Youth Partnership

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

Promoting quality in youth work practice in Europe

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1. Context

This study is part of the research initiative Mapping educational and career paths of youth workers and gathering knowledge on youth work. Its main objective is to contribute to a better understanding and sharing of information about the education and training of youth workers across Europe and what employment/career paths this prepares them for, as well as the implications for the quality of youth work.

The research initiative supports the implementation of the Council of Europe's Recommendation on Youth Work CM/Rec (2017) that recommended, *inter alia*, that member states:

> encourage the use of research, evaluation and continuous follow-up in developing knowledge-based quality youth work ensuring that mechanisms are in place to measure its outcomes and impact.

Research on youth work professions, education and training, and on-the-job support is also one of the objectives of the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership's work plan for 2019, which aims to focus

> on better understanding the world of professions and vocations involved in youth work, their interaction and how they contribute to building a stronger youth work identity, recognition and better youth work offer. This knowledge will contribute to furthering the implementation of the CM Recommendation on youth work and development of the future Youth Work Agenda for quality, innovation and recognition of youth work, foreseen by the new EU Youth Strategy.

Since 2017, under its annual work programmes, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership has undertaken initiatives to develop better knowledge on youth work, enlarge the youth work section in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) and continue to upload relevant research to its virtual library. These initiatives include reports on Mapping education and career paths of youth workers and Diversity of practice architectures on education and career paths of youth workers in Europe, based on a Europe-wide survey in which 41 countries participated. In addition, a number of exploratory papers on associations and networks of youth workers; youth work and the sociology of occupations; competences of youth workers; ethical standards in youth work; early career perspectives of youth workers; and youth workers learning in non-formal settings have also been undertaken and published.

1. Aim and rationale

This study explores and considers how quality is promoted and developed in youth work practice across Europe. The mapping report identified three main providers for youth work in Europe: the state (at national, municipal or local level), the voluntary youth sector and European support programmes.

This study focuses on a corresponding number of thematic areas:

- policy initiatives at national, regional and local level for promoting quality;
- innovative approaches for promoting quality in the voluntary youth sector;
- the role and impact of European support programmes; and
- methods of quality assurance in youth work practice.

Each of these is considered and evaluated.

While the thematic examples are addressed and considered in specific contexts, the issues they raise are both general, recurrent and overlapping. The examples are meant to be broadly representative of the many initiatives and approaches to promoting and improving quality youth work practice across Europe.

In selecting thematic examples from across Europe a number of factors have been taken into consideration. First, examples reflect a reasonable geographic spread and countries selected range from the large to the small in terms of both size and population. Second, while an effort has been made to select countries from each of the four pillars of architecture practice as defined by Kiilakoski,[1] most of the thematic examples used are from countries in Category 1 – strong practice architectures – and Category 2 – strong practice architectures room for development. The main reason for this is that projects and supports promoting and developing quality in youth work practice are more likely to be in place in countries with reasonably strong practice architectures. Third, the thematic examples that have been selected reflect some, but not all, of the themes and issues outlined in the mapping report: the role of the state at central and local level in promoting youth work; the impact of European policy and funding; the role of the voluntary sector; and issues relating to quality assurance.

In focusing on approaches for improving and further developing the practice of youth work "on the ground" in terms of quality and positive impact on the lives of young people, the study's approach is to consider and explore how different stakeholders across Europe are employing different tools and methods, their comparative and relative strengths and limitations and what can we learn from them in terms of both policy and practice.

The study's main focus is on practical, ongoing, regular and often in-house or associate approaches to promoting quality in youth work practice. In terms of education and training, while vocational training has been included in the study, degree level courses have not. The main reasons for this are that the number of countries with degree-level programmes in youth work is relatively small and that third-level institutions are primarily concerned with academic and learning content rather than everyday practice. Similarly, while 18 of the countries surveyed in the mapping report had quality

[1]. Kiilakoski T. (2018), 'Diversity of practice architectures on education and career paths for youth workers in Europe – An analytical report'.

assurance frameworks and 20 had either a competence framework or competence descriptors, this study does not consider these, as again, the focus is on practice.

The terms ‘country’ (signatories to the European Cultural Convention) rather than ‘member state’ and ‘paid’ rather than ‘professional’ youth worker are used in the study.

1.2 Database for the study

In summer 2019, a survey was conducted among EKCYP correspondents seeking information on:

- state-operated or funded systems/programmes/projects in place for the implementation and development of effective youth work practice at either central, regional or local/municipal level; and
- voluntary youth organisations’ or networks’ programmes/projects for implementing and developing effective youth work practice in their organisation or network.

In all, 22 countries responded to the questionnaire and this was employed to inform the thematic areas and countries selected for the study.

The main data sources for the study are the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership’s country information sheets, which are reasonably up-to-date; the responses to the questionnaire in the original 2017 survey for the mapping report; and online information and data from relevant websites. One of the study’s limitations is that the availability of online information and data in English was often a relevant factor in deciding on thematic examples. The Mapping education and career paths of youth workers (2018) and Diversity of practice architectures on education and career paths of youth workers in Europe (2018) reports and the exploratory papers as mentioned above also provided relevant information and data used.

2. Policy initiatives in promoting quality in youth work practice

Individual countries across Europe are the main stakeholders in promoting youth work, and its quality, particularly in terms of both policy and funding. This chapter will explore and consider four thematic examples of policy initiatives – the National Youth Service (Service national de la jeunesse, SNJ) in Luxembourg, the Youth Worker Programme in Ukraine, the Juleica card in Germany and KEKS in Sweden – for promoting quality in youth work practice. Each of these thematic examples reflects different aspects and approaches in promoting quality practice: a national agency in Luxembourg; the responsible ministry in Ukraine; national validation in Germany and co-operative networking among municipalities in Sweden.

2.1 The National Youth Service (Service national de la jeunesse, SNJ) – Luxembourg

Youth work in Luxembourg comprises that provided by paid youth workers in open youth work centres at local level, and voluntary youth work provided mainly by volunteer youth workers in youth organisations. In general, youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. The objectives of youth work include: promoting the social integration of young people; organising leisure activities; and promoting political participation in a democratic society. The 2017 Grand-Ducal regulation on the introduction of a national framework on non-formal education for children and young people defines the objectives of youth work in Luxembourg.

Organisations and services which offer youth work are defined by the revised Youth Law revised in 2016. The law distinguishes between three kinds of structure: Organisation de jeunes (effectively youth clubs run by young volunteers); Organisation en faveur de la jeunesse (organisations that focus on particular youth-related issues where youth work is a supporting factor); and Service pour jeunes (open youth work offered by local youth centres).

There is no legal framework for the professional recognition of youth workers in Luxembourg. The professional background of youth workers ranges from educators with a secondary education diploma in such fields as education or health, to a bachelor's or master's degree in such fields as education, social science or psychology. The bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives offered by the University of Luxembourg also provides for students who wish to work with young people.

The National Youth Service (Service national de la jeunesse, SNJ),[2] a public administration body under the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, contributes to the implementation of youth policy and is a point of contact, information, counselling and support for young people and actors in

[2]. www.enfancejeunesse.lu.

the field of youth work and also offers a wide range of non-formal learning opportunities for young people aged from 13 to 30.

The tasks of the National Youth Service, as defined by the Youth Law of 2016, include:

- organising and co-ordinating training for assistant facilitators (aide-animateurs), facilitators (animateurs) and managers of youth organisations;
- supporting the training of professionals working with children or youth and preparing educational materials for work with children and youth; and
- monitoring educational quality in education and care services for children with parental assistance and in youth services.

Under the Youth Act 2016, a quality assurance framework was introduced for institutions providing non-formal learning opportunities in regional and local youth centres. The Act defines specific objectives and outcomes that include methods of self-assessment and staff training. SNJ regional officers are responsible for monitoring the quality of education for both children and young people.
Under the Law, staff in child education and care and full-time youth services must participate in at least 32 hours of continuing education over a two-year period. For part-time staff, the number of hours of continuing education is adapted proportionately. A training commission is responsible for co-ordinating the provision of continuing education and validating continuing education programmes. The Law also provides for a diary or log, effectively a reference document, that details and allows for checking the adequacy of practice. The diary or logbook includes: descriptions of functions or tasks within the service; internal regulations; daily records of activities with children and young people; and statements of staff participation in continuing education and training.

