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8th EUROPEAN PLATFORM of YOUTH CENTRES

Vormingscentrum Destelheide, Dworp, Belgium
27-29 June 2017

Draft Report

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Executive Summary

The 8th Platform took place from 27 to 29 June 2017 at Vormingscentrum Destelheide in Dworp, Belgium. As in previous years, the platform was an opportunity to discuss:

- ✓ recent developments in the Quality Label Project;
- ✓ the role of centres in promoting values and priorities of the Council of Europe in the youth field;
- ✓ the role of youth centres in promoting quality and recognition of youth work in Europe.

The Platform aimed at responding to the variety of needs and expectations represented by the stakeholders present at the meeting - from experience centres already awarded the label to centres that have recently begun to consider the added value of engaging with the project.

Each Platform meeting is a contribution to the further development of the Quality Label Project. The 2017 meeting addressed the fact that nearly 10 years into the process, the Quality Label has now been adopted by a critical mass of youth centres in Council of Europe member states and that interest in acquiring the label has grown exponentially in the last couple of years. Larger questions about how the Quality Label can remain manageable for the CDEJ and the youth sector, and respond to the demand of multiple centres in member states wishing to acquire it, have emerged.

The Platform concluded on a number of key points for the further development of the Quality Label project relating to cooperation between the centres and to network enlargement.

Concerning cooperation and partnership between the centres, a significant number of avenues for cooperative projects have been identified, including applications for Strategic European Voluntary Service (EVS), common research projects in the area of recognition of non-formal education and outdoor education, working together on the implementation of Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' recommendations, and in relation to training for staff of public authorities.

However, the Platform also suggested that there is a need for a more strategic approach to coordinating and developing multilateral cooperation among centres, and that ways to facilitate this should be supported by the Council of Europe.

With regards to the network enlargement, the Platform concluded that more strategic thinking is required to move the Quality Label Project beyond its current stage of development. Though it is clear that it is neither the aim of the project or the task of the Council of Europe to create and maintain a formal network, the labelled centres may decide to pursue such an initiative with the advice and support from the institution. More reflection is needed in that respect on what the role of labelled centres in respective countries could be, and what should be the approach to the labelling of additional centres when there is more demand from within one country.

Some very practical ways in which the Council of Europe could follow up the Platform meeting were suggested as follows:

- developing a module for the technical dimension of running centres;
- organising a thematic action days in which all labelled centres can participate;
- organising study visits and job shadowing to the European Youth Centres and between the labelled centres.

Introduction of the Council of Europe's Quality Label Project and to the European Platform of Youth Centres

The Quality Label: Involving Youth Centres in the youth policy & youth work of the Council of Europe

The European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg are the backbone of the Council of Europe's youth sector. They serve as educational laboratories for the development of quality standards and innovation in and youth policy. Through the European Youth Centres, the Council of Europe offers young people and youth civil society (formal and less formal structures) across Europe, high level educational support, safe physical spaces and residential facilities and access to other sectors of the Council of Europe. Thus, young people have the opportunity to explore issues of concern, to advocate on their own behalf, and become actors of social change. The work programme of the European Youth Centres is a unique combination of policy development, research, training, and educational innovation. They are centres of excellence and a central pillar of the Youth Department and act a standard setter in the youth sector.

At the initiative of the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ), the youth sector launched in 2008 a project entitled the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres to further promote the standards established in the European Youth Centres in the member states. The aim is develop a network of youth centres across the continent that go through a process of assessment and development which respond to the quality criteria defined for the project, and ultimately to be awarded the Quality Label. The labelled centres are also expected to contribute to youth policy development at national and local level and to be good practice examples and laboratories for further development and recognition of youth work and non-formal learning.

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres project includes three components:

1. the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres, awarded to youth centres that meet the standard. Candidates for the Quality Label must undergo a process of assessment and development under the guidance of an international expert team;
2. an annual meeting of the European Platform of Youth Centres to ensure networking and experience sharing among centres recognised with the Quality Label and those aspiring to its acquisition;
3. an annual training session for the staff of the youth centres involved in the network, regardless of their status.

General pre-conditions require that youth centres interested in the label must:

- ✓ have for their primary mission to serve the youth sector and young people;
- ✓ have a clear mandate from and a structured relationship with public authorities;
- ✓ have relations with civil society as part of their policy;
- ✓ include multipliers among their primary target groups;
- ✓ have in-house educational staff working to support the activities;
- ✓ have accommodation facilities within one campus with the working facilities;
- ✓ operate on a strictly not for profit basis.

More information about and the detailed description of the eligibility criteria and the award process is available in the brochure [The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres](#).

Introduction to the European Platform of Youth Centres

The Platform is the annual meeting of Youth Centres that have received the label, that are in the process of acquiring it or wish to begin the process of acquiring it in the future. The Platform is the occasion for exchange and knowledge sharing among the youth centres. Including the 2017 edition, there have been eight platform meetings since the inception of the Quality Label Project. The 8th Platform (2017) was hosted by the [Vormingscentrum Destelheide](#), which was awarded the Quality Label in 2015.

The general objectives of the Platform meeting are to:

- ✓ familiarise and update the participants with the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres project;
- ✓ update participants with the Council of Europe youth sector developments and associate the youth centres with the programmes of the institution;
- ✓ exchange on management and educational practices in youth centres;
- ✓ support networking and cooperation amongst participants;
- ✓ further develop the Quality Label project.

The Platform meeting brings together:

- ✓ managers and staff members of the youth centres awarded the Quality Label; managers and staff of youth centres currently in the process of acquiring the Quality Label, planning to initiate such a process or interested in using the standard to improve their work;
- ✓ decision-makers planning to establish a youth centre with Council of Europe philosophy and quality standards;
- ✓ representatives of national youth ministries who support a selected youth centre and who participate as a tandem; and selected experts.

The complete list of participants can be found in the Appendices.

In consideration of the general objectives outlined above, the programme of the Platform in 2017 sought to address three main issues during its three days of work at Destelheide, as follows:

- ✓ the Quality Label Project and its current stage of development;
- ✓ the role of centres in promoting values and priorities of the Council of Europe in the youth field;
- ✓ the role of youth centres in promoting quality and recognition of youth work in Europe.

The programme of the 8th Platform aimed at responding to the variety of needs and expectations represented by the stakeholders present at the meeting - from experience centres already awarded the label to centres that have recently begun to consider the added value of engaging with the project. Many issues discussed at the Platform meeting address important common challenges that centres are dealing with, especially how to manage the quality standard both while in the process of acquiring the label and once they have received the award.

Each Platform meeting is a contribution to the further development of the Quality Label Project. The 2017 meeting addressed the fact that nearly ten years into the process, the Quality Label has now been adopted by a critical mass of youth centres in Council of Europe member states and that interest in acquiring it has grown exponentially in the last couple of years. Larger questions about how the Quality Label can remain manageable for the CDEJ and the youth sector, and respond to the demand of multiple centres in member states

wishing to acquire it, have emerged. Thus, the programme of the Platform had to provide the space for such discussions to emerge and to play out.

The programme of the Platform can be consulted in the Appendices.

The current report

This report presents a synthetic overview - rather than a chronological account - of the discussions that took place during the Platform meeting in relation to the three main issues addressed.

The current report focuses some attention on the broader set of questions relating to the future development of the Quality Label Project, as the participants raised many relevant suggestions that can be further explored by the CDEJ and the Secretariat in due course.

Theme 1: The Quality Label Project: Past, Present and Future

Latest developments in the Quality Label Project

As in previous years, the 8th Platform was an opportunity to take stock of development of the Quality Label project since its beginnings, and especially since the last Platform meeting. The Quality Label project emerged from the acknowledgement of the CDEJ that relatively few centres were working in a similar way as the European Youth Centres, e.g. operating under the auspices of public authorities with teams of their own educational staff. At the same time, it was clear that not only the European Youth Centres were in the process of developing youth work and its quality, and there was demand from centres themselves to receive recognition for their promotion of the Council of Europe values. Hence, initially, the idea was to create a Platform for dialogue and learning around all of these issues.

The initial goals of the project were to promote the approaches to youth work developed in the European Youth Centres to a wider group of centres and youth work practitioners and to contribute to the development of the quality, visibility and recognition of youth work in Europe. Initially, the main task was to develop a set of criteria that would be recognised as the basic common denominators among centres wishing to join the Platform. The Quality Label as such came later, and the initial target was to attract ten to 15 labelled centres that could act as hubs for further development of youth work in their respective countries.

