

COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH WORK PORTFOLIO

A TOOL FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
OF YOUTH WORK COMPETENCE



coe.int/youth-portfolio | Revised version 2025



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Council of Europe

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Cover design and layout: Pedro Meca

Printed at the Council of Europe.

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Introduction to the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio

The Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio supports youth work in its civic mission – fostering democratic competences among young people, while promoting the broader values of democracy and active citizenship. Designed to support and empower youth workers and, through a structured framework, it supports the cultivation of key competences essential for engaging meaningfully with young people in diverse communities and democratic processes in different contexts. By aligning with the Council of Europe's values, the Portfolio bridges theory and practice, equipping youth workers with the means to understand their role in creating spaces in which young people can thrive as informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. It supports the youth work community of practice in being a constructive force in the building of resilient, equitable societies rooted in respect for human rights and pluralism.

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio is a European tool for users intending to introduce, explain and understand the youth work, its functions and competences in their local and national contexts. The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio has been developed at the European level, but it is not primarily for people and organisations working at the European level or internationally. The Portfolio is addressed to youth workers and leaders, as well as the wider community of youth work practice, working at any level from local to international.

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio is a tool outlining the youth work competence framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers, in line with the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on youth work](#).¹ The competence framework is helpful for a common understanding of youth work functions, principles and values, as well as standard competences that any youth worker ought to have in order to fulfil these functions. The Portfolio and its competence framework are good starting points for the development of national competence frameworks, occupational

standards, youth work strategies and in general for new fit-for-purpose youth work policy, frameworks, and mechanisms and tools, as evidenced in the Study on updating the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio (November 2023).

This is a tool that helps individuals, teams and organisations **doing youth work around Europe** to understand their competence and to develop it more effectively. It is primarily for youth workers and youth leaders but can also be useful to youth work managers and administrators wishing to assess and further **develop their youth work competence** and/or that of the people under their supervision. It further aims to inspire members of the community of practice to include self-development and competence development as integral parts of their youth work practice, and to support youth work organisations in evolving their appraisal systems and assessment tools.

The Portfolio is also a tool that can be useful for the wider youth work community of practice: educators and trainers, leaders of youth and youth work organisations, youth work managers and policymakers, and generally all those involved in the youth work eco-system and interested in the topics of education and training of youth workers, quality development and recognition of youth work, and youth work policy development.

The Portfolio is an online tool. However, in order to respond to the needs of the widest community of practice, the Youth Department has gathered the content of the online Portfolio so that those who want to can use the Portfolio offline. While this publication reproduces most of the contents of the Portfolio website, it does not include the whole self-assessment and learning cycle which is facilitated by online tools on the website. It does, nevertheless, include the basis and the presentation of the process of using the Portfolio for (self)-assessment, as outlined in illustration 1.

1. [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2017\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work](#) brought forward youth work as an aim on its own. A reference particularly relevant for the Portfolio reads as follows: "2. establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers that takes into account existing practice, new trends and arenas, as well as the diversity of youth work".

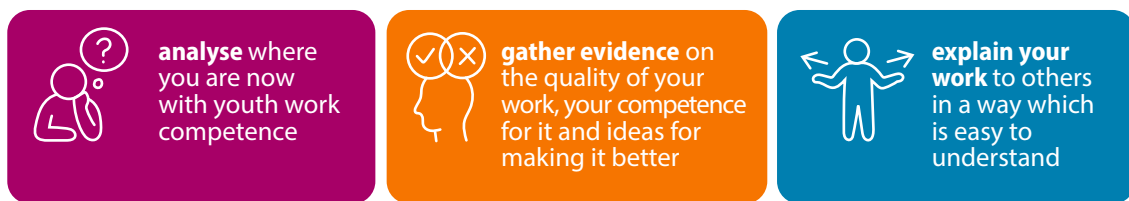


Illustration 1 - Self assessment process

The publication also includes:

- information about youth work essentials
- information about youth work competences
- updates about the youth work developments in Europe.

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio is an initiative of the Council of Europe in co-operation with partners such as the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. Read more about why and how it was developed in the “Further information” section.

Please share your experience of using the Portfolio online or offline with us, by contacting the Youth Department at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/contact>.

What's new in the revised Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio?

The revised Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio:

- Acknowledges the diversity of ways in which the self-assessment tool for youth workers has been used by the community of youth work practice across Europe since it was published. This version considers a broader range of potential users and uses of the Portfolio as a tool for:
 - **Education and training of youth workers**, where it supports the introduction of what youth work is, its functions and the youth worker competences needed to fulfil those functions in practice.
 - **Youth work competence development**, where it helps understanding of the youth work functions and the competence framework and offers opportunity for self-assessment and learning plans.
 - **Youth work policy and eco-system development**, where it serves as a reference and starting point for the development of national competence frameworks, occupational standards, youth work strategies and, in general, new fit-for-purpose policy, frameworks, and mechanisms and tools in various contexts and at all levels.

Responds to the political will expressed in the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on youth work](#) to have a youth work competence framework as a European standard for education and training of youth workers that can serve as a basis and inspiration for further adaptation and contextualisation by member states. The revised competence framework differentiates between core individual and collective youth work functions, positioning every individual youth worker within a supportive community of practice. Furthermore, the revised competence framework highlights the need for adaptability and sensitivity to different contexts and specific young people that youth workers engage with.

- Core group of youth work functions relevant for individual youth workers:
 - Focusing on the relationship with and outcomes for young people.
- Collective groups of youth work functions relevant for individuals, teams and community of youth work practice:
 - Focusing on oneself, one's practice and the field of youth work
 - Focusing on community and society.

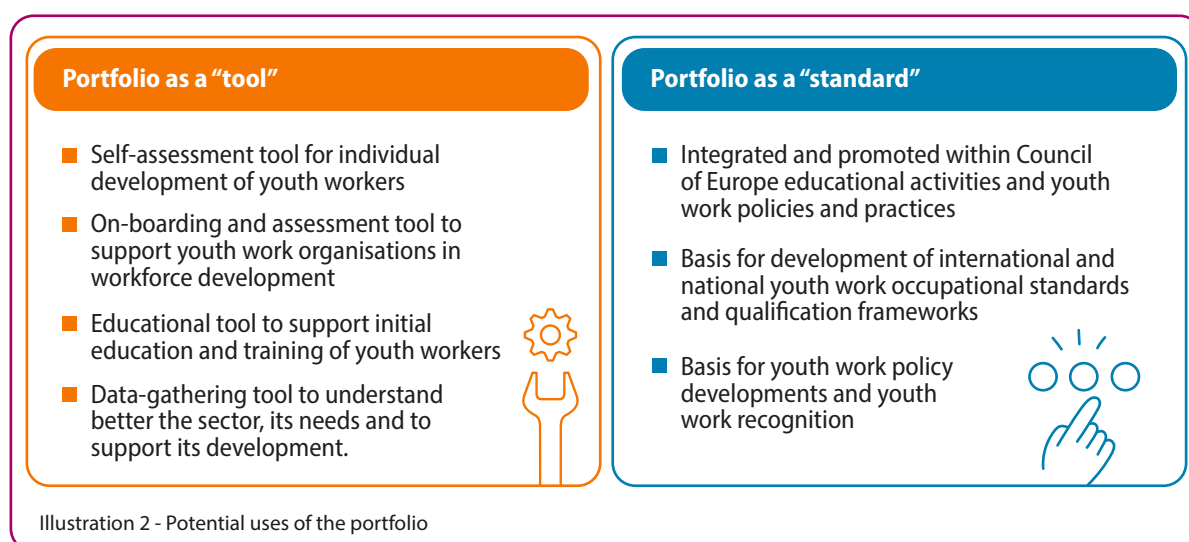
How to use the Portfolio

In this section, you can find ideas about how the Portfolio can be used in different ways as a support for the quality development of youth work. If you have further ideas or suggestions or ways in which you have used the Portfolio, please write to us at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/contact>.

The Portfolio is seen as both a 'tool' for assessment and as a 'standard' for quality youth work development. Since its first publication, it has been used as

an educational, as a managerial and as a general tool for mainstreaming youth work quality standards, as well as for assessment purposes. Its competence framework has supported the aspirations of members of the youth work community of practice to youth work excellence.

The following illustration outlines initial ideas for use of the Portfolio (and/or its elements):



The Portfolio is also well placed to directly support member states' operationalisation and implementation of the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on youth work](#) and particularly to "establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers". As such, it is a resource that has already been used:

- **by educators and trainers** for introducing youth work to learners and supporting their youth work competence development.
- **by youth work organisations** for on-boarding and assessment of youth workers
- **by policy actors** engaging in shaping youth work policies at different levels.

The Portfolio can be used independently and in combination with other tools and frameworks developed in member states to contribute to improved quality in youth work, competence

development, youth work policy and youth work eco-system development, as well as overall youth work recognition and promotion.

The following are ideas for use of the Portfolio as a tool for:

- Education and training of youth workers
- Youth work competence development
- Youth work policy and eco-system development.

Using the Portfolio for education and training of youth workers/youth leaders

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio can be useful for the education and training of youth workers and youth leaders. It is useful for introducing what youth work is, what it is supposed to do (its functions) and the competences youth workers need in order to be able to fulfil those functions in practice.

Educators and trainers can use the Portfolio as a reference when they develop youth work education and training course curricula.

The Portfolio can also be used as a self-assessment tool for participants of education and training activities interested in the development of their youth work competence. For example, participants can use the Portfolio at the beginning of a training course to assess where they are now with their youth work competence, as well as to identify learning goals that they want to achieve during the training course. The trainers can then use these learning goals to shape and fine-tune the curriculum of their training course.

The Portfolio is used in training courses of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe on youth work topics. It has been used for developing course curricula and by individual participants to develop their own competence assessments during training activities. As such, it has also served as a basis for the certification of the Council of Europe Youth Department's training courses.

Educators wishing to support learners in their competence development can set up processes of accompaniment using the Portfolio. Trainers can use it as a support tool for mentoring or coaching. Furthermore, it can be used to support youth leaders who want to develop their youth work competence, or to transition to a more explicit or professional youth work profile.

Using the Portfolio for youth work competence development

Youth work competence development is a shared responsibility of individual youth workers and youth leaders, and the wider community of practice that includes training teams, organisations and youth work managers. The following are ideas for how the Portfolio can be used by those actors:

Ideas for use by individuals

As an individual youth worker or youth leader, the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio can be useful for:

- self-assessing your current level of youth work competence
- setting-up learning and development aims and pursuing those in ways you will identify through the process
- after a certain time, revisiting your self-assessment to see what has changed, updating your Portfolio or restarting the process.

For youth leaders in particular, the Portfolio can be helpful for the purpose of professionalisation and for planning one's competence transition to a more explicit youth worker profile.

Making a Portfolio is a dynamic process, and we invite you, if you use the tool, to revisit it regularly. It can be a good friend in supporting you in keeping your motivation up for learning more and developing your youth work competence. You can easily check whether the self-assessment made at one point in time is still valid, and then update the parts for which changes or developments have taken place.

If you are engaged with a formal institution or structure, you might have to take part in a performance review or appraisal. It can be relevant to conduct your Portfolio review shortly before such an appraisal takes place because it can provide you with information and arguments to include in discussion of your performance and/or professional development plans with your supervisor.

Otherwise, you can decide for yourself when it makes most sense to work with it – for example, in conjunction with a regular team evaluation, or a discussion with your volunteer or professional supervisor, at the beginning and/or end of an internship, when you need to revise your CV for a job application, or simply to support a personal competence development check-in.

Ideas for use by teams

The Portfolio can be used as a learning and development tool in a team! There are two ways to carry out a team competence assessment using the Portfolio.

The first takes place in two steps, with each team member conducting their own self-assessment, and then collectively discussing aspects of team competence using the competence framework as a guide.

The second way is for all the team members to conduct the Portfolio assessment exercise together, with their teamwork being the subject of the assessment, rather than individual competence. In most cases, this only requires that you replace 'I' with 'We' when conducting the assessment. So, for example, when thinking about intercultural competence, the team exercise would be to assess how the team collectively understands its own intercultural reality (i.e. team composition and composition of the groups of youth it is working with) and how it deals with it (i.e. with each other and collectively with the participants).

Ideas for use by organisations and by youth work managers

The Portfolio can be used as a learning and development tool for an organisation as a whole!

Like teams, organisations can learn collectively and reach higher potential, and the Portfolio provides people in positions of responsibility in organisations with a framework for reflecting on the way the organisation is functioning and developing.

Youth work organisations and managers can use the Portfolio as a basis for the development of a 'quality assurance framework'. A quality assurance framework is a set of principles and guidelines that an organisation uses to make sure it is doing its work adequately, in line with its stated mission and objectives and with the needs of its beneficiaries. The development of an organisational competence assessment and learning plan can form the foundations of such a framework and can also be used for contributing to an organisational development strategy.

You can integrate the functions and competences that individual staff and/or volunteers you co-ordinate or manage have developed as part of their personal Portfolio assessments into processes of appraisal and objective setting. Furthermore, you can develop an assessment tool for youth work within your organisation based on the Portfolio.

The development of its human resources is essen-

tial for each organisation. You may use the Portfolio for on-boarding staff and volunteers, as well as for rolling-out an accompaniment process for their transition into different roles (for example, from youth leader to youth worker, or from youth worker to youth work manager). You can also use the Portfolio framework as a tool for identifying the learning needs of the youth workers and youth leaders you are managing in your organisation or institution, and for developing plans to address those learning needs in the most efficient and effective manner.

