

**Council conclusions on the role of youth work in the context of migration and refugee matters**

(2018/C 441/03)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

TAKES NOTE OF:

1. Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union <sup>(1)</sup>, which states that Union action shall be aimed at ‘encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe’.
2. Article 79(4) and (5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union <sup>(2)</sup>, which states that the European Parliament and Council may establish measures to provide incentives to promote the integration of third-country nationals, excluding any harmonization of laws and regulations of the Member States. The right of Member States to determine volumes of admission of third-country nationals coming from third countries to their territory in order to seek work shall not be affected.
3. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union <sup>(3)</sup>, especially the principles recognized, inter alia, in Articles 21 (Non-discrimination), 23 (Equality between men and women) and 24 (The rights of the child).
4. The Renewed Framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) <sup>(4)</sup> and the current Work Plan for Youth (2016-2018) <sup>(5)</sup>.
5. The Communication from the Commission ‘Europe 2020’ as endorsed by the European Council which recognizes the ‘role of youth work as a provider of non-formal learning opportunities to all young people’ <sup>(6)</sup>.
6. The Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Youth work <sup>(7)</sup>, which calls for better understanding of and an enhanced role, specifically in relation to the promotion, support and development of youth work on a range of levels.
7. The Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (Paris Declaration 2015) <sup>(8)</sup>.
8. The Recommendation CM/Rec (2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Young People’s Access to Rights <sup>(9)</sup>.
9. The Communication from European Commission on an Action Plan on the integration of Third Country Nationals <sup>(10)</sup>.
10. The Communication from European Commission on the protection of children in migration <sup>(11)</sup>, and the Council Conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child <sup>(12)</sup>, where is stressed the need to protect all children, regardless of their status, and give primary consideration at all times to the best interests of the child, including unaccompanied children and those separated from their families, in full compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol.
11. The policy recommendations of the EU Expert Group on ‘Youth work for refugees and young third country nationals’.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 115, 9.5.2008, p. 13. See Article 165(2), ex Article 149 TEC.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 115, 9.5.2008, p. 13. See Article 79(4), ex Article 63, points 3 and 4, TEC.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 364, 18.12.2000, p. 1.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 1.

<sup>(6)</sup> EUROPE 2020 Strategy, 3.3.2010,

<http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%202007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ C 202, 7.6.2016, p. 389.

<sup>(8)</sup> Paris Declaration, 17th March, 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20150316-paris-education\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20150316-paris-education_en)

<sup>(9)</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/1680702b6e>

<sup>(10)</sup> COM(2016) 377 final, 7.6.2016.

<sup>(11)</sup> COM(2017) 211 final, 12.4.2017.

<sup>(12)</sup> 7775/17, 3.4.2017.

## RECOGNISES THAT:

1. Youth work is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. The activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of 'out of school' education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers<sup>(1)</sup> and youth leaders and is based on non-formal learning processes and on voluntary participation<sup>(2)</sup>. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making<sup>(3)</sup>.
2. The focus of youth work is young people, who are the centre of all related policies, methods and activities. Young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals<sup>(4)</sup> are deemed to be competent individuals with abilities and strengths, capable of shaping their future.
3. The realities and practices of youth work vary, depending on the local, regional and national context. All forms of proposed cooperation are intended to support this diverse picture and do not aim to limit it through harmonization.
4. Among the guiding principles of youth work are the importance of promoting European values, gender equality and combating all forms of discrimination, respecting the rights and observing the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, taking into account of possible differences in the living conditions, needs, aspirations, interest and attitudes of young people due to various factors and recognizing all young people as a resource to society<sup>(5)</sup>. The ability of youth work to be responsive to individuals is of particular value in recognizing the abilities and strengths of young people with fewer opportunities.
5. Special attention should be given to young refugees and other third country nationals risking multiple marginalization based on their migrant background in combination with other possible grounds of discrimination, such as their ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, belief or political opinion.
6. The aim of youth work is to achieve positive destinations in the transition from adolescence to adulthood<sup>(6)</sup>. Young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, are individuals experiencing this transition period. Youth work aims to include all young people into society, while also offering tools and opportunities to enable them to influence society as active citizens. This inclusive nature of youth work should be applied to support the inclusion of young refugees and third country nationals into the new hosting society, while respectfully being aware that their inclusion process starts from a different point than that of local young people.
7. Youth work is also described as an educational partnership between young people and youth workers<sup>(6)</sup>. This learning takes place in a non-formal and informal environment. Youth work seeks to broaden the horizons of young people who are involved in its activities, to promote participation, and to invite social commitment of young people, in particular by offering opportunities to become active, by encouraging young persons to be critical and creative in their responses to their experiences and the world around them<sup>(7)</sup>. In providing this support for young refugees and other third country nationals, youth work communicates the hosting society's cultural understandings and values to the target group and vice versa in an intercultural learning approach.

