

MAPPING OF APPROACHES TO AESSING YOUTH WORK IMPACT IN SELECTED MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Study report

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Summary

A desk study of the approaches to assessing youth work impact in selected ten member states of the Council of Europe (Finland, Estonia, Republic of Ireland, Scotland (United Kingdom), Austria, Luxembourg, Germany, The Netherlands, Malta, Norway) was conducted by the Council of Europe project "Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase IV" at the request of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine in March-April 2026.

The methodology of the study includes the overview of key four areas for each of the selected countries:

- Ministry responsible for youth work
- Aims of youth work
- Competence framework for young people
- Key quality and impact assessment tools

The final part of the study includes six lessons for Ukraine.

[The Council of Europe project "Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase IV"](https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/youth-for-democracy-in-ukraine) is implemented within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" for 2023-2026. More information about the project, including news, youth resources and open calls for participation in the project, can be found by the link - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/youth-for-democracy-in-ukraine>.

1. Finland

Ministry responsible for youth work

The Ministry of Education and Culture (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö) has overall responsibility for national youth policy and youth work in Finland. At local level, municipalities are responsible for youth work provision. A number of other ministries, including Justice, Interior, and Social Affairs and Health, also contribute to cross-sectoral youth policy through the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (VANUPO).

→ [Ministry of Education and Culture – Youth policies and development](#)

Aims of youth work

Under the Youth Act (1285/2016, Section 2), the aims of youth work and youth policy are: (1) to promote young people's social inclusion and give them opportunities to participate and strengthen their capabilities; (2) to support their growth, independence, and sense of community; (3) to support their leisure pursuits and civic engagement; (4) to promote non-discrimination, equality, and the realisation of young people's rights; and (5) to improve their growth and living conditions. The Act applies to all people under the age of 29.

→ [Youth Act 1285/2016 \(Finlex\)](#) | [Ministry – Legislation on youth](#)

Competence framework for young people

Finland does not have a single national competence framework that sets out expected outcomes for young people as beneficiaries of youth work. Even so, the aims set out in the Youth Act provide an implicit orientation: youth work is expected to support social inclusion, active citizenship, independence, and a sense of community. The current National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (VANUPO 2024–2027), adopted by Government resolution on 21 March 2024, is built around the theme "Strengthening young people's wellbeing through multidisciplinary measures" and is organised into three baskets (korit): Kori 1 – a path forward for every young person; Kori 2 – diverse information and tools to support young people's mental wellbeing; and Kori 3 – supporting young people's wellbeing by strengthening participation, community, and safety. The Kanuuna / Finnish Youth Research Society quality package Kyllin hyvä also includes survey tools that capture young people's own views of their development.

→ [VANUPO 2024–2027 – Ministry overview \(English\)](#) | [Government resolution \(Valtioneuvosto\)](#) | [VANUPO 2024–2027 full publication \(PDF, Finnish\)](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **The Finnish Youth Act (1285/2016).** The Act provides the statutory basis for youth work in Finland. It is a framework law that requires municipalities to create the conditions for local youth work and activities, while leaving them considerable discretion over how this is organised in practice. Finland has also renewed its youth legislation several times over the past decades (1972, 1986, 1995, 2006, 2016), which shows an ongoing pattern of policy development rather than a one-off reform.

→ [Youth Act 1285/2016 \(Finlex\)](#) | [Ministry – Legislation on youth](#)

- **The Kanuuna network.** Kanuuna was a municipal youth work development network established in 2006 by directors of youth services in Finland's ten largest cities. At its height, it covered around 80 per cent of the volume of municipal youth work, through 24 peer-development networks involving more than 100 municipalities. From 2018 to 2024 it operated as a Centre of Expertise for municipal youth work, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and administered by the City of Lahti. Its main contribution was to develop self-assessment and peer-assessment tools for municipal youth workers and youth service managers. In the peer-assessment model, originally adapted from Kent in the UK, youth workers from another municipality observe activities against agreed quality criteria. The purpose is developmental rather than inspectorial. Together with the Finnish Youth Research Society, Kanuuna produced the nationwide quality package *Kyllin hyvä* ('Good Enough') in 2023, including curriculum templates (NUPS), surveys for young people, assessment criteria, and quantitative indicators. Kanuuna's Centre of Expertise mandate ended on 31 March 2024 when ministry funding was not renewed. Its successor, the *Kunnallisen nuorisotyön yhdistys ry* (Association for Municipal Youth Work, KNY), was founded in December 2023 and continues the peer-development networks, the *Kyllin hyvä* model, and the associated surveys. The original *nuorisokanuuna.fi* domain has since been repurposed.

→ [KNY – successor to Kanuuna \(kny.fi\)](#) | [Kyllin hyvä arviointipaketti \(Sway, Finnish\)](#) | [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Finland](#)

→ [KNY Toimintaa 2025 \(kny.fi, Finnish\)](#) | [Arviointikriteeristö kehitettiin vertaisten kesken \(nuoretjaosallisuus.fi, Finnish\)](#) | [Kanuunan toiminta päättyi – transition \(nuorisoseurat.fi, Finnish\)](#)

- **The youth work curriculum concept.** Finland is one of the very few countries (alongside the UK, for example) to apply the idea of a curriculum to youth work at national level. A ten-year action research project, running roughly from 2010 to 2020 and led by the Finnish Youth Research Society, worked with youth workers and managers in six municipal youth work

organisations to develop locally owned youth work curricula. In this context, a curriculum is a shared written document that sets out the aims, methods, and quality expectations of youth work within a municipality. It is developed by practitioners themselves through a participatory process and used for planning, communication, and evaluation. The Kyllin hyvä package now includes support for producing these curricula.

→ [Kiilakoski & Kinnunen \(2025\), The Curriculum Journal](#) | [Finnish Youth Research Society](#)

- **Cross-country impact measurement (2016–18).** Finland took part in the international project Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work in Europe together with England, Estonia, Italy, and France. The project developed and tested a methodology for measuring the impact of open youth work on young people's personal and social development. In Finland, the research was carried out through youth centres in co-operation with the Finnish Youth Research Society. The results pointed to measurable effects on social skills, confidence, and participation in community life.

→ [Studying the impact of international youth work \(Finnish Youth Research Society\)](#) | [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Finland](#)

- **Verke – Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work.** Verke supports quality development in digital youth work. This includes an international self-assessment tool for digital youth work competences, as well as training materials and wider co-operation. It also co-ordinates a European strategic partnership on digital youth work involving 18 countries.

→ [Finnish National Agency for Education – Digital Youth Work project](#)

2. Estonia

Ministry responsible for youth work

The Ministry of Education and Research (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium) is responsible for youth policy, the organisation of youth work, and oversight of the Education and Youth Board (Harno). Within the Ministry, the Department of Youth and Talent Policy deals with youth work, hobby education, and talent policy. Municipalities are responsible for organising and primarily financing youth work at local level. The Education and Youth Board, created in 2020 through the merger of four agencies including the former Estonian Youth Work Centre, is responsible for operational delivery, including monitoring, impact assessment, and quality system development.