Throughout this decade long process a number of important lessons were learned. The following issues were to a certain extent underestimated:

1. the large variety and diversity of centres in terms of: infrastructure, different youth/social work policies and histories, (un)reliable support from the public authorities responsible for youth and social policy, different staffing traditions (e.g. voluntary vs. paid staff) and differences in educational approaches;
2. the different needs of the centres in terms of educational contents and competence. The different and often disparate training needs of centres to be able to meet the standards demanded by the label has been a challenge to handle with respect to the development of the annual Quality Label training course;
3. the cooperation between the centres and the CDEJ representatives and other national/local authorities where they are located varies considerably from country to country. The differences between the administrative systems that govern the cooperation between youth centres and public authorities is another challenge. At the beginning, much expectation was put on CDEJ as the main avenue for reaching out to centres. However, as it turned out, word of mouth and the programmes of the European Youth Centres have been more important.

At the time of the Platform there are nine labelled centres; two more centres will be assessed through visits in 2017. The original target for the number of labelled centres has basically been reached. However, more centres than expected are interested in acquiring the Quality Label today, both in member states that already have one as well as in additional countries. The centres receiving the label are well networked and act as multipliers. Through the implementation of CDEJ's recommendations from the assessment process, the labelled centres also multiply innovative ideas and the quality label standards through cooperation with colleagues in other youth centres in their countries and abroad.

As the project developed, several elements have been added/enlarged, such as:

- ✓ the label ceremony, which has become increasingly important in the promotion of the centres. This procedure has become more formal and significant occasion than originally foreseen;

- ✓ the annual and dedicated training course for the educational staff of labelled youth centres;
- ✓ the CDEJ now accepts requests of member states (through its assistance measures programme) for support in developing national networks of youth centres;
- ✓ the expert teams involved in the assessment of new centres include now staff of the already labelled centres.

The project has now reached maturity and is recognised within the Council of Europe as a good practice. The Quality Label is now mentioned in newer recommendations of the Committee of Ministers, such as the recently adopted [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work](#).

Based on these developments, the Quality Label is entering a new phase of growth and several new challenges will need to be addressed. Due to increase interest, youth centres in member states where a labelled centre already exists are expressing interest in acquiring the label. The original strategy was to label one centre in each country to act as a hub for quality development of youth centres in that country. Yet the structures, traditions and needs in each member state are so different that this concept does not appear to be universally applicable. For larger countries, or those with federalised administrative systems, other approaches might be needed. Clearly, a new approach needs to be adopted that will mediate between the principle of geographical balance and the requests coming from the field.

The Quality Label project has been running long enough now for several centres to be at the point of requesting renewal of their label i.e. after 3 years. As the project enters this renewal phase, it has become apparent that the process developed initially also need to be revised. Several solutions were brainstormed during the Platform meeting in order to ensure a light administrative process, while maintaining a concern for quality and development of the centres in the network.

The current pace at which the network is enlarging and the foreseeable demand by the centres that wish to acquire the label, poses challenges for quality assurance of the overall Quality Label project. As the number of labelled centres grows, it becomes more and more challenging to provide the adequate level of human and financial resources necessary for the effective monitoring of the centres' developments and standard maintenance. It also poses challenges with respect to the support of the labelled centres in terms of 'privileged partnership' with the Council of Europe and what this could entail concretely.

After several editions, it is clear that the Platform meeting and the training sessions for staff of the labelled centres need to be adapted to respond to the emerging needs of centres, especially when it comes to balancing between the needs of newer centres and older centres in the network. It is also clear that more direct engagement from CDEJ representatives (and the national authorities they are representing) with the labelled centres is much needed.

Finding an appropriate approach to expanding competence and multiplying knowledge from the local to the European level and vice versa, still needs to be developed. As the network grows, many relevant practices and approaches are being developed within the labelled centres from which the European Youth Centres could also be learning.

Since the last Platform meeting in spring 2016, the following progress has been made:

1. five youth centres were awarded the Quality Label, with the number of labelled centres increasing to nine; the second training course dedicated to the staff of the labelled centres took place, and the third edition is in preparation;
2. from 2018, the Platform will be organised in one of the European Youth Centres to facilitate networking and contacts with the two EYCs and the Council of Europe in general;
3. from 2018, the training course will take place in a labelled centre. This measure aims to ensure that the quality standards for educational activities upheld by the Youth Department can be experienced by the labelled centres through their participation in the preparatory team. Also, it is an opportunity to further strengthen the sharing of expertise as the course can make use of the specific expertise of the labelled centre in which it will take place.
4. more emphasis is given to include staff/volunteers working at the labelled centres in the Youth Department's activities to ensure more opportunities of being connected with the institution's work.
5. the enlargement of the pool of Quality Label experts has begun where more labelled centres will take part in the assessment of new candidate centres;
6. the importance of the award ceremony for the recognition of the centre locally and nationally is more acknowledged. The Youth Department puts additional emphasis on the ceremony in the labelling process.
7. the Facebook group has been established to encourage autonomous networking among centres and appears to be functioning well;
8. a full team to coordinate and assist the project is in place since July 2017, based in the European Youth Centre Budapest.

The developments in terms of political and programme priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector present opportunities for the development of the Quality Label project:

1. The youth sector priorities for 2018-2019 place emphasis on rights: youth access to rights, social rights of youth with less opportunities, youth participation, co-management, shared decision making in youth policy, the soft legal basis for youth work standards in Member States, peaceful and inclusive societies, gender mainstreaming;
2. A new Action Plan on Protecting Refugees and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019) has been adopted by the Council of Europe. The Youth Department continues its work on the topic through the Summer School for Young Refugees and several other activities where the cooperation of the centres is also very important.

The evaluation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education has just culminated in a large scale European conference to take stock on progress. The results showed the need to reinforce the work on human rights education with and for young people, as well as to respond to challenges posed by advocacy for human rights education.

3. The Roma Youth Action Plan has been extended for the period 2016 to 2019. Some centres are working extensively with Roma youth and it will be important to see how the Youth Department and those centres can cooperate and learn from each other.
4. the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign has been immensely successful and is coming to an end in 2017. Combatting hate speech is evolving into a priority for the whole Organisation. There is acknowledgement and increasing concern about the shrinking space for civil society organisations and their role in democracy promotion. The European Youth Centres have continuously supported youth organisations as a way of supporting vibrant civil societies. To have safe spaces to pursue their work has

always important for youth organisations. In view of the new political developments across Europe, this issue becomes increasingly relevant to address and centres may have to reflect on how they see their role in this regard. This becomes particularly challenging given that centres are working closely with governmental authorities and also depend on them for crucial support.

A particularly important recent development within the Council of Europe is the recently adopted CM/Rec (2017)4 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work. As the first comprehensive recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on youth work this is a historic step towards more explicit recognition and support for youth work across Europe. It will promote efforts to safeguard the establishment and further development of quality youth work and pro-actively support it within local, regional or national youth policies. Furthermore, it identifies the need for strategies, frameworks, legislation, sustainable structures and resources, effective co-ordination with other sectors and related policies that promote equal access to youth work for all young people. The youth centres in the network are expected to play an important role in its implementation at national level.

In terms of upcoming activities, 2017 will see:

1. two exploratory visits: Marienthal Youth Centre in Luxembourg and Plovdiv Youth Centre in Bulgaria;
2. three end-of-term visits: Villa Elba in Finland, Ecocentar Radulovački in Serbia and Lisbon Youth Centre in Portugal with renewal processes expected.

The programme also ensured time for the participants to reflect and share their experience with the Quality Label processes in two groups:

- centres that have already been labelled and those in the process of acquiring it discussed current challenges as they experience it;
- new centres wishing to begin the process of acquiring the label and those wishing to use the label as a guideline for establishing new centres, discussed what the Quality Label process is and the criteria that are the basis of the standard.

Working group 1: Centres that have acquired the Council of Europe Quality Label

Youth centres with the label, or in the process of getting it, updated each other on latest and new developments. Centres in this group demonstrated quite some similarities in how engagement with the Quality Label is changing the way they work. For example, following up on the expert team's recommendations most centres are:

- exploring how to develop their programmes in line with the priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector: e.g. human rights education, intercultural learning, targeting youth with fewer opportunities, the use of new methodologies, e.g. art in education;
- working on improving their infrastructure;
- developing the international dimension of the centre's profile through projects, e.g. developing their own youth exchanges and other support programmes, e.g. hosting EVS trainees;
- developing bilateral and international (professional) exchanges with other centres using resources available from other funding bodies, including the National Agencies of Erasmus+;
- trying to engage with national authorities to ensure that they are able to satisfy the demands of the standard regarding association with public bodies. It was noted that centres need to engage with public authorities anyway, to access national recognition, legitimacy, agency and resources.

