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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

COUNCIL

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda

(2020/C 415/01)

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

RECOGNISING THAT:

1. 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. ⁽¹⁾
2. Although there is a common understanding of the primary function of youth work, it takes very different forms across EU Member States of the EU is defined or described differently and is associated with different perceptions, traditions, stakeholders and practices. It takes place in different forms and settings ⁽²⁾. Youth work plays an important role in the personal and social development of young people, their participation in society and in the transitions, they are going through. It is aimed at all young people, including those less engaged with society and/or with fewer opportunities and / or whose full political and social participation is at risk due to individual or structural disadvantages ⁽³⁾ or discrimination.
3. Young people engage on a voluntary basis, in an organised or self-organised manner, in youth organisations, associations, young people's initiatives or other open forms, thus contributing to the development of society at all levels. Youth work plays a crucial role in supporting this engagement. It is a way of reaching out to small and remote communities and promoting dialogue with young people in a form that is open and accessible to all.
4. Youth work enables young people to learn about and experience universal values such as human rights, gender equality, democracy, peace, pluralism, diversity, inclusion, solidarity, tolerance and justice.
5. Youth work is a field in its own right and an important non-formal and informal socialisation environment. It is carried out by a wide youth work community of practice. ⁽⁴⁾ Youth work is geared to young people's individual needs and requirements and directly addresses the challenges they face in today's society. An essential component of youth work

⁽¹⁾ Description from the Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on Youth Work.

⁽²⁾ For example, in youth centres, youth projects, outreach/detached youth work, informal youth groups, youth camps/colonies, youth information, youth organisations and youth movements as set out in the expert group final report on 'The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment'.

⁽³⁾ Structural disadvantages are, unlike individual ones, those disadvantages which do not relate to the person themselves but to the regulatory frameworks they are subject to and their basic living conditions.

⁽⁴⁾ See definition in Annex II.

is creating safe, accessible, open and autonomous spaces in society, as well as supportive and experiential learning environments for young people. The participation of young people in the design and delivery of youth work is essential in order to guarantee that organisations, programmes and activities are responsive and relevant to their needs and aspirations of young people.

6. Youth work facilitates learning and engagement among young people and thus promotes democratic awareness and active European citizenship.
7. At the second European Youth Work Convention, which took place in 2015, stakeholders worked to reach a common European understanding of youth work and to describe its core functions with regard to young people: creating spaces for young people and providing bridges in their lives.

EMPHASISE THAT:

8. During recent decades, youth work has grown to become a distinct field of work, carried out by, with and for young people at European level. In some Member States youth work is already a well-established field. However, in order to fully explore its potential, capacities need to be further developed.
9. The youth work community of practice has been the source of many recent developments in the field. These have been driven by a wide range of stakeholders, who are involved in addressing specific needs in the field of youth work. These developments reflect the great diversity of youth work and its different traditions in the individual Member States.
10. Youth work in Europe continues to face multiple challenges:
 - (a) **Conceptual framework:** Youth work must remain responsive to changes in society and in young people's everyday lives, to new knowledge and to the political context, while also being actively inclusive and offering equal opportunities to all young people. A common basic understanding and shared principles therefore needs to be developed. It is also necessary for there to be safe, accessible, open and autonomous spaces for youth work, for continuous reflection to be undertaken on methods and innovation in practices, for trends and new developments to be analysed, and for conceptual frameworks, strategies and practices to be adapted, where appropriate with partners from other sectors. In addition, it is essential to address global trends such as demographic challenges, climate changes and digitalisation, and to support the development of innovative solutions, smart and digital youth work.
 - (b) **Competence:** It is important to provide sufficient resources for the continuous development of youth work. Quality education and training and practical support for youth workers across the EU are a precondition for promoting the recognition and validation of youth workers' competences in the Member States.
 - (c) **Credibility:** Practices in the field of youth work need to be promoted in society, and the quality of youth work must meet the expectations and requirements of the field and of society, and be consistent with the nature, self-image and professional practices of the field, in order to ensure that the role and importance of youth work, as well as the results it delivers, are acknowledged beyond the field itself. In order to meet these requirements, the quality of youth work must also be improved, monitored and evaluated. Research should be carried out in the area of youth work, but without creating unnecessary bureaucratic burden.
 - (d) **Connections:** For the youth work community of practice to further develop youth work as a field geared to young people's needs, internal cooperation should be nurtured, including connections between youth work providers and youth policy makers, and cooperation with other sectors and policy areas. In addition, recognition in society, involvement with youth policy, appropriate legal frameworks, financial resources, institutional frameworks, and appropriate and sustainable structures are all important factors.
 - (e) **Crises and opportunities:** Youth work is constantly faced with fundamental challenges and must adapt to meet changing needs. The very existence and sustainability of many youth associations, youth work organisations and youth services is under threat as a result of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions on social contact have had a severe impact on the way youth work operates, and hence on young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities. Youth work has, however, shown its capability to react quickly to such a crisis and ensure that the views of young people are taken into account in the process of drawing up their blueprint for Europe's post-crisis future.

