sup>1</sup>. Positioned as a central hub in the Mediterranean, Malta represents a meeting point for different cultures and ideas, symbolising a place where new connections and strategic collaborations can thrive. The title 'Youthwork xcelerate' encapsulated the urgency and momentum needed to elevate youth work to new heights, with innovation and excellence as its hallmarks.

'Youthwork xcelerate' also meant an active drive towards improving standards, recognition, and quality in youth work, aligning with the convention's goal to provide a roadmap - comprising actions, initiatives, measures and processes - for the creation of a youth work strategy that unites Europe through a shared vision for youth work development as reflected in the EYWA and the Council of Europe's Recommendation on Youth Work. The focus on a 'youth work strategy' reinforced the idea that the convention would be a forum and catalyst for promoting long-term, sustainable progress in youth work across Europe and at national, regional and local levels, and to prioritise the steps required for the next five years.

It also highlighted Malta's role as a bridge between past conventions and future strategic actions. It emphasised the urgent need to strengthen and enhance quality youth work practices in Europe so that these efforts are recognised and supported at both the European and national levels. It also aimed to foster the development and well-being of young people across diverse contexts and ensure that youth work in Europe becomes and remains an essential, recognised and supported dimension of young people's learning, development and active citizenship.

#### 3.1.1. Format and programme of the Convention

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The draft programme for the convention comprised a plenary session, a series of roundtable discussions, thematic workshops and workshops on projects and inspirational practices. The thematic workshops focused on three dimensions:

- **Youth work core:** A shared vision for youth work and its future, which focused on definitions and descriptions of youth work, values and ethics, recognition and visibility, quality and standards, and monitoring and evaluation.
- **Youth work environment:** Supporting young people by addressing their needs and aspirations, ensuring their access, inclusion, participation, and empowerment.

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<sup>1</sup> The strategic approach to Youth Work Development in Europe may take different concrete forms in future policies (see the roadmap for details).

This includes advocacy in youth work; the role of employed and volunteer youth workers and youth leaders and their education, training, and recognition, as well as youth work methodologies, tools, approaches and new technologies.

- **Youth work systems:** Policy and strategy at the European, national, regional, and local levels, covering the voluntary youth sector and youth work associations, networks, centres, and service providers. It also included cooperation between state/public and voluntary sectors at different levels, state/public and EU/EYF funding and resources for youth work, and youth work's interaction with other policy fields.

The youth work core embodied the essential features and foundational principles of youth work; the youth work environment enabled practical implementation, while youth work systems provided the necessary support structures and mechanisms.

The thematic workshops were the primary forum where participants could consider, discuss and arrive at conclusions on the three overarching themes of the convention.

The convention also provided a platform for a diverse range of projects and inspirational practices from Malta and other countries, as well as from the European Commission, the Council of Europe Youth Department and the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership initiatives that mirrored, complemented and informed the thematic workshops.

The draft report and conclusions of the convention will be presented to the Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conference in Malta in October 2025.

### *3.1.2. The noise and the silence*

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The hope and expectations were that the convention in Malta would fundamentally be about giving voice to and listening to the youth work community of practice: youth workers, youth leaders, youth organisations and service providers who work at the coal face of youth work and interact with and support young people on a regular and ongoing basis. What were their hopes, expectations, aspirations, concerns, and fears for the future of youth work as a professional practice that has meaning and value for young people?

Ludwig Wittgenstein came to believe that the essence of language was in learning what other people are talking about from being in a community of successful language users. Are we a youth work community of successful language users? Are there issues that we talk about too much and others that we talk about too little? How do we avoid groupthink and listen to dissenting voices? What are the most important issues we need to address? Can we develop a shared language to tackle them? How do we turn words into actions? How do we approach these questions in relation to the spaces we occupy, our experiences in youth work, and the wider human and social environment? How do we reflect on the times we live in, the memories and lessons we have gained, the emerging challenges we face, and our vision for the future?

The language of youth work is positive, fervent, uplifting, and aspirational. Much progress has been made over the past 20 years in Europe in promoting and supporting youth work, but the lived reality of youth work for its community of practice is more challenging. The noise often shuts out the silence.



Uncertainty, disappointment, and frustration can be features of that silence. Low policy priority, lack of recognition, inadequate education and training, poor employment opportunities, lack of parity of esteem with other professions, insufficient support structures and intermittent and onerous funding measures are too common a feature of youth work across Europe and the consequences they have for both youth workers and young people. The tendency for stakeholders in the field to work in silos inhibits mutual support in maximising the effects of available resources. Regional imbalances in youth work provision in Europe, while apparent and acknowledged, are rarely addressed. The voluntary youth sector is the backbone of youth work in Europe, yet in many countries, it often bears an excess burden, its potential untapped and its capacity limited.

We must therefore focus on maximising our strengths, highlighting youth work's unique role in empowering young people as individual and active citizens, how it can complement and reinforce youth policies in related fields, while at the same time developing youth work strategies that are clear, realistic, focused, prioritised and time-bound.

### *3.1.3. Aims and outcomes of the Convention*

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The primary focus of the 4<sup>th</sup> EYWC in Malta was giving voice to and listening to the youth work community, articulating and arriving at conclusions that could provide the essential features, building blocks, measures and initiatives for developing and implementing an effective youth work strategy. All stakeholders – policymakers, European institutions, Member States at national, regional and local levels, National Agencies, the voluntary youth sector and young people – have varying roles and responsibilities in developing and implementing a youth work strategy.

The next five years will see a new EU youth strategy, a new Multiannual Financial Framework, a new generation of European programmes, and a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy.

The convention in Malta provided us with the opportunity to set out our strategic vision, priorities and objectives for youth work in Europe over the next five years and a roadmap on how they can be included in and become an essential pillar of all youth policy both at the European and national levels.

### ***3.2. Programme, Plenaries and Workshops***

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The evening before the convention, a welcome get-to-know-you event was held at Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in Santa Venera in the centre of the island of Malta. It was an opportunity for old friends and new friends to come together for a convivial evening of Maltese food and music, and a festive atmosphere to renew old acquaintances and forge new ones.

One of the evening's highlights was sessions with legendary figures in the youth field in Europe, Antje Rothmund, Bernard Abrignani, Jan Vanhee, Erik Langbraten and Howard Williamson, who reflected, in the company of participants, on their long involvement and what had been advanced and achieved over the years.

During the course of the convention, a Marketplace was also available for participants where the European Institutions and the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership provided information and advice on a wide range of publications and resources relevant to the youth work field.

In all, more than 500 participants, including 42 national delegations, attended the convention. Each participant was presented in advance with a guide, outlining the programme, concept and aims of the convention, as well as an information pack.

The programme of the convention and a list of participants are attached in the Appendices.



The convention kicked off early, in bright sunshine, with good humour, enthusiasm and expectation.

Sarah Spiteri, a youth worker with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and Jan Lai, a youth worker and trainer from Sardinia, launched the convention and acted as presenters throughout. They were a dynamic duo: friendly, warm and engaging who nonetheless kept things moving and on time.



**Hon. Keith Azzopardi Tanti**  
*Parliamentary Secretary for Youth,  
Research and Innovation, Malta*

The Parliamentary Secretary welcomed the participants to Malta and expressed the hope that the convention would offer meaningful dialogue and thoughtful cultural exchange. Reflecting on the development of youth work in Malta since the country's accession to the European Union in 2004, and the country's active commitment to the Council of Europe, he emphasised the benefits of European collaboration. The Council of Europe's 2003 review of Malta's national youth policy, the establishment of the national youth agency Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in 2010, and the Youth Work Profession Act of 2014, were all milestones in the development of youth work in Malta.



Malta's efforts to engage with young people in their communities, schools, and workplaces, as well as through social media, were highlighted as practical examples of how the current national youth policy "Towards 2030" is being implemented.

Concluding, the Parliamentary Secretary underlined the importance of a strategic approach to youth work, particularly in the face of broader societal challenges, such as economic instability, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the growing impact of artificial intelligence. Youth work conventions provided much needed leadership and direction in actively shaping youth work and its vision for the future.

"Here in Malta, we have witnessed firsthand the profound and defining impact youth work can have on young lives. For youth work to truly thrive, it must be grounded in a coherent vision, clarity of purpose, ongoing support and shared commitment from everyone involved in the youth work community."

## **Tobias Flessenkemper**

*Head of the Youth Department, Directorate for Democracy, Council of Europe*

Tobias welcomed the participants on behalf of the Council of Europe's Youth Department, emphasising the significance of youth work as a cornerstone of the Council of Europe's mission. He highlighted the commitment of the institution to dedicate spaces for young people through the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, funding for youth-led initiatives by the European Youth Foundation, and youth participation in youth policy development across all policy areas that affect young people's lives.

Youth work was framed as essential for fostering democracy, inclusion, and resilience in the face of challenges such as disinformation, conflict and social inequality.

He gave particular attention to the innovative responses of youth workers in Ukraine, and the broader role youth work plays in upholding democratic values. The recommendation on youth work has played a vital role in establishing youth work as a recognised policy field across Europe. The upcoming meeting of European ministers responsible for youth, in October 2025, will be a key moment in securing political commitment for the implementation of the outcomes of the convention in Malta.



The Council of Europe's commitment to youth work remains strong, as reaffirmed in the 2023 Reykjavik Declaration, in positioning youth perspectives and young people's democratic participation as central to the work of the institution.

Tobias concluded by thanking the participants for their passion and ongoing commitment in building stronger and more inclusive youth work, grounded in the belief that young people are vital actors in democracy and society.

"Youth work is essential for learning, practising and innovating democracy. Young people can experience diversity, inclusion and equality with their peers at home and abroad, regardless of their background and origin."

## Karen Vandeweghe

*Deputy Head of Unit, Youth and Volunteer Solidarity,  
Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission*

Karen praised the gathering of over 500 youth workers from across Europe, making the conventions a truly unique space for connecting, collaborating and exchanging. Youth work was highlighted as playing a crucial role in addressing current societal challenges, while protecting democracy, fostering inclusion, and promoting participation. A central aspect of youth work is the support it offers young people without judgment, creating safe spaces for growth and empowerment.

The progress since the 2020 convention was clearly noticeable, as youth policy is now more prominent on the EU political agenda. She referenced multiple initiatives, such as, the EU Youth Check, Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners, and the upcoming President's Youth Advisory Board. Additionally, the expansion of the Erasmus+ budget has enabled more mobility and cooperation projects, for example, the establishment of the Alliance of Youth Workers Association.



Reaffirming the commitment to the European Youth Work Agenda, the Council Recommendations on youth work in an empowering Europe and the Council Conclusions on creating local opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas were both adopted in 2024. Looking ahead, she announced the European Commission's ongoing preparation for the next generation of EU programmes and future EU Youth Strategy, with a listening process underway to which she invited the participants to contribute.

“Youth work helps young people from all walks of life to discover who they are and where they want to be. And it does this without labelling, without any judgment. Youth work really sees young people as they are and supports them in becoming who they want to be.”

**Nina Grmuša**  
*Chair of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), Council of Europe*

Nina opened her remarks with a personal reflection on the transformative power of youth work and the vital role youth work plays in building empathy, growth, and democratic trust among young people who get the opportunity to experience its benefits. Youth work is crucial for developing democratic citizenship, solidarity and human rights values. Youth workers play a fundamental role in helping young people understand the complexities of the world, to act on societal challenges, and build democratic values across Europe.

She argued that youth work must be recognised as both a civic and professional field, sustained through structural support in terms of funding, physical spaces, inclusive access and continued investments in education, training and policy development. She highlighted the Council of Europe's ongoing contributions, including the 2017 Recommendation on Youth Work, the European Youth Foundation and the Quality Label network.



Special recognition was given to the delegation of Ukrainian youth workers for their resilience in continuing to deliver youth work in challenging conditions, and to the broader youth sector for maintaining spaces to connect young people in facing democratic backsliding and shrinking space for civil society in many parts of Europe.

Looking ahead to the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers responsible for youth, she called for renewed political commitment in alignment with the commitments of the Reykjavik Declaration as well as the Democratic Pact of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, emphasising the inseparable link between strong democracies and strong youth work.

“Youth work helps young people become active, responsible democratic citizens. It nurtures empathy, understanding, and solidarity, and gives tools to young people to untangle the complexities of the world around them”.

### 3.2.2. Day 1 - Panel Discussion 1: From Germany to Malta: A Five-Year Journey

This session took us back to the Bonn Process and how it has shaped our collective path toward quality, recognised, and forward-looking youth work. The session anchored the 4<sup>th</sup> European Youth Work Convention in a shared vision and mapped the road ahead.

Speakers	
<b>Uwe Finke-Timpe</b>	Head of European and International Youth Policy Unit, Federal Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
<b>Frauke Muth</b>	Head of JUGEND für Europa, National Agency Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport and European Solidarity Corps, Germany
<b>Clotilde Talleu</b>	Manager EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership
<b>Raphael Scerri</b>	CEO - National Coordinator European Union Programme Agency, Malta
<b>Miriam Teuma</b>	CEO Aġenzija Żgħażaġh – Chair of the Steering Committee for Youth COE, Malta

**Uwe Finke-Timpe** emphasised the importance of having regular five yearly conventions and the positive impact they have in providing momentum in shaping the future of youth work in Europe. Following the previous conventions hosted by Belgium and Germany, Malta is now ensuring the continued priority of youth work on the European political agenda. The 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention was hosted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a very challenging time for all of society, including the youth sector. Throughout these challenges, the youth work community of practice has persisted, which demonstrates the resilience of the sector.

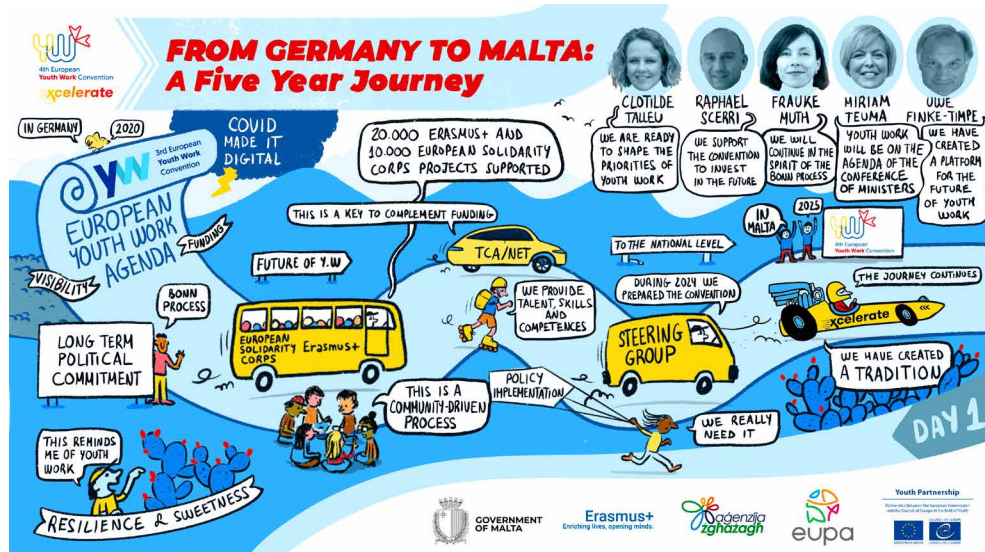
**Frauke Muth** described the European Youth Work Agenda as a milestone in youth work development across Europe, based on its uniqueness of being a community-driven process for establishing a common joint framework with priority areas, as well as long-term political commitment. Referring to the latest survey of the SNAC (Growing Youth Work) initiative, which supports national processes launched since 2020, 34 countries have established implementation processes at the national level, coordinated by national contact points and national working groups. Funding and strategic training support is essential for the long-term impact and future development of youth work.

**Clotilde Talleu** spoke of the long-standing partnership between the European institutions and their joint commitment to youth work since the establishment of the partnership over 25 years ago. Based on the outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention and the European Youth Work Agenda, the institutions agreed to strengthen the role of the

EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership in youth work development, making youth work a key pillar of the work of the Partnership. In this context, the Partnership coordinated the steering group and preparations for the convention in Malta and the participation of Erasmus+ partner countries in eastern and south-east Europe, providing practical and organisational support.

**Raphael Scerri** described the conventions as a collaborative arena to plan future investments in youth work in Europe. In Malta, €60 million has been invested over the past ten years through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. Investing in youth work is a joint effort in outreach to connect with and support new youth organisations and young people. These efforts require not just funding but also the talent, skills, and competencies of youth workers.

**Miriam Teuma** spoke of the efforts made over the past five years, which have been instrumental in shaping this convention in Malta. It is crucial to build on the momentum we have developed jointly the European level and how this can positively impact at the national and local levels. Conventions, presidencies and other initiatives and fora are platforms for raising political awareness and deliberating on key issues. The upcoming youth ministers conference, in October 2025, is a significant moment in securing political support for the work and conclusions of the convention.



### 3.2.3. Day 1 - Noise and Silence – perspectives on the convention

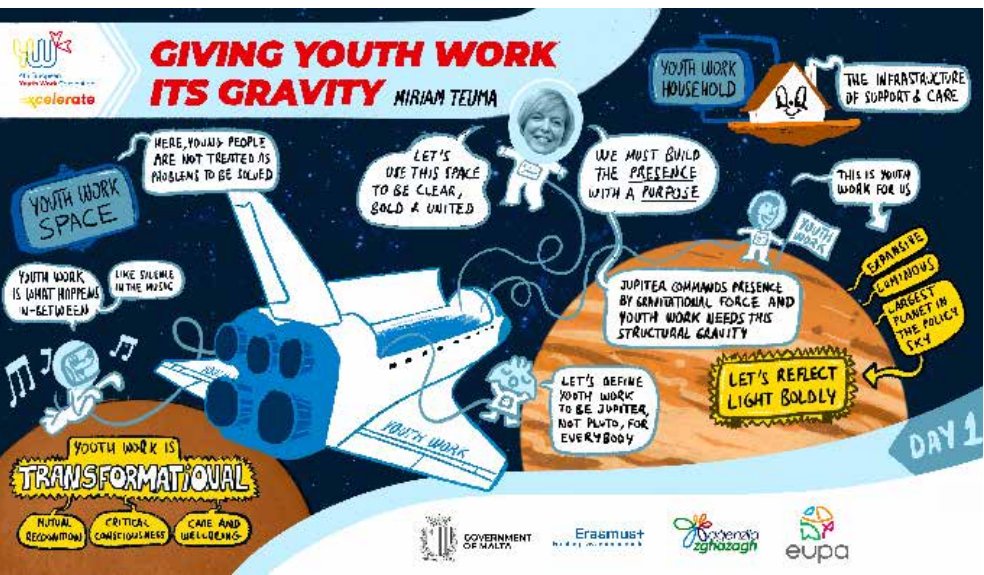
As chairperson of the Steering Committee for Youth of the Council of Europe, and CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, Miriam Teuma presented some perspectives on the overarching theme of the convention that could stimulate discussion and debate and arrive at clear conclusions.

Miriam invited participants to consider a philosophical basis for youth work. Centred on the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hannah Arendt, and Paulo Freire, youth work can be seen as founded on the educational values of curiosity, freedom, courage, compassion and equality in dialogue. Recognising young people as equal partners in facing the challenges of the world emphasises the transformational force of youth work.

To Mozart's Jupiter symphony, Miriam encouraged participants to consider the importance of listening to the silence between the notes. Youth work happens in-between: between formal systems and everyday life, between policy and lived realities, between being heard and truly listened to, and between what young people are expected to be and who they are becoming. Reflecting on the community of practice as a household, Miriam argued that youth work is both a source of well-being, security and fraternity, and a litany of everyday chores and housework – recognition, funding, quality standards, professional training and development, monitoring and evaluation.

Youth work is a practice for autonomy building, and a site for democratic participation, education and well-being, which requires active reflection on what we see ourselves to be, and how others in society view the youth work field. Using the gravitational dynamic between Jupiter and Pluto, Miriam urged participants to consider what measures were needed to help youth work in reaching structural gravity. The convention's role was to identify these essential measures, which can underpin and inform the development of a roadmap for a European youth work strategy.

The convention was a place not just to speak, but also to listen, to think, and to define. Miriam closed her presentation by urging participants to be clear, bold and united – to build presence with purpose in forging the future of youth work in Europe.



### *3.2.4. Day 1 - Workshops*

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Two sessions of the thematic workshops were held, one before and one after lunch on Day 1 and another was held on Day 2.

In advance of the thematic workshops, reporting templates, briefing notes and briefing sessions were held to inform and prepare facilitators and rapporteurs.

Each of the thematic workshops was facilitated by the same team of facilitators and rapporteurs. Maria Koutatzi served as the facilitators' coordinator, while Gisele Evrard was the rapporteurs' coordinator. Alice Bergholtz and James O'Donovan acted as the general rapporteurs, responsible for drafting the report on the convention.

### *3.2.5. Day 1 - Presentations from the European Institutions and their Partnership*

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Three key tools were introduced as strategic instruments to support the development of youth work. These tools represent the shared commitment of European institutions to strengthen the role and impact of youth work.

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#### **Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio – Yael Ohana, Programme Manager, Education, Training and Cooperation, Youth Department, Council of Europe.**

The Council of Europe's revised and updated youth work portfolio was presented by Yael Ohana, Programme Manager of the Education, Training, and Cooperation Division of the Youth Department. The youth work portfolio is a key tool to support the recognition, quality, and development of youth work across Europe.

The portfolio serves both as a tool and a standard, and provides for self-assessments, on-boarding and educational material and data-gathering, as well as serving as a basis for the development of international and national youth work occupational standards and qualification frameworks, standards for educational activities and youth work policies and practices within Council of Europe activities, and as a basis for youth work recognition.

The core of the portfolio is the competencies framework for self-assessment, focusing on relationships with – and outcomes for - young people, on self-practice in the field of youth work, and on the youth work community and wider society. Working in cyclical processes, the portfolio can be revisited over time, and is fully available online with practical guidance, theoretical background, and additional resources to strengthen youth work across all levels.

