



Recommendations for development of youth work in Cyprus

**Youth policy advisory mission¹
3-4 April 2019, Nicosia, Cyprus**

FINAL REPORT OF THE ADVISORY MISSION DELEGATION

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Acknowledgements

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The Delegation also thanks the Ministry of Education and Culture, the University of Cyprus and Cyprus Youth Council, Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation - KOKEN, and all youth organisations, associations, youth councils, youth clubs and NGOs which participated in the meetings organised as a part of the mission and their valuable participation and input during this process.

Executive summary

Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) requested assistance from the Council of Europe's Youth Department to support advancing and recognition of quality youth work in Cyprus, as a part of its intergovernmental cooperation measures. Within this context, the Advisory Mission Delegation visited Cyprus 3-5 April 2019 for a series of field visits, individual meetings and focus group discussions with YBC, Ministry of Education and Culture, University of Cyprus, the national youth council, youth organisations, youth clubs, youth centres and associations, youth leaders, volunteers, representatives of the municipal youth councils and others working with and for young people.

The objective of the Advisory Mission was to assess the situation of youth work in Cyprus and prepare recommendations for the development of quality youth work, including recognition of youth work, validation mechanisms of competences and experience of practicing youth workers and professionalisation of youth work through creation of educational paths for youth workers. Based on the assessment of national and local context in Cyprus and the set Policy Standards, Recommendations, values and best practices of the Council of Europe, the Delegation makes recommendations to Cyprus Youth Board in the areas outlined below:

Understanding of youth work

The Advisory Mission Delegation recommends to the Youth Board of Cyprus to

1. Define youth work as a practice, within the relevant legislative and policy documents, including the Youth Board Law, the National Youth Strategy, related implementation plans and others. For that purpose, the Advisory Mission Delegation recommends the YBC to adopt and use the description of youth work from the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work.
2. Develop the functions and characteristics of youth work in Cyprus by referring to the Youth Work Portfolio published by the Council of Europe's Youth Department.
3. Indicate the required competences for youth workers by using the Youth work Portfolio competence framework and the Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and encourage those working in the field of use to identify, assess and record their competences.
4. Make a clear distinction between the terms "youth worker" and "youth officer" and attempt to find an adequate translation of "youth worker" in local language, as already attempted through the Policy paper on youth work of the National Youth Council "Recognition of the Youth Worker" (2017).²

² Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation and National Youth Council. 2017. Recognition of the youth worker. (available only in Greek)

5. Distinguish between paid and unpaid youth workers, providers of non-formal education, youth trainers, youth officers, volunteers and youth activists in light of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work.
6. Set up a dedicated unit within YBC, with a task to develop and implement quality youth work across the youth field in Cyprus.

Spaces for youth work

7. Utilise existing spaces, in addition to developing digital or entrepreneurial skills of young people, to deliver youth work where young people are and where they spend their leisure time.
8. Encourage greater participation of young people in existing spaces, work on building relationships with young people, facilitating learning and skills-development. This could be achieved by setting up the programme of activities together with young people and giving them an opportunity to shape their own learning.

Validation of competences acquired through youth work

9. Develop a strategy for validation of competences and within this strategy distinguish between validation of competences for three different strands of persons involved in youth work, each of them engaging in different activities and having different types of competences: youth worker, youth leader and young person. The validation process of all three groups should complement and build up on each other. The validation and accreditation of such knowledge, skills and competences could be undertaken by the new Agency within the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is currently under development.
10. Validate the acquired competences of youth workers/youth leaders – volunteer youth worker by the respective body responsible of recognition of prior learning within the higher education institution, in case a formal tertiary level programme on youth studies or youth work is developed in Cyprus. . Competences acquired and documented could then be assessed by the education provider and certified accordingly, either by granting an amount of ECTS according to the learning outcomes, or a full degree, in accordance with the normative acts and procedures of the education provider and respective laws regulating recognition procedures on a national level.

- **The Youth Worker**

11. Validate one's experience and competences as a youth worker, which may have been acquired through practice and participation in the European programmes and/or NGOs.
12. Promote among youth workers documentation tools, such as the Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio and others, for recording and documentation of competences of youth workers gained through non-formal learning and youth work practice. Documentation should be facilitated and supported by the organisation, workplace, and provider of training or equivalent, by providing documentation tools. Documentation can be used at a later stage by the authorities towards assessment and certification, upon presentation of the documentation by youth workers who aim to get certificate or other form of formal validation.

- **The Youth leader – volunteer youth worker**

13. Validate one's experience as a youth leader – volunteer youth worker acquired through practice and leadership in European programmes and/or NGOs.
14. Promote among youth leaders documentation tools, such as the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio and others, for recording and documentation of competences of youth leaders gained through non-formal learning and youth work practice.
15. Create a local version of Youth Pass or a similar tool that can be easily applied and used in each of the organisations and by young people, their mentors, peers or similar, to document the competences of youth leaders acquired through non-formal education/learning.
16. Cyprus Youth Board as the National Validation body should ensure wide engagement of stakeholders, including youth and youth-work organisations, namely KOKEN and CYC among others, employers' representatives and education providers in development of validation arrangements and documentation tools.

- **Young People – participants in youth work activities**

17. Establish a centralised documentation tool in collaboration with the Cyprus Youth Council, and/or support youth work providers in the creation of their own documentation tools, based on the existing European tools (e.g. Europass, Youthpass), to be used by young people to document their learning. Self-assessment and reflection are important aspects in this tool.
18. Validate and certify within the possibilities of the youth work providers, the competences that young people have gained through youth work;
19. Bring together stakeholders from different fields, including formal and non-formal education providers, employers and state authorities in the process of setting up validation arrangements, such as the documentation tool, to facilitate the recognition of validated competences.

Qualifications – Education and training

20. University of Cyprus or other higher-level educational institution, in cooperation with other stakeholders, could take a lead in development of a multidisciplinary MA course in Youth Studies with a practical youth work component.
21. Develop a basic training course, accredited by the Ministry of Education and Culture or new Agency under the Ministry of Education and Culture, which will be the minimum qualification for those who wish to work with young people.

Establish youth work as a career

22. Establish youth work as an occupation detailing the requirements, competences and skills of youth workers and define the role of youth workers in supporting and facilitating development of young people

Building the capacities of youth organisations

23. Undertake and support capacity-building initiatives in cooperation with and for youth organisations, based on the principles of youth participation and involvement, knowledge about young people's lives and realities, work with inclusion of young people in all aspects of youth work and life of the organisation, strengthening leadership and responsibility of youth and safety, as well as their well-being and personal integrity.
24. Entrust partner youth organisations with tasks which could assist the YBC to fulfil its mandate. Allocate structural funds, in addition to project funding, to youth organisations to ensure their sustainability.
25. Facilitate peer-to-peer learning with other organisations across Europe.
26. Provide funding to youth organisations for development of youth work and training of volunteer youth workers – youth leaders who deliver youth work in youth organisations.

