

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE QUALITY LABEL FOR YOUTH CENTRES

Quality management in youth centres



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PREFACE

■ Ten years ago, the process of implementing a Council of Europe quality label for youth centres began, and today about 20 centres have gathered around this initiative. A brochure specifying the quality label criteria which need to be fulfilled in order to obtain the label outlines the initial ideas about quality standards in youth centres. However, during the annual platform meetings of the labelled youth centres, it has become clear that each youth centre has a different understanding of the notion of quality, a different approach in addressing quality management, and a different way of reporting its work.

One reason why no common tools have been developed until now is certainly the fact that youth centres, such as those labelled with the Council of Europe Quality Label, operate in very specific and varied fields of youth work. Furthermore, there is no critical mass of similar youth centres in Europe, or at least there are no important networks across Europe that would have made such a common approach desirable or necessary.

Very often the situation is similar in the member states of the Council of Europe, and the labelled youth centres mostly have minimal guidance from public authorities. If more similar or comparable structures existed within regions or countries, it would be much more probable that authorities would develop standards and impose them as requirements for the youth centres to adhere to.

This gap provides an opportunity, as youth centres can adapt quality management and reporting systems to meet their own priorities. However, this can also be a weakness.

While effective reporting should allow organisations to tell their story more fully, the absence of standardised procedures can complicate this process, resulting in quite disparate levels of accounting for the work that youth centres do, and the impact they have on the lives of young people.

This publication is in response to the requests expressed by the youth centres and proposes a common approach for the labelled youth centres to address quality, quality management and reporting. It proposes tools such as guiding questions for reflection, check-lists and assessment grids. These tools are to be seen as examples, and aim to serve as inspiration. Given the variety of youth centres, the tools should be adapted by each centre to its own context and needs.

The document also aims to contribute to and support the implementation of the Youth Work recommendation which invites us to “encourage the use of ... continuous follow-up in developing ... quality youth work ensuring that mechanisms are in place to measure its outcomes and impact.”¹, but most of all, the objective of this publication is to support youth centres in making their valuable work visible.

¹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2017) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work

INTRODUCTION

■ This document describes the approach chosen by Quality Label youth centres (QL-youth centres) to address quality, quality management and reporting. Evaluating the quality in a youth centre entails analysing the extent to which the centre meets its own goals, along with the expectations of its users.

Users benefit from youth centres in very different ways: some youth centres have to rent their spaces at times to groups or companies which have no direct link with the youth sector in order to ensure financial sustainability. Some youth groups use the centres to organise their own programmes. They need infrastructures adapted to youth activities, but do not require support from educational teams. With these groups the educational staff has no or little interaction. All the youth centres have groups and individuals participating in specific educational offers of the youth centre, including workshops, youth activities, events and training courses, for example. These participants come because of the educational offers and the know-how of the educational teams. Some youth centres run social programmes for specific target groups, normally vulnerable young people within the region. These programmes are highly specialised and targeted, and require intensive work with the young people. With such diversity of users and such varied degrees of interaction, there are correspondingly very diverse expectations and representations of results.

The diversity of funders represents another diversity of expectations. If a youth centre was created in order to develop youth tourism, the funder will look at

the figures of overnight stays and international guests. If the youth centre was designed as a municipal youth service, the funder will instead look at the outcomes of the social programmes of the centre. In some cases the youth centre is even financed through different funders and has to respond to multiple expectations and evaluations.

A specific problem with regard to quality management concerns how to measure the impact of the youth centre. Standardised measuring of the impact on users or participants is nearly impossible given the wide range of customers and offers. Therefore, the quality of the youth centre's work cannot be fully appreciated through solely measuring its results. As an alternative, it is proposed that centres work with the concepts of "structural quality" which concerns resources, and "process quality" which concerns the conceptual frameworks, educational programme offers and pedagogical approaches set in place in the youth centre in order to achieve its goals.

Documentation and evaluation are important tools in the context of efficiency. Keeping record what was planned, what actually took place, and what conclusions the management draws from the experience are all essential features of self-assessment and evaluation. Evaluation and continuous quality development are essential topics of quality management and therefore important chapters in this document.

Being able to document and to report the work of the youth centres and their approach to quality development in a

standardised manner is essential from the perspective of sustainability, as one major aim is to demonstrate to funders the evidence-based reasons for supporting youth centres. As transparent reporting promotes trust and confidence among donors, and allows talking to funders, a specific chapter is dedicated to this issue.



