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9TH EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF YOUTH CENTRES

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Activity report

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Executive Summary

The Quality Label Platform is an annual meeting organised by the Council of Europe for the Quality Labelled Youth Centres across Europe. It is an opportunity for the managers and lead personnel from youth centres in member states to meet annually to exchange examples of good practice, to network and develop cooperation and to explore any current trends or issues of common strategic importance.

From the Council of Europe's side, the meeting is used to inform the youth centres about developments in youth policy and youth work at European level and the implications of any such policies and practices for the youth centres.

This was the 9th Platform meeting and the thematic focus was on "Involving youth centres in the youth policy and youth work of the Council of Europe". In total, 27 participants attended the meeting from 12 countries and 17 youth centres were represented of which 10 are labelled.

The four thematic sessions of the 9th Platform meeting provided a focused programme and in-depth exchange of the participants. The Platform explored thoroughly the themes and provided a strong basis for the further involvement of youth centres in the development of youth policy and effect on youth work.

The group explored the value of youth work in youth centres and examined ways in which the work and the centres can be better promoted. This included the use of appropriate targeting of key stakeholders and language when developing promotional materials. This discussion approved the draft text on the role and value of youth work in youth centres was produced by the Quality Label expert team.

The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on Youth Work produced much interest. Apart from the lobbying potential such a document provides, it also delivered qualitative discussions on topics such as quality standards, cross-sectorial approaches and youth worker education and training. Many of the youth centres confirmed their intention to use the Recommendation in relation with municipalities as well as state level.

The role of youth centres in the development of youth policy was in some ways a more challenging subject to face. Some of the youth centres were able to show how they approach this area but others admitted this was still an area they struggled with. A number of good examples were shared, issues highlighted, and solutions pointed out. One important aspect was the reminder to the youth centres of the Quality Label criteria which obliges centres to commit to the development of youth policy.

The thematic session on indicators related primarily to the qualitative measuring and quantitative aspect of youth work. Many lessons learned were shared through the Finnish example and the discussion explored possible ways of dealing with this challenge for the youth sector.

The Platform participants made some recommendations with reference to the needs of youth centres, the next Platform meeting, the next Quality Label training course, and the developments for the new Quality Label brochure on youth centres role, value and impact in youth work and at large.

1. Background

The European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg are the backbone of the Council of Europe's youth sector. They serve as educational laboratories for the development of quality standards for youth work and focal points for innovation in youth policy development. Through the European Youth Centres, the Council of Europe offers young people and the formal and less formal structures of youth civil society across Europe, high-level educational support, protected physical spaces and residential facilities, and access to all other sectors of the Council of Europe. The work programme of the European Youth Centres is a unique combination of policy development, training, research and educational innovation. They are centres of excellence and a central pillar of the reputation of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe as a standard setter in the youth sector.

In 2008, the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) adopted a project to promote the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe as standard-setting instruments and examples of good practice for youth policy. This project aims at knowledge sharing and networking among youth centres across Europe.

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

1. the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres, to be awarded to youth centres that meet the standard, includes an assessment process, visits, award ceremony etc.;
2. an annual training course for the youth work and educational staff of the youth centres involved in the network, and;
3. an annual meeting of a European Platform of Youth Centres to ensure networking and experience sharing among centres recognised with the Quality Label and those aspiring to its acquisition. This meeting is for youth centre management.

Objectives of the European Platform of Youth Centres

The set of objectives for the annual European Platform are as follows:

- to inform about recent developments in youth policy on European level and to discuss how they can be used by the centres in terms of recognition of their work and impact;
- to exchange experience and practices among centres in how they address the challenges they are facing at national level;
- to develop joint approaches in order to promote the youth centres;
- to ensure networking and cooperation possibilities among labelled centres.

2. The 2018 Programme

The main theme of the 9th Platform meeting was 'Involving youth centres in the youth policy and youth work of the Council of Europe'. The programme focused mainly on four thematic sessions:

1. The relevance of youth centres as educational establishments – how to pitch the value of youth work in youth centres successfully

This session revolved around a new Quality Label brochure drafted to identify the role, value and impact of (labelled) youth centres. Much of the input and discussion focused on the need for appropriate language for the targeted audience, meaning that if only 'youth work language' is used it might not be

possible to reach out to other sectors. Recognition of youth centres work is needed, however, it must also come from the sector itself.

2. Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work – enhancing the provisions of quality youth work.

The [Recommendation](#) was presented and explored in detail, promoted as a source for lobbying and advocacy. Many of the managers of youth centres were able to identify relevant links with the standard and its potential use, especially in the development of youth policies. Recognition again came up as a subject.

3. The role of (quality labelled) youth centres in the development of youth policy.

This session explored the difficulties experienced in youth centres connecting with the development of youth policy. Positives and negatives of the journey of the Killarney Youth Centre, Ireland was used as an example and the presentation explored how this centre built a working relationship with the relevant authorities and how it has changed over time. The importance of adapting to the public authorities and balancing this against being resilient was also highlighted.

4. Opportunities and challenges in setting up a national system of indicators and tools for youth centres to measure impact – the Finnish experience

This session looked at ways of measuring impact and focused on a scorecard developed by the [Finnish Youth Centres Association](#). The lack of documentation of measuring quality was discussed and it was concluded that the authorities (local/rational) mainly request quantitative information rather than qualitative.

3. The Platform

The Council of Europe and the Platform

The Quality Label Programme has gained a lot of momentum since it started and the Platform will be celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2019. The Quality Label youth centres have become increasingly present in the activities of the Council of Europe Youth Programme and are progressively integrated in the work of youth sector. Most Quality Label youth centres have taken on new responsibilities - for example: contributing as members of expert teams for quality label assessment visits; participating as members of Council of Europe delegations for advisory missions to member states; partaking as members of the High level task force group on the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work, etc. As a result of increased recognition of the Quality Label Programme, some Council of Europe member states are currently looking to develop their own quality label/national standard for youth centres. Moreover, the support from the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), who is the initiator of the programme, is after a decade still steadfast.

Platform Development

The development of the Platform is constantly progressing and developing. New approaches have been implemented in 2018 taking into account the suggestions of the previous Platforms. These include making a clear distinction between the Platform meeting and the annual training course: the Platform is primarily for managers and other key staff, while the training course is for youth worker and other educational staff. The Platform meetings have been shortened to better accommodate the needs of managers and the themes are focusing on strategic leadership issues of common

interest. The themes for the annual training course will be better linked to good practices in youth work and the development of educational offer and programmes.