11. Both the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) and the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 call for the development of a European Youth Work Agenda. In this call, the EU Youth Strategy encouraged seeking further synergies with the work carried out by the Council of Europe in this area. This would allow fostering mutual cooperation and creating synergies between the EU and Council of Europe to further develop youth work practices and policies.

AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AS THE EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AGENDA:

12. The European Youth Work Agenda (hereinafter 'the Agenda') is a strategic framework for strengthening and developing quality and innovation in, and recognition of youth work. It adopts a targeted approach to further developing knowledge-based youth work in Europe and connecting political decisions with their practical implementation. The Agenda is characterised by coordinated cooperation among stakeholders at different levels and in various areas of youth work, and it also serves to strengthen youth work as a distinct field of work that can act as an equal partner with other policy fields.

13. The Agenda comprises the following elements:

(a) Political basis

In line with the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027), the European Youth Work Agenda should strive for quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. When it comes to implementation, the EU activities in the field of youth work should contribute to the strategy's overall objectives and build on the instruments and governance agreed for this strategy.

The Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work and the Youth Sector Strategy 2030 provide the impetus for strengthening, recognising and further developing youth work policies and practices, hence contributing to the development of the Agenda.

The above-mentioned documents call for creating synergies or close cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union institutions and their member states.

(b) Cooperation in the youth work community of practice

Cooperation within the youth work community of practice in the Member States and at European level is fundamental to the effectiveness of the Agenda and will shape both the content of the Agenda and its future development.

(c) Putting the Agenda into practice: 'the Bonn Process'

The process of implementing the Agenda, called the 'Bonn Process' ^(⁹), should be shaped by the youth work community of practice, within their respective spheres of competence and their various mandates, roles and capacities. It consists of developing and proposing implementation strategies, measures and priorities at all levels to be carried out through activities from local to European level, across the entire spectrum of youth work settings and within the relevant spheres of competence.

(d) Funding programmes in the field of youth

The enforced relevant EU's funding programmes in the field of youth, (in particular Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps), may offer support and funding to facilitate the implementation process of the Agenda in line with the programmes' objectives.

AIM TO:

14. Promote the further development and strengthening of quality and innovation in and recognition of youth work and, in partnership with the youth work community of practice, improve the framework within which it is carried out, at all levels, including by drawing on cross-sectoral cooperation and evidence-based approaches.
15. Give particular attention to the implementation of the Agenda as part of the EU Youth Strategy and, where possible, fully integrate youth work policies into all levels of youth policy and the associated strategies (national, regional and local) in the Member States.
16. Ensure the presence of sustainable structures and the availability of appropriate resources for quality youth work, so that all young people can have a positive experience of the measures put in place in this area, or shape these measures themselves, with a particular focus on action at local level and in remote and rural areas where there are fewer opportunities for youth work.