Procedures concerning the training of youth workers (‘animateurs’, ‘aide-animateurs’) as well as conditions concerning the recognition of volunteering experiences of young people are regulated by the 2009 Grand-Ducal regulation, and the training courses offered by the National Youth Service are published annually in the training agenda, which provides information on events and also training courses for young people and professionals working with young people.

The National Youth Service provides, on average, some 200 courses annually at four pedagogical centres, with some 3 000 participants – both professional and volunteer youth workers. Funding for the courses is provided by the Ministry for Education, Children and Youth. These courses employ different settings, methods and tools – presentations, workshops, peer learning – depending on the specific training required.
The courses in 2017 were subdivided into four domains:[3]

A. General context (context of the youth field, legislation, regulations)
B. Fields of action in the youth sector

[3]. Response to questionnaire for mapping report (2017).

B.1. Emotions, social relations
B.2. Values, participation, democracy
B.3. Language, communication, media
B.4. Creativity, arts, culture
B.5. Physical activities, body awareness, health
B.6. Natural sciences, engineering, environment
B.7. Transitions

C. Analysis of practical work (reflection and exchange with colleagues)
D. Administration of a youth centre.

Specific objectives were also defined with regard to each domain:

A. Understand the general framework of youth policy and the youth sector and allow the participant to situate his or her working context in a group, promote networking between youth centres and co-operation with other structures of the youth sector.
B. Provide theoretical and practical knowledge to develop specific projects, identify opportunities and needs for action, work on competences of pedagogical intervention, improve pedagogical skills, and acquire technical skills.
C. Provide participants with the opportunity to analyse their experiences and actions, find solutions to problems encountered in practice, and strengthen networking between professionals in the youth sector.
D. Provide participants with information for their administrative work and develop their skills for the management of the youth centre.

Participation in the courses is compulsory for paid youth workers, who also receive a certificate of participation.

2.2 The Youth Worker Programme – Ukraine

While there is no formal recognition of youth work in Ukraine at present, a draft law on youth (2019) includes provisions for youth work which is defined as activities carried out by or with young people that focus on their development and well-being. The draft law also include definitions of ‘youth work’ and ‘youth worker’.

National youth policy in Ukraine is set out in State Target Social Programme ‘Youth of Ukraine’ and covers the period 2016-2020. The programme focuses on six designated priorities, one of which is on the promotion of non-formal education through the development of youth centres, summer camps, youth information services and social mobility. A strategy for youth policy, covering the period 2020 to 2030, is also being developed.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, which has overarching responsibility for youth, has been operating a country-wide Youth Worker Programme in partnership with the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) since 2014.

The Youth Worker Programme (YWP) is aimed at developing the capacities of public servants and NGO volunteers to empower and equip young people with whom they work with the necessary skills to enable them to actively participate in their communities, as well as in policy and decision making at local and national level. The programme strives to challenge the paternalistic approach to young people's development by promoting international good practice and non-formal learning.[4]

The start of the programme in 2014 also coincided with decentralisation reforms that transferred powers from central government to local self-government bodies, replacing the principle of 'work with youth' with 'youth participation'. As a result of the reforms, youth work is now largely the responsibility of local government and includes funding, training for youth workers and the development of local infrastructure for youth work.

The target groups of the programme are public servants and leaders and activists from youth NGOs and training is organised in joint learning sessions – on a 50/50 basis – aimed at facilitating dialogue and co-operation between state bodies and NGOs. Participants on the programme are awarded a certificate on completion.

The programme has three components:

- Basic (24 hours) – Comprises modules on a wide range of topics: youth policy, organisation of youth work, project management, partnership mechanisms between government and non-government organisations, and development of the personal competences of youth workers.
- Specialised (24-40 hours) – For those who complete basis training. Themes of specialised training can be determined by participants and include 'Project Management in Youth Work', 'Civic Education for Youth Workers', 'Inclusion in Youth Centres', 'Volunteer Management', and 'Healthy Lifestyle for Youth'.
- Training for Trainers (40 hours) – For participants who have completed basic training and wish to organise training for others. Those who complete the programme get a licensed state certificate to organise training with the support of the other partners in the programme.

Since its commencement, more than 2 400 youth workers, both state employees and volunteers, from 24 regions have participated in the programme.

4. Strengthening the potential of youth work in Eastern Europe – Draft background paper, Council of Europe (2019).

2.3 Juleica – Germany

The legislative framework for youth work in Germany is the Social Code Book Eight – Child and youth services (Sozialgesetzbuch – Achtes Buch – Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, SGB VIII), also known as the Child and Youth Services Act (Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz (KJHG)), which came into force in 1991. In the federal states, there is also legislation for the implementation of the Act at local authority level.

Youth work in Germany is based on the principle of 'voluntarism' and is focused on the needs and interests of young people in such fields as: extracurricular education; youth work in sports and schools; youth work at recreational and international level; counselling and information; and supports for voluntary youth service providers and youth-led organisations; as well as supports for socially excluded young people and those with disabilities.

Youth work is generally seen as a 'practice-oriented field of action'. There is no legal definition of youth work and it is not a recognised profession. Youth workers' academic backgrounds tend to be in sociology, (social) pedagogy or educational sciences. Youth work, as a study course, may be included in social work or social pedagogy programmes. There is no validation system for the recognition of non-formal education and learning acquired through youth work.

There are wide regional variations in youth work across Germany. Youth work, as part of youth policy, is the competence of the federal states, with the federal government framing broader goals and ensuring coherence. At local level, statutory youth offices, voluntary youth associations, social welfare services, churches and NGOs operate, support and deliver youth work.

While there are no specific requirements with regard to quality standards at national level, the legislation does indicate that youth work services should reflect the interests of young people, who should also have a say in their design, and that services should help to teach young people self-determination skills and motivate them to take social responsibility and get involved in social issues. Accordingly, youth-led participation is a central feature of youth work in Germany, where youth group leaders play a significant role.

In 2009, the conference of ministers for youth of the federal states adopted a catalogue of minimum requirements for youth leaders across Germany. The federal states also set supplementary quality standards on aspects such as the duration of training (nationwide: at least 30 hours, in some states up to 50 hours). Anyone who has completed training in line with the applicable standards can apply for the youth leader card (Jugendleiter/In-Card, Juleica).[5] Juleica is a national standardised card for voluntary youth workers. It serves as a proof of qualification and also indicates the social recognition

[5]. www.juleica.de.

of voluntary work. Juleica card holders are officially recognised as meeting the quality and qualification requirements for voluntary youth work. The card can also be used as authentication and legitimacy to practice as a youth leader for public bodies such as information and advice centres.
The prescribed contents of Juleica training include:

- tasks and functions of the youth leader and the ability to lead a group;
- goals, methods and tasks of youth work
- legal and organisational aspects of youth work
- psychological and educational basics of working with children and young people
- dangerous situations for young people and issues of child and youth protection.

In addition, it is recommended that current issues relating to young people and youth work such as participation, gender roles and gender mainstreaming, migration and intercultural competences, international youth exchanges, and association-specific issues, be also incorporated into educational standards.

Application for the Juleica must be examined and endorsed by the provider, usually a youth association, network or initiative. The provider must also ensure that applicants, who must be at least 16 years of age, have the necessary maturity to fulfil the role and responsibilities of a youth leader.
While there are nationwide minimum standard requirements and some conditions are the same everywhere, there are also state-specific regulations and conditions.