The centres also discussed general as well as country specific challenges. The more general challenges include:

- the time-challenge for centres to work on the expert team's recommendations - a large number of centres only have one full time educational staff to work on the recommendations;
- the primary clients for centres are youth and community organisations, however, these often have difficulty to pay fully for the centres' services. This poses a problem especially in terms of having adequate resources for developing own educational programmes in line with Council of Europe values and also a sustainable financial situation for the centre;
- the question of recognition of the centre's work from authorities in their respective country was raised as both a challenge and opportunity for labelled centres. It would appear that the label is significant for the credibility of centres in terms of establishing new partnerships, e.g. SALTO SEE and the Tempus Foundation in Serbia is running regular EVS trainings in Ecocentar Radulovački. Having the label certainly had an impact on the decision of those actors to work with the centre;
- an important question was how to 'explain' the privileged partnership with the Council of Europe and what it means in practice. It was reiterated that one aim of the Quality Label Project is to develop strategic cooperation with the labelled centres that should have a key role in the development of youth work and youth policy. The close relation with the youth sector and its key actors at national and local levels was also pointed out as an important aspect.
- the expectation on centres to have an influence on youth policy developments continues to be a challenge. Several centres do not have the right kind of status or relationship with relevant ministries in charge of youth policy. Even if they take a more proactive stance, the centres often experience exclusion from important national/local processes and find it hard to gain 'a seat at the table'.

Each centre also had the opportunity to raise concerns regarding relevant situations in their countries, as they experience them.

Timișoara Youth House, Romania expressed that the main challenge, but also the main achievement of the label process in Romania, is the national recognition achieved in relation to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the involvement in policy making at national level. The changes in the government have delayed the process of approval of the new law on youth. The centre had the opportunity to take part in its preparations.

Killarney Youth Centre, Ireland expressed that the main challenge for the centre is to develop its role in the context of youth policy. It is becoming increasingly difficult to work effectively due to decreasing support and funding restrictions at national level for youth work. The recently adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work will be a useful and important tool for this centre in its efforts to advocate for increased (political) support and understanding for youth work in the country.

Ecocentar Radulovački, Serbia informed about recent changes in the national and local government and explained that it is not clear how this will have an impact on the local youth offices, including the office in Sremski Karlovci which has been an key interlocutor for the the centre. Funding available for youth work is mainly project based which make sustainable development of the centre and the mission to develop youth work very challenging. The centre is well recognised at national level due to its active involvement in the national association of youth workers. The centre has been instrumental in training new youth workers and team members of the centre. While being in demand in Serbia, the centres is still struggling to match the actual workload with sufficient workforce.

Villa Elba, Finland expressed that the major challenge for them is funding and human resources. It receives 1/5 of its budget from the Ministry of Culture and Education and the rest has to be fundraised. Efforts have been made to sell services in order to increase income, but the Centre's location makes it difficult to ensure full capacity all year round. Getting the label has certainly increased the Centre's visibility; however, it has also increased workload for the staff as they are frequently asked to participate in international events to present its work as a good practice.

Vormingscentrum Destelheide, Belgium expressed that they are facing similar challenges as Villa Elba. A lot of time is required to implement the expert team's recommendations which pose difficulties for the only full time educational staff who is assigned to this work. It is difficult to work on the development of the standards and at the same time keep up with the regular training and education programmes. There was also an expectation that the label would bring in new (international) clients and income, which has not materialised yet.

Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal stressed that despite the fact that the label is not bringing in more resources many other positive aspects have developed. For example, the centre's staff has become more motivated as a result of the process which creates additional legitimacy for the centre. This has also helped the centre to develop its advocacy role in youth policy and consequently also changing attitudes regarding the importance of youth work.

The discussion in this group was concluded by stressing that recognition by public authorities (and their financial support) is often lacking when centres are not embedded in a public/governmental structure, which is often the case. It was also said that the new developments around the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work could create closer links between the CDEJ and the labelled centres, giving centres more access to governmental support appropriate to their needs.

Working group 2: Centres new to the process and wishing to acquire the label

Participants of this group explored motivations among new candidates for undertaking the process and questions about the process and the quality criteria. It was reiterated that the Quality Label brochure remains the main reference document for any centre wishing to initiate the process. It contains an explanation of the process and practical steps from the expression of interest to the award ceremony itself. Given the maturity of the project, the brochure will be revised to make it even more reader friendly and a supplementary document may be developed to provide examples from the experiences of centres that already acquired the label and how they implemented the expert team's recommendations from the assessment.

In total, five centres expressed interest to initiate the process of acquiring the label. At least two of those are in countries where there is already one labelled centre - Finland and Bulgaria. Motivations for acquiring the label are the recognition public authorities and funders for youth work of a labelled centre. In some cases, there are even expectations from public authorities that centres should pursue the label. For others, it is clear that the acquisition of the label is a way to improve the work quality and to develop its international cooperation. Some highlighted that certain opportunities and development should be utilised to a larger extent to acquire the necessary support for pursuing the quality label, such as Varna being the Youth Capital in 2017. Finally, some expressed appreciation that the Platform and the network are real opportunities for exchange and peer learning.

Regarding the questions if the quality criteria are likely to change in the future, the Secretariat explained that the substance of the criteria for youth centres will not change per

se. However, given the fact that there is an interest from more centres than one in several countries, efforts to explore a more decentralised approach are underway. This may have an impact on the process of acquiring the label and the possibility of developing different approaches depending on the context of the centre (local or national level, specific youth work system, federal or central structure/administration). Such developments would need to be further elaborated before put in practice.

The Quality Label project in action: the recent label process of Vormingscentrum Destelheide

The Platform is an occasion for the labelled centre hosting the meeting to profile itself and for the participants to learn about the centre's work and implementation of the expert team's recommendations. Furthermore, it is an example of how the Quality Label process functions in practice, especially for centres newer in the network and aspiring to acquire the label.

In Destelheide, this part of the programme included a detailed presentation of the work being done and a guided tour through the centre's facilities. Participants were then invited to give their feedback and engage in a discussion about the labelling process with the staff that is heading the process.

The complete presentation of Vormingscentrum Destelheide is contained in the Appendices.

The feedback from Platform participants was very positive. Overall, Vormingscentrum Destelheide is a very impressive Centre:

- the centre has a clear international cooperation dimension with own programme of Youth Exchanges and EVS projects; the centre has exemplary cooperation with the public authorities concerned;
- it is wheelchair accessible, the rooms are multi-functional, it is spacious and it is likely that it never gets crowded; the facilities offer groups the opportunity to work in a variety of group sizes and formats;
- the centre is working with a wide range of target groups when it comes to arts and creativity. Through this, the centre is connecting the artistic community (including very well-known artists) and young people, which is of added value for both;
- the location in a small village allows people to concentrate on being at the activity and to focus on what they are doing;
- the work of the centre is clearly process oriented; the spaces are well adapted to experimentation especially for artists in the beginning of their establishment;
- the centre clearly favours environmental-friendly approaches: electric vehicles, chickens for waste management, light saving approach, etc.
- the outdoor and indoor spaces are connected through the architecture and there is a significant effort to maintain the philosophy of the original architecture;
- the centre is working with young people from 16+ and the staff are clearly open to change and adaptation of the programme to new developments and realities.

The participants also made recommendations for future development. These can be organised in three categories, as follows:

Concerning the programme:

- the programme is very focused on young people involved in arts. It would be interesting to expand this work to civic education for young people, using art as the vehicle;

- there might be room for improvement regarding the profile and objectives of the activities held in Vormingscentrum Destelheide, e.g. it is not clear how the programmes on art or producing art are related to Council of Europe values. The question of the role of 'art' in the programme arose: is it being used as an end in itself, or is it also being used as a tool for promoting other values? Furthermore, the Centre has very few educational staff. Overall, it was felt that the Centre might benefit from some diversification in the programme and additional activities on Council of Europe values.

Platform participants made suggestions for how this could be addressed, as follows:

- ✓ to condition the use of the space with the expectation that the work being done has something to do with those values;
- ✓ when there are several different groups in the centre at the same time, efforts could be made to bring them together for a common activity on Council of Europe themes;
- ✓ some training/orientation could be offered to users and their educators on how to internationalise their work, or relate it more to Council of Europe values;
- ✓ the centre could consider to strategically develop their own on issues more directly related to Council of Europe values;
- ✓ an annual message/theme linked to Council of Europe values could be chosen as a 'red thread' for all activities passing through the centre to create a link between activities;
- ✓ some activities held in the Centre are conducted for young people by older facilitators/mentors. It may be worthwhile reconsidering this age difference, and promoting more peer to peer activities.