Utilising existing talents and documenting the knowledge base for youth work

27. Map the existing skills and competences of youth workers, youth leaders, educators and trainers through an expert database which could take the form of a directory consisting of people who have relevant expertise and competences on specific approaches (e.g. human rights education, peace education, reconciliation work, intercultural learning) and/or issues: gender, social cohesion, minorities, migration etc. This database could be a resource available to YBC and others.
28. Develop further the existing pool of trainers and researchers within the Cyprus Youth Council so it can be a useful resource for the entire youth field and beyond.
29. Encourage and facilitate projects with other countries through Erasmus+ programmes, Commonwealth Youth Programme, Youth for Democracy programme of the Council of Europe, European Youth Foundation grants, engage in eTwinning, peer to peer learning and study visits to develop the capacity of the YBC staff and youth workers and to develop their understanding of youth work.
30. Prioritise youth work in the TCAs available within the Erasmus+ programme for a period of time in order to increase the capacity of practicing youth workers, paid and volunteers, and establish a critical mass of multipliers.
31. Organise specific trainings for Cypriot youth workers with European umbrella organisations like ERYICA and EYCA.
32. Develop a partnership/ agreement between the YBC and university to establish a research agenda to better understand the current context of youth policy and youth work in Cyprus, the existing pool of professionals working with young people, their capacities, needs and collect the data and evidence on youth workers, volunteers and beneficiaries. The agreement with university would give higher credibility to any research and data produced in this process. Existing regular research instruments on youth in Cyprus (e.g. national statistics office, Youth Wiki, EKCYP, Euro Barometer) can also be used to generate and

gather knowledge on youth work, and related topics, including youth participation, interests and needs of young people and more.

Policy and legal frameworks

33. Make an explicit reference to youth work, its definition, role and responsibilities (state, municipality etc.) for development of youth work, as well as definition of youth workers, paid and voluntary, in all relevant national policy documents, including the National Youth Strategy.
34. Embed youth work in the existing and new youth strategies and youth policies, defining the terminology, goals, fields of activity, types of youth workers, and priorities for youth work in Cyprus.
35. Action Plans of the National Youth Strategy should have specific actions, indicators and the budget for implementing youth work priorities for both the state authorities and other actors in the field, including organisations that provide youth work.

Decentralising youth work

36. Underline the importance of local authorities and establish a closer link between the state and municipalities in delivering youth work. It could be done by giving responsibility to municipalities to administrate provision of youth work on a local level and employing youth officers in the municipalities that would support it.
37. Provide funds for youth work development, including programmes, training for youth workers, youth initiatives and youth organisations who deliver youth work at all levels, including local level.
38. Support the establishment of a paid position of youth workers or youth officers in municipalities.
39. Support youth participation in decision-making by including local youth councils (where present and support establishment of local youth councils where not existing) in the decision-making processes of Municipal councils, particularly on youth issues.

Additional observations

Youth Board of Cyprus

40. Examine ways to reform the governance structure of the Youth Board to allow for more diverse and inclusive representation of youth stakeholders, including youth representative structures and minority groups of young people.
41. Align the Youth Board Law with the National Strategy in order to make them more compatible.
42. Include youth work within the structure and pillars of the YBC.

Youth participation

43. Provide space and opportunities for diverse groups of young people to actively participate in the governance structures and decision-making processes of the YBC in line with recommendations 19, 20 and 21 of the Council of Europe international review of youth policy in Cyprus (2007) and Recommendation 3.9.2
44. Encourage young people's participation in decision-making processes within the municipalities through direct and indirect forms of participation, as recommended by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and their Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2017) and Recommendation Rec(2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of young people in local and regional life.

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ACRONYMS

CCJ	Advisory Council on Youth
CDEJ	European Steering Committee for Youth
CoE	Council of Europe
CYC	Cyprus Youth Council
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ERYICA	European Youth Information and Counselling Agency
EYCA	European Youth Card
HRE	Human Rights Education
KOKEN	Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisations
NFE	Non-formal education
TCA	Transnational Cooperation Activities
YBC	Youth Board of Cyprus

1. Background and objective of the mission

One of the main objectives of intergovernmental cooperation in the Council of Europe's Youth Department is to promote and support the development of member states' youth field based on the values and standards of the Council of Europe. Public institutions and governmental authorities responsible for youth receive expert assistance to address youth policy issues and challenges, depending on the needs and contexts of the requesting states.

Within this framework of assistance measures, Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) requested assistance for youth policy development from the Council of Europe's Youth Department to support advancing and recognition of quality youth work in Cyprus. These activities are taking place in the larger context of the Ministry of Education and Culture's work on establishing new strategies on Youth, Education and Volunteering and occupational standards for youth workers with the Human Resource Development Authority and the National Youth Council.

The objective of the mission was to assess the situation of youth work in Cyprus, based on documentation provided by the YBC, field visits, individual meetings and focus group discussions, and prepare recommendations for the development of quality youth work, including recognition of youth work, validation mechanisms of competences, skills and experience of practicing youth workers and professionalisation of youth work through creation of educational paths for youth workers³.

2. Summary of the mission

The Advisory Mission Delegation was composed of Ms Antje Rothemund, Head of Youth Department, Ms Miriam Teuma, Chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Ms Liva Vikmane, Policy Officer on Youth Policy at the European Youth Forum, Ms Pegah Moulana, Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and Ms Lana Pasic, Researcher from the Pool of European Youth Researchers, EU-CoE Youth Partnership.

The mission took place on the 3rd and 4th of April 2019 in Nicosia and Larnaca, starting with the meeting with the Director and the personnel of the Youth Board of Cyprus. Visits were organised to the Makerspace, where conversations with youth NGOs (Stressball and Youth Cyprus) and individual entrepreneurs utilising this youth space were held, and the Youth Information Centre in Larnaca. In Nicosia, the Advisory Mission Delegation visited the following youth NGOs: The Cultural Workshop Ayion Omoloyiton, Youth Centre in Nicosia and Kaimakli youth club, which is a member of Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisations (KOKEN) and the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (Home for Cooperation) and held meetings with the national youth council, youth organisations, youth clubs, youth centres, youth leaders, volunteers, representatives of the municipal youth councils, youth workers and others working with and for young people.

³ According to Council of Europe norms and standards and based on Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work, the roadmap for its implementation, as well as the work of the ad hoc high level task force on youth work.

A meeting was held with the Ministry of Education and Culture (Office for European and International Affairs, Department of Higher and Tertiary Education) and the Rector of the University of Cyprus and Heads of Departments of Education and Psychology. The Delegation concluded its visit with the round table discussion with youth NGOs, National Youth Council, Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisations (KOKEN) and the Youth Board of Cyprus Administrative Board.

For a detailed programme of the visit, see Annex I.

3. Recommendations

Within the framework of the policy assistance measures to member states and in light of the requested support from the Youth Board of Cyprus in development and recognition of quality youth work, the Delegation, based on the set Policy Standards, Recommendations, values and best practices of the Council of Europe and the assessment of national and local context in Cyprus, makes recommendations under the following areas:

3.1 Understanding of youth work

There are numerous volunteers and youth leaders actively engaged in running programmes and activities with young people in Cyprus. Those working with young people have high levels of motivation and they practice youth work with “*meraki*” – doing things with love, passion and a lot of soul or thorough enjoyment of engaging in certain work or activities.

Youth policy and youth context in Cyprus have been reviewed previously, in 2007, by the Council of Europe. Council of Europe’s International Youth Policy Review (2007)⁴ in Cyprus noted that, while there are youth work activities taking place in the country, there is a limited understanding of the idea of youth work. There are various non-formal provisions of youth work by a variety of actors within youth sector, but no full overview on the exact state of affairs, what are the issues addressed, what type of youth work providers are involved in these activities and how are they trained or educated.

Since the International Policy Review in 2007, there have been certain developments in the area of youth work. The Advisory Mission Delegation during the visit in April 2019 has noticed that, there are numerous provisions of youth work by volunteers and youth leaders in Cyprus. Most of the volunteers, besides being driven by “*meraki*” have gained the competences needed for youth work, through European programmes, NGOs and practice of working with young people.

