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Report on the review of the implementation of Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4) on Youth Work five years after adoption

Agenda point 7.4.1

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Draft decisions

The Joint Council on Youth:

1. took note of the report on the review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 on youth work five years after its adoption and its main conclusions. In particular, it noted that such Recommendation, as the first Europe-wide policy document dealing with youth work as such, has had an important impact as a framework and guideline both in European policy and in some member states, and has contributed significantly to uniting the youth work sector and strengthening cooperation;
2. requested the secretariat to communicate the results of the review process to the Committee of Ministers;
3. agreed that there is a need to continue to support a better implementation of the Recommendation and the development of youth work in Europe, based on the needs of member States in this regard; and that further reflection should take place on how the Council of Europe can further consolidate its role as initiator and stimulus and contribute to strengthening the causality link between the Recommendation, European developments and developments at the level of member states;
4. decided that its working group will remain active and open to any other member of the CMJ, and instructed the working group to explore what follow-up could be given to the review process, also taking into account the results of the recent studies on this topic developed within the framework of the Council of Europe/European Union Youth Partnership;
5. thanked the CMJ drafting group, the European Youth Forum and the consultants for their contribution and support to the drafting process, as well as CDEJ members, national authorities in charge of youth work portfolios and youth organisations for their contribution to the survey and interviews.

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Introduction

The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on Youth Work¹ set new European standards for youth work in 2017. For the first time, an international organisation adopted a recommendation on youth work that referred to youth work as such, rather than youth work as a means to achieve a specific goal (e.g., prevention of radicalisation, prevention of discrimination). The adoption of the Recommendation followed a longer process of development of European youth work, in which the two European Youth Work Conventions in 2010, under the title "celebrating diversity" and in 2015, under the title "finding common ground", contributed significantly. With the Recommendation, these developments were backed politically, geographically covering all of Europe.

Since then, the context in which European youth work is carried out has changed dramatically. The lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the face of youth work all over Europe (RAY Network 2021). In many countries, youth work offers were transferred in the digital sphere, while at the same time, austerity measures led to a decline in youth workspaces. At the end of the pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine brought a new crisis to Europe, which affected youth work as well. In Ukraine itself, but also in other European countries, where refugees, their experiences and traumas need specialised youth work offers. Other developments, like the rapid growth in artificial intelligence and the increasing attention towards green youth work, also changed the face of youth work. Within this changing context, in 2022, five years after the adoption of the Recommendation, the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) started a review process of the implementation of the Recommendation.

Such a review process had already been included in the Recommendation and was further explicated in the Roadmap² accompanying the recommendation. According to the Roadmap,

“Progress in the implementation of this recommendation will be assessed five years after its adoption, in 2023, when the Joint Council on Youth will review:

- *any measures that member states have undertaken and any results*
- *any projects and initiatives carried out by youth organisations*
- *any plans or projects carried out by or with local/regional authorities*
- *the results and outcomes of the ad hoc high-level task force on youth work.”*

The present report summarises the main findings of the review. It does so in five chapters. The first chapter defines the scope and methodology of the review, followed by a second chapter in which the history of the Recommendation as well as its relation with the European Youth Work Agenda is highlighted. The third chapter presents the findings based on the measures taken to implement the Recommendation and focuses on the role, the implementation, and the relevance and importance of the Recommendation. The main lessons learned from the review are discussed in chapter four. Among others, it discusses the roles of actors and institutional memory. Finally, chapter five summarises the main conclusions and presents recommendations on how to continue with the Recommendation and its main aim, strengthening youth work in Europe.

¹ Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on Youth Work, available at <https://rm.coe.int/cmrec-2017-4-and-explanatory-memorandum-youth-work-web/16808ff0d1> (accessed 28 August 2023).

² Recommendation on Youth Work (CM/Rec(2017)4) Roadmap, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-work-roadmap> (accessed 28 August 2023).

1. Scope and methodology

To do justice to the mandate of the review, as set out in the roadmap, the review design focussed on the contribution of different groups of actors to the implementation of the recommendation. These initially included the Council of Europe, its member states, and other actors of the Council of Europe youth sector, which includes youth organisations, youth centres and European organisations and institutions with which the Council of Europe cooperates. A drafting group was appointed at the 46th meeting of the Joint Council on Youth, consisting of two representatives from the CDEJ, up to two representatives from the CCJ, and one representative from the European Youth Forum, supported by two consultants. It was decided upon to “look at how member States have implemented the Recommendation and the work that has been done, including by other stakeholders, to implement the Recommendation” (CMJ(2022)PV46).

The review thus takes a holistic approach, analysing synergies of actions of member states and other actors. Accordingly, the main question of the review is:

How do the 46 member states of the Council of Europe, proportionally followed by other actors of the Council of Europe youth sector, contribute towards the aims and goals of the recommendation?

This question should be, logically, answered following the principle of proportionality, this means according to the responsibilities, capacities, and power for the implementation of the recommendation of the actors. Rather than going into detail, the present report presents the general findings and conclusions following from the actions of the national governments of the member states and their contributions towards the aims and goals of the recommendation. Where data allow it, conclusions on other actors - both in member states and at the European level – will be taken into account. Although the Recommendation is of a practice-oriented nature, the review will examine the contributions to youth work practice and youth work policy.

Based on the Recommendation and the Roadmap of the Recommendation (see CMJ(2017)17rev2), a methodology for review process was proposed by the two research consultants and reviewed by the CMJ working group. The CMJ approved the methodology at its 47th Meeting in October 2022 (see CMJ(2022)PV47). The Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth (short: Youth Partnership) and the secretariat also provided support throughout the process.

As for its methodology, the review process combines various sources of information and is based on dialogue aiming at exchange of experiences and examples of good practices. In view of the different questions, actors and contexts, it made sense to pursue a mixed-method approach, combining desk research with standardised questionnaires and other qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups, observations) methods of data collection. This variety of methods allows the collection and triangulation³ of data from different actors and contexts and consequently the consideration of

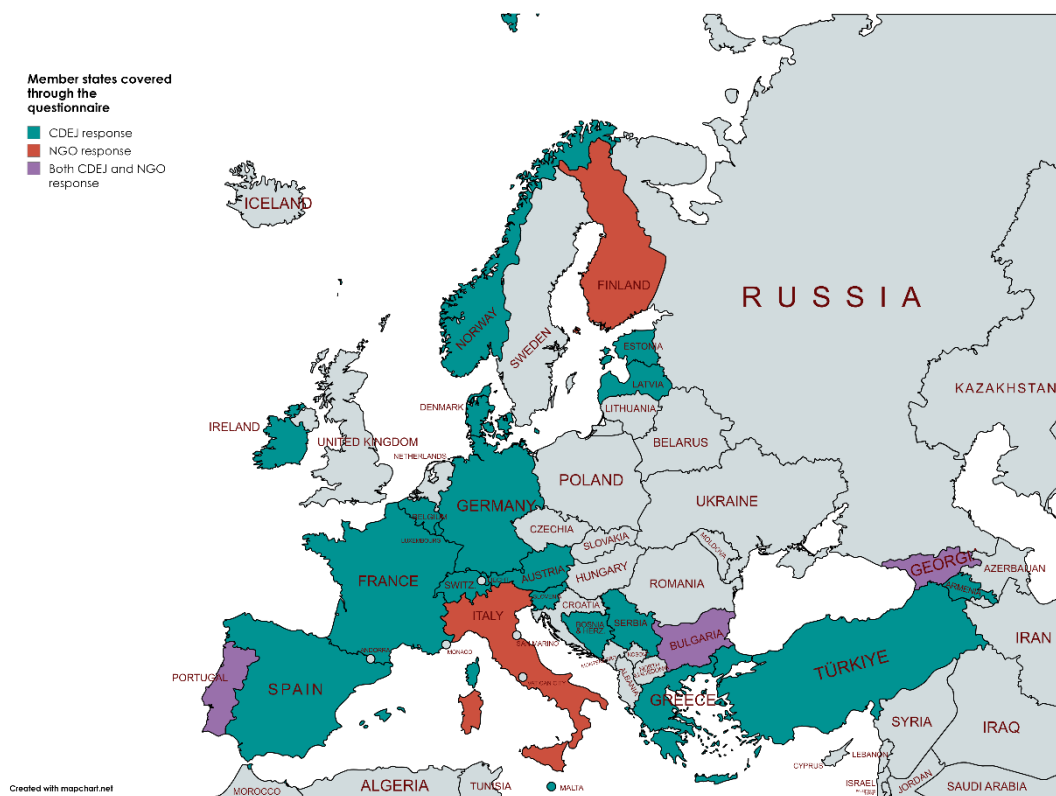
³ “Data triangulation is the process of checking data by comparing results obtained from multiple sources. Researchers may use it to check the accuracy of their findings and to ensure that their results support their hypothesis. Data triangulation is a common technique in qualitative research and usually involves confirmation of the data by those who collected and analysed it.” (See: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/triangulation-in-research> (accessed 31 August 2023)).

different perspectives. This triangulation of data, together with the multiperspectivity, facilitates the comparison of evidence, the reduction of bias and the gaining of a deeper understanding on some specific questions.