⁽⁹⁾ The third European Youth Work Convention, a digital event broadcasted from Bonn, is the start of the implementation process for implementing the Agenda.

17. Strengthen and extend the common principles of youth work within the youth work community of practice by increasing knowledge and awareness of developments in youth work in Europe, by promoting regular cooperation, exchange and common practices, while taking into account the differences between the various levels and areas of youth work.
18. Enhance understanding of the concepts, methods and tools used for education and training in youth work, further develop competence-based frameworks for formal and non-formal youth work education and training, where applicable and provide the various actors involved in youth work with sufficient quality education, training, guidance and support.
19. Regularly monitor and evaluate the state of and developments and challenges in youth work, analyse the needs of young people and trends relevant to youth work, involve young people when developing strategies and encourage the youth work community of practice in cooperation with other sectors concerned, to respond to these developments and continue to develop their ways of working accordingly.
20. Where appropriate, further develop strategies and actions that allow non-formal and informal learning in the area of youth work to be recognised and validated, and the contribution of youth work to empowering young people to be recognised.
21. Strengthen youth work's capacity to empower young people to contribute to the development of inclusive, sustainable, democratic, plural and peaceful societies.
22. Increase opportunities for cross-border interaction and exchange between young people from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and for intercultural exchange within Member States, making this standard practice in youth work, and facilitate the creation of more strategic projects for cooperation in youth work across Europe.
23. In light of the experience gained from the COVID-19 pandemic and in view of possible future crises, ensure, at all levels, the ongoing existence and operation of the various facilities and structures involved in youth work by developing crisis-proof mechanisms and resources, including digital technologies, and ensure that facilities and structures are able to adapt to the current situation and similar situations that may arise in the future.
24. Strengthen cooperation both between Member States and the Council of Europe and between the respective institutions in order to support the development of quality youth work across Europe.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES IN LINE WITH THE SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE AND AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS WITH DUE REGARD FOR THEIR SPECIFIC NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, TO:

25. Integrate youth work into existing and future youth policy strategies and their implementation at all administrative levels in order to facilitate greater innovation, improve quality and increase recognition of the field, with a particular emphasis on action at local level in shaping and developing the Agenda.
26. Identify themes and fields of action for the further development of youth work at local, regional and national level, in accordance with the common objectives of the Agenda, which should be drawn up and implemented within the framework of the EU Youth Strategy and in cooperation with the youth work community of practice. This process should be as targeted as possible and be integrated, where appropriate, into existing strategies.
27. Inform all relevant actors at national, regional and local level within the youth work community of practice about the Agenda and its implementation and ensure there is an appropriate dialogue with and among them.

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

28. Promote the European dimension of youth work through cross-border and transnational exchange, cooperation, intercultural learning and peer-learning.
29. Facilitate the implementation and further development of the Agenda by using existing structures and instruments or identifying or establishing, where appropriate, new, support structures, tools, partnerships or other appropriate methods of cooperation at the various levels.
30. Strive to ensure that the Agenda is shaped to the greatest extent possible by the youth work community of practice, and make available to them information, opportunities and spaces to facilitate its involvement. In this regard, special attention should be given to young people and youth workers.

31. Foresee a European Youth Work Convention in principle every five years, to serve as a forum for the further development of the Agenda, consider inviting the Member States of the Council of Europe as part of the neighbourhood policy of the EU, and explore the possible ways of supporting for the preparation and implementation of the Agenda through the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.
32. Set up an open and consultative 'Network for youth work development in Europe' of relevant structures that contribute effectively to the development of youth work by promoting innovative approaches, supporting the development and cooperation with and between different actors inside and outside the youth work community of practice, providing support and disseminating information on the various thematic priorities, approaches, networks and target groups. In this regard, advice and expertise from other sectors should also support the network. The network should seek to involve new actors in its development work.
33. Explore the possibilities under which the EU funding programmes, such as Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps, could actively contribute, where appropriate, to the implementation of the Agenda using the programmes' different funding instruments.
34. Promote active, critical citizenship and democratic awareness and the appreciation of diversity among all young people as permanent and fundamental parts of youth work, including by promoting competence-building through the education and training of youth workers. Give all young people, without discrimination, the opportunity to act on their own initiative, develop their self-efficacy and exercise a positive influence.
35. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Agenda. To this end, the EU Youth Report should include a dedicated chapter on the development of youth work structures, support tools, partnerships or other appropriate methods of cooperation in Member States and at European level.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

