

## STATUTORY FORUM

Report  
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# Youth work: the role of local and regional authorities

Current Affairs Committee

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### Summary

This report reviews the importance of youth work in member States, with examples of good practice on how it should be accompanied at the local and regional level. Underlining that young people are valuable and legitimate partners for public authorities, the report stresses the importance of investing in youth work as a means to create a more inclusive and democratic society.

Local and regional authorities are invited to design and implement innovative youth policies and engage in dialogue with young people, exchanging good practices among themselves via their respective national / regional associations as well as with youth initiatives and other stakeholders for designing better youth work policies and providing continuous competence development for youth workers. Local and regional politicians and the administrations under their authority are recommended to take the lead in developing contacts, creating spaces for and investing sufficient resources in youth work. The report provides local and regional authorities with a variety of guidelines aimed at improving co-ordination of youth work between all governance levels.

The report also provides a set of recommendations addressing national governments, encouraging them to constantly support local and regional authorities in the establishment of specific tools for the documentation and follow-up on youth work.

1 L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions  
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress  
SOC/G/PD: Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats  
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group  
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group  
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

**RESOLUTION 463 (2021)<sup>2</sup>**

1. The Council of Europe (the “CoE”) recognises young people as powerful agents for change and identifies youth work as an important contribution in this field. Compared to formal education and social services, youth work may be a relatively small sector but no less important in view of its impact on young citizens as they engage in a participatory process and seek information about their rights and opportunities.

2. Both indicators of the well-being of a society and major drivers of change, young people need to be acknowledged as fully-fledged citizens who contribute to shaping European societies. Effort must be made to accompany them by the development and implementation of innovative youth policies, as well as new ideas for youth work adaptable to individual needs and to local contexts.

3. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has made a recommendation to member States on youth work ([CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#)) in a seminal political document on the subject, emphasising the positive impact and central role that youth work can play in preventing and addressing social exclusion and in promoting the values of democracy and human rights.

4. In addition, youth work is one of the priorities of the CoE youth sector strategy 2030 ([CM/Resolution\(2020\)2](#)), the specific focus being on strengthening, recognising and promoting youth work policies and practices by embedding youth work in the youth policy framework, in particular through a European youth work agenda and its implementation in close co-operation with the European Union.

5. Along with the aims set by the CoE, and taking inspiration from the work of the CoE youth sector, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (“the Congress”) has long been vocal on the importance of empowering youth and on the urgency to implement youth work as a means to achieve the goal of building more inclusive and democratic societies.

6. Nearly two decades ago, in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life adopted in 2003, the Congress defined youth participation and active citizenship as “the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society”.

7. The Congress is also committed to promoting youth participation within its own institution. To pursue its dialogue with young people and to involve them in its work, it invites one youth delegate per country, between the ages of 18 to 30, from the 47 national delegations to attend two sessions alongside delegation members and to take part in all discussions and meetings during one year.

8. In line with the above, the Congress,

a. recognises that local and regional authorities must support young people so that they can achieve their full potential as autonomous members of society, not only by providing services but also by co-ordinating relevant activities at local level, with the objective of enabling them to plan their own future and exercise their democratic citizenship;

b. acknowledges that local and regional authorities are primarily responsible for successfully implemented youth work which requires specific attention to how given resources are used and how procedures are adapted to the living and working conditions of young people if effective and efficient youth work is to be carried out;

c. takes into consideration the differentiated circumstances, needs, interests, ideas and experiences of young people;

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<sup>2</sup> Debated and adopted by the Statutory Forum on 12 February 2021 (see Document [CG-FORUM\(2021\)01-02](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Ilсур METSHIN, Russian Federation (L, ILDG) and Thomas ANDERSSON, Sweden (R, ILDG).

*d.* notes that the work undertaken with and by youth is crucial to finding solutions for a safer, healthier and more inclusive world, starting with the implementation of United Nations sustainable development goals (in particular, regarding climate change and environment-related action) and when dealing with crisis situations (such as the recent refugee and COVID19 crises and the impact they had and have on social cohesion, the labour market, the economy, schooling and the health sector);

*e.* strongly encourages local and regional authorities of its members States to take the lead in developing contacts with youth initiatives and organisations and youth workers in their territories for this purpose.

9. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities to:

*a.* invest sufficient resources, both human and financial, in youth work, both when provided by the authorities and by NGOs and integrate a future-proofing approach into their planning, with procedures to regularly assess the impact of legislation, policies and activities related to youth work, keeping in mind the well-being of future generations;

*b.* provide (if youth falls within their competences, which may not always be the case for regional authorities) sufficient spaces for youth work and training for youth workers (professional and volunteer) for the delivery of quality youth work, with particular attention to the situation of isolated or disadvantaged youth who are often not directly in touch with various municipal or regional programmes and projects;

*c.* ensure that information is gathered and disseminated in a way that enables young citizens to take part in discussions starting from the same knowledge and to interpret it from their own perspective, bearing in mind that such information gathering requires the development of relevant, clear and measurable aims and indicators, followed by concrete analyses, tools, quality development and adoption of innovations as well as common efforts of all stakeholders to cooperate around these goals;

*d.* develop partnerships with NGOs and youth organisations for joint environmental initiatives aimed at building the capacity of youth as future leaders and driving forces behind a new climate change regime;

*e.* refer to Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work when devising policies and strategies for youth work and make use of the CoE youth work portfolio, and participate actively in the five-yearly reviews of CM/Rec(2017)4, the first of which is to be held in 2022;

*f.* promote the Council of Europe's "Gender Matters" manual on addressing gender-based violence affecting young people, and support youth work on issues of gender equality and gender-based violence through sustainable funding and structures and a competency-based framework for the education and training of youth workers;

*g.* consider applying for the CoE quality label for youth centres for local youth centres and to set up youth centres if there are none;

*h.* cooperate with and encourage local youth NGOs and associations to apply to the European Youth Foundation for funding of pilot activities.

10. Finally, the Congress reaffirms its intention to pursue its co-operation with the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Democracy, in particular, the Youth Department, on promoting youth participation and access to social rights for youth.

**RECOMMENDATION 450 (2021)<sup>3</sup>**

1. The Council of Europe (the “CoE”) recognises young people as powerful agents for change and identifies youth work as an important contribution in this field. Compared to formal education and social services, youth work may be a relatively small sector but no less important in view of its impact on young citizens as they engage in a participatory process and are informed about their rights and opportunities.

2. Both indicators of the well-being of a society and major drivers of change, young people need to be acknowledged as fully-fledged citizens who contribute to shaping European societies. Effort must be made to accompany them by the development and implementation of innovative youth policies, as well as new ideas for youth work adaptable to individual needs and to local contexts.

3. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has made a recommendation to member States on youth work ([CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#)) in a seminal political document on the subject, emphasising the positive impact and central role that youth work can play in preventing and addressing social exclusion and in promoting the values of democracy and human rights.

4. In addition, youth work is one of the priorities of the CoE youth sector strategy 2030 ([CM/Resolution\(2020\)2](#)), the specific focus being on strengthening, recognising and promoting youth work policies and practices by embedding youth work in the youth policy framework, in particular through a European youth work agenda and its implementation in close co-operation with the European Union.