In Bavaria, there is a particular focus on quality assurance and some training content is regarded ‘as binding’ including:

- teaching of leadership skills and group pedagogy in theory and practice
- methodological skills
- planning and implementation of activities based on practical examples
- structures of youth work
- value orientation of youth organisations
- legal and insurance issues
- prevention of sexual violence
- sex-conscious girl and boy work
- cross-cutting issues such as gender mainstreaming and inter-cultural competences.

In Brandenburg, training is divided into basic training – which includes the aims of youth work and youth social work as defined by law; the legal basis for youth work; group education; life situations of children and young people; project management; and communications and conflict – and specific training in such areas as media relations, travel law, nature and environment protection, and health education.

In Hesse, the focus of training is on: working in and with groups; supervisory duty, liability and insurance; organisation and planning; developmental process in childhood and adolescence; life situations of children and young people; the role and self-image of youth leaders.

The Juleica is valid for a maximum period of three years, after which it can be renewed, subject to the applicant having participated in further education and training.

Since its establishment in 2009, over 300 000 Juleica cards have been issued. Nationwide, there are over 100 000 volunteers in youth work who have a valid Juleica, while many other youth leaders have completed the requisite training, but have not applied for the card. Over 60% of youth leaders are between 16 and 25 years of age. Youth leaders are engaged in over 90% of all youth work programmes and organise over 50 000 holiday camps annually, as well as operating seminars, group sessions and other activities.

2.4 KEKS – Sweden

There is no legislative framework or national policy on youth work in Sweden. The concept of youth work tends to be more associated with leisure activities (meningsfull fritid) that take place in recreational centres and in youth organisations. In this context, youth work is broadly seen and interpreted as promoting capacity building and learning for young people in youth organisations, leisure activities, youth clubs, and other non-formal settings at local municipal level.

At local level, youth work is funded by the respective municipalities. Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. The municipalities have a considerable degree of autonomy, due in part to their capacity to raise revenue through local taxation, and consequently can largely fund their own activities. The municipalities also have responsibility for youth policy related issues in such fields as education, employment and training, health care, social care and services, and culture and leisure.
The voluntary sector plays a prominent role in providing for leisure activities at local level as well. In addition, in most municipalities there are recreational centres (fritidsgårdar), mainly targeting young people from 13 to 16 years of age, or youth/culture houses for those in secondary education and up to 25 years of age.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF)[6] supports youth organisations by distributing government grants. In accordance with the Ordinance on State Grants for Child and Youth Organisations, the purpose of such grants is to support children and young people's independent organisations. The ordinance defines the formal requirements and conditions that organisations must meet. Grant applications may be submitted only by youth organisations that are non-profit and voluntary, independent, respect the ideals of democracy, and promote equality and non-discrimination.

6. eng.mucf.se.

Most staff working in recreational centres or youth/culture houses are trained recreation leaders with a diploma in youth work following on a two-year vocational training programme (fritidsledarutbildning) at the folk high schools. All folk high schools with a recreation leader programme follow a common training plan/curriculum. Schools can also apply a self-assessment system with the aim of improving the quality of education as well as membership of SeQf – the Swedish Qualifications Framework. Karlskoga Folk High School offers distance training for those lacking training but who have been employed as youth workers in the leisure sector for at least three years. The former work experience is recognised as an internship, and an integral part of the training programme.

There are over 3 500 recreational leaders in Sweden, the majority of whom work at recreational centres and some at youth houses. Many are in temporary employment and tend to be relatively low paid. Lack of legislation and the sub-degree level education lead to a relatively low professional status.

There are no national level quality standards or competence frameworks for youth work in Sweden. Municipal authorities decide on whether and how youth work is evaluated at local level. Peer-learning initiatives for assessing quality in youth work have been undertaken by KEKS and the Research and Development Centre for Youth Work.

KEKS (Kvalitet och kompetens i samverkan)[7] is a network comprising some 60 member organisations, mainly municipal administrations in charge of youth centres, youth houses and youth projects, that aims to establish and build common goals and a common system of quality assurance. The network has developed a quality system that is used by all member organisations and employs benchmarking, peer learning, exchange of best practices and other forms of co-operation and support. The Research and Development Centre for Youth Work (Kunskapscentrum för Fritidsledarskap) focuses on youth work in youth centres in Stockholm and the surrounding municipalities, and develops and evaluates methods and leadership for youth work at youth clubs and recreation centres. Through an annual group/project questionnaire a picture of how a youth centre's activities are operating for the benefit of young people is detailed:

- how many, and the background of, young people being reached
- level of young people's participation in activities and decision making
- how youth workers handle young people's participation and learning
- the impact of the logbook
- the system for recording and documenting levels of participation and activities engaged in
- the online diary for making notes and structured analysis as well as for efficient communication between youth workers.

[7]. www.keks.se/.

A corresponding annual questionnaire is also issued to young people.
KEKS also provides its member organisations with access to conferences, seminars and courses on relevant topics, as well as thematic work groups where staff get to exchange experiences and best practice, support and tutoring for managers and staff, and support in initiating and running international projects.

The KEKS logbook is a web-based system for documenting open youth work and group activities. Introduced in 2011, it aims to create a unified model for documenting the daily activities in recreation centres, youth houses and other open youth work projects and activities. The system was further developed through an Erasmus+ strategic partnership and now the logbook is being used in Finland and Ireland.

In addition, the logbook is used to gather information for improving the quality of youth work practice; strengthen communications between member organisations and youth workers; promote and encourage reflective practice; and provide for better management practices in youth work.

KEKS is also an example of networks across the regions of Sweden that seek to promote quality practice in youth work. Other networks include:

- Kunskapscentrum för fritidsledarskap[8] – a centre for collaboration among 14 municipalities in the Stockholm region for the development and evaluation of methods and leadership focusing on open youth work;
- Fritidsledarskolorna – a national network for folk high schools offering youth work training;
- Fritidsforum[9] – an association for youth workers, offering further training and development.

3. Innovative approaches in the voluntary youth sector for promoting quality in youth work practice

The voluntary youth sector might be seen as the coalface in the practice of youth work; it is where youth work practice is the everyday reality. For the voluntary youth sector, promoting quality in youth work practice is therefore a priority since it impacts directly on the work they do on an ongoing basis with young people. This chapter will look at two thematic examples – bOJA, the competence centre for open youth work in Austria, and the National Youth Council of Ireland's (NYCI) *8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work* – where the voluntary youth sector seeks to put in place innovative approaches to try to strengthen and underpin quality in the practice of youth work. It will also highlight how approaches to quality assurance are largely determined by the nature and circumstances of youth work in individual countries.

8. https://fritidsledare.se/.

9. https://fritidsforum.se/.

3.1 bOJA – Austria

In Austria, youth work has a number of aspects: open youth work, voluntary youth associations, and youth work carried out by state institutions at federal or state level. While the Federal Ministry of Families and Youth is responsible for youth policy at federal level, with particular focus on the promotion of extracurricular youth education and youth work aimed at the development of the mental, psychic, physical, social, political, religious and ethical competences of children and young people, youth work is primarily the responsibility of the states.

Open youth work in Austria comprises youth centres, youth associations (NGOs), outreach and youth information services and regional and local youth initiatives and projects. Open youth work is location-based in youth centres, youth clubs, and youth cafés while mobile (detached) youth work takes place in public spaces – parks, train stations and other public places.

Open youth work, as the term implies, is open to all young people, has a low entry threshold, and official membership and regular participation are matters for young people themselves. Open youth work also places a focus on and seeks to engage with and accommodate disadvantaged and 'hard-to-reach' young people. Youth associations are quite diverse in composition and aims and often are associated with religious or political affiliations, though this is becoming less important, and some are youth led. Institutional youth work is carried out by state or municipal youth departments. Each one of the nine states of the Austrian federation has its own youth department, which co-ordinates youth work in the state, offers services and organises activities for young people.

At state level, courses on basic and further training for youth workers are provided in Vienna, Salzburg, Upper Austria and Vorarlberg and these courses are accredited through the aufZAQ. However, in the youth associations and in open youth work, training tends to be internal.

bOJA – the competence centre for open youth work – was established in 2009 and builds on the tradition of networking open youth work in Austria. It provides a network and support services for open youth work as well as expertise in quality development of open youth work. It also seeks to promote and strengthen, at both national and European level, the positive and empowering role that open youth work can play in the lives of young people.