Whereas data collection methods like interviews, focus groups, experts group meetings or consultative meetings could show the implementation of the recommendation in an exemplary and in-depth way, standardised questionnaires could show a general (but more superficial) picture. A prerequisite for the latter is, of course, that a certain quota of respondents is reached.

The review process thus consists of four phases: data collection, data analysis, writing and review process. As part of the data collection, desk research of existing documents was carried out (October - November 2022). Its goal was to find out which action member states took to implement the Recommendation, based on existing information and documents. For this purpose, documents were collected that provide information about youth work in the member states of the Council of Europe as well as about European Youth Work (for a list of documents, see [Annex 1](#)). The documents were searched for references to the Recommendation. When it became apparent in the review of the first documents that the Recommendation was not mentioned, the search was broadened to include information on the thematic content of the Recommendation, implemented from 2017 onwards.

Based on the results of the desk research, two questionnaires were sent out, one to the CDEJ members, and one to the members of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and the partner organisations of the Council of Europe (see [Annex 2](#)). The questionnaires were designed with the purpose of finding key data on the implementation of the Recommendation in the member states and by NGOs and Council of Europe partner institutions, following the measures mentioned in the Recommendation. Quantitative rating and qualitative open questions were combined for getting an overview and at the same time a deeper understanding of the implementation process. The questions related to the profile of respondents, to the knowledge and use of the Recommendation and to the role played by other actors should allow the identification of different perspectives and the triangulation of those (see [Annex 2](#)). The questionnaires run from December 2022 to February 2023. Unfortunately, the turnout of the questionnaires - although comparable to that of other similar exercises - was low. 22 members of the CDEJ completed the questionnaire, and 19 persons completed the questionnaire for non-governmental organisations and Council of Europe partner organisations – 10 from the European level and the rest from national, regional and local organisations. Taken together, 24 of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe are covered, of which two member states have answers from both the CDEJ member and at least one NGO/Council of Europe partner organisation. Furthermore, nine responses covered the perspective of European non-governmental organisations.



After these first rounds of data collection, an interim report was presented at the 48th Meeting of the CMJ (see CDEJ(2023)5). At this meeting, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) held a “Tour de Table”, at which the member states representatives answered and discussed the following question:

*Did you work with or consider the Recommendation in your work? If yes, why and how?
If not, why not?*

At the Tour de Table, a variety of measures contributing to the development of youth work in the member states were presented. However, the responses of the member states showed that many measures cannot be directly attributed to the Recommendation, but present youth work developments in general. In order to better understand the impact of the Recommendation, a review seminar was organised in Strasbourg on 3-4 April 2023 with twenty representatives from Member States, European youth organisations and national non-governmental organisations. The aim of the seminar was to gain deeper insights into the impact and relevance of the Recommendation for the individual stakeholder groups.

Based on the results of the review seminar, in-depth interviews were conducted with various people in May 2023 (see [Annex 3](#)). One person from the Council of Europe, ten people from the CDEJ and two people from European youth organisations were interviewed. Questions related to the history of the Recommendation, its relevance, importance and impact, as well as the roles of and different uses by different actors of the Recommendation. The results of the data collection were continuously analysed and presented at various meetings and conferences and discussed with the drafting group. The results of the research are to be reviewed in the CMJ and recommendations are to be made to strengthen the impact of the Recommendation.

2. History of the Recommendation

If one tries to trace the origins of the Recommendation, one inevitably ends up at the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, which was organised during the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 27-30 April 2015. In her final speech, Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director-general of Democracy at the Council of Europe, announced that the discussions at the Convention would be brought into a policy document by the Council of Europe. This announcement is considered to be the birth of the Recommendation, although it ignores the fact that the role of youth work in the Council of Europe's programmes and strategies had already been discussed within the Council of Europe.

As a horizontal dimension, youth work has long played a role in the Council of Europe's programmes and strategies. The Agenda 2020, for example, writes about youth work with young refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons as a means to contribute to the priority "living together in diverse societies", and the promotion and recognition of non-formal education and learning as a means to contribute to "ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life". Youth work is a method through which the priorities of the Agenda can be implemented. In this sense, the horizontal dimension of youth work in the Council of Europe's programmes and strategies is the use of youth work to achieve policy goals, a means to the aim.

Moreover, the Council of Europe has always played a role in the quality development of youth work, recognition and education and training. These include the youth work portfolio, a self-assessment tool for youth workers, and a variety of activities in the European Youth Centres, in the Quality Label centres and of projects supported by the European Youth Foundation. First discussions to strengthen this vertical dimension of youth work in the Council of Europe's programmes and strategies took place in the run-up to the Convention. The aim was to support youth work as such, rather than developing it as a means to the aim. The convention was the place where first ideas were exchanged between actors from policy, practice and research, and which were to be recorded politically. A fact sheet on the 2nd European Youth Work Convention states:

“At political level, the outcome of the 2nd EYW Convention should be used to feed a legal instrument on the value and significance of youth work in Europe, to be discussed by the Joint Council on Youth as the statutory body of the youth sector of the Council of Europe and to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers.”⁴

To prepare the Recommendation, a consultative meeting on youth work was organised in autumn 2015. It brought together a number of actors from the field, getting together to get a kind of overview, which actors are active in the youth work field, what they do etc. The aim of the consultative meeting was not only to create an informal mapping of the European youth work sector, but to find a common agreement on what the aim and task of the policy document should be. In this sense, the meeting helped to create a common atmosphere among stakeholders that could discuss the question of what the Council of Europe could contribute to further develop youth work as such. The results of the consultative meeting (see report in document CMJ(2016)7) were an important starting point for the drafting group, known as the “ad hoc high-level task force on youth work”. The task of the high-level

⁴ Fact Sheet “2nd European Youth Work Convention Brussels, 27-30 April 2015”, Available at http://eplusifjusag.hu/ckeditor/uploads/files/fact%20sheet_FINAL.pdf (accessed 15 August 2023).

task force, which covered the variety of stakeholders active in youth work in Europe and on the European level, was to prepare the Recommendation and to regularly consult the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ).

One of the most difficult tasks this group had to tackle was the question of terminology, which consisted of three different layers. First, there was the terminology of youth work itself. Whereas some countries had a very differentiated and specific terminology on youth work, in other countries youth work as a terminology was often confused with young people at work, and some countries do not even have a word for what would be described as youth work. Second, there was a discussion concerning borders between youth work and non-formal education and lifelong learning. With a focus on young people, it became clear that not all non-formal education is youth work and the other way around. The third discussion evolved around the role of youth organisations. While not all youth organisations are doing youth work (for example political youth organisations, who often work on youth activism rather than youth work), at the same time there was a certain fear that too much emphasis would be laid on paid youth work, neglecting voluntary youth work often organised by youth organisations. The agreed terminology on the latter was “paid youth workers and volunteers”, rather than the term “youth workers and youth leaders”, which was used in the Council of Europe before.

With its adoption 31 May 2017, the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work was “so far the only internationally adopted policy document with the sole aim to strengthen and support youth work practice and make it an integral part of youth policy” (CMJ-YWTF(2019)PV4). A roadmap for implementation and dissemination of the Recommendation was adopted, which listed the tasks ahead of member states, youth organisations and the Council of Europe Youth Department (CMJ(2017)17rev2):

Dissemination and implementation: roadmap 2018-2021

1. Member States

- 1.1 Translate and disseminate (in accessible formats) the text of the Recommendation to relevant authorities and stakeholders;
- 1.2 In coordination with other sectors and related policies, prepare strategies, frameworks, legislation, sustainable structures and resources that promote equal access to youth work for all young people;
- 1.3 Establish a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers that takes into account existing practice, new trends and arenas, as well as the diversity of youth work;
- 1.4 Foster national and European research on the different forms of youth work and their value, impact and merit;
- 1.5 Promote the sharing of practices and exchange of experiences among partners and stakeholders at both national and European levels;
- 1.6 Support the development of appropriate forms of review and evaluation of youth work.