Concerning the infrastructure, the following comment were raised:

- though a 'master plan' for the refurbishment of Vormingscentrum Destelheide is approved, it is clear that some of the spaces are not in the best state of condition and would need some renovation, e.g. the sleeping quarters;
- environmental friendliness could be increased by getting rid of the pre-packaged snacks and foods in the cafeteria;
- Clearer and visible signposting in English and brail/or other accommodations for the visually impaired would be useful, especially if the centre is working more often with young people with disabilities and international groups. An orientation map to help newcomers navigate the space would also be useful and avoid that people get lost;
- there is plenty of outdoor space and it might be worth considering to develop some facilities for organised sports and leisure, e.g. a football area, a 'real' garden, a terrace, etc.;
- some of the spaces are painted in murky colours. This certainly makes them more resistant to wear and tear but brighter colours would make the buildings seem less gloomy and more friendly/cosy.

Concerning embedding in the community:

- some effort could be made to engage volunteer young people from the local community along with those received through EVS.

Cooperation and partnership between Centres

The Quality Label project is a community of sorts, and in addition to the exchange that is provided for through the Platform, the centres also work together in several projects. The Platform meeting is an opportunity for the community members, including stakeholders that are not daily in contact with the centres, to learn more about the bi-/multilateral cooperation

and partnership efforts that are underway, and to initiate new ones. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for the Council of Europe to find out more about the needs of the centres that could be addressed and to ensure an adequate response.

This session revealed how centres are working together creatively and in a variety of ways to exchange good practices. Centres that have been involved with the Quality Label Project for long are cooperating with centres that joined the network recently as a kind of mutual support mechanism. They exchange practices and knowledge through study visits, job shadowing projects, on specific methodological issues of mutual interest, developing 'strategic partnership', joint applications to Erasmus+. Others are cooperating on the development of educational tools, on quality assurance and the educational needs across centres. Finally, others again are conducting training or developing youth exchanges involving young people in the work of other centres. Noteworthy is to which extent the cooperation activities are being financed by Erasmus+ programme and how talented the centres seem to be in making good use of this opportunity.

Centres further reflected on ideas for further cooperation and new projects, and the following ideas were presented:

Strategic European Voluntary Service (EVS): There are opportunities to be explored under this Erasmus+ action, although, sometimes centres find it difficult to find people to send and/or host. Furthermore, too many young people have no access to EVS at all, reason being that they have no information about it or because they come from social groups that would not normally fit the profile or would need extensive support to participate. The Europeers project for former EVS volunteers is an initiative that could be more utilised and centres could certainly develop a line of action around promoting and developing the quality of voluntary service in Europe using EVS opportunities.

Research based quality development approaches: Youth Centre Marttinen in Finland has developed a research project on the 'value of youth work'. The results could be interesting for those centres that are concerned with youth work standards and quality of youth work. This research included a survey on a quantitative approach on key issues that youth work is expected to deliver on. It also explored definitions of youth work, key elements of national and international youth work (inspired by the work done by In Defence of Youth Work in the United Kingdom), and evaluation models for the work of the youth centres. The results of the research are available [here](#).

Outdoor education: Several centres are developing and working with outdoor education with young people, and some participants expressed the interest to learn from each other in that respect. These centres hope to develop a project with a strong online dimension to exchange experiences in developing this kind of education. Such a project could also include study visits and job shadowing among centres to learn more about the specific competences of each centre in relation to outdoor education.

Council of Europe recommendations: Killarney Youth Centre together with the Bulgarian youth centres are proposing a series of international conferences about the role of youth work as conducted by youth centres and youth organisations on access to social rights of young people. The initiators hope they can gain expertise for the development of the conference series from the participants of the Platform. Furthermore, they hope to develop a strategy for promoting the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work in participating countries together with relevant stakeholders.

Training for staff of public authorities: Lisbon Youth Centre and CEULAJ proposed to develop a training module or several training activities for public authority staff that are

working with or in youth centres, focusing on youth work and youth policy. If successful, this module could be repeated according to demand. They expressed interest to source expertise from the centres in the network and benefit from the support of the educational team at the European Youth Centres. The experience of the Youth Department's 50/50 training courses was mentioned as important to take into consideration and also the challenge of how centres and typical leisure oriented youth work programmes can work on Council of Europe values effectively.

Taking the Quality Label and Platform forward

The Platform meeting is also a moment to discuss how the project will grow in short and long-term. It was agreed that several questions that were raised require more strategic reflection, other issues were discussed immediately and the participants offered suggestions for further development.

Regarding the 'privileged partnership' between the Council of Europe and the centres in the network it was stressed that further attention should be given to clarify the expectations from both sides and to be clearer on the potential capacity to meet these hopes. For example, all labelled centres do not have the same focus and level in terms of developed educational programme or youth policy work. Equally important for the successful development of the centres' work, is to build a fruitful relationship with the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe, in particular with the CDEJ members. The role of the Youth Department in supporting this relation-building with key government representatives was raised as an important aspect. The work of the forthcoming Task Force on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work and the potential role of the centres at national level should also be discussed individually with each labelled centre. Other open questions related to how the cooperation among the centres' network could be more consistent and valorised at international level. Furthermore, the question of sustainable development of the centres needs to be further addressed as funding seems to be available primarily for project-based work.

Additionally participants gave suggestions how the next platform meeting and the forthcoming training course could be organised to better meet their needs. In respect to the Platform meeting, the suggestions included the proposal to prepare an induction session primarily for the new centres in the network and to organise a separate session for the labelled centres to exchange. The Platform could also allow for more peer-to-peer cooperation (including matching new centres with labelled ones) to ensure networking. As the meeting will take place on Council of Europe premises, it will be important to include the work of other departments in the programme to familiarise and connect the centres with the overall work of the institution. The Platform meeting should keep its target group to managers of the centres and this should also be reflected in the programme of the meeting and the programme could include specific management sessions. Participants appreciated the non-formal approach in this Platform meeting and recommended keeping this approach in the next editions.

Regarding the 2018 Platform, some participants expressed the wish to focus on needs of applying youth centres to allow for exchange and learning to fulfil the criteria and to prepare a adequate assessment process with the advice of the centres that already went through the quality label process. The mix of labelled and other centres was much appreciated for peer learning among novice centres.

The question of how many participants per country should take part in the meeting was also raised, especially as there may soon be several labelled centres in some countries. It was

stressed that some criteria for participation need to be established to ensure a balanced and appropriate mix of centres. It was recommended that the theme of the training course is decided on in the platform meeting to allow managers to address vital needs and to identify the right staff to follow the course.

In respect to the 2017 edition of the training course, the participants proposed that the course focuses on the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the role the youth centres could take in ensuring access to social rights of disadvantaged young people. For the 2018 course, they proposed to address youth participation as main theme. The course could place more emphasis on project and activity design for the centre's programme and to include elements on how to introduce the chosen theme to other colleagues in their respective youth centre. The course should be seen as individual competence development of staff members as well as strategic development of the centres. Future editions should also address the question of advocacy in youth policy development as the participants felt that the centres need further improvement in this area. The Secretariat and training team should also ensure follow-up to the work done by the participants in the course. As from 2018, the training course will take place in the labelled centres to include the hosting centre's staff in the preparation and running of the course as a professional experience of organising a Council of Europe training course.

The Quality Label Project will in 2018 include the possibility of participating in study visits to the European Youth Centres as a way of peer-learning. The participants highlighted that further clarity is needed with respect to:

- ✓ participants of the study visits: are these mixed groups including managers, administrative and educational staff from a labelled youth centre?
- ✓ cost coverage of the visits: will there be a possibility to cover cost for participants who want to organise study visits to other labelled youth centres?
- ✓ could the visits be organised back-to-back with the Platform meeting (cost-saving) and could they also have a thematic learning feature?
- ✓ the length of the study visits should not be longer than 5 days.

To further develop the network a 'buddy system' was proposed where centres starting the process of assessment to acquire the label could be matched with (similar) centres that have already attained it. This should be particularly encouraged at national level where a labelled centre already exists in a country. This system could be further reinforced through job shadowing opportunities and exchanges among centres who share thematic interests.

Building on the experience of the No Hate Speech Movement, the participants proposed that each calendar year has a specific theme that guides the centres of the Platform. This thematic approach could help to define the themes of the training course and it could also culminate in a 'common action day' for all centres, e.g. 10 December which is the Human Rights Day. Such concerted actions would also contribute to better visibility of the project.

Regarding the enlargement of the network in countries where a labelled centre already exists, participants raised several concerns.

One concern was quality and standard compliance. The Quality Label is well recognised as a guarantee of quality, therefore this primary aim should be preserved. The concept of the Quality Label was never to award as many centres as possible. It was reiterated that the initial idea was to label centres that could act as youth work development hubs in member states and that one of the most important criteria to be respected in the enlargement process was to keep the geographical balance. As the interests is growing from centres across Europe (also in terms of more centres in one country), the CDEJ and the Youth

department need to reassess the situation and to measure its capacity against the apparent demand. A next step will be to decide on the pace of growth of labelled centres and how to avoid any unnecessary delays for interested and eligible centres who want to engage in the process.