(1) 'Youth worker' as defined in the Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50).

(2) According to Council resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (November 2009) (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1).

(3) Council of Europe, Standards of Youth Work, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-work1>

(4) 'Young refugees and other third country nationals' within the scope of these Council conclusions, and in the context of migration and refugee matters, are young women and men up to the age of 30, legally residing in an EU Member State.

(5) OJ C 327, 4.12.2010, p. 1.

(6) [www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/making-a-difference/understanding-value-of-universal-youth-work](http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/making-a-difference/understanding-value-of-universal-youth-work)

(7) According to National Occupational Standards for Youth Work Scotland, Lifelong Learning UK [www.youthworkessentials.org/up-running/what-is-youth-work.aspx](http://www.youthworkessentials.org/up-running/what-is-youth-work.aspx)

8. Participating in and shaping of activities and projects in youth work enhances skills, abilities and capacities of all actors involved: young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, as well as youth workers. Young people choose to be involved in activities of youth work, not least because they want to relax, meet friends, make new relationships, to have fun and to find support <sup>(1)</sup>. Therefore, youth work spaces need to provide respect and fun and create a welcoming, participatory, gender-balanced and democratically structured environment, where respect of others, for diversity, human rights and democratic values can be experienced in practice. In such safe and non-discriminatory environments, without the need for registration or financial contribution, where individual differences are respected by focusing on supporting and strengthening the trust young persons have in themselves, young people shall be able to develop and test their views, make mistakes and learn from them and their peers.
9. Having the opportunity to be part of a diverse social network with this offer of autonomous and voluntary participation can be a decisive factor for active participation in society. Youth work activities are chosen according to the life realities and needs of young people and are based on respect- and trust-based relationships of young people and youth workers. The start and end of these relationships should not be defined by an external factor, but only by the initiative of the young person, including young refugees and other third country nationals.
10. Youth work methods provide youth workers and young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, with skills to gather unbiased information, and enable them to strengthen their ability for self-reflection, intercultural awareness, critical thinking and resilience.
11. Youth work helps to develop competencies in the field of conflict prevention.
12. Youth work offers pathways to civic engagement and political participation by providing information about decision-making processes and access to politically responsible actors as well as by practicing democratic structures through active involvement in youth work activities. This voluntary participation in a respectful and informal setting may provide a positive sense of identity and belonging to young refugees and other third country nationals and enable them to contribute to positive change in society.
13. To support young people and broaden the scope of their activities, youth workers should collaborate closely with other actors and stakeholders at a local level. Through information-sharing, networking and cooperation, youth work can open individual access for young people into other areas, such as formal education, labour market, housing or health care. Encouraging young people to use these bridges into other areas is of special importance for youth work with young refugees and other third country nationals.

UNDERScores THAT YOUTH WORK REQUIRES:

**A. Knowledge and training**

Youth workers need specialized knowledge, skills and competences to engage in long-term relationships with young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, at all stages of their process; specific knowledge is also required when engaging with unaccompanied minors; knowledge, methods and training need to be based on intercultural awareness and reflection and have to be continuously evaluated and updated according to changing needs and perceptions.