2. Youth organisations

- 2.1 Support the dissemination of this Recommendation among youth workers;
- 2.2 Advocate the establishment or further development of quality youth work within local, regional, national or international youth policies;
- 2.3 Actively engage in any planned measures for the implementation of this Recommendation;
- 2.4 Implement capacity-building and awareness-raising activities with youth workers in order to further support the exchange of youth work practices, peer learning and the creation of sustainable networks and partnerships, for example through study sessions in the European Youth Centres and activities supported by the European Youth Foundation;

2.5 Promote the sharing of practices and exchange of experiences among partners and stakeholders at both national and European levels.

3. *Council of Europe (Youth Department)*

- 3.1 Set up an ad hoc high-level task force of the relevant stakeholders in youth work in Europe, which can elaborate a mid-term strategy for the knowledge-based development of European youth work (two meetings in 2018, two meetings in 2019);
- 3.2 Support the development and recognition of quality youth work and non-formal education and learning in the programme of the European Youth Centres and through activities funded by the European Youth Foundation;
- 3.3 Promote the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres as an example of good practice;
- 3.4 Disseminate further the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio in member States;
- 3.5 Include the Recommendation and its principles in other relevant areas of its work (youth policy development and advice, assistance measures to member States) where relevant;
- 3.6 Ensure inter-institutional co-operation in the promotion of this Recommendation.

Many of these tasks have been tackled, the most visible being the translations of the Recommendation into different national languages and the establishment of another high-level task force with the mandate to “elaborate a mid-term strategy for the knowledge-based development of European youth work (CMJ(2017)PV37).

During this period, the Council of Europe was going through an internal financial crisis. Following the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2015 due to its de facto annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea, the Russian Federation stopped paying their membership fee to the Council of Europe in 2017. The then Secretary-General, Thorbjørn Jagland, reacted to this financial crisis by developing an internal savings plan (“contingency plan”) which at its presentation in 2019 called for the abolition of the Council of Europe youth sector: “end the financing of the Organisation’s youth sector activities from the Ordinary Budget as of 1 January 2021 and to set up a new enlarged partial agreement on Youth”⁵. Thus, in the two pre-pandemic years, while continuing its work, the Youth Department had to advocate for the continuity of the youth sector in the Council of Europe. At the same time, the successor of the Agenda 2020 youth strategy of the Council of Europe had to be written. With these issues in focus, less work capacities were left for the dissemination and implementation of the Recommendation. After the crisis was solved by the Russian Federation coming back to the Council of Europe in 2019 and paying its debts, work to support the implementation of the Recommendation could take up pace.

Still, the Recommendation influenced the internal discussion of the Council of Europe, and especially the drafting of the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030, which was launched in 2020. Due to the Recommendation, youth work became one of four priorities in the youth sector strategy, thus enabling the Council of Europe to budget measures on youth work and develop programs and activities in this field.

One of these activities, which should be given special attention, was the work of the Council of Europe Youth Department during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Europe went into lockdown and face-to-face trainings and activities were impossible, the Council of Europe set up a website dedicated to good examples of activities with young people, all being presented as examples of youth work practice. The

⁵ Infosheet of the Advisory Council on Youth (2019), available at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dDH76EaQ-INNuWEpzqDcR2CE6QHizZEjkyfjQbfr0Uc/edit?fbclid=IwAR10H79kUTX3VnUv1_VQbfAuuajlTJClp3ZBLXHocweHXBAGMvyDkNdekHO (accessed 26 August 2023).

Council of Europe Quality Label youth centres played a particular role during this time, as they not only (partially) remained open during the lockdown, but also in some countries became the face of youth work activities where youth organisations had to struggle for their existence. After the pandemic, the Council of Europe is now building up a second website, which features examples of good practice, this time dedicated to youth work activities during wartime. In this sense, at the European level, the Recommendation has become a kind of stimulus to make more visible what is happening on the ground, and especially during exceptional situations.

Interestingly, in its recommendations towards the Joint Council on Youth and with the 3rd European Youth Work Convention ahead, the high-level task force recommended the establishment of a “European Centre for Youth Work Development” which could coordinate the delivery of the objectives of the coming European Youth Work Agenda. Such a centre should complement the work of the existing Youth Partnership and further the cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. However, this recommendation was not implemented because the parties could not agree on a new structure of cooperation. Instead, the existing Youth Partnership was equipped with an extra position for youth work. Both in the review seminar and in the interviews, this was seen as a missed opportunity to support youth work comprehensively and to take it further. A single position in the Youth Partnership cannot deal with this wide-ranging task in its entirety.

2.1. The Recommendation and the European Youth Work Agenda

On a timeline, the Recommendation is based between the 2nd European Youth Work Convention and its call for political standards, and the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, where the European Youth Work Agenda was established. The further development of youth work in Europe through a European Youth Work Agenda, which need was first expressed at the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, was politically supported by both European institutions, the Council of Europe and the European Union, in their respective strategies (EU: EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027; Council of Europe: Youth Sector Strategy 2030). In this regard, both institutions also declared their intention to work in close cooperation on the implementation of this agenda. As the German Chairmanship at the Council of Europe and its Presidency at the European Union overlapped in 2021, this was an ideal moment to cement the cooperation between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on youth work by launching the European Youth Work Agenda.

The cooperation between the European Union, where at that time a Council Resolution on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda was being prepared, and the Council of Europe is reflected in the fact that many members of the high-level task force were invited to join the steering group set up to prepare the 3rd European Youth Work Convention. People involved in the preparations for the 3rd European Youth Work Convention report that the Recommendation played an important role in the discussions around the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, guiding both to the Final Declaration and the Resolution of the Council of the European Union. The Final Declaration, to that extent, is largely based on the Council of Europe Recommendation on youth work and its explanatory memorandum.

Research on the European developments after the 3rd European Youth Work Convention revealed that the number of different documents on youth work in Europe – the Council of Europe

Recommendation, the EU Council Resolution, and the Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention – has created ambiguity about what the European Youth Work Agenda is. While the EU and actors close to the EU associate it with the EU Council Resolution, actors close to the Council of Europe consider the Agenda as a process that started with the 2nd European Youth Work Convention and in which the Recommendation, as well as the Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, are important steps⁶.

However, in the process of implementing the European Youth Work Agenda, the interviewees also observed a decline in the importance of the political documents that are behind the process. They were referred to as historical documents, capturing the momentum of a certain moment and context. After the momentum passed by, the documents are historical in the sense that they are still relevant, but of less importance. With new momentums appearing, new mechanisms and documents are installed.

2.2. Wrapping up

Looking at the history of how the Recommendation came about, its significance for the development of youth work in Europe can be summarised to four points. First, a main contribution of the Recommendation has been the fact that it was the first political document for the whole of Europe – European Union countries and non-EU countries - dedicated to youth work as a stand-alone field of action, rather than a means for other fields of action.

Second, the process leading up to the Recommendation, including the consultative meeting and the various discussions on terminology, has strengthened the common ground and the common view on challenges and opportunities of youth work within the youth work sector of the Council of Europe.

Thirdly, the Recommendation as a document and thus as a guide to action has had a considerable influence on other policy documents, not least the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 and the European Youth Work Agenda.

Fourth, with the Recommendation the now called the youth work community of practice⁷ got official recognition at the political level. In general, within the Council of Europe, a tendency of recognition, visibility and awareness of youth work – also by other departments – can be noted. An example of this was the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik in May 2023, where the Heads of States and Governments, together to discuss the future of the Council of Europe, were shown a video of how the Council of Europe supports youth work in the Ukraine.

⁶ Atanasov, Dragan/Hofmann-van de Poll, Frederike (2023): Preliminary results of the study "Mapping European youth work ecosystems". Discussion paper prepared for the Symposium "Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe", 31 May to 1 June, Budapest, Hungary. Youth Partnership: Strasbourg. Available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/195343642/Discussion+paper+Mapping+European+youth+work+ecosystems.pdf/95086fb8-52e9-c422-6dfe-d262714d3e7a?t=1685462414892> (accessed 31 August 2023).

⁷ "The term 'community of practice' is to be understood as the summation of all interested stakeholders across the youth work field, be they volunteer or paid staff, practitioners, researchers, public authorities or policymakers" (CMJ-YWTF(2019)PV4).