QUALITY IN A YOUTH CENTRE

QUALITY IN A YOUTH CENTRE

Notion of quality

■ “Quality” of a product or service can be defined as the degree to which this service or product fulfils its function. Thus “Quality” is a relative measure which does not allow one universal definition. Instead it has to be redefined for each service, organisation or structure.

How to define the quality of a service or structure as a youth centre? Some associate this with the results of the interaction between the young person and the educational staff. Others link quality strongly to the satisfaction of the young person with the projects in which they are involved. Still others define the quality of a youth centre as its ability to meet the different needs of the youth. In some youth centres quality is mostly linked to the quality of the visitor’s stay. We can also understand the quality of a youth centre, however, as its ability to meet the missions and objectives that have been set for it. It is mainly on this last idea that the quality management in youth centres, such as are presented in this document, is based.

Missions of a youth centres

■ The level of “quality” of a youth centre may be defined as how well it fulfils its function. Therefore, the question is to what degree it meets its objectives. In 2018, the QL-youth centres agreed to define their objectives under the following headings:

- be a (safe) space for young people
- be educational establishments
- be multipliers in youth work

- be focal points for networking
- promote the values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe.

The brochure “The Council of Europe Quality label for youth centres: Role, Value and Impact of Youth Centre” (2019) describes in more detail what is understood under each heading and should be read as complementary to the present document.

Quality of QL-youth centres should be appreciated with regard to above mentioned objectives. Each centre will need to explain what it is hoping to achieve under each of the above in terms of targets and how it has achieved them.

Nevertheless, a youth centre might have additional aims depending on its own specific context. Some youth centres run, for example, social programmes for young people, of which quality also needs to be evaluated. Being developed within the context of QL-labelled centres, this paper focuses mainly on quality issues related to the common objectives outlined above. However, the proposed tools can easily be adapted, and each centre should use this flexibility in order to develop their very own working tools in a way they serve them best.

Aspects of quality in youth centres

Each youth centre operates in a specific context involving different priorities. Therefore, the criteria for defining a quality service are different from one youth centre to another. However, a labelled youth centre should meet, at least to a certain degree, the below mentioned requirements.

The asterisk (*) points out indicators which are mentioned in the Brochure on the criteria for obtaining the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres.

Be a (safe) space for young people

The youth centre respects national standards with regard to fire security, work safety, accessibility and health and hygiene. *

The youth centre is accessible to young people with special needs, both in terms of programming as well as physical means. *

The youth centre is accessible to all young people (ideally). This concerns pricing policies and also a culture of welcoming (a positive attitude of the staff, acceptance of diversity, etc.).

The youth centre offers flexible and adequate working conditions for activities using non-formal education methodology and an atmosphere suitable for youth activities. *

The working conditions of the youth centre are suitable for different formats of activities, interactive methodology activities as well as seminars and conferences. *

The youth centre's staff understand how non-formal education works and that their role is to support the activities. *

The youth centre is youth-friendly. This concerns the facilities for leisure-time activities and the way the centre is arranged (furniture, equipment, a pleasant atmosphere, etc.).

The youth centre pursues an environmentally-friendly approach. *

Be educational establishments

The youth centre has an offer of educational activities which respond to clearly-identified needs.

Educational activities and training courses are well-prepared.

The staff is adequately trained to organise and run educational activities and/or training courses.

The youth centre is developing new and innovative youth work models. *

The educational team knows about and uses educational tools produced by the Council of Europe.

The educational team uses quality assurance tools such as those developed by the Council of Europe for educational activities and training courses.

Be multipliers in youth work

The youth centre is involved in training multipliers engaged in non-formal education with young people.*

The youth centre exchanges information with other actors of the youth sector on the content and quality of their work.*

The youth centre collaborates and shares expertise with professionals and volunteers at national and European levels.*

The youth centre documents and shares its good practices through publications or other means.*

Be focal points for networking

The youth centre organises platforms (seminars, conferences, training courses) to enhance exchange between various actors of the youth sector.

The youth centre advocates for the needs of young people and their organisations.*

The youth centre has regular exchanges on youth policy with the public authorities responsible for youth.

The youth centre creates space where young people can express their opinions.