**B. Stable framework and spaces**

Stable frameworks of legal rights, sustainable space and means, according to local, regional and national quality standards of youth work; this includes safe spaces and possibilities of participation in inclusive forms of youth work activities for young refugees and other third country nationals;

**C. Policies**

Policies to enable and support the autonomy of young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, and their active democratic participation in shaping policies;

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<sup>(1)</sup> National Occupational Standards for Youth Work Scotland, Lifelong Learning UK [www.youthworkessentials.org/up-running/what-is-youth-work.aspx](http://www.youthworkessentials.org/up-running/what-is-youth-work.aspx)

#### D. **Networking and Research**

Various forms of topic-oriented, cross-sector contact and exchange between youth workers and youth stakeholders are essential, both face-to-face as well as online. To continuously improve methods and related policies, unbiased quality information on the needs of the target group and developments in the policy area is needed.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, WHILE RESPECTING SUBSIDIARITY, AND INCLUDING REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS WHERE APPROPRIATE, TO:

##### A. **Improve 'Knowledge and Training' by:**

1. encouraging the mapping and dissemination of examples of good practice from various sectors that deal with young refugees and other third country nationals, while recognizing the contribution of these good practices to conflict prevention;
2. providing youth workers with adequate instruments for information and training such as on human rights, legal frameworks on national and local migration and asylum procedures, relevant languages, other local cultures, intercultural dialogue, emotional health and well-being, as well as on safety, security and information on access to psychological support for young people and youth workers, etc.;
3. providing information on positive narratives of integration processes and new role model initiatives, while recognizing that integration begins with the first day of arrival and is a two-way process for young refugees and other third country nationals, as well as their host society. The 'from-first-day-on information process' could start with topics linked to European values, human rights, democratic values and gender equality issues;
4. establishing adequate peer training and peer coaching opportunities for young refugees and other third country nationals, as well as for youth workers;
5. increasing the capacity of youth workers to strengthen resilience (their own as well as the target groups') and, with regard to increasing their well-being and mental health, to facilitate access to basic psychosocial support for young refugees and other third country nationals, as well as for youth workers;
6. training youth workers in facilitating intercultural dialogue on an equal footing between the local population and young refugees and other third country nationals; this includes skills to handle difficult conversations in a supportive and respectful manner and de-escalate or solve conflicts with democratic methods;
7. exploring ways of establishing formal and/or non-formal training approaches for youth workers, who actively work with young refugees and other third country nationals; successful participation should lead to some form of recognition/certification.

##### B. **Provide and enlarge 'Stable framework and spaces' by:**

8. supporting all types of youth work to reach out to young refugees and other third country nationals, to provide them with access to civil society activities and include them, wherever possible, as active participants and peers;
9. providing support and visibility for existing youth organizations or youth initiatives led by young refugees and other third country nationals, active in successful inclusion processes;
10. building networks between existing youth organisations, youth clubs and services that already have good contact, knowledge and expertise in working with young refugees and other third country nationals, and creating a network of actors concerned;
11. enabling ways of active participation for young refugees and other third country nationals in all existing local, regional, national and European youth programmes;
12. supporting the organization of local events and projects which showcase the abilities and talents of the local population (regardless of their backgrounds);