5. Along with the aims set by the CoE, and taking inspiration from the work of the CoE youth sector, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (“the Congress”) has long been vocal on the importance of empowering youth and on the urgency to implement youth work as a means to achieve the goal of building more inclusive and democratic societies.

6. Nearly two decades ago, in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life adopted in 2003, the Congress defined youth participation and active citizenship as “the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society”.

7. The Congress is also committed to promoting youth participation within its own institution. To pursue its dialogue with young people and to involve them in its work, it invites one youth delegate per country, between the ages of 18 and 30, from the 47 national delegations to attend each session alongside delegation members and to take part in all discussions and meetings.

8. In line with the above, the Congress encourages member States of the CoE to:

a. implement the Committee of Ministers’ recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#) on youth work in their countries, thereby also supporting youth work at the local level, *inter alia* by translating it into their languages (currently available in 20 languages) and participating actively in the five-yearly reviews of the [CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#), the first of which is to be held in 2022;

b. encourage local and regional authorities to work with NGOs and youth initiatives and to adopt a future-proofing approach, setting up procedures to assess the impact of legislation, policies and concrete action related to youth work, with a view to the well-being of future generations;

c. support local authorities to apply for the CoE quality label for local youth centres.

9. In addition, the Congress reiterates the invitation previously made to member States of the Council of Europe in its resolutions 346(2012) and 386(2015) to include young people in their national delegations to the Congress, both as representative and substitute members, so that the composition of the Congress reflects that of European societies.

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote 2.

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM<sup>4</sup>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Background to the report

1. The Council of Europe recognises young people as powerful agents for change and identifies youth work as an important contribution in this field. Youth empowerment should therefore be supported by government policies aimed at realising young people's full potential as autonomous members of society.

2. The Council of Europe is also committed to the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG 10 "Reducing Inequalities" and SDG 11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities" oriented at building a more inclusive, sustainable and democratic society. In this regard, the Committee of Ministers recommendation to member States on youth work ([CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#))<sup>5</sup>, a seminal political document on the subject, emphasises the positive impact and central role that youth work can play in preventing and addressing social exclusion and in promoting the values of democracy and human rights. In addition, youth work is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 ([CM/Resolution\(2020\)2](#)), the specific focus being on strengthening, recognising and promoting youth work policies and practices by embedding youth work in the youth policy framework, in particular through a European youth work agenda and its implementation in close co-operation with the European Union.

3. Along with the aims set by the Council of Europe, and taking inspiration from the work of the Council of Europe youth sector, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities ("the Congress") has long been vocal on the importance of empowering youth and on the urgency to implement youth work as a means to achieve the goal of building more inclusive and democratic societies. Nearly two decades ago, in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life adopted in 2003, the Congress defined youth participation and active citizenship as "the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society".

4. Within the past decade, the Congress adopted several texts on the subject, namely [Resolution 346\(2012\)](#) on youth and democracy, [Resolution 366\(2014\)](#) on empowering Roma youth, [Resolution 319\(2010\)](#) on the integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods which promotes local programmes and practice – designed with the meaningful participation of the young people themselves – that produce positive outcomes for and generate self-believe in young people, and [Resolution 414\(2017\)](#)<sup>6</sup> on the role of youth policies in supporting young people's transition to adulthood, recognising youth work and youth workers as crucial actors for the development of our society while constantly encouraging member States to strengthen the policies aimed at their employment. In 2019 the Congress adopted its [Resolution 442\(2019\)](#) and [Recommendation 433\(2019\)](#) on "Social rights of young people: the role of local and regional authorities", in which it underlined the essential role that local and regional authorities play by virtue of their competences in the social field, in facilitating the access and effective exercise of social rights by young people.<sup>7</sup>

5. Keeping up the momentum, the Congress included in its priorities for 2017-2020 a chapter on youth empowerment in which it drew attention to the involvement of youth delegates in its work since 2014, especially during plenary sessions. It promised to "encourage more commitment and improved

<sup>4</sup> This explanatory memorandum is based on the document prepared by the Council of Europe consultant Jonas Agdur, Chair of InterCity Youth, the European Network of Local Departments for Youth Work (KEKS). The written contribution is available from the Secretariat upon request.

<sup>5</sup> Recommendation CM/REC (2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work

<sup>6</sup> RES 346(2012) Youth and Democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement

RES 366(2014) Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels

RES 414(2017) Forever young? The role of youth policies and youth work at local and regional levels in supporting young people's transition to autonomy and working life

<sup>7</sup> [https://search.coe.int/congress/pages/result\\_details.aspx?objectid=090000168093c4f0](https://search.coe.int/congress/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=090000168093c4f0)

[https://search.coe.int/congress/pages/result\\_details.aspx?objectid=090000168093c4ec](https://search.coe.int/congress/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=090000168093c4ec)

dialogue between local and regional authorities and the education system across Europe” in order to foster greater youth participation.

6. In 2019, the Council of Europe’s Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) invited the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress to cooperate on a report on youth work, the findings and conclusion of which could usefully inform the 3rd European Youth Work Convention,<sup>8</sup> a large-scale event being organised by the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany in the overlap of Germany’s EU Presidency (July-December 2020) and CM presidency (November 2020 to May 2021). The event will play a key role in establishing a European youth work agenda as a strategic framework for the further development and strengthening of youth work practice and policies in Europe.

7. In line with the Congress’ commitment to youth empowerment, and in response to the proposal made by the Advisory Council on Youth, the rapporteurs have prepared the present report. It acknowledges that youth work is essential for building inclusive democratic societies and recognises that youth work and youth workers, whether employees or volunteers, at all levels, including local and regional ones, make a positive contribution to this by empowering and engaging young people. The rapporteurs emphasise that local and regional authorities have the responsibility to help young people achieve their full potential as autonomous members of society, not only by providing services but also by co-ordinating relevant activities at local level, with the objective of entirely enabling them to plan their own future and exercise their democratic citizenship.

### **What is youth work?**

8. Defining youth work has been one of the major challenges in the youth sector. The concept of youth work can in fact relate to different features such as its function, its aims, its working framework (employment or volunteer) its inherent values, its methods and its activities or to various combinations. It is easy to understand therefore, why there are so many different definitions thereof across Europe. To go further and establish a clearer picture of what youth work is, however, it is crucial to recognise that these definitions are not mutually exclusive; they just focus on different aspects of the issue. The question is how to relate these diverse perspectives to each other and put them together in clear and consistent way.

9. As stated in the above-mentioned CM/Rec(2017)4, 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”. This is achieved by “empowering and engaging young people in the active creation, preparation, delivery and evaluation of initiatives and activities that reflect their needs, interests, ideas, experiences and goals.”

10. To sum up, youth work consists in young people taking part in a common process of creating, organising, planning, preparing, carrying out and evaluating activities that are based on and respond to their self-perceived needs, interests, ideas, experiences and goals which will, through both informal and non-formal learning, develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that, in turn, will strengthen their self-determination and help them to be active citizens and gain autonomy, i.e. will contribute to their personal and social development. The guiding principle in this endeavour is that policies should be rights-based and need-based, inclusive and centred on young people, their needs, interests and abilities.