The youth centre calls on the expertise of youth organisations, associations and structures that have relevant specific competence to enrich certain activities, and considers them as consultants.*

Promote values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe

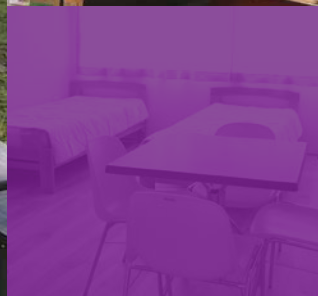
The youth centre hosts multilateral activities.

The youth centre is involved in wider European / international co-operation frameworks of the youth sector.*

The youth centre promotes Council of Europe's activities.

The youth centre makes efforts to multiply good practices from the international level (Council of Europe, European Union, United Nations, specific networks) and to spread the knowledge and values through training and promotional activities at national, regional and local levels.*

The youth centre's ethos, programmes and working philosophy are grounded in the values of the Council of Europe: respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.*



QUALITY MANAGEMENT

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Internal quality, external quality

■ In practice, quality takes two forms; external and internal:

External quality

This corresponds to users' satisfaction. It is a question of proposing services and programmes which correspond to users' needs and interests, but also building loyalty. This type of quality thus requires the necessity to listen to young people and to those engaged in working with young people. It also requires taking into account implicit needs, not expressed explicitly by young people.

Internal quality

This corresponds to the improvement of the functioning of the youth centre. The purpose of internal quality is to implement means to identify and limit malfunctions, and to improve internal processes. The beneficiaries are the following: the board of directors, the educational team, and of course the young people. It is difficult to achieve external quality without internal quality!

Since the two aspects of quality are closely related, we will not deal with them separately on the following pages.

Terminology: input, actions, output, outcomes, impact

■ Some of the most confusing terminologies within quality management are the words "input", "actions", "output", "outcomes" and "impact". However, it is

important to distinguish between these terms, as understanding this terminology not only ensures that appropriate indicators are identified, but also makes sure that they are effectively measured.

Input – resources that are used

Input, in simple terms, comprises those things that we use in a project to implement the project.

In the case of the youth centres, input include infrastructure, equipment, human resources (staff) and finances (budget).

Actions – what is being done

Actions are associated with delivering project goals. In other words, it is the use of resources to generate products and services. The actions represent the centre's proposal to young people, youth organisations and other users.

Actions of youth centres include renting rooms, preparing meals, organising educational offers for groups, organising youth exchanges, training sessions for multipliers or seminars, elaborating educational manuals, and so on.

Output – how the actions touch beneficiaries

Output is the first level of results associated with a project. Often confused with "actions", output includes the products and services delivered.

The output of youth centres can be measured by the number of overnight

stays, the number of meals served, participation in educational offers of the centre, participation in training courses, dissemination of educational material, and so on.

Outcomes – changes in the life of beneficiaries

This is the second level of results associated with a project. These are the direct effects of a project. Outcomes relate to the project goal or aim.

In the case of the youth centres, an outcome could be, for example, a change of behaviour in young people having participated in the activities of the centre. It could also be a training certificate achieved by a participant. Another out-

come could be a new network of youth organisations being established after a contact-making seminar organised by the centre.

Impact – change in society

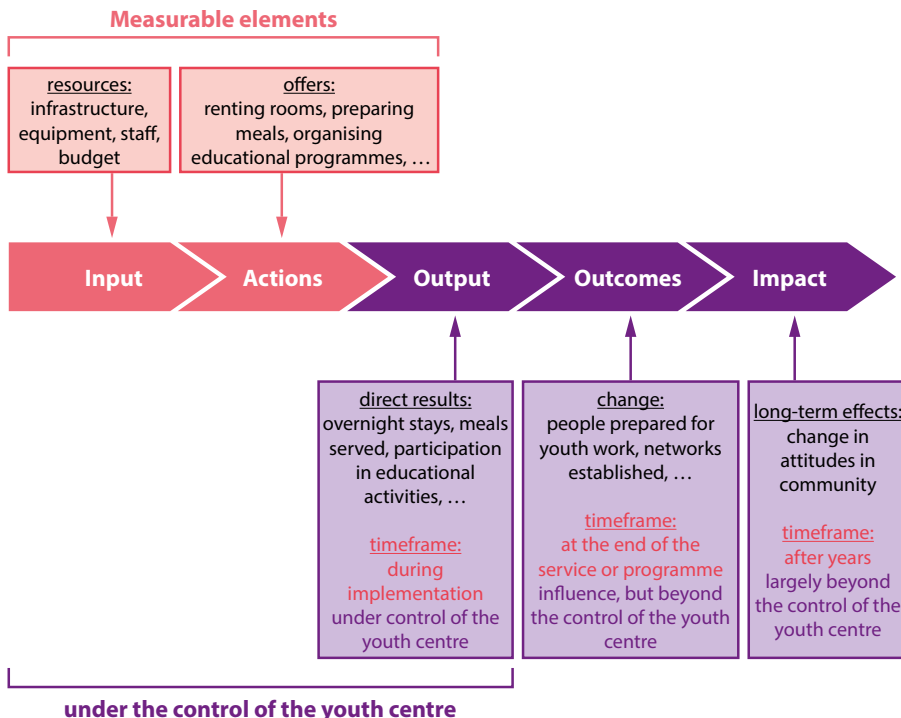
This is the third level of project results, and is the long-term consequence of a project.