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#### **Launching the Youth Work Strategies Manual – Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll, Member of the Pool of European Youth Researchers.**

The Youth Work Strategies Manual was officially launched at the convention and was presented by one of its editors, Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll. Developed by a team

that included Howard Williamson, Adina Șerban, Miriam Teuma, and Zara Lavchyan, the manual provides a comprehensive mapping and analysis and suggests future approaches in developing youth work strategies.

The publication offers practical guidance for various stages of strategy development, from establishing initial goals to implementation and assessment. Building on previous examples, including a detailed case study of Malta, the manual provides tools, methods, and examples to support each phase of strategy development.

The importance of establishing inclusive processes was emphasised in identifying who leads, who contributes, and who validates strategy, as well as grounding strategic planning in realistic contexts and expectations. Copies of the manual were available at the convention, and it can also be downloaded from the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership website. Participants were invited to use it as a resource in shaping sustainable and context-sensitive youth work strategies.

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### **Erasmus+ Supporting Youthwork - Jorun Boklöv, Programme Assistant - Youth Policy and Programmes, DG EAC-B3**

Jorun Boklöv, Programme Assistant for Youth Policy and Programmes at the European Commission, presented the support Erasmus+ offers for youth work and its development. Highlighting the scale of impact, she noted that between 40,000 and 50,000 youth workers have participated in Erasmus+ mobility opportunities annually, as Erasmus+ is often the only structured training option available in some countries. These experiences consistently show satisfaction rates above 95%, with reported outcomes including greater confidence among youth workers.

Furthermore, Erasmus+ promotes collaboration between organisations through small-scale partnerships, which are ideal for newer organisations, and larger, strategic partnerships, such as the Alliance of Youth Work Associations. Additional opportunities include capacity-building projects for non-EU countries and the *European Youth Together* strand, which encourages large-scale, cross-European networks of youth organisations.

National Agencies, Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA), and Networking Activities (NET) play an important role in maintaining quality in youth work. As the current programme cycle concludes in 2027, preparations for the next cycle are underway, and Jorun encouraged participants to engage with National Agencies and stay informed about developments through the European Youth Portal.

### 3.2.6. Day 1 - Panel Discussion 2: Noise vs. Silence

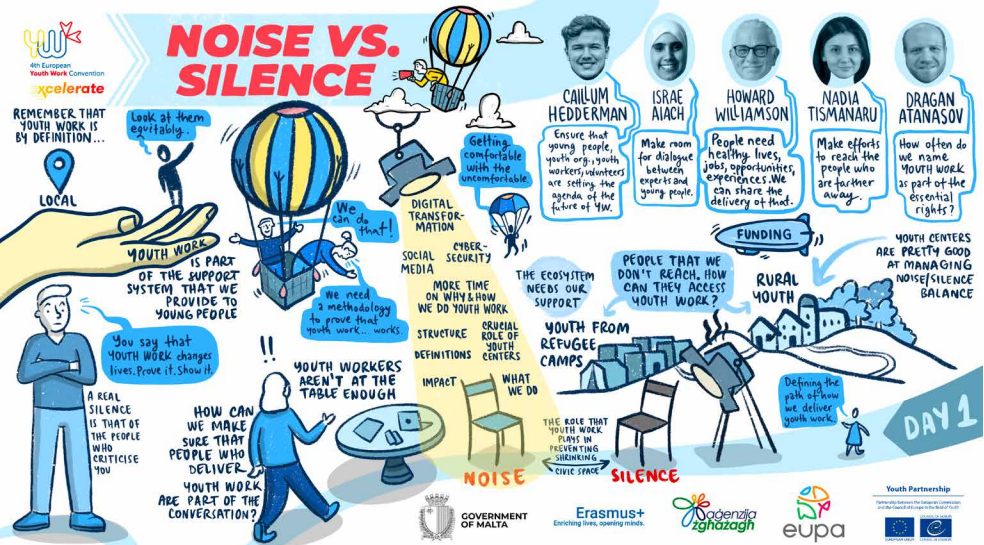
This discussion explored the tension between the noise and the silence in youth work – what areas are amplified, and what topics are silenced, and how can the convention be the space to explore this tension? Convention presenters Sarah Spiteri and Jan Lai asked the speakers a series of pertinent questions to stimulate discussion and debate.

Speakers:	
<b>Howard Williamson</b>	Professor of European Youth Policy, University of South Wales
<b>Caillum Hedderman</b>	Board Member, European Youth Forum (EYF)
<b>Dragan Atanasov</b>	President, Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations (AYWA)
<b>Nadia Tismanaru</b>	Vice President of Timis County Youth Foundation (FITT)
<b>Israe Aiach</b>	EU Representative, Flemish Youth Council

**Howard Williamson** offered a critical yet constructive reflection, calling for the youth work community to move beyond affirming what it does and to engage more seriously with why and how. He highlighted the importance of strengthening the link between internal evaluation methods and external needs and demands for evidence of impact. Advocating for partnerships with other sectors, Howard argued for youth work being a meaningful contributor to broader social issues. He called for realism, coherence, and strategic alignment to ensure more young people have access to the well-rounded package of opportunities and supports that successful youth work offers.

**Caillum Hedderman** stressed that youth work is not a homogeneous concept, highlighting the strength in the diversity of actors, and the levels and contexts involved. He urged for stronger recognition of both the service and policy roles youth organisations play in particular and emphasised the necessity of understanding local realities in European strategies. He called for youth-led co-creation in both practice and policy, as young people and youth work play a vital role in promoting democratic engagement and social cohesion, and combating shrinking civic space. Legal recognition, meaningful youth participation in decision-making, and long-term sustainable funding were highlighted as key pillars for strengthening youth work in the future.

**Dragan Atanasov** called for an action-focused approach, highlighting the strength in showcasing successful examples of youth work implementation from across Europe. He emphasised the need for deeper discussion of youth work's ideological and philosophical foundations, and advocated for youth work as a core societal support for young people. Emphasising the unique voice and experience of youth work professionals, he called for balancing bottom-up advocacy and top-down initiatives, as shifting priorities in funding cycles need to be met by resilient sectoral structures.



**Nadia Tismanaru** spoke of the vital role of youth centres in young people’s development and the importance of their financial sustainability. Warning of the effects of project-based funding and its potential impact on long-term planning and youth workers’ precarious conditions, resources for youth workers’ ability to function need to be safeguarded. She called for structural measures for impact evaluation, and genuine inclusion, emphasising accessible spaces, flexibility in approaches and methodologies, and outreach methods focused on unaffiliated youth. True inclusion, she stressed, requires capacity-building and structural support across the youth ecosystem.

**Israe Aiach** emphasised youth participation, mental health, digital transformation and inclusivity as prominent themes in youth work today. Youth work’s reach to marginalised groups of young people, such as rural youth and young refugees, is often dependent on grassroots initiatives. Sustainable support for talent development and empowerment of these spaces, she argued, is key in communicating youth work values. Advocating for youth involvement beyond consultation processes, into actual decision-making power, was raised as a crucial component in meeting emergent societal issues such as artificial intelligence in everyday life.

The first day of the convention concluded with a session where national delegations were given space to reflect on the day’s events and consider how these might influence youth work at the national and local level.

### 3.2.7. Day 1 - Evening Activity

Dinner was held in the magnificent La Valette Hall where, under its imposing but elegant vaulted ceiling bedecked with the colours of the Knights Hospitaller, participants enjoyed a convivial evening of food, wine, music, and dance organised by a group of young people.

For their many years work in and commitment to the youth field Antje Rothemund, Bernard Abrignani, Jan Vanhee, Erik Langbraten and Howard Williamson were presented with commemorative plaques by their Maltese hosts.

Convention presenters Sarah Spiteri and Jan Lai started Day 2 with a brief but lively reflection of the events of the opening day completed with videos and graphics.

### 3.2.7. Day 2 - Round Table: Young People's Experience of Youth Work

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This session put young people at the centre, sharing how youth work has shaped their lives, perspectives, and opportunities. Their voices reminded us why youth work matters – and where it must go next.

Speakers	
<b>Katrina Lambert</b>	Member, European YWCA
<b>Anna Knobbout</b>	Bureau Member, Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe
<b>Angel Perez Contrera</b>	Head of International Affairs & Climate Action, Spanish Youth Council
<b>Nikola Blagojević</b>	Manager, Eco Centre Radulovački
<b>Rebecca-Laura Bartolo</b>	Youth worker, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

Convention presenters, Sarah Spiteri and Jan Lai posed a number of challenging and interesting questions to the speakers.

In response to a question as to how they would describe youth work in their own words, Katrina used the architectural and sociological concept where youth work is seen as part of the third or public space that fosters social interaction and community solidarity outside the home (first place) and the workplace (second place). While the home and the workplace were the more important in shaping young people's lives, youth work was one of those public places that had a vital and significant role to play in young people's development. Asked what she would change about youth work, Anna responded that while youth work had already achieved much for young people, there was a need to reach out to young people in the margins and to foster the values of youth work among them. She also stressed the need to have legal frameworks in place for the effective recognition of youth work.

In the context of ensuring that young people's voices are heard, Angel highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer learning and the need for effective communication at all levels in youth work and the wider community. In responding to a question on addressing the needs and expectations of young people, Nikola recounted his own experiences in developing personally alongside the development of youth work in his own country. He stressed the importance of youth centres in providing safe spaces for young people that help them to develop and grow. Addressing gaps in meeting the needs and aspirations of

# ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION: Young People's Experience of Youth Work



young people, Rebecca referred to her own role as a youth worker in Malta and the various outreach and civic education programmes that she and her colleagues provided. It had to be acknowledged, however, that there were capacity and other limitations as to what could be provided, and there were always young people that remained beyond reach.

In an open discussion, Jan asked speakers if there were still areas where young people's voices were not being heard. The role of young people as active contributors to and participants in youth work was stressed, and the role that youth leaders and youth volunteers played also needed to be recognised. Young people were not just passive recipients of youth work but active contributors to and shapers of young work, central to its very nature and purpose. Youth work without "youth" was just "work". However, it was also noted by speakers that in some cases, the voices of young people were not just listened to but actively discouraged and "unheard".

In conclusion, the issue of funding was raised by speakers. It was commented that while adequate and sustained funding was essential, the "fun" element of funding should not be forgotten. It is only when we convince policy and decision-makers of the fun, creative and dynamic force that youth work plays in young people's lives will the necessary funding and related supports be provided.

### 3.2.8. Day 2 - Workshops

Following the roundtable, the final session of the thematic workshops was held before lunch, while after lunch, separate sessions of the shared practices and projects were held (Section 3.3).

Workshops on Sharing Inspiring Practices were held before lunch and workshops on Sharing Projects and Initiatives at European Level were held after lunch.

For the workshops on Inspiring Practices, Projects and Initiatives at European level, the

presenter of each workshop prepared a briefing note in advance, and a rapporteur was present at each workshop to write a brief summary report comprising the responses and contributions of those participating in the workshop.

### 3.2.9. Day 2 - Panel Discussion 3: on Findings of the thematic workshops

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Following a presentation by Alice Bergholtz, one of the general rapporteurs, on some of the key issues and findings emerging from the thematic workshops, this session of the convention provided a synthesis of insights, outcomes, and conclusions. Panellists responded to what was presented, highlighting common themes, challenges, and opportunities identified throughout the convention.

Speakers:	
<b>Henni Axelin</b>	Director for Youth Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland
<b>Celine Martin</b>	Head of Youth, Sport and ESC Development, Léargas, Ireland
<b>Marko Kovacic</b>	Associate Professor of Youth Studies, University of Rijeka
<b>Bruno Antonio</b>	Executive Director, DYPALL Network

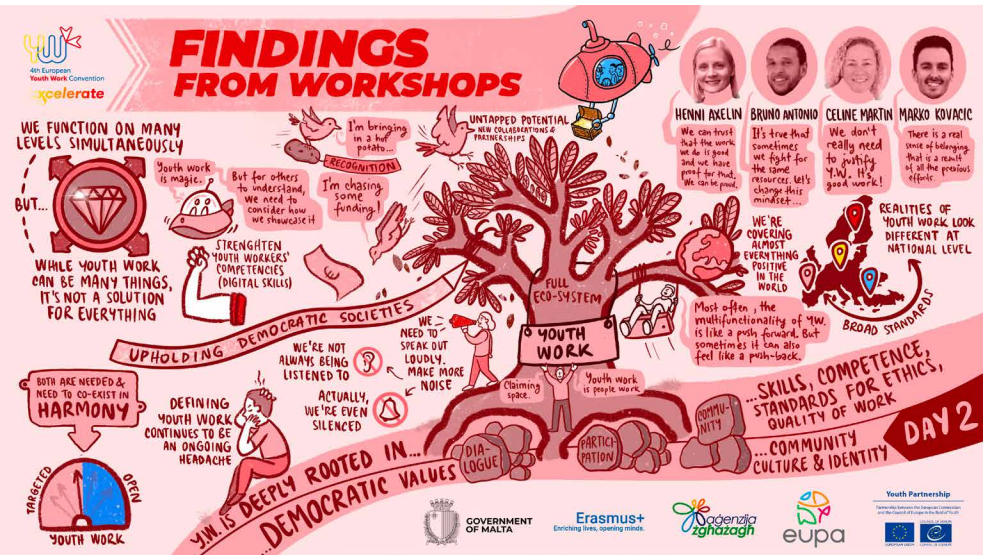
**Henni Axelin** emphasised the need for the youth work sector to recognise its own value and impact, rather than questioning its legitimacy. She noted a tendency to overemphasise funding discussions and argued that the sector needs to place its focus on building strong, sustainable structures for youth work. She also highlighted a need for structuring existing research, tools, and definitions to promote synergies between European-level policy, the convention outcomes, and concrete actions and activities. She stressed that the convention acts as a spark which encourages continued commitment and tangible follow-up at local, national and European levels.

**Celine Martin** reflected on the paradox that, despite youth work being a well-established and impactful practice, the community still has a need to justify its value. She emphasised a noticeable focus outward, to create additional public awareness and support beyond the youth work sector itself. She stressed the importance of recognising marginalised young people and seeing young people themselves as partners in co-shaping youth work strategies and actions. Looking ahead, she called for action-oriented steps, including establishing and further strengthening national structures for implementation and sustainability.

**Marko Kovacic** welcomed a growing recognition of youth work's importance in Europe in recent years, and an increasing need for the sector to build cross-sectoral alliances. He cautioned against self-justification, advocating instead for critical reflection to improve practices further and foster meaningful growth. He emphasised that youth work cannot solve all societal issues, but must acknowledge and engage with wider political realities,

including current conflicts. He called for continued work for coherence in policy processes, and using upcoming key political platforms, such as the ministerial conference in Malta, to ensure youth work voices are visible and impactful.

**Bruno Antonio** spoke of the powerful energy of the convention when reconnecting physically, following the previous convention being hosted online. He also raised concerns about the risk of recurring internal debates, such as the discussion on differences between paid and volunteer youth workers. He called for a shift from seeking recognition of youth work to focusing on quality and capacity-building, particularly in relation to shrinking resources and societal challenges. He also spoke of the importance of emphasising core values of human rights and empathy, where continuity, coordination across initiatives, and high frequency in meeting spaces are fundamental to exchange, learn and act collectively.



#### **Rares Voicu**

*President of the European Youth Forum (YFJ)*

Rares opened his remark by expressing appreciation for the commitment and the energy shown by the participants at the convention and thanking the organisers for a successful event. He emphasised that youth work is more than the activities it produces, as it supports the growth of young people, empowering them and enhancing their leadership capabilities. Youth work remains one of the few truly youth-centred infrastructures in Europe, and it underscores its continued relevance and resilience, as we have seen even in challenging times.

Youth work, he commented, is both beneficiary-led and practitioner-led, as young people play an active role in shaping the community of practice. The recognition of youth work's impact is dependent on recognition, legitimacy, and visibility within and beyond the youth field. Investing in adequate and sustainable funding is vital for the development of youth organisations and youth spaces, especially at the local level.



The cross-border function youth work plays was also emphasised, promoting European identity and a sense of belonging in young people regardless of their nationality. Emphasising the adaptive role of youth work in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, he urged the youth work community to take meaningful decisions and strong collective action in ensuring its further development.

“Youth work is one of the truly youth-centred infrastructures that are available to young people. It is where we as young people find support, it is where we build confidence, and where we claim our rights. It is not something that is just done for us as young people – it is something that we build together, that stems from our rights”

## Matjaž Gruden

*Director for Democracy, Council of Europe*

Matjaž began by warmly thanking the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, national authorities and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, the European Union and Council of Europe Youth Department team, as well as all participants for their contributions to the success of the convention. Youth work plays a vital role in defending and renewing democracy, which she emphasised aligns clearly with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact. Trust in democracy requires meaningful participation, especially crucial for young people, for which youth work is a key vehicle for engagement.



She further emphasised the empowering role youth work plays in helping young people to be active contributors in questioning, challenging and developing society through democratic engagement. Youth work must be supported structurally through legal recognition, funding, and infrastructure. It has the power to transform frustration into action and powerlessness into empowerment – essential for creating resilient and inclusive democracies.

“Youth work only works if we make it work. That means investing in it. It means creating supportive infrastructure, legal and institutional frameworks, stable funding, and political recognition. With those elements in place, youth work can move mountains. It can transform anger into action, frustration into engagement, and powerlessness into empowerment. That is how we build stronger democracies — by working with young people, for young people, but ultimately for all of us.”

**H.E. Ambassador Francesca Camilleri Vettiger**  
*Permanent Representative of Malta to the Council of Europe*

Ambassador Francesca Camilleri Vettiger opened her address by warmly welcoming participants to Valletta, a scenic meeting point which has long been a crossroad of ideas, identities, and voices. The Ambassador stressed that youth work is not abstract or theoretical but is a grounded and practical force operating in real communities and often in challenging conditions. Youth work builds resilience, inclusion and agency, and it bridges gaps between potential and opportunity.

Malta's commitment to youth empowerment is visible in the choices it has made and in the trust that it has shown. Malta's youngest EU Commissioner, and her own position as the youngest permanent representative among the Council of Europe Member States, are tangible examples of Malta's commitment.



Looking ahead, the upcoming conference of ministers responsible for youth, which will be held in Malta next October, will aim to ensure that the youth perspective is effectively included in decision-making processes in all 46 Member States across Europe. This commitment requires investment in structures, resources, and people to ensure that youth work remains a thriving source of democratic resilience and social cohesion.

“This convention is a reminder that youth work is not theoretical - it is deeply practical. It happens in real communities often under difficult circumstances. Yet it builds resilience, inclusion and agency. It is the bridge between potential and opportunity, between dreams and the tools needed to pursue them.”

## Glenn Micallef

*European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness,  
Youth, Culture and Sport*

Commissioner Micallef began by thanking the Maltese government for its work in placing youth issues high in its list of priorities for the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. He also stressed the transformative power of youth work, as it goes beyond the needs and offers support to young people. It empowers them to reach their full potential, giving them real responsibility and ensuring their voices are heard in policies that impact and shape their lives and futures.

Referring to the achievements since the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention in 2020, the Commissioner highlighted the fact that Erasmus+ funding has doubled, resulting in over 900 cooperation partnerships and mobility opportunities for over 400,000 youth workers, as well as the creation of the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations, the European-level platform for youth workers now supported by 14 national youth workers associations.



The Youth Policy Dialogues, initiated by the Commission, are part of an ongoing effort to embed youth voices across a wide range of policy issues such as promoting peace, improved housing and mental health, and enhancing quality of life. The Commissioner concluded by inviting all participants to contribute to the next EU Youth Strategy, by giving voice to their insights, experiences and aspirations as these can lend direction and provide a roadmap for EU actions in the youth work field in the years ahead.

“When we speak about youth work, it’s about youth workers. It’s about political leaders. It’s about policymakers. And it’s about charting the future of our societies, where we have one clear mission: we have to empower youth to reach their full potential. This should be at the core of our work. Together, we can have a strong effect, and we can be a force to shape future generations. We have to work together in the true spirit of European solidarity.”

**Hon. Keith Azzopardi Tanti**  
*Parliamentary Secretary for Youth,  
Research and Innovation, Malta*

The Parliamentary Secretary expressed his appreciation to the organising teams and partner institutions whose efforts made the convention such a success. The convention has delivered both vision and substance, laying the groundwork for future strategic actions.

Significantly, the conclusions of the convention will be presented at the upcoming conference of ministers responsible for youth, which will be hosted in October by the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, after which the report of the convention will be disseminated.



The Parliamentary Secretary stressed that responsibility for moving forward did not rest with a single institution, but in the collective efforts of national governments, European bodies, youth organisations, researchers, youth workers, and young people. Thanking the more than 500 participants from over 40 countries for participating in the convention, he closed by highlighting the vital role their active contributions can make in shaping the youth work field in the years to come.

“It is clear that this convention has delivered both in vision and in substance. The final report, when complete, will not only provide a practical framework for the future of European youth work but also offer clear guidance on how to bring the framework to life. The next important step lies ahead.”

## Hon. Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

*Minister for European Funds and the Implementation of Electoral Programme*

The Minister opened by reflecting on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which redefined our priorities and how the resilience of young people can assume even greater importance. He emphasised the vital role of young people as active leaders in shaping both the present and future of Europe. He praised the convention as a milestone moment for European youth work, which clearly demonstrates the progress of the sector since the last convention in 2020. The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps provided crucial support that enabled youth mobility, professional development, and volunteering across the continent.



The Minister underscored that European Youth Work Conventions have become crucial spaces for giving direction to future development and innovation in youth work, blending strategies, standards, and collaborative mechanisms in a shared vision. Thanking participants for their active contribution, the Minister reaffirmed his commitment to contribute to future discussions on strengthening and progressing youth work development.

“The future is always forged as a result of the decisions that are taken today, so it is important that tomorrow’s leaders - who are also already leaders today - are full participants in how we forge our future”

Following the conclusion of the convention, a reception was held on the roof of the Mediterranean Conference Centre overlooking Malta’s Grand Harbour.