Using the Portfolio for youth work policy and eco-system development

The Portfolio is a specific example of the commitment of Council of Europe member states to the promotion of the recognition of youth work based on the principles of non-formal education. This commitment was formalised through the adoption of [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)8 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people](#) and subsequent follow-up texts. In particular, the Portfolio is a unique tool connecting directly with [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Youth Work](#). Namely, the Portfolio operationalises the Council of Europe's political commitment to "establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers that takes into account existing practice, new trends and arenas, as well as the diversity of youth work."²

In particular, this edition of the Portfolio outlines a youth work competence framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers, in line with this Recommendation. Furthermore, it considers digitalisation trends in society, the digital transformation of the youth work sector and of youth work practice. This edition of the Portfolio includes consideration of developments within the youth work community of practice as reflected in deliberations at the [European Youth Work Conventions](#).

Policymakers at any level, from local to European, can use the Portfolio to develop youth work policies and to establish standards or tools for the [recognition of youth work](#). Importantly, the Council

2. Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work

of Europe Youth Work Portfolio has [already been used for youth work policy and eco-system development](#). Namely, it served as a reference and starting point for the development of national competence frameworks, occupational standards, youth work strategies and, in general, new fit-for-purpose policies, frameworks, and mechanisms and tools in various contexts and at different levels.

1. The Portfolio can be used as a basis for the development of a 'youth worker profile', thereby supporting the recognition of youth work as a profession.
 - **Example:** The Portfolio was used for developing a national certification system in Lithuania, and a competence model and occupational standards in North Macedonia. It inspired an organisation in Georgia to create its own competence framework adapted to context and use it to advocate for government recognition.
2. The Portfolio can be used by policymakers in the definition of curricula for the state-recognised training of youth workers. The Portfolio can also be useful in certifying the training or the learning outcomes that youth workers gain as a result of youth work training.
 - **Example:** The Portfolio is now integrated into the vocational education programme for youth workers in North Macedonia.
 - **Example:** The Portfolio has been translated and introduced into youth work in Ukraine through a training module for youth workers.
3. In an effort to bring the Portfolio closer to youth workers and their context, the trainers developed case studies on competences. In the realities where youth workers already need to undergo a specific training course in order to be recognised as youth workers, the Portfolio could be a complementary tool for self-assessment and development.
 - **Example:** The Portfolio was used for on-boarding youth workers in the ENTER! course on Access to Social Rights for Young People.
4. Policymakers can support youth organisations in making use of the Portfolio as a tool for quality improvement of youth work.
 - **Example:** The Portfolio has been used for the development of youth work strategy in Serbia.

Adaptations of the Portfolio to specific context

The Portfolio competence framework offers comprehensive guidance on core youth work functions. It focuses a lot of attention on individual competences for the relationship between people doing youth work and young people, as well as on the outcomes for the young people participating in youth work. Furthermore, it looks at 'collective' functions, focusing on youth work as a practice and as a field, and on its functions for both community and society. Both of those aspects need to be present for any individual youth worker to be adequately positioned and supported within the community of practice. Furthermore, to engage best with specific groups of young people, their contexts and needs, youth workers might need to explore and develop additional specific functions and related competences. Such contextualisation and/or specialisation should be developed through a deliberative process that involves both youth workers and the young people concerned, with particular sensitivity to the contexts in which the youth work takes place.

You may contact the Council of Europe's Youth Department at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/contact> and share information about potential adaptations.

Youth work essentials

In this section, you can find some basic information about what youth work is, about its main characteristics and approaches, as well as about its role in society, and how it has impacted and can impact public policy.

We encourage Portfolio users to read this information in detail before beginning work with the Portfolio. This information frames and provides context for many of the possible uses outlined, and for the content of both the Portfolio standard and competence framework.

What is youth work?

Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes by, with and for young people, and on their voluntary participation. Youth work is 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. The main objective of youth work is to support young people in their development, and in their understanding of and engagement with the world around them, as well as to create opportunities for them to shape their own futures. In practical terms, youth work is a journey undertaken with groups of young people who change and evolve; it can take place in a variety

of locations, can focus on a variety of issues and can use different methods.

The range of forms that youth work can take is just as diverse as the types of people and organisations involved in it. Youth work happens where young people are, and on their terms. Participation is voluntary. The content or thematic orientation of youth work is highly diverse. It takes place in more or less structured settings – ranging from youth clubs, cafes, or one-stop shops to the street, juvenile prison, or refugee camps. Ever increasingly, it is taking place online. Youth work can take place at any level, in any space or interactive environment through direct face-to-face and in-presence contact (as it has traditionally), as well as virtually in the digital space. It can be a single, one-off activity or a regular programme of activities in which young people interact with each other over a longer period of time. It can take place in the context of membership of a youth or other form of organisation, and it can take place on a drop-in basis without the ties of membership. Political activism, street work, sports activities, social enterprise, online meet-ups, video content-making, and even certain kinds of leisure-time activities, can all be termed 'youth work'.

More information about the diversity of youth work across Europe is available in '[Youth Work Essentials](#)', published by the [Partnership between the Council of Europe and European Commission in the field of Youth](#), henceforth referred to as the Youth Partnership.

WHAT IS YOUTH WORK FOR?

ENABLING young people to do the things they want to do together and individually

Providing young people with opportunities to **EMANCIPATE** and gain autonomy

Providing young people with healthy and safe opportunities for leisure that they can **ENJOY**



EMPOWERING young people to change things they think need to be changed in their immediate surroundings and society

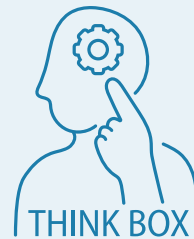
Helping young people to **ENGAGE** with power and policy

Providing young people with relevant and engaging non-formal **EDUCATION** opportunities that improve their competences

Illustration 3 - What is youth work for?

Digital transformations in our societies (and in youth work) are ongoing. You may want to reflect what they mean for youth work by using the illustration above. The following questions could help to reflect on your youth work in the context of digital transformations:

- How do digital competences contribute to young people's own aspirations? How does a lack of digital literacy hinder them?
- How do young people access relevant opportunities with(out) digital competences?
- How does the creative use of digital technology enable opportunities for diverse young people?
- How can a healthy digital lifestyle be promoted, with and/or even without the use of technology?
- How could digital technology be utilised as a vehicle for youth participation and for the engagement of young people with power and policy?
- Which digital education frameworks resonate with young people?



Have a look at some youth work examples:

My name is Xavier. I volunteer in a local organisation and I carry out leisure-time activities with adolescents.



My name is Anna. I am a youth work development officer in a national youth organisation that works with young people from rural areas. I run projects for supporting the social entrepreneurship of young people.

My name is Milosz. I am a youth worker in a socio-cultural community centre in an urban suburb of a large, formerly industrial town. The kids who come to the centre come from disadvantaged backgrounds - they have issues with education, drugs and violence, and the community centre is pretty much the only non-school based activity available to them. We also work with the social services of the municipality.



My name is Satu. I am a youth worker based in a local youth centre run by our municipality. Over the last 2 years, we have been providing young people with online youth work activities: we advise them, chat with them or even offer psychological support online.

My name is Josa. As part of my youth outreach work, I engage with young people on digital and online platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, where together we learn about and stand-up for human rights online. All the while I keep gaining digital competences in a co-learning process together with young people.

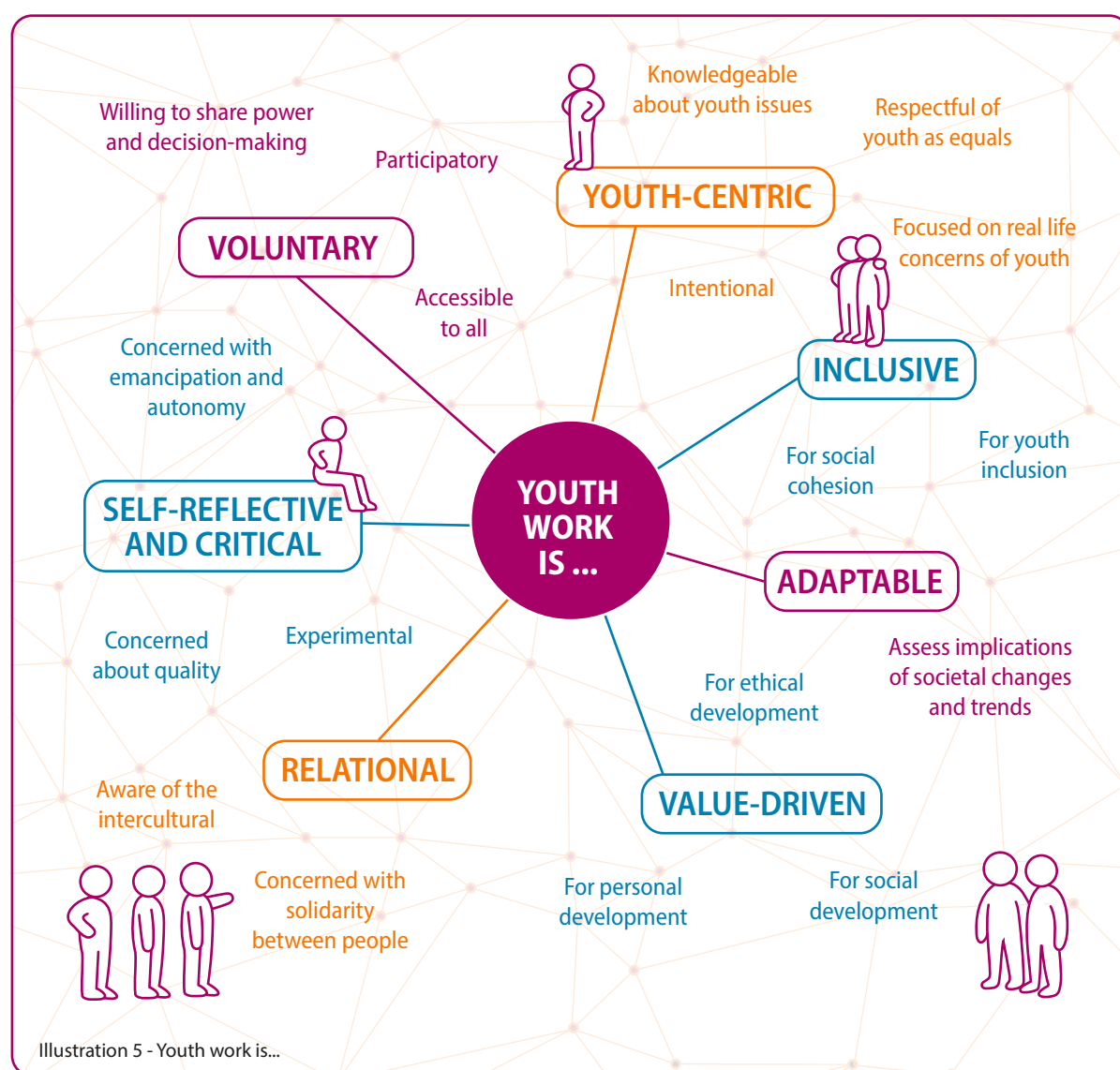


Illustration 4 - Youth work examples

Youth work characteristics

Youth work usually has the following characteristics

- Value-driven: youth work tries to serve the higher purpose of human dignity, respect, peace and democracy.
- Youth-centric: youth work serves key needs and aspirations of youth, identified by young people themselves
- Voluntary: youth work is not obligatory, and relies on the voluntary participation of young people
- Developmental: youth work aims at the personal, social and value development of young people
- Self-reflective and critical: youth work tries to make sure it is doing its best to live up to its mission
- Relational: youth work seeks authentic interaction and communication with young people, as a basis for sustaining viable communities.
- Inclusive: youth work creates opportunities for social cohesion and youth inclusion.
- Adaptable: youth work attempts to assess implications of societal changes, trends and developments on young people and to adapt to be able to support young people accordingly



Youth work is diverse around Europe

Public authorities, at all levels – local, national, regional and European – put in place policy, funding and other resources for youth work across Europe. Furthermore, and often in co-operation with such authorities, the voluntary youth sector is a key provider of youth work in Europe. The voluntary youth sector comprises non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, informal youth groups, faith-based organisations, youth wings of political parties and political organisations, associations and networks of youth workers and national umbrella structures such as youth councils, as well as transnational movements. While many receive state funding, youth NGOs often depend on European funding (Erasmus+ Programme, the European Social Fund, the European Solidarity Corps, the European Youth Foundation), and European accreditation (Youthpass). In some contexts, national and/or international (private) foundations also support youth work initiatives. This is especially the case where no state funding or accreditation is available.

Most countries have a youth policy that also includes a legal and/or strategic framework for youth work, financial and other support services.

Many countries also provide the formal education and training that underpin youth work as a discipline. Few countries include formal or legal definitions of ‘youth work’ or ‘youth worker’ in their youth policy documents. In national policy, youth work is often reflected as an important means of delivering youth policy or as part of services to young people. Youth work is sometimes part of a wider field of intervention, for example that of social pedagogy, socio-cultural education, hobby or leisure time.

More information is available in ‘[Youth Work Essentials](#)’, published by the [Partnership between the Council of Europe and European Commission in the field of Youth](#).

To further develop your reflection on youth work in your country or context, you could explore the youth work system in which you are working and engage in conversations about it with other youth workers or other members of the wider youth work community of practice in your context.

The following thinking box is a good way to start:

- How would you describe the youth work system in which you are doing your youth work?
- What kind of youth work do you practice?
- Can you identify these features in your youth work? Which ones are most important for you?
- What are the aims of your youth work?
- Which resources and support would be particularly beneficial for your youth work practice?



Youth work and non-formal education

Youth work often has a strong educational purpose or dimension. According to [Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People](#), the education or learning that takes place in youth work is typically ‘non-formal’ – not ‘formal’, but also not ‘informal’. Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational curriculum.