In the case of youth centres, an impact could be a change in attitudes of the village’s population towards other cultures due to regular international co-operation projects enhanced by the youth centre.

In some publications “outcomes” and “impact” are grouped under a single heading, “outcomes” or “impact”.

Results chain

Input, actions, output, outcome and impact form together what is called “The results chain” or “The impact chain”. There are different models of result chains; some more elaborate than others. The QL-youth centres work with the following diagram:



Measuring outcomes and impact?

■ Due to the diversity of the missions of a youth centre, the outcomes can be very diverse. They can be at the level of what actually happens to young people, and how they develop as a result of their taking part in an educational activity of the youth centre. They can be the effect a specific social programme has on a young participant. They can also be what happens to a participant during a training course or seminar of the centre. They can be considered in terms of a change in a youth organisation or youth service, having taken part in networking activities organised by the centres. However, these effects are difficult to measure as the youth centres do not usually work over a longer period with specific groups of young people or organisations that could be monitored over a longer time span.

This does not mean that youth centres and the activities organised on their premises have no effect on people. It is well known that positive experiences, for example, being included as a person of value, changes both our way of looking at ourselves and society, and also our way of acting. Working in a group of peers on a common project enables us to develop different kinds of soft skills. Meeting young people from other countries opens one's eyes to other realities. All these examples of desired results are positive, but putting them as pre-defined aims for youth work creates a major problem. If these kinds of aims are translated into performance indicators, the work done is in fact no longer youth work. In fact, the overall aim of youth work is "personal and social development" and therefore youth work is centred on the individual needs of young people, and its outcomes are very diverse. Furthermore, participation is an

important feature of non-formal learning and thus the results of activities are part of a process and not pre-defined. Youth work is not about reaching previously identified core skills and completing curricula.

Just as important is the fact that the results of youth centres are impossible to link directly to its activities as many other factors interfere with them. For example, a youth centre can offer effective violence prevention programmes over a period of several years in a difficult neighbourhood. These efforts may be undermined by the sudden emergence of new youth groups, or they may be reinforced by an increased police presence. To conclude: describing the outcomes and the impact of the youth centres is very difficult if not impossible, given the specific context in which they operate. As an alternative to measuring outcome and impact, youth centres should report on how they make efforts to deliver good services and activities. This is developed later in the following chapter.

Considering structural quality and process quality

■ Information and key figures on input, actions and output can be produced by youth centres and give a reliable first impression of its work and its evolution: increasing numbers of overnight stays or participation in activities demonstrate that the centre is attractive. However, this information in itself does not sufficiently describe the results of the youth centre.

As described above, it is very difficult to develop tools to measure the outcomes and impact of a youth centre. Thus an approach to evaluating quality only through an assessment of its results is inappropriate. In addition to

different figures describing its actions, labelled youth centres need to be able to demonstrate that they do their best to deliver services and activities of good quality: if they cannot guarantee specific outcomes, they can, however, guarantee to create a context which allows the achievement of their goals in the best possible way. In other words, and referring to concepts from the field of law, the centre has a “best effort obligation” instead of a “performance obligation”. This idea can be illustrated by an example from another sector: a holiday organiser cannot be held responsible for the weather or personal appreciation of a cultural offer. However, they can be sued over rooms not fulfilling the standards described in the catalogue, over insufficient staffing during activities for the children, or over badly-organised activities.