### 3.3. Shared practices and projects

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#### 3.3.1. Inspiring Practices

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<b>Workshop 1</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Jason Zammit
<b>Skylines - Engineering a National Youth Work Service</b>	<b>Organisation:</b> Aġenzija Żgħażaġh
	<b>Rapporteur:</b> Darko Markovic
	<b>No. of participants:</b> 20
	<b>Related Thematic Workshop:</b> Youth Work Systems - Youth work's interaction and relationship with and other policy fields

Skylines provided youth workers with a strategic, national-level perspective on developing sustainable and professional youth work systems, using the Maltese system as a context. It brought together youth workers and stakeholders to explore the key elements needed to strengthen the field both formally and informally.

The focus of the workshop was, firstly, on supporting the development of youth work in the context of a university-level course, the creation of a national youth agency focused on youth work, the formation of a regulated profession, the establishment of quality standards, and collaboration with schools and social services.

Secondly, youth work delivered within youth organisations was considered, focusing on practical ways to support quality development through tools such as self-assessment frameworks and targeted training initiatives.

Skylines aimed to support a shared understanding of the structures, systems, and standards needed in youth work through cross-sector collaboration and coherent national frameworks.

It was commented that while a formal youth qualification is available in Malta, there is no alternative route to achieving such a qualification other than through a university. Participants argued that when advocating for the formal recognition of youth work qualifications through national qualification frameworks, account should also be taken of the skills and competences gained by youth workers through informal and non-formal learning.

Participants also felt that there was a need for a cross-border recognition of youth work qualifications. While this could potentially be achieved through bilateral agreement, a European wide recognised youth work qualification should also be considered.

Participants saw the Maltese practice of youth workers working together with teachers as an example of successful cooperation, where youth workers could bring non-formal learning methodologies into the formal education system, and as an effective outreach strategy.

## Workshop 2

### Voices of the young people in Ukraine

**Presenter:** Olena Glazkova

**Organisation:** NGO Kremenchuk informative elucidative centre European Club, Ukraine

**Rapporteur:** Zora Csalagovits

**No. of participants:** 20

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Environment - Young people, their needs and aspirations and how youth work can support and empower them

The project “Voices of Young People in Ukraine” was aimed at amplifying the voices of young people from five regions in Ukraine, reflecting the impact of the war on young people.

This project focused on diversity, inclusion and participation and the needs of young people in a war environment and how to reflect on these needs: the principles and means for young people’s participation in their local communities; understanding the roles of different stakeholders in the field of youth; advocacy as a means to promote the interests and concerns of young people, and how to plan and own advocacy action; how to employ social media and record young people’s real life experiences of war; and how to build resilience and self-care.

The workshop aimed to create a space to think about how to empower young people in their communities at a time of crisis, to reflect on the reality of life for young people in a war setting and how to deal with the resulting stress and trauma.

After the presentation, the importance of sharing personal stories was voiced by participants as key to building cultures and a means of reflection for the storyteller.

General questions were asked about the first-hand experiences of someone living in Ukraine and the situation of youth workers.

When asked how they support each other as youth workers, the presenter explained that they meet regularly and have had training opportunities, such as trauma-informed youthwork, which supports cultivating a sense of community. It is about creating a peaceful environment. They also promote international activities to go abroad to gain some measure of relief from the effects of the war.

When asked whether they feel supported by the international community and by the policies of the Council of Europe as youth workers they said that this was a difficult question to answer. They mentioned that exchanges with Ukrainian youth workers and youth organisations online or offline are encouraged. Consultation was also offered if any organisation wished to know more about this approach to youth work.

### Workshop 3

#### Youth Centre Probishtip

**Presenter:** Martina Jachevska

**Organisation:** CA GRIT, North Macedonia

**Rapporteur:** Ondřej Bárta

**No. of participants:** 11

**Related Thematic Workshop:**

Youth Work Environment - Volunteering and youth-led youth work in youth organisations

Probishtip is one of a dozen youth centres in North Macedonia. The centre was initiated by young people from the community and went through a legal process, in close collaboration with the local government, to be officially recognised and established.

The municipality supports the youth centre by providing an annual budget for its programmes and operational costs, ensuring its sustainability. What makes this youth centre unique is that it is entirely led and operated by young people from the local community. The centre offers a variety of activities designed to meet the needs and interests of young people, including educational workshops, creative events, and initiatives that promote active youth participation, personal growth, and community engagement.

The workshop focused on how to explore, create and sustain youth-led spaces by building strong cooperation between youth organisations and local authorities, ensuring recognition and financial support, and empowering young people to lead programmes that address community needs.

Participants pointed out that NGOs are very much to the fore in promoting youth centres in North Macedonia in the absence of state support. Though municipal authorities do provide some level of support – primarily accommodation – inadequate financing, lack of space and equipment, short-term contracts and lack of other supports make the venture challenging.

Despite these challenges, the centre offers regular activities and clubs, where young people actively participate and create their own initiatives while working alongside youth workers.

## Workshop 4

### Youth Worker occupational standard in Latvia

**Presenter:** Renāte Mencendorfa

**Organisation:** Ministry of Education  
and Science, Latvia

**Rapporteur:** Dragan Atanasov

**No. of participants:** 17

**Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core:  
Quality and Standards

Latvia's new Youth Worker Occupational Standards (2024) were developed with the support of the Council of Europe, which conducted a youth policy advisory mission. These standards are comprehensive, comprising six core competencies: youth work implementation, youth initiatives promotion, competence acquisition facilitation, leisure activities provision, youth participation promotion, and youth project implementation. The standards also give youth work a more robust standing in society and serve as a basis for designing a professional programme for youth work in higher education in Latvia.

The standards offer a vision for youth work, informed and influenced by European perspectives and also highlight key issues of European youth work policy, including the promotion of non-formal and informal learning, youth participation, competence development, and ensuring leisure time activities.

The workshop aimed at sharing Latvia's experience in developing occupational standards and to show the wide range of competences needed for youth work and how these can be promoted and fostered at both the national and European levels.

Participants focused on the prospects and challenges of establishing formal education for youth work. A lack of qualified academics in many countries in the field was seen as a major impediment to establishing formal education programmes for youth work. It was pointed out that in the case of Iceland, the first academics had completed youth work studies abroad, while in Estonia, they came from related academic fields. Recruiting qualified personnel from other countries was seen as a possible solution, though the language barrier needed to be considered.

It was felt that in establishing formal education for youth work, careful consideration needed to be given to the national context and the role of youth work and the extent to which it related to social work or other associated fields.

The issues of occupational standards and how they relate to formal education qualifications were also raised, and it was suggested that when developing occupational standards, a wider understanding of social issues, the personal development of the young people and ethical values in youth work needed greater emphasis.

## Workshop 5

### Navigating Challenges and Maintaining Ethical Standards

**Presenter:** Renāte Mencendorfa

**Organisation:** Ministry of Education  
and Science, Latvia

**Rapporteur:** Dragan Atanasov

**No. of participants:** 17

**Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core:  
Quality and Standards

This initiative equips youth workers with the tools and frameworks needed to uphold ethical standards while navigating real-world challenges with a view to fostering integrity, professionalism, and responsibility in youth work, ensuring that young people are supported in safe, respectful, and inclusive environments.

The initiative follows a five-step approach: defining core ethical principles in youth work, analysing real-life ethical dilemmas and discussing possible resolutions, applying an ethical decision-making framework, debating ethical grey areas through interactive discussions, and reflecting on personal commitments to ethical practice.

The ethical framework and interactive methodology can be replicated across different cultural and social contexts. It can be adapted to tackle specific regional or national youth work challenges, such as social inclusion, digital ethics, or mental health support. The initiative can also be expanded through online training, toolkits, and multilingual resources, making it accessible for youth workers in various countries. Strengthening ethical awareness in youth work leads to more transparent, inclusive, and responsible youth services, ultimately fostering trust between young people and institutions.

The session began with reflections on the meaning of ethics and the core values for youth workers. Definitions of ethics were provided, emphasising the underlying principles and standards of behaviour. Participants highlighted key values such as patience, openness, respect, dignity, inclusiveness, trustworthiness, transparency, adaptability, and fairness.

The main activity centred on six case scenarios discussed in small groups. Each scenario addressed different ethical dilemmas. Participants explored ethical concerns, potential actions, and the most appropriate decisions, along with the reasons behind them.

Participants reconvened to further consider Scenario 1, which concerned a young person disclosing abuse and requesting confidentiality from a youth worker. This sparked an intense discussion about the ethical conflict between respecting confidentiality and the duty to safeguard. It showed differences between countries regarding protocols and practices.

Participants agreed on the importance of trust and transparency with young people. Some of the participants argued for cross-sectoral cooperation. Several stressed that youth workers are not investigators, but they have a duty of care and must act responsibly when harm is involved.

Different courses of action were considered: involving specialists, motivating the young person to seek help independently, and ensuring that legal protocols are followed. A strong consensus emerged that the ethical approach in youth work combines transparency, support, and accompaniment.

## Workshop 6

### From Reflection to Resilience: The Transformative Power of Reflective Supervision

**Presenter:** Rowena Borg

**Organisation:** Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

**Rapporteur:** Liz Green

**No. of participants:** 28

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core –  
Quality and Standards

Although youth workers employed by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh are recognised professionals, the agency is conscious of the need for continuous development and improvement in youth work practice. To this end, it has developed and implemented a system of Reflective Supervision to promote good practice and a culture of continuous learning in the agency.

Reflective Supervision, while employing reflective and supervised practice for the ongoing development of staff, essentially addresses the issue of quality assurance in delivering programmes and services to young people and staff accountability as part of a publicly funded body, entrusted with the care and promotion of learning and the well-being of young people.

The aim of Reflective Supervision is to promote the concept and realisation of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh as a learning organisation underpinned by a consistent commitment to the promotion and implementation of reflective and supervised youth work practice.

The workshop provided a space for participants to reflect on the questions and approaches that may arise during reflective supervision. Participants expressed that they felt connected to some of the reasons for employing reflective supervision, such as burnout, conflict, priority setting, and the professional and personal development of staff.

Participants reflected that the process can help people think in new ways and is a “strong opportunity to discover alternatives to our vision of the situation”. This can be particularly helpful when addressing conflict, when understanding other perspectives is vital in seeking a resolution.

Participants felt that reflective supervision could be a problem-solving tool, helping colleagues to understand and direct energy into what they have the power to change, rather than focusing on things that are not in their sphere of influence.

They also felt that there was value in connecting with others in a safe space to share feelings. There was discussion on the roles of ‘supervisor’ and ‘supervisee’ and the importance of this being separate from a line management or performance management relationship.

## Workshop 7

**The youth sector –  
How to present it  
to gain visibility  
and to single out it!**

**Presenter:** Josepha Nell and Charlotte LOASO  
**Organisation:** National Youth Service of Luxembourg  
**Rapporteur:** Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll  
**No. of participants:** 28  
**Related Thematic Workshop:** Quality development and recognition of youth work, non-formal education and learning

The focus of this workshop was on the development and implementation of an identity for Luxembourg's youth sector with the aim of sharing, promoting and implementing eight slogans that underpin programmes and services offered by the national youth service under the common heading "Jonker staark maachen".

This process required the identification of a simple language that was not technical or political, and the use of a clear visual identity. In addition, implementing an effective communications strategy was also central to its success. The importance of narrative also proved fundamental: the choice of words, their justification and the explanation of the strategy must ensure a shared vision of the sector.

The workshop focused on how the identity of the youth sector in Luxembourg was enhanced, leading to greater visibility, on how to communicate and present the youth sector, and how to convey an impactful and specific vision while linking it to an interconnected institutional ecosystem.

Participants were asked which of the eight slogans they considered the most important. Most opted for the "voice of the young people", as they considered it symbolised advocacy for young people's rights and the role of youth organisations and national youth councils in bridging the gap between young people and government.

It was also pointed out that "standing by young people" was an equally important slogan. Outside the youth sector, young people's voices may be heard, but they are not listened to, nor do authorities react to the voices of young people. Therefore, it was important that the youth sector stands by young people. With regard to "spaces for young people", it was pointed out that spaces do not have to be physical, but also spaces for youth dialogue, human rights and democratic participation.

## Workshop 8

### MLADIM - A digital tool for recording and monitoring quality of youth work

**Presenter:** Borut Pelko

**Organisation:** Youth Network MaMa (Mladinska mreža MaMa), Slovenija

**Rapporteur:** Mary Drosopoulos

**No. of participants:** 31

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core - Monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact

Digital platform MLADIM.si is a tool for monitoring the quality and efficiency of youth work developed by the Youth Network MaMa (Mladinska mreža MaMa) in Slovenia.

The project originated from the need to establish a supportive environment for youth work organisations and other NGOs in Slovenia, with the goal of developing a comprehensive database for data collection and analysis. It focused on familiarising participants with the importance and utility of data collection to measure the effects and impact of youth work.

The digital platform for recording and monitoring the quality of youth work was developed in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Science at Ljubljana University, which makes it also highly representative and applicable for other organisations and national contexts.

One of the main challenges in youth work across Europe is the absence of tools to systematically measure its quality and impact. Participants in the discussion highlighted several relevant cross-cutting issues.

The need for quality and impact measurement was emphasised, as youth work lacks standardised tools to demonstrate its effectiveness. Highlighting visibility and influencing policy and decision-makers could result from such measures. Digital gaps should be addressed, as many youth organisations struggle to adopt digital tools, which can lead to a misalignment with the digital habits of young people.

Standardised systems for tracking and analysing youth work activities are rare, and while Mladim offers partial support, a sector-wide commitment to monitoring and evaluation is needed. Tools in youth work often lack external validation, and such systems increase credibility and legitimacy and demonstrate the importance of academic partnerships for trust and policy influence.

Engaging young people in monitoring remains a challenge but their participation is vital as it builds trust and clear communication on the value of their input. Ethical concerns in the use of data were also raised by participants including consent, anonymity, GDPR compliance, and the use of collected data, particularly relating to young people.

## Workshop 9

### Youth work and its interaction with other fields

**Presenter:** Maria C. Borg

**Organisation:** Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

**Rapporteur:** Joanne Cassar

**No. of participants:** 29

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Systems - Youth work's interaction and relationship with and other policy fields

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's approach to integrating youth work and the arts in Malta is a leading example of cross-sector collaboration that enriches both the cultural sector and the youth work ecosystem. The initiative involves structured partnerships between youth workers, cultural institutions and young artists to co-create arts projects that encourage young people to develop their talents, find their voice in society and build a community of peers and mentors.

Targeted primarily at young people aged 13–25, the initiatives include projects such as the Malta Youth Film Festival, mentoring programmes, and programmes for young writers, visual artists, singer-songwriters and more. These are implemented with an emphasis on creative development and the building of soft skills such as, communication, self-confidence, and teamwork.

Youth workers act as facilitators, mentors, and cultural mediators - helping young people shape their creative ideas, ensuring inclusion, and bridging communication between the young people and creative collaborators.

The practice demonstrates how youth work adds value to cultural participation by rooting it in young people's realities, voices, and aspirations.

Participants pointed to numerous benefits and challenges when adopting such cross-sectoral approaches to youth work. Occasionally, power issues may arise. Youth workers could be considered less professional than their counterparts, and there is a need to foster parity of esteem. In some instances, bureaucratic hurdles emerge when collaborating with other sectors, such as agreed protocols and procedures.

Successful cooperation requires mutual commitment. Other sectors can benefit from collaborating with youth workers, and awareness can be raised about the positive contributions youth work can make to other fields.

Another positive effect was seen in pooling resources and reaching and including more young people in cross-sectoral initiatives. Youth workers can provide and develop transferable skills for young people and build positive relationships with them. Arts-based initiatives led by youth workers can lead to youth activism and engagement with broader social issues such as safeguarding the environment, minority rights, economic sustainability, and equality. Research into the impact of such cross-sectoral initiatives would also be of value.

## Workshop 10

### The path to recognition of the youth worker by a national association

**Presenter:** Michelangelo Belletti

**Organisation:** NINFEA, Italy

**Rapporteur:** Federica Demicheli

**No. of participants:** 16

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core – Recognition and visibility of Youth work

To promote the recognition and visibility of youth work in Italy, the national association NINFEA, which has been active since 2020, is working in cooperation with national and regional institutions on the professional recognition of youth workers through a process of identification and validation of skills acquired in various fields and linked to a formal professional profile.

NINFEA was established in 2020 with a view to giving national recognition, in Italy, to the role of youth workers. As a not-for-profit association under the Ministry of Economic Development, NINFEA is an important and credible reference point to define and consolidate youth worker competences.

The session focused on the validation of youth workers' competences in the Italian context, where there is neither a formal academic degree in youth work nor a complete legal definition or profile. In response, NINFEA has created a register with an official list in which the entry rules (based on experience, training and competencies) and annual updates for recognising professional practice are defined. The regional systems in Italy were also discussed in parallel.

Some regions have so far put in place processes to recognise competencies acquired non-formally, but these are still piecemeal and inconsistent. The lack of consistency amongst regional frameworks poses challenges to national-level recognition and to defining common quality standards.

They also reflect on how this situation shifts the weight to non-formal learning tools, like Youthpass or training certificates, which should be valued as certificates. It was underscored that the collection and documentation of verifiable evidence of competency achieved in practice was a vital prerequisite to initiate the validation process. At the same time, it was stated that professionalism as such may also encounter resistance when it is too inflexible and alienated from the actual diversity of youth work.

A loose and inclusive approach to validation could support this meta-recognition and the quality of youth work practice countrywide in Italy.

## Workshop 11

### Civic Education - Youth Work in Schools

**Presenter:** Simon Schembri

**Organisation:** Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

**Rapporteur:** Susie Nicodemi

**No. of participants:** 21

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Systems - Youth work's interaction and relationship with other policy fields

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, through its Community and Outreach Unit in collaboration with the Department of Education, developed a series of programmes and workshops that address various topics such as democracy, environmental awareness, debating, and civic participation.

The purpose of these initiatives is to create sustainable and holistic youth work services within schools. By integrating these programmes, the initiative aims to foster wider cooperation with schools and enhance the engagement of young people in diverse activities and initiatives beyond school hours.

The implementation of these programmes involves close collaboration between Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and the Department of Education, ensuring that the workshops are tailored to the needs and interests of the students. These workshops complement the curriculum and are presented in an interactive way, using a youth work approach. This approach not only supports the academic curriculum but also promotes active citizenship and civic engagement among young people.

Overall, the initiative successfully creates a sustainable model for youth work services in schools, leading to increased participation and cooperation between educational institutions and young people.

Participants joined Simon on an interactive Menti tour of different government-funded programmes that support civic participation and engagement in 43 secondary schools, using 14 youth workers provided by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh. These programmes aim to be sustainable through connecting to school curricula, and planning and engaging with teachers and other school staff. The non-formal methods used are often unfamiliar to teachers, although they come around to see the benefits of using them.

Other AZ outreach programmes include Youth. Inc (supporting young people in NEET); Youth Hubs hosted in higher education institutions and University outreach (Freshers' Week, information on EU voting, etc).

The growing number of requests from schools for such programmes is evidence of their relevance and success. Participants also shared other examples of youth work in schools, such as in Estonia, where there are games-based interventions.

## Workshop 12

**Why does  
#youthworkworks?  
The impact of  
youth work!**

**Presenter:** Lisa Franken

**Organisation:** De Ambrassade, Belgium

**Rapporteur:** Nik Paddison

**No. of participants:** 35

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core – Recognition and visibility of youth work

De Ambrassade (the Flemish bureau for youth affairs) asked all stakeholders in youth work in the Flemish region: Why does youth work actually work? We see and believe that youth work is important, but do we really know why? How does youth work do it, generate impact, pay off?

The result was an impact framework, created by the entire Flemish youth work sector, which was initiated in 2018 and updated in 2023. It is currently used as an action framework and a common language for youth workers, to inspire students about youth work and to provide a quality check for policymakers.

Participants commented that different youth workers will give different reasons for why youth work is effective - safe spaces, builds relationships, gives young people a voice, confidence, and a purpose, value-based practice, and empowerment and values. There are different terms, but the meanings behind the terms are not so different.

Participants also reflected on the mission of De Ambrassade - youth work is a right for all children and young people where they can experiment, learn by trial and error, and have the opportunity to participate fully in society, have access to leisure, relaxation and cultural and artistic activities, and develop and grow up together. Each youth worker should be able to recognise themselves in their DNA - putting young people at the centre, supporting young people to have ownership of youth work and youth organisations, a “process over product” approach that recognises the power of the group in shaping society.

Youth workers need to get people, including government and decision makers, talking about youth work, promoting its value and showing its impact.

## Workshop 13

### Youth Work for All - A Youth Work Movement for All Young People

**Presenter:** Matthew Seebach

**Organisation:** Youth Work Ireland, Ireland

**Rapporteur:** Adina Șerban

**No. of participants:** 23

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work  
Environment – Advocacy in youth work

Youth Work for All is a rights-based participatory campaign led by Youth Work Ireland that brings together young people, youth workers, policy makers and researchers to collectively have their voices heard by decision makers. The campaign advocates and promotes the critical importance of youth work and is a collaboration and co-production of youth activists, volunteers, board members and staff of Youth Work Ireland.

Youth Work for All is primarily premised on the expressed views of young people on youth work, from a national and European perspective. Central to this advocacy campaign is the participation and direction of young activists from the National Youth Action Group (NYAG) of Youth Work Ireland.

In the workshop, the project manager presented the process and introduced the consensus campaign concept, while a younger expert shared her experience of starting as a young person involved in the campaign and becoming a board member and leader of the campaign.

The methodology also involved elements of world café, which allowed participants to share their own experiences in running local, national and European campaigns.

In sharing practices and success stories, participants stressed that there was a need to ensure the full accessibility of similar campaigns and activities so that non-affiliated youth and young people with fewer opportunities are also part of the activities and consultation.

Participants saw such campaigns as both urgent and essential in highlighting the need for improved youth services for all young people.