→ [Ministry of Education and Research – Youth work](#) | [Education and Youth Board \(Harno\)](#)

Aims of youth work

The Youth Work Act, adopted in 1999 and revised in 2010, defines youth work as activities that create conditions for the diverse development of young people aged 7–26, outside family, formal education, and work, and on the basis of free will. The Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035 sets three broad goals: young people should have the opportunity and readiness to contribute to society; the transition to the labour market should be smoother; and quality youth work should be available across Estonia in ways that support self-development, success, experience, and independence.

→ [Youth Work Act \(Riigi Teataja, English\)](#) | [Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035 \(Ministry\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

Estonia does not have a separate national competence framework that explicitly defines expected outcomes for young people as beneficiaries of youth work. However, the Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035 does imply a set of expected outcomes, including self-development, success, experience, and independence. The hobby education system, which sits within the wider youth work framework, follows its own curricula aimed at developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes in particular hobby areas for young people aged 7–19. Estonia's comprehensive youth work quality assessment model, developed by Harno in the early 2010s, provides the main framework for evaluating youth work at municipal level and remains in use today.

→ [Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035 \(Ministry\)](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Occupational standards for youth workers (levels 5, 6, 7).** These standards are aligned with the Estonian Qualifications Framework. Level 5 (basic practitioner, replacing the earlier Level 4 for new certifications; existing Level 4 holders retain their certificate until renewal) covers basic practice, including organising youth work, interacting with the public, creating a safe environment, and continuing professional development. Level 6 adds competences in field development, mentoring, and team management. Level 7 is aimed at youth work managers and focuses on wider field development, organisational leadership, networking, and public communication. Certification is managed by the Estonian Association of Youth Workers (ENK) through a non-formal assessment process: candidates compile a portfolio and then take part in an expert panel interview lasting around 30–45 minutes. Competences can be demonstrated regardless of whether they were developed through formal education, non-formal training, or work experience. Certification costs €180 for a first application and €157 for renewal, with partial subsidy from the Ministry.

Certificates remain valid for five years, and new occupational standards came into force in 2024.

→ [ENK – Youth worker qualification levels \(Estonian\)](#) | [ENK – Certification process \(Estonian\)](#) | [Kutseregister – Noorsootõtaja, tase 5](#) | [Kutseregister – Noorsootõtaja, tase 6](#) | [Kutseregister – Noorsootõtaja, tase 7](#)

- **Municipal quality assessment tool.** Estonia has developed a dedicated tool for municipalities to map strengths and weaknesses in local youth work, plan improvements, and monitor progress. It covers four main areas: opportunities for non-formal learning; opportunities for participation; adequacy of infrastructure; and the qualification of the youth work workforce. This makes it a practical quality tool at municipal level.

→ [Education and Youth Board \(Harno\) – Youth work](#)

- **Smart youth work concept (2016) and EU Council conclusions (2017).** Estonia adopted a national concept paper on smart youth work in 2016, backed by an action plan covering digital literacy and skills, digital innovation in youth work methods, and cross-sectoral digital co-operation. During its 2017 EU Presidency, Estonia also played a leading role in the Council conclusions on smart youth work. Supporting tools such as the Noorteseire Juhtimislaud dashboard and the minuomavalitsus.ee overview of local government services help make youth policy more data-informed.

→ [Council conclusions on smart youth work \(EUR-Lex, 2017\)](#)

- **International impact study (2016–2018) and the Harno quality assessment model.** Estonia took part in the international project Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work in Europe between 2016 and 2018. The project explored a participatory evaluation methodology known as transformative evaluation (originating from social work rather than youth work), collecting young people’s own accounts of how youth work affected their lives. It was not designed to build a comprehensive evaluation system or to conduct a full-scale evaluation. Separately, Estonia’s actual comprehensive youth work quality assessment model was developed by Harno in the early 2010s and remains in use today (see harno.ee/noorsootoo-kvaliteedi-hindamismudel). This system was not significantly changed as a result of the 2016–2018 study. Under the Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020, satisfaction with youth work was measured regularly, and the final survey in 2018 found that almost 90 per cent of young people were satisfied.

→ [Education and Youth Board \(Harno\) – Youth work](#)

- **Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035.** Strategic Goal 3 of the plan is explicitly concerned with quality youth work and aims to ensure that it is

available throughout Estonia. The plan's total estimated budget is €356 million across the whole period. Key indicators include service availability by municipality, the number of certified youth workers, young people's satisfaction with youth work, and participation in hobby education.

→ [Youth Sector Development Plan 2021–2035 \(Ministry\)](#)

3. Republic of Ireland

Ministry responsible for youth work

As of May 2025, youth work functions in Ireland have been transferred to the Department of Education, having previously sat within the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). At local level, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have statutory responsibility for youth work under the ETB Act 2013. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), founded in 1968, serves as the representative body for voluntary youth organisations.

→ [Youth Work Act 2001 \(Irish Statute Book, full PDF\)](#) | [ETBI – Youth Work](#)

Aims of youth work

Section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as a planned educational programme that supports the personal and social development of young people through voluntary participation, complements formal, academic, or vocational education and training, and is provided mainly by voluntary youth work organisations. The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) builds on this by stating that youth work should help young people make informed decisions, develop social awareness and solidarity, have a voice in matters that affect them, act as active citizens, and be listened to seriously.

→ [Youth Work Act 2001 \(Irish Statute Book, PDF\)](#) | [Youth Work Act 2001 \(HTML\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

Ireland does not have a single national competence framework that defines youth work outcomes for young people. However, NYCI's Skills Summary tool offers a practical way of identifying the skills young people gain through youth work and volunteering. It maps these to employability and personal development competences and helps young people describe the value of non-formal learning to employers. The NQSF's five core principles also imply a clear picture of what quality youth work is expected to achieve.

→ [NYCI – Skills Summary](#) | [NQSF full document \(gov.ie PDF\)](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF).** The NQSF was introduced in 2010 by the then Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and implemented from 2011. It is built around five core principles and ten standards covering young people's involvement in planning and delivery, programme content, governance and management, documentation and reporting, and community and inter-agency relationships. The framework works through a continuous cycle: organisations first carry out a self-assessment against each standard, then undergo an external assessment by a Youth/Liaison Officer for local services or an NQSF Standards Officer for national organisations. External assessment includes observing practice and gathering the views of staff, management, young people, and volunteers.

→ [NQSF full document \(gov.ie PDF\)](#) | [gov.ie – NQSF publication page](#) | [Kerry ETB – NQSF Resources](#)

- **National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups.** Ireland also has a simpler set of standards designed for volunteer-led youth activity and youth work groups. Groups funded under the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and related schemes are required to use them, while other volunteer groups are encouraged to do so. Participating groups complete an Annual Plan and Progress Report. This matters because a large share of Irish youth work is delivered by volunteers rather than paid professionals, and the framework reflects that reality.