Since last year, the Platform meeting is held in one of the Europe Youth Centres (Budapest/Strasbourg) and the training course is hosted by a Quality Labelled youth centre. This enables the network to visit other labelled centres as well as benefit from the hosting centres' expertise in a field, as the theme of the training ideally should match with the expertise of the hosting centre.

Quality Label Developments

The Quality Label Programme is increasingly recognised as an example of good practice and the youth centres are progressively being used as a resource in the work of the youth sector. For example, the experiences of the Quality Label youth centres are being utilised to shape the Platform as a whole, and when assessing candidate youth centres aspiring to receive the label, representatives of labelled centres are contributing. The youth centres have different kind of expertise which is valuable when composing the expert team for an exploratory visit. To get the most competent assessment of a candidate youth centre, the right matching of a Quality Label youth centre is important and the candidate centre can be supported with relevant expertise and know-how throughout the process.

The importance of the visit to a candidate centre is essential. Increased interaction between the expert group and the candidate centre leads to a better understanding of the needs, and therefore the ability of the expert group to provide adequate advice and support. The expert group is currently working on adapting the procedures for the initial 3 year period and the 5 year extension period of holding the label. As a result of the expansion of labelled centres and putting in place new procedures, it is planned to expand the pool of experts.

The Participants

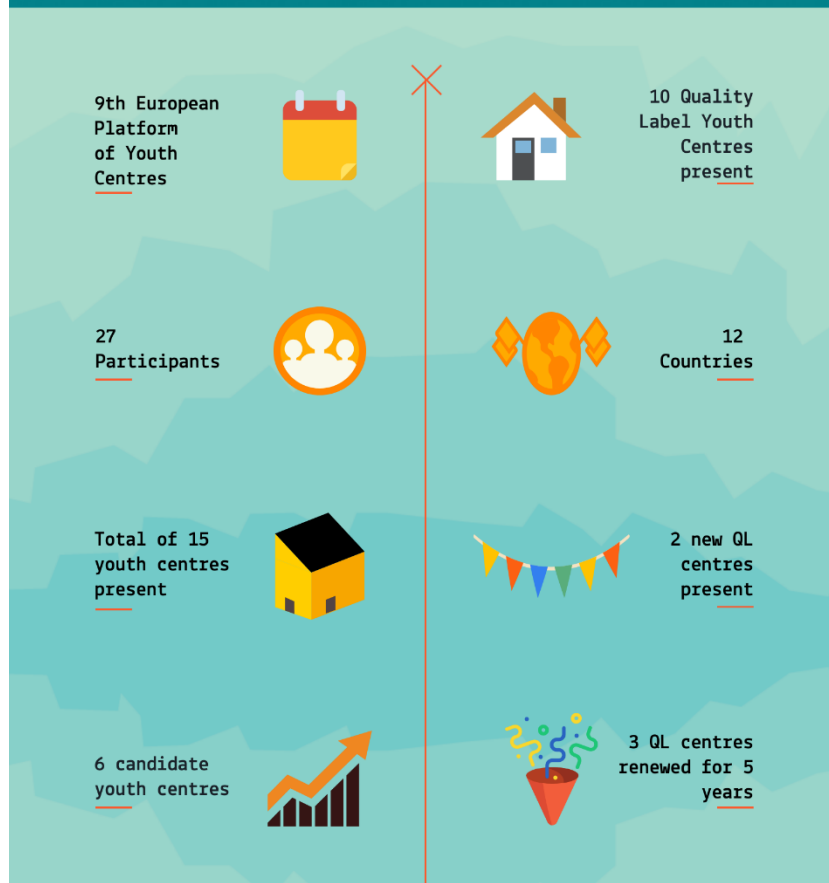
The 9th Platform brought together:

- managers and other key staff members of the youth centres awarded the Quality Label, youth centres currently in the process of acquiring the Quality Label, or youth centres planning to initiate such process;
- decision-makers planning to establish a youth centre with Council of Europe philosophy and quality standards;

In total 17 centres were represented at the 9th Platform of which 10 are labelled. After a call in 2017 for expression of interest, a number of youth centres submitted their interest to embark on an evaluation process of which several were present at this Platform meeting.

Currently there are 11 Quality Labelled youth centres located in 10 member states (June 2018). This will potentially become 13 by the beginning of 2019 as two new centres are envisaged to be assessed in 2018. An increase in the number of Quality label youth centres in 2019 and beyond is thus to be expected.

9TH PLATFORM *statistics*



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4. Quality Label Youth Centres in action

The youth centres present at the 9th Platform shared examples of some of their current work. The examples showed the diversity of work of the centres as well as their impact on the communities in which they are based. Some youth centres are involved in on-going work for the recognition of youth work, in the development of a youth work strategy and setting up national standards. Other centres are dedicated to the development of regional or city based youth meetings, creating support structures for volunteers, working with vulnerable groups such as young Roma and travellers or giving more focus to human rights in their work. The full list of activities can be found in Appendix C.

Future Plans of the Youth Centres

The youth centres were asked to share their plans for the next 12 months and beyond. A large number of plans were shared and interesting connections were

identified, for example a 'job shadowing' proposal for peer learning. More specifically, the centres shared the following:

[Vormingscentrum Destelheide, Belgium](#) is focusing on development work with respect to arts education, human rights education and increased involvement of volunteers. A call for EVS for young people with artistic backgrounds is under way. The centre is also planning a youth exchange, which will combine art and human rights education. A major challenge recently has been the fusion of Destelheide and Hanenbos youth centre, becoming one youth centre with two locations. The centre is also preparing for the end of terms visit in October for the prolongation of the label.

[Youth Centre Villa Elba, Finland](#) recently received the prolongation of the label for the next four years (2019-2022). The centre is continuing its work in a number of international projects which is one of its specialities.

[Youth Centre "Ekocentar Radulovački", Serbia](#) recently received the prolongation of the quality label for the next five years (2019-2023). They continue to prioritise recognition of youth work at national level. The centre has several projects lined up, e.g. International Voluntary Summer Work Camps and the project 'Citizens to science' which will target local communities and will explore the biodiversity of rivers, streams and wetlands.

[Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal](#) is developing its human rights education programme. The centre is supporting the City of Cascais, the European Youth Capital 2018 (outside Lisbon). They intend to translate Council of Europe publications into Portuguese, including the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on Youth Work. In cooperation with other labelled centres they will organise a youth worker study visit to Finland and they are involved in a job shadowing scheme with other centres.

[FITT – Timișoara Youth House, Romania](#) are actively involved in the drafting of a new youth law, which will include specific provisions for youth centres. They also helped drafting a new regional youth strategy for Timisoara County and have been assigned to develop quality standards for youth centres in Romania. The work is conducted in connection with the Romanian EU presidency and will support the EU youth work agenda. Youth exchanges, training courses and EVS/Solidarity Corps opportunities are also prioritised and the centre is participating in job shadowing schemes for youth centres.

[Marienthal Youth Centre, Luxembourg](#) received the quality label for the initial period 2018-2020 and hosted the 3rd Quality Label Training Course for educational staff in February 2018 in connection with their award ceremony. The training course focused on the topic of young people's access to social rights and the 'Enter! Project'.

[Killarney Youth Centre, Ireland](#) received the Quality Label for the period of 2017-2019 and the assessment process has been good for reflecting on their practice, structure and programming.

[Youth Centre Brežice, Slovenia](#) has broadened their target group and have initiated work with local Roma (youth) population. Street based youth work is another priority and they are looking for partners for a training course on 'Positive Self-Image' among young people.

[Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud \(CEULAJ\), Spain](#) has a newly appointed director and they are preparing for the prolongation of the quality label. Work is being done on improving the infrastructure of the centre in terms of innovation, energy and efficiency. Currently they are designing activities using the local open cultural spaces for focusing on employment issues.

[Youth Centre Marttinen, Finland](#) is currently focusing on the preparations of the quality label expert team visit, which will take place in June 2018. Strong focus is

given to develop the international dimension of the centre's work; they have now 10 volunteers are currently recruiting more. Soon they will embark on an ambitious 2-year project bringing together youth researchers, municipalities, and youth workers. In December, the centre will celebrate its 25th anniversary and it is hoped that this can be combined with a potential quality label award ceremony. They are partners in the job shadowing schemes for youth centres.

WannseeFORUM Youth Centre, Germany is currently focusing on the preparations of the quality label expert team visit, which will take place in September 2018. Major upcoming events are to host a large scale Berlin Youth Forum and to organise a large youth meeting with the German parliament with over 900 young people.

De Hoge Rielen – ADJ vzW, Belgium are preparing a global strategy meeting on communication and marketing for youth centres and youth work. They will be developing quality evaluation tools, surveys and focus groups and they are currently involved in youth exchanges. The plan is to host a Quality Label expert team visit in 2019.

Torino Youth Department, Italy informed that they recently learned about the Quality Label for youth centres and are keen to learn more and potentially also apply for the label at a later stage.

For a full list of planned activities, see Appendix C.

5. Youth Centres and the Value of Youth Work

Thematic Session I: The relevance of youth centres as educational establishments – how to pitch the value of youth work in youth centres successfully

One of the questions around youth work and particularly with regards to youth centres, is 'what do you do?' and 'what is the value of what you do?' Even though these questions have been asked since the beginnings of youth work, the youth sector does not have a great track record of being able to answer it. This chapter examines the on-going need for recognition of youth work and explores a means to support that process in the form of a new Quality Label brochure. A text drafted by the expert group was presented addressing the work of the youth centres and what a youth centre should deliver in terms of quality youth work and non-formal education.

Council of Europe Quality Label Text

Georges Metz, the Director of the National Youth Service in Luxembourg, and a member of the Quality Label expert group introduced the draft text on the new Quality Label brochure. He explained that the basis for producing the text was for creating a common understanding of the Quality Label as a concept and an action. It is to show what has been achieved in the last decade, promote its value, and to heighten the recognition of the work. It also works as a reference document.

Structure of the Text

The text explains the historical background of the Platform, the current trends, and introduces the Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work. The bulk of the text goes on to explore the value of residential activities and the importance of youth organisations having a space to operate from. It explains how youth centres can respond to the educational needs of youth groups, schools and even public authorities, providing services and approaches that other sectors cannot. This also links with youth centres being able to act as multipliers through offering training courses, educational tools, and materials to others.

The text highlights and promotes youth centres as the backbone of the youth sector. It also emphasises the role of the Council of Europe, which is to maintain coherence, support the connections and create the conditions for the further development of the Platform. It also stresses that this does not mean financial support for the daily running of any of the youth centres.

The Youth Centres and the Text

It was proposed that the new brochure can be used as a base when producing official documentation or an action plan by the youth centres. The text has been designed to work as a guide through its explanation of youth work and its description of the concept of a youth centre. It was expressed that the text could further support reflection on practice and act as a system for the monitoring of good practice. All of the youth centres present at the Platform felt that the text represented them in a constructive way. It was shared that the Quality Label brochure on the 15 criteria was rather technical, whereas this text was inspirational because it articulated more about the purpose of a youth centre and its relationship with young people. Through a constructive discussion, clarifications were sought and found, elements that participants felt were missing were highlighted, and various points of view were taken into account for the next drafting.

Lobbying

Some of the participants saw the text as a complimentary tool for lobbying. They thought that the text would be useful in lobbying with different stakeholders. The group explored how the text can play a role in creating an understanding about youth work and the purpose of the youth centre with local and national authorities. Others saw the text as a tool for promoting the quality of youth work and the Quality Label among peer centres at national level. It was also highlighted that it would be particularly useful for explaining to schools what a youth centre does. This would be especially useful in countries where recognition of youth work is lacking. Some expressed the need for the text to be even more practical based, with step-by-step sections and good practice combined with different topics. There was also a proposal for a shorter version and versions with adapted language for different target groups.

Conclusion

The group highlighted how the text can be used as a guideline for developing youth centre strategy and communication plans, etc. The participants emphasised the importance of how the text makes it clear what a youth centre is, what its role is, and how it works in its educational capacity for the personal and social development of young people. Creating that local level understanding of the idea and role of a youth centre is extremely important to all the centres. This text will support the centres in showing their value in society and how they connect with other sectors and different institutions. The new brochure may also work as a development tool.