So, what are the characteristics of 'non-formal' education or learning?

In brief ...

- learning takes place outside the structures of the formal education system and differs from this in the way it is organised and in the type of recognition this learning confers
- learning is intentional and voluntary
- learning aims above all to convey and practise the values and skills of democratic life.

Methodological features

- balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning
- linking individual and social learning
- partnership-orientated solidarity and symmetrical teaching / learning relations
- participatory and learner-centred approaches
- close to real-life concerns, experimental and orientated towards learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices.

Values

- Values linked to personal development: autonomy; critical thinking; openness and curiosity; creativity
- Values linked to social development: communication; participation and democratic citizenship; solidarity and social justice; responsibility; transformative power of conflict
- Ethical values: human rights; respect for others; intercultural learning and dialogue; peace / non-violence; gender equality; inter-generational dialogue.

Non-formal educators ...

- use participatory methods
- use diversity as a positive learning tool
- make critically reflective links between the concrete and the abstract, in order both to facilitate the learning process and continuously to improve their quality
- have knowledge about young people's lives and cultures in Europe.

Youth work and youth policies

Youth work is also about the place of young people and their concerns in society and the public sphere. It is also about influencing society, politics and

power relations, especially if those position young people at a disadvantage, marginalise them or exclude them.

- How do the realities of the young people you work with influence your work?
- How do you find out about the needs and concerns of young people?
- In what ways do politics and policy influence the way you do your work?
- How do you see your role in relation to the wider political and social context youth work takes place in?



Youth work competence

Youth work competence

The Portfolio is a tool for assessing youth work competence and for planning how to develop it. Youth workers are life-long learners. Youth work, as a practice and as a field, is constantly changing and developing.

Competence is a key concept for understanding the Portfolio assessment and the tool.

“

Competence is the “ability to do something successfully or efficiently”. The term is often used interchangeably with the term

‘skill’, although they are not the same. Two elements differentiate competence from skill, and make competence more than skill.

When one person is competent, they can apply what they know to do a specific task or solve a problem and they are able to transfer this ability between different situations.³

”

The Portfolio wants to support you in answering questions about your competence, for example:

When you think about the youth work you are involved in, what do you **do** and what do you **need in order to be able to do it well**? What does it take to be a competent youth worker?



In youth work, competence is understood as having three interlinked dimensions:



Knowledge: This dimension refers to all the themes and issues you know or need to know about how to do your work. This is the “cognitive” dimension of competence. It is commonly associated with the “head”



Skills: This dimension refers to what you are able to do or what you need to be able to do your youth work. This is the “practical” or skills dimension of competence. It is commonly associated with the “hands”



Attitudes and values: This dimension of competence refers to the attitudes and values you need to espouse in order to do your work effectively. This dimension of competence is commonly associated with the “heart”

Illustration 6 - Competence dimensions

3. [Council of Europe Youth Portfolio 2015 edition](#)

When you think about your own work, that of your team or your organisation, what do you associate with the head, hands and heart? Ask yourself the following questions and use the picture to document the answers:

- What should people doing youth work know?
- What should people doing youth work be able to do?
- What attitudes and values should people doing youth work have?
- What do you bring with you to your youth work that makes you competent?



The Portfolio competence framework

The Portfolio looks at those things which **youth work usually or most commonly does**.

We call these the **functions of youth work**.

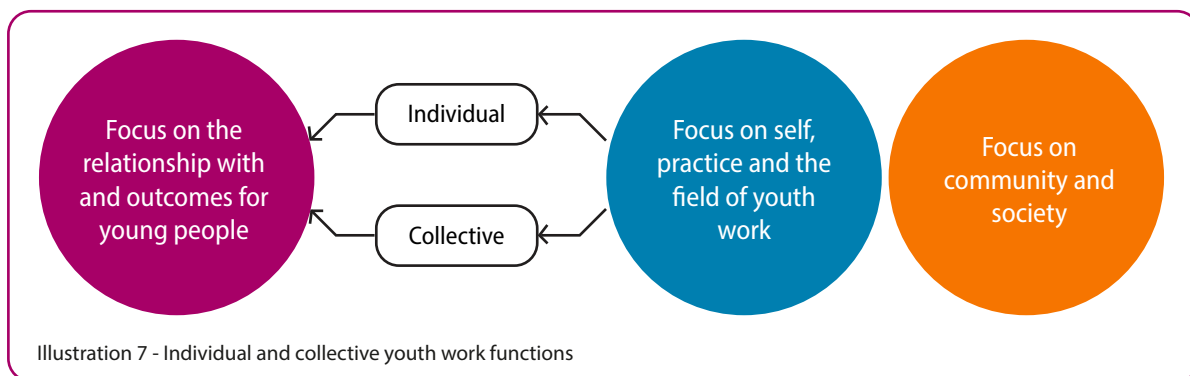
The functions are grouped into three categories. The first group is considered core. The second and third groups are seen as 'acting in service' of the core group.

- 1. Functions focusing on the relationship with and outcomes for young people (core group).** These are considered essential and represent the core of what youth work is supposed to do according to Council of Europe practice and quality standards. They are applicable in diverse contexts and settings, including digital settings.
- 2. Functions focusing on self, practice and field of youth work.** These represent reflective, learning, co-operative, experimental and innovative aspects relevant for the youth work community of practice and are in the service of the core functions.
- 3. Functions focusing on community and society.** These represent a broader view on the role and effects of youth work practice and are in service of core functions.

From these functions of youth work, the Portfolio tries to understand better what youth workers should be able to do, in other words, the competences youth workers need to have to do youth work well.

The competences that one needs to have in order to do youth work have been divided into two categories:

- **Core competences** that make this field of activity unique and are closely connected to the core group of functions of youth work that focus on the relationship with and outcomes for young people. These competences are primarily relevant for individuals doing youth work.
- **Other competences** that are important for youth work and possibly other fields of activity. These are, in principle, relevant for individuals, teams and organisations doing youth work, as well as for the community of youth work practice, and for the wider community and society. Typically, individual youth worker competences are complemented by the competences of others within their team and/or organisations. These can also be understood as 'collective competences'.

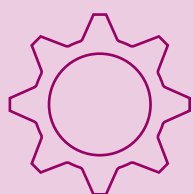


Together, the identified functions and competences make up what we call the **Portfolio Competence Framework**.

The Portfolio should be understood as a blueprint that can be adapted to your specific context. The list of functions and competences presented in the framework is by no means exhaustive. Other functions and competences could be outlined as specialisations, or for the purpose of contextualisation and adaptation to specific young people and their needs. Such additional and more specific

functions, and thus competences, could be further developed by users in relation to the different needs of young people, interests of youth workers and the contexts in which youth work is set. Furthermore, you may find that some competences in the framework are not relevant for the work you do, the young people you engage with or the context in which youth work is happening. You may want to inform the Council of Europe Youth Department about adaptations you undertake. You can do so by sending an email to: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/contact>.

Overview of youth work functions and competences in three focus areas



Core group of functions focusing on relationship with and outcomes for young people

Accompany young people in their personal, social and emotional development

Youth worker competences:

- * Understand the social contexts of the lives of the young people and support them in navigating these
- * Build positive, non-judgemental, trusting relationships with young people
- * Demonstrate openness in discussing young people's personal issues
- * Relate to young people as equals
- * Address the needs and aspirations of young people.

Provide relevant learning opportunities for young people

Youth worker competences:

- * Support diverse young people in identifying their learning needs, wishes and styles, taking any specific needs into consideration
- * Create safe, motivating and inclusive learning environments for individuals and groups
- * Support young people in reflecting on their own learning
- * Inform young people about learning opportunities and support them in using them.

Support young people's agency in making sense of the society they live in, and in engaging with it

Youth worker competences:

- * Assist young people in identifying and taking responsibility for the role(s) they want to have in their communities and societies
- * Support young people in identifying goals, developing strategies and organising individual and collective action for social change
- * Support young people in developing their critical thinking and understanding about society and power relations, how social and political systems work, their consequences for diverse young people and how they (as young people) can have influence and develop agency
- * Support young people in developing their competence and confidence for being active in their communities and societies as individuals and members of groups and teams
- * Actively involve young people in shaping policies and programmes, especially those that will affect them.

Support young people in actively contributing to the development of a culture of human rights and democracy in their communities and societies

Youth worker competences:

- * Support young people in developing their competence for living in diverse societies, notably in relation to values and attitudes towards diversity
- * Promote inclusion of and exchange between young people who come from diverse backgrounds at home and abroad so that they can learn about other countries, cultural and social contexts, political beliefs, religions, levels of access, abilities and lifestyles, among others
- * Work creatively on enhancing young people's competence for dealing with social, political and interpersonal conflicts constructively
- * Support young people in recognising and working against injustice, oppression, discrimination and all other forms of human rights abuse, individually and in collaboration with others.

Self-tailored part with potential specific and contextual Youth Work functions focusing on outcomes for young people



Functions focusing on self, practice and field of youth work

Develop reflective and evaluative youth work practice

Youth worker competences:

- * Plan and apply a range of participatory methods of reflection and evaluation
- * Use the results of evaluation to improve youth work practice
- * Stay up to date on research on the situation and needs of young people and on youth work
- * Actively evaluate teamwork with colleagues and use the results to improve it
- * Recognise and evaluate your own needs, boundaries and limits in different youth work contexts and develop strategies for addressing these, as appropriate
- * Reflect on how to innovate your own youth work practice, and experiment with new approaches.

Co-create, co-implement and co-evaluate youth work projects and programmes

Youth worker competences:

- * Involve young people in the development of youth projects
- * Involve young people in the implementation of youth projects
- * Involve young people in the communication and visibility of youth work projects and programmes
- * Involve young people in planning and organising evaluation of youth work projects and programmes.

Nurture connection to youth work field

Youth worker competences:

- * Prioritise collective learning and working with colleagues to develop youth work practice
- * Share relevant information and practices within your youth work community of practice
- * Engage with youth work related processes, as appropriate to the needs of your youth work context, for example, recognition.

Contribute to the visibility and recognition of the role, impact and value of youth work for young people and their communities

Youth worker competences:

- * Gather and document evidence of the impact of the youth work you do
- * Involve young people in activities to evaluate and communicate the positive impacts of the youth work you do to stakeholders who can support its development
- * Collaborate on the development of visibility activities for the positive impact of youth work.

Contribute to the development of policies and programmes to work better for young people

Youth worker competences:

- * Co-operate with others to shape youth policies and programmes
- * Advocate for the participation of young people (especially those with whom you work) in shaping the development of youth policies and programmes
- * Seek links between youth work practice and policies that can support the development of youth work.

Functions focusing on community and society

Develop a systemic and future-orientated approach to youth work practice

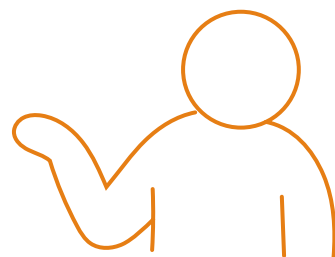
Youth worker competences:

- * Reflect on the diversity of eco-systems the young people you are working with live in, and on what this means for the youth work you do with them
- * Develop your sensitivity for signs of change(s) (in attitude, behaviour, issues they find concerning, atmosphere) among the young people you work with and in their context
- * Design responses to challenges and opportunities you and the young people you work with see emerging and think are important for the community and society
- * Make contingency plans and design youth work activities that can be adapted easily.

Support the integration of youth perspective in other spaces

Youth worker competences:

- * Develop strategic co-operation and partnership with colleagues from other parts of your organisation, other organisations, and/or in other sectors to support your youth work
- * Advocate for a youth perspective to be included in other sectors' policies, practices and services within and beyond your organisation
- * Support colleagues from other parts of your organisation, other organisations and in other sectors to develop attitude, experience and skills, and act towards youth perspective integration in their respective fields.



Explanation of youth worker competences in relation to youth work functions

Youth worker competences assigned to each youth work function can be understood as the “how” – they outline how a youth worker can go about those functions, which attitudes and values are the foundation, and what specific knowledge and skills are needed.



Youth worker competences in relation to core group of functions – focusing on relationships with, and outcomes for young people

To accompany young people in their personal, social and emotional development:

* Understand the social contexts of the lives of the young people and support them in navigating these

This involves:



Knowledge

Having information about situation, status and condition of (youth in) society; Understanding socio-economic factors, cultural biases, family and community dynamics; Knowing young people's digital cultures; Being aware of diversity of (digital) identities young people harbour, experiment with and project; Being aware of safety risks in young people's (digital) context



Skills

Analysis; Information management; Finding out where young people are and how they communicate; Facilitating exploratory conversations



Attitudes
and values

Curiosity; Openness; Empathy; Appreciating young people's social context; Being conscious of personal biases.

* Build positive, non-judgemental, trusting relationships with young people

This involves:



Knowledge

Understanding the physical, emotional, and cognitive changes that occur during adolescence; Being familiar with current trends, hobbies, and interests of young people; Understanding how young people build and maintain relationships, and contemporary factors influencing them (e.g. digitalisation, pandemic)



Skills

Democratic leadership; Active listening; Communication and engagement skills; Navigating relationship-building processes



Attitudes
and values

Openness; Empathy; Self-awareness; Confidentiality; Interest in young people's views; Trustworthiness; Honesty; Transparency; Valuing and respecting the different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and identities of young people; Being conscious of personal biases; Having trust in processes; Strong belief in capacities of young people; Willingness to learn about, communicate and engage with young people “where they are” and through the diverse platforms they are currently using.

* Demonstrate openness in discussing young people's personal issues

This involves:



Knowledge

Ethics of youth work



Skills

Management of one's own emotions; Emotional literacy; Responsiveness



Attitudes
and values

Active listening; Openness; Patience; Sensitivity; Emotional stability; Confidentiality; Empathy; Being conscious of personal biases; Adaptability; Willingness to support young people through challenging times.