Creating a favourable context to reach its goals means for a youth centre to have a good “structural quality” (infrastructures adapted to youth activities, trained staff, an adequate number of staff, and so on) and a good “process quality” (clear vision of the target group, attitudes of the staff, involvement of the participants, programme offers, evaluation procedures, continuous professional development of the staff, etc.).

Structural quality

In youth centres, the structural quality concerns the available resources, that is, the size of the educational team, the qualification of the staff, the available infrastructure, the equipment, and so on.

It is not only about the number of rooms and equipment and their conformity with the different regulations (for example, safety or hygiene), but also about how they are adapted to the needs of

the youth groups. The level of the quality of infrastructure is, however, to a certain degree relative: in a well-equipped country the expectations are different than in a country with less infrastructure for young people. Structural quality also concerns the permanent staff: the number of staff in relation to the activities, as well as the qualification of the collaborators.

In each country, the most important aspects of structural quality are regulated and monitored (for example: legal obligations in terms of infrastructure and hygiene). In some countries the qualification of the permanent staff is regulated. However, structural quality does not concern all aspects of the youth centres. Furthermore, structural quality does not tell us much about how much the facilities correspond to the needs of the users or about the participants’ learning experiences. Therefore, this document concentrates also on the process quality.

Process quality

The “process quality” concerns the way that youth centres function. It is about how the youth centres understand their mission, which core principles underpin their work and how they prepare their staff for its tasks. Another important element of process quality is the attitude of the staff towards the young people and how they interact with them. It is also about how their programmes are continuously adapted to the needs of young people and the youth sector. Finally, process quality concerns how the centre approaches quality management and quality assurance.

The quality management cycle

■ The main goal of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres is to provide an opportunity for youth centres to improve the quality of their offer to young people and the youth sector in their country. However, the label is not a strict norm and does not require the fulfilment of a fixed set of precise standards. Instead, it offers a framework within which youth centres can develop the quality of their offer to young people and the youth sector at their own pace.

A common approach to quality development is to work with the idea of the quality cycle, which is a tool for organisational self-assessment. It is a systematic series of steps for gaining learning and knowledge for the continual improvement of a product or service.

Dr. William Edwards Deming, known as the father of quality management, developed the so-called P-D-C-A Cycle. This quality management cycle is like a circle with four parts or phases:



Planning: Establish objectives and processes required to deliver the desired results.

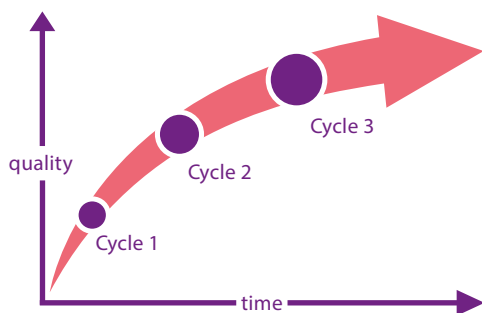
Doing: Transfer the plan to reality.

Checking: During the check phase, the data and results gathered from the “do” phase are evaluated. Data is compared to the expected outcomes to see any similarities and differences.

Acting: Records from the “do” and “check” phases help identify issues with the process. These issues may include problems, opportunities for improvement, inefficiencies and other issues. Root causes of such issues are investigated, found and eliminated by modifying the process. Risk is re-evaluated. At the end of this phase, the process has better instructions, standards or goals. Planning for the next cycle can proceed with a better base-line.

There is a chronological order to the cycle. Each part builds upon the previous. It is not possible to change the direction of the cycle or to turn the system around.

By repeating such quality cycles, the youth centre improves its services and activities continuously. It facilitates the learning of its members and continuously transforms itself and becomes a “learning organisation”.



A European response to the work of Dr. William Edwards Deming is the EFQM-model developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management, a not-for-profit membership foundation established in Brussels, Belgium in 1989. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a common European quality management instrument for the public sector derived from the EFQM-model and launched in 2000. These instruments are both based on Dr. William Edwards Deming’s work.

All quality management models have in common the aim of promoting self-assessment with the involvement of all staff, of developing an improvement plan based on the results of the self-assessment and of implementing the improvement actions. As the quality management cycle of Dr. William Edwards Deming is easy to understand and use, the present document is based on this approach.

On the following pages, several tools for approaching the four phases of the quality cycle in a youth centre are described. The “plan” and “check” phases are crucial, as they are preconditions for quality development. Therefore, sets of guiding questions concerning planning and self-assessment are developed in this document. As the “act” phase should be based on records from the “do” and “check” phases, one part of this document concerns documentation and reporting. Grids with key figures and key information, as well as an outline for reports, help to keep track of the work done by the youth centre.