**The Council of Europe Youth Department has produced a useful guide to Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work called *Youth in the spotlight*. The guide explains what youth work is and provides numerous examples of good practice from around the member States.**

## 2. WHAT CAN LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES DO TO SUPPORT YOUTH WORK?<sup>9</sup>

11. Youth work might take the shape of international youth exchanges or global movements, but it has its roots at the local level. It starts when young citizens take the opportunity to engage in a participatory process. They might do it for different reasons; from having some fun on Friday evenings and to promoting relevant and “quality” opportunities<sup>10</sup> for other young people or engaging in volunteering work, etc. Some of them might do it independently, without any support or even despite resistance, while some others would never do it if not actively invited to and/or supported along the way. Quality youth work does not happen by itself: participation needs the right soil to flourish. The role of local and regional authorities in this, is to make this opportunity as attractive and accessible as possible, fertilising the ground for quality youth work.

12. However, the conditions under which this must be done are drastically different. Deprived city suburbs and small rural villages face different challenges, from the available resources’ capability to the needs and aspirations of their young citizens. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that youth work is, even in big cities and regions, a relatively small sector with limited resources. Engaging with young people is the key component and cooperation with others can make a significant difference.

13. It logically follows that local and regional authorities should invest in reaching out to all young people. Unorganised, isolated or disadvantaged, socially excluded and uninformed youth is often not directly in touch with various municipal or regional programmes and projects. Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on finding these young people where they are in order to propose targeted and adapted responses.

14. The decisions of local and regional authorities need to be based on relevant and updated information and knowledge. A long-term strategic plan to achieve a shared vision is crucial if aims are to be realistic, they must be based on the recognition of which outcomes can be achieved. If aims are to be met, they must be based on the acknowledgment of how to best design the practices aimed at allocating the necessary resources.

15. If youth work is “to be based on and respond to the needs, interests, ideas and experiences of young people as perceived by themselves”<sup>11</sup>, young people need to be systematically addressed regarding these issues. This could be done through questionnaires, focus groups, debates and other active citizenship initiatives, directly involving young people in the whole process, including the decision-making process, especially about the prioritization and inclusiveness of young people’s diverse interests and needs, that change according to cities and villages.. When choosing a method, however, it is important to keep in mind that, different groups of young people are likely to give different answers and that it is therefore important to ensure that all different groups are reached, represented and directly involved. Depending on resources, geographical conditions and socioeconomical structures, this understanding on eventual differences is also important when priorities are to be set.

16. Addressing the needs of young people through youth work should be accompanied by another dimension, that of youth goals. The EU Youth Strategy, which is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation and European Youth Goals 2019-2027, mentions 11 European Youth Goals identifying cross-sectoral areas that affect young people’s lives and point out challenges (connecting EU with youth, equality of all genders, inclusive societies, quality learning, space and participation for all etc..). This dimension should also take into account the individual aspect and the specific objectives of each young person.

17. The rapporteurs would emphasise here the responsibility of local and regional authorities in ensuring that this knowledge and information is gathered and disseminated in an accessible format,

<sup>9</sup> All the good practice examples provided in the report are presented in frames.

<sup>10</sup> The degree of “quality” may be defined as how well something fulfils its function; to what degree the actual outcomes meet the youth work’s aims and contribute to the personal and social development of young people. See the [Report](#) from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States “Quality Youth Work”.

<sup>11</sup> The core principles of youth work, available at <http://159.69.211.24/~changema/bullet-point/%EF%82%A7to-be-based-on-and-respond-to-the-needs-interests-ideas-and-experiences-of-young-people-as-perceived-by-themselves-thus-bringing-added-value-and-or-joy-in-life/b>

so that the young citizens concerned can take part in discussions starting from the same knowledge and that they are able to interpret it from their own perspective.

**The Open Spaces Project, Region of Novosibirsk, Russian Federation:** The aim of the project is to increase young people's access in small towns and rural areas of Novosibirsk to diverse cultural life opportunities which would respond to their expectations and needs. The project is implemented by youth workers in small towns, rural areas and villages together with the local youth community and involves two persons – a guarantor (representative of a local municipality) and a future space coordinator (a young person living in the small city or village). The “spaces” are getting opened as autonomous structural bodies based on youth centres, institutions of culture or sports. Positive outcomes: six “open spaces” have been created and, during the second edition of the project, 8 people got employed as curators of the “open spaces”.

## 2.1 Establishing infrastructure to support youth work

18. When a clear youth work policy and the relative measurable aims are set, the role of local and regional authorities is to establish a sustainable infrastructure for youth work that matches this policy, making it possible to realise. This needs to be done in dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, especially young people, taking their experiences and ideas into account.

When establishing this infrastructure, it is vital to discuss how to ensure that:

- youth work is recognised, supported at a policy level and regulated also by ensuring the educational paths to perform this role are promoted and accessible;
- there are clear and well-known structures and processes for young citizens to influence the decision-making process;<sup>12</sup>
- all young citizens have equal access to quality youth work;
- there are safe and suitable facilities, “spaces”, with relevant equipment where young people can meet and “explore, articulate and develop their interests and talents, as well as their ideas for the future”;
- youth work providers can be flexible and adapt to the changing needs, ideas, interests and goals of young people;
- all young citizens get adapted information about their rights as well as about their possibilities to take part in youth work activities on local, regional, national and European level;
- funding of youth organisations and youth work providers is fair, sustainable<sup>13</sup> and transparent and accessible;
- youth workers have relevant competencies<sup>14</sup> and access to competence development when needed;<sup>15</sup>
- youth work is adequately documented and followed up as a basis for assessment and further development;
- there are well-functioning structures and processes for cross-sectorial cooperation.

<sup>12</sup> Participation is a fundamental human right recognised, among others, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is a core principle of human rights and is a condition for effective democratic citizenship for all people. The Council of Europe youth sector manual “Have your say!” was produced to support local and regional authorities, youth organisations and young people who want to give young people a real say for a meaningful democratic youth participation and accompanies the Congress' Revised European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life. See also the [Council of Europe youth sector's co-management system](#).

<sup>13</sup> In many countries youth work providers are heavily dependent on project funding, lacking a steady financial platform. This makes their situation very insecure and prevents them from working on a more long-term basis. Many organisations even lack the resources needed to apply for money, whereas others get worn out by doing so. In order to ensure continuity and quality in the youth work offered to their young citizens it is therefore important that local and regional authorities, as far as possible, provide youth work providers and youth organisations with basic funding. This investment will in many cases also lead to that more project money can be obtained from, for example, Erasmus+.

<sup>14</sup> See for example: The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-competence>; The European Training Strategy in the Field of Youth - <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/trainingstrategy/>

<sup>15</sup> See the work being undertaken by the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth on education and career paths of youth workers (<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-researching-education-career-paths-youth-workers>).



- Infrastructure stays relevant to the needs of the youth community, ensuring that as many young people as possible have access to the infrastructure, taking into account demographical changes in the region
- the youth NGO's could use the facilities freely and which platform for cooperation should be present to ensure that NGO's has the necessary access to the facilities and infrastructure.