* Relate to young people as equals

This involves:



Knowledge

Ethics of youth work; Being aware of power implications in youth work relationships



Skills

Representing one's own identity as a youth worker; Communicating clearly and creating space for young people to claim



Attitudes
and values

Power-sharing; Having trust in young people's agency; Being ready to challenge and be challenged; Solidarity.

* Address the needs and aspirations of young people

This involves:



Knowledge

Familiarity with youth work methods and approaches; Knowing one's own boundaries, and when collaboration and referral are needed



Skills

Using different (digital) tools for mapping needs and aspirations of young people; Co-creation of strategies and plans; Progress monitoring; Identifying and providing needed expertise and support (not necessarily one's own); Mentoring and coaching skills



Attitudes
and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Agile mind-set.

To provide relevant learning opportunities for young people:

- * **Support young diverse people in identifying their learning needs, wishes and styles, taking any specific needs into consideration**

This involves:



Knowledge

Learning theories (learning styles, preferences, etc.); Non-formal education and learning; Understanding diverse backgrounds and challenges of young people you work with; One-on-one youth work



Skills

Identification of learning aims; Needs analyses; Facilitation of self-reflection and learning processes; Inclusive educational approaches; Inclusive methods; Facilitation of co-creation and young people taking the lead



Attitudes and values

Openness; Empathy; Sensitivity to diversity; Having trust in young people's agency; Agile mind-set.

- * **Create safe, motivating and inclusive learning environments for individuals and groups**

This involves:



Knowledge

Learning theories (learning styles, preferences, etc.); Non-formal education and learning; Group dynamics; Multiple education, training and learning methods and tools in different learning settings, including digital and online



Skills

Motivating young people; Coaching; Feedback; Creativity; Inclusive educational approaches; Group management; Learning facilitation; Debriefing; Problem-solving; Mediation and conflict transformation; Using a range of educational methods and (digital) tools, including ones that develop creativity and foster motivation for learning; Facilitating learning by doing



Attitudes and values

Willingness to experiment; Support for young people taking the lead; Acceptance of the positive learning potential of conflict.

- * **Support young people in reflecting on their own learning**

This involves:



Knowledge

Ethics of youth work; Reflection and assessment tools



Skills

Training; Coaching; Mentoring; Feedback; Process facilitation



Attitudes and values

Empathy; Openness; Readiness to challenge others.

* Inform young people about learning opportunities and support them in using them

This involves:



Knowledge

Relevant educational / professional guidance sources; Learning opportunities inside and outside the community; Local and international education providers; One-on-one youth work



Skills

Information management; Verifying (online) sources and identifying validity of information; Motivating young people; Creating opportunities for implementation of young people's learning



Attitudes and values

Curiosity; Support for young people taking the lead.

To support young people's agency in making sense of the society they live in and to engage with it:

* Assist young people in identifying and taking responsibility for the role(s) they want to have in their communities and societies

This involves:



Knowledge

Politics, local & global issues; Society; Power relations; Policies relevant to young people



Skills

Facilitating exploratory conversations with young people; Critical thinking; Active listening; Political literacy; Media literacy



Attitudes and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Curiosity about global & local issues and trends; Support for young people taking the lead

* Support young people in identifying goals, developing strategies and organising individual and collective action for social change

This involves:



Knowledge

Interests and concerns of young people; Issues that young people are passionate about



Skills

Participatory decision-making; Democratic leadership; Active listening; Critical thinking; Planning for action and change; Group management; Facilitation; Risk assessment; Collaboration



Attitudes and values

Power-sharing; Having trust in young people's agency; Solidarity; Responsible risk-taking, Willingness to experiment.

- * **Support young people in developing their critical thinking and understanding about society and power relations, how social and political systems work, their consequences for diverse young people and how they (as young people) can have influence and develop agency**

This involves:



Knowledge

Politics, local and global issues; Society; Power relations; Policies relevant to young people; Understanding (digital) media power



Skills

Navigating and facilitating difficult conversations; Political literacy; Active listening; Critical thinking; Facilitation; Advocacy; Media literacy



Attitudes and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Curiosity about global & local issues and trends; Solidarity; Responsible risk-taking, Willingness to experiment; Being ready to challenge and be challenged; Acceptance of the positive learning potential of conflict.

- * **Support young people in developing their competence and confidence for being active in their communities and societies**

This involves:



Knowledge

Politics, public policies, local & global issues; Participatory and democracy mechanisms



Skills

Coaching; Empathy; Communication; Feedback; Facilitation; Action planning; Political literacy; Media literacy



Attitudes and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Responsible risk-taking; Willingness to experiment; Solidarity.

- * **Actively involve young people in shaping policies and programmes, especially those that will affect them**

This involves:



Knowledge

Youth policies; Public policies; Participatory and democracy mechanisms; Policies and programmes of the organisation; Organisational management and development; Understanding ethos of an organisation



Skills

Participatory process facilitation; Consultation; Advocacy; Needs analyses; Participatory decision-making



Attitudes and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Transparency; Personal initiative; Responsible risk-taking.

To support young people in actively contributing to the development of a culture of human rights and democracy in their communities and societies:

- * Support young people in developing their competence for living in diverse societies, notably in relation to values and attitudes towards diversity**

This involves:



Knowledge

Human rights; Cultural awareness; Diversity; Global issues



Skills

Navigating and facilitating difficult conversations; Communication; Intercultural learning; Human rights education; Debriefing



Attitudes and values

Empathy; Tolerance of ambiguity; Solidarity; Self-awareness; Emotional stability; Sensitivity; Distance from social roles; Clarity on one's own values; Being conscious of personal biases.

- * Promote inclusion of and exchange between young people who come from diverse backgrounds at home and abroad so that they can learn about other countries, cultural and social contexts, political beliefs, religions, levels of access, abilities and lifestyles, among others**

This involves:



Knowledge

Human rights; Diversity; Cultural awareness; Foreign languages; Identity theories



Skills

Facilitation; Intercultural learning; Human rights education; Group dynamics and management; Mediation; Conflict transformation; Inclusive education



Attitudes and values

Empathy; Tolerance of ambiguity; Solidarity; Self-awareness; Emotional stability; Sensitivity; Distance from social roles; Clarity on one's own values; Being conscious of personal biases.

- * Work creatively on enhancing young people's competence for dealing with social, political and interpersonal conflicts constructively**

This involves:



Knowledge

Conflict (transformation) theories; Human rights and freedoms; Understanding notions of discrimination, oppression, racism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, ableism, homophobia, fascism, etc.



Skills

Navigating and facilitating difficult conversations; Conflict transformation; Mediation; Dealing with unexpected situations; Addressing consistently expressed hate, discrimination, oppression, racism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, ableism, homophobia, fascism and other expressions of hate and disregard of other humans in the youth work setting



Attitudes and values

Openness to be challenged; Readiness to challenge others; Orientation towards the common good; Respect for others; Tolerance of ambiguity; Clarity on one's own values; Being conscious of personal biases.

*** Support young people in recognising and working against injustice, oppression, discrimination and all other forms of human rights abuse, individually and in collaboration with others**

This involves:



Knowledge

Politics, public policies, local & global issues; Human rights and freedoms; Notions of discrimination, oppression, racism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, ableism, homophobia, fascism, etc.; Democracy mechanisms; Sexism



Skills

Coaching; Empathy; Communication; Feedback; Navigating and facilitating difficult conversations; Participatory action planning; Addressing consistently expressed hate, discrimination, oppression, racism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, ableism, homophobia, fascism and other expressions of hate and disregard of other humans in the youth work setting; Political literacy; Media literacy; Co-operation; Sexism



Attitudes and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Responsible risk-taking; Willingness to experiment; Orientation towards common good.

Self-tailored part with potential specific and contextual Youth Work functions focusing on particular outcomes for young people



Youth worker competences in relation to functions focusing on self, practice and field of youth work

To develop reflective and evaluative youth work practice:

*** Plan and apply a range of participatory methods of reflection and evaluation**

This involves:



Knowledge

Inclusive evaluation approaches; Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning principles (MEAL)



Skills

Participatory evaluation methods; Facilitation of reflection, evaluation and feedback processes; (Self-)reflection; Feedback



Attitudes and values

Personal initiative; Openness to constructive criticism and feedback; Having trust in learning value coming from reflection, evaluation and feedback.

* Use the results of evaluation to improve youth work practice

This involves:



Youth work methods; Capacity-building providers and opportunities



Analyses and making sense of data, evidence and insights; Self-management; Change implementation methods



Having trust in learning value coming from reflection, evaluation and feedback; Openness to the views of others; Personal initiative; Readiness to adapt to unforeseen changes; Orientation towards the common good.

* Stay up-to-date on research on the situation and needs of the young people and on youth work

This involves:



Youth research approaches, actors and sources



Analysis; Information management; Making sense of and contextualising research findings



Openness; Personal initiative; Readiness to; Orientation towards the common good.

* Actively evaluate teamwork with colleagues and use the results to improve it

This involves:



Teamwork and Team-learning theories



Evaluation; Co-operation; Assertive communication; Partnership-building; Active listening; Feedback; Conflict transformation; Mediation; Action planning



Being constructive; Being ready to challenge colleagues and be challenged; Curiosity; Trust; Orientation towards the common good.

- * **Recognise and evaluate your own needs, boundaries and limits in different youth work contexts and develop strategies for addressing these, as appropriate**

This involves:



Youth work Portfolio and other self-assessment & self-reflection tools



Self-reflection; Evaluation; Assertive communication; Feedback; Action planning; (Strategic) co-operation



Personal initiative; Being constructive; Being ready to challenge colleagues and be challenged; Awareness of risks; Willingness to explore professional boundaries and referral practices.

- * **Reflect on how to innovate your own youth work practice, and experiment with new approaches**

This involves:



Teamwork and Team-learning theories; Youth work approaches and related fields



Evaluation; Research; Progress monitoring; Visioning; Co-operation; Assertive communication; Partnership-building



Openness; Being constructive; Being ready to challenge colleagues and be challenged; Curiosity; Trust; Willingness to experiment; Tolerance towards ambiguity; Agile mindset; Orientation towards the common good.

To co-create, co-implement and co-evaluate youth work projects and programmes:

- * **Involve young people in the development of youth projects**

This involves:



Project development; Youth empowerment and participation principles; Funding sources



Participatory process and project design facilitation and management; Ideation; Conceptualisation; Negotiation; Creativity in looking for resources; Fundraising



Open-mindedness; Belief that young people are experts for their lives; Trust; Awareness of power balance.

* Involve young people in the implementation of youth projects

This involves:



Project management frameworks; Human resources (volunteer) management; Resource management



Facilitating participatory project team meetings; Mentoring; Progress monitoring; Facilitating learning by doing; Management (including finances); Leadership; Delegation; Planning; Communication; Networking



Open-mindedness; Having trust in young people's agency; Capacity to adapt to new / unforeseen situations; Self-confidence; Support for young people taking the lead.

* Involve young people in the communication and visibility of youth work projects and programmes

This involves:



Communication and media tools (online); Visibility principles; Ethics of youth work.



Facilitating learning by doing; Mentoring; Creativity; Presentation skills and public speaking; Report writing; Capacity to adapt your discourse to different audiences



Open-mindedness; Having trust in young people's agency; Willingness to learn about, experiment with and use novel communication and visibility tools and platforms; Self-confidence; Support for young people taking the lead.

* Involve young people in planning and organising evaluation of youth work projects and programmes

This involves:



Inclusive and participatory evaluation approaches and tools



Facilitating participatory evaluation processes; Participatory evaluation methods; Democratic leadership; Process management; Data management; Research techniques



Openness to constructive criticism and feedback; Having trust in young people's agency; Support for young people taking the lead.

To nurture connection to youth work field:

* Prioritise collective learning and working with colleagues to develop practice

This involves:



Knowledge

Teamwork; Available learning resources and opportunities



Skills

Assertive communication; Feedback; Managing own learning needs in collective learning settings; Assessing own professional boundaries



Attitudes
and values

Life-long learning; Curiosity to explore concepts and practice; Healthy professional relations; Solidarity; Self-care.

* Share relevant information and practices within your youth work community of practice

This involves:



Knowledge

Youth work community of practice; Youth services in your context.



Skills

Documentation; Communication; Information management; Presentation skills and public speaking; Networking



Attitudes
and values

Solidarity; Willingness to share resources; Life-long learning; Orientation towards the common good.

* Engage with youth work-related processes, as appropriate to the needs of your youth work context, for example, recognition

This involves:



Knowledge

Local / National / European policies relevant for your youth work field



Skills

Analyses of research findings; Building arguments; Collaboration; Advocacy



Attitudes
and values

Having trust in importance of engagement in shaping youth work field; Solidarity; Orientation towards the common good.

To contribute to the visibility and recognition of the role, impact and value of youth work for young people and their communities:

*** Gather and document evidence of the impact of the youth work you do**

This involves:



Knowledge

Indicators of impact



Skills

Data and evidence management; Research techniques



Attitudes
and values

Curiosity; Openness to critical findings.

*** Involve young people in activities to evaluate and communicate the positive impacts of the youth work you do to stakeholders who can support its development**

This involves:



Knowledge

Inclusive and participatory evaluation approaches; Communication and media (online) tools



Skills

Facilitating participatory team meetings; Participatory methods; Research techniques; Communication; Presentation skills; Advocacy



Attitudes
and values

Strong belief in young people's capacity; Transparency; Accountability.