What Next

Based on the comments from the participants during the Platform meeting and by email afterwards, a new version of the brochure was circulated amongst the participants during the summer. Once agreed by written procedure, the new text will be part of the Platform report and as such submitted to the CDEJ in October 2018. The finalised text will become a new publication of the Council of Europe (in English and French) and at the disposal of the youth centres.

6. The Recommendation on Quality Youth Work

Thematic session II: Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work – enhancing the provisions of quality youth work

In May 2017 the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers unanimously adopted the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on Youth Work](#). This was a historic step towards broader recognition and support for youth work and the first texts of its kind about youth work as a field of practice in its own right, acknowledging the countless positive outcomes they create for individuals, their communities and for society in general. In this second thematic session the Recommendation was presented and the group focused their discussions on a number of different aspects linked to the Recommendation.

'Recommendation on Youth Work – enhancing the provisions of quality youth work'

Antje Rothmund, Head of the Youth Department, Council of Europe, explained that the Recommendation provides a common base for youth work for the member states of the Council of Europe. Though the Recommendation is not legally binding, it provides a definition that all the member states in principle have agreed upon. The Recommendation makes a useful lobbying tool for youth work as each government has agreed to its adoption.

In her presentation, she emphasised that this is the first policy document that talks about youth work as a field of social practice. Furthermore, the Recommendation highlights the importance of seeing young people as a resource and not a problem, it emphasises that youth work is an empowering and participative process.

Within the Recommendation there are 7 specific recommendations. The last one uses the Quality Label for youth centres as an example of good practice for linking youth work provision and the implementation of youth policy:

"Recommends that the governments of the member States, within their sphere of competence, renew their support for youth work by: promoting the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres as an example of good practice;"¹

Although it is good for recognition that the Quality Label is being mentioned in the Recommendation, it was pointed out that at the same time it creates pressure and high expectations. To be able to fulfil this high expectation of being examples of 'good practice' the youth centres will need to be better coordinated and have better communication between themselves.

Youth Work Provision in Europe

A recent report '*Diversity of practice architectures in Europe: an analytical report based on Mapping Educational Paths of youth workers*',² for the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth explored what actually exists in terms of youth work provision. It analyses information from 41 of the Council of Europe member states.

The report states that all member states in the mapping have some kind of structure for youth, out of which:

¹ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/10886476/CM+REC.pdf/ba2e3081-680e-2200-f6cc-1acb89c6fd22> page 3

² <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-mapping-educational-paths>

- 7 are inactive;
- 21 have policy initiatives in youth work;
- 22 have occupation profiles for youth workers (either separate studies for youth work or combined with social work studies);
- 18 have a system to recognise competences for doing youth work;
- 15 have associations of youth workers (from trade unions to professional alliances);
- 13 have statistics on how many youth workers are employed in the country by all youth work providers.

Through discussion in the group, it was clear that even the age of what a member state considers to be a young person differs from country to country let alone the concept and understanding of youth work. The Recommendation provides a European level platform for supporting organisations, youth workers, policy makers and researchers to promote and lobby on youth work. The Recommendation does not offer a specific definition of youth work but it does provide broad statement on what youth work encompasses.

A Competency Framework

At the time of the drafting of the Recommendation there was a strong debate around whether there should be a competency framework for volunteers and another for full time paid staff - or if there should just be one for all those who work with young people regardless of status. There is a fear that if there are separate ones it will professionalise youth work and diminish the value of the work of volunteers. The Council of Europe is continuing to promote the validation, certification and recognition of both volunteers and full-time paid youth workers.

Lobbying

The Recommendation puts the spotlight on quality labelled youth centres by referring to it in recommendation no 7. It was pointed out that even though all the member states signed up to the Recommendation, this does not mean the national or local government are fully informed and aware of it. The importance of dissemination is highlighted in the Recommendation and encourages it to be used as a tool to promote quality youth work. The participants agreed that the youth centres also have a responsibility to make sure that the authorities and institutions are informed and know what can be achieved with the Recommendation.

The participants noted that the Recommendation can also be used to further develop different materials for such dissemination. They also explored how in the past there has been little work in defining quality youth work, partly because of the difficulties of measuring qualitative aspects of youth work as opposed to the quantitative. A recurring theme through the Platform meeting was to think about the language used when promoting youth work and to think about different approaches for different target groups. To lobby successfully one should not only identify whom to approach but to but perhaps more importantly how to address them.

Youth Policy

The Recommendation provides many resources for the development of youth policy. Something many of the centres highlighted is the weak link between youth work (and therefore youth centres) and youth policy. Interestingly the connection between youth policy and youth research is quite active, though it also needs more development, especially in relation to evidence based youth policy. It was re-emphasised that the youth centres have an important role to play in creating and developing youth policy. Though this is already one of the quality criteria for a labelled youth centre, some participants felt this as a lot of responsibility and something not quite within reach,

whereas others were able to show how they are actively involved in youth policy development. It was agreed that this is an area which deserves more attention and work.

Quality Standards in Youth Work

The group noted that the Recommendation provides a good foundation for the promotion and assurance of quality youth work. Used in combination with the standards set out by the Quality Label itself, it makes a strong basis from which the youth centres can work. Even with just the Quality Label standards, some youth centres are seeing an influence on how youth work is being developed. In one country the national association standards are very much in line with and based on the Quality Label documentation.

An example from one member state described a situation where the local authorities are contracting youth centres and youth organisations for their youth work, many of which do not comply with an acceptable level of quality. Very often, these are commissioned because they are low-priced. It was felt that the Recommendation should be promoted to such municipalities and institutions, raising their awareness of what recognised quality-based youth provision should be and that quality in the work is more important than saving money.

Some of the youth centres highlighted that through having regular quality checks on the youth work in their centres, it ensured that what is happening is quality youth work. With such checks in place, it was expressed that the youth centre becomes a stronger advocate for the development and recognition of quality youth work.

Cross-Sectorial Approach

Another issue raised was how face-to-face youth work often does not link with other sectors or even with other parts of its own sector. The question was posed about how to proceed to bring the different actors together and although no 'magic' answer is available, it was expressed that the Recommendation could help with this. The participants stated that they wanted to find ways of using the Recommendation to connect researchers, policy makers and young people.