19. In order to meet these requirements, a lot of knowledge and inspiration could be gathered from the other organisations and sources dealing with the subject. However, if public money is to be spent in accordance with these policies and in the most efficient way, these questions need answers that conform to the context in which youth work is going to take place.

20. Youth work officially recognised as such can, as said above, be provided by public institutions and/or by NGOs and other non-public bodies. How this is arranged varies both among and within countries. In some countries, youth work is mainly provided by NGOs; in other countries it is mainly provided by public institutions. Quite often there is mixed provision. It must be noted that there are also equally big variations regarding the balance between paid and volunteer youth workers. Regarding this last aspect, it is important to have a clear and defined structure reflecting the main differences in terms of youth work provided by paid professionals and by volunteers. The nature of their work, function, commitment, and roles played is different, and this needs to be defined and harmonised, in order to have clear expectations on the role of each category, so that they complement the kind of work and activities done by each, without duplication of efforts and/or lack of involvement by both parts.

21. In harmony with the policy and the set-up infrastructure, the role of local and regional authorities should guarantee that activities are carried out accordingly, supervise them and give support when needed. As for all publicly financed operations, this must be done in a sustainable way, ensuring that youth work can function under steady conditions. Authorities should ensure that funds provided for youth projects (whether carried out by NGOs or autonomous youth initiatives) is used properly, avoiding unnecessary spending (for example, not used to promote non-sustainable products such as single use plastics, etc.),

22. Consequently, when ruling on youth work, it is crucial to consider that it is based on the active participation of young people, their co-creation of activities, and that providers therefore need to be flexible regarding both when and where provision should take place and what methods and means should be used.

23. The rapporteurs underline that governance cannot be efficiently done through the mere setting up of strict rules and regulations regarding, for example, the opening hours of youth centres or when youth workers must work and where. This would kill both the flexibility and the creativity needed to provide quality youth work. It would also take the responsibility on how given resources should be used in the best possible way, away from the providers.

## **2.2 Setting objectives and defining indicators**

24. Youth work must be governed by objectives, through the setting and continuous follow-up of and dialogue on measurable aims, where quality (the degree of participation, learning and relevance for reaching the goals of youth) is balanced with costs and the target group reached. This, once again, underscores the importance of having clear and measurable aims regarding both quantitative and qualitative outcomes of youth work, as well as having clear structures and processes for continuous dialogue. Once aims are defined, relevant and adequate indicators need to be set for measuring the work done and the impact reached, as well as enabling an assessment of whether the goals have been met accordingly. If this is not the case, the indicators will make it possible to readjust the method in order to achieve the objective.

25. To achieve the goal of setting relevant aims, youth work needs to establish indicators in relation to safety and treatment, young people's influence, their participation, learning and the target group<sup>16</sup>. This means that for each area, e.g. young people's participation, there needs to be a set of sub-indicators that concretise what this means in practice and make possible to provide a structured follow-up. The sum of the sub-indicators constitutes the general indicator.

<sup>16</sup> It means defining which characteristics related to the composition of the target group are important, e.g. gender balance. The corresponding aim might be maximum 10% deviation from equal gender balance.

26. A short example of sub-indicators related to young people's participation might be as follows:

- ✓ Young people take part in preparations and long-term planning;
- ✓ Young people take part in implementation;
- ✓ Young people take part in evaluation;
- ✓ Young people perceive themselves as resources in the process;
- ✓ Young people perceive that they own the process
- ✓ Young people take part in decision-making processes (insofar as possible) on issues directly affecting their lives, their interests and their goals;

27. Concerning the above-mentioned example on “young people's participation”, the following aims might be set:

- A minimum target of 30% of young people taking part in youth work should be actively participating (i.e. take part in preparations, implementation and evaluation);
- A minimum target of 60% of youth work activities should be produced by young people (i.e. activities that are prepared, implemented and evaluated by young people).

28. The process of setting aims and indicators is thus defining what is seen as quality youth work in the given local or regional context<sup>17</sup>. This process will at the same time, when done in the right way, be a good example of participatory youth work.

29. It is important to note that a comprehensive system for documentation and follow-up will function as a governing mechanism. Through continuously asking for both quantitative and qualitative documentation of young people's participation and learning (together with statistics on number of participants, etc.) the aims become manifest in everyday operations and help youth workers keep focus and develop their work.

30. Unfortunately, in youth work, the tradition of documentation and follow-up is not a very strong one. Besides counting numbers, there has been little systematic follow-up on quality. Single isolated projects have been subjected to evaluations, often done by researchers carrying out interviews and making on-spot observations. However, what has largely been missing is the sector's own capacity to do continuous follow-up in a way that enables comparisons over time and provides the facts necessary for assessing the overall quality of operations and deciding on measures for improvement. This is an area where local and regional authorities can accompany young people by providing assistance, training and working frameworks to ensure proper documentation of youth work.

31. As stated in the European Charter on Local Youth Work, in order to implement and monitor the quality development of youth work, it is needed to have:<sup>18</sup>

- a clear and comprehensive system for documentation and follow-up of outcomes, preconditions and work processes in relation to measurable indicators and aims;
- regular and up to date mappings of local realities and needs;
- clear procedures for continuous analysis of and reflection on outcomes in terms of how they relate to preconditions, work processes and activities, and the need for further development;
- clear procedures for continuous updates on new national and international research, trends and methods in the field of youth and youth work;
- common efforts of all stakeholders to cooperate around;
- quality development and adoption of innovations;
- continuous competence development of youth workers based on a clear competency framework in combination with an analysis of local outcomes, needs, strengths and weaknesses.

<sup>17</sup> An example of a complete set of aims and indicators related to the main general indicators can be found at [www.keks.se/eng](http://www.keks.se/eng), it is however important that aims and indicators are discussed and adapted to local conditions as described in the handbook Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development.

<sup>18</sup> European charter on local youth work – <https://www.europegoeslocal.eu/charter/> p.7

- cooperation between youth workers, civil society organisations and responsible authorities in order monitor plans for quality development.<sup>19</sup>

The rapporteurs recommend this future-proofing approach to local and regional authorities inviting them to set up procedures to regularly assess the impact of legislation, policies and activities related to youth work, keeping in mind the well-being of future generations.

### **3. GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Council of Europe projects and tools**

##### **3.1.1 The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio**

32. The youth work portfolio was developed in response to the youth work community of practice calls for an instrument that could help them to gain better recognition for their work. The Portfolio does this by helping members of that community of practice to:

- identify, assess and record their competencies;
- describe their competencies to others,
- set their own further learning and development goals.

The Portfolio is a tool which helps people and organisations doing youth work to consider how they contribute to helping young people acquire the competence to be active citizens.

##### **3.1.2 Council of Europe quality label for youth centres**

33. Youth centres in member States that subscribe to the values and youth policy priorities of the Council of Europe can apply for the quality label for youth centres. The label is a means of encouraging quality development among youth centres based on the established standards for educational and policy approaches of the youth sector and are a mechanism for the promotion of quality standards in non-formal education and youth work.<sup>20</sup>

##### **3.1.3 The ENTER! project**

34. Back in 2008, the Council of Europe Youth Department launched a project called "Enter!" on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The project aimed at strengthening the vision of youth work as an important mechanism for young people to participate and share their future, despite any form of discrimination they may be subject to. The role of local and regional authorities was essential in the development of the Enter! project (cf Congress Resolution 319 (2010)).