*** Collaborate on the development of visibility activities for the positive impact of youth work**

This involves:



Knowledge

Communication and media tools (online); Visibility principles; Ethics of youth work



Skills

Creativity; Capacity to adapt your discourse to different audiences; Co-operation



Attitudes
and values

Open-mindedness; Trust; Willingness to learn about, experiment with and use novel visibility tools and platforms; Self-confidence.

To contribute to the development of policies and programmes to work better for young people:

* Co-operate with others to shape youth policies

This involves:



Knowledge

Youth policy concepts, actors and mechanisms at different levels (local to European)



Skills

Visioning; Analysing; Conceptualising; Communication; Networking; Co-operation; Partnership-building; Democratic leadership; Advocacy; Negotiation; Presentation skills and public speaking



Attitudes
and values

Willingness to partner with other actors; Curiosity; Open-mindedness; Patience; Tolerance of ambiguity; Personal initiative.

* Advocate for the participation of young people (especially those with whom you work) in shaping the development of youth policies

This involves:



Knowledge

Participatory and democracy mechanisms; Youth policies; Public policies



Skills

Advocacy; Participatory planning; Analyses of research findings; Presentation skills and public speaking



Attitudes
and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Personal initiative.

* Seek links between youth work practice and policies that can support the development of youth work

This involves:



Knowledge

Youth work practice; Youth policies and other frameworks in your context



Skills

Analysing; Planning; Conceptualising; Visioning.



Attitudes
and values

Personal initiative; Being constructive



Youth worker competences in relation to functions focusing on community and society

To develop a systemic and future-orientated approach to youth work practice:

- * **Reflect on the diversity of eco-systems the young people live in and on what this means for the youth work you do with them**

This involves:



Knowledge

Youth work approaches; Having information about situation, status and condition of youth you engage with; Understanding socio-economic factors, cultural biases, family and community dynamics influencing young people; Being aware of diversity of (digital) identities young people harbour, experiment with and project; Being aware of safety risks in young people's (digital) context



Skills

Analysis; Information management; Facilitating reflective sessions; Assessing if referral to other services / sectors is beneficial; Design of youth work; Being proactive



Attitudes and values

Curiosity; Openness; Empathy; Being conscious of personal biases; Willingness to identify and reflect on implications and respond to modern-day challenges and emerging trends.

- * **Develop your sensitivity for signs of change(s), in attitude behaviour, in issues they find concerning, in the atmosphere in the group (among others) among the young people you work with and in their context**

This involves:



Knowledge

Changes; Systems



Skills

Observation; Analyses; Reflection; Critical conversation



Attitudes and values

Open-mindedness; Honesty; Personal initiative.

- * **Design responses to challenges and opportunities you and the young people you work with see emerging and think are important for the community and society**

This involves:



Knowledge

Local and global issues; Societal trends



Skills

Political literacy; Active listening; Critical thinking; Facilitation; Advocacy; Media literacy; Ability to adapt to changing circumstances; Contextualising; Planning; Risk-mitigation



Attitudes
and values

Curiosity about global & local issues and trends; Solidarity; Having trust in young people's agency; Responsible risk-taking; Willingness to experiment; Willingness to identify, reflect on implications and respond to modern-day challenges and emerging trends.

- * **Make contingency plans and design youth work activities that can be adapted easily**

This involves:



Knowledge

Contingency planning principles; Having a framework within which your youth work functions (and what may change)



Skills

Forward thinking; Scenario development; Resourcefulness; Planning



Attitudes
and values

Adaptability; Open-mindedness; Having trust in young people's agency; Willingness to experiment; Tolerating ambiguity.

To support the integration of youth perspective in other spaces:

- * **Develop strategic co-operation and partnership with colleagues from other parts of your organisation, other organisations, and in other sectors to support your youth work**

This involves:



Knowledge

Understanding the organisation, framework and eco-system of your youth work; Partnership-building principles; Societal and policy expectations of youth work



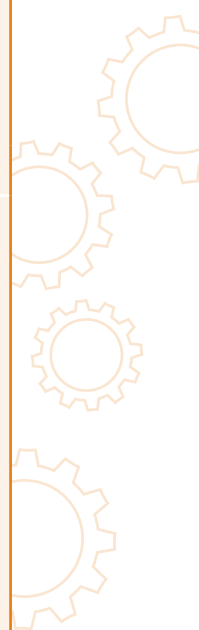
Skills

Ability to position your youth work within the eco-system; Ability to present your youth work compellingly; Co-operation; Partnership-building; Assertive communication; Advocacy; Negotiation



Attitudes
and values

Confidence to co-operate strategically with other sectors; Open-mindedness; Trust; Willingness to explore links and synergies.



*** Advocate for a youth perspective to be included in other sectors' policies, practices and services within and beyond your organisation**

This involves:



Knowledge

Having a youth perspective concept; Understanding the ethos of your organisation;
Having a policy eco-system and actors relevant for young people in your context



Skills

Advocacy; Capacity to adapt your discourse to different audiences; Presentation skills
and public speaking



Attitudes
and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Willingness to stand-up for young people;
Orientation towards common good.

*** Support colleagues from other parts of your organisation, other organisations and in other sectors to develop attitude, experience and skills, and act towards youth perspective integration in their respective fields**

This involves:



Knowledge

Having a youth perspective concept; Having a policy eco-system relevant for young
people in your context



Skills

Peer education; Coaching; Mentoring; Information management



Attitudes
and values

Having trust in young people's agency; Open-mindedness; Trust; Self-confidence;
Willingness to share know-how from your practice.

Making your own Portfolio

A Youth Work Portfolio includes a self-assessment based on the Portfolio competence framework and a learning development plan that allows the user to set up their own learning goals. It also allows for organisational use for on-boarding and assessment of youth workers. Making one's Portfolio is not a one-off process. It is dynamic, from self-reflection and self-assessment to setting learning goals, to self-assessment of achieved goals and learning, to setting up other learning goals, and so on.

How to fill in the self-assessment form

The self-assessment form is organised by the functions of youth work in a matrix with the competences of youth workers.

For each youth work function, you will first be asked to rate the relevance of that function for your work on a three-point scale (*not relevant at all; somewhat relevant; highly relevant*). Here, you will be asked to provide reasons for why you have rated each as relevant or not.

If you decide that a function is not relevant for your youth work, then you will not be asked to assess it, but only to provide some reasons why it is not relevant.

For example, you may explain that a function is not relevant because your current youth work practice is not at all related to it, or because there are other members of your team specifically dealing with this aspect of youth work.

Further on, you will be asked to **assess your level of competence** on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = not competent at all; 5 = highly competent) for all the functions that are relevant for your youth work.

You will also be asked to justify the level of competence you have assessed by providing examples: these will be descriptions of how you acquired certain competences, or youth work situations in which you demonstrated such competence.

One of the main ways to check that what you see as your competence is also what others you work with see is to ask for feedback.

For example, you may indicate that you participated in training on a specific theme or skill. You may provide concrete examples of how you use your

competence when working with young people. You may also indicate that you have received feedback from your colleagues or the young people you work with, pointing out that you have a certain level of that competence. Other ways to describe your competence include testimonies from young people, reference letters or recommendations from your employer or volunteer manager, certificates from courses and/or examinations, and/or proof that you participated in or tried to access on-the-job or other training.

The section on giving and receiving feedback provides some useful advice for this part of the assessment.

The last step of the self-assessment for each competence is to indicate if there are any aspects that you would like to improve. Be concise and specific if you indicate something you want to learn in relation to this competence. What you insert in the answer to this question will guide your work and reflection on your learning development plan based on technical capabilities: You may reflect on the specified resources and opportunities provided by the Council of Europe and Youth Partnership for inspiration.

You may first want to check the description of that specific competence to get some ideas of what you want to learn. You may also want to reflect on your own or discuss with others about what you could improve on in relation to that competence.

If you choose to create a printed Portfolio, you will need to print a self-assessment questionnaire for each competence and use it to assess your competence. For your 'physical' Portfolio, all you need is a folder, a print-out of your self-assessment form, and print-outs of any documentary evidence you wish to provide to justify your self-assessment. (Relevant products from your youth work activity include photos, drawings, texts; testimonies of colleagues or young people you worked with; reference letters by colleagues and/or supervisors; diplomas attesting to acquiring certain competence; excerpts from evaluation of your youth work activities; a concise description of a situation when your use of a specific competence has brought value; etc.) In this way, the Portfolio can be a useful tool when discussing or demonstrating your competence to employers or managers, or when reworking your CV or preparing for an appraisal.

Self-assessment questionnaire



Self-assessment of the relevance of the youth work function	
How relevant is this function to your youth work?	<div><div>1. Not relevant at all</div><div>2. Somewhat relevant</div><div>3. Highly relevant</div></div>
<div>If <i>not relevant at all</i>, why? Please reflect on the profile of your youth work and provide examples for why this function is not relevant.</div> <div></div>	



Self-assessment of competences

How competent do you consider yourself in this competence?

- 4. Not competent at all
- 5. Mostly not competent
- 6. Competent
- 7. Mostly competent
- 8. Highly competent

Describe your competence here, including examples of how you demonstrate this competence in your youth work. You can include previous learning experiences that developed your competence and examples of youth work where you make use of this competence.

If there is anything more you would like to learn related to this competence, please insert the main points you would like to improve on below. If you insert something here, this will automatically be included in your learning and development plan.

How to fill in the learning and development plan

A Learning and Development Plan (LDP) focuses on the competences you want to improve, develop, learn or acquire within a specific period after you have completed your Portfolio self-assessment, and which you identify for yourself as appropriate. In the self-assessment, you will be asked if there is anything more about a competence that you would like to learn or develop.

The LDP helps you to organise your learning and development in youth work. It can help you put into practice the learning and development you have identified as necessary for improving your competence.

The self-assessment form is based on those aspects you want to develop or learn more about that you have identified when doing your self-assessment (the last question in the questionnaire).

The LDP asks you to identify 'how' you want to develop your competence further, by asking you to choose from a list of learning opportunities. You can decide for yourself what you think the most adapted approach or method is for pursuing your learning and development needs according to your own preferences.

Next, you will be asked to set up a time frame for your learning, and a moment when you would like to check your learning progress on that specific competence. You are the one to choose your time frame. Try to make it realistic enough for doing both short personal and professional development activities, such as enrolling in a one-day refresher course or doing some reading on an important theme, and also for more intensive and demanding activities, such as going back into education to gain a new qualification.

Learning and Development Plan (LDP) Questionnaire



Self-assessment of the relevance of the youth work function

You have decided to learn more about ...

How would you like to improve your competence? *Examples: get more training, attend a university course, read more about the topic, be tested through youth work activities, develop a new approach in youth work, discuss your work with colleagues or young people, self-reflection, get feedback.*

When would you like to check your learning progress?

Would you like to add anything else about your learning in this topic?

Feedback

Using feedback as a tool for your self-assessment

Carrying out a self-assessment is an enriching experience through which we can learn a lot about ourselves. Nevertheless, there is much to be gained in asking for feedback from others. You can get feedback or external input from many different kinds of people. More experienced colleagues or superiors and colleagues you trust are a natural choice. However, it is also important and useful to get insight from the young people you work with and for.

Getting input/feedback from the young people you work with

The young people you work with, their issues and aspirations, should be at the centre of concern in your youth work. Finding out more about how they perceive your competence for the work you do with them is important for the authenticity and credibility of your self-assessment, whether you go through it as an individual, in a team or in an organisation.

There are many ways to access input from the young people you work with. Some of them are part and parcel of regular youth work practice and involve different kinds of participatory evaluation methods. Nevertheless, for those of you who wish to include this dimension as part of your self-assessment process, it is worth thinking explicitly about how you can access input from the young people you work with.

Some useful possibilities include:

- ☐ Adding some questions to evaluate your (or your team's or organisation's) performance / competence in activity evaluations filled out by participants
- ☐ Group or one-on-one discussions with the participants of your activities about their experience of your work with them. For the credibility and legitimacy of this kind of discussion, and to be able to include transcripts or notes from these in your Portfolio as proof of competence, you should invite a colleague to attend and record the discussions. It is important to be as transparent as possible.

- ☐ Testimonies / direct statements by your participants about your work. These should be written, and in the first person but can be delivered anonymously if you think it is more appropriate.
- ☐ Asking one or more of the young people you work with to give you feedback on the Portfolio assessment you have prepared. Here you need to think carefully about the competence of the young people concerned. Again, for the sake of transparency, such conversations should be conducted with another colleague present, and documented.

You may feel embarrassed or insecure about asking your participants how they feel about your work directly. The participants may also feel insecure, not want to "hurt your feelings", and self-censor what they say to your face. Even if this is the case, it is extremely important to do it. The Portfolio is a self-assessment tool, and it relies on a delicate balance of self-perception confronted with outside perceptions to provide a credible and legitimate evaluation. You can organise any of the above activities anonymously, if you think this kind of dynamic might change the way the young people interact with you. Technology opens a lot of avenues for receiving input anonymously.

If you are conducting a 'team' portfolio exercise, then ideally each member of the team would give feedback to and receive feedback from the whole team, whether individually or collectively, in addition to asking for feedback from at least one person "external" to the team.

Feedback from colleagues or external people

Think about some people you trust and who have direct experience of your work and performance in youth work. Who you choose, and how much of your self-assessment you discuss with them, is up to you. The important thing to remember is that the person or people must know your work well.

Whom can you ask for feedback?

Getting feedback is an essential part of the Portfolio learning and development process. Without an “outside eye” on your self-assessment, it is difficult to “validate” it. In other words, it is difficult to show that it is more than your own personal opinion and, therefore, not biased or exaggerated.

It is up to you to choose the person or people who will provide feedback on your self-assessment. This checklist will help you make a decision about who to ask to provide feedback.