3. Measures towards the implementation of the Recommendation

Looking at the findings resulting from the measures presented in the various phases of data collection as a contribution to the Recommendation, these findings can be assigned to three areas: the role of the Recommendation (section 3.1.), the implementation of the Recommendation (section 3.2.), and its relevance and importance (section 3.3.).

3.1. Role of the Recommendation

First, the analysis of the documentation ([see Annex 1](#)) shows that the Recommendation is hardly mentioned in any of the documents that have a non-political nature. This finding is supported by the observations made at the Visible Values Seminar, organised by the Youth Partnership 15-16 November 2022, which gave the impression that the Recommendation is not present in the regions South-eastern Europe and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Discussions and references were made to the development of European and regional youth work in general, rather than being referred to the Recommendation. The European Youth Work Agenda as a framework for youth work policy development likewise played only a minor role in the discussions.

The reasons for this absence of explicit references to the Recommendation are multiple. A considerable amount of the analysed documents is part or linked to the Youth Wiki, which is based on a questionnaire of the European Union. The political framework in which these chapters are written has correspondingly little room for the recommendation of another international organisation, namely that of the Council of Europe. However, this would not explain why the EKCYC Country Sheets hardly contain any reference to the Recommendation either. Another reason, as explored in the previous section, is that the 2017 Recommendation is partly overshadowed by subsequent developments in European youth work policy, in particular the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, the development of the European Youth Work Agenda and its implementation.

Second, the analysis of the political documents specifically shows that the Recommendation serves as a framework and reference for other European documents, like the Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention and EU Council conclusions, recommendations, and resolutions on youth work related topics. A prominent example is the EU Council Resolution on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01), where the youth work definition is cited from the Council of Europe Recommendation. This could support the thesis that later developments in European youth work policy overshadow the Recommendation, or that the Recommendation fathered further developments.

Following these two findings, the review took the approach of identifying activities that since the approval of the Recommendation are aligned with it, rather than being direct consequences of the Recommendation.

The analysis of the activities aligned with the Recommendation point towards a difference between what could be described as countries with established national youth work systems, and countries with emerging national youth work systems. Not surprisingly, activities and initiatives regarding youth work development in emerging national youth work systems focus on the establishment of political frameworks and laws as well as on youth work capacity building. Both kinds of national youth work

systems focus on quality youth work, like the establishment of youth work ethical standards and the quality of youth workers education. Both systems also focus on the recognition of youth work. However, where established, national youth work systems focus on its recognition by other sectors and actors as a field of support and action, emerging national youth work systems focus more on the recognition of youth work and youth workers as a profession.

These findings, in terms of diversity in the implementation, were already mentioned in the final report of the high-level task force in 2019: “the first two years after its adoption also reveal that the realities in member states are more diverse than expected. It is therefore acknowledged that the implementation of the Recommendation has already been and will continue to be a work in progress for years to come, if the aspirations of the Recommendation are to be fulfilled and some level of youth work ‘parity’ is to be achieved across the member states” (CMJ-YWTF(2019)PV4).

The role played by the Recommendation was probably less decisive in countries with long and proud youth work traditions. But in countries that have either no tradition or are short of tradition that publicly describes youth work, there is a need for support. The youth policy assistance missions of the Council of Europe, for example, are offering such support. Since the Recommendation, the Council of Europe receives more requests and invitations for contributing to the development of youth work. Those were not so frequent before. Some examples are assistance on how to include youth work in a national youth strategy, requests on education and training of youth workers, how to set up youth centres and how to develop quality criteria for youth centres. Furthermore, there is a visible development, where countries with established national youth work systems, like Belgium, Malta or Finland, share their experiences with other countries, for example through study visits, supporting them in the development of their youth work structures.

Examining the mentioned activities and measures in the entirety of the member states in the area of youth work since the Recommendation, they can be clustered in three thematic areas. By far the most activities and measures mentioned in the documents can be attributed to the area of "ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work". Many contributions in this area concern the establishment or further development of youth policy and youth work policy acts. They may be more general on youth policy, with youth work being a part of it, like the Child and Youth Empowerment Act in Germany⁸, the National Youth Policy “Towards 2023” in Malta⁹ and the First National Plan for Youth in Portugal¹⁰. Some are also more specific on youth work, like the Scottish National Youth Work Strategy¹¹. At the European level, the regular reports of ERYICA and Eurodesk are examples of how partner organisations to the Council of Europe contribute to strengthening youth work.

A second area is that of research and evaluation on continuous follow-up and quality of youth work. Examples are the Impact box youth work¹² in Austria, which contains a comprehensive collection of empirically proven and documented impacts of out of school youth work and OLINA, the youth work

⁸ <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/gesetze/neues-kinder-und-jugendstaerkungsgesetz-162860> (accessed 31 August 2023).

⁹ <https://flightml5.com/rqmms/wbuk> (accessed 14 September 2023).

¹⁰ <https://dre.pt/application/file/a/116321812> (accessed 31 August 2023).

¹¹ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/policy-research/policy/national-youth-work-strategy/> (accessed 31 August 2023).

¹² <https://jugendarbeitinoesterreich.at/wirkungsbox/> (accessed 31 August 2023).

quality self-assessment tools for youth NGOs and youth centres in the Czech Republic¹³. At European level, the European Youth Information Quality Label of ERYICA¹⁴ is a contribution to this Recommendation.

The third area is that of competences, both the recognition of competences acquired in youth work as well as the establishment of competency-based education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers, which is very much aligned to the discussion on what quality youth work should look like. The findings of the desk research show that in many countries, quality youth work is debated and quality standards as well as particular training courses for paid and volunteer youth workers are developed. In Slovakia, for example, a working group on quality standards in youth work was set up¹⁵, whereas in Croatia a youth studies programme has been implemented¹⁶.

The "Tour de Table", part of the 70th CDEJ meeting (Strasbourg, 13 March 2023), allowed the collection of additional information on the implementation of the Recommendation. It confirmed that for the EU countries that implementation process was merged or integrated in the process of the European Youth Work Agenda.

For example, as reported by the German representative, the Recommendation was one of the main elements to start the preparations towards the European Youth Work Convention in 2020, the Recommendation and its implementation being a guiding document for their activities during their EU Presidency (July - December 2020) and their Council of Europe Chairmanship (November 2020 - May 2021). When it comes to describing youth work, it was the ambition of the EU German presidency in 2020 to have exactly the same description in the EU Council Resolution on the establishment of a framework for the European Youth Work Agenda as the Council of Europe member states agreed on in the Recommendation.

Another example is from Georgia, where the government recently established a new youth strategy. The new youth strategy was based on the international documents, including the Recommendation. In addition, inspired by the Recommendation, Ukraine is doing its best during the war to develop consultations with civil society and implement a national programme of youth workers.

The most relevant thematic areas that were mentioned by the government representatives as part of the implementation process, were the development of policy frameworks, the recognition of youth work and the improvement and enlargement of education and training of youth workers, defining standards, skills, and competences for it.

A good example of this kind of development is the national framework of standards for youth workers of Greece, constituted as a set of complementary actions that include the knowledge and skills charter of youth workers, the shaping a national training framework, the development of a model guide for

¹³ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/czech-republic/104-quality-and-innovation-in-youth-work> (accessed 31 August 2023).

¹⁴ <https://www.eryica.org/quality-label> (accessed 31 August 2023).

¹⁵ <https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/sk/platforma/novinky/231-standardy-kvality-v-praci-s-mladezou-na-pripomienkovanie> (accessed 31 August 2023).

¹⁶ <https://www.idi.hr/en/cooperation-and-conferences/participation-in-teaching/youth-in-contemporary-society/about-the-programme> (accessed 31 August 2023).

the training of youth workers, the drafting of educational material, the definition of the certification process and the national register of youth workers.

The Recommendation helped youth workers, especially in countries with no legal framework or no established youth work systems, to explain what youth work is about, especially towards ministries and decision-makers. It was used as an advocacy tool to point out the relevance of youth work, both to youth decision-makers and to decision-makers in other fields. In North-Macedonia and Serbia it was also used to establish legal frameworks for youth work. After the ministerial youth department in 2019 was closed in the Czech Republic, the Recommendation was used for lobbying and as a guidance for establishing a youth work agenda of the re-opened youth department in 2023. With the help of the Recommendation, weaknesses were identified, and new sustainable funding programmes were set up to better respond to new needs and new societal changes for young people in society. A final example is Italy, where the ministry drafted a law which includes the recognition of youth work and is planned to be approved soon.