35. The project was adopted through a Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers in 2015 ([CM/Rec\(2015\)3](#))<sup>21</sup> which provides a list of concrete suggestions addressed to member States and local authorities for its implementation. Young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the 47 Member States developed and implemented local projects with the support of their local authorities in order to respond to challenges of discrimination, violence and exclusion. Successful partnerships were made between youth work, young people and youth policy at local level.

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<sup>19</sup> Monitoring quality development involves paying attention to how young people's attitudes and their perceptions of themselves and their participation in society change - for example, experience or feelings related to being acknowledged as a "resource"; changed attitudes in relation to immigrants, development of soft skills such as the ability to cooperate, gained knowledge (e.g. about the EU). See the [Report](#) from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States "Quality Youth Work"

<sup>20</sup> For more information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/quality-label-for-youth-centres>.

<sup>21</sup> [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c46f7](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c46f7)

**Municipality of Neapoli-Skyes, Greece:** A pilot initiative aimed at promoting the use of the Enter recommendations by local authorities in Greece was carried out by the Municipality of Neapoli-Skyes. The recommendation was translated into Greek. Regular meetings were organised with the Mayor, the youth sector of the Municipality, young people and local NGOs. As a result, the recommendations were included in the municipal action plan for 2014-2019. The Municipality further developed its relationship with local youth organisations. Today, around 100 municipalities in Greece (from the total of 325) are active in local youth policy. The Central Union of Municipalities is proposing a manual on youth policy on local level including good practices from national and European level and the tools of EU and the Council of Europe on youth. Further municipalities showed interest in the project.

**Municipality of Léon, Spain (2017-2018):** Youth workers with the Association Auryn and the councillor of the municipality of Léon for the family, social service and youth developed a local project to implement the Enter! Recommendation. The project consisted of a series of workshops for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Leon using non-formal education tools and approaches on topics such as intercultural learning as well as information on human and social rights connected to the needs of the young in their lives. It also promoted the Enter! Recommendation's implementation through the municipal policy programme, to develop new ways for partnerships with the local youth work associations.

36. The second phase of the Enter! project sees the local programmes having a double role in its implementation: on one hand, they provide content for practical learning for the youth workers who organised them; on the other, they form a wide basis for youth work interventions on access to social rights. Two examples from the local projects carried out as part of the two long-term training courses (2017-2018) are included below. They can serve as inspiration for youth workers and youth organisations in taking up social rights themes with young people.

**City of Brussels, Belgium, Peace of heART Project:** In Molenbeek, known as a difficult and disadvantaged neighbourhood where radicalisation has taken root, the project works with young people and with local authorities in order to create a place for their cultural expression. During a 5-day seminar, young people learn about social rights, the tools and skills to be agent of change and at the end of the seminar they have an exhibition with their art (in which they express their feelings about their everyday life, needs and how they see the future). The project is committed to continuously support them in their role as agents of change.

### 3.1.4 Taking it seriously: A guide to accompany Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3

37. To assist policy makers, youth work practitioners, youth organisations and youth workers, the Council of Europe youth sector has produced a guide to the implementation of Committee of Ministers CM/Rec(2015)3 [on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights](#). The Guide offers advice and examples of action to take and policies to develop so that the social rights of young people are taken seriously by all actors concerned by social inclusion and social cohesion.

### 3.1.5 Human Rights Education training programme

38. The Council of Europe youth sector runs a programme of national and regional trainings in human rights education for youth leaders and youth workers based on the "[Compass: Manual for human rights education with young people](#)", and the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

## 3.2 European Commission and other bodies

### 3.2.1 European Commission's Handbook

39. Quality development is "a systematic and continuous process of learning - of gathering information that is to be used to make knowledge-based, ongoing, gradual improvements"<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development - [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development_en) p. 64

Therefore, once the indicators have been set, one should decide how to concretely analyse them; what tools for gathering statistics to use. The Handbook provides different tools including those for the documentation of statistics and work processes, questionnaires for young people engaging in or benefitting from youth work, templates for interviews and focus groups and tools for self-assessment and peer-assessment.

40. Although the above-cited principles have been set in 2003, it has only been in recent years that systems for documentation and follow-up -meeting these requirements- have started being developed. In this regard, the European Commission's handbook "Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development"<sup>23</sup> ("the Handbook") contains some examples of such systems and how they are to be implemented and used.

41. The Handbook provides a detailed step-by-step guide on how to build a system for, and work with, quality development. Its aim is to supply the youth work sector with an easily accessible and concrete model for continuous, systematic and knowledge-based quality development. It also uses a clear and free-from-technical-terms language, which makes it easy to follow for all the stakeholders who need to be involved in the process: from young people and youth workers to public administrators and politicians.

42. The main messages in the Handbook are the following:

- The backbone of quality development is a clear and structured process that uses well customised tools, but the heart and soul of it is constructive reflection and thorough analysis based on reliable information;
- Reflection and analysis whether they take place during the creation or running of a system for quality development, need the views and engagement of all the stakeholders concerned;
- Quality development should be a continuous process. Having a good and fun atmosphere while working is therefore essential.<sup>24</sup>

43. In its Chapter 3, "Developing Indicators and Tools to Gather Information", the Handbook lists five main areas in relation to which indicators should be formulated: the core principles; core features; outcomes; preconditions and work processes. The basic method for developing indicators is posing questions that are aimed at identifying the main criteria that characterise the subject matter at hand. The handbook provides useful examples.<sup>25</sup>

44. Different methods for following up on indicators can give very different results and some of them are more reliable than others. For example, during an evaluation of youth work in a rather big city in Sweden, two different questionnaires were used: one for youth workers and the other for young people engaging in or benefitting from in youth work. One question asked whether the activities were based on young people's active participation: the two groups gave different responses. Nevertheless, as young people are more likely to know if they participate or not and do not have a policy to live up to, their reply was found to be likely more credible.<sup>26</sup>

45. If the idea is to analyse young people's active responsibility, the following indicators aimed at promoting it, should be kept in mind:

- There is a clear model for giving young people necessary training.
- There is a clear routine for informing young people about their rights and opportunities
- There are clearly defined roles and positions that young people can hold.
- There are well-developed methods for working with young people's responsibility.

<sup>23</sup> Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development - [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development_en)

<sup>24</sup> Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development, Executive summary - <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94f52c00-28b0-11e7-ab65-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>25</sup> Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development - [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development_en) p. 44

<sup>26</sup> Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development - [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2017/improving-youth-work-your-guide-quality-development_en) p.43

- There are clear work plans regarding what actions should be taken and by whom in order to achieve the specific aims that are set in relation to young people's responsibility.

### 3.2.2 Quality assessment: some examples

46. The rapporteurs note that local and regional authorities need assessment to manage youth work and to showcase its outcomes. Youth work providers need them in order to reflect on and develop their practice. It is only through the regular gathering and analysis of information regarding quality (degree of participation, learning and relevance to achieving young people's goals), target group (who is reached) and costs that authorities and practitioners can create together a learning system and develop youth work in accordance with the Council of Europe recommendation.