In Austria, bOJA estimates that there are some 340 providers of open youth work with a total of over 630 site facilities. Centres of open youth work employ approximately 2 000 youth workers that reach and involve some 250 000 young people on an annual basis.
bOJA acts as a service point to facilitate youth work and youth workers, a networking agency with state youth councils, international bodies, youth-related fields and researchers. It also provides a platform for the promotion of quality youth work practice.

In recent years, bOJA[10] has developed a range of practical tools for all open youth work practitioners. These include:

- a quality manual, which is regularly revised and upgraded and was in its fifth edition as of 2017;
- a toolkit for quality development in youth work that includes methods and tools for evaluation as well as self-assessment sheets. It also employs a logbook or 'line count lists' that record visit frequency, as well as daily logs of events and activities, and photos and video documentation, among others. The toolkit also includes quality dialogue, the aim of which is to look at practitioners' work from different angles and analyse and discuss the results;
- worksheets for self-assessment that include expansion of competences, identity development, coping with everyday life, lobbying and participation;
- regular surveys of young people and stakeholders in mobile (detached) and site-specific youth work settings.

Vienna, Lower Austria, Tyrol and Styria have also produced manuals and handbooks on mobile (detached) youth work and open youth work as well as impact concepts and impact analysis.

3.2.8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work – National Youth Council of Ireland

In Ireland, while the state determines national youth policy and provides funding, youth work, in the main, is the preserve of the voluntary youth sector. The Youth Work Act (2001) describes youth work as a 'planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal academic or vocational educational training; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations'. While the Act has largely remained dormant for policy and operational reasons, the definition of youth work is an adequate reflection of the nature and extent of youth work practice in Ireland.

Ireland has approximately 1 400 paid youth workers and some 40 000 volunteer youth workers. The voluntary youth sector is the main employer of youth workers in Ireland who determine necessary qualifications as well as pay and conditions.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 represents the first overarching national children's policy framework comprehending the age ranges spanning children and young people up to age 24. It adopts a whole-of-government

[10]. www.boja.at/english.

approach and is underpinned by a number of constituent strategies in the areas of early years, youth and participation. A national youth strategy provides out-of-school supports for young people in their local communities. The aim is to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by strengthening their personal and social competences by, *inter alia*:

- providing effective youth work, and associated opportunities for young people
- enhancing existing services and initiatives in relation to young people
- monitoring youth work supports and services to ensure both quality of service and value for money.

A National Quality Standards Framework for youth work (NQSF) was introduced in 2011 as a support tool to assess standards of youth work and evaluate development and improvement.

The NQSF applies to all staff-led youth work organisations, services, projects and programmes which are funded under the Department for Children and Youth Affairs. An interim review of the NQSF was published in 2017.

In 2016, the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), the representative body for voluntary youth organisations, published a toolkit for the youth sector: 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work – Promoting best quality inclusive practice in youth work settings.[11] The toolkit was developed after extensive interviews with 16 youth work organisations across Ireland, who described their inclusive youth work practices. The 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work aimed to help voluntary youth organisations to report within the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) and:

- write continuous improvement plans
- develop a logic model or work plan towards realising the outcomes in national youth strategy
- fulfil responsibilities under equality legislation
- follow commitments set out in the voluntary youth organisation's diversity/equality/integration/inclusion policy.

As well as:

- acting as an assessment and planning toolkit to help develop and realise best practice in equal and inclusive youth work;
- articulating youth work practice in a structured matter that meets the reporting requirements of the NQSF and national youth policy objectives; and
- spurring thinking about inclusive youth work practice.

The eight STEPS to Inclusive Youth Work are:

- Step 1 Organisational Review
- Step 2 Policies and Group Contracts Policies
- Step 3 Space and Environment

[11]. www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/.

- Step 4 Staff and Volunteers
- Step 5 Activities and Involvement of Young People
- Step 6 Resourcing Inclusion
- Step 7 Networking and Partnerships
- Step 8 Monitoring and Evaluation.

Each step provides for:

- examples of relevant sources of evidence. For instance, in Step 4 – Staff and Volunteers, examples of evidence include: job and volunteer role descriptions, records and evaluations of staff training in equality and diversity, supervision records, shared practice seminar notes, evaluation review/feedback documents, minutes of inclusion and diversity committee meetings, newsletters and communications to volunteers with equality and inclusion-related content, etc.;
- best practice indicators relating to the organisation and the young people they work with and how they relate to the core principles and standards of the NQSF and the outcomes of national youth strategy. For instance, in Step 5 – Activities and Involvement of Young People, examples of best practice indicators are under the heading of programme planning, programme content and support procedures;
- practical examples of good practice from among the 16 voluntary youth organisations involved;
- further resources and supports;
- an action plan template for continuous improved planning;
- a logic model.

4. The role and impact of European support programmes in promoting quality in youth work practice

European support programmes such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and Erasmus + have played, and continue to play, an important role in promoting quality in youth work practice. As indicated in the mapping report, for most of the countries in southern and eastern Europe, the voluntary youth sector largely bears the burden of provision, while Europe largely bears the burden of funding. This chapter will explore and consider the impact of two ESF initiatives – PRAKTIK – Practical skills through non-formal education in youth work, a national project in Slovakia, and Keys for life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education, in the Czech Republic – on promoting quality in youth work practice.

4.1 PRAKTIK: Practical skills through non-formal education in youth work – Slovakia

In the Slovak Republic the 2008 Act on youth work support defines youth work as comprising 'primarily educational activities, social activities, information and advisory services for young people, youth leaders and youth workers'. The Act also provides definitions of 'youth leader', 'youth volunteer' and 'youth worker'. The role of the state in relation to support for youth work at national, regional and local level and funding arrangements are also set out in the Act, which also regulates and accredits educational bodies and programmes in the field of non-formal education and training.

A Concept Paper on Youth Work Development 2016-2020, which was adopted by the government, focuses on five main areas: the needs of young people as a basis for youth work; quality youth work; stakeholders in youth work; financing of youth work; and recognising and raising the profile of youth work. Action Plans for the periods 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 have been adopted to implement the concept paper.

The Slovak Youth Institute (IUVENTA) is a state-sponsored organisation under the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport whose primary role is to implement state policy with regard to children and young people.

IUVENTA12 is also the national agency for the Erasmus + programme in the fields of Youth and Sport and it also hosts Eurodesk. The scope of its activities includes: accreditation of youth work activities; promoting the development and recognition of quality youth work; and providing education and training for youth leaders, youth volunteers and youth workers.

As part of its role in promoting quality youth work and providing education and training for youth workers, IUVENTA undertook a national project PRAKTIK – Practical skills through non-formal

12. www.iuventa.sk.

education in youth work, over a two-year period, March 2013 to October 2015. The project was co-funded by the European Social Fund.

The PRAKTIK project focused on developing practical skills in youth work for both youth workers and youth leaders as well as contributing to change and innovation in youth work and non-formal education. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of youth work in leisure activities and to ensure the development of practical skills; provide space for youth leaders to actively participate in the preparation and implementation of activities; and ensure the transfer of know-how from youth workers to youth leaders.

The PRAKTIK project was implemented in all regions of Slovakia, with the exception of Bratislava. Within the PRAKTIK project, there were 35 facilitators working in the regions to ensure the implementation of the project at regional level. The project comprised three main activities with accompanying outcomes.

The aim of Activity 1 was to create a network of thematic youth centres, specifically oriented towards the creation, development and evaluation of practical education and training programmes for youth workers and youth leaders.

Each youth work centre focused on a priority thematic area which resulted in an experiential education programme for youth workers and youth leaders. These programmes were developed, in the following areas, by a group of experts and the programmes were accredited under the 2008 Act on support of youth work:

- promoting a healthy lifestyle
- promoting the practical use of ICT
- development of practical skills in working with small materials
- search and support work with talented youth
- support and development of experiential activities in environmental education
- support and development of citizenship education and multiculturalism
- support and development of global education.