Participants also concluded that long-term intervention to ensure mainstreaming of youth services is needed and all relevant actors in the youth sector should be constantly and continuously involved. Also, youth-led campaigns guarantee the full participation of young people, while outreach should remain a priority for youth workers.

## Workshop 14

### Respect – the basis for good cooperation in youth centres

**Presenter:** Aline Fuchs

**Organisation:** wannseeFORUM Foundation

**Rapporteur:** Ajša Hadžibegović

**No. of participants:** 13

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Systems – Youth work associations, networks, centres, and service providers.

The wannseeFORUM Foundation is a youth education centre certified by the Council of Europe. Human rights and respect for them are of particular importance.

At global and European level questioning fundamental democratic values and human rights has become all too common. In response, wannseeFORUM Foundation developed the Respect Charter in 2017. The Charter defines fundamental ethical values and promotes respectful, democratic cooperation among all people at the centre – staff, guests, and young participants alike. It serves as a clear and binding framework that underpins all educational and social interactions at the centre.

The workshop focused on how the Charter of Respect was created and how it is used. The workshop also provided hands-on experience for participants with participatory methods used in seminars – such as co-creating a seminar contract based on participants' own values, which then leads into the introduction of the broader Charter.

Participants were given the Charter and asked to share what “respect” means to them - understanding, listening, support, cooperation. They also considered a number of related questions. What do I need to feel safe in this group? What is important to me in how we treat each other? What are my wishes for communication? What are my needs, rules or boundaries?

Participants discussed and were interested to learn more about how the “Charter of Respect” was created and how young people were involved. What happens if rules are not respected? How do we keep an open dialogue with groups whose values and rights do not align with ours?

## Workshop 15

### Systematic knowledge-based youth work development

**Presenter:** Jenny Haglund

**Organisation:** KEKS

**Rapporteur:** Zara Lavchyan

**No. of participants:** 30

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core:  
Monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact

KEKS is a holistic model that covers the whole quality assessment and development cycle. Starting from measurable long-term aims related to the core values of youth work, a web-based system is employed for the continuous gathering of statistics and input from young people via questionnaires.

All these activities occur not only in relation to youth workers but also concerning managers, public administrators, and politicians, thereby addressing the entire youth work ecosystem. In 2024, the system was utilised by 64 Swedish municipalities, encompassing approximately 300 meeting places for young people, and the questionnaires received over 12,000 responses from young people.

The outcomes are presented annually to municipalities and youth centres and are compared with the results from previous years, thus making it possible to see developments over time. The overall results are also presented in an annual report, revealing interesting patterns in how various groups of young people take part in youth work and how they perceive their participation and learning.

Participants appreciated the availability of concrete data to communicate to politicians and decision makers the positive impact of youth work. Many expressed an interest in adopting a similar system within their own organisations. Participants were also interested in the data collection system and the questionnaires which are used by KEKS in their Logbook.

The Logbook was of particular interest to participants as users can choose which features they want to concentrate on, what kind of data to collect, and which features to highlight based on the specificities of their work. Each of these features also provides a chance to collect different data, e.g. number of young people in activities, money spent on a single activity/hour, amount of money spent on a single activity or young person, amount of people supported by a youth worker, etc.

Participants found the Logbook to be a very effective tool that can be used for, reflection on practice, assessing the participatory nature and level of activities and general practices, impact, and advocacy, and especially for evaluating, planning, practice and action at local and municipal level.

<b>Workshop 1</b>	<b>Presenters:</b> Silvia Mangia and Stefanos Agathokleous <b>Organisation:</b> Eurodesk Brussels Link, Belgium <b>Rapporteur:</b> Mary Drosopoulos <b>No. of participants:</b> 31 <b>Related Thematic Workshop:</b> Youth Work Environment – Methodologies and new technologies in youth work
<b>How can AI help with inclusive digital communications?</b>	

The workshop focused on strategically integrating AI into youth work to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and impact and equip youth workers with the skills to use AI tools ethically and effectively and ensure inclusive and accessible digital communication. The goal is to raise awareness of how AI tools can be used to enhance accessibility, inclusion, and overall user experience in digital communication, which is one of the primary mediums used by youth workers.

Anyone can benefit from these practices, but they are especially valuable for youth workers, as they can enhance young people's access to information and create more opportunities for them. AI can be employed in this context to develop the necessary digital skills, to offer tailored support to users and to create inclusive communication designs.

Participants in the workshop explored the potential of AI in enhancing youth work, reflected on ethical considerations, and experienced practical applications of AI tools with the aim of empowering youth workers to integrate AI strategically, and foster a culture of innovation and responsible technology use.

Participants discussed and highlighted a number of themes. Concerns were raised about the reliability of AI, especially due to biased training data. Participants noted the risk of misinformation and exclusion when addressing sensitive topics such as race, gender, or disability. The importance of critically assessing AI-generated content was emphasised.

There was also a debate on the ethics of using AI in tasks like job applications and academic work. While AI can aid in drafting, concerns emerged around uncredited use, which may erode originality and integrity. Transparency and ethical use were emphasised. Despite challenges, AI's strengths were acknowledged, especially its speed, efficiency, and help with refining tone or phrasing in communication. AI's environmental footprint was briefly discussed, with concerns expressed about sustainability despite digital efficiency gains.

Privacy sparked active discussion. While digital tools offer convenience, they often require extensive data sharing. The group called for greater digital literacy and accountability from tech companies regarding data use.

The question of who owns AI-generated content remains unresolved, adding complexity to creative and professional use cases.

## Workshop 2

### Emerging futures of youth work: how ready are we?

**Presenter:** Darko Marković

**Organisation:** MOVIT, Slovenian NA, European Academy on Youth Work, Serbia

**Rapporteur:** Gisele Evrard

**No. of participants:** 23

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core – Definitions and descriptions of youth work

The European Academy of Youth Work (EAYW) is a strategic partnership of National Agencies that focuses on innovation in youth work and the capacity of youth work to identify and respond to emerging challenges.

The 'Futures of Youth Work' research report explores the evolving landscape of youth work in the context of emerging global challenges, including technological advancements, climate change, shifting demographics and changing societal values. The project aspires to 'envision' the European landscape of youth work in the year 2050 through the Foresight methodology of Horizon Scanning. It aims to equip the youth work sector with the insights and strategies needed to navigate an uncertain future while maintaining its core mission of empowering young people.

When introducing the research, the presenter explained that the aim was not to predict developments but to adopt a future-oriented mindset and be ready for systemic change. The presenter briefly outlined the trends that emerged from the signal spotting phase of the research and how these were felt and perceived by the research team, in terms of interconnectedness and 'importance' in the future.

Participants then considered "what signals or societal shifts do you notice in your environment that might impact the future of youth work?" The responses reflected a wide and diverse range of concerns, such as "hate speech is the new normal", or the increasing "manosphere, misogyny and knife crimes among young men". AI was also mentioned as replacing face-to-face skills and empathy. Positive developments were also mentioned, such as "greater interest in nature", "countercultures on the rise", that "young people tend to get better at expressing their feelings" and "more conscious behaviour regarding substance use".

Participants also considered "what type of change is needed in youth work today?" They called for "making youth work provision more flexible (let young people experiment), not expecting "long-term commitment", for "building trust", and for making youth work "more fit to post-migrant societies". The need for "new forms of youth work (community-based youth work in rural areas)" was also highlighted, as well as the importance of "co-creation of youth work policies and initiatives with young people - quality dialogue".

### Workshop 3

#### From Training to Recognition: Advancing the Competences of Youth Workers

**Presenter:** Nerijus Kriauciunas

**Organisation:** Awero, Lithuania

**Rapporteur:** Joanne Cassar

**No. of participants:** 20

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Environment – Youth work as a profession

The Awero (former Nectarus) team, together with Cities of Learning partners, International Youth Work Trainers Guild and European and National Youth Workers Associations, is creating a practice example in Europe on how the European Training Strategy can be translated into specifications – a set of modular training courses for youth workers and trainers.

The Awero team are building the training, recognition and certification framework which will support the development of partners, youth workers and trainers. It will also provide training on international youth worker competences, as a complementary activity to local or nationally based training for youth workers. The goal is to improve the quality of international youth work by implementing the European Training Strategy (ETS) modular training courses based on the ETS competence model for youth workers and trainers working internationally.

Participants' discussion on the aims and contribution of Awero and its partners in developing a modular training and recognition framework for youth workers across Europe, focused on a number of issues.

Although there is a general understanding of the core competences of youth work, there are differences pertaining to political contexts, youth work opportunities, youth work recognition, youth work "readiness", and allocation of resources, which might affect how the competences are acquired and practised. Participants, however, agreed that this diversity can be regarded as a bonus, which enriches the learning process of the competencies, rather than as an obstacle.

Awero training fosters diversity in the training of youth work practices, as this is crucial for youth work growth, for the international mobility of youth workers and for demonstrating the profession's value to society. Youth work practices are bound to go in different directions to develop and grow. They need to reflect the European dimension of youth work.

The accreditation of Awero recognises different levels of achievement by external assessors. There was a discussion on tailoring the modular courses according to the experiences of participants. The duration of the course and the follow-up after the international training were also discussed.

Critical thinking skills were also seen by participants as necessary to understand the competence areas in the ETS model. This also implies facilitating critical thinking among the young people they work with. This can involve structured activities that encourage debate, analysis of media, ethical dilemmas, and understanding complex social issues.

## Workshop 4

### Youth participation strategy: where to next?

**Presenter:** Brigita Medne  
**Organisation:** SALTO Participation & Information  
**Rapporteur:** Zora Csalagovits  
**No. of participants:** 18  
**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Environment - Advocating for youth work policy

Youth Participation Strategy, derived, developed and inspired by the EU Youth Strategy, aims at enhancing youth participation in democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, and includes strategic aims to strive for, as well as the context to understand youth participation more.

YPS Steering group members, consisting of 6 youth representatives and 6 stakeholders (European Commission, National Agencies, SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, ERYICA and RAY) have been working throughout 2024 to evaluate – where are we with the implementation of it? Where should we go next? Some of the aims deserving more attention have been identified, such as the democratic participation of young people with fewer opportunities and the involvement of young people in decision-making.

The workshop focused on strategic direction, as well as providing a space to reflect on the current state of youth participation within youth work systems and the importance and potential for exercising youth participation as a right in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

Participants, in small group discussions, focused on a number of key issues. Using an example from Ireland, participants noted that most of the time, there is a tendency to connect with young people with fewer opportunities through the school and education system, but these are not always well suited to engaging with young people with fewer opportunities. They concluded that organisations, including schools, must believe in the importance of hearing young people, and that participation is a two-way street where young people should be prepared to be heard and listened to and where both parties are open to working together.

With regard to the involvement of young people in decision-making, participants indicated that in their countries, they have compulsory youth councils and/or youth participation fora.

In terms of understanding youth participation, participants felt that some form of monitoring tool, such as a youth test, to assess whether participation is meaningful and its relative strengths and weaknesses, was necessary. Participants also discussed the need for funding for youth participation and related research, as well as the importance of promoting and advocating for it.

## Workshop 5

### European Youth Information Quality Label

**Presenter:** Imre Simon

**Organisation:** ERYICA, Luxembourg

**Rapporteur:** Federica Demicheli

**No. of participants:** 15

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core -  
Quality standards

The Quality Label was developed in the framework of the Council of Europe – ERYICA Partnership Agreement, to assist young people in finding quality information, in accordance with the European Youth Information Charter. All youth information providers in Council of Europe Member States are eligible to obtain the Label, provided that they are public or private non-profit organisations providing youth information services.

The Label was developed by a working group composed of Council of Europe experts, youth information professionals from the ERYICA network, and young people. It is being implemented through the efforts of a Task Force.

By equipping young people with the right tools and knowledge, the European Youth Information Quality Label enables them to not only respond effectively to current challenges but also to advocate for their rights and assert their role in shaping a sustainable future.

The purpose of the workshop was to promote quality youth work and introduce a concrete solution that helps youth workers and their organisations on this path.

Participants at the workshop learned that the EYI Quality Label is a physical, clear and recognisable label proving for the quality and reliability of the information offered to young people.

An ERYICA working group is entrusted with the establishment of the internal indicators, the management of the content development, and the evaluation of the application. The model has been developed to be flexible and can be adapted to different national settings in the European Union.

Firstly, it begins with a self-assessment stage that is especially useful since it calls on organisations to account for their practices based on reality. This is succeeded by an assessment with the young people themselves, and the final quality assessment, ultimately resulting in the award decision. The label is evaluated every three years. Special mention was also made of the peer review, which allows organisations to profile their respective strengths as well as points for improvement.

Participants appreciated the fact that it is a flexible tool that could be adapted to different contexts and that could be reviewed every three years as a guarantee of quality.

## Workshop 6

**From vision to action:  
a strategic approach  
towards local  
youth work**

**Presenter:** Judit Balogh and Jenny Haglund

**Organisation:** Europe Goes Local/JINT vzw,  
Belgium-Flanders

**Rapporteur:** Ondřej Bárta

**No. of participants:** 14

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core:  
Quality and standards

Europe Goes Local is a strategic cooperation project designed to support local youth work stakeholders in developing their youth work policies and strategies. As part of its efforts, the project has created a tool - the European Charter on Local Youth Work - which outlines the guiding principles for quality youth work. This Charter serves as a guideline for municipalities and NGOs seeking to enhance their youth work practices.

To complement the Charter, the project offers an online toolkit known as the Changemakers Kit. This resource provides not only information but also practical tools to foster dialogue among local stakeholders. By asking the right questions, the Changemakers Kit helps stakeholders assess their current offers and create plans for improvement.

The workshop introduced participants to the European Charter on Local Youth Work and the Changemakers Kit. Through a simulation exercise, participants experienced how the Charter facilitates dialogue and lays the groundwork for a quality development journey.

Participants identified some core elements of quality youth work, such as youth participation, qualified youth workers, impact assessment, professionalism and “passionalism”, all represented in the Charter on Local Youth Work. Participants also noted different ways in which the Charter can be applied, for example, a youth work-friendly city label based on the Charter was created in Croatia, the system of EGL ambassadors was put in place in Sweden, and the Charter served as an inspiration for setting up a local youth work policy in one municipality in Sweden.

Europe Goes Local also introduced the Changemakers Kit to support youth workers in implementing the Charter. The Changemaker Kit is currently being revamped and will be relaunched by the end of 2025. The Competencies Framework and Youth Work Curriculum created by KEKS (Sweden) were also listed as good practice examples among support tools for local youth work quality development.

## Workshop 7

### **Building Bridges for Youth Work: Alliance for advocacy and development – Presenting the European Alliance of National Youth Worker Association (AYWA)**

**Presenter:** Edgar Schlümmer and Jelena Stojanovic

**Organisation:** Alliance of Youth Workers Associations, Estonia

**Rapporteur:** Dragan Atanasov

**No. of participants:** 19

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core - Recognition and visibility of youth work

The European Alliance of Youth Worker Associations (AYWA) aims to improve the quality and innovation of youth work by providing youth workers with opportunities for learning, training, and collaboration.

AYWA stands out as a pioneering network that unites youth worker associations across Europe, fostering collaboration, innovation, and policy influence on an international scale. Beyond training and professional development, AYWA actively advocates for youth workers at the European level, pushing for better recognition, improved working conditions, and increased funding. By amplifying their voices in policymaking, AYWA helps shape a more sustainable and well-supported future for youth work.

The workshop focused on the AYWA's purpose of fostering collaboration, advocacy, and professional growth in youth work and its mission to address shared challenges, strengthen policy influence, and promote the recognition of youth work.

Participants' discussions focused on the structure and work of the AYWA. On the differences between AYWA and a pan-European union of youth workers, the AYWA unites national associations, which are civil society organisations and not trade unions. AYWA is an umbrella of national organisations which unite either individual youth workers or organisations that provide youth work. They also involve volunteer youth workers, and their focus is broader than salaries and worker rights, including recognition and quality development. Professionalisation of youth work is the organisation's main focus, and the aim is that membership should be diverse and, depending on the national context, with different criteria applied by different national associations.

Participants also discussed the challenges faced by youth workers in different countries. The main challenges identified included recognition and identity (some form of formal certification was needed), lack of educational opportunities, lack of job opportunities and low wages, and insufficient funding, which is often temporary and project-based, where consistency is required.

## Workshop 8

### SNAC EaT - An insight view on the Strategic Partnership on Education & Training of youth worker

**Presenter:** Eliza Bujalska

**Organisation:** Network of Erasmus+ Youth National Agencies/JUGEND für Europa, Germany

**Rapporteur:** Nik Paddison

**No. of participants:** 35

**Related Thematic Workshop:**

Youth Work Environment – Youth work as a profession

EaT SNAC – Anchoring quality education and training of youth workers focuses on systemic impact on education and training of youth workers at national and European level. It identifies how to strengthen spaces for synergies, cooperation, and joint reflection on youth work at the European level using the EU Youth programmes for better quality at all levels.

The Strategic Cooperation of National Agencies on Education and Training of Youth Workers (EaT SNAC) aims at reaching systemic impact on education and training of youth workers by recognising their competences and learning experiences. Current topics in EaT SNAC are the European dimension in education, training youth workers, civic/political education and training and its contemporary challenges, reflective practice, and the development of the professional identity of youth workers.

The focus on youth work is central, emphasising various aspects of training, education, and professional development in the field as essential features. A significant challenge is the formal recognition of youth work, which influences how the profession is perceived and supported, both financially and institutionally.

The SNAC is a partnership between Belgium Flanders, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Hungary, and Estonia. It brings together educators and trainers. It creates a space for discussion, especially to connect countries where youth work is not recognised with those where it is more developed.

In the workshop, Latvia, Estonia, Italy and Germany were taken and discussed as examples of the role and impact of SNAC.

Examples of projects and actions included: getting students of youth work involved in Erasmus+ activities and opportunities, and exchanges of students between youth work universities in Estonia; in Italy the SNAC NAs (National Agencies) have spread the call to people teaching and training youth work and are cooperating with a university to create a 60-hour course for youth workers; Latvia has taken material from the SNAC and is planning a university course for youth workers; while in Germany a course has been created for youth workers linked with material from the SNAC.

## Workshop 9

### Building strong processes for youth work development across Europe

**Presenter:** Elke Führer

**Organisation:** JUGEND für Europa

**Rapporteur:** Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll

**No. of participants:** 12

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core – Recognition and visibility of youth work

Five years after the launch of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA), the “Growing Youth Work” SNAC invited participants to reflect on progress across Europe. Drawing on fresh insights from the 2023–2025 surveys, this interactive workshop highlighted lessons learned, national success stories, and ongoing challenges in building sustainable youth work structures.

The focus was on using new data and real-life examples to explore how countries have fostered effective national processes, the role of stakeholder collaboration, and strategies to strengthen recognition and advocacy for youth work.

The workshop focused on understanding the lessons from countries active in the implementation of the EYWA by learning about the research on national processes over the last three years and by gaining practical insights from different countries.

After a presentation on the general implementation of the EYWA in national processes in Europe, examples from Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina were considered and discussed by participants.

In Ireland, the Ministry contacted the NA and youth workers organisations to establish an implementation process. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was no national process led by a national youth centre. During implementation, the youth centre invited local governments to discuss the process at the first Bosnian Youth Work Convention, held in 2023. Following this convention, a process for local-level development of youth work was established.

The message participants gleaned from the workshop was the importance of getting the key stakeholders on board, making a difference, and not waiting, as there will never be a perfect moment to start implementation. It was also evident that it was important to see the EYWA as a whole, rather than eight individual areas to be implemented. Furthermore, a dialogue between stakeholders, including youth work organisations, was seen as crucial. Even more valuable was a trusting relationship between the ministry and stakeholders, where each actor knows where and how it can contribute.

## Workshop 10

### Enhancing Recognition of Youth Work and Non-formal and Informal learning (NFIL)

**Presenters:** Eda Bakir and Kristiina Pernits

**Organisation:** SALTO Training and  
Cooperation Resource Centre

**Rapporteur:** Marzena Ples

**No. of participants:** 20

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core –  
Recognition and visibility of youth work

Despite the many years that recognition of youth work and its learning value has been on the agenda in Europe, progress remains uneven, while the general context for recognition and non-formal learning is changing.

The handbook “Unlocking Doors to Recognition” and other resources developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation provide guidance on developing a strategy for the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning.

The handbook guides the reader through the steps of developing a strategy for the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning, in addition to other resources developed by SALTO. These resources target any youth work stakeholders who are willing to enhance the recognition dimension of their youth work-related practice.

The workshop focused on brainstorming on actions and ideas that support advocating for and contributing to the recognition of youth work and developing awareness of developments and support materials that enhance the recognition of youth work.

The workshop began with a reflective individual activity in which participants selected and shared statements highlighting the positive impact of their work, touching on themes such as financial value, social impact, and individual transformation.

After the handbook was presented, participants looked at recognition as a process with many sides: starting from understanding their own role and value in youth work to taking action and improving policies and systems.

Key themes emerged across four dimensions of the Integral Model. Participants stressed the importance of youth workers acknowledging their own role and value as a first step to recognition. Participants also discussed integrating a recognition dimension into daily work and improving communication about activities and impact. Youth work should become more visible. Funding, feedback and observed impact on young people were stressed. Participants also mentioned addressing misconceptions in youth work among community members and called for clearer communication on the results of youth work and outreach.

Some participants highlighted the disconnect between local recognition efforts and national policy. For a successful strategy in youth workers’ own contexts, reflecting and addressing all these quadrants was seen as essential.

## Workshop 11

### Help us shape the next EU Youth Strategy

**Presenters:** Marta Touykova, Babis Papaioannou and Jorun Boklöv

**Organisation:** European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

**Rapporteur:** Susie Nicodemi

**No. of participants:** 26

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core – Recognition and visibility of youth work

The present EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027), ‘Engage, Connect Empower’ will shortly end and a new post 2027 EU youth strategy, a new Multiannual Financial Framework, and a new generation of European programmes are currently under consideration.