A major risk when developing quality management tools is to end up with very complex models which imply a heavy workload. Most of the youth centres operate with a relatively small number of collaborators and the use of complex instruments might be disproportionate. The aim of the present document is to propose tools which are simple to use, and which can serve all QL-youth centres, regardless of their size. As mentioned before, each youth centre should take the liberty to adapt the tools to its specific needs.



PLAN

PLAN

Why and how?

Developing a consistent planning of a youth centre's activities, services and development is an important task of the management team. Good planning is a strong guideline and can steer the different teams to success under the most challenging conditions. A poorly-constructed plan, on the other hand, can create problems for everyone involved. Given the permanently changing field in which youth centres operate, the period which covers the planning cannot be too long. Therefore, it is recommended that teams develop yearly work plans. Following a few simple steps can help to create a workable planning.

Keep in mind the mission of the youth centre

The starting point of each yearly work plan should be a brief review of the legal basis or constitution, as well as the mission statement or concept paper of the centre.

Take into account evaluations of the centre

Other important elements to take into consideration are recent self-assessments or evaluations, and the recommendations that were made.

Break it down

The next key step is to create a work breakdown structure that provides a detailed list of project deliverables. This list should be discussed and agreed together with the team. Given the diversity of tasks, it

is recommended that different items are discussed in separate groups: the team in charge of boarding and lodging has other preoccupations than, for example, the educational team.

Define jobs

Everyone in the youth centre should understand what their role entails and what their responsibilities are during the upcoming year. Defining individual work plans within the youth centre can be helpful when it comes time to reviewing staff. It also avoids staff doubling up on processes that one person could do more efficiently.

Compliance

Youth centres are required to adhere to certain laws and regulations. Ensuring procedures in the youth centre are well-documented will mean it can show it has been following procedures if any legal action is taken against the youth centre.

Planning tool

The projects need to be documented and, where possible, benchmarks should be defined. This should be done in a way that is easy to use and consist rather of a table with projects, benchmarks, names of responsible people, than of a narrative text. If this table is well done, it will be very helpful in the "check" phase.

Guiding questions for planning

During the planning process, each aspect of the services of a youth centre should be considered. Again, the guiding questions are grouped along with the main objectives of QL-youth centres. The following list of guiding questions is a proposal that should be adapted or completed by each centre, based on its own context and needs.

Be a (safe) space for young people

What initiatives or works are necessary to guarantee the safety and health of the users?

What initiatives or works are planned to ensure conformity with regulations?

Which parts of the infrastructure need renovating?

What smaller repairs in parts of the centre are planned?

What new equipment should be acquired?

What initiatives or works are planned in order to allow easy access to the centre? (e.g. accessibly by public transport, access for people with reduced mobility, etc.)

What initiatives are being taken to hear the voice of young people in the development of the centre?

Be educational establishments

What educational activities are planned for the upcoming year?

What training courses are planned for the upcoming year?

What innovations in the programmes are foreseen?

What new educational tools will be developed?

Is the agenda of educational activities and training courses well-balanced so as to avoid overwork during certain periods?

Be multipliers in youth work

What new partnerships are planned?

What publications are planned?

What actions are planned to increase the recognition of the youth work in the centre and youth work in general?

Be focal points for networking

What opportunities are there for exchange with youth policy makers?

What conferences, seminars or exchange platforms are planned?

What potentially new partners or users are there (in order to broaden the target group)?

European dimension

What multilateral activities are planned?

What activities related to the Council of Europe are planned?

General management:

What measures are planned to ensure conformity with regulations? (e.g. GDPR, HACCP)

Which procedures are not yet documented?

What steps are being undertaken to improve the sustainable management of the centre?

Human resources:

Are any people planning to leave during the year? (retirement, maternity leave, etc.)

How are these leaves being taken into account and covered?

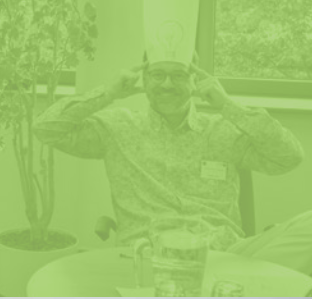
Are any new recruitments planned?

What offers for further training are available to the staff?