Similar to the Council of Europe’s International Youth Policy Review in 2007, the consolidated and common understanding of youth work within the youth sector is still lacking, and there is

⁴ Council of Europe. 2007. Youth Policy in Cyprus. Conclusions of the Council of Europe International Review. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023f2>

little knowledge of it outside the youth sector in Cyprus. Considering the context, the Delegation identified the following challenges of youth work in Cyprus: the aims and objectives of youth work are vague, structures lack coherence and there is no agreed methodologies on how to conduct youth work; professional competence is scattered and there is a lack of capacity to meet young people's needs and aspirations; in addition it is difficult to quantify the outcomes of youth work activities.

Much of the work with/for young people in Cyprus involves non-formal education programmes (NFE) and provision of information and counselling, run by the YBC, youth organisations, youth clubs and volunteers. While these programmes provide a valuable basis for development of skills and competences of young people, they do not necessarily comprise youth work as such. Thus, there is a need for better understanding of youth work as a social practice and understanding of the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviour conveyed and practiced through youth work.

The National Youth Council's Policy Paper on Youth Work⁵ defines youth work as:

“Any planned programme and activity of personal and social education which is based on the values of non-formal education and is designed to improve the skills and competencies of young people outside of the formal educational curriculum.”

While the definition covers a broad range of potential activities, nonetheless

- The Advisory Mission Delegation recommends to the Youth Board of Cyprus to define youth work as a practice, within the relevant legislative and policy documents, including the Youth Board Law, the National Youth Strategy, related implementation plans and others. For that purpose, the Advisory Mission Delegation recommends the YBC to adopt and use the description of youth work from the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, which is the following:

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

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

Youth work achieves this by empowering and engaging young people in the active creation, preparation, delivery and evaluation of initiatives and activities that reflect

⁵ Definition in Country sheet on youth work in Cyprus, 2018 by Christoforou, E. Available at: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/11004734/Cyprus_country+sheet_youth+work_JB.pdf+1.pdf/60466b7e-6bf2-86a7-cdd8-981a70eb07d9

their needs, interests, ideas and experiences. Through this process of non-formal and informal learning, young people gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need in order to move forward with confidence.

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

It is important to note that the definition outlined above can and should be modified and adapted to the local context in Cyprus to best reflect the local needs and realities. Such definition should be then framed as a practice within legislative, policy or strategic practices.

The Council of Europe in its work, centred around young people, has created a variety of tools and methods to support the Member States in the development and implementation of youth work and youth policy. In line with this, Council of Europe Youth Department has developed a Youth Work Portfolio to facilitate the common understanding and recognition of youth work. The Youth Work Portfolio explains the place of youth work and youth workers within the wider public sphere, as presented in Diagram 1, emphasising the role of youth work in providing young people with space, skills and opportunities to influence civil society, politics and power relations.

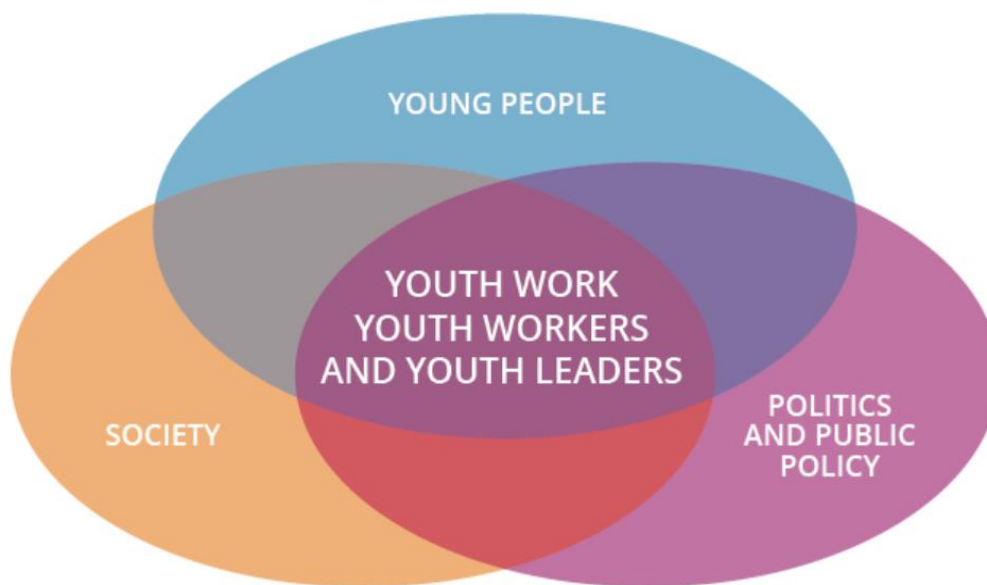


Diagram 1: Youth work within the wider public sphere⁶

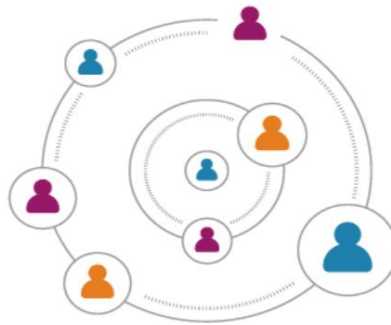
⁶ Council of Europe. 2015. Youth Work Essentials. Youth Work Portfolio. A tool for the assessment and development of youth work competence. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/home>

WHAT IS YOUTH WORK FOR?

ENABLING
young people to do the things they want to do together and individually

Providing young people with opportunities to **EMANCIPATE** and gain autonomy

Providing young people with healthy and safe opportunities for leisure that they can **ENJOY**



EMPOWERING
young people to change things they think need to be changed in their immediate surroundings and society

Helping young people to **ENGAGE** with power and policy

Providing young people with relevant and engaging non-formal **EDUCATION** opportunities that improve their competencies

Diagram 2: What is youth work for?⁷

- Develop the functions and characteristics of youth work in Cyprus by referring to the Youth Work Portfolio published by the Council of Europe's Youth Department, as described in Diagram 1 and 2.

Furthermore, there are various other characteristics of youth work, which should be kept in mind when developing quality youth work. Youth work is developmental and holistic in its approach; driven by values aimed at the personal social and political development of young people; inclusive of all young people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status or other characteristics; youth-centred and it is based on the knowledge of the youth sector, youth issues and concerns and priorities of young people. Youth work is voluntary and informal, giving young people freedom to choose if they want to participate; self-reflective and critical regarding quality, experimentation and emancipation of young people; relational and cooperative, based on principles of solidarity and inter-culturalism and aspires to create social change.

