

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on promoting new approaches in youth work to uncover and develop the potential of young people

(2016/C 467/03)

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

RECALLING:

1. The political background to this issue as set out in the Annex to these conclusions.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

2. Young women and men possess inner potential and talent that may be of benefit to them as well as to the whole of society. The potential of young women and men can be seen in terms of competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes), which build upon their creativity and diversity.
3. Young people are striving to develop their potential, talents and creativity in connection with active citizenship, personal development and employability. While development of talents means transforming extraordinary abilities into excellence, development of potential means development of latent qualities or abilities that may lead to future success or usefulness, considering the individual situation of a young woman or man.
4. In order to uncover and develop the potential and talents of all young people, the EU and its Member States need to support and promote the implementation of effective cross-sectoral policies that can encourage and support young people and help them realise their full potential. Special attention should be given to those in difficult life situations.
5. Youth work has been used to reach out to young people including those who are marginalised or at risk of being marginalised. However, as young people's lifestyles and behaviour changes in the context of new social and technological developments, it is essential that new methods and approaches in youth work continue to be developed. In order to understand and connect to young people, youth work should also improve its outreach to the digital world.

UNDERLINE THAT:

6. Youth work takes place in many different forms and settings, answering to the various needs, dreams, aspirations and living conditions of young people. Its capacity for outreach and responsiveness to emerging changes brings qualitative change to the lives of young people and to society.
7. The learning processes in youth work help young people to develop their competences in a holistic way, including knowledge, skills and attitudes. Youth work is often used to assist young people in facing various life challenges, whether during transitions from education to work, periods of unemployment, various emerging threats including radicalisation leading to violent extremism or in their search for positive identity and a sense of belonging.
8. The youth work environment should be stimulating, adaptive, attractive and responsive to new trends in the lives of young people and thus support them in uncovering and developing their potential, which can be often hidden and not apparent within formal education or in other sectors. This environment should be a place to experiment and try new things, where failure is allowed and is considered part of the learning and social integration processes.
9. The activities developed in youth work have proved to be effective in the positive development of young personalities and they need to be further supported and strengthened. Encouraging innovation in youth work should be seen as a part of the response to constant change, aiming to attract the interest of all young people including those not yet taking an active part in youth work activities. Innovations should be part of the continuous quality development of youth work, responding to the needs, interests and experiences of young people as perceived by themselves ⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ *Quality youth work* — common framework for future developments of youth work. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, European Commission, 2015.

10. To appeal to young people and to ensure greater impact on their lives, new settings where young people spend their time, such as modern city infrastructure and virtual space, as well as new approaches using innovative online and offline tools (such as gamification ⁽²⁾, GPS based activities ⁽³⁾, learning badges ⁽⁴⁾ or design thinking ⁽⁵⁾), should be reflected upon and taken into account in the further development of education and training of youth workers.
11. Young people themselves should play a crucial role in the design, development and implementation of the innovation process of youth work to make this innovation successful.
12. The capacities of youth workers (either volunteer or employed) can be enhanced through education, training and networking opportunities, guidance, as well as financial support, in order to search for and implement new and innovative approaches in youth work with the aim of reaching out to more young people, especially those which are difficult to reach, and of achieving a greater impact on their lives.
13. The creation of evidence-based youth policy requires regular updates, with up-to-date and relevant data gathered at local, regional, national and European level. Information on the lifestyles and current living trends ⁽⁶⁾ of young people should also be included.
14. Beyond the development of the youth work sector as such, cross-sectoral cooperation is vital for the development of new approaches in youth work. In the context of implementing new approaches in youth work and youth policy practice, the cooperation of stakeholders representing various sectors needs to be facilitated and promoted, so as to ensure the effective identification of cooperation opportunities ⁽⁷⁾ and to contribute to the quality of youth work practice and the better fulfilment of young people's needs.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

15. Promote, support and evaluate the exploitation, design, development, testing and dissemination of new tools and approaches to be used in youth work by means of cross-sectoral cooperation, in order to respond appropriately to current needs and future challenges, interests and expectations of young people and society. In order to ensure quality, young people, youth researchers, youth workers and youth organisations should be invited to take an active part at all stages of the process.
16. Enhance the capacities of youth workers (voluntary or employed) for innovation and the development of the potential and talents of young people by providing educational and training opportunities focusing in particular on:
 - a) the use and adaptation of innovative approaches in youth work practice;
 - b) the incorporation of information on the latest living trends of young people into youth work education and practice;
 - c) the use of cross-sectoral cooperation when designing new and innovative tools and approaches for youth work practice;
 - d) the methods in particular to reveal and then to develop young people's potential and talents, building their self-esteem and self-confidence;

⁽²⁾ *Gamification* means applying the mechanics of gaming to non-game activities to change people's behaviour. There are examples of applications counting the steps one does every day, providing rewards and allowing comparison to others. Various elements of game dynamics and mechanisms can be implemented and applied in youth work, too. (Gamification 101: An Introduction to the Use of Game Dynamics to Influence Behaviour, Bunchball, 2010).

⁽³⁾ *GPS based activities* use electronic devices with GPS positioning (mostly smart phones) for different activities to support physical movement, orientate in new environment, fulfil different tasks or learn more about interesting places.