This workshop provided participants with the opportunity to inform and influence the new EU Strategy and the role that youth work can play in shaping and determining it. It is also part of a wider listening and consulting process by the European Commission to garner ideas and suggestions for the Commission’s proposals for the post 2027 EU Youth Strategy.

The workshop presented a number of key questions. “What activities and instruments can help with the recognition of youth work? How can education and training for youth workers be better supported? How can youth work contribute to other youth-relevant policies? How to embed the outcomes of the 4th Youth Work Convention in the strategy? How to make the strategy flexible and adaptable? How can European programmes enable the future strategy by funding opportunities for recognition, quality and development of youth work?

Presented with a series of key questions, participants in response pointed to the importance of recognising and investing in youth work as a sector with its own values and impact; integrate youth work into the heart of the strategy, not as an annex; promote (existing) quality standards and competence frameworks, ensuring their uptake at national level; and recognise and support the professional role of both youth workers and trainers, including through formal education pathways.

With regard to European funding programmes, participants stressed the need to ensure long-term structural support (not just project-based funding); use tools such as micro-funds to make youth participation meaningful, especially for those with fewer opportunities; support countries where youth work lacks national investment or recognition, and to equalise quality across Europe.

Participation could be strengthened by including youth work and youth voices across all EU policies using existing structures and networks; improving coordination and communication, with a stronger mandate for the EU Youth coordinator and ensuring national delegations communicate back and follow up on European decisions; and promoting the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda.

Participants felt that the new strategy should be based on existing research and evidence, with more investment in studies to measure youth work's long-term impact; design it as a living document - capable of responding to changing phenomena through annual planning, regular monitoring and shared ownership; and involve youth organisations, NGOs, and young people in developing yearly targets, tracking progress, and ensuring transparency.

## Workshop 12

### Quality Tools for Youth Work in Europe

**Presenter:** Tomi Kiilakoski

**Organisation:** EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership

**Rapporteur:** Zara Lavchyan

**No. of participants:** 27

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Core – Quality and Standards

This workshop focused on a study, commissioned by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, which explores the current state of youth work quality tools in 15 European countries, focusing on how the quality of youth work is understood and supported. Quality youth work has been a long-standing European priority due to its contributions to young people's wellbeing and social inclusion. However, there is no shared definition of what "quality" entails or how best to promote it across diverse national contexts.

The study is based on a survey of correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCY) and members of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR). Countries which did not have youth work quality tools or frameworks were not analysed. To create a more balanced picture of youth work quality, data collection was supplemented by additional research on five countries. The studied countries have developed national quality tools, and fewer have focused on tools that integrate local contexts or young people's perspectives.

Participants' discussions addressed issues such as quality youth work versus quality in youth work, quality frameworks, tools, standards, and the overarching theme of recognition. The discussions included reflections on the level and understanding of the quality assurance approach, whether it is structural, practical, or a hybrid model.

Questions to consider related to what one understands by quality, how it should and can be measured, whether there is one way of defining quality or if it includes a lot of specificities and subjective views and practices, and whether it is situational or more of a framework to follow.

The discussion also touched on the issues of how young people, the final beneficiaries, should become part of quality assurance mechanisms and how to best include them in the co-creation of any existing formats and tools.

## Workshop 13

### New Resources for Youth Work – Advocacy and Project Management

**Presenters:** Olga Kyriakidou, Ajsa Hadzibegovic, and Bogdan Imre

**Organisation:** EU-Council of Europe  
Youth Partnership

**Rapporteur:** Ajša Hadžibegović

**No. of participants:** 26

**Related Thematic Workshop:**  
Youth Work Environment – Advocacy and  
methodologies in youth work

This workshop introduces two new resources from the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, designed to inspire and equip youth workers, leaders, and changemakers:

- Toolkit for Youth Work Advocacy – offering strategic guidance for national-level youth work development, along with methods for self-reflection and effective advocacy planning.
- T-Kit 3 on Project Management (revised edition) – intended for those initiating their first projects or looking to enhance their ability to design and manage youth projects effectively.

The workshop provided space for an exchange with participants on the themes of advocacy and project management.

Participants were appreciative of both T-Kit and eager to understand when they will be available for use and how to use them. Furthermore, participants wanted to know if these resources would be available in other languages. For participants, there was a lack of clarity on how participatory these resources were and if the ownership of their use lay with any specific actor. In response, it was indicated that T-Kit was created through a participatory process with consultative and expert group involvement; it is a resource that different actors could use for youth work advocacy, is intended to be adaptable to local contexts, and offers inspiration cards and examples of arguments to address misconceptions about youth work.

The revised T-kit will be published on the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership website.

Participants also highlighted the differences in project management when working with employed, volunteer or mixed teams and were enthusiastic about using the resource.

## Workshop 14

### Level Up Your Youth Work: Discover the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio

**Presenters:** Yael Ohana and Sulkhani Chargashvili  
**Organisation:** Council of Europe Youth Department  
**Rapporteur:** Liz Green  
**No. of participants:** 20  
**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work Environment – Youth work as a profession

This workshop focused on the revised 2025 edition of the Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio and considered how the revised portfolio can further enhance youth work practice and provision.

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio supports the youth work community of practice in assessing and developing competencies and programme quality. It serves as a standard by setting benchmarks and aiding recognition of youth work across Europe. As a self and organisational assessment tool, it defines key competencies to measure quality. It also promotes lifelong learning and reinforces the youth work's civic mission—democracy, human rights, and inclusion.

The workshop explored the framework of self-assessment functions, and participants tested it from the perspectives of both youth workers and organisations. The developmental element helps you to identify gaps in your skill set and then allows you to focus your learning and development.

Following the discussion and feedback, the presenter addressed their planned next steps, which included piloting the portfolio in institutions and teams, creating something more mobile and digital for easy use, and developing a database of portfolios and sharing this with the community of practice.

Group discussion also took place on whether something like the competence framework could be used in the contexts of policy making/training, and individual youth worker development. It was notable that participants were at significantly different starting points across the board, some in countries with well-developed training and qualification systems for youth work and some in which there is no recognition of youth work, which is delivered by volunteers only.

## Workshop 15

### Strengthening Youth Perspectives in Policy Making

**Presenters:** Clementina Barbaro  
and Marius Schlageter

**Organisation:** Council of Europe Youth Department

**Rapporteur:** Adina Şerban

**No. of participants:** 32

**Related Thematic Workshop:** Youth Work  
Environment – Young people - their needs and  
aspirations - and how youth work can support  
and empower them

This workshop explored initiatives by the Council of Europe to enhance the inclusion of the youth perspectives in policy-making processes. It presented tools, strategies, and good practices that strengthen the voice of young people in decision-making at local, national, and European levels.

During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to get acquainted with tools, strategies, and good practices that strengthen the voice of young people in decision-making at the local, national, and European levels. Clarifications around the essential concepts of youth participation and their relevance for the youth policy field also helped participants understand the youth perspective set out in Council of Europe documents and strategies that reinforce the value of youth work. The workshop was also an opportunity for the participants to understand how the co-management system and the presence of the members of the Advisory Council on Youth contributed to the discussion and reinforced the structured and structural youth participation processes at the Council of Europe level.

The reference framework was introduced to the participants, including the guiding principles, the main working mechanisms, and the importance of mainstreaming youth and youth policies, as the framework may be adopted during the youth ministers' conference in October 2025.

Participants considered and commented on a number of issues including in the framework baseline definitions of relevant concepts such as youth, youth work, and youth policies. The three modes of participation: a. political actors miming youth participation and just inviting participants to meetings, b. political actors completely ignoring the youth population, and c. the sporadic cases of a true youth political participation, where the Council of Europe is perceived as a model.

Participants also expressed interest in understanding what instruments the Council of Europe employ to support youth work and youth work development. The European Youth Foundation, the European Youth Centres and the training opportunities for youth workers were new to some of the participants, while other participants shared experiences relating to the benefits of using the available instruments.

In all, 15 thematic workshops, five each under Youth Work Core, Youth Work Environment and Youth Work Systems, were held in three sessions, the first two on Day 1 of the convention and the third on Day 2. Each workshop had the same facilitator and rapporteur over the three sessions to provide both continuity and knowledge building. In advance of the workshops, templates for both facilitators and rapporteurs were provided, setting out their respective roles.

The format for the sessions was also outlined and included a round of introductions from participants, an introduction to the workshop theme by facilitators, followed by a general discussion on the theme – usually in subgroups – with suggested prompt questions. The workshops concluded with the subgroups reconvening and participants agreeing on a maximum of five conclusions derived from their discussions.

Rapporteurs were present throughout each of the three sessions, and they then compiled reports which presented the main issues and topics discussed and the final conclusions.

When considering the reports and conclusions of the thematic workshops in general, a number of crosscutting and overarching themes can be identified relating to how youth work is seen, its role and what it does or can or should do.

First, youth work is seen as a catalyst for positive societal change and promoting democracy. It is characterised in the conclusions by reference to the inclusion and participation of young people in policy and decision-making, recognition and visibility of youth work's role in such change, democratic participation, active citizenship and underpinning values and ethics. The role of young people as active partners with youth workers in creating, shaping, innovating and sustaining the youth work environment was also a recurring theme.

Second, youth work is viewed as a practice discipline evidenced by reference to the delivery of quality youth work-based programmes and services, the role and recognition of youth workers and the development of their competences, monitoring and evaluation, and research and sustainable funding.

Third, the role of the Member States, at national, regional and local levels and that of the European institutions and European funding programmes were seen as pivotal, not only in developing and strengthening youth work, but in ensuring its long-term sustainability. Political commitment, legal and administrative structures and the necessary human, financial and physical resources were seen as essential for such sustainability. Sustained operational funding for the voluntary youth sector was also a recurring theme.

Fourth, the stark divide in youth work provision across Europe is also evident. While many countries have well developed systems and support structures for youth work, in many others, the state is largely inactive or only partly active in its support of youth work. In these countries, the burden falls on a voluntary youth sector that has limited recognition, support structures, and resources. While an effective European youth work strategy can

add value to youth work in countries where it is well supported, it is crucial for those countries where it is less well supported. While such a strategy cannot, of itself, bridge the gap between the “haves” and “have nots” in youth work in Europe, it can provide for a less imbalanced and more sustainable youth work field.

While there is evidence of tension and incompatibility between these crosscutting and overarching themes, the reports and conclusions, in general, see them as interlocking, interdependent and mutually supportive. They are the pillars on which future the European youth work strategy rest. How that strategy addresses the challenges and opportunities that they present and how effectively it coordinates and renders them cohesive will largely determine the strategy’s success or failure.

# Definition & description



Each of the three sessions of the workshop started with a presentation and discussion of existing definitions.

Youth work is by, with and for young people, with a focus on youth-led and co-creation. It takes place in the non-formal education and learning realm and is based on voluntary participation and democratic values. It supports and empowers young people to develop their identity and their talents, and can include both targeted and open approaches and methods. Youth work is fundamentally relational in the sense of people and places. Youth work is organised, constructive and managed by professionals, both paid and unpaid.

Youth work is rooted in national contexts, history and philosophical traditions. Among different participants in different subgroups during the workshop, there was disagreement as to what belongs to youth work. Some countries clearly excluded music and sports, whereas others included these in their descriptions, pointing out that youth work takes place where young people are. Also, it was argued that youth work does not take place “out of school”, but rather “out of curriculum”, that is, outside formal learning. In some countries, school is a space for youth work, whereas in other countries, it is not. In one workshop, participants agreed that different target groups, including policymakers and young people, need different definitions of what youth work is and what it can achieve.

It was argued that rather than explaining what youth work is doing, it should explain why it is doing what it is doing. “Focus on the magic of youth work, resulting in wisdom”, rather than showing how this is done. Following the analogy of a doctor or a lawyer, it was argued that society has a general idea of what they are there for, although their methods may not always be clear or understood. Similarly, it is generally known how they become a doctor or a lawyer; education and training, as well as subsequent career opportunities, are clearly formulated. This is a requirement for youth work as well.

The strengths of youth work definitions are that they provide a common framework, platform and language, encompassing a richness grounded in diversity. The variety of definitions, both at the European as well as the national, and even regional and municipal levels, is useful in keeping this richness. Definitions show the strength of the sector and its flexibility in helping young people, while its value base is what separates youth work from other actors and fields, such as education or employment. As such, a definition can frame and shape the scope of youth work provision, while at the same time, set boundaries to the scope of youth work. Definitions enhance the sense of connection, ownership and safety, and a realisation that youth work matters.

A clearly communicated weakness of current definitions and descriptions of youth work is that they are not understandable to people outside the field. This sparked a debate among participants about the recognition of youth work as a profession. This lack of understanding is also felt within the field, as it was particularly noticed that at the municipal level, European definitions “do not live” or “do not capture reality”. Thus, it was argued that there should be an understanding that there is a difference between definitions at a policy level, and the concepts and understandings of youth work that municipal and local actors work with.

# Values & Ethics



## YOUTH WORK CORE WORKSHOP



There was active participation in the discussions in all three sessions of the workshop.

There is a common understanding about the core ethical principles underlying youth work, such as inclusion, integrity, respect, care, empathy, trustworthiness, solidarity and equality. Some values might be given more importance than others, depending on the specific youth work contexts. Building on this, the workshop participants discussed how these values can be transmitted to young people through youth work. For example, youth work can provide political education through informal learning. This is regarded as a core ethical principle of youth work, mainly because of social or political turmoil some young



*The future of Europe depends on how young people perceive Europe.*

people might be experiencing and impacting on their personal lives. Examples of political education included discussing social justice and inclusion, social class, poverty, inequality, populism, democratic values, racism, and human rights.

The implementation of youth work ethical practices may differ according to specific situations and contexts, and according to the ideologies/beliefs young people may follow (liberal/far-right/conservative, radical, etc.). These ideologies might keep young people away from youth centres and activities. Some young people are polarised politically and ideologically. Ethical values are subjective, and there might not be consensus about them, for example, what democracy entails. In this regard, youth work can facilitate and provide safe spaces for young people to learn from each other, and listen to and communicate with each other. Youth work does not have all the answers to complex ethical questions and moral dilemmas, but it can offer safe spaces for young people to talk, discuss and reflect about them.



*It is one thing to talk about values and ethics, but it is another to be vocal about it.*



*Youth work restores trust in young people, as the makers of a better future.*

Youth work can work to de-polarise young people through reflective critical thinking, even when acknowledging that there is no consensus. This also means accepting young people as they are, while supporting them to safeguard the well-being of other people. Youth work can also offer safe spaces where young people can have some agency and gain a sense of belonging. This is not limited to youth work settings but can be extended to all forms of youth work activities, including digital youth work.

The old model of group participation seems to be losing its importance among young people. Grippled by individualism, young people are more likely to take individual action than join collective efforts, which raises the question of how youth work can respond to this reality, and whether to refrain from pushing for group engagement. Youth work enables young people to trust themselves in an ever-changing and uncertain world. The value of trust must be emphasised more. In situations where young people have started losing trust in institutions and politicians, youth work is instrumental for young people in building trust in themselves and in systems that work for young people's benefit.

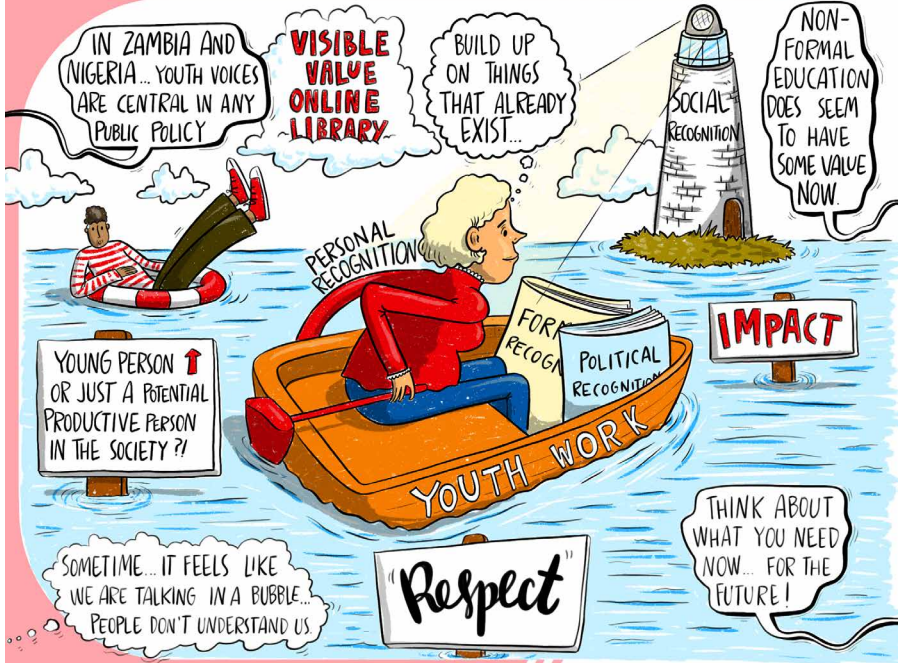
Youth workers' self-care and burnout issues raise ethical issues, simply because 'one cannot support others if they cannot help themselves'. A few examples of mental health support mechanisms were highlighted by participants, such as in the Belgian, German-speaking community, where there is an initiative for youth workers to meet twice a month with a psychologist to process their struggles, growth and questions.

Media literacy among young people requires urgent attention and a stronger youth work focus to enhance critical thinking skills and support them in engaging critically with the media and AI content.



*We should remember that youth work is relational in its nature.*

# Recognition & Visibility



## YOUTH WORK CORE WORKSHOP



Participants in the workshop considered a number of questions. What does recognition mean to you? Who is responsible for recognition? Are you involved in recognition work? What does recognition look like in your context?

Participants explored and detailed the wide-ranging role and impact of youth work across Europe and at national, regional and local levels.

It was felt that while we have relatively high levels of recognition, particularly political and formal recognition, we have tended to neglect the importance of social recognition.

We don't know or have forgotten how to effectively communicate what we do to the communities we live and work in.

Even if youth work is recognised in many ways, at the societal level, people still don't know what youth work is.

““““

*So we are recognised at the European level, they know about us.*

Building awareness of youth work policies at the local level builds recognition. An example was provided of a training course for the German NA on civic engagement. The participants on the training course were locally based youth workers. When the European Youth Work Agenda was introduced and explored during the course, the youth workers participating were surprised to learn that they were recognised at the European level.

Participants in the workshop also raised the question as to how we might replicate something that the sports sector does – effectively promoting their sector and securing funding through “statistics, medals and championships”. At the same time, youth work offers “happy young people”. It was pointed out that no country in Europe has a Ministry for Youth and that at most, youth, is subordinate to other policy fields such as education, sport, and the family.

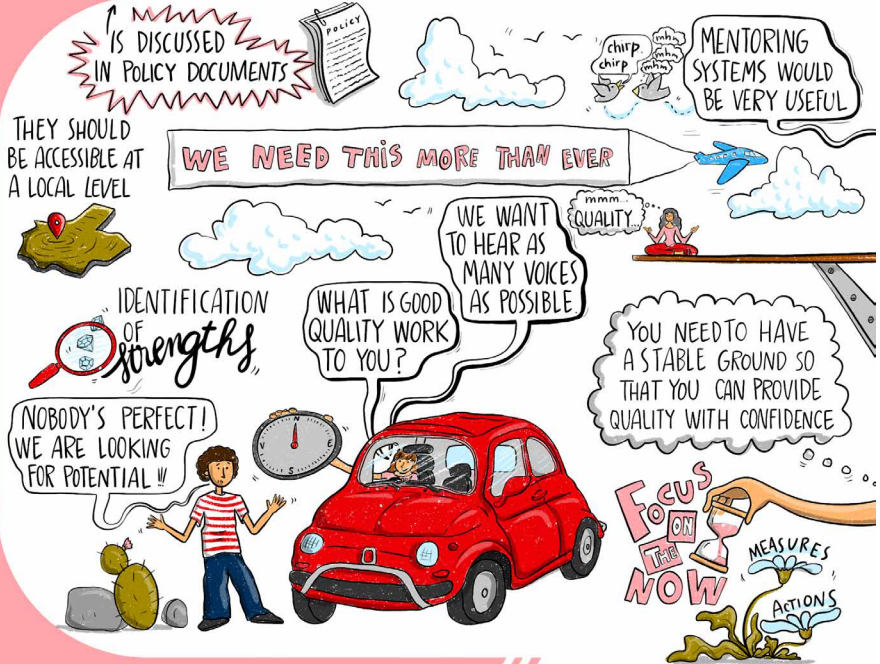
Political recognition can facilitate access to funding, but perhaps we should prioritise gaining recognition from other sectors that work with young people. Youth work can both inform and support related policy areas such as employment, formal education, and health, while also contributing its unique qualities and methods to these fields.

Participants also felt that while youth work can contribute to political engagement and positive societal change, it was, regrettably, also the case that youth work can be used as a means of control in some countries and as a tool for promoting the interests and ambitions of particular political parties or ideologies.

““““

*There is often a demand that we provide evidence to governments and municipalities to justify the existence of youth work. Yet there is so much data and evidence available about how their policies continuously fail young people when it comes to health, employment, housing, crime, etc. But they have no evidence of youth work failing!”*

# Quality & Standards



## YOUTH WORK CORE WORKSHOP



Basic conditions of quality youth work, which participants in the workshop repeated time and time again, included: sustainable long-term funding, and quality infrastructure in the physical sense (safe and inclusive youth work spaces), logistical sense (youth work delivery and accessibility), and in a methodological sense (youth work professionalism).

Participants also felt that impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and youth research should be politically and financially supported in the youth work domain at all levels. This can contribute to the recognition of youth work as a valuable practice by the wider society, going beyond the youth work domain and youth field circles. It should also

include tools supporting feedback collection, and it should feature planned periodical reviews of youth work policy and practice. In this way, youth work can become an evidence-based and evidence-driven domain, especially through sub-domains like quality standard design, or competence model development and usage. Such an approach would also allow for keeping track of capacities in youth work and ensure that youth work is accessible to all young people in all local contexts.