Education and Training of Youth Workers

At European level, we can identify some common themes underpinning the approach of the European institutions on the promotion and development of youth work and youth work training. However, the responsibility for youth work lies with member states and there is a need to establish what is happening in the youth sector in countries throughout Europe.

The issue of education and training of youth workers concerned many of the youth centres at the Platform. The importance of recruiting educated and competent youth workers in the youth centres (professionally employed as well as volunteers) was emphasised strongly. Participants explained that in some member states courses are offered for youth workers from a basic level diploma through to MA and PhD levels. In some other countries there is still nothing available in the formal education system, but there are opportunities through the sector itself which provide training courses based on a non-formal education approach.

The recently published Youth Partnership report '[Mapping of educational and career paths of youth workers](#)' provide a better understanding and sharing of information about the education and training of youth workers across Europe and what employment/career paths this prepares them for, as well as the implications for the quality of youth work. The participants were recommended to consult the publication.

Conclusions

The Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on Youth Work was seen by the youth centres as a great opportunity and the participants expressed the potential for its use to promote and enhance quality youth work. Through having a universally accepted document describing youth work and its importance, it provides the youth centres with a lobbying tool, not just for the promotion of youth work but also for the development of youth policy as well. The youth centres welcomed the Recommendation and the majority expressed their wish to utilise the document to their benefit as youth centres and for youth work in their respective communities.

7. Role of Youth Centres in the Development of Youth Policy

Thematic session III: The role of Quality label youth centres in the development of youth policy

Tim O'Donoghue, Manager of the Killarney Youth Centre in Ireland, shared some of his experiences of youth work and leading a youth centre. In his presentation he explored the impact that changes in (youth) policies have had on youth centres in youth work in Ireland. His main focus was on the role taken by his centre in the development of youth policy and how it is changing. The chapter goes on to explore a number of issues related to youth centres and youth policy.

Example of the Killarney Youth Centre - eurOg

The mission statement of the Killarney Youth Centre:

To empower all young people to grow to their full potential by enabling them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for their wellbeing and the enrichment of their communities

eurOg - the Killarney Youth Centre is a key interlocutor for young people in the community as well as various public bodies such as the Department of Justice, schools, social services, health services, police, etc. The youth centre provides innovative responses at grass roots level that support the personal and social development of young people. At the same time, the centre is expected to answer to the needs of the state and other agencies. This spirit of partnership has been an approach for a number of years which formed a key part of government policy.

Policy Development

In 2001 youth work in Ireland was formally recognised by the government under the Youth Work Act but the legislation was only partly enacted. In 2015, the Education & Training board (ETB) Act was introduced and within this the Education & Training Boards were named as having responsibility for the oversight of state funding for youth and ensuring that local youth work plans are co-ordinated. The Ministry for Children and Youth Affairs published a new children and young persons policy – Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and subsequently a National youth policy all directing that different government departments would work together to avoid duplication of services, however, the new approach has diminished the recognition of youth work with many other agencies taking over different aspects of youth work and emphasising an approach of 'services to young people'.

It was emphasised in the presentation that the needs of young people are nowadays identified with a top down approach and the youth work sector is considered as just

one of many services the government has to outsource the work to. Though the state maintains its commitment to youth work, it is also clear that the main emphasis is on value for money and for youth centres to receive public funding, it has become increasingly important to prove evidentially and statistically its impact.

Youth work and the work of youth centres has traditionally been a place where young people come for various purposes - from having fun to seeking advice and information on different topics. It was always a space for young people and for relationship/capacity building. These days funding for youth has become focused on providing a range of services targeting disadvantaged young people in case management terms rather than the traditional approach of relationship development.

The self-assessment component of applying for the Quality Label was an eye opener for the Killarney Youth Centre. It highlighted for their team the extent to which they have shifted from universally discussing youth work to talking about specialisms of youth services. In their view, policy has moved away from support to mainstream youth work towards youth services designed on more intense interventions with high risk cases. This poses a challenge for the protection of the more open, universal youth work approach which will previously relied on state investment and support.

Links Between Youth Centres and Public Authorities

Most of the youth centres represented at the Platform meeting confirmed that they are linked with a local municipality or with a department or ministry at state level. Examples of structure that the centres are linked with are: Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Education; Secretary of State for Youth and Sports; Office for Youth under the Ministry of Education; Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of Sports and Science; Central Office of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth; and Federal Assembly for Civic Education etc.

Some youth centre present at the meeting are run or financed by the municipality. In one case, a centre has a co-management system in place with the local authorities. Other perspectives related to public authorities include being a part of the local advisory council on youth affairs and the national youth council on youth affairs. In two cases the youth centres are governed by a local council for youth. There are also cases where the youth centre has been a key figure in the development of the national youth law. Some centres are involved in hosting regional youth work conferences in partnership with regional administration or providing support to local authorities in hosting and implementing national events.

The breadth of local authority departments and/or state level ministries emphasises the diversity of understanding, opinion and attitude towards youth work. The amount of support, both financial and in terms of policy, also varied greatly. Consequently, this has an impact on the amount of influence a youth centre can exert for the development of any youth policy, let alone gaining the involvement of young people in such processes.

Connecting to Youth Policy Work

The concept of youth policy has traditionally been connected to state and local authorities. In many cases, it nowadays also includes other bodies such as companies and other private sector entities who have their own take on youth policies.

In terms of policy work that the youth centres are involved in, the dominant subjects were young people, education (formal and non-formal), human rights and the environment. The education aspect also included the development of innovative approaches in the formal education system. The 'environment' covered sustainable development as well as environmental protection. The range of other subjects

included: health, employment, citizenship, entrepreneurship, gender, media, equality, rural development, etc.

Some youth centres shared that the work they are engaged in has a direct influence on youth policy, this included e.g. developing national standards in youth work, involvement in research programmes, networking with different ministries, and having direct inputs on laws and policies related to young people.

Challenges Experienced

Lack of resources and consequent bureaucratic burdens

Complex finances and 'red tape' topped the obstacles list. More specifically this meant, the numbers of reports they have to constantly fill out for their public authorities, the continuous funding applications for projects – local to European level, a general lack of funding for running the centres, insufficient resources – including human resources, and legislation that regularly changes or is overly complicated.