**Spain:** Several municipalities in the region of Gerona use self-assessments based on indicators to gather information about their local youth policies. The University of Gerona developed the tool and supports the municipalities in the use of it. At the start municipalities and youth workers were not used to gather information in such a way. The university helped them to make use of assessments and now the culture of assessments is becoming more and more common in youth work, helping people to bring the current situation under control while setting goals and directions.

**Lithuania:** A methodology for quality assessment of youth policy has been developed by municipalities to maximise the efficiency of the programmes and measures implemented in the field of youth policy at the national and local level and to harmonise development of youth policy in the municipalities. Each assessment report describes the local context and contains data collected according to nine indicators and their analysis (preconditions for youth policy implementation; youth participation; support for young people; youth non-formal education, youth training and counselling; youth information, inter-agency dimension, cross-sectoral dimension, integrity of youth policy, improvement and innovations of youth policy, international relations and cooperation), good practices and an assessment summary. The reports are public and available online.

### 3.2.3 The “Europe Goes Local” project

47. In 2016, the National Agencies of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme and their partners<sup>27</sup> engaged in a long-term cooperation. This led to the development and implementation of a project called “Europe Goes Local: Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level” which core aim is to raise the quality of local youth work in particular through enhanced cooperation between various stakeholders that are active at the municipal level.

48. On 4 June 2019, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Event of the Europe Goes Local network, in line with the recommendations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Work Convention and the newly adopted Council of Europe recommendation [(CM/Rec 2017)4] on youth work, the Steering Group of the project set the target of creating a European Charter on Local Youth Work through a series of actions and activities at the European, national and local levels.

### 3.2.4 The European Charter on Local Youth Work

49. The Charter constitutes a common European platform for the necessary dialogue on youth work. It is a checklist around which stakeholders can gather and discuss what measures might be needed for the further development of youth work.

50. The introductory text of the Charter captures the importance of youth work and sets the tone for the following guiding principles: “A democratic society needs the voices and active participation of young people. In order to fulfil this role, young people need a place where they can set their own agenda. A space where they, together with their peers, can explore, articulate and develop their interests and talents, as well as their ideas for the future. A space where they get stimulation and support to further develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need in order to reach their

<sup>27</sup> These partners are: The European Youth Forum, the Partnership between The Council of Europe and the EU in the field of youth, InterCity Youth – the European Network of Local Departments for Youth Work and the POYWE network.

full potential as individuals and citizens. Youth work is this space, and young people are, and must always be, its primary stakeholders”<sup>28</sup>.

51. The core principles of youth work presented in the Charter state that youth work is value based and that it needs to:

- be based on voluntary participation – on young people being active in youth work out of their own will and motivation;
- be based on and respond to the needs, interests, ideas and experiences of young people as perceived by themselves, thus bringing added value and/or joy in life;
- be created, organised, planned, prepared, carried out and evaluated together with or by young people;
- contribute to the personal and social development of young people through non-formal and informal learning;
- strive to enhance young people’s self-determination, autonomy and access to rights;
- have a holistic perspective on young people and meet them where they are, as capable individuals and primary resources in their own lives and for society as a whole;
- promote critical thinking and creativity, as well as human rights, democratic values and active citizenship;
- be actively inclusive and offer equal opportunities to all young people.

**Municipality of Gentofte, Denmark:** The municipality has its own youth policy (referred to as UNG POLITIK) that has been developed in close cooperation between young people and politicians. Out of several different initiatives, one is the establishment of a "mobile youth office". The municipality has given young people the opportunity to develop and operate a "mobile youth office", which is to drive around in the municipality and involve other young people in different activities. The young people are given free scope to organise and conceptually develop the "mobile youth office" that will both serve as a food truck and have a scene on the roof. In combination with a resourceful group of young people, the political prioritisation provides the municipality with good opportunities to involve young people in concrete activities and even policy development.

**City of Porto, Portugal, Porto Youth Strategy 4.0:** This is a new municipal youth strategy with young people, youth workers and decision makers. It focuses on a goals-oriented approach to strengthen democratic participation and empower a youth-friendly city. Erasmus+ #YouthUpPorto will set-up nine youth labs, engaging the seven city boroughs. This local youth dialogue project invites all stakeholders to work together and develop: 1) local youth policies assessment; 2) shared principles and vision (#youthupporto Manifest); 3) Porto Youth Goals and SMART targets (connecting local, national and global agendas); 4) youth participation mechanisms; 5) a toolbox to support youth work, youth organisations and active citizenship. The Project team includes Porto Youth Council organisations, National Youth Council and National Federation of Youth Associations. Shared responsibility with Porto Youth Council explores the potential to move towards co-management of local youth policies. The project design also includes four training activities for young people and youth workers, 4 workshops with other municipalities, one National Local Youth Council Meeting, to support peer-learning and competences development.

#### 4. YOUTH INITIATIVES AND WORK DURING CRISIS SITUATIONS

52. Europe has gone through a turbulent decade facing a series of crises which set a critical challenge for all levels of government, calling for adapted and effective measures. The influx of a staggering number of refugees running for their lives from war or famine under horrendous conditions, the increasing number of climate change related disasters ranging from wildfires to floods which tested the resilience of urban and rural areas. The rising radicalisation of certain sections of the population resulted in terrorist attacks in many cities and has sometimes led to a reaction by governments restricting individual freedoms to a certain extent, accompanied by the spread of new forms of hate speech and the current COVID-19 pandemic have shaped European policies and

<sup>28</sup> European Charter on Local Youth Work, Europe Goes Local, (2019), p. 1 available at <https://www.europegoeslocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/20190603-egl-charter.pdf>

continue to have an impact on the lives of all citizens. Young people have been active and quite visible in dealing with these issues.

#### 4.1 Refugee integration

53. In recent years, migration has put a huge pressure in many European countries. There is an emerging reflection on how to ensure a faster and more efficient integration of the immigrants. The youth sector has the challenging task to develop mid to long-term responses to help the big proportion of migrants, who are young people themselves, integrate in their new communities and participate actively in public life (cf in particular CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood).

54. According to the reports from 27 European Union countries, “Youth work is also defined by its broader more societal aims which are participation in democratic societies, prevention and social inclusion and cohesion”<sup>29</sup>. One of the core issues and thematic priority areas identified across government youth policies and funding programmes is the situation of disadvantaged young people. Young people with migrant backgrounds is one of the target groups that are not sufficiently reached by youth work<sup>30</sup>. This is the reason why youth organisations and youth centres should look into the activities that they are proposing and critically evaluate the suitability of the activities to vulnerable groups (as refugees) as well as the accessibility of it to more various groups including people with fewer financial opportunities, etc.)