A transversal achievement of the Recommendation, as was pointed out in the review seminar and stipulated by several people in the interviews, was that it helped to bring like-minded people and organisations together to cooperate. For example, a clear result of the implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation on youth work in Romania is the organisation, on yearly basis, of the National Youth Workers Convention since 2021. Based on the European vision of developing and improving the quality of youth work in the member states, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, the Erasmus+ National Agency and the non-governmental youth sector have created the framework to connect youth work professionals at national level, provide a space to work and share good practice and relevant resources, address challenges facing youth work and, last but not least, to identify and put forward the basis for the next steps of working together and supporting each other.

This development in the cooperation between the different youth work actors is seen both within countries, for example in Serbia, Spain or Romania, but also between organisations of different countries. In this sense, the Recommendation has led to better coordination between (non-governmental) organisations, for example as networks are developed on quality assurance and youth worker education and training. However, the developments around the European Youth Work Agenda show that at the European level, by now there is some confusion - or at least a lack of overview - on which actors are working on which topics, thus hindering cooperation and coordination¹⁷.

3.2. Implementation of the Recommendation

The analysis of the responses to the questionnaires on the implementation of the Recommendation shows at first that almost exclusively, the NGOs and partner organisations involved in the Council of Europe structures responded to the questionnaire. As for the implementation of the

¹⁷ Atanasov, Dragan/Hofmann-van de Poll, Frederike (2023): Preliminary results of the study "Mapping European youth work ecosystems". Discussion paper prepared for the Symposium "Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe", 31 May to 1 June, Budapest, Hungary. Youth Partnership: Strasbourg. Available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/195343642/Discussion+paper+Mapping+European+youth+work+ecosystems.pdf/95086fb8-52e9-c422-6dfe-d262714d3e7a?t=1685462414892> (accessed 31 August 2023).

Recommendation, they are in general reasonably satisfied, but a bit more critical with the implementation of the Recommendation and the different measures than the CDEJ representatives. This general tendency should be taken with many precautions because a country's triangulation of different actors is not possible. The qualitative responses on activities and concrete actions are very limited and in quite some cases rather general.

The responses of the CDEJ members show a reasonable level of satisfaction with the implementation of the Recommendation, except for two member states. In general, the responses by the NGOs and partner organisations are slightly more critical but since the ones and the others do not refer to the same context/country, no relevant conclusion can be drawn from that difference.

The answers of the CDEJ members are detailed and offer a compressive overview of the initiatives taken in line with the Recommendation, although its specific role and contribution, as was already concluded in the desk review, remains unclear. The Recommendation seems to have served as a framework for the development of youth work.

“European documentation is always important. On several occasions, agreements and treaties suppose a basis for future national plans. For example, most of the topics of the Recommendation appear in the Spanish 2030 Youth Strategy, which is a huge progress to the future. But it affects not only in a documentary sense. The Recommendation gives ideas related to informal learning, youth worker profiles or good practices. These proposals are being discussed by the regional governments, who have the competences in youth. The Council of Europe text also brings an opportunity to enhance the network between the national and the regional level through meetings and events. Youth work in Spain depends on the functioning of this system.”

The analysis of the quantitative variations and of the qualitative answers of the CDEJ members shows that, for each member state, there is a considerable difference in the level of implementation of the different fields of action. This considerable difference is as well recognisable in the answers of NGOs and partners and could be due, as suggested in the desk review, to the different level of development of youth work in different countries and subsequently their different focuses. A less generous explanation would be the selective implementation of the Recommendation, an implementation “a la carte” without embracing and engaging with it as a whole.

The analysis of the responses of the CDEJ members, by the different fields of action and across countries, shows that the perceived biggest progress in the implementation of the Recommendation is in respecting the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations doing youth work. The smallest progress, but still satisfactory according to the responses, took place in relation to cross-sectoral cooperation. The other fields of action were very similar and quite developed as a result of the Recommendation.

In relation to the development of youth work, it was doubted in the interviews whether the Recommendation played a crucial role. After all, it was suggested that youth work just develops through doing, without needing formalised commitments in political documents to do so. As an example of this, the case of Luxembourg could be mentioned, where the Recommendation was not explicitly promoted. However, its content was promoted “naturally working in its direction”. The collaboration between research, practice and policy is a key element in the orientation, definition and implementation of youth policy and especially youth work in Luxembourg. This approach is anchored

in the youth law and served as a basis for the drafting of the recent national youth action plan 2022-2025.

Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that the Recommendation is supportive as a political backup at the national level, to bring youth work on the political agenda. Moreover, without the Recommendation, youth work would have hardly been so high on the agenda of either the Council of Europe or the European Union, as is mirrored in their respective youth (sector) strategies¹⁸.

3.3. Relevance and importance of the Recommendation

The Review Seminar on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 on Youth Work (at the EYC Strasbourg, 3 - 4 April 2023) allowed the direct exchange on the implementation process and a deeper understanding of the national realities in relation to it. Participants, both governmental and NGOs representatives, considered and declared to have used the Recommendation and its review as a window of opportunity for the further development of youth work.

The detailed and first-hand information showed that the implementation of the Recommendation at national level was a combination of causal and casual initiatives and activities. In other words, the activities contributing to the implementation were in some cases planned and targeted to do so and in some other cases rooted in other agendas and priorities but in line and supporting its fulfilment.

Another distinction which came to the surface in the analysis of the findings of the research seminar was the difference between “punctual contributions” (e.g., information or awareness raising activities on youth work) and structural developments (e.g., long-term strategies for the quality development of youth work, legal frameworks, recognition of youth work). It was discussed that punctual contributions towards the Recommendation could not have a long-term effect on the development of youth work without structural developments.

Finally, the review seminar participants, on the “role” of the Recommendation, made the distinction between the relevance of its contents and its importance in a certain moment and context. The contents of the Recommendation were unanimously considered, six years later and despite the changing circumstances, as very relevant in their contexts and realities. The participants concluded that the Recommendation is very valuable in terms of contents and ideas, and still today an inspiring framework. Looking at it with today's eyes, participants just missed a stronger focus on digital youth work.

As for its importance in a certain moment and national context, the picture as already analysed varies very much. The changing circumstances¹⁹, as well as the existence or non-existence of a consolidated

¹⁸ Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030. Engaging young people with the Council of Europe's values. Available at www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-strategy-2030 (accessed 26 July 2023).

Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting Within the Council on a Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field: the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027. 2018/C 456/01. Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:TOC> (accessed 26 July 2023).

¹⁹ For example the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, the Russian war of aggression in the Ukraine, the acceleration of the climate crisis and the synergies and overlaps with the European Youth Work Agenda.

youth work system at national level, fomented a very heterogeneous picture in terms of having been of a key importance or not in the developments of youth work at national level.

The interviews showed that the Recommendation and the process leading towards it, with the consultative meeting and roadmap, helped to map out and bring together a field that until the adoption of the Recommendation then was quite scattered. The idea of the Recommendation represents “something we can all hold onto and something we want to do together, something that we are, something we are committed to”.

3.4. Wrapping up

The results of the review on the measures regarding the implementation of the Recommendation can be summarised towards three levels - general, the European and the national level.

First, there is the role of the Recommendation in general. Here, it is pertinent to distinguish between the relevance of its contents and its importance in a certain moment and context. The contents of the Recommendation were unanimously considered as very relevant in the different contexts and realities. As for its importance in a certain moment and national contexts, the picture varies very much. The changing circumstances and having or not a consolidated youth work system at national level fomented a very heterogeneous picture.

Nevertheless, a considerable contribution of Recommendation is that the Recommendation and the process leading towards it helped to map out and bring together a field that, until the adoption of the Recommendation, then was quite scattered. A transversal achievement of the Recommendation was bringing like-minded people and organisations together to cooperate.

Secondly, if one takes a look at the European and national level, despite the lack of mentions to it in the documents of a non-political nature, the Recommendation serves as a framework and reference for other European youth work related documents.

Third, at the national level, the activities aligned with the Recommendation allow the identification of three thematic areas, being "ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work", research and evaluation on continuous follow-up and quality of youth work, and competences. Competences refers both to the recognition of competences acquired in youth work as well as to the establishment of competency-based education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers, which is very much aligned to the discussion on quality youth work.