To get a complete overview, the Youth Department will make a stock taking exercise of how many centres are interested want to apply. A call for expression of interest will be sent to all non-labelled centres that participated in last three platform meetings to express whether they are interested in applying. This survey will include some additional questions to assess the needs of potential candidates, and to understand the reasons behind their application. Based on the results of the survey it will be possible for the CDEJ and its expert group and to plan the time frame and approach in consultation with the centres concerned.

Theme 2: The role of centres in promoting values and priorities of the Council of Europe in the youth field

One of the key quality criteria for labelled centres is that their programmes contribute to the promotion of Council of Europe values through youth work. The Platform meeting is an opportunity for staff of the centres to explore ways in which this can be done. Usually the meeting include at least one thematic session addressing a key value or priority of the Council of Europe to explore how centres can incorporate this in their educational work. In 2017, the theme was 'reaching out to vulnerable young people', because many centres are working with such young people and were interested in requiring additional expertise how to tailor their offers with respect to vulnerable youth. Through the Enter! project the Youth Department has developed a wealth of expertise on the issue of access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (enter.coe.int). In 2015 a Committee of Ministers recommendation was adopted on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, along with a guide on how to work with it as an advocacy tool.

Youth centres 'reaching out to vulnerable young people'

Centres had the opportunity to present their specific programmes targeting young people experiencing vulnerabilities and exclusion and explaining their approach to addressing access to social rights of young people they work with. The following aspects were notable across centres:

- centres are quite successful in using their existing competence in social/art pedagogy to develop projects for young people locally or from abroad;
- centres are managing to reach young people experiencing serious social rights issues and difficulties;
- until now most centres are not involving target groups to a large degree in the development of those programmes. The question was raised how this fact impacts young people's empowerment in the long term;
- centres are certainly addressing immediate needs of young people, but the focus does tend to be recreational, language and social contact related rather than addressing the social rights needs of the target group;
- the conceptualisation of intercultural learning that appears to be most common among centres is largely 'apolitical', focusing on individual cultural differences and 'getting on well together';
- pedagogy tends to be focused on social integration rather than questions of power and change;
- centres are grappling with financial challenges for this kind of work - available funds are mainly for projects and not programmes with a longer time perspective. This poses

difficulties in terms of sustainable engagement with this kind of young persons and raises questions of ethical responsibility when centres are not able 'to finish what they started' due to lack of funding;

- centres are also struggling with the novelty/inexperience of working with young refugees and young migrants who are experiencing different kinds of vulnerabilities;
- centres are also challenged in terms of supporting young people to access their rights in systems that are lacking a transversal and integrated approach; often the youngsters themselves end up losing out to the time used trying to work in a way which is foreign;
- it is not entirely clear for some centres how to link their work in social integration with youth experiencing difficulties with educational approaches the Council of Europe has developed to promote or work within its value frameworks;
- reflective youth work practice has not arrived in all centres to the same extent.

Centres working with the Enter! Recommendation

The Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and associated support materials and the Enter! Project was presented so that centres could reflect how they can use this as an advocacy tool and promote its use in their country

The full presentation of the Recommendation can be consulted in the Appendices. The support document to the Recommendation entitled 'Taking it Seriously' can be consulted [online](#). The Enter! Project can be consulted on www.enter.coe.int.

Group sharing around these questions revealed that:

- most centres have only recently begun to work with 'new target groups' of vulnerable youth such as youth with disabilities, young refugees and asylum seekers, whereas they have more experience with the more 'classical profile' of youth coming from 'local' disadvantaged communities (working class families, culturally 'homogenous' groups from the home country, youth exchange groups from one country abroad etc.).
- most centres would like to work with young people under 16 years of age, but there are some barriers which usually mean their target groups tend to be 16+ (young adults).
- there is some support from governmental authorities for working with young people experiencing vulnerabilities of different kinds, but it tends to be quite difficult and bureaucratic to access, and it is not entirely clear how centres can benefit from such programmes.
- in many contexts where the centres are operating, usually the specialised NGOs have more relevant and developed expertise for addressing the needs of such young people. Also, many of the programmes are implemented directly by public institutions, which often lack specific youth work related expertise;
- while there might be moral support and political will, this does not change the fact that there is a lack of funds for programmes of this kind and for staffing them appropriately. Centres could be doing more if there was sufficient funding and their interventions would likely be more effective. The problem of scale of outreach continues to frustrate many centres who are aware that they could have more impact on the situation of access to social rights of young people.

Centres proposed the following possibilities for working with/around the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods:

- centres could take steps to enquire what the different stakeholders - local authorities, youth councils, ministries responsible for implementation) have done since the Recommendation was adopted;
- centres can use the manual 'Take It Seriously' and the Recommendation to develop a local youth strategy on access to youth rights in cooperation with other stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental) and young people locally. This is already happening in Kecskemet, Hungary for example;
- a youth-friendly version of the roadmap for implementation could be drafted in accessible and appropriate language to help youth to get involved in the application;
- the Recommendation should be translated into national languages and the centres could 'interpret' the parts of the Recommendation that are most relevant to them in order to identify the most relevant processes for any advocacy or consultation activities;
- centres could inform the municipal youth department where they are located about the Recommendation, and ask what they want to do;
- centres can do some work with the Recommendation internally, e.g. discussing it with the staff and the young people, putting it on the centre's website, do some visibility with youth associations/NGO community and use their networks to disseminate;
- centres can initiate activities with young people to reflect on why access to social rights is important, how they see it and what they would like to do to promote it with the support of the centres.

Members of the CDEJ pointed out that like the Quality Label, the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods will be monitored by the CDEJ - the intergovernmental committee of the Council of Europe's youth sector. Implementation will be reviewed after five years. The CDEJ members also expressed hope that the labelled centres would encourage other governmental bodies with whom they have significant relationships, to work with the Recommendation. In the end, if some municipalities wish to work together with centres on its implementation there are ways for the Council of Europe to support such initiatives. Furthermore, centres could support the learning from the process, by encouraging their partners to participate in any process of evaluation that will be initiated by the CDEJ.

Furthermore, it was clear that numerous members of the statutory bodies (CDEJ, National Youth Councils) are not aware enough of the work and efforts of centres which are based in countries where they are active in. Some effort needs to be made to rectify the lack of contact, because there are certainly stakeholders who would be interested and could offer some support. The Joint Council meeting could also be an opportunity to valorise the work of the centres, especially as regards young refugees and asylum seekers. Centres could also benefit from the recent work done by the European Youth Centres and the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on this issue.

Finally, the opportunities of the European Youth Foundation appear not to be so well known to the centres. While institutional funds are probably not an option, there might be opportunities for young people in the centres to receive small scale project funds for work on youth access to social rights. Furthermore, grantees receiving EYF grants for international activities could be encouraged to hold their activities in labelled centres as fee paying clients. This would make EYF funds works twice, and has the potential to be of added value for both the grantees of the EYF and the labelled Centres.

Theme 3: The role of youth centres in promoting quality and recognition of youth work in Europe

The Quality Label project was originally conceptualised as a contribution to the promotion of quality and recognition of youth work around Europe, this being a perennial priority of the CDEJ. Furthermore, member states of the Council of Europe are increasingly interested in the development of national quality standards for youth work and youth centres, and some have even requested support from the Youth Department for initiating processes that consider both Council of Europe values and best practice from across the youth sector.

One can take a broader or narrower view on the question of quality standards and recognition. The Quality Label has taken one approach, but there are many examples at national and international level of how quality development, assurance and recognition of youth centres and youth work are ensured. Some countries have very developed processes and systems of recognition, others are using social work or other professional frameworks (adult education, etc.) for the purpose of ensuring quality in youth centres because there is not yet a 'profession' called youth work. Labelled centres and centres wishing to receive the label are often also certified or recognised in other ways - by national institutions, by professional associations, or by international frameworks. Centres have to reflect on which standards to 'go for' and what the added value of certain kinds of recognition is over others, and how the label interrelates with the other standards they are interested in, expected to have and need to continue their work sustainably.

Many centres also see it as their role to contribute to the broader objective of youth work development and promoting quality in youth work practice through the work they are doing with young people.

Roundtable

The subject of the roundtable discussion was the further development of the role of labelled youth centres, and that of the Council of Europe through the Quality Label. Two developments have brought it to the forefront. First, the fact that there is demand from member states and from youth centres to enlarge the network to include more than one centre in some countries, and for support in elaborating national standards frameworks. Second, is the recent adoption of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work. This is the first multilateral policy document of an international institution to push youth work forward and promote its value and recognition, the qualification of youth workers and the visibility of youth work impacts. It will likely result in more interest in youth work on the part of national and local authorities, and more demand for 'external' expertise in this field.