⁷ Ibid

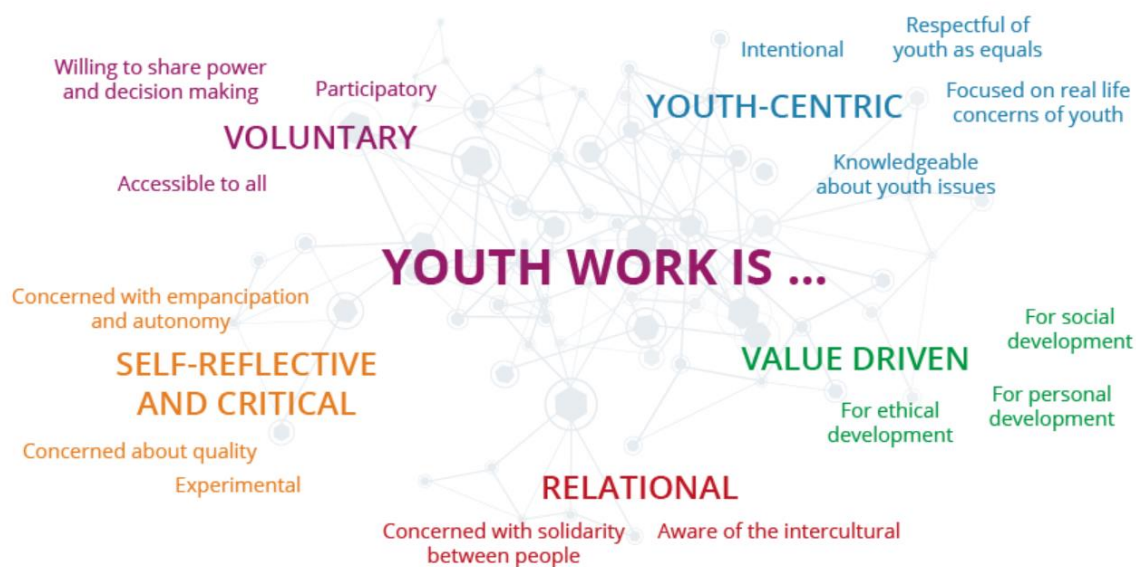


Diagram 3: Youth work characteristics⁸

In order to ensure the quality delivery of youth work to young people and its recognition, youth work providers, or youth workers, need to have certain knowledge and competences, as prescribed by the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work.⁹ Competence is understood as the “ability to do something successfully or efficiently” and consists of several elements: “knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour, values and critical thinking”.¹⁰ Thus, the Delegation recommends the YBC to use the Council of Europe’s *Portfolio competence framework*¹¹ and *Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*¹².

Some of the competences within these frameworks are specific youth work competences, unique to the youth field, while others are more general competences, relevant to other fields, but also important in youth work. The competences youth workers should have, relate to their ability to:

- address the needs and aspirations of young people
- provide learning opportunities for youth
- support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it
- support youth in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations
- practice evaluation to improve the quality of youth work
- support collective learning in teams

⁸ Council of Europe. 2015. Youth Work Portfolio. A tool for the assessment and development of youth work competence. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/home>

⁹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 May 2017 at the 1287th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies. Available at: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectId=0900001680717e78

¹⁰ Council of Europe. Youth Portfolio. Portfolio competence framework Available at: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-competence#{%229802689%22:\[\]}\]](https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-competence#{%229802689%22:[]}])

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Council of Europe 2018. Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008418-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-2-8573-co/16807bc66d>

- contribute to development of organisation, policies and programmes for young people and
 - develop, conduct and evaluate projects.
- Indicate the required competences for youth workers by using the Youth work Portfolio competence framework and the Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and encourage those working in the field of use to identify, assess and record their competences.

Having in mind the above description of youth work and that there is no adequate translation of “youth worker” in Greek language, and that the current term is translated as “youth officer”, the team advises:

- Youth Board of Cyprus should make a clear distinction between the terms “youth worker” and “youth officer” and attempt to find an adequate translation of “youth worker” in local language, as already attempted through the Policy paper on youth work of the National Youth Council "Recognition of the Youth Worker" (2017)¹³
- Distinguish between paid and unpaid youth workers, providers of non-formal education, youth trainers, youth officers, volunteers and youth activists in light of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work.

In Cyprus, different individuals and groups are working with young people, but not all of them are youth workers. Therefore it is important to make a distinction between youth workers, providers of non-formal education, youth trainers, youth officers, volunteers and youth activists, and expected level of their engagement. Furthermore, a clear distinction has to be made between non-formal and informal education/learning and an understanding on their role in youth work should be created.

The EU-CoE Youth Partnership Glossary on youth¹⁴ contains definitions of important terms that can be of a valuable resource when defining the relevant terminology on a national level. Some of the key definitions relevant for development of youth work in Cyprus can be found in Annex II.

- Set up a dedicated unit within YBC, with a task to develop and implement quality youth work across the youth field in Cyprus.

In order to support the process of development of quality youth work in Cyprus, and ensure integration of Recommendations above, the Delegation finally recommends the setting up of a dedicated youth work unit within YBC Secretariat, with the main task of developing and embedding youth work across the youth sector.

¹³ Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation and National Youth Council. 2017. Recognition of the youth worker. (available only in Greek)

¹⁴ EU-CoE Youth Partnership. Glossary on youth. Available at: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>

3.2 Spaces for youth work

Cyprus Youth Board supports the functioning of important, innovative and modern youth spaces in Cyprus, including Makerspace, STEAMers, youth clubs and youth organisations. These spaces exist as platforms for young people to develop their talents and competences, providing diverse and rich opportunities for youth to engage in cultural, arts, science and sports activities, to learn how to use new technologies and network with their peers. They are supported by YBC and also cover their costs through the implementation of their own activities.

Having recognised the existence of these attractive and well-equipped youth spaces and their potential, it is important to think about bringing youth work to places where young people are already spending time. These spaces already serve specific groups of young people, focusing on new technologies, business and entrepreneurship, and they can widen their reach and be also used as open spaces and platforms for youth work, reaching out to young people and maintaining contact with them in person and online. These existing structures are also doing outreach to young people in schools, communities and villages outside of main cities, and they can also be multiplied in other places around Cyprus.

Considering the potential of these youth spaces to develop and incorporate youth work elements within their current portfolio, the YBC can support their wider outreach and develop youth work by:

- Utilising existing spaces, in addition to developing digital or entrepreneurial skills of young people, to deliver youth work where young people are and where they spend their leisure time. It might include widening the scope of easily accessible activities to incorporate open youth work practice, encouraging further engagement with other young people, the community and a variety of themes on offer.
- Encouraging greater participation of young people in existing spaces, work on building relationships with young people, facilitating learning and skills-development. This could be achieved by setting up the programme of activities together with young people, to give them an opportunity to shape their own learning.

In this process, YBC may use the important potential of existing spaces to enable the development of relationship between youth workers and young people, considering the following questions: Is the space young people centred? Does it ensure young people's safety, well-being and personal integrity? Does it strive to help young people to learn and develop beyond the programme offers? Does it promote equality and inclusiveness for all young people? Is the space committed to quality and continuous improvement in supporting young people?

3.3 Validation of competences acquired through youth work

In Cyprus, there is currently no official validation system of competences acquired through youth work and non-formal learning. However, there are those who practice youth work as part of their wider occupational role or as volunteers. It is important to distinguish between

three different strands of persons involved in youth work, each of them engaging in different activities and having different types of competences: youth worker, youth leader and young person.

The EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)¹⁵ invites Member States to establish mechanisms and make arrangements for the validation of competences gained either through youth work or non-formal and informal learning. Based on the Recommendation, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus is currently coordinating the establishment of the validation mechanism on non-formal and informal learning.

Validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the four distinct phases outlined below:

1. **Identification** of individual learning outcomes, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
2. **Documentation** of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning (e.g. through self-assessment or validation mechanisms from a training provider) to make this learning visible;
3. **Assessment** of learning outcomes (through an Agency, formal education provider, such as University, or other accredited body);
4. **Certification** of the results of the assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate.¹⁶

¹⁵ European Union. Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01) Available at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Council_Recommendation_on_the_validation_20_December_2012.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid

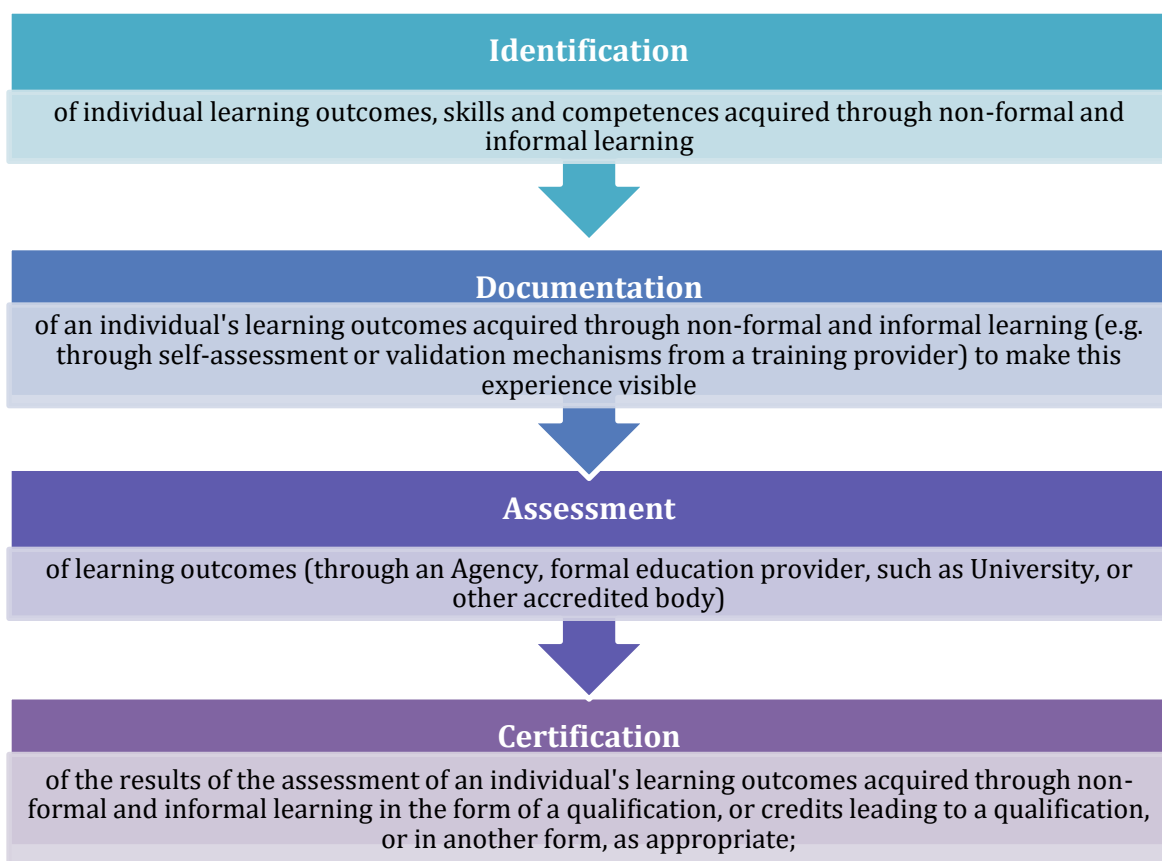


Diagram 4: Validation of non-formal and informal learning¹⁷

It is important to note and make a distinction between validation of competences of those who deliver youth work - youth workers and youth leaders, and young people who engage in youth work activities as participants or beneficiaries.

- It is therefore recommended to develop a strategy for validation of competences and within this strategy to distinguish between validation of competences for three different strands of persons involved in youth work, each of them engaging in different activities and having different types of competences: youth worker, youth leader and young person. The validation process of all three groups should complement each other.

The validation and accreditation of such knowledge, skills and competences could be undertaken by the new Agency within the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is currently under development or the Youth Board of Cyprus as the competent national authority for youth issues. It is essential to ensure that the acquired competences are documented by the youth workers and the NGOs and/or programmes (for example, through Youth Pass) they have been part of, prior to the attempt to validate them.

¹⁷ Diagram based on the text from Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01) Available at: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Council_Recommendation_on_the_validation_20_December_2012.pdf

- In case a formal tertiary level programme on youth studies or youth work is developed in Cyprus, validation of acquired competences of youth workers and youth leaders – volunteer youth workers can be done by respective body responsible of recognition of prior learning within the higher education institution. Competences acquired and documented as suggested above could then be assessed by the education provider and certified accordingly, either granting amount of ECTS according to the learning outcomes, or a full degree, in accordance with the normative acts and procedures of the education provider and respective laws regulating recognition procedures on a national level.

Keeping in mind the distinction above, as outlined in the Council Recommendation, the Advisory Mission Delegation suggests the following:

3.3.1 The Youth worker

The Youth worker is a person who conducts youth work as an occupation, or as a volunteer. Most people conducting youth work in Cyprus are doing this on a voluntary basis in their free time, and are considered to be volunteers who work with youth. There is currently no established system of validation of their competences, specialised training for their role, or recognition from society. Their competences for delivering youth work are acquired informally and through non-formal training, without undertaking formal education on youth work or youth studies.

Taking into consideration the skills and competences of youth workers outlined above (see 3.1.), and the various ways in which they can be obtained, as well as various profiles and paths of life of youth workers, the Delegation recommends to validate their experiences and competences in the following ways:

- Validate one's experience as a youth worker, which may have been acquired through practice. The Advisory Mission Delegation's visit to Cyprus found that there are a number of people working within the youth sector who have acquired specific skills and competences for youth work through participation in the European programmes and/or NGOs.
- Promoting among youth workers documentation tools, such as the Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio and others, for recording and documentation of competences of youth workers gained through non-formal learning and youth work practice. Documentation should be facilitated and supported by the organisation, workplace, and provider of training or equivalent, by providing documentation tools. Documentation can be used at a later stage by the authorities towards assessment and certification, upon presentation of the documentation by youth workers who aim to get certificate or other form of formal validation.

3.3.2. The Youth leader – volunteer youth worker

Youth leader is a young person in an organisation, youth club or NGO who undertakes certain leadership role in the organisation and can deliver and conduct youth work activities with young people on a voluntary basis.

In the context of Cyprus, youth leaders are currently delivering youth work as non-paid volunteers. They may take up leadership roles within an organisation including running the organisation, planning the youth work activities, doing outreach youth work with young people and/or dealing with administration and project applications. During this process they gain competences such as public speaking, administration, moderation, people management, team work and project management, among others.

In order for youth leaders in Cyprus to be able to validate these competences and use them in their academic and professional experience, we recommend the following:

- Validating one's experience as a youth leader – volunteer youth worker acquired through practice and leadership in European programmes and/or NGOs.
- Promote among youth leaders documentation tools, such as the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio and others, for recording and documentation of competences of youth leaders gained through non-formal learning and youth work practice.
- Create a local version of Youth Pass or a similar tool that can be easily applied and used in each of the organisations and by young people, their mentors, peers or similar, to document the competences of youth leaders acquired through non-formal education/learning
- Cyprus Youth Board as the National Validation body should ensure wide engagement of stakeholders, including youth and youth-work organisations, namely KOKEN and CYC among others, employers' representatives and education providers in development of validation arrangements and documentation tools.