- The person knows you well in the youth work context in which you are active.
- The person is familiar with youth work concepts and practices in general and has, themselves, some experience of working with young people.
- The person has some experience of training, mentoring, counselling and/or providing professional feedback to colleagues.
- The person is willing to conduct the feedback process with you and act as your external validator in case you want to access the open badges method of certification for your

Portfolio, including all the tasks that this requires of them.

- The person is “well-seen” and “respected” by the wider youth work community of practice in which you both participate.
- The person is able to give you constructive criticism (i.e. independent, external, not necessarily a close friend, not your mum, etc.).

Remember! You can use more than one person to provide feedback, and you may decide to have a different person to act as the critical friend for different parts of your self-assessment.

More information on giving and receiving feedback

Feedback is a dynamic process that should go in two directions. Especially if you are using the Portfolio in a team or for organisational development purposes, the ‘giving feedback’ part of this dynamic will be just as important as the ‘receiving feedback’ part.

What feedback is and what it is not⁴

What feedback should be	What not to say Why?	What to say Why?
Descriptive	<p>"This is bad!" or "This is good!"</p> <p>Because criteria for this judgement are subjective and other people can interpret them differently</p>	<p>"Your loud talking during the role-play made me feel stressed."</p> <p>Because it is up to the other person to decide what to do with the feedback; keep your observation to a description of what happened and what you felt at that moment</p>
Specific	<p>"You are dominant!"</p> <p>Because the way of saying it is both unhelpful and confrontational, and doesn't tell the other person anything specific about how you experienced the situation</p>	<p>"While making that decision, I had the impression that you dominated the space for discussion and that I did not have space to contribute ..."</p> <p>Because this indicates what you experienced, and how you experienced the situation</p>
Appropriate	<p>"What you need to do ..."</p> <p>Because this presents your suggestion as a fact rather than as an opinion</p> <p>Because this indicates a projection of your needs onto the other person</p>	<p>"What I see as your needs ..."</p> <p>Because you are speaking on your own behalf which helps prevent any reactions or opinions being presented as facts</p> <p>Because this indicates that you are thinking about the needs of the other and what they might be able to do about the feedback</p>
Useful	<p>If a person is unable to change something, there is no point in mentioning it.</p> <p>Because it just makes the other person feel powerless if they cannot change the thing you point out, and pointing it out is not constructive</p>	
Wanted	<p>Feedback is most effective when wanted by the receiver.</p> <p>Because if it is not wanted, it won't be accepted as constructive and worked with</p>	
At the right time	<p>If at all possible, feedback should be given as soon as the impression was made.</p> <p>Because if it is given much later, the other person will not remember the situation as well, and will not be able to consider the feedback constructively</p>	
Clear	<p>Ask the receiver of feedback whether they need any clarification of your point.</p> <p>Because you may not have made yourself clear and they may not understand it completely</p>	

4. Adapted from T-Kit Training Essentials, p. 102 in previous edition, available online at: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-6-training-essentials>

Tips for giving and receiving feedback

Giving	Receiving
Think about the needs of the person receiving the feedback. Is what you have to say really relevant? Does it relate to something they can work on or change? Does it really respond to their needs or is it a projection of your own?	Listen actively and carefully. Hear the feedback through to the end and consider what it is trying to tell you.
Avoid being judgemental as far as possible (avoid the use of “you”). Use “I” statements and avoid speaking on behalf of others (“we”).	Try to remain open to what is being said to you. If you notice that you are becoming defensive, make a mental note of any questions or disagreements and check them out later.
If you encounter defensiveness or an emotional reaction to your feedback, deal with those reactions first rather than trying to convince, reason, or supply additional information.	If you are unsure about what the person giving feedback is trying to get at, try to rephrase what you have just heard and check with them that you have understood what was said correctly.
	Think carefully about the feedback you have received. Don’t react immediately to what you have heard.
	Go back to your self-assessment and check whether you want to change or add anything.

If you want to **find out more** about giving and receiving feedback, consult the chapter on [Training in Teams](#) in the new (and previous) edition of [T-kit Training Essentials \(p. 46\)](#).

Further Information

Read more about the Portfolio and about youth work recognition in Europe through the questions and answers below.

Who developed the Portfolio?

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio was developed by the Council of Europe and its partners in the European Youth Sector. Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 46 member states, 27 of which are also members of the European Union. The mission of the Council of Europe is to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its key instruments are the [European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#), and the [European Court of Human Rights](#). Find more about the Council of Europe at www.coe.int.

The Council of Europe and its partners want to encourage more young people to get involved actively in strengthening civil society in Europe and in defending the values of human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion. They are also interested in promoting and developing sectoral policies that include youth perspectives and specific youth policies, putting special emphasis on the participation of young people.

The core mission of the Council of Europe in relation to young people is to enable them to be active citizens. The Council of Europe believes that national and international youth policies should create conditions and opportunities for learning and experiencing which creates knowledge, skills and access to rights for young people.

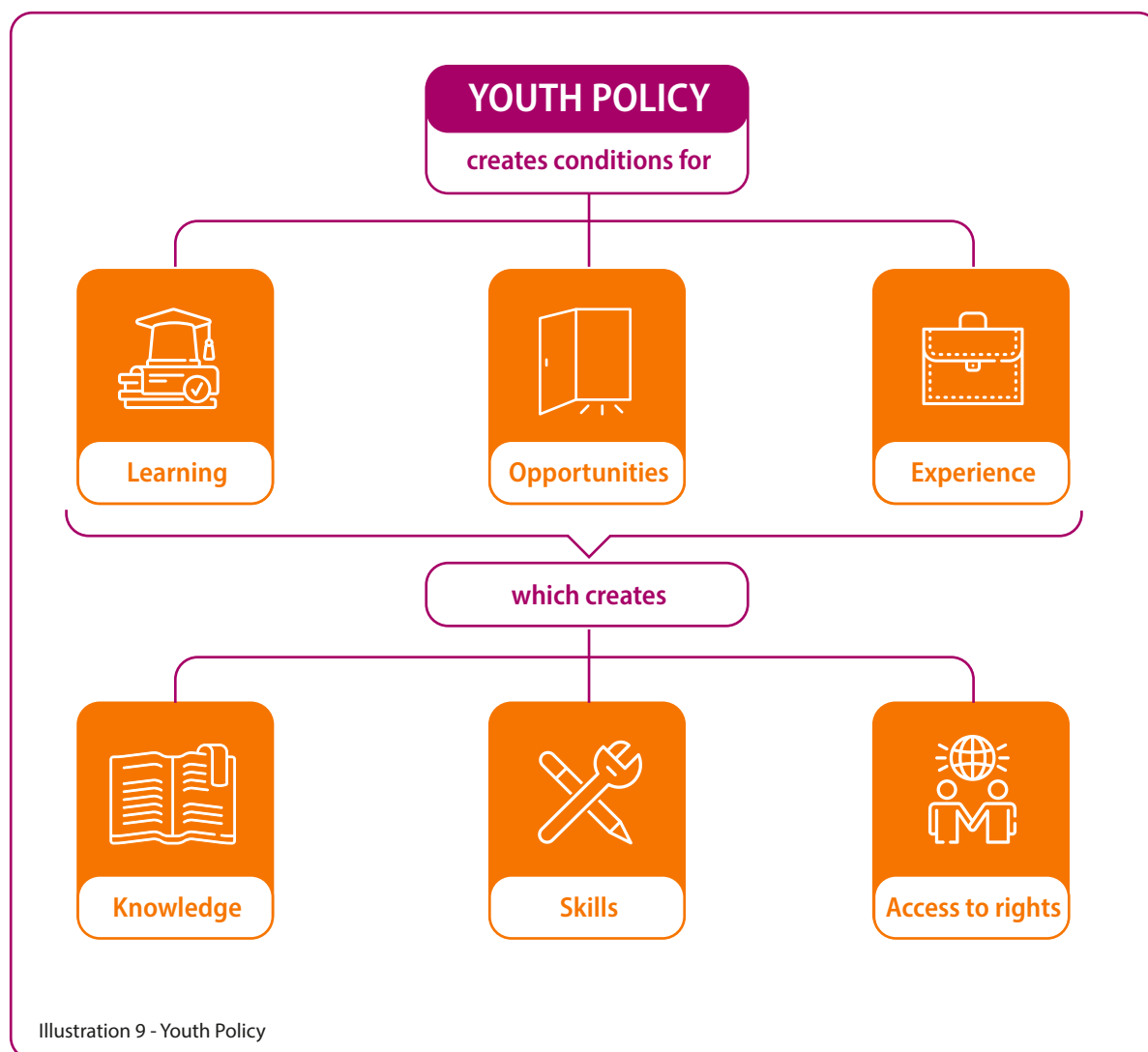


Illustration 9 - Youth Policy

The Council of Europe has a Youth Department which is co-managed by youth organisations and governments with equal decision-making power working together. The Youth Department has a long-standing tradition in training and education activities for youth workers and youth leaders in Europe. Find out more about the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, the [co-management system](https://www.coe.int/youth), the partners involved and its activities, at www.coe.int/youth.

The thematic priorities of the Youth Sector are described in its strategies. Youth work development, quality and recognition are priorities. Find out more at: [Our Youth Strategy - Youth](#).

Why was the Portfolio developed in the first place?

1. The Portfolio is an instrument for improving the recognition of youth work:

The youth work community of practice around Europe, through ongoing debates and exchanges, has expressed the need for an instrument that could help them to gain better recognition for their work. The Portfolio does this by helping members of that community of practice to:

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

The portfolio has been developed taking into account the long-standing practice of the Council of Europe in youth leader and worker training. Since the establishment of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972, the Council of Europe's youth sector has developed a wide range of training courses for people and organisations doing youth work, multipliers, non-formal educators, public servants and even researchers from across Europe, in themes ranging from human rights and anti-racism to conflict transformation and social inclusion, participation and democracy. Find out more about the educational work and publications of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe at www.coe.int/youth.

2. The Portfolio is an instrument for promoting the Council of Europe's approach to youth policy:

The Council of Europe sees the core task of national and international youth policies as creating the necessary conditions for young people to be active citizens. This task touches on so many aspects of young people's lives that youth policy has to involve many different public policy sectors including, but not limited to, education, health, social affairs, family, justice, housing, and so on. It must therefore be implemented in a co-ordinated manner between different policy sectors. The Council of Europe promotes this 'cross-sectoral' way of working to address young people's needs and concerns among its member states.

A cross-sectoral approach to youth policy means that it will be implemented using a variety of different means of intervention, ranging from legal measures to specific kinds of support programmes for young people. A key dimension for the Council of Europe is educational. Youth policy should support young people in acquiring the necessary competences to be active citizens (for example, autonomy, responsibility, initiative, engagement, solidarity, etc.). That is why youth work based on the principles of non-formal education and learning is one of the key working instruments of the Council of Europe's youth policy.

The Portfolio is a tool which helps people and organisations doing youth work to consider how they contribute to helping young people acquire the competence to be active citizens. It asks them to consider how their knowledge, attitudes and skills can contribute to the fulfilment of this key task of youth policy.

3. The Portfolio is an instrument for promoting the values of the Council of Europe and the European Youth Sector

The Council of Europe believes that the ways in which individuals, organisations and institutions practise youth work, diverse as these are across Europe, reflect their vision of society and the values they wish to promote.

The Council of Europe's mission is to promote a Europe which:

- respects human rights and human dignity
- promotes participatory democracy
- strives to achieve social cohesion, social justice, and gender equality
- considers living together in a pluralistic multicultural society as an enrichment and opportunity for social and economic progress, rather than as a problem
- encourages the development of civil society
- actively works to eradicate all forms of racism or discrimination based on social and ethnic origins, religion and sexual orientation
- contributes to making the world a better place to live, through active measures for global solidarity.

The Portfolio reflects these values in its understanding of what youth work is for, how it should be carried out, and which competences are necessary for doing it well. The very idea of a self-assessment tool, which provides individuals, teams and organisations with the opportunity to reflect on their own competence for youth work, and to develop their own plans for improving it, is grounded in a vision of youth work as a process of continuous learning and emancipation for those who practise it as much as for those who participate in it.

Why is the Portfolio revised on a regular basis?

The process of updating and revising the Portfolio is undertaken in response to significant political and practice developments in the youth work field, and with the aim of sustaining the relevance of the Portfolio as a European standard for the development of youth work functions and youth worker competence. Furthermore, revisions are undertaken to improve the Portfolio as a European tool to be more concrete, practical and usable to youth workers and the wider community of youth work practice at all levels.

The current revision was undertaken in 2024/25 to support the operationalisation of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on youth work](#) and support youth work development in Council of Europe member states and at institutional level, in accordance with the recommendations included in the report on [Recommendation on youth work: Five years after adop-](#)

[tion" Report on the review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#) as well as feedback on creative uses of the Portfolio documented in the [Study on updating the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio, November 2023](#).

What currently is the European debate on youth work?

Acceptance for the positive role that youth work based on the principles of non-formal education plays for the social integration, active citizenship, employability and the overall well-being and social development of young people has grown significantly. This growing awareness has put youth work and non-formal education high on the political agenda of many national governments and international institutions, including those of the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

This is not only the result of inter-governmental co-operation. Youth work organisations and providers all over Europe and at the European level have successfully advocated for social and political recognition for the specificity of youth work in comparison to other forms of work with young people. As a result, the European institutions have taken a more strategic approach to encouraging governments to value, recognise and support this kind of work through dedicated policies, programmes, research and resources.

The Council of Europe and the European Commission, as European institutions, have both committed to the recognition and quality development of youth work at European level and in their respective member states.

This commitment is formalised through different kinds of political document from Council of Europe and Committee of Ministers' Recommendations to Council of the European Union Resolutions.