**The Changemakers Academy, Stockholm, Sweden:** local training and mentoring project launched by The Young Republic, a youth organisation registered in Sweden, aiming to empower young people (including those with refugee and migrant backgrounds) to create a participatory and inclusive environment in their local communities. The project was implemented in three phases. Starting with a seminar, young people formed smaller teams to analyse, plan and carry out their projects, accompanied by mentors. Progress was monitored on three projects: to increase the turnout among foreign-born youth in the Swedish elections, to foster spaces for dialogue between young newcomers and local authorities and to promote safe housing for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. The project succeeded in bringing non-organised youth closer to grass-roots activism, and to reach out to more than half a million interactions through its campaign to encourage voting among foreign-born youth.

**Blend-In — language, cultural and social orientation for young refugees in Cyprus:** funded by Erasmus+, aims to facilitate the smooth cultural and social integration of young migrants and refugees in the hosting society. The project also addressed youth workers, social workers and operators. In order to achieve its goals, the consortium of seven European organisations from five countries (Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Malta and the United Kingdom) designed and developed two main resources: a mobile application addressing young refugees and migrants’ needs during their early days in a host society and orienting them into the hosting society’s cultural and social realities and norms and a handbook for operators focusing on key areas of the successful integration of young refugees and migrants in a host society.

**Social innovators from migrant perspective, Ashoka Foundation, Spain:** Hello Spain, from the Ashoka Foundation, is launching a program for change makers who are refugees, migrants or diaspora. They are helping them to build a strong social network structures, providing them with training and an “innovation lab” where to give their ideas to build a project in order to help the whole entrepreneur community. Part of this team are young workers with social projects that are already in place, also connected to the project Ashoka Young Change-makers, enhancing intergenerational learning.

<sup>29</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on youth work, Brussels, 18 and 19 November 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Laura Bačinskienė. Justina Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska, Integrating Refugees through Youth Work, Institute for Policy Research and Analysis, 2016 available at [https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toy\\_trainer\\_download-file-2836/TRY%20analyze%2010%2024.pdf](https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toy_trainer_download-file-2836/TRY%20analyze%2010%2024.pdf)



## 4.2 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change and youth action

55. The UN bodies recognise young people as key actors in raising awareness about all the seventeen SDGs, running educational programmes, promoting sustainable lifestyles, conserving nature, supporting renewable energy, adopting environmentally friendly practices and implementing adaptation and mitigation projects. Young people constitute the majority of the population in many countries and have an increasingly strong social and environmental awareness, which has the power to transform our societies towards a low-carbon and climate resilient future<sup>31</sup>.

56. Accordingly, the rapporteurs believes that the work undertaken with and by youth is crucial to raise the ambition of the Council of Europe member States to foster a new climate change regime. Tackling climate change requires concerted, coordinated and multi-level action supported by the conscious and informed efforts of the individuals.

57. Young people are a major driver of change. It is therefore essential to strengthen both formal and informal education on climate change and viable lifestyles to increase their awareness of the facts of climate change and to enable them to integrate this knowledge into their lives. Moreover, partnerships should be developed between governments, territorial authorities, NGOs, youth organisations for joint environmental initiatives aimed at building the capacity of youth as future leaders and driving forces behind a new climate change regime.

**Youth Leader Climate Change Project, Scotland:** The aim of this 2020 project is to equip Scotland's youth work leaders with a working understanding of the climate emergency and give them skills and tools to nurture and direct young people's concern into positive practical action. The project, launched by the National Agency for Youth Work of Scotland in cooperation with *Keep Scotland Beautiful*, will: deliver free climate change training for youth workers working across the whole range of youth work settings (training will require a day of study and will be offered through a mix of face to face workshops, self-study and webinars to offer flexibility and accessibility); develop a toolbox of activities, resources and ideas that youth workers can use to engage, inform and mobilise young people to play their part in responding to the climate emergency; train youth workers to be climate change trainers.

**#UnÁrbolPorEuropa, Equipo Europa, Spain:** The aim of this project is to facilitate Spanish youth to involve themselves into local decision-making regarding sustainability. They are offering training on the European Green Deal and youth activism. They have also launched the "Youth Forum on Local Sustainability" where youth can debate about different topics and take their own conclusions. The project, launched by the Youth Association Equipo Europa in cooperation with the Spanish European Parliament Office (Madrid), has invited a group of young people to involve the local administration of all Spanish provinces in fighting climate change.

## 4.3 Radicalisation

58. Radicalisation of individuals and groups and the associated use of violence have become a growing issue of concern in Europe and its neighbouring regions. There has been a notable rise in hate speech, violent xenophobia, religious and political extremism, terrorist attacks, incidence of hate crimes and attacks on migrants and refugees in Europe and its neighbouring regions. All of these emerging concerns have highlighted the need to work with young people in order to identify and address the root causes of extremism and prevent their radicalisation, as well as strengthen young people's resilience, prevent marginalisation, promote equality, emphasise alternatives and reinforce the cohesion of communities in which they live.

59. While on one hand, religious radicalisation of young people born and raised in Europe has been on the rise, particularly in countries such as France, Belgium, and Germany as well as in the countries of the Western Balkans and Southern Mediterranean, on the other hand, we are also witnessing a parallel development of right-wing radicalisation in both Western and Eastern Europe. It is important to recognise and emphasise that different types of radicalisation often co-exist and feed into each

31 United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change, 2010, <http://bit.ly/1FBQsfy>

other. All of these emerging concerns have highlighted the urgent need to work with young people, in order to identify and address the root causes of extremism and prevent their radicalisation.

60. The youth sector cannot be the panacea to violent radicalisation. However, youth work can, together with education and other sectors, play a role in preventing it in the early stages. It can do so, for example, by:

- empowering young people to have a greater degree of autonomy, self-determination and control over their lives in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible way;
- supporting young people to deal with challenges they face;
- strengthening young people's resilience to violent ideologies by developing their critical thinking and helping them recognise the harm violence can cause to them and their communities.<sup>32</sup>

**PRONI Centre for Youth Development in Brcko, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The project was inspired by research findings that Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a target for national and global extremist recruitment efforts. In order to address this issue PRONI organises various activities, such as social media campaigns, street actions, sporting events and planned trainings of youth workers to confront youth radicalisation. The Facebook campaign "Citizens Against Terrorism B&H", which aimed to raise awareness among young people about the issue of radicalisation leading to violence, and confront violent behaviour online and offline, reached 347 383 and engaged more than 50 000 people (post-engagement) and had 1531 likes. As part of the campaign, a street action was also organised in Tuzla, with 427 people signing a petition and sending it to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ambassador to the UN. In the petition, they asked for 22 May to be recognized as the International Day against Terrorism. The goal of the campaign was to send a message that youth from Bosnia and Herzegovina are active in addressing radicalisation, and are working locally, but thinking globally.

**Forum MNE in Rožaje and Plav, Montenegro:** The project "Preventing Youth Radicalisation in Northern Montenegro through Youth Work" focuses on challenging the current value system of young people in the three municipalities in the northern part of Montenegro (Rožaje, Plav and Berane), promoting tolerance, peace building, conflict transformation and individual development. In Rožaje and Plav, it is related to a very strong affiliation to Islam, and in Berane to the Orthodox Church. Forum MNE is doing preventive work, so none of these issues are tackled directly, but rather following the meticulously tailored project activities that mainly deal with value systems and conflict management in all three municipalities. Among other activities, the project involves the following: capacity-building trainings for young people from targeted municipalities on preventing violent radicalisation and extremism through online and offline activities, at least 10 community-based activities (documentaries, festivals, workshops, graffiti etc.) targeting this issue and an e-brochure on prevention of youth radicalisation.