13. empowering youth work structures, wherever possible and applicable, to act as support link between public services, the local population and young refugees and other third country nationals. Therefore, authorities at the responsible level should:
  - a) promote programmes, actions and projects that combat prejudice and stereotypes and address potential fears of the local population;
  - b) promote intercultural- and interreligious dialogue by providing support and visibility;
  - c) create visibility for 'good news' and positive narratives;
  - d) provide programmes, actions and projects to raise awareness of the culture, values and habits of local host societies as well as of the regions of origin of young refugees and other third country nationals;
  - e) create safe spaces where the local community, including young refugees and third country nationals, may engage in respectful dialogue to address, prevent and/or combat discrimination, xenophobia and racist and anti-semitic views. Wherever appropriate, the activities of these safe spaces may be publicised through information and communication media;
  - f) support and acknowledge the contribution of all actors (governmental as well as from non-governmental organizations or private initiatives) engaged in the process;
14. creating safe, child and youth friendly spaces within receiving structures or refugee reception centres, taking into account the principle of the best interest of the child and of young people. These spaces should be operated by youth work staff with adequate skills in cooperation with professionals from other sectors, so that learning of the new host societies rules and values and of the needs and background of young refugees and other third country nationals may begin from the very first day on;

**C. Strengthen 'Policies' by:**

15. developing strategies and frameworks, where appropriate, on the empowerment and integration of young refugees and other third country nationals, allowing them to become active members of society, also by empowering and supporting them to become youth workers; this can be done by providing training opportunities on democratic values, gender equality and participation issues, as well as granting access to ways of active social and political participation. The training should include reflections on the similarities and differences between the system and values of the host country and those of the country of origin;
16. seeking to establish a clear cooperation framework of the different sectors which are part of the integration process, which clearly defines and values the roles of and synergies between all sectors involved, including youth civil society organisations led by young refugees and other third country nationals;

**D. Invest in 'Networking and Research' by:**

17. supporting the establishment of a dialogue between youth workers and other professionals of diverse backgrounds and sectors, encountering young refugees and other third country nationals, to identify key issues and opportunities for cooperation and exploring the role youth work could play in capacity-building within these policy areas, while ensuring that youth work and enforcement of legal status decisions remain separate;
18. creating cross-sector networks, partnerships and seminars or conferences, where policy-makers of different sectors, youth workers and young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, can meet and engage in dialogue;
19. supporting research projects and evidence-based youth work in the sector of migration-related matters;

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

**A. Improve 'Knowledge and Training' by:**

1. mapping information and training needs within the European youth work sector and providing opportunities for an exchange of information or experience (face-to-face as well as online) at the European level on, amongst others, human rights and asylum issues, intercultural dialogue, relevant languages and building resilience;

2. strengthening opportunities for peer counselling, learning and training of young refugees and other third country nationals, as well as youth workers of diverse backgrounds through providing access to language learning and empowerment, as well as to formal, non-formal and informal learning and mobility programmes;
  3. continuing to identify, support and disseminate at Union level existing and innovative tools, methodologies and examples of good youth work practice in all sectors dealing with migration-related matters;
- B. Provide and enlarge 'Framework and Spaces' by:**
4. taking steps to ensure active participation for young refugees and other third country nationals in existing and future European programmes;
  5. continuing to promote and support cross-sector partnerships and initiatives, in particular between youth work providers, education and training institutions, social and employment services, and social partners that support young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, to acquire and develop life skills;
- C. Strengthen 'Policies' by:**
6. further promoting and supporting a cross-sector approach in supporting young people, including young refugees and other third country nationals, in developing their talents, as well as in acquiring and developing the necessary competences to facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life;
  7. providing available information, where the current life circumstances of young people, especially those of young refugees and other third country nationals, might not be in accordance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; and suggest action, where needed, to improve the situation;
- D. Invest in 'Networking and Research' by:**
8. strengthening support for cross-sector dialogue and networking opportunities at the European level (online tools, seminars, conferences) to enable capacity-building for youth workers, stakeholders and peers from the area of migration-related matters;
  9. making use of dialogue instruments on EU level (such as the European Youth Strategy and the European Youth Dialogue, as described in the Commission's Communication 'Engage – Connect – Empower') to create opportunities for exchange and cooperation of stakeholders in the area of migration-related matters;
  10. supporting European research and data evaluation instruments for evidence-based youth work in the area of migration-related matters.
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