Quantitative outputs, relating to the establishment of thematic centres, training programmes, and publications, were also identified and measured.

The aim of Activity 2 was to improve the quality of further education and training for youth workers and to promote the use of innovative methods, such as experiential learning, and approaches in youth work.

The activity aimed to teach youth workers and youth leaders how to prepare, implement and evaluate youth activities and how to share their experiences of working with young people with their peers and

fellow youth workers. Certificates of completion of accredited education in the field of specialized activities in youth work as provided for in the 2008 Act were awarded to each participant. Activities were supported by experts in the relevant fields, educational experts and also at regional level. Quantitative outputs, relating to the training of youth workers and youth leaders, activities and accreditation, were also identified and measured.

The aim of Activity 3 was to implement short-term and long-term activities, which served as a space for practical verification of the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes of youth leaders and youth workers. At the same time, one of the tasks of the activities was to create space for the intersection of formal and non-formal education through activities and events. Quantitative outputs, relating to short-term and long-term activities, participants and methodologies, were also identified and measured.

During the project, a total of 40 entry and 37 thematic educational programmes were implemented, attended by some 500 professional and voluntary youth workers; and 40 short-term and 37 long-term activities were organised involving some 3 250 children and young people.

Seven thematic publications also resulted from the project reflecting the experiences of the different regional thematic centres. The thematic publications focused on:

- promoting healthy lifestyles through adventure activities
- practical use of ICT through experiential activities
- support and development of practical skills in working with small materials
- support work with talented youth
- support and development of experiential activities in environmental education
- support and development of citizenship education and multiculturalism through experience
- support and development of global education.

A Methodological and Information Handbook on the project was also published.
While PRAKTIK was a one-off co-funded project, ongoing training for youth workers and youth leaders has continued.
The Association of Non-Formal Education (ANEV, Czech Republic) provides a long-term training course Marker CS[13] with three residential phases and a mentoring/practical phase in between that focuses on how to prepare, realise and evaluate educational activities in youth work.

Marker CS normally last for some 30 days over a six-month period. Training addresses such issues as: self-assessment, reflective practice, needs analysis, support and feedback, setting educational goals, group dynamics, debriefing, presentation skills, ethics, quality and trends in youth work and policy context.

[13]. www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/reference/marker-cs-long-term-training-course-for-youth-workers.5473/.

The aim of the programme, which is supported by SALTO, is to contribute to improving the quality of non-formal education in youth work in the Slovakia, as well as in the Czech Republic, through increasing the competences of youth workers. The training is organised in a Czech-Slovak context and is accredited in both countries.

4.2 Keys for life: Developing Key Competences in Leisure-time and Non-formal Education – Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, youth work is a feature of leisure-time education which is mainly provided by a network of leisure-time centres (Střediska volného času, SVČ), school clubs (školní kluby, ŠK) and after-school childcare facilities (školní družina, ŠD). While not legally required, these providers are registered as part of the formal education system. They are operated and largely funded by central government, the regions or municipalities, and to a lesser extent by private bodies.

Youth work is also provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), whose umbrella organisation is the Czech Council for Children and Youth (Česká rada dětí a mládeže, ČRDM), which has some 100 member organisations. There are in all some 1 500 NGOs that provide leisure-time activities and learning opportunities for children and young people. Activities include sports, art, nature studies, in which children and young people participate on a voluntary basis. Funding for NGOs through grant-aid programmes is provided mainly by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and to some extent by other ministries. Organisations may also apply for grants from regional, municipal or local authorities.

Under the National Register of Qualifications, Vocational Qualification Certificates are also awarded for youth work related activities such as: co-ordinator of volunteers; youth leader for leisure-time-based activities for children and youth; and guarantor of safety of children and youth in non-formal and leisure-time based education.
While there are some paid youth workers in NGOs, for the most part they are volunteers. Their qualifications or terms of employment are a matter for individual NGOs, subject to standard national employment regulations. Some of the larger NGOs at national level also provide for internal training for youth workers, mainly in leadership.

Youth work in the Czech Republic tends to be both varied and diverse. It can take on many forms – youth centre based, youth projects, outreached and detached youth work, informal youth camps, youth information, youth movements and campaigns, and digital and online activities. It can also take place in a variety of settings – youth clubs, leisure-time centres, schools and churches.

The OLINA tool is one of the products of an ESF national project in the Czech Republic Keys for life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education 2009-2015. It is an

online system for the management of youth work quality systems in non-formal learning settings – leisure-time centres, youth clubs and youth NGOs.

The OLINA tool[14] is based on three modules:

- self-evaluation
- competence building
- training,

and it aims to:

- facilitate the establishment and maintenance of youth work quality systems
- improve the quality of youth work at management and systems level in youth NGOs and youth centres as well as the competences of youth workers and youth leaders
- increase the efficiency and quality of youth work activities
- garner feedback on youth work quality with a view to continuous improvement and innovation in meeting the changing needs of young people.

OLINA employs youth work quality self-assessment tools for youth NGOs and youth clubs and centres on an interactive online platform which offers three modules:

- an Assessing Module, which facilitates youth work quality self-assessment by youth NGOs and youth centres by providing them with self-assessment tools that can be used in different youth work settings and enables users to engage regularly in self-assessment and compare the results of self-assessment. Users can also consult with and get methodological support from experts in the National Institute of Further Education;
- a Competence Module, which facilitates the self-assessment of 30 key youth work competences for both youth workers and youth leaders. There is also a multi-source external assessment tool that enables users to be assessed by supervisors, colleagues, external partners and young people, and thus helps to further develop and enhance their competences;
- an E-learning Module, which provides for eight innovative e-learning training programmes aimed at developing and improving eight selected key competences for youth leaders: effective communication and presentation; planning; project management; problem solving; human resources management; strategic management; leadership; and fundraising. The results of e-learning are incorporated into users' personal profiles and can form the basis for further training and development.

The OLINA tool also**:**

- facilitates the measurement of progress in developing quality youth work in youth NGOs and youth centres as well as key competences of youth workers and youth leaders;
- enables managers, youth workers and youth leaders to document the development of their competences and create their own personal competence portfolio and adopt a remedial action plan to address deficiencies; and

[14]. http://olina.nidv.cz.

- enables an equal access for all managers, youth workers and youth leaders.

However, OLINA also requires consistency and application if its potential benefits are to be realised.

5. Methods for assuring quality in youth work practice

Assessment, coaching and supervision are features of quality assurance but may be seen as challenging and sometimes controversial in promoting quality in youth work practice. This chapter will look at three thematic examples: peer and self-assessment at municipal level in Finland; voluntary coaching in Estonia; and supervised practice in the national youth agency in Malta. While peer and self-assessment are often seen as a feature of youth work practice, supervision and coaching are not always regarded as such. They can often be conflated, but they are distinct practices. Supervision can be described as a professional and formal conversation between practitioners in a given field with the aim of developing and improving practice. Coaching, on the other hand, focuses on maximising individual potential and enhancing performance.

5.1 Peer and self-assessment – Finland

According to the Youth Act 2016, youth work is about supporting the growth and development of young people in Finland and helping them to become independent and active citizens while improving their living conditions and promoting intergenerational solidarity.

Youth work in Finland is generally seen as an independent service, activity and discipline. It is financed by central government and by local authorities and parishes. Youth worker education is a long-standing feature of vocational and third level education, particularly in the universities of applied sciences.

Youth workers can be paid or volunteers. As the focus is on professional autonomy and decentralised policies, there is no national competence framework or competence descriptors for youth workers and youth work is not a regulated profession.

Quality standards for youth work have been developed employing bottom-up strategies. The self and peer assessment quality model for youth work was originally developed in the Helsinki region but in recent years it has been implemented at municipal level across Finland. A revised quality model was produced in 2015.[15] At present, Kanuuna, a network of youth services in 27 of Finland's largest urban areas, oversees and co-ordinates operation of the tool.