Are there any opportunities for international volunteers at the centre?

Communication:

What communication activities are planned?



DO

QL-YOUTH CENTRES: FOCAL POINTS FOR NETWORKING

Documenting the work

Documenting the work is an essential feature in the context of quality management as only a good documentation of choices made in the “plan” phase (priorities, working plan, processes, etc.), and of experiences made within the “do” phase allow for effective self-assessment (the “check” phase) and adaptation of the processes and programmes (the “act” phase).

Three main ideas concerning documentation and reporting should be taken into consideration.

Documentation should serve the youth centre in the first instance

Most importantly, the information coming out of the documentation should speak to the youth centre itself. The documentation should be geared towards information that matters to the youth centres themselves. It should allow the youth centre to see what works, to identify where improvements can be made, and to learn from results when making decisions about the future.

It should be mentioned that good documentation is not only useful within the framework of quality management, but is also useful with staff changes, as it keeps track of what was planned and realised.

Principle of proportionality

A core question is about what to record. As the youth centres have a large diversity of

services, the recording could also be very extensive. It is important to keep in mind that there is little point in setting recording standards that are impractical, or too numerous and time-consuming. When setting up the grids for recording, management should be sure that the data that is asked to be recorded is needed, and helpful for evaluation at a later stage.

Importance of knowing beforehand which data to collect

It is difficult to collect relevant data on past actions. It is therefore important to decide beforehand what data to collect. It is also important to have comparable data from year to year. Thus it makes no sense to frequently alter the type of data collected. The choice of key figures to be collected is a strategic one and should be carefully considered and thought through.

In the following, tools for documenting the work of the youth centres during different phases of the quality cycle are suggested.

Recording input, actions and output

The input, actions and output of youth centres can be described with several key figures. In the tool presented below, they are grouped according to the five aims of the QL-youth centres:

- be a (safe) space for young people
- be educational establishments
- be multipliers in youth work
- be focal points for networking

- promote values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe.

It is interesting to note that, even if there are many external factors that impact on youth centres (for example degree of support by funders, political environment etc.), input, actions and output are under the control of the youth centres. Therefore, keeping a record of them is helpful when it comes to evaluation.

Key figures on input, actions and output (“What we do”)

Input

Be a space for young people

Number of beds available	
Number of rooms for activity available	
Number of employed administrative or technical staff (full time equivalent)	
Number of external staff (employed by service companies, full time equivalent)	

Be an educational establishment / Be a multiplier in youth work

Number of employed educational staff (full time equivalent)	
Number of trainees or long-term volunteers (European Voluntary Service or similar)	
Number of (educational) freelancers/external trainers	
Number of volunteers (but not European Voluntary Service)	

Be a focal point for networking

Number of regional networks in which the centre is involved	
Number of international networks in which the centre is involved	

Promote values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe

Number of networks or programmes of the Council of Europe in which the centre is involved (for example: Platform for youth centres, No Hate Speech Movement, etc.)	
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Actions

Be an educational establishment

Number of educational activities (for example: sessions)	
--	--

Be a multiplier in youth work

Number of training courses	
Total number of (own) pedagogical tools available (publications, tutorials, simulation games, etc.)	
Number of new (own) pedagogical tools available (publications, tutorials, simulation games, etc.)	

Be a focal point for networking

Number of exchange activities on national/regional level (seminars, conferences, etc.)	
Number of youth policy programmes in which the youth centre is involved	

Promote values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe

Number of activities organised by the centre which are specifically linked to the Council of Europe's priorities	
--	--

Output

Be a space for young people

Number of overnight stays	
Number of meals served in the centre	
Number of youth groups organising their own programme in the centre	
Number of young people using the premises	

Be an educational establishment

Number of groups participating in the centre's programmes	
Number of participants in the centre's programmes	

Be a focal point for networking

Number of regional networks in which the centre is involved	
Number of international networks in which the centre is involved	

Be a multiplier in youth work

Number of participants on training courses organised by the centre	
Number of (own) publications sold / distributed	

Be a focal point for networking

Number of participants in national/regional exchange activities	
Number of participants in international exchange activities	
Number of networks based in the youth centre	

Promote values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe

Number of participants in activities specifically linked to the Council of Europe's priorities	
--	--

Note:

On the one hand, some centres would not want to consider some of the proposed key figures as they are not relevant for them; on the other hand, some centres would want to add certain key figures, as they participate in specific programmes. This list is flexible and should be adapted by each centre according to its own needs.