→ [gov.ie – National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups](#)

- **North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS).** NSETS was established in 2006 on an all-island basis and covers both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It professionally endorses higher education programmes in youth work through a process that includes institutional self-assessment, a panel visit with interviews, and conditional or full endorsement against agreed criteria. Endorsed programmes are monitored annually and must go through full re-endorsement every five years. NSETS sits within the UK and Ireland Joint ETS Forum, allowing qualifications to be recognised across jurisdictions.

→ [NYCI – NSETS overview](#) | [NSETS endorsement process](#) | [NSETS Professional Endorsement Criteria \(PDF\)](#)

- **Youth Work Act 2001.** The Act remains the legislative foundation for the Irish youth work system. It gives the Minister responsibility for developing and co-ordinating youth work programmes and services and establishes the wider statutory architecture, including Youth Work Development Plans, an Assessor of Youth Work, a National Youth Work Advisory Committee, Youth Work

Committees, and Voluntary Youth Councils. It also sets out the role of vocational education committees, now ETBs, in local delivery and funding.

→ [Youth Work Act 2001 \(Irish Statute Book, PDF\)](#) | [Youth Work Act 2001 \(HTML\)](#)

- **Integrated system in practice.** Ireland's strength lies in the way these elements fit together. The Youth Work Act provides statutory backing; the NQSF offers organisational quality assurance through self- and external assessment; the volunteer standards extend the quality framework to the non-professional sector; and NSETS helps ensure that higher education programmes support professional formation. NYCI links several of these strands in practice through its representative and delivery roles.

→ [NYCI – Programmes](#) | [NYCI – Youth Work Act 2001](#)

4. Scotland (the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Ministry responsible for youth work

In Scotland, youth work sits within the remit of the Scottish Government, specifically the area responsible for Children and Families. It is treated as part of the broader field of Community Learning and Development (CLD), governed by the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013. Local authorities are under a statutory duty to secure CLD provision in their areas. At national level, YouthLink Scotland and Education Scotland work closely with government: the former as the national agency for youth work, the latter through inspection and support for self-evaluation. As youth work is a devolved matter, Scottish arrangements are distinct from those in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

→ [CLD \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) | [YouthLink Scotland – national agency](#)

Aims of youth work

The National Youth Work Strategy 2014–2019, and the policy direction that followed it, presents youth work as a values-based process that builds young people's capacity through informal and non-formal education and depends on voluntary participation. It starts from young people's own experiences and aims to make learning enjoyable and engaging. The strategy identifies five ambitions: that youth work is valued in Scotland; recognised as a contributor to learning and skills; seen as a valued partner in education; supported by a strong workforce; and able to show leadership across the sector.

→ [National Youth Work Strategy 2014–2019 \(Education Scotland, PDF\)](#) | [CLD strategic guidance 2024–2027 \(gov.scot\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

Scotland stands out for having an explicit framework describing the outcomes youth work seeks to achieve in young people’s lives. The National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework, first published in 2015 and integrated into a single tool by YouthLink Scotland in 2022, sets out seven outcomes covering health and wellbeing, relationships, learning, participation in groups, decision-making, broadening horizons, and voice and social commitment. Alongside these are eleven youth work skills, such as confidence, resilience, leadership, and problem solving, which are understood as the building blocks that help young people move towards those outcomes. The framework is explicitly rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

→ [Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework – YouthLink Scotland](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Self-evaluation through ‘How Good Is Our...’ frameworks.** Scottish youth work is part of the CLD self-evaluation and inspection system overseen by HM Inspectors of Education. Two key frameworks apply: *How Good is the Learning and Development in our Community?*, used in statutory inspections of local authority CLD services and their voluntary and community partners; and *How Good is Our Third Sector Organisation?*, designed for voluntary sector providers. Both are built around quality indicators and performance measures that help practitioners identify strengths and areas for development. Importantly, these frameworks are designed for joint self-evaluation by managers, teams, and partners, rather than as purely top-down inspection tools, and peer evaluation based on the same indicators has also been piloted.

→ [Education Scotland – How Good Is the Learning and Development in Our Community? \(PDF\)](#) | [National Youth Work Strategy 2014–2019 \(Education Scotland, PDF\)](#)

- **National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work.** The Youth Work NOS define the performance, knowledge, and understanding expected in the workplace. They are developed on a UK-wide basis but managed in Scotland by Skills Development Scotland on behalf of the devolved administrations. The 2019 refresh was facilitated by the CLD Standards Council for Scotland with input from YouthLink Scotland. In practice, the NOS connect to induction, PDAs, SVQs, Modern Apprenticeships, and degree-level qualifications, and they sit alongside the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework.

→ [CLD Standards Council – Youth Work NOS Functional Map \(PDF\)](#) | [CLD Standards Council – Youth Work NOS 2019 Introduction \(PDF\)](#) | [YouthLink Scotland – National Occupational Standards](#)

- **CLD Competent Practitioner Framework and Code of Ethics.** The CLD Standards Council is the professional body for Community Learning and Development in Scotland, including youth work. Its Competent Practitioner Framework brings together the knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics expected of competent practice, structured around seven competences and five key attributes. The Code of Ethics provides the ethical basis for that practice.

→ [CLD Standards Council – Standards and Benchmarks](#) | [CLD Competences and Code of Ethics – YouthLink Scotland](#)

- **Youth Work Outcomes and Indicators in practice.** The seven outcomes are supported by indicators that help organisations use them in self-evaluation and quality improvement. Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland work jointly with local, regional, and national organisations to strengthen the use of these tools and improve the way outcomes and impact are understood. The Scottish model is notably low-stakes: organisations are not penalised for failing to meet a particular threshold, which sets it apart from more compliance-driven systems and brings it closer to developmental quality improvement models.

→ [YouthLink Scotland – Outcomes and Skills Framework](#) | [Youth Programme Quality Intervention Scotland \(PDF\)](#)

- **Research and impact base.** YouthLink Scotland and the Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group have built up a significant body of research on the impact of community-based universal youth work. A 2018 study with the University of Edinburgh and the University of St Mark and St John found that 93 per cent of surveyed young people reported increased confidence, 74 per cent reported improved life skills, and 68 per cent felt more positive about their community after taking part in youth work. More recent longitudinal biographical research with the University of Edinburgh follows how young people themselves describe the impact of youth work over time.

→ [YouthLink Scotland – Research](#)

5. Austria

Ministry responsible for youth work

Austria's federal structure means that responsibility for youth policy and extracurricular child and youth work is shared between the federal government and the nine federal states (Länder), with the states carrying most responsibility for

extracurricular youth work. At federal level, general affairs and the co-ordination of youth policy sit with the Directorate General Family and Youth in the Federal Chancellery. The provincial youth departments are responsible for regional design and implementation. The federal legal basis is the Federal Act on the Promotion of Education and Upbringing outside of Schools and the Promotion of Youth Work (Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz, BGBl. I Nr. 126/2000).