Youth workers should be established and recognised as a profession. To that end, all responsible bodies should work towards the following:

- A definition of youth work and youth workers, clearly differentiating them from other fields, such as social work, and defining credentials necessary for entering the profession are needed
- Competence models reflecting national needs should be set up in a clear, flexible, and well-formulated way, and include clear connections to educational pathways
- Internationally visible, unified and recognised standards in youth workers' qualifications should be introduced
- Clear and officially recognised pathways into the youth work profession should be established, including further education and mentoring systems for youth workers, non-formal learning pathways, and volunteering practice recognition
- Youth work professional standards should be established - potentially differentiating between paid and voluntary youth workers - and including the code of ethics, and
- Quality standards for youth centres and other youth work spaces should be applied.

These criteria need to be flexible enough to support all modes of youth work, need to be established with the involvement of all youth work stakeholders, and be periodically reviewed. They should also be explicitly based on democratic values and supported by a set of indicators.

The well-being of youth workers was another major topic discussed by participants. This was mentioned in connection with burn-out prevention, but also in connection with general well-being and mental health management of youth workers. The well-being of youth workers is directly linked to the quality of youth work and, therefore, should be an important topic on the youth work policy agenda.

European coordination is needed, but not in the sense of imposing rules on different youth work realities, but rather in setting up common, basic (minimum) standards applicable across different youth work contexts. It would be useful to support youth workers in identifying relevant and recognised materials related to youth work quality.

All countries should have national and relevant support bodies for youth workers. Cooperation between the European and national levels is a must in youth work. This should also include cooperation with other sectors on a systematic basis.

## Thematic Workshop 5

**Title:** Monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact

**Facilitator:** Nerijus Kriauciunas

**Rapporteur:** Mary Drosopoulos

**No. of Participants:** 106

# Monitoring & Evaluation



## YOUTH CORE WORKSHOP



Framed within the broader European youth policy landscape, the three sessions of the workshop sought to produce doable, consensus-based conclusions to inform both national and European level strategies.

The sessions opened with a brief welcome and an introduction of the team. The facilitator shared useful digital tools and resources related to the topic from both the European level – Youth wiki, the Quality Label - and the national level - NAPOR's resources on quality work and the Logbook from Sweden.

In subgroups, participants shared insights into how youth work and its impact are currently monitored and evaluated within their respective contexts. The core of the workshop consisted of two structured rounds of small-group discussion. These deliberations focused on identifying measures and actions needed to integrate monitoring, evaluation, and research more effectively into future youth work strategies at both European and national levels.

In general, discussions showed that participants identified a diverse range of approaches to monitoring and evaluation, while also posing shared common challenges:



*Use statistics to understand and improve, not to punish.*

A key issue identified was the scarcity of systematic and long-term evaluation practices, particularly at local, municipal, and national levels. Participants, sharing experience from their own contexts, often noted a limited understanding of the necessity and added value of monitoring and evaluation, which was often accompanied by strong resistance from both governmental bodies and organisations. This resistance was attributed, in part, to a lack of knowledge and institutional capacity to assess the impact of activities effectively. Moreover, the short-term and discontinuous

nature of participation (many organisations in different regions operate under donor-driven projects of limited funding and capacity) further complicates the implementation of meaningful monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, a pervasive lack of trust between evaluators and those being evaluated—frequently linked to the limited use of participatory evaluation methods—was seen as a significant obstacle to the development of effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

The workshop reaffirmed that while significant groundwork has been laid through previous conventions in Ghent (2010), Brussels (2015), and Bonn (2020), there remains a pressing need to advance shared frameworks, foster research capacity, and enhance the visibility of youth work’s societal value.



*Make hard decisions and pick up a shared set of tools.*

Monitoring and evaluation are not merely technical tasks but vital components of professionalising the field, enabling continuous learning, and ensuring that youth work remains responsive, accountable, and impactful across Europe.



*Be brave enough to say that something is not working.*

## Thematic Workshop 6

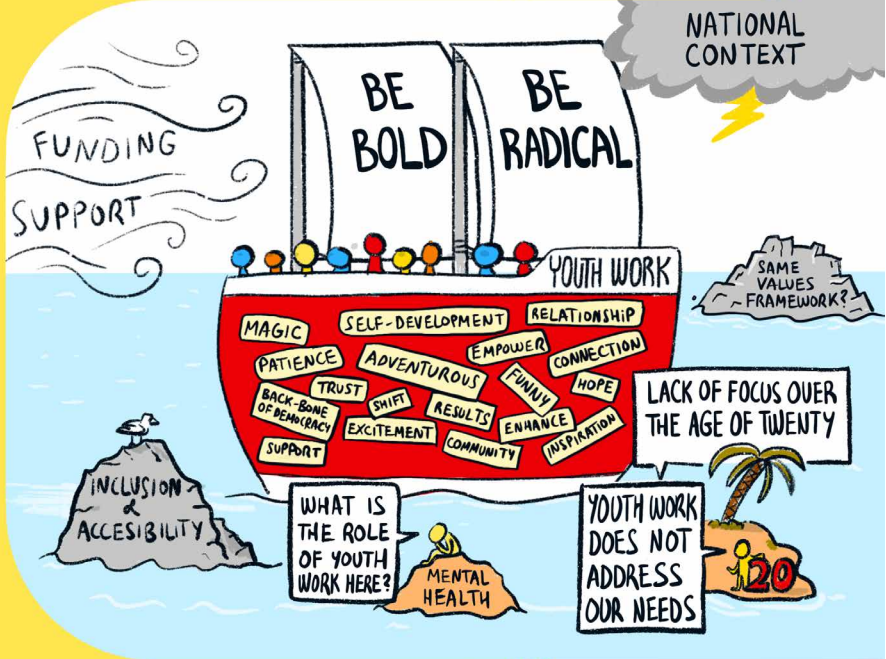
**Title:** Young people, their needs and aspirations and how youth work can support and empower them

**Facilitator:** Bruno António

**Rapporteur:** Federica Demicheli

**No. of Participants:** 76

# Young People's Aspirations and how Youth Work can support them



## YOUTH WORK ENVIRONMENT WORKSHOP



Youth Partnership

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



Throughout the three sessions of the workshop, it was clearly indicated that youth work adds significant value in nurturing and enabling the personal, social, and civic development of young people and providing young people with the space to grow, question, and work together.

Youth work is a social and educational practice which is essentially non-formal learning that enables young people to increase their ability to act and helps to bridge the gap between young and old generations through accompanying young people in the process of their growing up.

Youth work enables this by creating spaces that are open and inclusive, grounded in participation, dialogue, and trust. These spaces are not imposed on young people but are co-created with them —places where they can explore their own identity, strengthen their voice, exercise agency, and effect change.

The participants indicate several roles and strengths of youth work:

- Empowerment beyond employability: Although youth work can develop soft skills for the labour market, its ultimate goal should be empowerment, inclusion, and democratic engagement, not employability per se.
- Political and societal participation: In this way, youth work helps young people become actors of change, to stand up for their values and become involved in shaping their communities and societies.
- Flexibility and adaptability: Youth work spans sectors, including education, health, digital media, and local governance. It can be tailored to various purposes, from intercultural exchange to mental health support.
- Values promotion: The promotion of peace, tolerance, and intercultural learning is core to youth work – sometimes explicitly laid out in national policies, or in other cases embedded in practice.
- Preventing radicalisation: Youth work plays a critical role in preventing polarisation and violent radicalisation, in particular when long-term processes and safe spaces are provided for the development of critical thinking, a sense of belonging, and value-based education.
- Support and mentorship: Several best practices emphasised the importance of mentorship, community attachment, and youth workers' role in accompanying young people through life transitions.

There was some caution expressed by participants on over-idealising youth work. Too much optimism can cover up the structural flaws and practical limitations that operate on the ground. If such problems go unattended, it becomes a lot more difficult to tackle them.

Another issue raised by participants was values. Youth work is often seen as a driver of peace, inclusion, and critical thinking, but these do not emerge of their own accord. They need to be consciously intended, coherent, and supported by value frameworks that are shared. Without these, youth work may be instrumentalised or lose its critical edge.

Although it is designed to see young people through different life cycles, youth work's structures and policies always emphasise their younger years, with a consequent lack of focus on "older" young people.

In many aspects of young people's lives—including mental health, housing, and access to services, youth work can have an impact, but without cooperation from other sectors - and with public support systems potentially weakened - the results will be limited. With no public health, welfare, or education links, pressure can mean that youth work simply cannot meet more complex needs.

## Thematic Workshop 7

**Title:** Advocacy in youth work  
**Facilitator:** Olga Kyriakidou  
**Rapporteur:** Ajša Hadžibegović  
**No. of Participants:** 58

# Advocacy in Youth Work



## MAIN CHALLENGES



**YOUTH WORK ENVIRONMENT**  
**WORKSHOP**

**YUW**  
4th European  
Youth Work Convention

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

There was a clear and shared understanding among participants at the workshop that youth work advocacy is important, both in terms of supporting young people to raise their voices and in advocating for youth work itself and its continuing impact.

Advocacy was discussed and described as a distinctive line of youth work which “not every youth worker needs to do, but some have to”.

The gap between existing, even if rare, advocacy efforts in youth work and actual challenges that young people face, including the fact that those facing the most pressing issues

cannot advocate for themselves, raises the question of whether such instrumentalised advocacy in youth work is creating exclusive systems and replicating inequality.

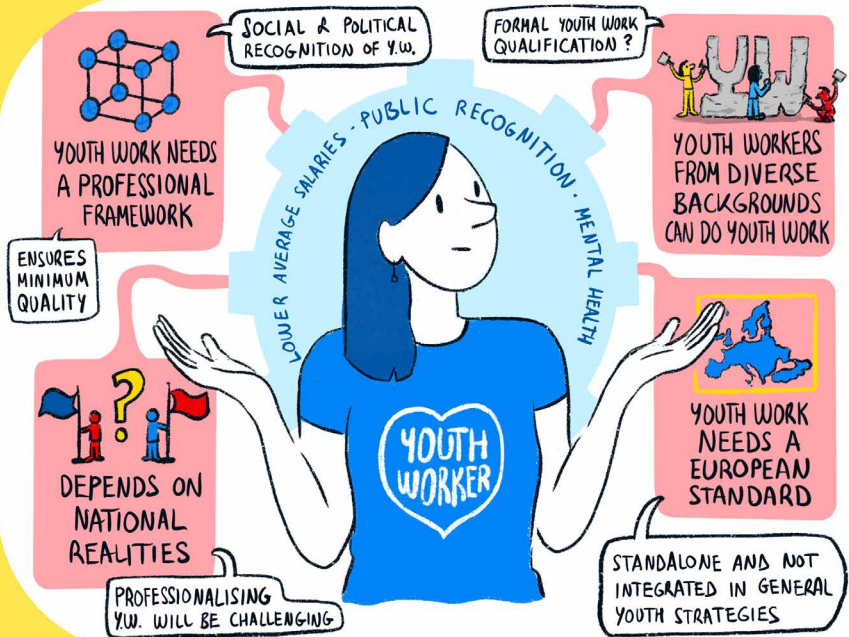
Key factors in influencing youth work's ability to consistently support and amplify young people's voices were identified by participants as:

- Insufficient systemic support - young people often face a lack of follow-up or accountability from decision-makers, which weakens their trust in institutions and democracy and decreases their motivation to participate in democratic life.
- Sustainability of youth participation - youth engagement, in principle, remains short-term and under-supported, and due to the long-term nature of advocacy, youth advocacy, particularly through project-based youth work, is very difficult to sustain.
- Precarious youth work environment - youth workers are often overworked, underpaid and employed on short-term project-based contracts, leading to high turnover and burnout. This weakens their focus on and continuity of support for youth advocacy.
- Advocacy and youth work - neutrality norms are often misinterpreted, discouraging youth workers from engaging in political conversations, even when necessary to uphold young people's human rights from a universal human rights value base. Youth workers' ability to empower youth politically is limited by their level of competence in this area, and there is an evident lack of training in advocacy within youth work education.

A broader set of structural and political barriers were identified by participants as key factors for youth work's relatively weak position and influence as a sector:

- Lack of youth work representation and recognition – youth workers are not represented in key policy deliberations and have “no seat at the table”, where they would have power to support young people and influence policy developments.
- Project-based and insufficient funding - structural and sustainable financing of youth work, to support and accompany young people in advocacy, is rare. This leaves little time or capacity for youth workers and organisations to engage in systematic advocacy for youth work and other pressing issues relevant to young people.
- Lack of capacity for advocacy - many youth work practitioners and stakeholders face limited time, funding, skills, and sometimes even self-confidence to engage in advocacy.
- Youth work and other pressing policy issues - economic and security concerns are taking over the sense of urgency in the youth policy field. In principle, youth work finds it difficult to measure and communicate the impact of youth work in a way that resonates with policy-makers.

# Youth Work as a Profession



YOUTH WORK ENVIRONMENT  
**WORKSHOP**



Most of the participants saw the professionalisation of youth work as a desirable and important process, particularly for ensuring minimum quality, social and political recognition of youth work. Recognising youth work as a profession was also seen as essential for improving the status of youth workers, especially through ensuring adequate working conditions, competitive job opportunities, prospects for professional development, and achieving financial sustainability. Furthermore, professionalisation was deemed as important for building stable youth work structures, for greater visibility of youth work in society and for distinguishing it from other professions.

There was general agreement, among participants in the workshop that the process of professionalising youth work will be challenging, and it will depend a lot on national conditions.

Participants, in subgroups, also discussed the status of youth workers, and it was often mentioned that even in countries where youth work is recognised as a profession, youth workers have a lower status compared to other similar professions and have lower average salaries. This makes the sector unattractive, which results in high turnover of staff, with youth workers leaving for better-paid jobs as soon as there is an opportunity or when they gain enough competencies. This means that providing jobs and good working conditions needs to be parallel with creating educational and training opportunities.

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*What kinds of jobs are available if one completes youth work education? For example, if you finish Masters Degree in youth work, what are the opportunities that municipalities, youth organisations and other stakeholders can offer, so that your efforts and resources are paid off?*

It was also pointed out that obtaining a formal youth work qualification cannot be the only way to become a youth worker, because it would be too limiting if all youth workers were required to have a degree to be able to work with young people. It was often mentioned that the reality of youth work is very diverse, and different pathways should be available, including for those with no formal training. In that sense, there was a discussion as to whether youth work should really be seen as a profession or more as a job, open to those coming from different professions.

Volunteer-based youth work was seen as equally valuable, especially because it is mostly passion-driven. At the same time, experience was often seen as equally relevant to education and training. Ultimately, professionalisation was mostly understood as being competent and providing good quality work with young people, regardless of status. However, some caution was expressed regarding volunteering-based youth work, since volunteers are sometimes used to replace paid staff, they are not provided with adequate working conditions, and monitoring the quality of their work is more difficult.

To bridge the wide differences in professionalisation of youth work in different countries, it was proposed to develop a common professional standard on a European level, including values, ethics and competences of youth workers. This was not necessarily seen as a formal instrument, but as some sort of quality label, targeting both employed and volunteer youth workers, and developed by the sector itself.

Meanwhile, there were also calls for a common European legal framework on youth work, or at least a European strategy for professionalisation. Such a strategy would have to be standalone, and not integrated in general youth strategies, and it should be followed up with specific measures that would support its impact on national and local policies, adjusted to the realities in different contexts.

## Volunteering and Youth-led Orgs



### YOUTH WORK ENVIRONMENT **WORKSHOP**



Youth Partnership

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



As stated in one of the opening speeches in the plenary, “Youth work is an act of citizenship”. This seems to be even more true for youth-led youth work initiatives, where young people are not just recipients of services or participants in activities but are in the driving seat in crafting programmes and developmental opportunities for other young people. Thus, volunteering and youth-led youth work create enhanced spaces for youth empowerment and youth participation. These young volunteers act as decision makers and leaders in their communities. By placing young people at the forefront, this approach fosters a sense of ownership, empowerment, and accountability. The impact of these activities goes beyond individual growth, serving as catalysts for societal change.

Nevertheless, participants in the workshop felt that youth-led and volunteering youth work is facing common challenges across Europe.

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*Recognition is not only about words and certificates, but also actions.*

There is, in general, a lack of time and resources for young people to get involved in youth work and volunteering activities. In many countries, there is an administrative and bureaucratic burden for young people and organisations that is negatively impacting young people's motivation to take part in such activities. Voluntary youth work is not taken seriously and regarded as of lower quality and not trustworthy enough in comparison

to professional youth work. In many countries, there is still a lack of recognition for this kind of

voluntary engagement and consequently there is a need to create instruments for recognising the competencies gained by voluntary youth workers.

Participants felt that mandatory, but easy-to-access, basic youth work training for all voluntary youth workers was required. In some countries, Ireland and the United Kingdom, for example, training is linked to compliance with Child Protection Laws. Still, the actual training should be more practice-oriented and include basic

features such as: communication skills, basic youth

work and non-formal methodologies, how to work

with young people, how to take care of oneself, securing funding, and advocacy. There is also a need to enhance the intra-organisational recognition of voluntary youth workers. This might include some extrinsic measures like specific awards, providing tickets for interesting events and some other benefits for the volunteers. At the same time, the intrinsic recognition strategies would be 'treating the voluntary youth workers as equals', as colleagues who work alongside other professionals.

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*Youth work restores trust in young people, as the makers of a better future.*

Finally, one of the common challenges agreed by participants was the need to ensure sustainable funding for these activities, including covering volunteers' costs related to the actual engagement, thus making it more accessible and inclusive.

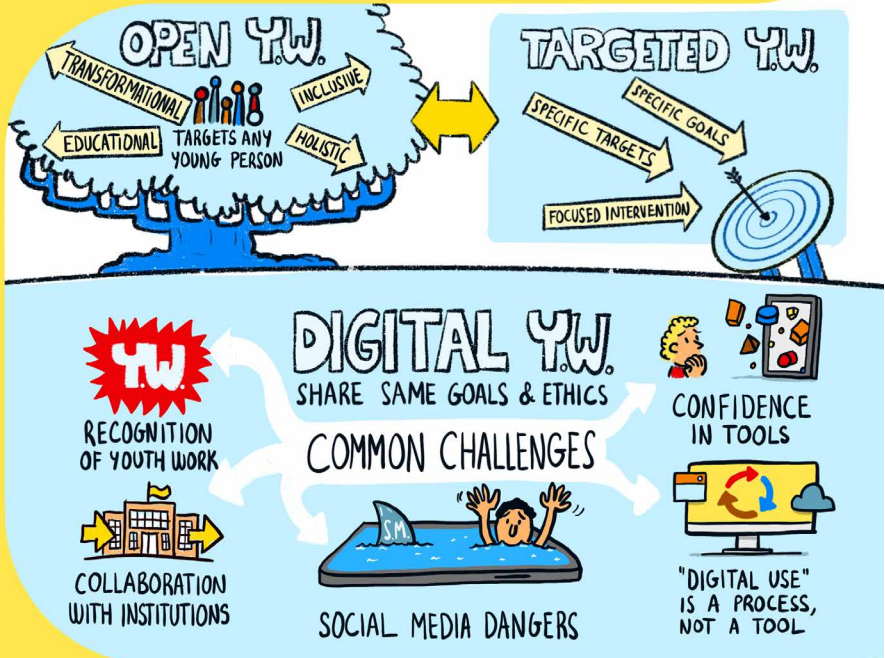
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*The fact that you are young does not mean that you don't know how to work with young people.*

“““

*Youthpass is reserved for Erasmus+ and ESC, but we need Youthpass for ALL youth work.*

## Methodologies and New Technologies



YOUTH WORK ENVIRONMENT  
**WORKSHOP**



Participants were very open in sharing their opinions and concerns. They recognised three main areas connected to methodologies where youth work needed improvement: competence, infrastructure and funding.

Competence development in digital areas was a shared issue across all three sessions of the workshop. Youth workers experience feelings of being left behind, and some of them are afraid to explore digital environments. Participants underlined difficulties with accessing and utilising software and hardware, while GDPR creates delays and limitations

in implementing online activities. Participants' frustration was evident with insufficient funding, lack of recognition and lack of sustainability and focus on short-term projects.

Many stressed the need to stay up-to-speed on current digital trends, but at the same time, they emphasised ongoing pressure and difficulties in trying to be up to date while preserving the quality, safety and relational depth of youth work. At the same time, there was a strong sense that youth workers should be future oriented. Another challenge mentioned was connecting with and reaching out to unengaged young people in both online and offline spaces.

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*The online environment isn't one world – it's a thousand fragmented spaces. Youth workers need to understand these different bubbles.*

“““

*At this moment, we are way behind the technology. We need to think about how we can integrate technology into our work... not think about how to catch up, but think about the next 30 years, to have the vision of what we want in the future.*

Perhaps surprisingly, there were many more participants interested in discussing digital youth work rather than open/targeted youth work. Among those who focused on open/targeted youth work, conversations often shifted toward broader challenges in youth work, rather than distinctions between open and targeted approaches. Both were generally viewed as complementary methods and not opposing ones. Both approaches are understood similarly in different countries, sometimes open youth work is called universal youth work (Finland and the United Kingdom).

Open youth work was greatly valued for its role in promoting diversity and inclusion; however, one might struggle to accommodate everyone's needs. Targeted youth work, on the other hand, had the means to focus on needs, but risked becoming exclusive or donor-driven if not based on evidence and local realities. One subgroup of participants had an interesting discussion regarding municipalities and organisations focusing too heavily on targeted youth work that may overlook "ordinary" young people who can become vulnerable without access to youth work.

