

STATUTORY FORUM

Youth work: the role of local and regional authorities

Recommendation 450 (2021)¹

1. The Council of Europe (the “CoE”) recognises young people as powerful agents for change and identifies youth work as an important contribution in this field. Compared to formal education and social services, youth work may be a relatively small sector but no less important in view of its impact on young citizens as they engage in a participatory process and are informed about their rights and opportunities.

2. Both indicators of the well-being of a society and major drivers of change, young people need to be acknowledged as fully-fledged citizens who contribute to shaping European societies. Effort must be made to accompany them by the development and implementation of innovative youth policies, as well as new ideas for youth work adaptable to individual needs and to local contexts.

3. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has made a recommendation to member States on youth work ([CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#)) in a seminal political document on the subject, emphasising the positive impact and central role that youth work can play in preventing and addressing social exclusion and in promoting the values of democracy and human rights.

4. In addition, youth work is one of the priorities of the CoE youth sector strategy 2030 ([CM/Resolution\(2020\)2](#)), the specific focus being on strengthening, recognising and promoting youth work policies and practices by embedding youth work in the youth policy framework, in particular through a European youth work agenda and its implementation in close co-operation with the European Union.

5. Along with the aims set by the CoE, and taking inspiration from the work of the CoE youth sector, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (“the Congress”) has long been vocal on the importance of empowering youth and on the urgency to implement youth work as a means to achieve the goal of building more inclusive and democratic societies.

6. Nearly two decades ago, in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life adopted in 2003, the Congress defined youth participation and active citizenship as “the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society”.

7. The Congress is also committed to promoting youth participation within its own institution. To pursue its dialogue with young people and to involve them in its work, it invites one youth delegate per country, between the ages of 18 and 30, from the 47 national delegations to attend each session alongside delegation members and to take part in all discussions and meetings.

8. In line with the above, the Congress encourages member States of the CoE to:

a. implement the Committee of Ministers’ recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#) on youth work in their countries, thereby also supporting youth work at the local level, *inter alia* by translating it into their languages (currently available in 20 languages) and participating actively in the five-yearly reviews of the [CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#), the first of which is to be held in 2022;

¹ Debated and adopted by the Statutory Forum on 12 February 2021 (see Document [CG-FORUM\(2021\)01-02](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Ilsur METSHIN, Russian Federation (L, ILDG) and Thomas ANDERSSON, Sweden (R, ILDG).

b. encourage local and regional authorities to work with NGOs and youth initiatives and to adopt a future-proofing approach, setting up procedures to assess the impact of legislation, policies and concrete action related to youth work, with a view to the well-being of future generations;

c. support local authorities to apply for the CoE quality label for local youth centres.

9. In addition, the Congress reiterates the invitation previously made to member States of the Council of Europe in its resolutions 346(2012) and 386(2015) to include young people in their national delegations to the Congress, both as representative and substitute members, so that the composition of the Congress reflects that of European societies.