However, at the same time a thematic difference between the countries with emerging national youth work systems and countries with established national youth work systems can be observed. Emerging systems focus with their activities and initiatives on the establishment of political frameworks and laws as well as on youth work capacity building. Whereas both systems also focus on the recognition of youth work, there are differences in their approach. Established national youth work systems focus on its recognition by other sectors and actors as a field of support and action and emerging national youth work systems focus more on the recognition of youth work and youth workers as a profession.

In general, the findings show a considerable difference in the level of implementation of the different thematic fields of action. Member states perceived the biggest progress regarding the implementation of the Recommendation in respecting the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations doing youth work. The smallest progress took place in relation to cross-sectoral cooperation.

Linked to the above, however, the difference - and the impact - of punctual and structural contributions needs to be taken into account. The implementation of the Recommendation at national level was a combination of causal and casual initiatives and activities, urging a discussion to which extent punctual contributions can have a lasting impact without structural developments.

4. Lessons learned

The situation of youth work in Europe makes it difficult to draw a general picture of youth work in Europe and the influence of Recommendation. The review process has drawn a differentiated picture consisting of different states of implementation, different perspectives on youth work and the role of Recommendation and different understandings of youth work. Nevertheless, before turning to the final conclusions in chapter 5, an attempt will be made to present some "lessons learned".

A first lesson learned from the review is that the review process itself helped governments to reflect on what is happening on youth work in their country, rather than how the Recommendation has been implemented. This became apparent at the survey, where many of the examples of measures and activities were related to youth work, but no link was made to the Recommendation. This view was reinforced during the CDEJ Tour de Table, where many of the reported developments related to youth work in general, rather than the implementation of the Recommendation. However, at the review seminar there were some critical remarks to which extent the reporting on youth work developments at the CDEJ would really lead to a reflection on how to further develop youth work and strengthen youth work in some countries.

Despite these critical remarks, the findings of the review process point towards a second lesson learned, namely that in many cases, the Recommendation served as a framework for the shaping of national youth and youth work policies. In some cases, this relationship between the Recommendation and new youth work policies has been very evident and stated explicitly by governmental officials, like in the case of Serbia. In other countries, as well as on the European level, the Recommendation served more as an implicit guideline and a reference document.

If we now look at the impacts of the Recommendation on youth work in the member states of the Council of Europe, it must be noted that the obvious linkages, as just described, are hardly to be found. Also, in the review seminar and in the interviews, it was reported that direct connections between the Recommendation and youth work in the member states, especially local youth work, are hardly visible. At the same time, it was also discussed whether such a visible connection is really important. Many participants felt that this link was not important, because it was clear that the Recommendation had captured the spirit of the times and was part of a process that had decisively advanced youth work in Europe.

This is reflected in the findings of the survey and the Tour de Table, which show that in countries with functioning youth work, this youth work is increasingly becoming a political priority. In countries where youth work is being established, there is a growing awareness that youth work exists in these countries and makes a fundamental contribution to the cohesion of society. The topics of the Recommendation reflect ongoing youth work in the member states, without quoting the Recommendation itself. In the countries where new youth policies are adopted, it is evident that youth work is part of the law or action plan as an independent field or as an executive field of action.

A particularly critical challenge, which was identified during the review seminar and in the interviews, is the weak "institutional memory" of the various actors. Institutional memory refers to the information that is held and passed down within an institution. With regard to the Recommendation, this means that information on the creation, adoption and implementation of the Recommendation has to be collected over the years and passed down within the Council of Europe, national

governments and NGOs. This approach is especially important in processes which continue over a longer period of time, and in cases where institutional turnover is not or only partly met with formalised briefings and transmissions of information. These difficulties affected the review process, as knowledge on the history, adoption and implementation process of the Recommendation was not completely or only partially available.

A final reflection is on the role of the Council of Europe in European youth work, especially in relation to the European Union. Both institutions play an important role in the development of European youth work - more than that, they are considered by other European actors as having the main political responsibility of driving European youth work forwards. At the same time, the review revealed differences among the two institutions. As reflected in the review seminar and in some interviews, the European Union created a process with regard to its EU Youth Strategy - with its instruments and youth goals - which created a feeling of ownership among the different actors towards its Youth Strategy. One way ownership was created was by assigning the necessary financial resources for the activities and initiatives linked to and part of the Youth Strategy. With regard to the Council of Europe and the Recommendation, although adopted in a democratic and participatory way, such allocation of fundings was more difficult. It is to be discussed whether this may have been a reason for the observed lacking ownership, especially from youth organisations, towards the review process. This partially led to an increased focus of the review on member states rather than the whole Council of Europe youth sector. Whether this limited ownership towards the Recommendation is due to the Recommendation itself, to the limited financial resources and the few activities explicitly devoted to it, to the already mentioned limited institutional memory or to other reasons could be further explored.

In this line, it would be important for the youth sector of the Council of Europe to further develop its own role in European youth work. In the review seminar, attention was repeatedly drawn to the fact that the Council of Europe, with regard to European youth work, discusses contents, starts certain processes, which are then multiplied at the European level by other institutions and organisations. This role as initiator can also be observed regarding the Recommendation. With the ending of the review, the open question is how the Council of Europe youth sector can consolidate and/or expand this role in relation to the 4th European Youth Work Convention, announced for 2025, as well as its cooperation with the European Commission in the Youth Partnership.

5. Main conclusions

The review of the implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work has lived by the contributions of many. In a comprehensive process steered by a CMJ appointed drafting group, the review made the synergies and divergences regarding these contributions visible. Although focussing on the member states, it also touched upon the developments and contributions of other Council of Europe youth sector actors. In focus of analysis were the actor's views on the relevance, significance and influence of recommendation. The data collection methods used by two consultants hired for the review process included desk research, a questionnaire, a review seminar, and standardised qualitative interviews. In the following, the most important aspects that can be derived as conclusions and lessons learned from the previous chapters are presented.

There is no doubt that the main achievement of the Recommendation is giving youth work its own political document, thus developing it into a policy field of action in its own right. In contrast to the previous recommendations of the Council of Europe, where youth work was part of the package of measures to promote other topics, the (further) development of youth work itself is central in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4. With the Recommendation on youth work, youth work as such and its development perspectives were placed in the centre. In doing so, it has also given further youth work developments a political framework. In this sense, it has acted as an example. Rather than being an integral part of youth policy, youth work now is a policy field which can and has to be developed on its own - without lessening its contribution to other policy areas. The Recommendation thus set a political standard that was later followed by other European developments - the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 and the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 both integrating youth work as a priority area within youth policy, and the European Youth Work Agenda and the EU Council Resolution on establishing a framework for the European Youth Work Agenda, aiming at bringing youth work as a stand-alone field of action forward. For the latter two, the Recommendation served as a framework for development. A similar function was also reported from some member states, where the Recommendation served as a framework for shaping national youth and youth work policies.

Secondly, the Recommendation has acted as a unifying element. Within the Council of Europe, it is a political framework where many different initiatives (e.g. Quality Labels Youth Centres, youth work portfolio), partly already existing before, find a place in and can be further developed against the background of the Recommendation. Following up on the grounds laid at the 1st and 2nd European Youth Work Convention, the Recommendation contributed to the efforts of unifying a quite scattered field, bringing like-minded people and organisations together to cooperate. Thus, the Recommendation strengthened the common ground and common view on challenges and opportunities of youth work within the COE youth work sector, which in the process helped to gain political recognition for the youth work community of practice at the political level.

A third conclusion concerns the contents of the Recommendation. Although the Recommendation addresses important issues and sets definitional measures, its contents are now, six years after adoption, no longer "state of the art". The topics of the Recommendation are still relevant, especially the discourse on quality youth work, research and evaluation processes, and recognition and competences. However, both the field of youth work and youth policy have evolved since then. This is partly due to the changing circumstances in which youth work takes place today compared to 2017.

This includes the post-pandemic situation and the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against the Ukraine as well as the increased attention to climate change. One topic mentioned to be missing in the Recommendation in its current importance is digitalisation - this includes not only digital youth work, but also topics such as digital literacy of young people and youth workers, etc. At the same time, youth work policy was pushed further due to the developments around the European Youth Work Agenda. The broader framework of youth policy, too, set new priorities through Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030. Although these documents followed up upon the contents of the Recommendation on youth work, they also set new priorities in the field of youth work.