3.3.3 Young People – participants in youth work activities

Youth work has a holistic approach and provides space for young people to learn, experiment and grow. Through participation in youth work activities, they can develop their values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical thinking. Documenting and validating these competences is essential for both young people and the youth sector, giving visibility and political recognition to the youth field. In order to document and validate these competences, the Advisory Mission Delegation recommends to:

- Establish a centralised documentation tool in cooperation between the Youth Board of Cyprus and the coordinating bodies of the youth organisations and youth clubs such as the Cyprus Youth Council and Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation. These bodies shall support youth work providers in the creation of their own documentation tools, based on the one developed on the national level and existing European tools (e.g. Europass,

Youthpass), to be used by young people to document their learning. Self-assessment and reflection are important aspects in this tool.

- Validate and certify within the possibilities of the youth work providers, the competences that young people have gained through youth work;
- Bring together stakeholders from different fields, including formal and non-formal education providers, employers and state authorities in the process of setting up validation arrangements, such as the documentation tool mentioned in point one, to facilitate the recognition of validated competences.

European youth councils use a range of well-established mechanisms that could be used as a starting point for discussion on validation arrangements. Validation should not be measuring only young person's engagement in terms of time and number of volunteering hours, but it should rather focus on the learning outcomes, skills developed and competences acquired.

3.4. Qualifications - Education and training

Considering that there is currently no occupation and formal pathways for education and training of youth workers in Cyprus, and that most of those involved in youth work have acquired relevant skills and competences through European training programmes and informal learning in the field on a local level, the Delegation recommends the following in order to develop quality youth work through education and training opportunities for both paid and volunteer youth workers and facilitate the establishment and recognition of a youth work profession in Cyprus:

- University of Cyprus or other higher-level educational institution, in cooperation with other stakeholders, could take a lead in development of a multidisciplinary MA course in Youth Studies with a practical youth work component.
 - The course could combine some of the existing modules from the Departments of Education, Psychology, Social and Political Sciences and/or Social Work.
 - Link up with partner universities outside of Cyprus with strong youth work component, such as Malta, UK, Finland or Estonia.
 - Include a practical youth work component with placement in the field, which could be in already existing youth work providers in Cyprus, including youth organisations and youth clubs, or placement in another country where the know-how is available, through Erasmus+ projects.
- Develop a basic training course, accredited by the Ministry of Education and Culture or the new Agency under the Ministry of Education and Culture, which will be the minimum qualification for those who wish to work with young people.
 - The basic practical and theoretical training course should be developed for all those wishing to work with youth, particularly volunteer youth workers and youth leaders, who comprise majority of the youth sector in Cyprus, and then municipal officials, non-formal educators, teachers, members of youth clubs etc. In the short term, the Youth Board of Cyprus could develop and run this

course as a pilot, and then, creating multipliers, accredit a number of NGOs and other institutions which could run the course in the long-term and issue certificates.

- A Course could be structured based on similar courses in other European countries including at a minimum the following contents:
 - roles and functions of the youth leaders and the ability to lead groups;
 - goals, methods and approaches to youth work
 - Legal and organisational issues of youth work
 - Psychological and educational basics for working with children and adolescents
 - Health and Safety issues of child and youth protection and risk-assessment
 - Current issues relevant for youth work: participation, social inclusion, human rights education, gender roles and gender mainstreaming, migration background, intercultural competences, facilitating encounters in diverse communities etc.
 - Opportunities and contents of international youth work, including: European values, international youth exchanges and European programmes etc.
- Funding should be allocated by relevant authorities accordingly for the development and delivery of these trainings.

When developing a course, the Advisory Mission Delegation team recommends to organise a study visit to Germany, France or any other country with established training courses for youth workers.

3.5 Establish youth work as a career

Although there are many volunteers working with young people in Cyprus in various capacities, there is no established framework and occupational classification for the youth worker. In the context of Cyprus, youth work is mainly considered to be volunteerism with a special focus on young people. However, youth work as a social practice can be delivered not only by volunteers but also as paid work within organisations, associations, youth clubs or municipalities. Therefore, the Delegation recommends to the YBC to:

- Establish youth work as an occupation detailing the requirements, competences and skills of youth workers and define the role of youth workers in supporting and facilitating development of young people.

3.6 Building the capacities of youth organisations

The youth field in Cyprus consists of various organisations and actors, whose capacities are developed through practical work and engagement in the European programmes and trainings. On the other hand, the funding for their activities and functioning is limited to the

grants from the Youth Board and its “Youth Initiatives” fund, European Youth Foundation funding opportunities and the EU funding (Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps programmes among others). The Advisory Mission Delegation recommends that the YBC facilitates the strengthening of capacity of youth organisations, by:

- Undertaking and supporting capacity-building initiatives in cooperation with and for youth organisations, based on the principles of youth participation and involvement, knowledge about young people’s lives and realities, working with inclusion of young people in all aspects of youth work and life of the organisation, strengthening leadership and responsibility of youth and safety, as well as well-being and personal integrity of young people.
- Entrusting partner youth organisations with tasks which could assist the YBC to fulfil its mandate. Allocate structural funds, in addition to project funding, to youth organisations to ensure their sustainability.
- Facilitating peer-to-peer learning with other organisations across Europe.
- Providing funding to youth organisations for development of youth work and training of volunteer youth workers – youth leaders who deliver youth work in youth organisations.

3.6 Utilising existing talents and documenting the knowledge base for youth work

While there are no legal definitions of youth work or formal educational pathways for youth workers put in place, it is important to recognise that youth work is already taking place in Cyprus - there is experience, practice, commitment and passion – a “meraki” for youth work within youth organisations and other civil society initiatives. Yet, there is a need to create a critical mass of multipliers within the country. The Youth Board of Cyprus could acknowledge, develop, support and make effective use of the existing talents by:

- Mapping the existing skills and competences of youth workers, youth leaders, educators and trainers through an expert database which could take the form of a directory consisting of people who have relevant expertise and competences on specific approaches (e.g. human rights education, peace education, reconciliation work, intercultural learning) and/or issues: gender, social cohesion, minorities, migration etc. This database could be a resource available to YBC and others.
- Developing further the existing pool of trainers within the Cyprus Youth Council so it can be a useful resource for entire youth field and beyond.
- Encouraging and facilitating projects with other countries through Erasmus+ programmes, Commonwealth Youth Programme, Youth for Democracy programme of the Council of Europe, European Youth Foundation grants, engage in eTwinning, peer to peer learning and study visits to develop the capacity of the YBC staff and youth workers and to develop their understanding of youth work.

- **Prioritising youth work in the TCAs** available within the Erasmus+ programme for a period of time in order to increase the capacity of practicing youth workers, paid and volunteers, and establish a critical mass of multipliers.
- **Organising specific trainings for Cypriot youth workers with European umbrella organisations like ERYICA and EYCA.**
- **Developing a partnership/ agreement between the YBC and university/ies to establish a research agenda** to better understand the current context of youth policy and youth work in Cyprus, the existing pool of professionals working with young people, their capacities, needs and collect the data and evidence on youth workers, volunteers and beneficiaries. The agreement with university/ies would give higher credibility to any research and data produced in this process. Existing regular research instruments on youth in Cyprus (e.g. national statistics office, EKCYP, Youth Wiki, Euro Barometer) can also be used to generate and gather knowledge on youth work, and related topics, including youth participation, interests and needs of young people and more.