Self-assessment is done once or twice a year while peer assessment or audits are done less frequently. There are different aspects to conducting self-assessment and the principles are the same for peer assessment:

- the work community (usually youth workers in a youth centre or municipality) study the principles and criteria of assessment;
- youth workers make assessments individually;

[15]. Nojd T. and Siurala L. (2015), *Youth Work Quality Assessment*, Kanuuna Publications.

- the work community formulates a shared conclusion of criteria levels, areas of strength and areas for improvement.

In Finland, peer assessment in youth work is external where youth centres are audited by external youth workers, usually from another municipality. The model is based on reciprocity and one that provides evaluative information and facilitates mutual understanding and shared learning. The process of peer audit usually involves two external youth workers from another municipality observing activities in a youth centre over a period of time, guided by established criteria. In all there are 24 assessment criteria or indicators and four levels of rating from insufficient or poor to excellent.

The process of auditing youth centres has a number of phases:

- Preparing for peer audit which stresses the importance of timing – when should it take place in the centre's cycle of development – the respective roles of observation, interviewing and feedback, detailed knowledge of assessment criteria, and the respective roles of the auditors.
- During the actual audit, usually of two hours' duration, the focus is on actions rather than the personalities or abilities of youth workers. The audit should not interrupt or impede the everyday work of the centre and young people at the centre are told of the audit and its purpose and also interviewed as to their experiences of the centre. Initial or draft assessments are to be recorded during the course of the audit.
- Based on observations and interviews with youth workers and young people, the auditors formulate a shared conclusion on the criteria levels, areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
- In a feedback meeting the auditors present their conclusions followed by a group discussion on the findings, observed strengths and areas for improvement. The aim is to provide youth centres, youth workers and young people with new insights and possibilities as to what the centre can or might do. Following on the feedback meeting, youth workers select areas for improvement and prepare an action plan to implement change.

In Finland, regular self-assessment and peer audits are seen as helping youth workers and youth communities develop youth work practice actively and systematically. The information acquired through assessment supports the development and improvement of everyday youth work. All employees, not just youth workers, and young people are involved in the process. Young people, in particular, are seen as integral to the process even though their role in quality assessment and as auditors has so far been limited to only some municipalities and youth centres.

5.2 Coaching – Estonia

Youth work is regulated by law at the national level in Estonia. Youth work is defined in the Youth Work Act as 'the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons which enable them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education

system, and work on the basis of their free will'. Estonia also has degree-level programmes in youth work.

There are occupational standards for youth workers and minimum qualification requirements are at Levels IV, VI and VII of the Estonian Qualifications Framework. There are no minimum qualification standards for volunteer youth workers. However, volunteer youth workers can avail themselves of in-house training and non-formal training provided by the Estonian Youth Work Centre or other agencies. There are estimated to be some 5 000 paid youth workers in addition to volunteers.

The Estonian Association of Youth Workers (EAYW) was established in 2016 and is an organisation for professional youth workers, both paid and volunteers. The Association is open to all qualified youth workers, those attending youth work courses and those who are not formally qualified but have extensive experience in the field.

EAYW is a non-profit organisation focusing on promoting youth work and the professional development of youth workers. It also works in co-operation with government, relevant ministries, the Estonian Youth Work Centre and other umbrella organisations in the youth field. Representatives of the association also participate in various working groups, committees, and councils with the aim of further developing youth work at local, regional and country level, as well as advocating for and promoting youth work as a profession. The association also provides training, seminars and conference participation for its members.

The EATW also has a Coaching Bank that provides coaching for its members, including leaders and specialists in the youth field, based on conversation and dialogue between the coach and the coachee or client with the aim of enhancing overall work output. The aim of such coaching is to develop and enhance professional competences, build and strengthen team leadership and team work; and embrace the challenges of youth work practice. Training and activities of the Coaching Bank are supported by the Ministry of Education and Research.
Coaching usually comprises six coaching sessions, some of which can be done through social media but the first and last sessions must be face to face. Coaches are trained by the Academy of Executive Coaching, which is represented in Estonia by the Estonian Business School. Coaches work on a voluntary basis and on average take on two or three coachees or clients annually, amounting to some 18 sessions in all. Those wishing to be coached can apply online and the demand for coaching is increasing, with an additional 15 coaches being trained in 2019.

Supervision of youth work practice is not obligatory in Estonia; however, annual 'development discussions' are held between youth workers and their managers. Recent research would seem to indicate that such annual meetings are not considered adequate by either youth workers or managers.

5.3 Supervision – Malta

Aġenzija Żgħażagħ (National Youth Agency) is the main provider of youth work programmes, initiatives and services in Malta. The voluntary youth sector is proportionally small when compared with the voluntary youth sector in other European countries.

Aġenzija Żgħażagħ is also the main employer of youth workers. Youth work is a regulated profession under the Youth Work Profession Act 2014 which gives formal professional recognition and status to youth workers, as well as regulating the profession and determining the qualifications and conditions under which youth workers can acquire such recognition. The University of Malta has a primary and master's degree level programme in youth and community studies. Aġenzija Żgħażagħ also oversees and manages the implementation of the national youth policy, Towards 2020 – A shared vision for the future of young people.

The Youth Work Profession Act defines youth work as 'a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people. Youth workers engage with young people in their communities, including the voluntary sector, and support them in realising their potential and address life's challenges critically and creatively to bring about social change.'

Since its establishment in 2010, Aġenzija Żgħażagħ has put in place administrative structures and operational procedures for the promotion and implementation of youth work practice and youth-related services. The agency's staff expanded from six in 2011 to 79 (full-time and service contract staff) in 2017. The agency now has 35 full-time staff, including 21 professionally qualified youth workers as well as seven professional youth workers on a service contract.

Although youth workers employed by Aġenzija Żgħażagħ are recognised professionals, the agency is conscious of the need for continuous development and improvement in youth work practice. To this end, Aġenzija Żgħażagħ has embarked on a three-year project, in partnership with YMCA George Williams College, London, on developing supervised and reflective practice to promote a culture of continuous learning in the agency. The project is an offshoot of an Erasmus + project Youth work for Learning and Working life, on learning environments that offer services to young people with complex learning needs, in which Aġenzija Żgħażagħ and George Williams College were partner organisations.

The project, while employing reflective and supervised practice for the ongoing development of staff, essentially addresses the issue of quality assurance in delivering programmes and services to young people and staff accountability as part of a publicly funded body, entrusted with the care and the promotion of learning of, sometimes vulnerable, young people.[16]

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[16]. Belton B. (2019), *Draft report on the 'Youth work for Learning and Working life' project*.

The aim of the project is to promote the concept and realisation of Aġenzija Żgħażagħ as a learning organisation underpinned by a consistent commitment to the promotion and implementation of reflective and supervised practice.

The initial objective was to establish an organisational 'tree' of supervision for the project's three-year duration. At the end of each year, a report will be provided and this will act as the foundation for the ongoing review of the project. An evaluation report will be published when the project concludes.
In the first year of the project, 20 of the agency's staff participated in the project, both youth workers, management and administrative staff, and the objective is to include all staff during the duration of the project. As well as an external supervisor from YMCA, two senior managers, three middle managers and 15 youth workers and administrative staff participated in supervised practice. Managers were both supervisors and supervisees.

In its initial phase, the project comprised three full-day workshops that focused on participant learning via the sharing of practice and study materials:

- All participants were supplied with study materials electronically.
- All participants were asked to undertake five sessions of supervision as supervisees.
- Management participants were asked to undertake five sessions of supervision as supervisors.
- Supervision sessions were focused on the supervisee.
- All participants, as supervisees, were given the opportunity to provide a self-assessment of their learning.
- Supervisors were given the opportunity to provide an assessment of their supervisee's learning.
- All participants were encouraged to keep in regular contact with the supervisor from YMCA via email and Skype.
- Electronic and face-to-face tutorials were made available.