Turning towards national developments, the review shows, and this is a fourth conclusion, that the Recommendation has relevant contents, but its importance depends on the existing or non-existing momentum as well as the different national contexts. What was highlighted in particular in the review is the different importance of the Recommendation for member states where a youth work system is emerging and member states with an established and legally anchored youth work system. The Recommendation is particularly important as a guideline for member states with an emerging national youth work system. In these countries, a special focus is - and here the Council of Europe can provide support, e.g., through policy missions – on the establishment of youth work political frameworks and laws, youth work capacity building, and the recognition of youth work as a field of work and youth worker as an independent profession. Non-governmental organisations use the Recommendation for advocacy and lobbying to press for these issues. In member states with established youth work systems, the focus at youth work development is much more on the recognition of the youth work sector by other sectors and establishing cooperation between youth work and other sectors like employment, education, health and justice. One positive development related to recognition and attributed to the Recommendation, both in emerging and established youth work systems, is the increasing respect for the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations that carry out youth work. At the same time, member states reported that youth work has become a political priority since the adoption of the recommendation. This could be further strengthened in the future by creating opportunities to share inspiring practices, be it for example through a regular "tour de table" on youth work, or through an online platform.

Deriving from the previous, a fifth conclusion is that these differences in youth work systems have to be taken into account when discussing further youth work development. Different member states have different needs, and one may argue to what extent these needs can all be addressed by the Recommendation itself. Nevertheless, it must be considered where the priorities should lie - e.g., building up or consolidating, which topics - in order to have a strong(er) impact in the post-review phase. This would include increased differentiated offers of assistance and learning. It would be important to consider how the specific and punctual measures and activities taken in the implementation of the Recommendation can be supported by structural and long-term initiatives, including Council of Europe youth work policy, programmes and funding instruments.

A sixth conclusion, and one of concern, is the - partly - moderate participation of the Council of Europe youth sector in the review process. Examples are the participation of member states in the questionnaire and the participation of non-governmental organisations in the whole review process. On the one hand, this raises the question of how far this has to do with the recommendation itself, and how ownership of the recommendation can be strengthened. On the other hand, it also raises the question of how far lessons can be learned from the review process itself for future such processes.

Two related aspects show the difficulties that arose during the review process. Firstly, the review process has helped many national governments to reflect on what is happening in their country in terms of youth work development. However, in only a few cases did it lead to a reflection on the implementation of the Recommendation. Secondly, in all phases of the review process, participants from the entire Council of Europe youth sector - member states, non-governmental organisations, partner organisations, etc. - found it difficult to identify causal relationships between the Recommendation and youth work developments. This may be due to the increased number of European documents on youth work, or to the difficulties to relate European documents to national developments. The weak institutional memory, found throughout all actors of the Council of Europe youth sector, may add to this challenge. It would be worth considering whether a continuous and repeated dissemination and the use of briefing mechanisms, offered by the Council of Europe, could be helpful in addressing these challenges.

Overall, the review process of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 shows varied findings. Essentially, the Recommendation, as the first Europe-wide policy document dealing with youth work as such, has had an important impact as a framework and guideline both in European policy and in some Member States. It has made a significant contribution to uniting the youth work sector and strengthening cooperation. At the same time, it is difficult to attribute the numerous youth work developments in Europe causally to the Recommendation. For the upcoming discussion on the future of the Recommendation, the question now is how the Council of Europe can further consolidate its role as initiator and stimulus, while at the same time increasing the visibility of the causality of European developments and developments in the member States, set in motion by the Recommendation and the Council of Europe's further measures.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of analysed documents in the desk research

	Title
1	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Austria
2	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Belgium-Flanders
3	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Belgium- Wallonia
4	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Belgium-German
5	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Bulgaria
6	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Croatia
7	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Cyprus
8	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Czech Republic
9	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Denmark
10	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Estonia
11	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Finland
12	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - France
13	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Germany
14	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Greece
15	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Hungary
16	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Iceland
17	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Ireland
18	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Italy
19	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Latvia
20	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Lithuania
21	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Luxembourg
22	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Malta
23	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Netherlands
24	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Norway
25	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Poland
26	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Portugal
27	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - North Macedonia
28	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Romania
29	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Serbia
30	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Slovakia
31	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Slovenia
32	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Spain
33	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Sweden
34	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - Turkey
35	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - UK-England
36	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - UK-Northern Ireland
37	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - UK-Scotland
38	Youth Wiki Chapter on Youth Work - UK-Wales
39	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Armenia
40	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Belarus
41	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Belgium-Flanders
42	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Bulgaria
43	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Croatia
44	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Cyprus
45	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Czech Republic
46	ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Estonia

- 47 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Finland
- 48 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - France
- 49 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Georgia
- 50 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Germany
- 51 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Italy
- 52 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Latvia
- 53 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Liechtenstein
- 54 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Luxembourg
- 55 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Malta
- 56 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Montenegro
- 57 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - North Macedonia
- 58 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Norway
- 59 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Serbia
- 60 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Slovenia
- 61 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Slovakia
- 62 ECKYP Country Sheet on Youth Work - Sweden
- 63 Youth Partnership - Thinking seriously about youth work. And how to prepare people to do it
- 64 Youth Partnership - The history of youth work volume 6
- 65 Youth Partnership - Between insecurity and hope. Reflections on youth work with young refugees
- 66 Youth Partnership - The history of youth work volume 7
- 67 Youth Partnership - Youth worker education in Europe. Policies, structures, practices
- 68 Youth Partnership - T-Kit 10: Educational Evaluation in Youth Work
- 69 Youth Partnership - T-Kit 11 Mosaic: The training kit for Euro-Mediterranean youth work
- 70 Youth Partnership - T-kit 13: Sustainability and youth work
- 71 Youth Partnership - Youth work against violent radicalisation
- 72 Youth Partnership - Youth Work in Eastern Europe: Realities, perspectives and inspiring initiatives
- 73 Youth Partnership - Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers. Part II. Diversity of practice architectures
- 74 Youth Partnership - Mapping the educational and career paths of youth workers Part I. Report
- 75 Council of Europe - STEP-by-STEP together
- 76 Council of Europe - Youth Work in the Spotlight
- 77 Council of Europe - CoE Recommendation on Youth Work with background document
- 78 Council of Europe - Promoting quality in youth work practice
- 79 Council of Europe - Youth Sector Strategy 2030 with accompanying document
- 80 Council of Europe - What can youth work do for access to social rights? - ENTER Project
- 81 ERYICA - The European Youth Information Quality Label
- 82 ERYICA - 2019 Annual Report
- 83 ERYICA - 2020 Annual Report
- 84 ERYICA - 2021 Annual Report
- 85 Eurodesk - SURVEY RESULTS 2021 COVID-19 Impact on the Eurodesk Network
- 86 Eurodesk - Mobility advisor competence framework
- 87 Eurodesk - Virtual facilitation guide
- 88 Eurodesk Survey 2019

Annex 2: Online questionnaires

Online questionnaire for the CDEJ

In 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a [Recommendation on Youth Work \(CM/Rec\(2017\)4\)](#), including the advice to examine the implementation of this recommendation five years after its adoption. Now, in 2023, the review of the implementation of the Recommendation aims to identify:

- *how the combined efforts of the Council of Europe youth sector, member states and youth organisations are contributing to the development of youth work policy and practices in the member states and at European level.*
- *how the Recommendation acts as a driver for change in the member states and at European level.*

This questionnaire, together with other tools (desk review, consultative meetings, etc.), is the main source of information on the implementation of the recommendation.

Therefore, your answers are a valuable contribution to the review of the implementation of the Recommendation.

Thank you very much for taking part!

Your background

Q1 Your name (optional)

Q2 Your position

Q3 your country

The implementation of the Recommendation

The following questions are literally quoting measures mentioned in the Recommendation. In the Recommendation, Member States were invited to take these measures to develop and strengthen youth work at all levels.

Q4 Please assess the progress that you have observed in your context in relation to the following proposed measures for youth work:

1: No progress 2: Insufficient 3: Fair 4: Considerable 5: Remarkable progress

. provide an enabling environment and conditions for both proven and innovative youth work practices (including for example, sustainable structures and resources), particularly at the local level, while acknowledging that youth work benefits from regional, national and international opportunities and co-operation;

a. strengthen the role and position of youth work in order to facilitate cross-sectoral co-operation between youth work - whether it is provided by public authorities, the private sector or civil society - and other sectors, including for example: social care, health, sport, culture, formal education, employment services and criminal justice;

b. promote and support coordination between local, regional, national and European levels of youth work, thereby facilitating networking, co-operation, peer learning and exchange;

c. promote the recognition of the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding developed through participating in and delivering youth work;

d. promote equal access to youth work;

- e. promote the role of youth work by: – informing young people of their rights and of the opportunities and services available to them
- f. respect the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) doing youth work
- g. foster knowledge-based youth work that can respond to the changes and trends in our societies and the emerging challenges faced by young people
- h. encourage the use of research, evaluation and continuous follow-up in developing knowledge based, quality youth work ensuring that mechanisms are in place to measure its outcomes and impact.