The most relevant for Portfolio users, and those who intend to use the Portfolio as a tool for advocacy regarding the recognition and development of quality youth work, are listed below (most recent first):

- The 2023 [Reykjavik Declaration "United around our values"](#) adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which outlines 10 Principles for Democracy and commits Council of Europe member states to supporting young people in participating in deliberations and decision-making processes. It validates the role of youth work for engaging

young people in shaping the present and future of their societies, as well as in addressing challenges to democracy and human rights.

- The 2020 [Resolution of the European Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda \(2020/C 415/01\)](#) acknowledges the importance of rethinking the education of young people and youth workers, and supporting them.
- The 2019 [Council of the European Union Conclusions on Digital Youth Work](#) reaffirms the fact that digital media is an important context in which youth work is practised and the need for a “... digital transformation of the youth work sector and youth work practice”, including through the development of critical digital literacy and agility.
- In the [Council of the European Union Conclusions on Smart Youth Work](#), it was recognised that Smart youth work means making use of and addressing digital media and technologies for the purpose of positive outcomes for young people.
- The 2017 Council of Europe [Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work Rec\(2017\)4](#) outlines four key aspects for the recognition of youth work: personal, social, political and formal.
- The 2012 [Council of the European Union Recommendation on the validation of non- formal and informal learning of 20 December 2012 \(2012/C 398/01\)](#) encourages the member states to offer individuals the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned outside formal education and training – including through mobility experiences – and to make use of that learning for their careers and further learning.
- The 2003 [Council of Europe Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people \(Rec\(2003\)8\)](#).

Furthermore, and starting in 2010, [European Youth Work Conventions](#) have been organised at regular intervals. A European Youth Work Convention is a large-scale gathering of what has come to be known as the European youth work community of practice, including policy, research and practice stakeholders from across the continent, to discuss their visions, and the issues and challenges of youth work in the present and future from the perspective

of policy. They aim to chart ways forward for youth work development across Europe, at both the national and European levels. The first two, organised in Ghent and in Brussels in Belgium, sought to understand what the common core of youth work is across Europe, and how this is distinct from other forms of work with young people, while recognising the diversity of youth work in form, approach and experience across the continent ([Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention and Documentation from the 2nd European Youth Work Convention](#)). The 3rd and 4th editions, organised in Bonn, Germany and in Malta respectively, sought to create an agenda for anchoring European and national level efforts to develop recognition, quality, innovation and cross-sectoral co-operation in a common vision of excellence in youth work. The [European Youth Work Agenda](#) is based on the [Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention “Signposts for the future”](#). It focuses on the promotion and recognition of youth work and its connection to local contexts, communicates the value of youth work beyond the youth work community of practice and places importance on the capacity of youth work as a field or as a sector to navigating European and worldwide transformations. The [2025 EYWC](#) in Malta sought to institutionalise the implementation of a comprehensive European Youth Work Agenda as a common responsibility of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, with the active participation of member states of both, and the infrastructure of their programmes.

While each institution has its own specific policies and programmes on youth work development and recognition, they recognise the extent to which their efforts can be complementary. They established a [Partnership on Youth](#) to foster the development of common priorities in the field of Youth, one of which is recognition and quality development of youth work. Notably, it contributes to this agenda by producing knowledge on youth work and translating it for effective use in youth policy and practice.

Some of the Partnership’s most important initiatives on recognition and youth work development have included the production of key knowledge books:

- Youth worker education in Europe: Policies, structures, practices
- Seven volumes on The History of Youth Work in Europe
- Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe
- Pathways to Recognition

What are the options for recognition available to Portfolio users?

There is no specific recognition, validation or certification process associated with the Portfolio at this point. Furthermore, there is no “one-stop shop” which explains the recognition, validation and certification options available to people doing youth work across Europe. These two facts can make acquiring recognition for their achievements, and for the value of their work, seem complicated to people doing youth work. However, significant progress has been made with the validation of non-formal learning across Europe, although not necessarily connected to the youth field. Co-operation between youth and education fields in this area would be needed, particularly as qualification and occupation frameworks for youth workers are being developed at national levels.

As a tool for the *self-assessment* of competences, the Portfolio is one of the many ‘informal’ recognition methods available to people doing youth work. By combining self-assessments with *evidence* of experience, testimonies from participants in your activities, reference people and certificates from further learning and training undertaken, the Portfolio provides its holder with a *history* of their competence. Like a photographer or graphic designer who creates a Portfolio of their artistic creations, people doing youth work can use the Portfolio to show what they have done and why they and eventually others think they are competent in doing it.

Nevertheless, across Europe there are a variety of ‘formal’ recognition, validation and certification possibilities available. These are more often than not organised nationally, but European options also exist. Working in your context, you will best be able to judge what kind of recognition is useful or necessary for your situation and development. Here we provide some clues for finding your pathway to recognition using the Portfolio.

Formal validation and certification pathways are typically organised in-country, and offered by state-recognised national, regional or local authorities and institutions of different kinds. These are very diverse. Each country has different forms and procedures, and some countries even have several different pathways to accessing recognition. For example, some countries have university level bachelor’s degree study programmes and others have vocational training programmes. Others allow people to gain qualifications for youth work through on-the-job

practice. Some countries have no specific professional or academic qualification system for youth work at all. Furthermore, some countries have several routes that one can take or combine these, according to one’s interest, learning style and possibilities. In many countries, local and regional authorities and other state-recognised institutions offer vocational training and further professional education opportunities through shorter- and longer-term course formats with different types of certifications.

Finding out about the different pathways available in your country demands research and time. Here are some useful starting points for finding out more:

1. The higher education, vocational training or adult education authorities in your country, region or city can provide information about networks of providers and other relevant opportunities. For participating countries, the [EURYDICE Network](#) provides information on which authorities from local to national levels are responsible for which kind of education, training and recognition, and so on.
2. In countries participating in the [Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission](#), the [National Agencies](#) responsible for the implementation of the programme can provide information on specific national initiatives in the fields of youth, vocational training, adult education and recognition.
3. The [Eurodesk](#) portal is useful for finding out more about initiatives relevant to youth. Eurodesk is the main provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them.
4. [Youthpass](#) is part of the European Commission’s strategy to foster the recognition of non-formal learning. It is a recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth projects that take place within the framework of EU Youth Programmes, specifically Erasmus+ [youth participation activities](#) and [youth exchanges](#), and the [European Solidarity Corps](#).
5. Youth work associations and providers in your country may be a good starting point for finding out more about recognition pathways, resources and guidelines. The [Alliance of Youth Workers Associations](#) (AYWA) was founded in 2024 as an umbrella organisation gathering national youth worker associations. AYWA offers support and guidance to youth workers interested in creating youth worker associations in contexts where there are none.

Further reading

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Useful reference websites

Council of Europe – Youth Department

www.coe.int/youth

Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People

Education with young people and value-based youth work

www.coe.int/en/web/compass

Digital Youth Work

A long-term project of the National Agencies of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps

www.oph.fi/en/education-development-and-internationalisation/long-term-cooperation-projects/digital-youth-work

Digital resource hub

A professional digital competence toolbox for youth work

<https://digitalyouthwork.scot>

www.verke.org/en/publications/a-professional-digital-competence-toolbox-for-youth-work

Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission ('Youth' is spread around opportunities for individuals and organisations)

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu>

European Commission, Handbooks on Youthpass and recognition

[Handbooks for Youthpass and recognition – Youthpass](#)

European Solidarity Corps

[About | European Youth Portal](#)

ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally

Competence model developed within the framework of EU Youth Programmes

www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/tc-rc-nanetworktcs/youthworkers-competence-model

Eurodesk Portal

The main provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them

[Eurodesk - Youth information experts since 1990](#)

European guidelines for digital youth work

[Guidelines - digitalyouthwork.eu](#)

European Language Portfolio of the Council of Europe

Supporting the development of learner autonomy, pluri-lingualism, intercultural awareness and competence; helping people record their language learning achievements and experiences

www.coe.int/portfolio

EURYDICE Network

The Eurydice Network provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. As of 2024, it consists of 43 national units across 40 countries (following the addition of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova) participating in the Eu's Lifelong Learning Programme.

<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/keywords/lifelong-learning-programme>

INFED. Not-for-profit resource site on informal education

[featured - infed.org](#)

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

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/visible-value-recognition-of-youth-work>

The European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn process

[Bonn Process - Bonn Process](#)

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

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>

The SALTO Youth Resource Centres Network

Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme

www.salto-youth.net

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

[T-kits - Youth Partnership](#)

Unique Learning Badges Project

Online visual recognition platform for providers and receivers of non-formal education

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/unique-learning-badges>

Visible value – Recognition of youth work, CoE-EU Youth Partnership

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/visible-value-recognition-of-youth-work>

Glossary

Accreditation

Education organisations and institutions need permission to issue certificates, diplomas and qualifications. Accreditation is the process they have to go through to get it. For example, universities need accreditation to issue degrees, and they usually get this from the national educational authorities, who vouch for the credibility of the degrees they issue.

Assessment

Assessment is the process of evaluating or estimating the nature, ability or quality of something.[i] In formal education, assessments are done using exams to judge performance and achievement, and usually result in a ranking of those who did best and worst according to a pre-defined standard. Assessment also takes place in non-formal education, but group experiences and processes are more important than individual achievement; non-formal education also uses different methods to conduct the assessment. Participatory processes of evaluation and debriefing are preferred to testing and ranking. Self-assessment is a process of evaluating yourself according to a given standard or set of criteria. In the case of the Portfolio, the Portfolio competence framework provides the standard against which the self-evaluation takes place, as well as a guide for how to do it and how to document its results. [i] Source: Oxford online dictionary

Certification

Certification is the formal process of validating knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences. Certificates are the “pieces of paper”, which record the outcomes of getting certified. They usually have the status of official documents and are a very common way of communicating academic or professional achievements.

Competence

Competence is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. The term is often confused with the term ‘skill’. Two things make a competence different from skill and make a competence more than a skill. When you are competent, you can apply what you know to a task or challenge, and you are able to transfer this ability between different situations. In non-formal education, competence is understood as having three interlinked dimensions: knowing, knowing how to do, and knowing

how to be. These are often symbolised by the head, hands and heart.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathy has also been described as the ability to “put oneself in someone else’s shoes”.⁵

Evaluation

Evaluation is making a reasoned judgement about something. The term ‘evaluation’ does not say anything about the judging being done not about the purpose, or the method or whether the result is good or bad. It only refers to the process.

Evidence

Evidence is proof of something. In the context of the Portfolio assessment, you are asked to provide evidence of your competence. This evidence refers to anything you think backs up the claims you make about your competence. These could be testimonies from your former participants, reference letters or recommendations from your employer or volunteer manager, certificates from courses and/or examinations you may have taken, proof that you participated in or tried to access on-the-job or other training, or anything else you think demonstrates the extent to which you assess yourself as competent. Evidence can take different forms too – video, audio recordings, photos, blogs, and so on. Getting input from the young people you work with or asking someone you know and trust, and who knows you in your youth-work context, to review your self-assessment are also good ways of gaining evidence to back up your competence assessment.

Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence is a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself
- respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people
- establish positive and constructive relationships with such people

5. Source: Oxford online Dictionary

- understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural "difference".

While the definition of intercultural competence provided above states that such competence involves respecting people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself, it is important to distinguish between respect for people and respect for actions. Human beings and their inalienable human rights, and the dignity and equality of all people, should always be respected, but there are limits on the respect which should be accorded to actions: respect should be withheld from actions which violate the fundamental principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Actions which violate these principles should not be condoned on the grounds of 'cultural difference'.⁶

Knowledge

Knowledge is what someone individually knows or the sum of what a given group collectively knows. In education, knowledge is what there is to learn, but this does not mean that it is good or useful. It has to be joined up with skills (to become useful) and with principles and values (to become worthwhile).

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are the results of a learning process. These can be expressed in many ways (not only through certificates) and they can be measured in many ways (not only exams). Recorded learning outcomes are just snapshots of a given moment in time in any learning process.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated"⁷ pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional reasons. The idea of lifelong learning recognises that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations. During the last 50 years, ongoing scientific and technological change has shown that learning takes place constantly through daily interactions with others with the

world around us.⁸ Research shows that Life-Long Learning can improve personal development, active citizenship and social inclusion.⁹

Qualification

A qualification is an official record or document testifying to the fact that a person has successfully completed a given course or reached a given standard of achievement for a field, skill or competence. It is often used as a synonym for a certificate or diploma.

Prejudice

Prejudice is preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.¹⁰ Prejudice is most often negative, and prejudices are rarely borne out by facts or evidence.

Recognition

Recognition is a formal and often legal way of showing that participation in learning and its outcomes are worth something or valuable. Certification is a form of formal recognition. There are also less formal forms of recognition, known as social recognition. This means that the wider community of practice considers something valuable even though it may not have official documents to 'prove' its worth.

Skill

A skill is the combination of knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job. 'Skilled' refers to someone who has learned what to do and how to do it and can show this.

Solidarity

Solidarity is unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; support for others experiencing some difficulty or challenge with which one or one's group / community can identify; mutual support within a group.¹¹

Stereotype

A stereotype is a widely-held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of

6. Source: Barrett, M., et al., 2013 <https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/pestalozzi/Source/Documentation/Pestalozzi3.pdf>

7. Department of Education and Science, Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education. Dublin: Stationery Office, 2000, available online at: www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/fe_aduled_wp.pdf

8. Definition adapted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lifelong_learning

9. Commission of the European Communities, *Adult learning: It is never too late to learn*. COM(2006) 614 final. Brussels, 2006

10. Source: www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/prejudice

11. Adapted from: www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/solidarity?q=solidarity

person or thing.¹² Stereotypes can be positive or negative. Usually, there is some “truth” underlying stereotypes.