In addition to a resource pack and study materials, participants were also apprised of what supervision is: 'Supervision is a regular face to face, uninterrupted meeting between a supervisor and supervisee, provided at a time and date that is suitable for all parties, which should be agreed in advance. Supervision enables participants to learn and grow through supported reflection processes.' The purpose of supervision is to:

- provide a regular space to question and reflect on practices and plans
- look at what you do well and explore situations that might have gone better whilst reflecting on how to improve and develop such situations
- think about how to use personal and professional resources more effectively
- allow you to further ensure the quality of your work practice.

Participations also had to sign a supervision agreement and input to an ongoing report on the progress of reflective and supervised practice.

6. Main findings and conclusions

While this study reiterates and reflects many of the issues highlighted in the mapping report, it also sheds light on other issues, perhaps less articulated, that relate to and promote quality in youth work practice.

6.1 Policy initiatives at national, regional and local level

One issue that this study further emphasises is the variegated, complex and contrasting nature of youth work practice across Europe, in terms of geography, administration/funding, terminology, policy and practice.

Both Sweden and Germany are large, geographically diverse countries. Youth work is a term not in common use and is often seen as a subset of or contextualised by broader youth and child policy issues. While central government sets out broad policy parameters, youth work is largely the preserve of the municipalities in Sweden and the federal states in Germany.

Ukraine's Youth Worker Programme (YWP) has similarities with the training course in Luxembourg. While both countries do not have formal education courses in youth work, Ukraine has yet to develop and implement the interlocking policy, legislative and quality assurance supports available in Luxembourg.

One obvious difference between Ukraine and many other European countries is scale, in terms of both landmass and population distribution. Ukraine is larger in size than France and Spain with over 5 million young people in the 14-25 age group. In terms of youth work, Ukraine has adopted two approaches that address these issues. First, the Youth Worker Programme is but one feature of a broader policy of reform, including youth policy reform, and decentralisation, and second, it reflects a determination to maximise capacity by harnessing the potential of both the state and voluntary sectors.

In Sweden, youth work tends to be associated with leisure-time education and activities that take place in recreational centres and in youth clubs. While there is no quality assurance system in Sweden at national level, the KEKS network has developed a quality system that is used by all member organisations and employs benchmarking, peer learning, exchange of best practices and other forms of co-operation and support.

Almost all the countries included in the study have overarching children and youth policies. In the case of Ukraine, the policy overlap is with culture and sport. Bracketing children and young people – up to a particular age – in terms of policy and funding has the advantage in that it allows for greater focus in terms of policy co-ordination and funding. However, it can also have some potential disadvantages for young people. The home and the school are defining features of childhood and much of the state's policy focus and funding tends to be absorbed by formal education and child

welfare. Even in countries such as Finland and Ireland where youth work is reasonably well developed – Kiilakoski categorises both as having strong practice architectures – state expenditure on youth work and youth services amounts to less than 1% of the annual education budget. Consequently, young people and youth work may often be the 'poor relation' in terms of policy overlap and funding.

The wide variety and diversity of youth work providers and youth work settings and the general prevalence of out-of-school or leisure-time activities – which tend to be intermittent and narrowly time-bound, e.g. after-school clubs, summer camps, etc. – pose both challenges and opportunities for youth workers. Such settings can facilitate innovation and youth participation but lack of time and continuity may impede the impact and potential of effective youth work practice.

While four of the 11 countries in this study – Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Malta – have degree-level courses in youth work, it is not the norm in Europe. The mapping report identified six of the 41 countries surveyed as having degree-level courses specifically in youth work, while 11 others offered courses in related fields that are associated with and provide education paths into youth work. Given the fact that the vast majority of youth workers in Europe, both paid and voluntary, do not have an academic background in youth work, the importance of providing education and training in youth work practice takes on a new significance.

Luxembourg, Ukraine, Germany and Sweden all provide some level of regular training for youth workers. Formal vocational programmes are available in Sweden, while Germany provides training for the Juleica card and Luxembourg and Ukraine provide annual or regular training courses. Two features of these training courses are their duration and content. In terms of duration they tend to be short – 32 hours in Luxembourg; 24-40 hours in Ukraine; and 30-50 hours in Germany – if provided on a regular/annual and, in some instances, mandatory basis. In terms of content, while they included common youth work themes – social relations, values, creativity, participation, democracy (Luxembourg); gender roles, migration and intercultural competence (Germany); healthy lifestyles and civic education (Ukraine) and leadership (Sweden) – there is also a strong focus on what might be described as organisational or managerial skills – administration of a youth centre (Luxembourg); legal and insurance issues (Germany); support in initiating and running international projects (Sweden); and volunteer management (Ukraine).

Youth work in Germany is largely based on the principle of 'voluntarism' and is seen as a 'practice-oriented field of action'. There is no legal definition of youth work and it is not a recognised profession. Youth workers' academic backgrounds tend to be in sociology, (social) pedagogy or educational sciences. Youth-led participation is a central feature of youth work in Germany, where youth group leaders play a significant role.

The Juleica card sets out minimum requirements for youth leaders across Germany. The federal states also set supplementary quality standards on aspects such as the duration and specific training. The minimum annual required training is 30 hours, in some states up to 50 hours. As in the case of Luxembourg, while training is relatively short, provision is extensive with over 100 000 volunteers in youth work holding a valid Juleica card, which is valid for a maximum period of three years, after which it can be renewed, subject to the applicant having participated in further education and training. While the training prescribed for the Juleica deals with common youth work themes such as gender roles and gender mainstreaming, migration and intercultural competences, there is a particular focus on tasks and functions of youth leaders; goals and methods; regulation and organisation; and dangerous or challenging situations. This regulatory and cautionary approach is even more pronounced.

In Luxembourg, while course duration is relatively short, provision appears relatively consistent with annual funding being provided by the relevant ministry. The relatively short duration of such training may point to a concern with minimum but guaranteed organisational and operational standards rather than addressing more complex personal or social issues that young people may have. As we will see, while such training can be supplemented by other forms of learning, it nonetheless may point to a general lack of training and preparedness for the effective practice of youth work.

6.2 Innovative approaches in the voluntary youth sector

While the voluntary youth sectors both in Austria and Ireland recognise the importance of promoting quality in youth work practice, the nature and circumstances of youth work in both countries points to differences in approach as well as some similarities.

Open youth work in Austria and in other countries in which it is practiced, such as Sweden and Germany, presents particular challenges for promoting quality in youth work practice. Open youth work is not only open to all young people, with a low entry and participation threshold, but also seeks to reach out to young people, particularly ‘hard-to-reach’ young people, in location-based settings and through mobile (detached) youth work. Open youth work is also open to new ideas and new ways of working with young people. It is a form of youth work most removed from systems, regulations and oversight.

Yet the very nature of open youth work, its flexibility and diversity, points to a need for quality practice. Consequently, bOJA – the competence centre for open youth work – while having many functions, also provides a platform for the promotion of quality youth work practice. bOJA has developed a range of practical tools for open youth work practitioners that are similar to approaches to quality assurance in Luxembourg and Sweden such as self-assessment, log books, surveys of young people and stakeholders in mobile (detached) and site-specific youth work settings and quality dialogue.

As policy maker and the main funder of youth work in Ireland, the state has put in place a National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) to assess standards of youth work, evaluate development and promote improvement. NQSF is mandatory for all staff-led voluntary youth organisations funded by the state.

The toolkit 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work – Promoting best quality inclusive practice in youth work settings, produced by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) – the representative body for voluntary youth organisations – seeks to do two things: facilitate compliance with the NQSF; and further develop and improve the quality of youth work practice in the voluntary sector. The purpose of the toolkit is to help voluntary youth organisations develop and realise best practice in equal and inclusive youth work while at the same time articulating youth work practice in a structured matter that meets the reporting requirements of the NQSF and national youth policy objectives.