3.7 Policy and legal frameworks

The current policy and legal frameworks in Cyprus, including the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022¹⁸ do not make any specific reference to youth work. The National Youth Strategy 2017-2022 covers eight main fields of action: employment and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, participation, education and training, health and wellbeing, voluntary activities, youth and the world and creativity and culture. While many of the areas are linked with youth work and non-formal learning, the strategy does not make any specific reference to youth work as a separate field, and in fact it refers to youth workers only once (Action field D: Education and Training):

“4.2 Provide constant training and specialisation for teachers and youth workers.”

without providing details on what is youth work, who are youth workers and how to provide this training and professional development for them. This means that youth workers have no status in the legal or policy framework to engage with governments and neither can funding be effectively spent on youth work as a priority, when it is not included in the key areas of the Youth Strategy.

The Delegation thus makes the following recommendations:

- **Make an explicit reference to youth work, its definition, role and responsibilities (state, municipality etc.) for development of youth work, as well as definition of youth workers, paid and voluntary, in all relevant national policy documents, including the National Youth Strategy.**

¹⁸ Youth Board of Cyprus, 2017. National Youth Strategy.

- Embed youth work in the existing and new youth strategies and youth policies, defining the terminology, goals, fields of activity, types of youth workers, and priorities for youth work in Cyprus.
- Action Plans of the National Youth Strategy should have specific actions, indicators and the budget for implementing youth work priorities for both the state authorities and other actors in the field, including organisations that provide youth work.

3.8 Decentralising youth work

Youth work plays a very important role particularly at the local level, where young people are: in municipalities, youth organisations, youth clubs, in public spaces, schools, and on the streets. In order to reach, include and empower young people, the Delegation recommends decentralising youth work policy in Cyprus by:

- Underlining the importance of local authorities and establishing a closer link between the state and municipalities in delivering youth work. It could be done by giving responsibility to municipalities to administrate provision of youth work on a local level, and employing youth officers in the municipalities that would support it.
- Providing funds for youth work development, including programmes, training for youth workers, youth initiatives and youth organisations who deliver youth work at all levels, including local level.
- Supporting the establishment of a paid position of youth workers or youth officers in municipalities.
- Supporting youth participation in decision-making by including local youth councils (where present and support establishment of local youth councils where not existing) in the decision-making processes of Municipal councils, particularly on youth issues.

3.9 Additional observations

In order for youth work to be successful, the environment – ecosystem – in which it takes place must be supportive of young people, youth workers and youth work activities. Based on the observations from the Advisory Mission in April 2019, the Delegation also makes further recommendations for the YBC:

3.9.1. Youth Board of Cyprus

The Youth Board of Cyprus, as the main body with mandate for youth is currently run by the Administrative Board which consists mainly of youth representatives of the political parties which form a parliamentary group in the House of Representatives, making the organisation highly political. Furthermore, the Youth Board Law (1994) is out-dated and not aligned with

the new National Youth Strategy (2017-2022) and European standards and programmes. Therefore the Advisory Mission Delegation recommends YBC to:

- **Examine ways to reform the governance structure of the Youth Board to allow for more diverse and inclusive representation of youth stakeholders, including youth representative structures and minority groups of young.** This may include opening up the Administrative Board to youth organisations such as KOKEN, Cyprus Youth Council, to representatives from the Ministry or University, and other actors relevant in the youth field in Cyprus. This is also in line with recommendations 19 and 21 of the Council of Europe international review of youth policy in Cyprus (2007).
- **Align the Youth Board Law with the national strategy in order to make them more compatible.**
- **Include youth work within the structure and pillars of the YBC.**

3.9.2 Youth Participation

The Council of Europe has long been committed to promoting the active participation of young people in civic life and decision-making. Keeping in mind existing structures in Cyprus, we recommend the following to increase opportunities for participation:

- **Provide space and opportunities for diverse groups of young people to actively participate in the governance structures and decision-making processes of the YBC** in line with recommendations 19, 20 and 21 of the Council of Europe international review of youth policy in Cyprus (2007) and Recommendation 3.9.2¹⁹
- **Encourage young people's participation in decision-making processes within the municipalities** (as mentioned above in 3.8), through direct and indirect forms of participation, as recommended by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and their Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2017) and Recommendation Rec(2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of young people in local and regional life.

¹⁹ Council of Europe. 2007. Youth Policy in Cyprus. Conclusions of the Council of Europe International Review. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023f2>

4. Concluding remarks

The Advisory Mission Delegation notes that there are many active youth organisations, volunteers, youth leaders and others working with young people in Cyprus. They engage in activities with young people with a lot of passion and enthusiasm, and many of them have taken advantage of the learning opportunities provided through the EU programmes in order to gain the competences needed for youth work.

YBC supports innovative and modern youth spaces where young people can develop their talents and competences and engage in a range of cultural, arts science and sports activities, which could further serve as spaces for youth work.

Nevertheless, the Delegation notes that consolidated and common understanding of youth work and competences needed for engaging in youth work is still lacking within the youth sector and policy documents. The Delegation therefore recommends to YBC to use the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work and competences described in the Youth Work Portfolio, in order to define youth work, and include new definition in all relevant policy frameworks which concern young people.

The mechanisms for validating the competences of those practicing youth work: volunteer youth workers and youth leaders, and well as young people gaining from youth work, established pathways for qualification and training of youth workers and establishment of profession of youth worker within the occupational classification in Cyprus are also important areas in which the Delegation has made recommendations, in order to support establishment of quality youth work.

The Delegation has also found that there is a great opportunity within Cyprus for the YBC to support building capacities of youth organisations, utilise existing talents and research and document the existing knowledge base for youth work. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for decentralisation of youth work, increasing participation of young people and reforming the governing structure of the YBC itself for a more representative functioning.

Finally, on a more general note, considering the political context of Cyprus, youth work should have a main role in facilitating encounters between communities and these priorities should be reflected in their youth initiative funding programmes, through explicit support to organisations working in the area of reconciliation and peace-building. The Cyprus youth sector would also benefit greatly from taking advantage of more European funding opportunities, if it aligns its priorities more within the E+ programmes.

Annex I Programme of the visit

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S
YOUTH POLICY ADVISORY MISSION IN CYPRUS
ON YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENT
WEDNESDAY 3RD – THURSDAY 4TH OF APRIL 2019
NICOSIA**

Final Programme

Tuesday 02/04	Arrival
Wednesday 03/04	
09:00-10:00	Presentation of the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) in Nicosia and meeting with the personnel (incl. a talk with Erasmus+ NA)
10:45-12:15	Visit of @ the Makerspace and meeting with Youth NGOs
12:30-13:30	Visit at the Youth Information Centre of Larnaca
16:00-16:30	Visit a Youth NGO in Nicosia (The Cultural Workshop Ayion Omoloyiton)
17:00-18:00	Visit at the Youth Centre in Nicosia & Meeting with Latsia Municipal Youth Council
18:30-19:00	Visit at Kaimakli Youth Club
Thursday 04/04	
09:30-10:30	Ministry of Education and Culture (meeting with the Office for European and International Affairs, Department of Higher and Tertiary Education)
11:00-12:00	Association for Historical Dialogue and Research Home for Cooperation (meeting with Turkish Cypriot Youth NGO's)
15:30-16:15	Tour at the University of Cyprus (UCY)
16:30-17:30	Meeting with the Rector of the University of Cyprus, the Vice- Rector for Academic Affairs and the Heads of Departments for Social and Political Sciences, Education and Psychology
17:30-19:00	Round table discussion with youth NGOS's & the YBC Administrative Board @ UCY premises (with the National Youth Council and member youth NGO's, Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation, Girl Guides, Municipal and Community Youth Councils)
19:30	Debriefing
Friday 05/04	
09:30-12:00	Final conclusions – experts meeting @ Nefeli Conference room at the hotel

Annex II Glossary on youth

Glossary below is based on the terminology developed by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. The key terms below, similarly to the definition of youth work, should be adapted to the local context.