36. Ensure that the Agenda is enshrined in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, including the European Youth Goals, and increase its visibility by using the governance instruments and tools provided for in the EU Youth Strategy to implement the Agenda and to monitor, evaluate, disseminate and utilise its results.
 37. Ensure synergies with other international organisations and reinforce the existing partnership with the Council of Europe when implementing the Agenda through complementary and coordinated action. The EU-Council of Europe partnership in the youth field could be assigned a central role in ensuring synergies and in facilitating dialogue for youth workers.
 38. Consider developing an open and multilingual dedicated European digital platform on youth work in close cooperation with the youth work community of practice to share information, knowledge and good practices, engage in cooperation and peer-learning. Thereby facilitate the development and implementation of the Agenda, including its external dimension, where relevant. An expert group representing the youth work community of practice could accompany and advise on the process of creating and implementing the platform.
 39. strengthen knowledge-building and evidence-based approaches in youth work in Europe by facilitating expert exchanges and scientific- and practice-informed research on the impact of the principles, developments, concepts, activities and practices applied in the field, in particular by involving youth researchers and building a repository of expertise within youth work organisations.
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ANNEX I

References

In adopting this Resolution, the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council refer to the following documents:

Council documents

- Council Resolution on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1)
- Council conclusions on digital youth work (OJ C 414, 10.12.2019, p. 2)
- Council conclusions on smart youth work (OJ C 418, 7.12.2017, p. 2)
- Council conclusions on education and training of youth workers (OJ C 412, 9.12.2019, p. 12)
- Council conclusions on raising opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas (OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, p. 3)
- Council Resolution on youth work (OJ C 327, 4.12.2010, p. 1)
- Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1)
- Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (OJ C 195, 7.6.2018, p. 1)

European Commission documents

- Study on youth work and entrepreneurial learning (2017)
- Study on the value of youth work in the EU: general report - case studies- country reports (2014)
- Youthpass impact study. Young people's personal development and employability and the recognition of youth work (2013)

Expert group reports from the Council's cooperation in the youth field

- Expert group report: Developing digital youth work – Policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples (2018)
- Expert group report: The contribution of youth work to preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation (2017)
- Expert group report: The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment (2015)
- Expert group report: Quality Youth Work - A common framework for the further development of youth work (2015)

Council of Europe documents

- Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on youth work
- Resolution CM/Res (2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030

Others

- Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention ⁽¹⁾
- European Training Strategy in the field of Youth. Supporting the development of quality youth work in Europe through capacity building (2015) ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262187/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/eu-training-strategy-youth_en.pdf

ANNEX II

For the purpose of this Resolution, the following definition applies:

Youth work community of practice ⁽¹⁾

In the field of youth work, the youth work community of practice should be understood as a group of people, professional or non-professional, who share the same interests in resolving an issue, improving their skills, and learning from each other's experiences.

The youth work community of practice comprises stakeholders at all levels from local to European level, such as:

- youth workers and youth leaders;
- youth work managers;
- project carriers;
- accredited and independent youth work organisations;
- trainers;
- researchers;
- educators of youth workers;
- local communities and municipalities;
- National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps;
- youth representations and young people and
- policy-makers for youth.

All the actors in the youth work community of practice have, within their respective spheres of competence, different mandates, roles and capacities for the further development of youth work.

⁽¹⁾ The term 'community of practice' is a theoretical term developed by educational psychologists Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger.

ANNEX III

Infographic on the European Youth Work Agenda

The European Youth Work Agenda