The Roundtable was the occasion for an exchange of experience and views on how standards and recognition frameworks for youth centres and youth work function in different countries and what can be learnt from these experiences for the future development of the project. The CDEJ members and the Youth Department alike were interested in receiving input to inspire the discussion of the CDEJ about the future of the Quality Label and its policy on how it should develop. Centres that do not yet have the label were interested in hearing more about the added value of the Council of Europe Quality Label in relation to other recognition formats, as seen by those who already have it. Finally, participants of the Platform were also interested in the other CDEJ assistance measures that support youth work development in the member states.

The presentations are included in the Appendices.

Mihai Adrian Vilcea representing the Timiș County Youth Foundation in Romania informed that the new draft Romanian Youth Law¹ includes a specific chapter on quality standards for youth centres, which has been developed based on the Quality Label and its criteria. There are three categories of youth centres: national centres, which in profile are closest to the labelled centres; local centres, which are expected to have less space and do not have accommodation; and then rural centres, whose profile is not clearly defined yet. Youth information and counselling centres will have their own framework. With this set of definitions a framework for accreditation will be established, and those centres receiving accreditation will receive privileged access to governmental grants. All this will have to be linked with the occupational standard existing for youth workers. For now, the provisions in the law will establish only the framework. The initiative to include these provisions in the law was taken by a coalition of NGOs. The relationship of some stakeholders in the coalition to the Quality Label and the Council of Europe provided the credibility needed to be taken seriously by the government in the process of drafting the law.

Antje Rothemund heading the Youth Department pointed out that the experts that drafted the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work grappled with the question of 'who is a youth worker?', because the diversity of situations regarding youth work as a profession in the member states is so great. For this reason, the Youth Department is in the process of mapping the basic and further training pathways for youth work around Europe - including all possible profiles - from voluntary youth leaders and workers, through those who do that as their main paid employment.

Heli Lehto representing the Youth Centre Villa Elba presented the fact that Finland is reforming the administrative organisation of social and health care services, under which youth centres are usually operating. With the move to a 'counties' system' of administrative organisation in 2019, it is unclear where the organisational responsibility for youth centres will reside. Until recently, there were 10 centres like Villa Elba in Finland, but one has been closed down by the Ministry. The criteria for funding the remaining nine centres are more or less established. There is a stable relationship with the relevant Ministry and there are opportunities to communicate about centres' plans on an annual basis. Centres do the required scorecard exercise on quality. It covers what kind of youth work is being done, includes an evaluation of quality according to some criteria and each centre has to describe what and how it does in terms of youth work and youth work standards.

In 2017, Finland adopted a new youth law which also includes some important guidelines for establishing quality in our work. These include definitions for the type of activities (nature/cultural/camping etc.), their geographical orientations (e.g. international), how the work contributes to certain values (e.g. sustainable development), and the kind of experience participants are supposed to have during activities (e.g. guided adventures). Also, social impact, management, type of youth work and 'standards' are taken into account when centres are receiving funding from the state. The centres have to report on quantitative results. So far, there has been no expectation to report on the quality of what the Villa Elba does, but the centre is trying to develop mechanisms to make quality reporting possible. This said, Finland has a very clear educational path for youth workers. Furthermore, the new youth law of 2017 changed the approach to defining youth centre. Youth centres are now supposed to be 'youth work development centres', in other words, developing youth work in the region where they are located, advocating for youth work towards the relevant governmental bodies and even contributing to the further training and education of people who do the work (youth workers).

¹ At the time of writing in Sumer 2017, the law had not yet been adopted.

Antje Rothemund remarked that the definition of youth centre can be a real issue for debate. The Quality Label approach is that a youth centre is a residential training and education centre with a relationship to public authorities, but in the national, regional and local contexts they can and do have many more diverse profiles including youth club style centres and NGO initiatives. Establishing standards across such diversity is very challenging.

Georges Metz, CDEJ representative from Luxembourg spoke about the distinctions made in the Luxembourg legal and administrative context between youth organisation and youth service organisation, and pointed out that while there is no definition of a youth centre, there is a definition for youth services - these are public services provided to young people - and include youth centres. Hence, any public youth centre is considered a public service and are therefore bound by standards for public services. Any voluntary or charitable or social organisation that wants to run a youth centre or any kind of youth work offer, has to apply for accreditation (already since 1998).

Youth and children services are linked in Luxembourg - the definition of the 'age range' covered by these services in the law is 0 - 30 years, covering early childhood through young adulthood. Obviously, with this approach, not all forms of work are offered to all age groups. Until recently, a lot of attention was paid to developing public childcare provision, but not so much attention was paid to the infrastructure and quality of the youth services. A reform project ensured that the youth sector was involved in the discussion about what needed to change in order to further develop the youth dimension in Luxembourg. Since then, there has been acknowledgement for the fact that the quality of youth work is not just about the qualification of the people doing it, but that the actual work being done with young people also needs to be described. This resulted in the definition of seven fields of action to which non-formal education with young people should contribute, including healthy lifestyles, communication/media, civic engagement, etc. Now youth centres in Luxembourg are asked to develop their own concept along with these seven fields and to justify if/why they do or do not work in a particular field. And they have to document and describe their work and the processes they do with youth. The staff of each centre all have to have some form of qualification for their particular tasks, even the 'voluntary staff' and the paid staff have the choice to follow further training for at least 16 hours in any given year.

The National Youth Service in Luxembourg has accredited assessors and controllers who are trained to evaluate and monitor the work of the centres. Public financial resources are withdrawn if the process is not followed. The quality of the process is the most important, because if the process is good then the output/outcome will also be good, but in end effect, the actual outcome is not 'measured'. Probably the most interesting thing about this process is that centres engage with the process voluntarily. As public services, the centres are not obliged to do this, but they are aware that it is important for their work and to set a good example.

Finally, in relation to staff profiles, Luxembourg also has clear definitions. An 'animateur' is a voluntary youth worker and they have their own training process and receive a specific qualification. Youth workers receive social pedagogy degrees through formal higher education institutions. Currently, Luxembourg is exploring whether to develop a vocational training track for youth work.

Antje Rothemund commented that it is most unusual for the process to be considered more important in quality assessment - usually it is the outputs in relation to the resources invested that take precedence in institutional contexts, and based on this financial resources will be made available.

Anastazja Zydor, representing Jugendbildungsstätte Unterfranken in the Federal State of Bavaria in Germany, presented the regional framework within which a voluntary network of

youth education centres has created a self-referential form of certification based on a mutually decided upon standard. To provide context, it was explained that Germany has a lot of different definitions and differentiations between different streams of youth work, because sectors like education and social work are under the responsibility of the individual federal states rather than a central governmental authority. Furthermore, the term 'youth centre' is usually used to refer to open youth work clubs, where young people can go to fill their leisure time constructively and to 'stay off the streets', whereas a 'youth education centre' does activities of a more educational nature. The Jugendbildungsstätte Unterfranken is a youth education centre offering their clients pedagogical support to improve the quality of the activities taking place on the premises. Twelve such centres in Bavaria have formed a voluntary network to ensure the quality in their establishments since 2008. Hygiene, safety and other standards are covered by specific federal and state laws, so this network is primarily concerned with the educational dimension.

The initiative to establish the Network and to develop common standards came from the youth centres themselves in a bottom up movement, even if the Bavarian Youth Council supports it. The Network benefits from a coordination point located in one of the centres, staffed by one person. The members of the Network meet once per year and exchange on the centres' experiences since their last meeting. The Director of each centre and at least one member of the centres' educational staff participate in the Network meeting, during which workshops and training are offered to each other. Furthermore, trainings for all kinds of centre staff - including the technical staff - are offered on a regular basis, by a training institute close to Munich that cooperates with the Network to cater for its specific needs. Despite the focus on educational quality, the Network members are involved in all kinds of developmental projects, including some technical ones. For example, the Network is currently developing a common computer system for bookings, a project that will benefit each and every member. The Network centres have a common corporate presence with a website and a Facebook page, etc.

The quality standard being applied has been developed by the Network itself (with seven categories relating to the content and objective of learning, the experience of the learner and guest being hosted in the centres, pricing and accessibility of the centre, the mutual support offered by members of the network, some operational criteria, and so on) and centres that join and apply the standard receive a certificate issued by the Network, called the JUBIZERT!. The certificate is issued for two years and is subject to renewal, based on a review conducted by two or three Directors of other member centres, rather than by external assessors.

Antje Rothmund remarked that this is a very interesting and useful example of good practice because of its reliance on so-called 'self-paced development'. Basically, a voluntary community consensually commits to mutually agreed upon standards which are then controlled and monitored by members of the same community. Even in the Quality Label project, where the main concerns are less tangible and relate to value education, promotion of democracy and so on, this concept of 'self-paced developed' and the voluntary quality community is very attractive. Indeed, for the future decentralisation of the label process through the national and regional levels in member states, should that be the decision on how to proceed, this is an interesting prospect.