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*Technology is changing fast... we just have to do it, try new things, and learn. Not wait for inspiration, but create our own practices.*

Participants who discussed digital youth work agreed that a balanced approach was necessary without excessive dependence on digital tools. Digitalisation is a double-edged sword as it brings new opportunities for youth engagement and learning, but it also risks isolating young people in algorithm-driven bubbles, which are not accessible to youth workers. Participants shared their worries about the growing digital overload affecting both young people and youth workers. As a remedy, they suggested the practice of "digital detox", which helps promote well-being and allows people to reconnect with offline experiences that build relationships and foster personal growth.

The participants showed that blended youth work, which connects digital and physical elements, creates both sustainability and inclusivity in youth programmes. It enables youth workers to interact with young people through digital platforms while maintaining offline relationships. Digital youth work exists as an ongoing practice which needs reflection, support and sustainability to avoid being reduced to tools or outputs.

The participants maintained a positive and hopeful atmosphere despite facing challenges. The majority of subgroup discussions quickly shifted from complaints to solutions by sharing good practices, recommending tools and proposing spaces for collective learning. Participants showed a strong sense of solidarity in light of youth work conditions in different countries. They expressed a strong commitment to further develop inclusive, future-oriented, and responsive youth work to address the changing needs of young people. The outcomes of the workshops showed the deep need for systemic changes, but also existing strengths in the youth work field.



# Voluntary Youth Sector

**BOGDAN  
IMRE**



## YOUTH WORK SYSTEMS WORKSHOP



4th European Youth Work Convention

Youth Partnership

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



Participants in the workshop focused on a number of cross-cutting issues identified and discussed in subgroups.

There was a particular focus on volunteer turnover and retention. A high turnover of volunteers was observed in many countries, mostly due to economic pressures, cost of living, or the need to work or study. Turnover was seen as a limitation, resulting in difficulties in promoting and maintaining quality standards. A desire was expressed to improve the quality of voluntary youth work, but concerns remained about finding a balance between setting standards and maintaining volunteer engagement. Participants felt that it would

be important to consider the potentially negative impact of introducing standards.

Retention also suffers due to burnout, lack of support, and poor recognition. Training volunteers also becomes difficult because of the high turnover. The needs and opinions of young people should be taken into consideration with the aim of co-creating youth volunteering strategies with young people themselves.

Lack of resources was a topic of debate, often leading to divergent views. Funding rarely covers core costs: much time is spent looking for funds rather than creating initiatives for young people. This results in a loss of energy and initiative and makes it harder to make long-term plans and ensure sustainability. There was also tension between being able to do what the organisation is supposed to do with their mandate, and what they need to do to get funding.

From the volunteers' perspective, the high, increasing cost of living means that young people are working and studying in most cases, reducing the time available for volunteering. This issue has led to decreased youth participation in youth organisations.

The need for a data-informed funding model that identifies the minimum requirements for sustaining quality youth services and volunteer engagement was also identified by participants.

Lack of recognition was also a common theme. Voluntary work is often not officially recognised as youth work. There is a need to acknowledge that those working in the youth voluntary sector are those directly involved at the grassroots level. Volunteers themselves are frequently unaware of their role as youth workers, and this needs to be addressed by youth organisations. The sector needs to acknowledge the strength of diversity in the field, where everyone seeks to be a bridge and facilitate a space for young people. The challenge is to bring recognition of this work to the national and political level. For better recognition, a continuous assessment of the impact of youth work is needed to show evidence of the work being done. A further step would be to work on communicating research and definitions efficiently to the general public and to politicians.

Volunteers lack access to structured, pedagogically informed training. A need was identified for good training programmes that focus on pedagogy and knowledge of youth. Investment is needed for mechanisms such as supervision of people working in the sector or youth organisations.

The quality standards set by funding schemes are high, and at the same time, working with volunteers is not structurally supported. There is little or no supervision or support systems available to ensure quality standards.



The public and political invisibility of voluntary youth work was also discussed. Developing joint strategies between state bodies and youth civil society, at national and local level, was seen as important in embedding volunteerism in long-term youth policies. Joint strategies would also be a step to repair the disconnection between research, real-life practice, and policymaking.

## Thematic Workshop 12

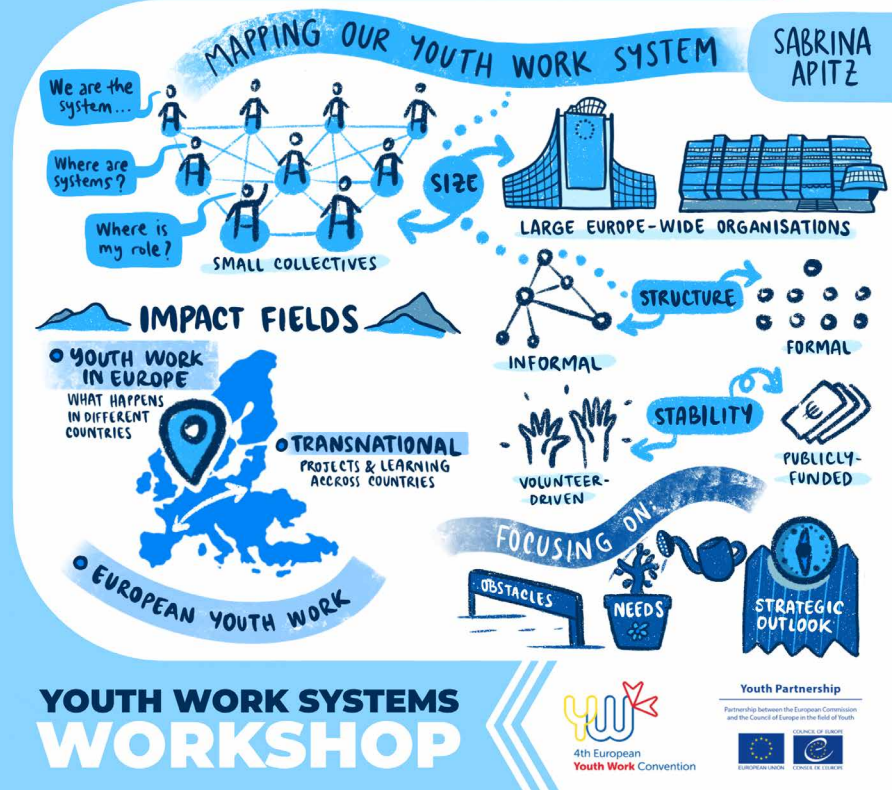
**Title:** Youth work associations, networks, centres and service providers

**Facilitator:** Sabrina Apitz

**Rapporteur:** Zara Lavchyan

**No. of Participants:** 78

# Youth Work associations, networks, centres & service providers



Participants in the workshop identified a lot of systemic and structural fragmentation in the field. In many countries, there is still no specifically designated body to undertake the coordination and development of youth work at the national level. This means that there is often no clear vision and strategic direction, and no designated resources to support the field. Youth work is often not aligned with dedicated and relevant policy fields, and this leads to overlap, duplication and a lack of focus in policy fields needing youth work interventions.

Recognition and visibility of youth work remain a challenge. Generally, youth work does not

enjoy the recognition and visibility of related policy fields such as education, culture, social affairs, employment, sports, and justice. Youth work as a profession is still unrecognised and unregulated in most European countries. This often leads to great fluidity, as the jobs in the sector are often not guaranteed and not well paid. In general, human capital is scarce. There is often a shortage of youth workers, especially in rural areas and smaller towns. Young people in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged.

The issues of sustainable and resourcing of youth work continue to be problematic. The different actors face it differently, and the needs vary greatly. It is important to recognise these specificities to apply effective strategies to resolve the issues. Sustainable core operational and structural funding is pivotal in supporting the operation of grassroots youth work providers and organisations. Project-based-only funding does not provide for sustainable operations on a day-to-day basis for independent organisations, which are outside the state or municipal youth work field.

Participants focused on how funding and resources for voluntary and independent youth organisations could be provided on a sustainable basis, regardless of political uncertainties.

The issue of ensuring funding for setting up physical spaces and infrastructure for youth work was also discussed. For quality youth work, it was pointed out, quality spaces are essential. Youth work spaces should be seen as part of critical public infrastructure.

Capacity building was also a topic of discussion. Building and developing human resource capacity was important from grassroot level to National Agencies and relevant ministries. The development of common quality standards, co-created with ministries and stakeholders, could further improve service delivery and accountability.

Participants also discussed the youth work sector presence in policy-making. It was felt that youth work organisations, professional youth workers, and volunteers are not consulted or involved in the decision-making process on youth policies and related cross-sectoral policies. This results in youth work perspectives and the potential support of the youth work sector being excluded from discussions and decisions on youth and related policy fields.

Finally, discussions also developed around advocacy. The different bodies, individuals, organisations, networks and associations should come together at both national and European level to promote and amplify advocacy. The role of professional associations, trade unions, umbrella organisations supporting youth work, as well as voluntary youth organisations, plays a vital role in these consolidation efforts. These efforts need to be strategic, vision-based, evidence-based, united and targeted at long-term structural change. Investment in professional networks should be made at all levels.

## The state/public and voluntary sectors at national, regional and local levels



**YOUTH WORK SYSTEMS  
WORKSHOP**



The nature of the discussion and the resulting conclusions flowed between talking about voluntary organisations, volunteers and youth voice/ influence which reflected the variety of contexts and the nature of voluntary youth work in the participants' countries: and a highly structured network of NGOs with paid staff or with large numbers of volunteers, to grassroots community run groups or self-organising, sometimes political youth led groups.

There was a recurring theme of a lack of meaningful or guaranteed engagement by the voluntary sector in decision-making. Participants did share examples in which the cooperation was working well (Belgium, Serbia, and Estonia). However, there was often



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example, an umbrella organisation, as crucial to facilitate dialogue and ‘bridge the gap’ between the NGO and government sectors. These strengthened structures can enable a more equal partnership and bring in more marginalised voices.

Participants discussed the relationship between strategy and practice at different levels and between the state and voluntary sector. Consideration was given as to how we can utilise European frameworks to grow youth work nationally and regionally and use the standards, instruments and resources available to support youth work at the local level, while also ensuring that local realities influence and guide decision-making so that youth work priorities meet young people’s needs, appreciating there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’.

European instruments highlighted to embed nationally and locally were the EU Youth Check, EU Youth Policy Dialogue, the Council of Europe Co-Management structure and the reference framework for integrating a youth perspective. These examples educate public sector actors to interact with youth organisations and the voluntary sector in a collaborative and empowering way.

”””

*Ensure stable public funding for the youth sector so that organisations, staff and volunteers can focus on their work and its development, rather than constantly worrying about finances. These are relatively small sums in the context of the public sector budget.*

**Thematic Workshop 14**

**Title:** State/public and EU/EYF funding and resources for youth work

**Facilitator:** Gianluca Rossino

**Rapporteur:** Adina Şerban

**No of Participants:** 67

# State/Public and EU/EYF funding & resources for youth work

**GIANLUCA ROSSINO**



## YOUTH WORK SYSTEMS WORKSHOP



4th European Youth Work Convention

Youth Partnership

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



Following the introduction to the theme by the facilitator, participants' reflections were encouraged around challenges related to funding: recurring pressure in application processes, short-term funding, lack of sustainability in funding, and lack of recognition of youth work in accessing private funding.

Economic issues and financial constraints at the national level were also seen as possibly impacting the availability of funding for the sector.

Participants were invited to map existing financial support systems at national, regional and local levels. Examples provided by participants included both national funding (calls for projects launched by Ministries or by international organisations, structural funding for youth organisations or support specifically for newly established youth organisations); and local authority funding (municipalities' departments of youth, regional youth authorities or regional youth institutes, national funding both for local initiatives and also for international exchanges, or private-business initiatives supporting youth projects and youth development projects).

“““

*Erasmus+ always asks for novelty and innovation, but that sometimes blocks sustainability. When trying to replicate and scale up projects and initiatives, organisations are told that they copy projects. Innovation is not always the recipe for success when sustainability is needed.*

“““

*Most of the funding opportunities do not really consider the survival of youth organisations. If no operational costs are covered, then how can we ensure the continuation of projects and initiatives?*

Participants, in subgroup sessions, then considered questions relating to problems and challenges in state/public funding, the main challenges in European funding and mismatches and overlaps between the two. They were also asked to consider measures/actions that could be taken in a future youth work strategy to tackle these issues and how state/public and European funding could be more aligned to maximise their impact at both the European and national level.

In their discussions, participants focused on ensuring efficiency in European funding, removing barriers encountered by youth groups and organisations, some newly established or with little experience, in accessing funding, and investing in enhancing the visibility and recognition of youth work.

In particular, participants felt that European institutions should find ways to better support the youth sector and enhance grant opportunities for youth NGOs. It was also hoped that in the youth ministers' conference in October 2025, funding youth work activities would be high on the agenda and that the outcomes of the ministers' conference would identify some specific measures to support the youth sector financially.

Reference was also made, in the context of national youth strategies, to the need for stable and continuous financial support for youth NGOs, at both national and local levels, so that networks of youth NGOs could be established and youth work services ensured.

Multi-annual frameworks could also support the existing youth infrastructure and create safer spaces dedicated to young people.

Crosscutting and recurring themes that featured in all sessions related to: insufficient funding, lack of structural funding nationally and locally, limited funding opportunities for European networks, onerous application processes, and lack of long-term funding, which reduces the impact and visibility of youth work activities.

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*The Commission invests a lot – operational grants – but nothing similar is available at the national level. And if we talk about the road map and the next steps, that should be considered.*

## Thematic Workshop 15

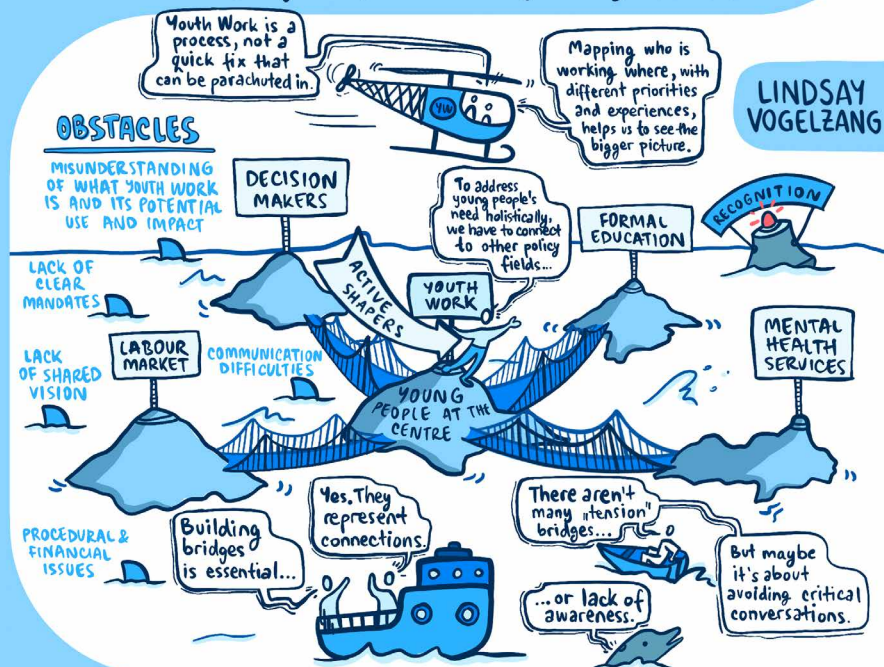
**Title:** Youth work's interaction and relationship with other policy fields

**Facilitator:** Lindsay Vogelzang

**Rapporteur:** Susie Nicodemí

**No of Participants:** 80

# Youth Work's interaction and relationship with other policy fields



## YOUTH WORK SYSTEMS WORKSHOP



Youth Partnership

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



In considering youth work's interaction and relationship with other policy fields, participants saw building bridges as essential. These bridges represented connections: logical ones and ones which can also reveal tensions. While participants did not identify many 'tension' bridges, this was seen as a result of avoiding critical conversations or simply a lack of awareness of existing or potential tensions. Mapping who is working where, with different priorities and experiences, helps us see the bigger picture and how we collectively contribute to different sectors' approaches to helping and supporting young people.



*the other fields take young person as a beneficiary of all the established services.*

To address young people's needs holistically, it is clear that we have to connect to other policy fields such as the labour market, mental health services, and formal education. However, there are many obstacles that exist, such as a lack of shared vision, misunderstanding of what youth work is and its potential use and impact, communication difficulties, lack of clear mandates, and procedural and financial issues.

Recognition was a recurring theme. Participants in the workshop stressed the need for youth work to have its own status—and not just to support other sectors' agendas – and to have a stronger policy mandate. Youth work is a process, not a quick fix that can be parachuted in. It is a long-term relational experience that requires trust and patience.



*Youth work is the only field that gives the opportunity to young people to shape the programmes that they need individually.*



*We need to learn each other's strengths and weaknesses.*

The youth field has many strengths and is uniquely placed to be the connector or translator sector across sectors, especially if effective structures exist at the local level. There were repeated calls from participants for long-term funding, capacity building and infrastructure, not just project-based support. To be able to sustain and grow the field, proper frameworks which are underpinned by political will are needed.

Synergies with formal education were seen as obvious, with young people's education and development being a clear goal for all. The distinctive role of youth work is putting young people at the centre, not as passive recipients of a programme or service, but as active shapers. Enabling spaces for young people to have direct contact and dialogue with decision-makers, and supporting both sides to be able to listen to each other, has worked well. Having open communication was seen by participants as key to influencing others, which requires trust, mutual respect and shared values.



*Youth work can contribute to all these other policies, but it must not be instrumentalised and youth needs to be recognised as an equal sector on its own.*



*Making a connection with the arts and culture sectors can create more opportunities for young people. We should all do that.*

Participants in each thematic workshop were allowed up to a maximum of five conclusions. In all, 164 conclusions were arrived at. Following on consideration of these wide ranging conclusions, 74 were selected as having strategic significance, that is, conclusions which could not only inform but constitute an integral and essential feature of future European youth work strategy, at both European and Member State level. In some instances, conclusions were amalgamated to better reflect their strategic importance. At the same time, all efforts were made to ensure that the final list presented here expresses the key messages of all the original conclusions shared and discussed by participants.

The Inspiring Practice and Projects workshop also resulted in inputs from participants, which were deemed of strategic significance, and these have also been included below.

### 5.1. Youth Work Core

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#### *Definitions and descriptions of youth work*

- Youth work is fundamentally rooted in democratic values, dialogue, participation, and youth leadership, and these need to underpin all strategic approaches to youth work.
- Descriptions or definitions of youth work are closely related to youth work as a profession or professional practice. The nature and role of youth work need to be clearly defined; it can be empowering or preventive and must be distinguished from related fields such as social work.
- Broad European definitions are both the strength and the weakness of youth work. They are wide enough to encompass all descriptions and practices of youth work across Europe. Yet, they also make it challenging to relate these definitions to specific national realities and circumstances. Greater clarity is also needed regarding the terminology used in relation to youth work - such as inclusion and participation - to maximise its potential for societal change.<sup>2</sup>
- Concepts, descriptions and definitions need to be based on context as well as historical and philosophical traditions.

#### *Values and ethics in youth work*

- A European code of ethics for youth workers should be established.
- A reference framework to understand their societal role, supportive communities of practice, and values of self-care should underpin and reinforce the role and tasks of all youth workers. The mental health and well-being of youth workers should also be a priority.

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<sup>2</sup> Taking into account the definition of youth work outlined in the European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01) as a basis of discussions, on the future of your work, its potential development and necessary adaptation to changing realities.

- The core ethical principles of youth work - equality, integrity, care, respect, and solidarity - should act together and are not separate from each other.
- The contribution of youth work in supporting young people to be politically informed is an ethical matter that enables them to think about what they stand for and which values they hold and live by.

### *Recognition and visibility of youth work*

- The diversity of youth work practices across local and national contexts across Europe brings life to the established, commonly agreed definitions of youth work. This diversity is a key strength which should be highlighted when communicating the contributions of youth work to society.
- National legislation or policy frameworks that formally recognise youth work can strengthen its position and visibility. Recognition processes are most effective when developed in close dialogue with the youth work community and supported by adequate public funding.
- Support mechanisms and opportunities for youth workers' professional development improve the quality of youth work. Strategic investment in competence development should be a key part of future planning at both national and European levels.
- Platforms for youth workers to connect can strengthen professional identity and encourage peer-learning. Such platforms could also encourage youth workers to explore new tools to enhance learning, including digital technologies like artificial intelligence.
- Coordinated communication efforts are needed to raise the public's awareness and understanding of youth work. European and national campaigns can help clarify what youth work is and share concrete examples of its contribution to society, to which actors such as ERYICA, the European Youth Forum, the Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations (AYWA) and national youth organisations could make valuable contributions.

### *Quality and standards in youth work*

- Long-term, stable funding and infrastructure are vital to delivering high-quality youth work. National frameworks need to provide the foundation that allows organisations to access European funds without compromising the continuity of local practice.
- Quality standards in youth work are most effective when developed through inclusive, participatory processes involving practitioners, young people, and relevant stakeholders. These standards should reflect national contexts while aligning with shared European frameworks, and include regular review processes to ensure long-term, sustainable outcomes.
- Existing quality tools and resources, such as competence models and training frameworks, can be better used through improved translation and dissemination. European-level coordination could play a central role in strengthening the review, translation, and dissemination processes to enhance knowledge exchange between practitioners and community actors.
- Visibility of youth work is part of quality development. Creative communication using social and other media can showcase the diversity and relevance of youth work, and help inspire new engagement among young people and the youth work community.

### *Monitoring and evaluating youth work and its impact*

- Regular data collection, academic research, and monitoring and evaluation practices are essential for building a stronger evidence base for youth work. Long-term investment and coordination at both national and European levels are key to developing and improving these efforts.
- Effective evaluation of youth work reflects the diversity of the community of practice by combining qualitative and quantitative methods and collecting both short and long-term data. Valuing personal stories, experiences, and the lived realities of young people helps to capture the full impact of youth work.
- Inclusive and participatory evaluation processes – engaging young people, youth work practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders – build trust, shared ownership, and ensure relevance across different contexts.
- Investing in accessible, user-friendly digital tools and platforms can support the exchange of methods, practices, and outcomes. Multilingual functionality is important to ensure relevance across national contexts.
- Embedding ethical, transparent, and participatory evaluation exercises in all stages of youth work activities strengthens both practice and credibility.