→ [Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz \(RIS, German\)](#) | [BKA Kompetenzzentrum Jugend – Offene Jugendarbeit infosheet \(PDF, German\)](#)

Aims of youth work

In Austria, extracurricular youth work includes planned recreational and social-educational activities intended to promote and strengthen young people. These offers are based on voluntariness, openness, orientation to young people's living environments, participation, and equal rights, and they are explicitly non-commercial. The Austrian Youth Strategy, in place since 2019, adds a wider policy frame through four fields of action: learning and employment; participation and initiative; quality of life and a spirit of co-operation; and media and information.

→ [Bundeskanzleramt – Jugendstrategie \(German\)](#) | [BKA Kompetenzzentrum Jugend – Offene Jugendarbeit infosheet \(PDF, German\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

Austria's approach is shaped by two linked documents rather than a single national competence framework. First, bOJA has developed an impact concept, Goals, Achievements and Effects of Open Youth Work in Austria, which sets out five Wirkungsdimensionen (dimensions of impact) for young people: (1) Kompetenzerweiterung (broadening of competences); (2) Identitätsentwicklung (identity development); (3) Alltagsbewältigung (coping with everyday life); (4) Interessenvertretung (representation of interests); and (5) Partizipation (participation). Second, there is a Competence Framework for Child and Youth Work that defines the competences youth workers themselves need across different settings. Together, these give a reasonably clear picture of both what young people are expected to gain and what workers need in order to support that development.

→ [bOJA – Qualitätsentwicklung und Publikationen \(German\)](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **bOJA Quality Manual for Open Youth Work (Qualitätshandbuch).** Developed by bOJA, the nationwide competence centre for professional open children's and youth work, the Qualitätshandbuch sets out quality standards for Austria's open youth work in terms of structure, process, and outcomes, while also offering guidance for further development. The 5th edition (2021) is the

current version. When these standards were first developed in 2011, they gave a very diverse field a common point of reference. Around 341 providers operate some 680 facilities across Austria, of which 87 per cent are youth centres.

→ [bOJA Qualitätshandbuch \(5th ed., 2021, PDF, German\)](#) | [BKA Kompetenzzentrum Jugend – Offene Jugendarbeit infosheet \(PDF, German\)](#)

- **Toolkit for Quality Development in Open Youth Work.** Alongside the Qualitätshandbuch, bOJA has produced a toolkit of methods and instruments for quality development in open youth work. This is complemented by the bOJA documentation database, which collects activity data from youth centres and supports sector-wide analysis. The combination of standards, tools, and shared data gives Austria a practical infrastructure for quality development.

→ [bOJA – Qualitätsentwicklung und Publikationen \(German\)](#)

- **Quality dialogues at local level.** bOJA also supports municipalities through a method known as Qualitätsdialog or 'quality dialogue'. Working with the Ministry of Health, it has linked this approach to a health-literate youth work award scheme that has already been awarded to more than 100 institutions and is based on nine criteria. These dialogues are useful not only for strengthening practice locally, but also for producing information that can be reported upwards to municipalities and ministries.

→ [Europe Goes Local – bOJA interview](#)

- **aufZAQ certification system for youth work training courses.** Funded by the Federal Chancellery and the youth departments of the federal states, aufZAQ is a national certification system for youth work training courses. It certifies programmes rather than individual youth workers, helping to ensure that the education and training available across Austria meets common quality criteria. By 2023, 34 courses had been certified.

→ [aufZAQ – official site \(German\)](#)

- **Youth surveys and Get Active participation.** Under the Austrian Youth Strategy, ministries organise 'reality check' exchanges between young people and ministerial representatives to test whether youth objectives connect with lived experience. Between 2017 and 2021, the Get Active team – around 25 young people aged 16–24 from across Austria – took part in projects designed to help ministries and organisations engage better with young people. This gives participation a more concrete role in shaping youth policy.

→ [Bundeskanzleramt – Jugendstrategie \(German\)](#)

6. Luxembourg

Ministry responsible for youth work

In Luxembourg, youth work falls under the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse). Within that structure, responsibility is shared between the Service de la jeunesse, which shapes policy, and the Service national de la jeunesse (SNJ), which implements youth policy and supports educational quality in the non-formal education sector. The SNJ also acts as a support and resource centre for the field, with a mission often summed up as *Jonker staark maachen* – 'empowering young people'.

→ [Service national de la jeunesse – official site](#) | [Ministry – Youth work principles and actors](#)

Aims of youth work

The amended Youth Law of 4 July 2008 provides the main legislative framework. Youth work is understood as non-formal education outside school and as socio-educational work carried out by, with, and for young people, individually or in groups, through a wide range of social, cultural, educational, environmental, and political activities. The Ministry describes this as a social practice, while the SNJ frames its role around creating the conditions for healthy development and supporting young people to become responsible, active citizens who respect democracy, values, and fundamental rights.

→ [Loi du 4 juillet 2008 sur la jeunesse \(Legilux, French\)](#) | [Ministry – Youth work principles and organisation](#)

Competence framework for young people

Luxembourg's approach to outcomes is distinctive because it works through the Cadre de référence national sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes (National Reference Framework on Non-Formal Education for Children and Young People). Established by the Règlement grand-ducal of 28 July 2017 and now in its 2021 edition, the Cadre de référence is structured around seven champs d'action (fields of action) and covers three age tranches – petite enfance / young children (under 4), âge scolaire / school age children (4–12), and jeunesse / youth (12–30) – so it spans the whole 0–30 age range rather than youth alone. Developed by the SNJ, it sets out fields of action, general objectives, and pedagogical principles for childcare, education, and youth services. Rather than specifying a narrow list of competences for young people, it focuses on the quality of the learning environment and on providing stimulating learning experiences. In that sense, it is more process-oriented than outcome-driven.

→ [Cadre de référence national – official hub \(enfancejeunesse.lu\)](#) | [Cadre de référence national 2021 \(PDF, men.public.lu, French\)](#) | [Cadre de référence national 2021 \(PDF, guichet.public.lu, French\)](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Concept d'Action Générale (CAG) – General Action Concept.** Since the introduction of the non-formal education framework for open youth work in 2017, quality assurance in Luxembourg has been tied to a structured monitoring system. A central element is the requirement that every youth centre produce a Concept d'Action Générale (CAG). Once positively reviewed by the SNJ and adopted by the Ministry, the concept remains valid for three years. It covers pedagogical aims and principles, organisation, structure, and internal evaluation. This creates a particularly clear link between local pedagogical planning and the national quality framework.

→ [Cadre de référence national – official hub \(enfancejeunesse.lu\)](#)

- **Regional Youth Agents (Agents régionaux, AREG).** Quality monitoring is carried out by regional youth agents employed by the SNJ. They visit services regularly to discuss how the non-formal education guidelines are being implemented and whether practice matches the service's general action concept. This is designed as a supportive and developmental process, rather than a punitive inspection model.