#### 4.4 COVID-19 crisis

61. According to the new UN plan to address COVID-19<sup>33</sup>, young people are some of the most affected by the pandemic's socio-economic impacts and are facing severe difficulties in accessing rights. The COVID-19 outbreak in fact, represents a massive challenge for the youth work sector. Almost overnight, it has completely changed the way the whole sector works, putting up new obstacles between young people and the vital support that the sector provides them with.

62. Nevertheless, youth are also among the most active in global responses: not only they are on the frontlines as health workers, but they are also advancing health and safety in their roles as researchers, activists, innovators, and communicators. As such, decision-makers must commit to ensuring youth voices are part of the solutions for a healthier, safer, and inclusive world. As a way to overcome the above-mentioned obstacles different youth workers' organisations are giving guidance

<sup>32</sup> García López - Pašić, *Youth Work against Violent Radicalisation*, Council of Europe and European Commission, 2018, p. 5, available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/YW-against-radicalisation-web.pdf/90a7569d-182d-0b0c-ce5d-9a0fe111ec91>

<sup>33</sup> UN News, UN launches COVID-19 plan that "could defeat the virus and build a better world", 31.03.2020 available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060702>

on how to move the youth work offer online, as well as signposting vital information and services to help navigate the challenges posed by COVID-19.

63. From the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council of Europe youth sector set about exploring how to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis on the rights of young people, youth civil society, youth policy and youth work and to adapt its work. Together with its partners, the youth sector has been drawing the attention of the member States to the need to continue to guarantee the protection of young people's fundamental and human rights and uphold the Council of Europe's values. The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) – the co-managed decision-making body of the youth sector – set up a working group to analyse the challenges and highlight best practices supporting youth work.

64. In this regard, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth has launched the COVID-19 and Youth platform<sup>34</sup> in order to grant visibility to those youth initiatives responding to COVID-19 and to the health, social, and economic consequences of the pandemic. All the organisations featured in the platform are currently fighting COVID-19, helping their local communities with medical assistance, food distribution, arts programs, education initiatives, technology solutions and more.

65. Along similar lines, the European Youth Forum has launched the #SeparatedbutUnited campaign, with the aim of showcasing all the critical initiatives youth organisations and young people are taking in Europe and beyond, recognising that the impact of COVID-19 is exposing existing failures and inequalities built into our economic, political and welfare systems and that there is an urgent need to address these deep-rooted issues, to stand up for human rights and fairer societies.

**Caritas Europa, Bresso - Metropolitan Area of Milan, Italy:** Caritas Ambrosiana (Diocese of Milan), FOM (the Foundation of the oratories of the Diocese of Milan) and the Youth Pastoral Office have addressed the young people inviting them to collaborate and share creativity, so as to go through this moment of emergency. Bresso is unfortunately one of the cities with the most infected and most quarantined families, and to cope with this situation, the parish and the oratory have joined forces with those of the Municipality, the Civil Protection and the Red Cross. Youth workers, in ten days, prepared about 300 packets of food, which the Civil Protection then handed over to families and lonely people in quarantine. In groups of three, with mask, gloves and keeping the required safe distance, they pack the parcels following the indications of the municipal call centre. With an average of ten requests a day, the volunteers – a total of fifteen, even if the availability was greater – are divided into several work teams that change over the various days of the week. In addition to those assisted for the emergency in these days, the youth of Bresso continue to distribute food to over 200 families in difficulty.

**E-Democracy Project, Athens, Greece:** Its aim is to inform Greek university students about the challenges and questions that have arisen from the Covid-19 pandemic. The message of this project is that in order to have the right answers, first you need to ask the right questions. E- Democracy will use interactive learning methods to maximize the participants' benefit. This project divides the Covid-19 challenges in three sectors: Public Health, Economics and Politics. Each sector will have its own workshop where the participants will have the chance to voice their opinions and scepticism about the inadequacies that have emerged due to the pandemic and discuss the feasible potential solutions and their implications. Each workshop will have two coordinators to guarantee the quality of the debate.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

66. Youth work is, compared to formal education and social services, a relatively small sector but not less important. It creates life changing experiences through non-formal working methodologies. Youth work should therefore be recognised at policy level, regulated by standards, and introduced into the educational path of young people.

67. Even if formal education requires more resources, the importance of youth work, and the non-formal and informal learning it provides, could be exemplified through the following metaphor: When

34 Initiative available at <https://www.unmgcy.org/youth-initiatives?offset=1588368265940>

you cook steak, you will spend most of your money on meat. You will probably also spend some, but less, money on potatoes and vegetables. The sum spent on salt and pepper will be almost negligible. However, you would not skip it, and you would not compensate the lack of salt and pepper through buying more meat. Youth work is the seasoning in the lives of many young people, it provides them with knowledge, skills and experiences that are vital to their personal and social development and to the quality of their everyday lives.

68. Local and regional authorities must support young people so that they can achieve their full potential as autonomous members of society, not only by providing services but also by co-ordinating and co-managing relevant activities at local level, with the objective of entirely enabling them to plan their own future and exercise their democratic citizenship, fostering thereby a more democratic, inclusive and self-aware society in the long term.

69. Local and regional authorities are the ones primarily responsible for successfully implemented youth work. This is a task that needs to be taken seriously and handled with care. It requires specific attention to how given resources are used, how well they are documented and how procedures are adapted to the living and working conditions of young people if effective and efficient youth work is to be carried out.

70. Given the differentiated circumstances, needs, interests, ideas, experiences and goals of young people, local and regional authorities must ensure that information is gathered and disseminated in a way that enables young citizens to take part in discussions and decision-making starting from the same knowledge and to interpret it from their own perspective.

71. Such information gathering requires the development of relevant indicators, followed by concrete analyses, tools, quality development and adoption of innovations as well as common efforts of all stakeholders to cooperate around these goals.

72. The rapporteurs call on local and regional authorities to take the lead in developing contacts with youth workers, youth initiatives and organisations in their territories for this purpose, allocating the necessary resources.

73. Local and regional authorities should (if youth falls within their competences, which is not always the case for regional authorities) provide sufficient spaces for youth work and invest sufficient resources – both human and financial – in youth work whether provided by the authorities or by NGOs and/or even by unorganised informal youth groups.. They should also ensure, insofar as possible, free of charge and widely available training for youth workers (professional and volunteer) for the delivery of quality youth work. They should also be encouraged to apply both for the CoE quality label for local youth centres and set up youth centres if there is none, and to the European Youth Foundation for funding for pilot activities and invited to participate actively in the five-yearly reviews of the CM/Rec(2017)4 (first to be held in 2022).

74. The rapporteurs invite member States to supply the local and regional authorities with the necessary support to make it happen, in particular by implementing the CoE Recommendation of 2017 (CM/Rec(2017)4, translating it into their languages (currently available in 20 languages) and contributing to the five-yearly reviews.