Q5 Could you please give an example of what happened in your country with regard to the different measures mentioned in the Recommendation?

. provide an enabling environment and conditions for both proven and innovative youth work practices (including for example, sustainable structures and resources), particularly at the local level, while acknowledging that youth work benefits from regional, national and international opportunities and co-operation;

- a. strengthen the role and position of youth work in order to facilitate cross-sectoral co-operation between youth work - whether it is provided by public authorities, the private sector or civil society - and other sectors, including for example: social care, health, sport, culture, formal education, employment services and criminal justice;
- b. promote and support coordination between local, regional, national and European levels of youth work, thereby facilitating networking, co-operation, peer learning and exchange;
- c. promote the recognition of the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding developed through participating in and delivering youth work;
- d. promote equal access to youth work;
- e. promote the role of youth work by: – informing young people of their rights and of the opportunities and services available to them
- f. respect the freedom and autonomy of youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) doing youth work
- g. foster knowledge-based youth work that can respond to the changes and trends in our societies and the emerging challenges faced by young people
- h. encourage the use of research, evaluation and continuous follow-up in developing knowledge based, quality youth work ensuring that mechanisms are in place to measure its outcomes and impact.

In relation to youth workers

Q6 Please assess the progress that you have observed in your context in relation to

Additionally in establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers, member States are invited to:

- work with youth work providers and other stakeholders to develop a set of core competences (for example values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) that should be expected from youth workers;
- establish frameworks, strategies, programmes and pathways for the education, training, capacity building and professional development of youth workers based on the agreed set of competences;

1: No progress 2: Insufficient 3: Fair 4: Considerable 5: Remarkable progress

Q7 Could you please give an example of what happened in your country with regard to the different measures mentioned in the Recommendation?

- work with youth work providers and other stakeholders to develop a set of core competences (for example values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) that should be expected from youth workers;
- establish frameworks, strategies, programmes and pathways for the education, training, capacity building and professional development of youth workers based on the agreed set of competences;

Q 8 What is -if any- the added value of the Recommendation?

- With regard to national, regional and local youth work
- With regard to European youth work

Other actors

Q9 From your perspective, how do the following actors contribute to the measures mentioned in the Recommendation, **within your country?**

- Youth organisations
- Youth workers associations
- Youth work organisations
- National Youth Council
- Council of Europe youth department
- Youth Partnership
- European Union and its Programmes
- Others...

1: Supporting our initiatives 2: advocacy 3: own initiatives 4: no contribution

Q10 From your perspective, how do the following actors contribute to the measures mentioned in the Recommendation, **at the European level?**

- Network of youth NGOs, including the Advisory Council
- European Youth Forum
- Organisers of study sessions at the EYCs
- Youth Partnership
- Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres
- European information services (ERYICA, Eurodesk)
- European Union and its Programmes
- Others...

1: Supporting our initiatives 2: advocacy 3: initiating own initiatives 4: no contribution

Finally

Q11 Any other ideas or reflections that you would like to share in relation to the implementation of the Recommendation?

Q12 May we contact you for an in-depth interview or focus group?

yes,no

If yes, please write your email here:

Online questionnaire for NGOs and Council of Europe partner organisations

In 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a [Recommendation on Youth Work \(CM/Rec\(2017\)4\)](#), including the advice to examine the implementation of this recommendation five years after its adoption. Now, in 2023, the review of the Recommendation aims to identify:

- *how the combined efforts of the Council of Europe youth sector, member states and youth organisations are contributing to the development of youth work policy and practices in the member states and at European level.*
- *how the Recommendation acts as a driver for change in the member states and at European level.*

This questionnaire, together with other tools (desk review, consultative meetings, etc.), is the main source of information on the implementation of the recommendation.

Therefore, your answers are a valuable contribution to the review of the Recommendation.

Thank you very much for taking part!

Your background

Q1 Your profile

- Young person
- Youth worker
- Youth leader
- NGO responsible
- Local / Regional / National Government representative
- European Institution worker or representative
- Researcher
- Other: Please specify...

Q2 Level you (mainly) work at

- Local
- Regional
- National
- European
- Mixed: Please specify...

Q3 Country of residence:

Q4 Your organisation:

Q5 Your name (optional):

You and the Recommendation

Q6 Your knowledge of the Recommendation

- I do not know about it.
- I heard about it.

- I know its main contents.
- I know it deeply.

Q7 Do you use the Recommendation in your work?

Yes, because....

No, because...

Q8 If yes, how do you use the Recommendation in your work (multiple-choice)?

- As a framework of reference.
- As an advocacy tool towards the local, regional or national government.
- As a framework for developing projects and taking measures
- Others,

Q9 Which part of the Recommendation do you consider to be particularly relevant for your work (multiple choice)?

- Definition and scope of youth work
- Ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work through legal and political support;
- Ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work through sustainable funding and structures;
- Improved coordination across sectors and between the local and the national levels
- Establishing competency-based education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers
- Appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work
- The proposed measures and principles promoted as the norm for youth work
- Fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work
- Other, ...

Q 10 What is -if any- the added value of the Recommendation?

- With regard to national, regional and local youth work
- With regard to European youth work

The implementation of the Recommendation

The Recommendation lists a number of measures that were suggested to be taken in order to develop and strengthen youth work at all levels.

Q11 Keeping in mind the level you mainly work at (European, national, regional or local), please assess the progress that you have observed *in your own work context* in relation to the following proposed measures for youth work

1: No progress 2: Insufficient 3: Fair 4: Considerable 5: Remarkable progress

- . Ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work through legal and political support;
- a. Ensuring the establishment or further development of quality youth work through sustainable funding and structures;
- b. Improved coordination across sectors and between the local and the national levels
- c. Establishing competency-based education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers

- d. Appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work
- e. The proposed measures and principles promoted as the norm for youth work
- f. Fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work

Q 12 Could you give an example of how your organisation contributes to the implementation of the Recommendation regarding the aforementioned measures?

Finally

Q13 Any other ideas or reflections that you would like to share in relation to the implementation of the Recommendation?

Q14 May we contact you for an in-depth interview or focus group?

yes, no

If yes, please write your email here:

Annex 3: Structured in-depth interviews guidelines

Following the findings of the desk review, the aim of the structured in-depth interviews was to collect additional data and deeper and more precise information on the implementation of the Recommendation in particular on the following aspects:

1. The process towards the drafting and adoption of the Recommendation and the synergies with other youth work developments at European level.
2. Current relevance (i.e., relevance of the contents and measures proposed by the Recommendation today)
3. Importance of the Recommendation. Did the Recommendation play an important role in the development of youth work at national and at European level?
4. Different uses by different actors of the Recommendation, e.g., by NGOs mainly as an advocacy tool? By decision makers mainly as a guidance or framework?
5. Role of the Recommendation in the development of youth work policy, especially in relation to subsequent developments such as the European Youth Work Agenda
6. Impact of the Recommendation, with regard to the actions of the governments of the member states, within the member states (i.e., national youth work and youth policy developments) and at European level (i.e., European youth work developments)?

In terms of methodology the main guidelines, adapted to each interview, were:

- The interview had a clear structure following some of the above-described aspects.
- The structure of the interview was communicated to the interviewer before the interview or just at the beginning of it so that it has a clear redline.
- The interviewer asked for permission to the interviewee for using anonymised quotations of his/her answers to better illustrate a certain idea in the evaluation report.
- The questions had a clear focus but were framed as “open” questions, inviting the respondent to talk at some length.
- In the formulation of the questions and in the analysis of the answers, “facts”, “experiences” and “opinions” were distinguished but differently categorised.
- With the permission of the interviewee the interview was recorded. The interviewer took notes and completed them afterwards.
- Each structured interview was documented for the internal notes of this evaluation.

According to the experience and involvement of the different interviewed in the development, drafting and implementation of the Recommendation, the interviews had different specific focuses.