The toolkit also seeks to align theory and practice. In each of the eight steps, relevant sources of evidence are not treated as an abstract concept: practical examples of relevant evidence is provided. Similarly, in setting out best practice indicators, practical examples of good practice from among 16 voluntary youth organisations are provided.

While quality assurance is often seen in abstract terms in the form of frameworks or systems, the nature and circumstances of youth work in particular countries, as in Austria and Ireland, means that quality assurance needs to be embedded in how youth work is perceived, supported and practised in such countries. At best, quality assurance frameworks or systems are no more than templates or starting points in ensuring quality in youth work practice.

6.3 The role and impact of European support programmes

The importance of European support programmes was highlighted in the mapping report. In this study the relevance of such support programmes is also evident and the challenges and opportunities they present. Two ESF-aided programmes are considered in the study PRAKTIK – Practical skills through non-formal education in youth work in Slovakia and OLINA, an online assessment tool, developed under Keys for life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education, in the Czech Republic.

The PRAKTIK national project in Slovakia was a major intervention, over a two-year period, to develop practical skills in youth work for both youth workers and youth leaders and promote innovative practices in youth work and non-formal education. The project focused on creating a network of thematic youth work centres that promoted, developed and supported common youth work policy themes – healthy lifestyles, digital skills, the environment, citizenship and global issues.

Relevant experts supported the project and outputs in terms of participation and publications were also put in place.

OLINA, an online assessment tool, is a by-product of an ESF project in the Czech Republic and comprises three interlocking and sequential modules: self-evaluation, competence building, and training. Self-assessment operates at both organisational level and at youth worker and youth leader level through key competences and an e-learning programme to further develop selected key competences. OLINA also provides for a multi-source external assessment tool that enables users to be assessed by supervisors, colleagues, external partners and young people.

Such projects, reflecting both European policy priorities and funding requirements, have both strengths and limitations. An obvious aim and benefit of such programmes is that they give impetus, capacity and support for youth work where it may have been lacking. It also provides opportunities for innovation, experimentation and future policy development and implementation.

The relatively short and temporary nature of such programmes, however, raises the issue of sustainability and impact duration. What are the lasting or long-term effects of such interventions? But they also give rise to other policy questions, in particular that of capacity. To what extent did youth work in Slovakia and the Czech Republic have the underlying capacity to absorb and make effective use of what was achieved and learnt under the projects? Did the projects prove a support or a diversion in meeting the real needs of youth workers and young people? And these questions give rise to a broader policy issue.

There is an inevitable gap between policy priorities and funding arrangements at both country and Europe level and the reality of day-by-day youth work practice on the ground, its needs and aspirations. In countries in Categories 1 and 2 of Kiilakoski's practice architectures this gap may be more manageable than for countries in Categories 3 and 4 who are still at the development stage. Whatever the nature or extent of this gap in countries across Europe, bridging that gap may be an overarching policy priority.

The Finnish model of peer and self-assessment and the Czech model of online assessment have similarities: a combination of individual self-assessment, organisational assessment, the employment of criteria (indicators) and competences with the aim of improving and developing quality of practice. They both also employ a system of external assessment, one of the essential features of quality assurance.

The differences between the two models are to be seen in their origins as well as in their processes. OLINA emerged from an ESF project and has some of the characteristics of such projects: innovative, well-funded, comprehensive and ambitious. However, the extent of its use and impact is difficult to

gauge. In Finland, self and peer assessment is essentially a 'home-grown' tool and one that relies more on group work, personal communication and long-standing practices in youth work.

There is also the issue of transference. The logbook devised by KEKS in Sweden is now in use in Finland and Ireland, and a project in supervised practice in Malta is now evolving into a permanent feature of youth work practice, both as a result of Erasmus +.

In terms of European support programmes, small, focused and flexible initiatives may carry more weight in the long term than larger, more costly and more ambitious country wide initiatives.

6.4 Methods for assuring quality in youth work practice

Finland, Estonia and Malta and small countries in terms of population size. All have well-developed systems and supports for youth work. Finland and Estonia rank in Category 1 – strong practice architectures, and Malta in Category 2 – strong practice architectures room for improvement, in Killakoski's ranking. Youth work has a legislative basis in all three countries and degree-level programmes in youth work are also provided. While youth work is a regulated profession in Malta, youth work in Finland and Estonia have many features of professionalisation. In Malta, the majority of youth workers are paid and a substantial number of youth workers in Finland and Estonia are paid, which is not the case in most other European countries, where volunteers outnumber paid youth workers.

Despite relatively well developed systems and supports for youth work, all three countries recognise the need for promoting and further developing quality in youth work practice. However, their respective approaches are different.

The self and peer-assessment quality model in Finland adopts a bottom-up approach. Originally developed in the Helsinki region, it is now in operation across Finland.

While self-assessment is done more frequently, peer assessment or audits is a defining feature. The Coaching Bank in Estonia is a voluntary service that seeks to strengthen the competences of youth workers and enhance youth work practice and output. It may also be the case that coaching in Estonia is filling a perceived gap or need that is not adequately being addressed or provided for by the state, or in youth organisations or in youth work settings. In Malta, where Aġenzija Żgħażagħ, the national youth agency, is the main provider of youth work, employing reflective and supervised practice is a quality assurance tool for delivering programmes and services to young people and staff accountability as part of a publicly funded body.

While Finland, Estonia and Malta may have different contexts and approaches, assessment, coaching and supervision reflect a perceived need that is also apparent in other countries, whether that be

'analysing experiences and actions' in Luxembourg, 'support and feedback' in Slovakia, 'exchanging experiences and best practice' in Sweden, promoting 'quality dialogue' in Austria, and engaging 'regularly in self-assessment and comparing the results of self-assessment' in the Czech Republic.

KEKS, in Sweden, through its annual group/project and young participants' questionnaires, attempts to record how youth centres' activities are operating. As well as providing for thematic work groups to exchange experiences and best practice, and supporting tutoring for managers and staff, KEKS' web-based system and log book for documenting open youth work and group activities creates a unified model for documenting the daily activities in recreation centres, youth houses and other open youth work projects and activities. The log book also gathers information for improving the quality of youth work practice; strengthens communications between member organisations and youth workers; promotes and encourage reflective practice; and provides for better management practices in youth work.

As in the case of Luxembourg, log books are not just administrative tools to record attendance, events and activities but can also be seen as a way of developing organisational, group or corporate memory and thus increasing a sense of identity, ownership and purpose in youth work through recording and documenting shared experiences both positive and negative, mutual learning, and good practice over time. While larger and better funded organisations can produce annual reports and other publications on their activities and achievements, log books in small and voluntary groups can reinforce corporate memory, identity and purpose.

All countries in the study provide thematic examples of networking, association and co-operation. In some instances, as in Austria and Ireland, networking is among voluntary youth organisations; in others it is voluntary co-operation between municipalities, as in Sweden and Finland; Ukraine seeks partnership between the state and the voluntary sector; while Malta provides an example of international co-operation.

These networks provide insights into youth work practice 'on the ground' and how quality in youth work practice is being promoted, and these can briefly be summarised as follows:

- information gathering through regular surveys of youth organisations and young people
- the use of log books
- reflective practice, group discussion, quality dialogue, and feedback
- planning, goal setting and regulatory compliance
- strategic management, project management; problem solving; human resource management
- organisational, peer and self-assessment.

What is evident from these examples is that in promoting quality in youth work practice, youth work networks and individual youth organisations and groups seek to cultivate corporate memory;

strengthen institutional capacity; focus on process, regulations and outcomes; promote reflective practice and become learning organisations.

Terms such as ‘corporate memory’, ‘institutional capacity’, ‘process and outcomes’, ‘regulatory requirements’ and ‘learning organisation’ are not uncommon or unfamiliar, but none of these terms, and only one word, ‘learning’, is listed in the Council of Europe’s Glossary on youth. Yet, as is evident from this study, such concepts reflect, embody and impact on everyday practice in youth work and they may have as much force and validity as other more widely accepted values and concepts in the youth work field.

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