→ [SNJ – mission of regional youth officers](#) | [Ministry – Youth work principles](#)

- **Co-ordination of youth worker training and continuing education.** The SNJ co-ordinates both initial training for specialist youth workers and continuing education for professionals working with children and young people. It also manages the central continuing education portal, enfancejeunesse.lu, giving the non-formal education sector a single access point for training opportunities. This reinforces the idea that competent staff are a core element of quality.

→ [Continuing education portal – enfancejeunesse.lu](#)

- **Centre for Childhood and Youth Research (CCY) at the University of Luxembourg.** Youth work research and evaluation are an established part of the CCY's agenda. Projects have examined young people's educational experiences in non-formal settings and what they learn when they become active participants in youth work themselves. Luxembourg also takes part in the RAY network, and the CCY works with Anefore, the country's Erasmus+ agency, to generate evidence on programme impact.

→ [University of Luxembourg – Department of Social Sciences \(FHSE\)](#)

- **Higher Council for Youth (Conseil Supérieur de la Jeunesse).** The Higher Council for Youth brings together 22 representatives from youth organisations, youth services, organisations working for young people, pupils and students, municipal representatives, the National Assembly of Young People, the ministry, and youth research. It functions as a structural mechanism for bringing together the perspectives of young people, practitioners, and researchers in youth policy discussion.

→ [Loi du 4 juillet 2008 sur la jeunesse \(Legilux, French\)](#)

7. Germany

Ministry responsible for youth work

At federal level, youth policy in Germany sits with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). However, Germany's federal structure means that the Länder and municipalities carry most direct responsibility for child and youth services. The legal framework is set out in Book VIII of the Social Code (SGB VIII), especially sections 11–14 on child and youth work and section 73, which provides the legal basis for the Juleica.

→ [SGB VIII \(Sozialgesetzbuch Ahtes Buch, gesetze-im-internet.de, German\)](#) | [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Germany](#)

Aims of youth work

The Federal Government's Youth Strategy, adopted in December 2019, brings together 163 measures across nine youth-relevant areas and reflects the idea of Eigenständige Jugendpolitik – youth policy as a field in its own right. The strategy is intended to make the interests of Germany's 12- to 27-year-olds visible across government, whether the policy issue is housing, transport, internet access, or climate protection. Its overall aim is to ensure that measures in all policy areas take account of their likely effects on younger generations.

→ [BMFSFJ – Jugendstrategie \(German\)](#) | [Federal Government Youth Strategy explained \(deutschland.de\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

Germany does not have a single national competence framework that defines youth work outcomes for young people, nor does it have a general formal validation system for non-formal and informal learning in youth work. Instead, many organisations have developed their own standards and competence orientations. The federal Child and Youth Report, which must be published once in each parliamentary term under section 84 SGB VIII, provides a broad evidence base on young people's situation. The fifteenth

report described the youth phase through three broad developmental challenges: qualification, becoming independent, and positioning oneself in the world.

→ [SGB VIII § 84 – Kinder- und Jugendbericht \(gesetze-im-internet.de, German\)](#) | [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Germany](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Juleica – Jugendleiter*in-Card.** The Juleica is Germany's nationally standardised card for voluntary, and to a lesser extent paid, youth workers. It functions as proof of qualification, a form of authentication when dealing with public bodies, and a visible sign of recognition for voluntary commitment. To obtain one, a person must usually be at least 16, be active with a recognised youth service provider, complete a basic training course meeting agreed standards, and hold a valid first aid certificate. The card lasts for three years and can then be renewed through refresher training. Roughly 100,000 voluntary youth workers currently hold a Juleica. In practice, it is a large-scale non-formal training and recognition system for the volunteer base of German youth work.

→ [Juleica.de – official portal \(Deutscher Bundesjugendring\)](#) | [SGB VIII § 73 \(gesetze-im-internet.de, German\)](#)

- **Jugend-Check – youth relevance check on legislation.** The Jugend-Check is a regulatory impact tool that examines the possible effects of draft federal laws on young people aged 12–27 before those laws are adopted. It was developed jointly by the BMFSFJ, the Institute for Regulatory Impact Assessment and Evaluation, and youth policy experts, and has operated through the Kompetenzzentrum Jugend-Check (KomJC) since 2017. The KomJC is unusual in that it provides a continuous youth-focused regulatory assessment process through an independent academic institution. In the twentieth legislative period, it published 91 Jugend-Checks and examined around 490 draft laws.

→ [Kompetenzzentrum Jugend-Check \(FÖV\)](#) | [Jugend-Check \(Jugendgerecht.de, German\)](#)

- **Federal Child and Youth Plan (Kinder- und Jugendplan des Bundes, KJP).** The KJP is the central federal funding instrument for child and youth services. Its rules require pilot initiatives supported by the federal government to be accompanied by research and evidence-based evaluation. This gives Germany a structural link between funding and learning, even in the absence of a single overarching quality system.

→ [KJP Richtlinien 2017 \(BMFSFJ PDF, German\)](#) | [KJP consolidated guidelines \(verwaltungsvorschriften-im-internet.de, German\)](#)

- **Federal child and youth reports (Kinder- und Jugendberichte).** Once in each parliamentary term, the federal government must publish a Child and Youth Report. These are prepared by independent expert commissions and offer detailed empirical and conceptual analyses of specific aspects of the situation of children and young people. The reports summarise the state of research and identify policy gaps and emerging challenges, and they are widely used within the youth sector as authoritative reference works.
→ [SGB VIII § 84 \(gesetze-im-internet.de, German\)](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/s_g_b_viii_84.html)
- **Sector self-defined quality standards.** Beyond the Juleica and the KJP, Germany does not have a general quality assurance system for the non-formal sector. Instead, many organisations have developed their own standards, often with a strong emphasis on democratic decision-making, low-threshold access, participation, and reflective practice. This pluralism is both a strength and a limitation: it allows different traditions and providers to maintain distinct approaches, but it also makes system-wide comparison more difficult.
→ [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Germany](#)

8. The Netherlands

Ministry responsible for youth work

In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) holds overall responsibility for national youth policy, while the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science covers education-related dimensions. Since the major decentralisation reform of 2015 under the Jeugdwet, municipalities have had operational responsibility for youth services, including youth work, youth care, and preventive provision. The Nederlands Jeugdinstituut (NJI) acts as the national knowledge institute for the youth field and is a central source of methods, evidence, and quality tools.

→ [Jeugdwet \(wetten.overheid.nl, Dutch\)](https://wetten.overheid.nl/) | [Nederlands Jeugdinstituut \(NJI\)](https://www.nji.nl/)

Aims of youth work

After decentralisation in 2015, Dutch youth policy has been built around the idea that municipalities and their partners should be able to deliver coherent, locally grounded support to children and young people. Within this wider system, youth work contributes by strengthening developmental conditions, supporting wellbeing, and offering preventive support before more intensive youth care is needed. The broad aim is to help young people grow up safely and healthily, develop their talents, and participate fully in society.