Skills Deficit

Some of the youth centres talked about have a skills deficit in their staffing. They also pointed out that most youth workers lacked competency for linking to the political aspects of the work. This would often lead to a lack of credibility in the eyes of the local authorities and institutions. Some pointed the finger to themselves, stating that they did not have their work clearly defined and in some instances, they acknowledged a gap between the daily work they are doing and the youth policy they are promoting. This in turn leads to a general lack of recognition.

Political Instability

Another obstacle highlighted by some, was their governments, ministries and or municipalities political instability. This instability often leads to changes in leadership at local and national levels, this in turn can lead to a change of staff which in turn can mean a lack of expertise and knowledge of the work of the youth centres. Time and energy spent lobbying and gaining recognition can be destroyed overnight with the change of someone at the top. Some of the youth centres confirmed that they do not have any relation developed at ministry level, and in other instances, the needs of young people are not a priority in the country.

Responsibility of Labelled Youth Centres

It was pointed out that one of the internal obstacles refers to the network of labelled youth centres. It was felt that there was a poor level of cooperation between the youth centres and that not all had the same level of commitment to the Platform as a whole. While it is clear that each youth centre has its own context, direction and interests, it was felt that there needs to be a greater harmonisation between and a better understanding of the Quality Label standards and their fulfilment.

Opportunities for Solutions

Recognition and Language

Participants stressed that youth work needs to know its own worth, it needs to be able to communicate its impact clearly to the national authorities, to the local community and to individual young person. It needs to communicate to each in a language that can be understood, the 'political language' will not be understood by the young people and the 'language of young people' will not be understood by the politician.

Needs of Young People to Policy

The youth centres have a responsibility to communicate the needs of young people to the local authorities and relevant ministries. One centre described how they created a

dedicated structure to facilitate the process for policy development. Their approach had been to have a direct connection with the young people, explore their needs, support the young people in developing campaigns and ensure that their voices were heard at political level. There is a need to communicate that youth centre's youth work and educational staff are key to how policy can be implemented successfully. Successful youth work practice needs to be shared – especially to other youth centres.

Networking

Networking is a huge support for overcoming obstacles. This can be from creating a local support base to creating large scale local activities with other youth centres and youth organisations. Working on gaining government and municipal support brings visibility, moves towards recognition and supports in terms of possible funding. It is important to link with formal education institutions, schools and universities, especially where youth worker education takes place. Networking at international level is also important, at the minimum maintaining strong connections with the other labelled youth centres but also with youth projects and organisations. Programmes such as Erasmus+, Youth in Action and of course the Council of Europe's Youth Department can particularly support this level of networking through providing funding and/or support.

Conclusions

Several participants talked about continuous development of staff expertise and ensuring integrity. It was pointed out that through developing the competencies and capacities of staff the chances increase to be invited to strategic meetings where policies are designed. The issue of being able to communicate clearly the value and role of youth centres was also emphasised several times. Some participants stressed the need of youth centres being more pro-active (to set the agenda) as opposed to being reactive to the politicians (and responding only to their agenda). The centres encouraged each other to become more aware of what influences policy and to find pathways and take control.

8. Indicators and Tools to Measure Impact

Thematic session IV: Opportunities and challenges in setting up a national system of indicators and tools for youth centres to measure impact – the Finnish experiences

Catarina Silvander, Manager of Villa Elba Youth Centre, Finland, presented a recent initiative of Finnish youth centres on the development of a scorecard with minimum requirements based on national legislation and specific regulations related to youth centres. The aim of the initiative is to provide the national authorities in charge of youth centres with information on the quality of youth work of youth centres in Finland. This subject explores ways how labelled youth centres can measure and report impact at national level.

The Finnish example

Finnish youth work has been legislated since 1972, the basis of this legislation was to ensure provision for young people's free time. Newer legislation focuses on support for young people's free time, their engagement in civil society, social inclusion, and the improvement of a young person's growth and living conditions.

The Finnish Youth Policy Programme was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, young people, and key actors engaged in youth work and policy. The basis of the policy states that young people should have the:

- possibility to engage;
- opportunities for participation;
- employment;
- mental health support.

The Quality of Youth Work

Overall, youth work in Finland (and many other countries as well) has been more about the 'doing' than the 'recording, documenting and reporting' of what was being done. Because of this, it has been difficult to define results of work being undertaken and to prove the value of youth work. In essence there is no historical record on the impact of youth work on the lives of young people, which was also acknowledged by other youth centre representatives.

In recent years there has been increasing pressure for youth work in Finland to prove its worth in the form of outcomes and to prove its value for money in terms of quality - this was also echoed by the other centres present. As a result, the Finnish youth centres have developed a set of indicators and a quality assessment process as a way of demonstrating impact and value. This is not universally popular with some people in the youth sector, some are against the notion of measuring youth work. However, the indicators do provide a basis for assessment and development.

Background to the Tool

The process was launched in 2016 when the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated a request to the Finnish Youth Centres Association (that Villa Elba and Marttinen Youth Centres are members of) and provided resources for a working group to develop some kind of tool for measuring impact. The initial work was based on the Quality Label for Youth Centres criteria and other existing descriptions of indicators. Their aim was to create a tool to measure the quality of youth centres' youth work. However, due to an unrealistic time schedule and difficulties in finding common ground a new direction was taken in 2017 and the Finnish Youth Centres Scorecard was successfully developed.

The aim of the scorecard is to assess the quality of the work in youth centres. Once in use, the tool will be used by the Ministry of Education and Culture to evaluate the nine Finnish youth centres which are part of the national youth policy scheme and the Ministry base their decision making for funding of youth centres on the scorecard.

How it Works

The scorecard consists of a matrix and areas of focus. Each area of focus is broken down into a series of objectives and each objective is then analysed according to the matrix list.

SCORECARD	
Matrix	Areas of focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Objectives ✓ Evaluation criteria and indicators ✓ Means ✓ Results ✓ Development actions ✓ Responsible person and time schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good quality camp activities ✓ International youth work ✓ Sustainable development and environmental responsibility ✓ Regional development of youth work ✓ Impact in society and ability to serve ✓ How to make youth centres better known and communication

Future Developments

The Ministry of Education and Culture is now working towards a new system for monitoring and evaluating youth centres (starting in 2019). The new Youth Act states that youth centres need to have a system in place for monitoring and assessing its own activities. Increasingly, the Finnish youth centres are requested to evaluate its work and justify its value in order to receive public funding. In general, youth centres are rather good at quantitative methods of verification and evaluation but are weaker in measuring quality of the work (at group and individual level). The Scoreboard still lacks a qualitative measurement aspect and focuses more on the quantitative aspects.