Tolerance of ambiguity

Tolerance of ambiguity is the ability to tolerate different interests, expectations, and needs, and to make allowances for them in the process of establishing understanding between people or in other new situations or situations of uncertainty.¹³

Validation

As with recognition, validation refers to a process for establishing the formal and/or informal worth or value of something. In the educational field it refers to the recognition of learning progress and outcomes as valid and valuable.

Youth work community of practice

A youth work community of practice is understood as a group of people, professionals or not, who have, within their respective spheres, different mandates, roles and capacities for the further development of youth work. Typically, they share an interest in resolving problems, improving their skills, and learning from each other’s experiences.

A youth work community of practice comprises actors at all levels, from local to European, such as :

- youth workers and youth leaders
- youth work organisations
- youth work managers, project carriers, trainers
- researchers, educators of youth workers
- local communities and municipalities
- National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps
- youth representations and young people
- youth policymakers.

Source.¹⁴

12. www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype

13. Adapted from: Otten, H., Ten Theses on the correlation between European youth encounters, intercultural learning and demands on full and part-time staff in these encounters, IKAB, 1997, available online at: www.ikab.de/reports/Otten_thesen_en_1997.pdf

14. www.bonn-process.net/be-part-of-it/community-of-practice

Acknowledgements

Over the years, from the first version to this complete revision, a very large number of people have been involved in developing and improving the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio. The Council of Europe would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the Portfolio.

Consultant, researcher and writer for the 2nd revised edition, 2025: Ajša Hadžibegović

Contributors: Sulkhan Chargeishvili, Yael Ohana and Rui Gomes, Youth Department of the Council of Europe

Proofreading: Rachel Appleby

Experts involved in the preparation of the 2025 edition

- Alessandra COPPOLA, Italy
- Alyona GLAZKOVA, Ukraine
- Dragan ATANASOV, North Macedonia
- Elizabeth GREEN, Scotland/United Kingdom
- Frederika HOFMANN-VAN DE POLL, Germany
- Gubaz KOBERIDZE, Georgia
- Jan DEDUYTSCHÉ, Belgium
- Juha KIVINIEMI, Finland
- Kevin JONES, United Kingdom
- Miguel ANGEL GARCIA LOPEZ, Spain
- Mihai VILCEA, Romania
- Miriam TEUMA, Malta
- Monica CORRIGAN, Portugal
- Nadia TISMANARU, Romania
- Nedeljka BOROJEVIC, Serbia
- Nerijus KRIAUCIUNAS, Lithuania
- Oksana TRESCENKO, Lithuania
- Olga KYRIAKIDOU, Greece
- Saleh BAGHIROV, Azerbaijan
- Silvia VOLPI, Italy
- Simon SCHEMBRI, Malta
- Slava MEZHDOYAN, Georgia
- Vesela MAREVA, Bulgaria
- Yael OHANA, Germany
- Yaryna BORENKO, Ukraine
- Zaruhi LAVCHYAN, Armenia

With the support of Council of Europe, Youth Department: Ambre MULLER, Katalin ORMOS, László MILUTINOVITS, Rui GOMES, Sulkhan CHARGEISHVILI.

Acknowledgements for previous editions

Authors:

- Yael Ohana, Author of the 2nd edition 2015
- Mark Taylor, Consultant, researcher and writer of the 1st edition 1996

Contributors to the previous editions (in alphabetical order)

Adalsteinsson Julius (*Iceland*), Ageeva Ludmila (*Russia*), Aigro Mariann (*Estonia*), Akdevelioglu Ilknur (*Turkey*), Almeida Laranjeira Henriques de Joana (*Portugal*), Altinsoy Guler (*Turkey*), Alvarez David (*Spain*), Andersen Jakob (*Denmark*), Arvaniti Chrysafo (*Greece*), Asanidze Vaxtang (*Georgia*), Atmani Saïde (*France*), Bedo Viktoria (*France*), Belletti Michelangelo (*Italy*), Bergstein Rita (*Germany*), Bilger Sophie (*France*), Bjaeldager Jakob (*Denmark*), Bock Damon (*Estonia*), Bodeving Claude (*Luxembourg*), Bodson Nathalie (*Belgium*), Boes Marc (*Netherlands*), Boulanger Pascale (*Belgium*), Boyd Lyn (*United Kingdom*), Bowyer

Jonathan (*United Kingdom*), Brecelj Markucic Arijana (*Slovenia*), Brent Colin (*United Kingdom*), Briedova Barbara (*Slovakia*), Busemann Nina (*Germany*), Calafateanu Adina (*Romania*), Candek Sonja, Cares Mike (*Germany*), Carniel Cristina (*Italy*), Castro José Pedro (*Spain*), Cauwelier Johan (*Belgium*), Chachava Kate (*Georgia*), Chakvetadze Nato (*Georgia*), Cotis Sophy (*Greece*), Cremer Françoise (*Belgium*), Cummings Andrew (*United Kingdom*), Cvetkovska Aleksandra (*"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*), Da Silva Nuno (*Portugal*), Dagkos Anastasios (*Turkey*), D'Erasmus Francesca (*Italy*), De Vilder Dirk (*Belgium*),

Dechenaux Claire (*France*), Demir Basak (*Turkey*), Denissova Stasya (*Russia*), Deri Andras (*Hungary*), Dias Vitor (*Portugal*), Dodin André-Jacques (*France*), , Dotter Stéphanie (*France*), Drouet Elise (*Belgium*), Dubois Christine (*Belgium*), Dufour Thierry (*Belgium*), Dundua Temo (*Georgia*), Dybowski Sandra (*Germany*), Elefante Enrico (*Italy*), Elisashvili Nino (*Georgia*), Evrard Gisèle (*Belgium*), Fedotova Yulia (*Russia*), Fistravec Tina (*Slovenia*), Fröström Linda (*Sweden*), Fruk Marija (*Slovenia*), Gallagher Tony (*United Kingdom*), Garcet Cédric (*Belgium*), Georgescu Mara (*France*), Gerber Dominik (*Switzerland*), Gerjevic Mateja (*Slovenia*), Geudens Tony (*Belgium*), Gitolendia Boris (*Georgia*), Gomes Rui (*France*), Gordeeva Ekaterina (*Russia*), Grace Pauline (*United Kingdom*), Grech Daniela (*Malta*), Griffiths Graham (*United Kingdom*), Grübener Klaus (*Germany*), Grunwald Sebastien (*Germany*), Gucek Marja (*Slovenia*), Guiu Pere (*Andorra*), Gulletta Riccardo (*Italy*), Guneri Halit (*Turkey*), Gunven Asa (*Sweden*), Hadzibegovic Ajsa (*Serbia & Montenegro*), Hallsworth Laura (*United Kingdom*), Häring Polona (*Slovenia*), Hayrinen Iida (*Finland*), Hellings Céline (*Belgium*), Hoffmann Verena (*Germany*), Hoskins Bryony (*France*), Hovi Merja (*Finland*), Hoyla Sari (*Finland*), Hristova Milena (*Bulgaria*), Hughes Gareth (*France*), Hunter-Darch Susanna (*United Kingdom*), likhtetska Iryna (*Ukraine*), Jankovic Jakub (*Slovakia*), Kajaluoto Ulla (*Finland*), Kakorina Svetlana (*Russia*), Kalan Elif (*Turkey*), Kalberg Helen (*Estonia*), Kamel Haythem (*Luxembourg*), Karamouzi Eugenia (*Greece*), Kazakov Egor (*Russia*), Kelly Shawn (*Denmark*), Khusnutdinova Irene (*Russia*), Khutsishvili Otar (*Georgia*), Kingkiladze Sopio (*Georgia*), Kipourous George (*Greece*), Kiss Balázs (*Slovakia*), Klocker Sabine (*Austria*), Koka Eneken (*Estonia*), Konrad John, Koracin Janja (*Slovenia*), Korkmaz Gülcan (*Turkey*), Koskinen Alekski (*Finland*), Kostanyan Arpine (*Armenia*), Koutentaki Polyxeni (*Greece*), Koyuncu Emre (*Turkey*), Kragh-Ryding Ida (*Denmark*), Krajewski Mateusz (*Poland*), Kralik Juraj (*Slovakia*), Krezios Athanasios (*Greece*), Kuntzel Bastian (*Germany*), Kylchyk Kateryna (*Russia*), Laconte Leen (*France*), Lambot Jérôme (*Belgium*), Langer Johannes (*Austria*), Lauritzen Peter (*France*), Le Gludic Gaëlle (*France*), Legion Anna (*Poland*), Lenco Peter (*Slovakia*), Lopez Laura (*Belgium*), Losego Matia (*Portugal*), Maciek P (*Poland*), Magnier Emilie (*France*), Malisheva Olga (*Russia*), Männisalu Jutta (*Estonia*), Manucharyan Marine (*Armenia*), Margaryan Tatevik (*Armenia*), Markovic Darko (*Serbia*), Marletta Giuseppe (*Italy*), Martinez Luis Alvarado (*Spain*), Masson Alix (*Belgium*), Matcov Ecaterina (*Moldova*), Mattila Anu (*Finland*), Medlinska Marta (*France*), Memedi Deniz ("former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), Messina Luca

(*Italy*), Mierzejewska Alicja (*Poland*), Mikeladze Lasha (*Georgia*), Miniac Pavillard (*de*) Daniela (*Spain*), Modra Justyna (*Poland*), Molokanova Tatyana (*Russia*), Moskalenko Larysa (*Ukraine*), Niglas Tiit (*Estonia*), Nizinska Joanna (*Poland*), Nomikou Maria (*Greece*), Nordström Piia (*Finland*), Nowosad Anna (*Poland*), Nybäck Sari (*Finland*), Olle Cristina (*Germany*), Oreshkin Raul (*Estonia*), Oshchebska Sofiya (*Ukraine*), Ostini Marino (*France*), Otto Christoph (*Germany*), Panchenko Irene (*Russia*), Panchenko Sergey (*Russia*), Panebianco Agata (*Italy*), Patterson Lee (*United Kingdom*), Paunonen Laura (*Finland*), Paunovic Marko (*Serbia*), Pavkov Marija, Pavlin Andreja (*Slovenia*), Pensavalle Guy (*France*), Petcu Galina (*Moldova*), Peeters Jo (*Netherlands*), Peters Caroline (*Germany*), Petrovskaya Oxana (*Russia*), Pinto Luis (*Portugal*), Pop Marius (*Romania*), Prost Nicolas (*France*), Pustelnik Valdemar (*Denmark*), Ragauskas Laimonas (*Lithuania*), Ratko Natalija (*Slovenia*), Rauravaara Jaakko (*Finland*), Razafinfrazaka Franck (*France*), Rieux Lucille (*Belgium*), Ripatti Tommi (*Finland*), Rojnik Irene (*Belgium*), Rossi Rosario (*Italy*), Rostohar Petra (*Slovenia*), Saarela Laura (*Finland*), Sabler Meta (*Slovenia*), Salokannel Tytti (*Finland*), Savik Sviatlana (*Belarus*), Savisaari Lauri (*Finland*), Scharf Christian (*Germany*), Schild Hans-Joachim (*France*), Scholz Carmen (*Germany*), Schuur Kees, Semrincova Lubica (*Slovakia*), Serrao Mario (*Italy*), Sheverdina Olga (*Russia*), Slimakova Dusana (*Slovakia*), Smith Elizabeth (*United Kingdom*), Snaeland Hafsteinn (*Iceland*), Sommer Kerstin (*Germany*), Sondergaard Peter (*Denmark*), Sousa Madalena (*Belgium*), Spina Gabrilele (*Italy*), Spirina Ludmila (*Russia*), Stergar Matic (*Slovenia*), Stoianova Dina (*Russian Federation*), Surian Alessio (*Italy*), Sweetman Norah, Tadeusz (*Poland*), Tarand Gerd (*Estonia*), Taru Marti (*Estonia*), Taylor Mark (*France*), Tissot Philippe (*Greece*), Tolstoguzova Elena (*Russia*), Tonna Lara (*Malta*), Topalovic Ivan (*Serbia*), Topchishvili Tamuna (*Georgia*), Torp Peter (*Belgium*), Tóth Eszter (*Hungary*), Tove Iren Lea (*Norway*), Tsertsvadze Tiko (*Georgia*), Uyar Yasemin (*Turkey*), Vaap Riina (*Estonia*), Van Hamme Olivier (*Belgium*), Van Hove Jan (*Belgium*), Vandenhoute Genevieve (*Belgium*), Vanhee Jan (*Belgium*), Vaughan Chloe (*United Kingdom*), Veljovic Admir (*Serbia*), Viigi Heli (*Estonia*), Virolainen Signe (*Estonia*), Von Hebel Manfred (*Belgium*), Wagner Marie-Kathrin (*Germany*), Willems Pieter (*Belgium*), Wissner Michal (*Poland*), Wunderlich Nathalie (*Germany*), Yildiran Burcin (*Turkey*), Yuryk Oksana (*Ukraine*), Zakharova Tatiana (*Russia*), Zamecki Lukasz (*Poland*), Zbrojkiewicz Katarzyna (*Poland*), Zhelyazkova Radostina (*Bulgaria*), Zhorzholiani Irakli (*Georgia*), Zografou Eleni (*Greece*).

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio is a tool that helps individuals, teams and organisations doing youth work around Europe to understand their competence and to develop it more effectively. This tool can also be used by trainers, youth work managers and policy makers and generally all those interested in the topic of quality development and recognition of youth work.

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio has been developed at the European level, but it is not primarily for people and organisations working at the European level or internationally. The Portfolio is addressed to youth workers and leaders working at any level from local to international.

coe.int/youth-portfolio

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www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member States, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member States have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