→ [Jeugdwet \(wetten.overheid.nl, Dutch\)](https://wetten.overheid.nl) | [Nji – Effectief werken in het jeugdveld \(Dutch\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

The Netherlands does not have a single national competence framework for young people as such. Instead, the Dutch approach tends to define quality and expected impact at the level of interventions. Nji maintains a substantial database of effective youth interventions, each of which describes its aims, methods, target groups, and evidence base. It has also identified ten essential preconditions for a successful long-term youth approach. In practice, this means quality is framed less around a universal set of competences for all young people and more around what a given intervention is expected to achieve for a specific group.

→ [Nji – Kwaliteitskompas \(Dutch\)](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Kwaliteitskompas (Quality Compass).** The Kwaliteitskompas is Nji's central instrument for helping municipalities and their partners manage and improve quality in youth policy. In use since 2017, it is currently structured around seven bouwstenen (building blocks) and moves from ambitions and intended social outcomes, through policy choices and activity quality, to direct results, learning, and collaborative working. What makes it particularly useful is that it links policy and implementation in a single quality cycle rather than treating them as separate domains.

→ [Nji – Kwaliteitskompas \(Dutch\)](#) | [Kwaliteitskompas – interactive site \(Dutch\)](#)

- **Databank Effectieve Jeugdinterventies.** Nji's national database of effective youth interventions evaluates each entry against structured criteria covering theoretical basis, practical applicability, and evidence of effectiveness. Interventions are then recognised through a four-level scale, from 'well-founded' to 'effective according to strong indications'. Municipalities and providers can use the database when choosing evidence-based interventions, which then feed into the wider Kwaliteitskompas cycle.

→ [Nji – Kwaliteitskompas, kwaliteit van activiteiten \(Dutch\)](#)

- **Samen leren en verbeteren – joint learning and improvement.** One of the Kwaliteitskompas building blocks focuses explicitly on shared learning and improvement. The idea is that quality should be strengthened through collaboration between policy-makers, professionals, and providers, and that monitoring should support learning rather than simply accountability. Nji also provides guidance on setting up learning networks in which municipalities, providers, schools, and others can learn from one another.

→ [Nji – Samen leren en verbeteren \(Dutch\)](#) | [Nji – Hoe versterken we samen de kwaliteit \(Dutch\)](#)

- **Staat van de Jeugd.** This public data resource, maintained by Nji, provides municipality-level information on the situation of children and young people. It allows municipalities to begin the Kwaliteitskompas cycle from a firmer evidence base, combining statistical data with observations, signals, and stories from professionals, young people, parents, and partners.

→ [Nji – Model voor samenhangende aanpak \(Dutch\)](#)

- **Effective practice publications and guidance.** Beyond the Kwaliteitskompas itself, Nji produces a continuing stream of practical guidance, including manuals, background publications on effective working, and material on leading principles in the social domain. In that sense, Nji functions as an ongoing knowledge infrastructure for the Dutch youth field, with the Kwaliteitskompas acting as a key point of integration.

→ [Nji – Kwaliteitskompas \(working with it, Dutch\)](#)

9. Malta

Ministry responsible for youth work

In Malta, youth work falls within the ministry responsible for youth, currently the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation. At operational level, two bodies are central: Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, the National Youth Agency established by Legal Notice 522 of 2010 and the main employer of professional youth workers; and the Youth Work Profession Board, created under the Youth Work Profession Act 2014 to regulate the profession. Malta is therefore one of the relatively few countries in Europe where youth work is formally regulated through dedicated legislation.

→ [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) | [Youth Work Profession Act – Chapter 533 \(Laws of Malta, PDF\)](#)

Aims of youth work

The Youth Work Profession Act (Chapter 533, originally Act XX of 2014) defines youth work as a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social, and political development of young people. Youth workers engage with young people in their communities, including the voluntary sector, and support them in realising their potential and responding critically and creatively to life's challenges so that they can contribute to social change. The Act also states that youth work should take account of all forms of diversity and applies to young people aged 13 to 30. The current National Youth Policy 'Towards 2030 – Reaching out to, working with, and supporting

young people' runs from 2021 to 2030 (with a mid-term review in 2025/26) and is structured around eight strategic goals.

→ [Youth Work Profession Act – Chapter 533 \(Laws of Malta, PDF\)](#) | [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#)

Competence framework for young people

Malta does not have a separate national competence framework for young people as outcomes of youth work. It does, however, provide a clear pathway through three accredited programmes delivered by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ at MQF Levels 1, 2, and 3. These courses focus on independent living, working life, and workplace-related skills, run for 35–40 weeks, and are taught by professional youth workers. As a result, some youth work outcomes are formally recognised within the national qualifications framework.

→ [Council of Europe – Malta Youth Partnership](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Youth Work Profession Act and the Youth Work Profession Board.** Malta's most distinctive feature is the regulation of youth work as a profession. The Act (Chapter 533) establishes the Youth Work Profession Board, sets out its composition and functions, and provides a regulatory framework for professional practice, including codes of conduct and sanctions. The Board is responsible for assessing standards, recommending requirements for initial and continuing education, recognising qualifications, awarding or refusing warrants, maintaining the register of youth workers and associations, advising on the Code of Ethics, and examining allegations of misconduct, negligence, or incompetence.

→ [Youth Work Profession Act – Chapter 533 \(Laws of Malta, PDF\)](#)

- **Warranting system for youth workers.** In Malta, practising as a youth worker requires a warrant from the Youth Work Profession Board. To qualify, a person must complete one of the approved University of Malta programmes and then show the equivalent of two years' full-time practice in the field. This creates a single and highly formal route into professional youth work, closer in structure to professions such as teaching or social work than to the looser arrangements seen in many other countries.

→ [Youth Work Profession Act – Chapter 533 \(Laws of Malta, PDF\)](#)

- **Quality Label and Quality Service Charter.** Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ has received the Quality Label awarded within the Maltese Public Administration for

service delivery that meets defined standards. The scheme is organised around four pillars and the five SERVQUAL determinants. The agency's Quality Service Charter, available in both English and Maltese, makes these standards visible to young people and signals a commitment to ongoing monitoring and improvement.

→ [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ – homepage and Quality Label](#)

- **Practice Guide for the safety and well-being of young people.** The agency has also developed a Practice Guide for staff, contracted workers, volunteers, placement students, and interns. It is designed to support the protection, safety, and wellbeing of young people, and to ensure that risks are recognised and addressed quickly. Alongside this, the agency also uses data protection, staff development, and performance management measures as part of its internal quality approach.

→ [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#)

- **University–practice collaboration and gathering young people's opinions.** Through a memorandum of understanding with the University of Malta's Department of Youth and Community Studies, Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ provides fieldwork placements for students preparing to enter the profession. The agency also works with the National Youth Council on issues affecting young people's wellbeing and uses interactive media to gather young people's views regularly. In practice, those views form part of its ongoing quality improvement work.