Conclusion

The Finnish example shows a number of trends that are common in most countries and among most youth centres, particularly the absence of initiatives of youth centres to monitor and evaluate their own work was emphasized in the exchange. This deficiency inevitably leads to the difficulty of proving the benefit of youth work in youth centres to national and local authorities. Participants also acknowledge the challenge of measuring quality and impact of youth work in youth centres. However, they also stated clearly that measuring, monitoring and evaluating are key elements that youth centres must come to terms with and engage with before they are imposed from outside.

9. Other Issues Raised

Throughout the Platform meeting a number of other issues were raised during the thematic sessions by the participants. Because most issue came up in more than one of the thematic sessions, they are being recorded here rather than being repeated in each of the thematic chapters.

Recognition and Visibility

There is a desire among the youth centres to improve visibility and recognition both locally and nationally. The majority of the youth centres the need to demonstrate the benefits of their educational work and the role centres can play in society. It was stressed that each youth centre needs to find a successful way to communicate its work to the wider public, institutions and local authorities. Youth centres have the know-how – they are professional knowing well their work, knowing how youth work differs from teaching they, and knowing non-formal education. However, the majority of centres are not skilful in revealing this to others and often people do not understand.

A successful example of how to reverse the situation was presented by Marienthal Youth Centre. In order to refine their communication they went back to basics, documenting what the centre was actually doing, describing concretely the aim, the approaches, the main features of the youth centre and they also defined non-formal education. Whilst doing so, there was a realisation that the language used related largely to the youth sector only. In order to reach policy makers, institutions, parents, educators, the media etc. they needed to (re)write the message to reach the respective targets groups.

This work resulted in the creation of a series of publications, educational materials, posters and videos. It also included a concept paper on non-formal education for

decision and policy makers using language that is familiar to those working in that field. Politicians are now using this concept paper as a reference point. The centre also produced a leaflet for journalists and politicians on what non-formal education is, written in reader friendly language. A number of posters were designed which were put up in day care centres to reach parents about the work of the centre. They even created a comic strip aimed at young people, again utilising a format they would be familiar with and adapting the language accordingly.

Communicating successfully what the youth centres do is an important step towards recognition and this initiative must come from the sector/youth centre itself. It is necessary to learn the language of those we want to communicate with and to ensure that the right tool is used – leaflet, video, poster, comic strip, etc. The material needs to be simple, clear and concise.

Finances vs. Youth Work

The pursuit of financial stability was an issue shared among all youth centres. Finding the right balance between youth activities and self-financed was stressed as a challenge for many. Renting out space to self-financed activities has become increasingly common due to ever-increasing running costs of a youth centre (building) and decreased public funding of youth centres. In some cases, centres have the pressure from the local authorities to generate revenue.

However, this practice creates inevitably a dilemma for the youth centres – i.e. if a centre is largely used by self-financed activities, consequently there will be more income but less space available for youth work. And, if the number of self-financed activities decreases, so does the revenue, but there will be more opportunities for youth work activities.

There were several approaches among the centres how to strike the right balance and optimise income. One centre explained that they mainly rent their space to state funded youth work initiatives and include the renting cost in the budget when applying for contracts. Some centres are co-financed by the state budget and the local authorities, but usually this must be topped up with revenue from self-financed activities. Some centres receive no public funding and keeps a 60-40 balance of the centre's occupation – 60% youth work activities and 40% self-financed activities. Another centre described their approach to promote youth work within the private sector by adding "*every time you use our centre you are supporting youth work*" to the correspondence with potential and actual renters. In conclusion, the centres stressed that despite the need for revenue, the core mission of the youth centres to work with young people should not be lost.

Residential vs. Day to Day

The balance between day-to-day activities and residential activities was discussed in connection with achieving financial stability. The Quality Label very clearly has a strong focus on the residential aspect of youth centres but they are also spaces for local young people. Most centres organise the day-to-day youth work activities with local young people. It was stressed that the possibility to host local groups, youth exchanges and other international activities for several days expands their capacity for quality youth work. It was clear from the discussion that youth centres have their own approach of balancing residential activities versus day-to-day activities.

Expertise

The Quality Label never had the intention to fill the gap of youth work in countries that have no official definition or understanding of it. Despite this, the Quality Label Programme has received several requests from different countries for policy

assistance in developing a national standard for youth centres. It has been noticed that some of those initiatives have “copied and pasted” Council of Europe Quality Label criteria without taking into account national contexts or local needs. The participants stressed the need of the Platform to act as a resource to country/regional based groups who want to develop their own criteria and standards.

10. Recommendations

Youth Centres’ Needs

The participants stressed the need for sharing good practice and the necessity to improve communication among the labelled youth centres between Platform meetings. Some of the suggestions that was put forward addressed:

- an online tool for communication; many tools exist and the network should find a suitable one for its needs and start using it
- a resource database; to collect all materials used by the centres in one place
- job shadowing opportunities for staff; some centres already have some peer learning schemes between each other.

If such measures were put in place, the group felt that it could facilitate the development of youth work and non-formal education among youth centres. With greater communication and cooperation, the links between youth work and youth policy can be strengthened. It was also recommended to intensify work with the implementation of the Recommendation on Youth Work as this supports the voices of and needs of young people.

The Platform

In 2019, the Platform will have its 10th anniversary and at the same time the Council of Europe will celebrate its 70th anniversary. It was agreed that this could be a good opportunity to celebrate and push the youth work agenda. The group made several suggestions regarding the theme, e.g. exploring the managerial perspective of measuring quality in youth work and sharing of good practices how quality can influence policy development.

A key priority since the start has been to increase the geographical scope of the Quality Label Programme and its Platform to include youth centres from different member states. There is a positive effect of labelled youth centres on their local/national context, which is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of candidate centres are from countries where a labelled centre already exists. In cases where more than one labelled centre exist, it was stressed that they should work together and support each other.