Antje Rothmund posed questions about the possible added value of a 'national' label or quality standard. Would such a development push forward the development of youth work in the member states? For those centres in countries where such a standard already exists, has it helped youth workers/youth centres in their efforts to develop youth work? For those whose countries do not have such a standard, would this be something they see as relevant and needed?

Vladimir Budalić from Ecocenter Radulovački spoke about his experience with the National Association for Youth Workers, which has established criteria for national youth work associations/associations working with young people. This association offers an accreditation process, but it is not exclusive. In other words, any organisation can apply for it and receive the accreditation if it meets the criteria. Furthermore, the accreditation can be done progressively along with three levels. This approach has helped with motivating organisations to improve the quality of their youth work. Today, after some years of operation, the social recognition is very high and an organisation cannot really say it is doing youth work in Serbia if it does not have the accreditation. However, the training and qualification of youth workers is another business altogether and these two processes are still not really related, which is definitely a gap.

Mihai Adrian Vilcea representing the Timiș County Youth Foundation explained that in Romania it is possible to receive training as a 'youth worker' and the profession officially exists. This said, the training is very short (about one week) and once you get this certificate there is nowhere for 'graduates' to work. Furthermore, there is no obligation on youth centres to do more than 'host' activities - many do not have their own programmes and, therefore, also do not have their own staff.

Georges Metz representing Luxembourg in the CDEJ shared the experience of the so-called 'local youth houses'. There are 60 such youth houses in Luxembourg, and they all have their own educational and social work staff. They target young people from 'difficult backgrounds' in local contexts. However, many municipalities were critical of their work and did not see the sense. So, to protect themselves they introduced something like a process of documenting what they do, which is the first step to being able to justify why they exist. This process helped them to gain the support of the Ministry, when the inevitable discussion of their future came around. As a result of this process, they were able to show that they are doing useful work, relevant to the municipalities.

Antje Rothmund asked if labelled Centres can imagine that other centres in their countries would consider them as examples of good practice for international youth work because they have the Council of Europe Quality Label.

Heli Lehto, representing Villa Elba answered that in the Finnish context this is already working well, and that her centre is trying to support others to develop the quality of their international youth work, through their national association of youth centres. This said, every member of the Finnish Network of Youth Centres has some specialisation of their own and brings that specialisation to the table. On the other hand, Antti Korhonen from Youth Center Marttinen pointed out that the recent political decision of the Finnish government for youth centres to become youth work development centres is not necessarily a positive development. Over the years, there were many changes in the name of youth centres but the infrastructure (i.e. the buildings) was always a constant. This transition sees the added value of having physical youth centres being put into question, and it is unclear at this point whether frameworks like the Quality Label will help if push comes to shove in the political decision making around the future of youth centres. So, there is also some uncertainty to be navigated around the trickle down approach in youth work development.

eurÓg Killarney Youth Centre, represented by Tim O'Donoghue and Cormac Lally, commented that in Ireland there are several standards and definitions in practice, but the Department for Children and Youth Affairs is pushing for what they define as a more accountable approach. At the moment, outcomes and money count for more than qualitative assessment. Indeed, youth work in Ireland is facing a similar challenge and dilemma to that experienced by the colleagues in Finland. A lot of things that the youth work community in Ireland believed to be permanent and 'untouchable' have been put into question, and many are quite concerned about how youth work policy is developing. Paradoxically, the Minister

is very supportive right now, but the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has distanced itself from the youth organisations, and there are a lot of new layers of bureaucracy that are very challenging.

Mircho Hristov, representing the Varna European Youth Capital Association, commented that there are many gaps that need to be filled regarding youth related definitions in Bulgaria. The most recent policy conferences have shown that those gaps need to be filled urgently because these are the basis for the development of effective quality standards. In Bulgaria, one centre already has the label, one in process, two that want to begin the process and a fifth centre that aspires. The European Youth Capital in Bulgaria and the EU Presidency are both good opportunities for the Bulgarian youth sector to push forward. What is clear, however, is that the expertise of the Council of Europe will be needed for any such process. The Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work will be an extremely important tool in the process.

CDEJ member for Belgium Flanders, Jan Vanhee, reminded the Platform that it is important to establish the basic needs of centres to guarantee the quality of the educational process. Three things seem to be most important - an educational approach, educational staff and management with some knowledge of education. At the moment it seems that most centres do not really have enough educational staff to do everything they need/want to do. This is also a question for policy makers responsible for decision making around the funding of youth work in youth centres.

Tim O'Donoghue representing eurÓg Killarney Youth Centre referred to the definitional question. Ireland also has 'youth cafes', and a toolkit on the design for a youth cafe has been developed. eurÓg Killarney Youth Centre is in the 3rd category of 'youth cafe', with professional youth workers that can provide integrated youth services based on youth needs. Standards for the delivery of youth work also exist for developmental purposes, but in the end outcome and financial accountability criteria apply when it comes to the funding available for a centre's work. The Quality Label is certainly a good starting point for the process of broadening perspectives on what quality should mean in the context of youth work provision. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether the label means eurÓg Killarney Youth Centre would be accepted as an example of good practice for other youth centres.

Antje Rothemund concluded that there is no one way to approach the question of quality. The Label is only one way. At the same time, diversity in approaches to quality in youth centres around Europe is also the beauty of Europe, and that is why we like it. However, it is clear that quality criteria are very important to any standard. At the very least, centres could play a role in encouraging policy makers to consider criteria accepted by the community of practice.

Evaluation of the platform meeting

The Secretariat received 20 responses to the evaluation form online. 95% of the respondents evaluated that the meeting responded to their expectations to a high degree (65%) or totally (30%). In respect to the achievement of the objectives, they were rated in the following way on a scale from 1=not at all achieved to 5=fully achieved:

Objectives	1	2	3	4	5
To update and familiarize participants with the Quality Label project		1	2	4	13
To update participants with the Council of Europe developments and associate participants with the programme of the institution		1	3	11	5
To exchange on management and educational practices in the youth		2	7	9	2

centres					
To support networking and cooperation among participants		2	5	5	8
To further develop the Quality Label project	1	1	2	12	4

Participants commented that the objectives were covered in the programme of the Platform meeting, however some of the sessions would have required more time to allow for deeper and more substantial discussions. Some of the participants coming from centres that always took part in the Platform meeting found some of the basic information, albeit needed for the beginners, redundant and suggested alternative ways of working with this part. In terms of further developments, it was suggested to pay attention to allow management practices to be also tackled.

In terms of outcomes of the meeting at both personal and institutional level, participants highlighted the following:

- ✓ motivation to apply for the label and answers to the questions related to process and standards;
- ✓ an understanding of the Council of Europe priorities in the youth sector, the work done and some ideas about how the recommendations of the institutions could be implemented at local/national level;
- ✓ new ideas for development of the educational work of the centre;
- ✓ networking and ideas for future cooperation both with the Council of Europe and the other centres in the network;
- ✓ ideas for strategic development of the centre and how to further improve the relationship with policy stakeholders at local and national level;
- ✓ a chance to promote the work done by their centre.

Participants highlighted that it was very important to them to have the time to discuss how the Quality Label Project will develop in the future. Even though the conclusions are not all clear and further decision making and research is needed, it is important for them to brainstorm and contribute to this process. Many of them felt very confident with the plans for follow-up, albeit some would like clearer answers on questions related with the possibility of a second youth centre per country to apply for the Quality Label.

In respect to the host centre, the working conditions and the support of the staff was highly appreciated, albeit improvements of the sleeping quarters were suggested.

Conclusions and follow-up

The 8th European Platform of Youth Centres meeting was very successful and rich in terms of ideas and topics for the future development of the project. It came at a time of change, where the project has matured with nine centres already labelled and several in the process.

The meeting touched upon several critical areas where strategic thinking at both Council of Europe level and at the level of youth centres is required. The new political developments such as the adoption of three Committee of Ministers recommendations in the youth field in the span of three years provide also a huge momentum for the work within this project.

The added value of the project in terms of recognition for youth work done by the centres at national and local level, as well as its focus on quality are becoming a trademark recognised by other funders and stakeholders active in Europe. However, the meeting made clear the fact that even the labelled centres are also in a development process and several aspects will need further attention.

With the respect to the privileged partnership with the Council of Europe, this will have to be further explored in what it could practically mean beyond the support offered to the centres through the Quality Label, as well as the access to the educational programme offered by the institution. The centres have a role to play at national and local level in the implementation and promotion of the Council of Europe work in the youth field (i.e. supporting the implementation of the Committee of Ministers recommendations). However, the work with the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods shows that the pedagogical conceptualisation of the programme of activities of the youth centres does not always match the level of the European Youth Centres. Being embedded in local communities and having a direct relationship with public authorities can offer interesting avenues of cooperation. The function of the training course and of the Platform meeting to further develop the particular aspects of this strategic and privileged partnership will need particular attention in the years to come.