→ [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Malta](#)

10. Norway

Ministry responsible for youth work

Norwegian youth policy is cross-sectoral, so there is no single ministry of youth as such. Overall responsibility for child and youth policy sits with the Ministry of Children and Families, while the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) acts as the central operational body. Much youth work still depends on municipal initiative and civil-society actors, with Youth Work Norway (Ungdom og Fritid) playing a particularly important role at national level.

→ [Bufdir – Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs](#) | [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Norway](#)

Aims of youth work

In Norway, youth work is still closely associated with professional open youth work in youth clubs, most of which are supported or provided by municipalities. NGO-run youth clubs are also becoming more common. The aims are usually framed around creating safe and inclusive meeting places, supporting participation and democratic engagement, strengthening health and wellbeing, and giving young people experiences of mastery and belonging. More broadly, Norwegian youth policy places strong emphasis on cross-sectoral co-operation and on the participation of children and young people.

→ [Ungdom og Fritid \(Youth Work Norway\)](#)

Competence framework for young people

Norway does not have a separate national competence framework setting out youth work outcomes for young people. Its strength lies instead in the depth of its data on young people themselves. The Ungdata survey covers a wide range of issues relevant to adolescent life, from health and substance use to family relationships, leisure, wellbeing, and school. Researchers at OsloMet have also used Ungdata data to examine how municipalities can use youth clubs more actively to support health and wellbeing. In practice, Norway answers the question of what young people gain from youth work more through empirical evidence than through a prescriptive national framework.

→ [Ungdata – national hub](#)

Key quality and impact assessment tools

- **Rammeverket – the Framework for fritidsklubber (Ungdom og Fritid).** Rammeverket (the Framework) is Norway's sector-led quality framework for fritidsklubber (youth clubs), produced by Ungdom og Fritid (Youth Work Norway) as part of the Fritidsklubbløftet (Youth Club Boost) project. Launched in June 2024, the project is supported by a NOK 270 million grant from Gjensidigestiftelsen, with Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) as partner. Rammeverket sets out recommendations on universal design, staffing norms, youth worker competence and qualifications (currently no degree pathway exists in Norway for youth club workers), facilities, and youth participation in club design. As such, it represents the most concerted current attempt to establish nationwide quality benchmarks for open youth work in Norway, driven by the sector itself rather than by central government.

→ [Ungdom og Fritid – Rammeverket \(Norwegian\)](#) | [Ungdom og Fritid – Strategic Plan 2025–2027 hub \(Norwegian\)](#)

- **Quality criteria for municipal youth clubs.** Youth Work Norway (Ungdom og Fritid), together with the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees, has published quality criteria for municipal youth clubs, youth centres, and open meeting places. These criteria cover outreach, democratic values and participation, facilities and resources, youth worker competences, and interdisciplinary co-operation. They are sector-defined rather than state-imposed, and therefore reflect practitioner views of what good quality looks like.
→ [Ungdom og Fritid – Youth Work Norway \(Norwegian\)](#)
- **Ungdata survey – national youth survey at municipal level.** Ungdata is a population-based survey scheme established in 2010 and funded through the national budget, with data collected locally in municipalities. The most recent national report (NOVA Rapport 4/25, Bakken 2025) covers the 2023–2025 sweep and is based on responses from 276,397 young people across 345 municipalities plus Svalbard, with an overall response rate of 77 per cent (compared with a pre-pandemic average of around 87 per cent). The Ungdata Centre at NOVA, OsloMet co-ordinates the system, while regional KORUS centres support implementation. The survey includes a dedicated section on access to and use of youth clubs, youth centres, and open meeting places, making it a particularly valuable source of comparable data on the reach and uptake of youth work.
→ [Ungdata 2025 – NOVA Rapport 4/25 \(PDF, Norwegian\)](#) | [Ungdata – national hub](#)
- **Ungdata Junior and Ungdata Plus.** The system has expanded through two complementary surveys. Ungdata Junior is adapted for children in grades 5 to 7, while Ungdata Plus is a longitudinal study linking survey responses to register data in order to study longer-term outcomes such as education, work, and family life. This gives Norway unusually strong capacity to examine how young people’s wellbeing develops over time and how leisure activities, including youth club participation, may relate to later outcomes.
→ [Ungdata Junior – methodology paper \(Sage\)](#) | [OsloMet – Youth Research](#)
- **Youth Leadership training and quality development by Youth Work Norway.** With funding from the Norwegian Directorate of Health, Youth Work Norway offers a Youth Leadership course that emphasises youth clubs as inclusive meeting places where participation supports wellbeing, mastery, and belonging. The organisation, which brings together more than 600 youth clubs nationwide, also trains youth workers, develops quality standards, contributes to research, and works with policy-makers, educators, and employers to strengthen the field.

→ [Ungdom og Fritid – Youth Work Norway](#) | [Council of Europe – Country sheet on youth work in Norway](#)

- **Bufdir-commissioned research on youth work and youth participation.** Norway's evidence base is also strengthened by commissioned research. This includes a 2021–2022 project by the Norwegian Labour Research Institute on participatory work with young people in municipalities, a 2023 NTNU Social Research study on the framework conditions for leisure clubs, and the longer-running work of the Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary Sector. Together with Ungdata, these studies give Norway a strong basis for evidence-informed youth policy.

→ [Bufdir – Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs](#)

Lessons for Ukraine

The most useful immediate references for Ukraine are Finland (peer review, framework law, Kyllin hyvä toolkit), Estonia (portfolio-based competence certification by a sector body), Norway (sector-led framework via a CSO, plus the Ungdata survey), Scotland, the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland (low-stakes self-evaluation), Germany (Juleica volunteer recognition), and Ireland (dual track for volunteer groups).

These six countries were selected on the basis of three criteria: (1) the model is compatible with a decentralised, hromada-based system; (2) it has low running costs and does not require a large central agency or inspectorate; and (3) the sector itself, rather than the state, plays the lead role in quality assurance. The table below summarises the main transferable element from each country, together with its key strength, main limitation, and the conditions under which it is most likely to work in Ukraine.