In several members stated there is currently a process to develop national quality standards for youth centres and in some cases labelled youth centres are directly involved in the (drafting) process and drafting. Though this is not of primary importance, it was agreed that the Platform should support these developments.

Training Course 2019

The participants expressed their wish that the training course could meet the training need of youth centre staff which cannot be provided elsewhere. It was hoped that the annual training could motivate youth workers and educational staff to come back with innovative methods and approaches which could enrich the centres own programmes and activities. It was also stressed that the training course should also be a place

where participants learn from each other and where good practices are shared. In terms of themes two topics were proposed:

- how to work with/manage volunteers and include them in the daily work effectively;
- environment and sustainability - how to improve the facility/buildings and the attitudes of staff, guest and partners t to achieve more environmentally friendly approaches in work.

New Brochure

The Platform expressed its satisfaction with the new text/brochure on the role and added value of youth work in youth centres. The meeting agreed to pursue the development of a "kit of quality label brochures" which would be complementary and would include the new text (to be finalised by September 2018), a revised version of the quality criteria brochure (in 2019) and a new brochure on good practices in labelled centres (to be finalised by December 2018).

11. Appendices

Appendix A: Programme

Monday, 4 June

- Arrival and check-in
19.00 Dinner
20.30 Informal welcome & drinks

Tuesday, 5 June

- 09.00 Opening & welcome
Address by Antje Rothmund, Head of Youth Department, Council of Europe
- 09.30 Presentation of participants and youth centres: round of introduction
- 10.00 State of play: progress and developments since the 8th Platform meeting
Gordana Berjan, Coordinator of the Quality Label for Youth Centres Programme, EYCB, Council of Europe
- 10.30 Coffee break
- 11.00 Session I: The relevance of youth centres as educational establishments – how to pitch the value of youth work in youth centres successfully
Georges Metz, Director of the National Youth Service Luxembourg, Member of the Quality Label Expert Team
- 12.30 Lunch
- 14.00 Session II: Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work – enhancing the provisions of quality youth work
Antje Rothmund, Head of Youth Department, Council of Europe
- 15.30 Coffee break
- 16.00 Session III: The possibilities of (quality labelled) youth centres in the development of youth policies
Tim Odonoghue, CEO Euróg, Killarney Youth Centre, Ireland
- 17:30 Closing of the day; guided tour of the EYCB (optional)
Csaba Kedves, In-House Services Manager, EYCB, Council of Europe
- 19:00 Boat cruise dinner on the Danube

Wednesday, 6 June

- 09:00 Session IV: Opportunities and challenges in setting up a national system of indicators and tools for youth centres to measure impact – the Finnish experience
Catarina Silvander, CEO Youth Centre Villa Elba, Finland
- 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:30 Future actions and activities of the Quality Label Programme
- Proposals for the 10th Platform meeting 2019
- Providing peer support and multiplying the work of the youth centres at European, national and local levels
- 12.30 Conclusions, evaluation and closing of meeting
- 13.00 Lunch

Appendix B: Participant List

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Appendix C: Calendar of activities

2018	
June	<p>Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network of youth hostels in Portugal meeting, dissemination of quality label project information - European Youth Capital 2018 Cascais - Translation of CoE recommendations and other publications into Portuguese
July	<p>Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud, Spain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to improve infrastructure of the centre in terms of innovation, energy and efficiency
	<p>de Hoge Rielen – ADJ vzW, Belgium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint global strategy meeting on communication and marketing
August	<p>Youth Centre Brežice, Slovenia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Street youth work on regional level (sharing experiences)
	<p>IPDJ Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth worker training course level 4 - Entrepreneurship of youth worker training course level 4
	<p>Youth Centre Marttinen, Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 volunteer vacancies
	<p>de Hoge Rielen, Belgium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summer youth exchange 'off the grid' with Finland, Italy, Belgium - Further develop quality evaluation; surveys, focus groups...
October	<p>Vormingscentrum Destelheide, Belgium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EVS, call for young people with artistic background, application in October, long term, 10 months
	<p>Youth Centre Marttinen, Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 year project, leading with knowledge, cooperation with researchers, municipalities and youth workers
	<p>Youth Centre Brežice, Slovenia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training course application 'Positive Self-Image', looking for partners
December	<p>Youth Centre Marttinen, Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25th Anniversary of youth centre (and possibly QL ceremony) - Training for senior officers in the municipality on how to reach young people
	<p>Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud, Spain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of the expert team to assess renewal of Quality Label
	<p>FITT - Timișoara Youth House, Romania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council of Europe national trainings - Developing quality standards for youth centres, needs support from others
2019	
January	<p>Youth Centre Villa Elba, Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International projects at home - internationalism; experience what learnt; partnerships; networks
	<p>FITT - Timișoara Youth House, Romania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KA2; informal groups of young people - Solidarity Corps; quality label system for EVS - Supervision and management of youth centres as a theme at the 10th Platform Meeting - Job shadowing with other youth centres - Internships - KA3 Erasmus+ Youth clubs developed and run by young people
	<p>Vormingscentrum Destelheide, Belgium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth exchange, arts and HRE - looking for partnerships and proposals. Feb application deadline - International clubs. To work more bottom up, young people prepare a

	youth exchange
	Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud, Spain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designing an activity for young people in open cultural spaces, focus on employability - New government in place: aim to increase the number of activities
	Youth Centre Marttinen, Finland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job shadowing
	FITT - Timișoara Youth House, Romania <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Romania EU Presidency (Jan-Jun 2019). Time to be pushing the youth centres at policy level
March	Youth Centre "Ekocentar Radulovački", Serbia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International voluntary summer work camps, call opens in March each year. 18+ only
April	Youth Centre "Ekocentar Radulovački", Serbia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizens to science. Topic, biodiversity monitoring of rivers, streams and wetlands
May	WannseeFORUM Youth Centre, Germany <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Berlin Youth Forum with focus on Europe
	de Hoge Rielen – ADJ vzW, Belgium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing for the visit of the Quality Label Expert team
June	Youth Centre Marttinen, Finland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital youth work seminar (capacity building)
June	Council of Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10th Anniversary Quality Label Platform
July	Finland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finnish EU Presidency (June-Dec 2019) Focus on youth worker training and education
TBC	Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth worker study visits to Finland - World conference of youth ministers of the United Nations (first time since 21 years) - Job shadowing with Mollina, development of soft skills