Certification

Certification refers to a standardised process of formally validating knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competencies acquired by an individual or represented through a learning/service provider.

Competence

Competence is often used interchangeably with the term skill, but they do not mean the same thing. Competence means the ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in a stable/recurring or changing situation. Two elements are crucial: applying what one knows and can do to a specific task or problem, and being able to transfer this ability between different situations.

Competency-Based Framework

The competency framework defines the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for people within an existent framework. Consequently, every individual have its own set of competencies that are to be developed or acquired. In developing a competency based framework, a pre-set list of common standards and competencies customized then to a specific target group or to the needs of the organization is to be defined. Creating a competency framework is considered to be an effective method to asses, to maintain and to monitor the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the individuals involved with an initiative or part of an organization. The development of the framework does also allow the measurement of the existent competencies in the starting point of the assessment as well as of the competencies developed through the development process. The competency development framework had also been described as a learning paradigm and, especially in education, focused on describing and measuring what learners need to know and be able to do (outcomes), given the goals and mission of a specific programme.

European Portfolio for Youth Workers and Leaders

The European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers is an initiative of the Council of Europe in cooperation with experts and partners such as the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. It provides youth leaders and youth workers in Europe, volunteers or professionals, with a tool, which can help them, identify, assess and describe their competencies based on European quality standards. In using this portfolio, youth leaders and youth workers are not only contributing to the recognition of their experience and skills but also to efforts to increase the recognition of youth work and non-formal education and learning.

Formal recognition

Formal recognition refers to reaching an 'official' status for some aspect of youth work and non-formal learning/education, (e.g. validation of competences; official accreditation of programmes; certification of youth workers and trainers, etc.).

Key competences

Key competences are a combination of basic knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context, to be provided through lifelong learning as a key measure in Europe's response to globalisation and the shift to knowledge-based economies. Moreover, they are particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.

Key competences in the shape of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to each context are fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society. They provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation. The EU recommends that they should be acquired by everyone, this recommendation proposes a reference tool for European Union (EU) countries to ensure that these key competences are fully integrated into their strategies and infrastructures, particularly in the context of lifelong learning.

Key competences should be acquired by:

- Young people at the end of their compulsory education and training, equipping them for adult life, particularly for working life, whilst forming a basis for further learning;
- Adults throughout their lives, through a process of developing and updating skills.

The acquisition of key competences fits in with the principles of equality and access for all. This reference framework also applies in particular to disadvantaged groups whose educational potential requires support. Examples of such groups include people with low basic skills, early school leavers, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, migrants, etc.

Informal learning

Informal learning, from the learner's standpoint at least, is non-purposive learning, which takes place in everyday life contexts in the family, at work, during leisure and in the community. It does have outcomes, but these are seldom recorded, virtually never certified and are typically neither immediately visible for the learner nor do they count in themselves for education, training or employment purposes. APEL systems are one way in which the outcomes of such learning can be made more visible and hence open to greater recognition.

Non-formal Education

Non-formal education is any educational action that takes place outside of the formal education system. Non-formal education is an integral part of a lifelong learning concept that ensures that young people and adults acquire and maintain the skills, abilities and dispositions

needed to adapt to a continuously changing environment. It can be acquired on the personal initiative of each individual through different learning activities taking place outside the formal educational system. An important part of non-formal education is carried out by non-governmental organisations involved in community and youth work.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has passed a resolution and a recommendation on “Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge” promoting enhancement of traditional forms of education settings, recognition and support of non-formal and informal learning settings.

Non-formal Learning

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

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

Non-formal education and learning in the youth field is more than a sub-category of education and training since it is contributing to the preparation of young people for the knowledge-based and the civil society.

Skill

Skill means having the knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job. Having a skill means that someone has learned what to do (possesses the knowledge) and knows how to do it (can transfer the knowledge into real practice), which also means that someone else can observe the skill in action.

Validation

The overall aim of validation is to make visible and value the full range of qualifications and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where these have been acquired. The purpose of this validation may be formative (supporting an on-going learning process) as well as summative (aiming at certification).

The validation of non-formal and informal learning is also considered a top priority by several NGOs, for the modernisation of education and training systems in Europe.

Volunteering

Volunteering refers to an activity or a set of activities which take place through a non-profit or a community organisation, with no financial payment for the work done by the volunteer. The volunteering experience might be portrayed as a set of learning opportunities and personal or professional development for the volunteer, having as aim to be of benefit to the community. The volunteer involved with the activities might be a professional in the field offering the expertise and aiming at supporting the individuals and impacting the communities' development, or might be ones involved with activities with no link to their profession, but driven by personal motivation and willingness to help.

Youth Pass

Youth Pass is a European recognition tool for nonformal and informal learning experiences in youth work, available to the participants of the projects granted through Erasmus Plus and Youth in Action programmes. The Youthpass certificate allows the participants to describe their learning experiences and learning achievements, being part of the European Commission's strategy to foster the recognition of non-formal learning. At the end of the project, the participants reflect upon the personal non formal learning process. The certificate is an essential document that supports active European citizenship of young people and youth workers, and also an excellent tool for the social recognition of youth work.

Youth Work

Youth work is a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures.

Increasingly, youth work activities also include sports and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the domain of 'out-of-school' education, most commonly referred to as either non-formal or informal learning. The general aims of youth work are the integration and inclusion of young people in society. It may also aim towards the personal and social emancipation of young people from dependency and exploitation. Youth Work belongs both to the social welfare and to the educational systems. In some countries it is regulated by law and administered by state civil servants, in particular at local level. However, there is an important relation between these professional and voluntary workers, which is at times antagonistic, and at others, cooperative.

The definition of youth work is diverse. While it is recognised, promoted and financed by public authorities in many European countries, it has only a marginal status in others where it remains of an entirely voluntary nature. What is considered in one country to be the work of traditional youth workers – be it professionals or volunteers - may be carried out by consultants in another, or by neighbourhoods and families in yet another country or, indeed, not at all in many places.

Today, the difficulty within state systems to adequately ensure global access to education and the labour market means that youth work increasingly deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion. Increasingly, youth work overlaps with the area of social services previously undertaken by the Welfare State. It, therefore, includes work on

aspects such as education, employment, assistance and guidance, housing, mobility, criminal justice and health, as well as the more traditional areas of participation, youth politics, cultural activities, scouting, leisure and sports. Youth work often seeks to reach out to particular groups of young people such as disadvantaged youth in socially deprived neighbourhoods, or immigrant youth including refugees and asylum seekers. Youth work may at times be organised around a particular religious tradition.

Youth Workers

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

Youth Work Practice

Youth work practice mainly refers to the key elements that define youth work. The key elements that had been used to define the youth work practice had been the following: Focusing on young people, their needs, experiences and contribution; Voluntary participation, young people choose to become involved in the work; Fostering association, relationship and community, encouraging all to join in friendship, to organise and take part in groups and activities and deepen and develop relationships and that allow them to grow and flourish; Being friendly, accessible and responsive while acting with integrity. Youth work has come to be characterised by a belief that workers should not only be approachable and friendly; but also that they should have faith in people; and be trying, themselves, to live good lives; Looking to the education and, more broadly, the welfare of young people.

Annex III References and recommended documents

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