⁽⁴⁾ *Learning badges* are virtual badges in the online space which ratify learners' achievements. Some companies support this idea, including Mozilla, which created an online platform called Open badges. This fits in well with initiatives around the recognition of non-formal learning in youth work.

⁽⁵⁾ *Design thinking* is a human-centred, collaborative, optimistic and experimental approach. It works well with young people because they become an integral part of change, while also designing a new solution. It can be used to (re)design various programmes, tools or spaces for young people. (Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit, 2012).

⁽⁶⁾ Information on the lifestyles, living trends of young people includes specifics on young people from a sociological, psychological and pedagogical point of view. Such information should answer questions, such as: What are the interests of young people? What do they fear? How do they learn? How do they spend their leisure time? How do they interact on social networks? How do they manage their finances?

⁽⁷⁾ A creative workshop aimed at creating a new application for mobile devices, attended by youth workers, young people and ICT specialists could stand as an example here.

- e) the involvement of young people as a source of valuable information and expertise, e.g. in the development of digital competences;
 - f) reaching young people at risk of marginalisation, using innovative approaches and focusing on the development of their potential and talent.
17. Encourage, where relevant, sustainable support, including financial support, of the organisations working with and for young people, in particular on collective projects and following the principles ⁽⁸⁾ of youth work, so as to build their capacities for innovation.
 18. Work closely with the representatives of regional and local authorities, youth councils and youth work organisations, young people and other actors in the youth field so that the messages included in these conclusions are widely incorporated into practice at regional and local level.
 19. Promote and support spaces and opportunities in partnership with local authorities, where appropriate, in order to allow young people to meet in person and develop common initiatives.
 20. Consider the creation of flexible spaces and opportunities for experimentation, trial and error, where youth workers and young people can learn to react to the fast-changing conditions and lifestyles, and learn to deal with complexity.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

21. Consider the regular collection and analysis of information on the living trends of young people and support dissemination of the findings to the relevant stakeholders, including national, regional and local policy makers, volunteers in youth work, youth leaders and youth workers.
22. Search for innovative approaches implemented in youth work practice, including other relevant fields, such as education and training, sport and culture, social services, information and communication technologies, etc. and create opportunities for adapting innovative approaches used in other policy fields to the youth work area, as well as for sharing examples of good practice.
23. Where appropriate, identify the new competences that youth workers need and develop education and training modules that facilitate the acquisition of new competences by youth workers, including digital competences.
24. Through the creation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies, youth strategies and youth initiatives at national, regional and local level, identify new approaches in youth work that help to uncover and develop the potential and talent of all young people.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

25. Make regular analysis and insert a section in the Youth Report providing up-to-date and accurate information on the latest lifestyles and living trends of young people.
26. Support the exchange of information on lifestyles and living trends of young people, as well as examples of good practice and innovative approaches implemented in youth work at the level of EU Member States, as well as outside the EU. Organise expert meetings, conferences and other mutual learning activities and consider using platforms such as the European Youth Work Convention to promote innovative approaches in youth work.
27. Make best use of the existing EU programmes such as Erasmus+ to support the implementation of innovative approaches in youth work practice.

⁽⁸⁾ See footnote 1.

ANNEX

In adopting these conclusions, the Council recalls in particular the following:

- the Communication from the Commission 'Europe 2020' ⁽¹⁾ as endorsed by the European Council and its flagship initiatives 'New Skills and Jobs' ⁽²⁾, 'Innovation Union' ⁽³⁾, and 'Digital Agenda for Europe' ⁽⁴⁾,
- the Council Conclusions of 30 May 2016 on the role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to preventing and combatting violent radicalisation of young people ⁽⁵⁾,
- the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 December 2015, on a European Union work plan for youth for 2016-2018 ⁽⁶⁾,
- the Council conclusions of 18 May 2015 on enhancing cross-sectorial policy cooperation to effectively address socioeconomic challenges facing young people ⁽⁷⁾,
- the Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people ⁽⁸⁾,
- the Council conclusions of 25 November 2013 on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training ⁽⁹⁾,
- the Council conclusions of 16 May 2013 on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽¹¹⁾,
- the Council conclusions of 11 May 2012 on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people ⁽¹²⁾,
- the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 18 November 2010, on youth work ⁽¹³⁾,
- the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 11 May 2010, on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty ⁽¹⁴⁾,
- studies and declarations:
 - the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) ⁽¹⁵⁾,
 - the Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States (2015),
 - the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (2015) ⁽¹⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ 7110/10

⁽²⁾ 17066/10

⁽³⁾ 14035/10

⁽⁴⁾ 9981/10/REV 1

⁽⁵⁾ 9640/16

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 1.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 172, 27.5.2015, p. 3.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 18.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 30, 1.2.2014, p. 5.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ C 168, 14.6.2013, p. 5.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽¹²⁾ OJ C 169, 15.6.2012, p. 1.

⁽¹³⁾ OJ C 327, 4.12.2010, p. 1.

⁽¹⁴⁾ OJ C 137, 27.5.2010, p. 1.

⁽¹⁵⁾ OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 17.

⁽¹⁶⁾ http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8529155/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85