Country	Transferable model/tool	Key strength	Main limitation	Conditions for applicability in Ukraine
Finland	KNY peer-assessment model; Kyllin hyvä self-assessment toolkit; Youth Act as framework law	Cheapest quality model in the sample; peer-driven; ready-made toolkit	Depends on a critical mass of willing municipalities; no enforcement mechanism	Requires a network co-ordinator (CSO or association); hromadas willing to participate voluntarily
Estonia	Portfolio-based occupational certification (levels 5, 6, 7) run by a sector association (ENK)	Competence-based, no degree gate; very low cost; recognises informal learning	Trust in the certifying body must be built; integration with national qualifications framework needed	Requires an accredited certifying body with transparent procedures; NQF alignment
Scotland, the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Low-stakes self-evaluation (How Good Is Our... frameworks); Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework	Improvement-focused, not punitive; builds a learning culture	No compliance lever; quality depends on provider willingness	Works best where there is already sector buy-in; benefits from light-touch national oversight
Norway	Rammeverket (sector-led quality framework); Ungdata municipal youth survey	CSO-driven, not state-driven; one shared survey gives comparable data cheaply	Framework is new (2024) and untested at scale; survey needs sustained funding	Needs a strong national CSO or network; donor/foundation funding can substitute for state budget
Germany	Juleica volunteer youth-leader card	Minimal infrastructure cost; devolved to civil-society providers; 100,000+ holders	Recognises volunteers only; not a professional qualification	Needs recognised training providers at local level; training standards must be agreed nationally
Ireland	Dual-track quality standards (NQSF for professionals; simpler	Recognises that volunteers and professionals need	Lighter track may become a ceiling rather than a floor	Realistic where volunteer provision is the norm; incentives

	standards for volunteer-led groups)	different compliance levels		needed to encourage progression
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The unifying thread is that all of these put the sector itself, rather than the state, at the centre of quality assurance – which is the most workable starting point for Ukraine in the medium term. That is not to say a sector-centred approach carries no risks. Fragmentation of standards across hromadas, uneven quality between communities, and limited accountability mechanisms are real concerns. But comparable systems manage these tensions in practice: in Finland, the KNY network co-ordinates peer assessment across 21 or more municipalities, creating shared criteria and a common quality language without central enforcement; in Scotland, Education Scotland provides a light-touch oversight function alongside the sector’s own self-evaluation, ensuring that local autonomy does not drift into isolation. A sector-led model is not the same as an unco-ordinated one – and the examples above show how horizontal co-ordination between practitioners can do much of the work that a vertical inspectorate would otherwise be expected to do.

To save resources, Ukraine should focus on using peer review rather than state/government inspection -- like Finland and Scotland

- **Finland - the Kanuuna / KNY peer-assessment model.** In Finland, youth workers from one municipality visit another, observe practice against shared criteria, and produce a developmental report. It is a peer-learning model rather than an inspection regime. The Kyllin hyvä package adds self-assessment tools, youth surveys, and curriculum templates. For Ukraine, the main attraction is practical: this is a relatively light-touch way to support quality at hromada level without creating a large new compliance structure.
- **Scotland, the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland - low-stakes self-evaluation through the 'How Good Is Our...' frameworks.** Scotland uses a shared set of quality indicators for joint self-evaluation by providers, managers, and partners. The purpose is improvement, not punishment. That distinction matters. In a system where central enforcement capacity is limited, and where the immediate task is to strengthen practice, a learning-oriented framework is more likely to be used well than a rigid inspection model.

To keep the system light, rely on civil-society organisations and youth NGOs -- like Norway and Germany

- **Norway - a sector-led framework through Ungdom og Fritid.** Norway's current quality work in youth clubs is driven mainly by the sector itself, especially through Rammeverket and the wider Fritidsklubbbløftet project. This

shows that a credible national framework does not always need to start with legislation or a central government body. For Ukraine, that is a realistic lesson. Much of the field already depends on CSOs, donor support, and local initiative, so a sector-led model may be the most workable route in the short to medium term.

- **Germany - Juleica as a practical volunteer-recognition model.** Germany's Juleica card offers a simple way to recognise and support volunteer youth leaders through short training and periodic renewal. It is nationally recognised, but the issuing process is still rooted in civil-society providers. For Ukraine, this is useful not because it should be copied exactly, but because it shows how a volunteer base can be recognised without building a complex state-run system around it.

To certify youth workers on the basis of competence, avoid degree gatekeeping -- like Estonia

- **Estonia - portfolio-based occupational certification at three levels (5, 6, 7).** Estonia's model is built around occupational standards, portfolio evidence, and a short expert interview. It does not depend on a single degree route, which means people can demonstrate competence gained through work experience, non-formal learning, or formal education. That makes it especially relevant for Ukraine, where the workforce is still developing and includes many practitioners whose experience is real but not always formally recognised. At this stage, a competence-based route is likely to be more useful than a tightly regulated professional model.

To anchor the system in Ukrainian law without over-prescribing - like Finland and Republic of Ireland

- **Finland - the Youth Act 1285/2016 as a framework law.** The Finnish Youth Act sets out aims, defines the field, and places responsibility on municipalities to create the conditions for youth work, but it does not prescribe a single delivery model. That balance is important. For Ukraine, a framework law of this kind would give youth work clearer standing while still leaving room for local variation between hromadas.
- **Ireland - a parallel quality track for volunteer-led groups.** Ireland runs a full framework for professional services and a simpler one for volunteer-led groups. The logic is straightforward: the same expectations cannot sensibly be applied to every provider. This is a useful lesson for Ukraine. A small volunteer group in a rural hromada should not be asked to meet the same administrative requirements as a larger professional service in a major city.

To build solid Ukraine-focused evidence base cheaply, invest in one good population survey - like Norway

- **Norway - Ungdata as a shared municipal-level youth survey.** Norway's approach is notable because it relies on one strong survey instrument used across municipalities, rather than many small disconnected studies. In practice, the system works through a clear division of labour: the Ungdata Centre at NOVA (OsloMet) designs the questionnaire, manages the data, and produces national analysis, while regional KORUS centres support implementation in individual municipalities. Funding comes from a dedicated national budget line. Municipalities participate on a rolling cycle, so the data is refreshed regularly without requiring every municipality to survey simultaneously. For Ukraine, the principle is clear: one shared survey designed well and administered at hromada level – even a modest one, using existing school or youth centre infrastructure to keep costs down and running on an annual or biennial cycle – would generate more usable evidence than a patchwork of one-off evaluations. The key is that the instrument is shared, so results are comparable across hromadas and over time.

Resource-heavy models/limited use in Ukraine

- **Malta and Luxembourg - strong systems, but resource-heavy.** Malta's statutory professional regulation and Luxembourg's combination of a national framework, mandatory local action concepts, and regional monitoring are both highly developed systems. They are also built for relatively small, well-resourced jurisdictions with stronger central capacity than Ukraine currently has. That said, specific elements from both could be partially adapted without importing the full regulatory infrastructure. From Malta, the Code of Ethics for youth workers and the Practice Guide for the safety and wellbeing of young people are both standalone documents that could be adapted for Ukrainian use without requiring the full warranting regime or the Youth Work Profession Board. From Luxembourg, the Concept d'Action Générale – the requirement that each youth centre produce a local pedagogical planning document, reviewed periodically – is a practical quality tool that could work at hromada level without the salaried regional monitoring agents (AREG) that Luxembourg uses to oversee implementation. What would not transfer cheaply at this stage: Malta's full warranting system (degree-only entry, statutory registration, formal misconduct procedures) and Luxembourg's AREG staffing model.