The centres are also bringing their own specificity and specialty, showed by the good practices shared, this work should be further given visibility and the good practices shared amongst other partners of the Youth Department. Significant effort was done by the Secretariat to ensure participation of representatives of the labelled youth centres in the programme of activities of the Youth Department having a double aim: to offer more learning opportunities, but as well to connect the labelled youth centres with other youth networks and stakeholders the Youth Department works with.

Specific training needs emerged and they will be addressed by the Secretariat through the programme for 2018-2019. These include the development of training modules on the overall project for beginners, modules on the technical dimensions of running youth centres, as well as facilitating the running of action days and of study visits.

While networking and exchange of good practices is very much valued by the youth centres in the network, it is clear that these exchanges will not be facilitated by the Secretariat albeit some recommendations in terms of matching and structuring peer support will be taken into account. However, it is not the role of the Council of Europe to facilitate the creation or maintenance of any formal network. This was not the aim of the project and it is not the task of the institution. Labelled centres may decide to pursue this avenue at their own initiative. Indeed, given the critical mass reached it is logical that this question is raised. The Council of Europe can advise and eventually support.

With respect to the future development of the project and the potential ideas of developing national quality standards for youth centres will require some further research and piloting.

While the roundtable brought an interesting debate and reflection over the diversity of youth work, it also made it clear that this will not be an one size fits all approach, as some of the labelled youth centres are in a position to act as hubs in this respect, while others operate in an administrative system that makes it difficult or where such a role is not necessary because already taken up by other institutions.

However, all labelled youth centres should be playing an important role in the promotion and development of quality and recognition of youth work in the countries where they are located. The centres involved in the Quality Label project, whether labelled at this point or not, are all in some way or another in the process of developing innovative practices of youth work in line with the values of the Council of Europe, and are all trying to make sure that they improve their work on an on-going basis in line with the recommendations of the assessors. Other centres, and the wider youth work practice community, could be learning from their experiences.

With respect to the enlargement of the network, the Secretariat will launch in the autumn of 2017 a survey to take stock of the centres who intend to apply for the label regardless of being based in a country where a labelled centre already exists. This will allow the Secretariat to map the demand and propose a way forward that is sensible to the needs and intentions of the youth centres, but as to the capacities of the expert team and the respect of the principle of geographical balance.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Programme

Monday, 26 June 2017

- Arrival and check-in
- 19:00 Dinner
- 20:00 Informal welcome & social evening

Tuesday, 27 June 2017

- 09:00 Opening & welcome
Address by Representative of Destelheide; Gordana Berjan, Executive Director of the European Youth Centre Budapest; George Metz, member of the European Steering Committee on Youth
- 09:30 Presentation of participants and youth centres
Getting to know each other and team building exercise
- 10:15 State of play: progress and developments since the 7th Platform meeting
 - Council of Europe
 - Quality label project
- 10:30 Exchange of information on on-going bi/multilateral projects initiated after last platform meeting
- 10:45 Coffee break
- 11:15 Learning more about the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres
 - working group for centres new in the Quality Label project
 - working group for Quality Labelled centres
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Presentation of the Vormingscentrum Destelheide
 - Presentation in plenary of the centre's activities, programmes, projects and educational approaches
 - Tour and examination of the facility in smaller assessment groups
- 16:30 Coffee break
- 17:00 Plenary session: Reflections and feedback on the Vormingscentrum Destelheide youth work and facility
- 18:00 Closing of the day
- 19:30 Dinner

Wednesday, 28 June 2017

- 09:00 Thematic session on “Reaching out to vulnerable young people”:
presentation of good practices in youth centres
- 'Tailwind', Villa Elba, Kokkola, Finland
 - 'YouthReach', Killarney Youth Centre, Ireland
 - 'Young asylum seekers', Marienthal Youth Centre, Luxembourg
 - 'Molenbeek', Vormingscentrum Destelheide, Belgium
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Council of Europe's instruments and tools for the promotion of social rights of disadvantaged youth:
- Enter! Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and associated support materials;
 - Group exercise on learning about social policies and social rights of young people through human rights education.
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Open space: opportunity to discuss and plan future bi/multilateral cooperation projects among youth centres
- 16:30 Coffee break
- 17:00 Promoting quality standards in youth work: the role of Quality Labelled youth centres
- Round table discussion with: Antje Rothmund, Head of the Youth Department, George Metz, member of CDEJ (Luxembourg), Heli Lehto, Villa Elba (Finland), Mihai Vilcea, Timisoara Youth House (Romania), Anastazja Zydor, Jugendbildungstätte Unterfranken (Germany)
- 18:00 Dinner in Brussels

Thursday, 29 June 2017

- 09:00 Future development of the Quality Label project:
- the role of youth centres in youth policy development;
 - providing peer support and multiplying the work of the youth centres at national and local levels;
 - associating youth centres with Council of Europe's programme of activities and relevant support needed from the Council of Europe Secretariat.
- 11:00 Conclusions, evaluation and closing of meeting
- 12:00 Lunch
- Departure

Appendix 2 List of participants

First name	Surname	Country	Youth Centre
Lies	Jacob	Belgium	Vormingscentrum Destelheide
Eline	Leonard	Belgium	Vormingscentrum Destelheide
Stefaan	Meeussen	Belgium	de Hoge Rielen – ADJ vzw
Vesela	Mareva	Bulgaria	International youth center for children and youth at risk – Stara Zagora
Mariya	Angelova	Bulgaria	Youth Centre Plovdiv
Dimitriya	Todorova-Andonova	Bulgaria	Youth centre Plovdiv
Mircho	Hristov	Bulgaria	Varna European Youth Capital Association
Erim	Comunoglu	Cyprus	Nicosia Turkish Municipality
Heli	Lehto	Finland	Villa Elba
Mitja	Valentinc	ENYC	Mladinski center Krško, Slovenia
Antti	Korhonen	Finland	Nuorisokeskus Marttinen / Youth Centre Marttinen
Anastazja	Zydor	Germany	Jugendbildungsstätte Unterfranken
Klaudia	Ferenc	Hungary	HELPI Youth Development Workshop of Hírös Agóra
András Csaba	Kósa	Hungary	HELPI Youth Development Workshop of Hírös Agóra
Cormac	Lally	Ireland	Killarney European Youth Centre
Tim	O'Donoghue	Ireland	Killarney European Youth Centre
Sandra	Britz	Luxembourg	Marienthal Youth Centre (Jugendcenter Märjendall)
Ana Cristina	Fernandes Tavares Costa Garcia	Portugal	Lisbon Youth Centre - Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth IPDJ, I.P.
Fernanda Maria	Garcia Oliveira Brito	Portugal	Lisbon Youth Centre - Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth IPDJ, I.P
Mihai Adrian	Vilcea	Romania	Timisoara Youth House (FITT – Timis County Youth Foundation)
Alina Valentina	Ignea	Romania	Timisoara Youth House (FITT – Timis County Youth Foundation)
Vladimir	Budalić	Serbia	Eco Center Radulovački (Pokret gorana Vojvodine)
Roland	Bánhegyi	Slovakia	Regional youth centre Kosice
Javier	Berlanga	Spain	Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud - CEULAJ

Tereza	Pozo Duran	Spain	Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud - CEULAJ
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Organisers

First name	Surname	Country	Affiliation
Georges	Metz	Luxembourg	CDEJ representative
Jan	Vanhee	Belgium	CDEJ representative
Yael	Ohana	Germany	Rapporteur, Frankly Speaking
Antje	Rothemund	France	Head of Youth Department, Council of Europe
Gordana	Berjan	Hungary	Executive Director EYCB, Council of Europe
Ruxandra	Pandea	Hungary	Educational Adviser EYCB, Council of Europe
Peter	Zelenka	Hungary	Assistant Quality Label Project EYCB, Council of Europe

Appendix 3 List of presentations and links

1. Introduction to the Youth Department
2. Quality Label project: current state of play
3. Quality Label project: looking into the future.pptx
4. Presentation of Vormingscentrum Destelheide
5. Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods
6. CM/Rec (2017)4 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work

Thematic session in “Reaching out to vulnerable young people”

7. Good practice Villa Elba
8. Good practice Marienthal
9. Good practice eurÓg Killarney
10. Good practice Destelheide

Presentations for the roundtable promoting quality standards in youth work:

11. Timisoara Youth House, Romania
12. Villa Elba, Finland
13. Jugendbildungsstätte Unterfranken, Germany