## **5.2. Youth Work Environment**

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### *Young people – their needs and aspirations – and how youth work can support them*

- Youth groups need support in creating networks, which are essential for meaningful youth participation in decision-making and for reducing isolation.
- The values of youth work need to be actively promoted outside the youth world, using existing tools to impact and break the youth work bubble.
- More dynamic and flexible ways of funding youth work need to be developed, and political empowerment among young people requires increased access and visibility of opportunities.
- Intercultural learning needs to be mainstreamed through a “training of trainers” programme to develop youth workers’ competencies.
- Both physical and digital youth work spaces are required, with individualised support tailored to varying needs and age groups.
- Youth work needs to be co-built with young people: young people must have agency and be in active leadership positions to participate in democratic and political processes.

### *Advocacy in youth work*

- Advocacy plays a vital role in the development of youth work and can be strengthened through dedicated time, training and resources. Supporting youth work associations and youth organisations, both national youth councils and International nongovernmental youth organisations, helps ensure the sector has a collective voice both at the national and European levels.
- Creating formal channels for youth workers, including voluntary youth workers, to contribute to national and European policy processes ensures that practical experience informs youth policy alongside input from youth organisations and other stakeholder representatives.
- Including advocacy-related competencies in youth worker education and training

- such as knowledge of youth work standards and the ability to communicate the value of the field to the broader society – can support more active engagement in policy dialogue.
- Structured spaces for peer learning and cross-sector collaboration can help integrate youth work into broader societal frameworks and promote shared understanding across different fields.
- Targeted communication strategies, public awareness campaigns, and recognition instruments - such as awards – can highlight the contribution of youth work to democracy, inclusion and the well-being of young people.
- A European observatory for youth work could be established to support the collection and sharing of evidence, helping to identify patterns, gaps, and opportunities for strategic development and knowledge exchange across Europe.

### *Youth work as a profession*

- Professionalisation in youth work goes beyond formal recognition, encompassing competencies, ethical standards, values, and the ethos of youth work. Both paid and unpaid youth workers can make meaningful and equal contributions to the field when they work in line with common youth work principles.
- Strong networks and unions of youth workers strengthen recognition by providing collective representation. Where these exist, they have contributed to greater social and political recognition of the profession.
- European-level tools – such as competence models, quality standards, and quality labels – can serve as useful reference points to support professionalisation while allowing flexibility within national contexts.
- Sustainable and long-term funding is essential to support youth work as part of the social infrastructure. Embedding youth work into national budgets and linking it with broader policy frameworks can help turn commitments into concrete action.
- National legal frameworks are necessary to regulate the working conditions of youth workers and support the development of career paths with fair wages, job security, and access to continued learning.

### *Volunteer and youth-led organisations*

- Voluntary youth work plays a vital role in the youth work ecosystem, often driven by passion and rooted in core youth work values. It serves as an entry point for many professional youth workers and enables broad participation for young people from diverse backgrounds.
- The perception that voluntary youth work is less credible than professional youth work remains widespread. But unpaid does not mean unprofessional. This misperception should be addressed through public recognition, quality assurance measures, and investment in basic and easily accessible training opportunities for volunteers.
- Youth work organisations should strengthen their internal recognition of voluntary youth workers, using both 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' measures – such as access to learning, mentoring, free participation in events, and symbolic awards – while treating volunteers as equal members of their teams.
- Policy makers should ensure sustainable funding for volunteering and youth-led youth work, while minimising the administrative burden and requirements for

young volunteers and their organisations. Simplified processes and long-term support mechanisms are essential for enabling youth-led initiatives to thrive.

- Diverse pathways into youth work should be recognised. While formal qualifications are important, they should not be the only route into youth work. Instruments for recognising competencies gained through volunteering – especially at the national level – can help legitimise and strengthen volunteer-based youth work.

### *Methodologies and new technologies*

- Continuous professional support, including training and education for youth workers' digital competence, is needed. This should include shared learning spaces, practical guidelines, manuals, and collaboration with communities and with young people. To make this possible, support systems should be developed and integrated into national qualification frameworks for youth work.
- Practical guidance on applying GDPR in digital youth work, along with accessible manuals, should be developed to help navigate data protection rules while ensuring safe and effective digital engagement with young people.
- Accessible platforms and tools should be supported to enable the continuous exchange of experiences and good practices across countries and sectors. This strengthens innovation, peer learning, and quality development.
- Funding support schemes to youth organisations need to take into account expenses related to digital infrastructure and its maintenance including hardware and software which would also help move beyond short-term project funding.
- A balanced approach between open and targeted youth work is needed. Practical guidelines focused on different target groups should be developed in collaboration with psychologists, youth coordinators, municipalities, youth workers, and other experts.

## **5.3. Youth Work Systems**

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### *The Voluntary youth sector*

- Sustainable funding and professional support are fundamental. Volunteers cannot be expected to carry the full weight of youth work in many parts of Europe without proper backing.
- Volunteers need professional support, especially in administration and coordination, so they can focus on what matters: working directly with young people.
- The independent and voluntary nature of youth work needs to be supported and protected. Youth work should be independent and a space for free participation. Rising political tensions and political influence on youth work can hinder its independence. Voluntary youth work is essential for participatory citizenship and should be accessible to all.
- To ensure recognition of volunteer youth workers, coherent schemes in Europe are needed that formally recognise the competences developed through voluntary engagement, leading to qualification as recognised, "real" youth workers. These schemes should be integrated and mutually recognised across Europe.
- More monitoring is needed on European funded projects to increase transparency

and address any negative perceptions. Exchanges between volunteers should be maintained and further strengthened by preserving EU youth programmes, reducing their bureaucracy, and by actively involving young people in their design. European funding programmes also need to better align with the core mission of youth organisations.

#### *Youth work associations, networks, centre and service providers*

- Youth spaces' infrastructure, furnishings, equipment, renovation, and maintenance are critical to quality youth work and need to be resourced through dedicated funding grants or subsidies.
- A dedicated EU funding line is needed to safeguard the political and operational independence of independent youth-led spaces.
- The EYWA is a working framework that should be further developed and strengthened as an axis for systemic work and collaboration.
- National youth councils, similar umbrella bodies, national networks, and advocacy/lobbying platforms have specific challenges and need dedicated, sustained operational funding. Models for financially self-sustainable organisations (e.g. social entrepreneurship models) also need to be expanded and supported.
- A quality label or accreditation system for youth centres and youth organisations – modelled on the Council of Europe's Quality Label – should be developed and implemented at the national level.

#### *State/Public and voluntary sector*

- All stakeholders, including young people, NGOs/CSOs, youth organisations and political authorities at national, regional and local levels, should be equally involved in the process of strategy building from planning to implementation and evaluation. To achieve this, we need independent and strong NGOs/CSOs that are meaningfully included in policy, decision-making and implementation.
- Effective cooperation between the voluntary and state/public sectors requires robust structural resources, including clear legal frameworks, dedicated institutions, and well-defined processes for collaboration, backed by substantial financial investment and political will.
- Youth work is diverse and should not be heavily governed top-down; it needs ongoing support from various actors to meet and exchange. Collaborative platforms and advisory bodies can enhance outreach, data-driven strategies, and effective advocacy.
- We need to prioritise the needs of young people, perceiving them as a partner, a resource, and an asset, not a problem. We should give them the resources and support to resolve social issues through youth work.
- All future youth work development needs to be centred at the local level, underpinned by political and financial support at national and European levels. Everything starts and needs to continue at a local level when developing a strategy and funding opportunities.

#### *State/Public and EU/EYF funding*

- In applying for European funding, the language, accessibility, programme guidelines, and reporting tools should be streamlined and more user-friendly. At times, difficulty in understanding the concepts and features of the digital platforms

makes youth organisations hesitate to apply for funding.

- Member States should ensure stability and certainty of funding for youth work programmes and services with a strong focus on national youth strategies.
- The European youth work strategy should focus on providing structural funds to representative national councils, including youth worker associations, so that they can establish networks of youth organisations without having to apply for one-off project-based funding.
- Member States and public authorities should allocate long-term funding to youth centres, youth-led groups, and youth infrastructure.
- Multi-annual framework schemes should support youth work programmes and services. If no long-term funding is provided, youth work programmes and services for young people are not sustainable.
- European institutions should ensure dedicated funding for the development and sustainability of youth NGOs in non-EU Member States. Scarcity of funds in the non-EU Member States has a direct impact on the recognition of and provision for youth work.

### *Youth work's interaction with other policy sectors*

- Youth work keeps young people at the centre—involving them in decisions that affect them and listening to their voices. This needs to be replicated in other policy fields. We must mainstream young people's needs across many sectors. Other sectors need to understand who we are, what we do, and the difference we make. The youth field should be treated as an equal sector.
- Youth work is not a quick fix, and cannot be parachuted in as a method, much less a solution. Other sectors need to understand and recognise this long-term process through stronger relationships, trust, and the sharing of approaches. When working cross-sectorally, we must be clear about the resources available from all sides and use them effectively.
- Youth work methods should be shared with others, especially other education sectors, so they are not seen as 'just games' or a secondary way to learning. There needs to be genuine mutual recognition of the youth work approach.
- We must define youth work's boundaries and roles when working with other policy fields, to manage expectations and clarify where collaboration is most effective. We should develop clear policy directions and aims that work for all sides, with coordinated monitoring to track progress and adjust as needed.

While the conclusions are presented in the thematic format of the convention – Youth Work Core, Youth Work Environment and Youth Work Systems – they can also be viewed and categorised in terms of youth work strategy, as comprising:

- Underpinning Principles and Values, such as “youth work is fundamentally rooted in democratic values, dialogue and participation and youth leadership, and these need to underpin all strategic approaches to youth work”
- Development Process and Good Practices, such as “support mechanisms and opportunities for youth workers' professional development improve the quality of youth work. Strategic investment in competence development should be a key part of future planning at both national and European levels”.
- Essential Supports and Services, such as “sustainable and long-term funding is

essential to support youth work as part of the social infrastructure. Embedding youth work into national budgets and linking it with broader policy frameworks can help turn commitments into concrete action”, and

- Specific and Focused Actions, such as “a European observatory for youth work could be established to support the collection and sharing of evidence, helping to identify patterns, gaps, and opportunities for strategic development and knowledge exchange across Europe”.

It was not intended, nor indeed desirable, to formulate and determine a European youth work strategy at the two day convention in Malta. While the dimensions and dynamics will vary, only the European institutions – the European Commission and the Council of Europe – and the Member States, with the inclusion and involvement of the voluntary youth sector, have the political remit to develop such strategy and the administrative structures, operational systems and human and financial resources to implement it. What the convention aimed to do, through the participants' collective vision and voice, was to outline the structures, building blocks, dimensions, measures and initiatives that are essential and fundamental for developing and implementing effective strategic approach to youth work development in Europe in the years ahead.

The conclusions in the report reflect the collective vision, voice, convictions and hopes of the convention.

The Roadmap and accompanying timeline, as set out below, demonstrates how the conclusions of the convention can inform, underpin and feature in European and national youth policies and strategies in the years ahead. It is nevertheless important to note that this strategic approach, which will guide the work of all stakeholders in the coming years, may be reflected in future policies in a variety of ways and take different concrete forms.



- **European institutions, National Agencies, Member States at national regional and local level, the voluntary youth sector and the wider youth work community including providers and support services to consider and take appropriate action to give effect to the convention's conclusions.**
- **The European Commission in making proposals for the new EU Youth Strategy, post 2027, to ensure that the convention's conclusions inform, underpin and be an integral feature of such proposals.**
- **The European Commission and the Council of Europe, through the Youth Partnership to strengthen cooperation and coordinate approaches in implementing the convention's conclusions, focusing on its three central pillars: youth work systems, youth work environment, and youth work core. This includes in particular data collection and analysis of youth work developments at European and national level, the development of a new European Code of Ethics for Youth Work, as well as seminars and concrete materials on relevant themes (e.g. Critical thinking in the digital era).**
- **Initiatives under the European Youth Work Agenda to be reviewed and aligned with the roadmap and conclusions of the convention.**

# 2026-2027

## Phase 2

- **EU Council Presidencies - in 2026 and 2027 - to propose measures, through the Youth Working Party, to give effect to the convention's conclusions, and in considering and agreeing the new EU Youth Strategy, ensure that youth work is a dedicated section or pillar of the strategy.**
- **During EU Council Presidencies, Directors-General for Youth to report on actions taken to give effect to the convention's conclusions at national, regional and local level.**
- **The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership to focus its future work programmes on promoting and co-ordinating and following-up the implementation of the convention's conclusions.**
- **The Joint Council of the Council of Europe (CMJ) to establish a Task Force to amend where appropriate the Recommendation on Youth Work, in the context of the convention's conclusions and adopt the revised recommendation by the Committee of Ministers by the end of 2027.**

**New EU Youth Strategy – to include a designated section or pillar for Youth work.****1. Role of the European Commission in implementing the EYWS****Having regard to the conclusions of the convention, and in consultation with the Council of Europe, the Commission should establish and agree with Member States**

- a shared vision, understanding and definition of the role and mission of youth work
- the values and principles that underpin youth work strategy and practice
- baseline and aligned approaches to, inter alia, quality and standards, monitoring and evaluation, recognition of competences required by youth workers and youth leaders, and codes of ethics and digitalisation
- through the Youth Partnership, facilitate, advise and support Member States in implementing these measures at national, regional and local level.

**New Generation of financial support programmes**

- Through the National Agencies for EU youth programmes, the provision of targeted EU funding mechanisms for the development of quality youth work and capacity building among the youth work community of practice
- Provide, inter alia, a designated funding scheme for an Operational and Services Grant to support voluntary youth organisation - not in receipt of or with minimal state/public funding – on an annual basis. Through the National Agencies

for EU youth programmes, the provision of targeted EU funding mechanisms for the development of quality youth work and capacity building among the youth work community of practice.

## 2. Role of the Member States in implementing the EYWS

### **Having regard to the conclusions of the Convention and following consultation with the youth work community of practice at national, regional and local level, Member States should**

- establish a legal or other administrative instrument to formally recognise youth work as a practice discipline, or include it in existing legal or administrative provisions
- provide for governance and administrative support structures at national, regional and local level for youth work practice, programmes and services, where these are not already in place
- strengthen education, training and employment opportunities for youth workers
- allocate funding on an annual or regular basis to support youth organisations that provide youth work based programmes and services for young people, where this is not already done. Commensurate or comparable funding could also be provided to voluntary youth organisations funded under the Operational and Services Grant.

## From 2028 Onwards

### **Implementation of EU Youth Strategy and the strategic approach to youth work development by the European Commission and Member States.**

# 2028-2030

## Phase 4

- **The Council of Europe and the European Commission to further enhance cooperation and, through the Youth Partnership, commence preparations for the 5th European Youth Work Convention with relevant stakeholders, including the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations, to agree the expectations and aims of the convention.**
- **The Council of Europe to ensure that the convention's conclusions informs and are reflected in the Council's Youth Sector Strategy – post 2030 – and its implementation.**

# 2030-2040

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**New Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy  
– Implementation.**

## Appendices



**Programme**  
**European Youthwork Convention**  
**Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta**

**Tuesday 27 May 2025**

**18:00 - Registration**

Registration from 18:00 onwards at Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, Triq il-Kbira San Ġużepp, Santa Venera, SVR 1013 at the National Youth Agency for the start of the Convention and the Maltese EYWC Festa Opening.

**18:30 - Meet and Greet (until late including dinner)**

An interactive and festive opening celebrating connection, reflection, and shared purpose. Participants will share expectations, engage with legendary youth work pioneers – Bernard Abrignani, Erik Langbråten, Antje Rothemund, Jan Van Hee, and Howard Williamson – and experience youth work in Malta.

**Wednesday 28 May 2025**

**08:00 – Registration (if needed)**

**09:00 – Introduction**

**09:15 – Welcome Speeches**

- Hon. Keith Azzopardi Tanti, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Research and Innovation, Malta
- Tobias Flessenkemper, Head of the Youth Department, Directorate for Democracy, Council of Europe
- Karen Vandeweghe, Deputy Head of Unit, Youth and Volunteer Solidarity, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
- Nina Grmusa, Chair of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), Council of Europe

**09:45 – From Germany to Malta: A Five Year Journey**

**This session takes us back to the Bonn Process and how it has shaped our collective path toward quality, recognised, and forward-looking youth work. It anchors the convention in a shared vision and maps the road ahead.**

- Uwe Finke-Timpe, Head of European and International Youth Policy Unit, Federal Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
- Frauke Muth, Head of JUGEND für Europa, National Agency Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport and European Solidarity Corps, Germany
- Clotilde Talleu, Manager EU-COE Youth Partnership
- Raphael Scerri, CEO - National Coordinator European Union Programme Agency, Malta
- Miriam Teuma, CEO Aġenzija Żgħażaġh – Chair of the Steering Committee for Youth COE, Malta

**10:30 – Programme Overview and Logistics**

<b>11:00 - Coffee Break and setting up the Market Place</b>
<p><b>11:30 – Thematic Workshop – Session 1</b></p> <p>Participants are invited to choose one workshop from one of three thematic areas: Youth Work Core, Youth Work Environment, and Youth Work Systems. Each area features five workshops, designed to deepen understanding, spark dialogue, and generate new ideas.</p>
<b>13:30 - Lunch</b>
<b>15:00 – Thematic Workshop – Session 2</b>
<b>17:00 - Coffee Break and Market Place</b>
<p><b>17:30 – Presentations from the European Institutions and their Partnership</b>  <b>Three key tools are introduced as current strategic instruments to support the development of youth work. These tools represent the shared commitment of European institutions to strengthen youth work’s impact.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CoE Youth Work Portfolio – Yael Ohana, Programme Manager, Education Training and Cooperation, Youth Department, Council of Europe</li> <li>• Launching the Youth Work Strategies Manual – Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll, Member of the Pool of the European Youth Researchers</li> <li>• Erasmus+ Supporting Youthwork - Jorun Bokloev, Programme Assistant - Youth Policy and Programmes, DG EAC-B3</li> </ul> <p><b>18:00 – Plenary Discussion: Noise vs. Silence</b></p> <p>This provocative discussion explores the tension between the noise and the silence in youth work—what areas are amplified, and what topics are silenced, and how can the convention be the space to explore this tension.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy, University of South Wales</b></li> <li>• <b>Caillum Hedderman, Board Member, European Youth Forum (EYF)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dragan Atanasov, President, Alliance of Youth Workers’ Associations (AYWA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Nadia Tismanaru, Vice President of Timis County Youth Foundation (FITT)</b></li> <li>• <b>Israe Aiach, EU Representative, Flemish Youth Council</b></li> </ul> <p><b>18:45 – Conclusion and Reflections in National Groups</b></p> <p>A reflective pause for national teams to discuss key insights, assess what resonates most with their contexts, and plan how to carry the outcomes of the Convention into their national realities. A collective space to translate learning into action.</p>
<b>19:30 Dinner Buffet</b>

**08:30 – Registration**

**09:00 – Introduction: Recap of Day 1**

**09:15 – Round Table Discussion: Young People’s Experience of Youth Work**

This session puts young people at the centre, sharing how youth work has shaped their lives, perspectives, and opportunities. Their voices remind us why youth work matters – and where it must go next.

- Katrina Lambert, Member, European YWCA
- Anna Knobbout, Bureau Member, Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe
- Angel Perez Contrera, Head of International Affairs & Climate Action, Spanish Youth Council
- Nikola Blagojević, Manager, Eco Centre Radulovački
- Rebecca-Laura Bartolo, Youth worker, Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ

**10:00 – Sharing Inspiring Practices**

Participants will explore real-life examples of innovative, inclusive, and impactful youth work across Europe in 15 diverse workshops. These workshops offer both inspiration and practical tools to take back home.

**11:00 – Coffee Break and Market Place**

**11:30 – Thematic Workshop – Session 3**

Participants are invited to choose one workshop from one of three thematic areas: Youth Work Core, Youth Work Environment, and Youth Work Systems. Each area features five workshops, designed to deepen understanding, spark dialogue, and generate new ideas.

**13:30 – Lunch**

**15:00 – Sharing Projects and Initiatives at European Level**

These workshops enable participants to connect, exchange ideas, and discover new collaborations through the projects and initiatives presented to them.

**16:00 – Coffee Break and Market Place**

### **17:00 – Preliminary Findings from Thematic Workshops**

- Alice Bergholtz, General Rapporteur

### **17:30 – Panel Discussion on Findings**

This session brings together key reflections from the thematic workshop streams, offering a synthesis of insights and outcomes. Panelists will react to what emerged, highlighting common threads, challenges, and opportunities identified by participants.

- Henni Axelin, Director for Youth Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland
- Celine Martin, Head of Youth, Sport & ESC Development, Léargas, Ireland
- Marko Kovacic, Associate Professor of Youth Studies, University of Rijeka
- Bruno Antonio, Executive Director, DYPALL Network

### **18:00 – Final Speeches**

- Rares Voicu, President of the European Youth Forum (YFJ)
- Matjaž Gruden, Director for Democracy, Council of Europe
- H.E. Ambassador Francesca Camilleri Vettiger, Permanent Representative of Malta to the Council of Europe
- Glenn Micallef, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport
- Hon. Keith Azzopardi Tanti, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Research and Innovation, Malta

### **18:45 – Thank you and Goodbye**

### **19:30 – Reception under the Stars for Networking**

## List of Participants

The List of participants is available on the dedicated page of the Convention at the Youth Partnership's website - the direct link is the following: <https://go.coe.int/nAYMR>

Additionally, the following content is also available on the website:

- Preparatory guide to delegates
- Convention in pictures and Videos
- Graphic recording and other Resources



Presidency of Malta  
Council of Europe  
May - November 2025

Présidence de Malte  
Conseil de l'Europe  
Mai - Novembre 2025



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**Youth Partnership**

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