Key information on “process quality” (“How we do”)

The centre has a clear understanding of its context and missions	Yes	Partly	No	n.a.
The context of the centre is described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The priority beneficiaries are defined	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The needs of priority beneficiaries are identified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The objectives of the centre are described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A mission statement has been formulated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The educational offer of the centre is consistent	Yes	Partly	No	n.a.
The educational programmes are in line with the objectives of the centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Each programme has a concept paper describing the context, educational aims and activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Each activity is described: educational aims, methods, operation flows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The staff of the centre is prepared for its tasks	Yes	Partly	No	n.a.
The employed staff is informed about the mission and goals of the centre as well as the annual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The tasks of each employed staff member are described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote values, approaches and standards of the Council of Europe	Yes	Partly	No	n.a.
Number of activities organised by the centre which are specifically linked to the Council of Europe's priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Number of (own) publications sold / distributed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The tasks of freelancers are described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The tasks of volunteers are described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The job-descriptions of staff (employed, freelance, volunteer) are updated on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employed staff are offered further training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Freelancers/external trainers are trained for their tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteers are prepared for their tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre has prepared a manual for its staff and revises the document on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The centre has developed a quality management	Yes	Partly	No	n.a.
The centre has an annual working plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The annual working plan is put together in discussion with the staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre sets annual targets and adopts indicators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre has statistics on activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The feedback from users and participants is collected and analysed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre has an annual review of activities with the staff (self-assessment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The management of the centre implements conclusions of the self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre gives follow-up suggestions based on the recommendations of the Council of Europe within the framework of the Quality Label for Youth Centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre is involved in quality management schemes concerning the management of the infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre is planning its future	Yes	Partly	No	n.a.
The centre maintains structured relations with donors (government, funders, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre considers it has a secure financial situation for the next 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre has developed a strategy for future development concerning financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre has developed a vision for future development concerning infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The centre has developed a vision for future development concerning educational programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note:

As with the previous list, this one should also be adapted to each centre's reality. Moreover, some youth centres might prefer to use a scale from e.g. 1-5, instead of "yes" and "no" as possible answers.



CHECK

CHECK

Internal and external evaluation

■ Reporting the work with key figures and information the way it is described above gives no direct appreciation of the value of the achievements. This would be the topic of an evaluation which is an analysis of the information contained in the reports.

Evaluation needs to be planned and it is up to the management to make sure that it happens on a regular basis. A positive attitude towards evaluation processes can change attitudes among the staff as quality assurance becomes an issue. Given the large scope of actions at a youth centre, frequent evaluation of the youth centre as a whole represents an important effort and might be too time-consuming. This problem can be solved by evaluating only one activity during one year (e.g. lodging) and putting a focus on another activity the next year (e.g. educational programmes). Alternatively, the youth centre could choose to evaluate certain aspects each year (e.g. catering, educational offer) and, in addition to that, analyse a specific issue in more detail each year (e.g. infrastructure). In doing so, the youth centre shows that it is concerned with evaluation even if it does not have the means to do a full in-depth evaluation per year.

Evaluation can be done internally (self-assessment) or with the help of an external body.

Internal evaluation (self-assessment)

Self-assessments are often the first step in assisting an organisation towards effective outcomes. Most of the QL-youth centres have a strong tradition of internal evaluation and their teams meet on a regular basis to discuss the results of their work and how they can improve processes. Several youth centres use supervision as a part of evaluation practice, and an opportunity for the staff to reflect on their practice and afford them the necessary forum to reflect, discuss and develop innovative solutions.

As with the planning process, it might be useful to carry out the self-assessment in separate groups according to individual tasks within the youth centre. It is also important to stimulate critical thinking during self-assessment.

External evaluation

This is an evaluation that is carried out by someone who is not directly involved in the development or operation of the service or activity being evaluated, in other words, it's carried out by someone from outside the project team. A common feature is to systematically ask for feedback from participants, and calculate the satisfaction rate of the users and participants.

A more in-depth evaluation can be carried out through an evaluation process by an external expert. This can be done, for example, within the framework of acquiring a quality label.

These quality labels should be chosen according to the priorities of the youth centres, but should concern the different fields such as lodging, catering, waste management and educational activities.

External evaluation can also cover the youth centre as a whole and be carried out by a specialised entity. An easy way to implement external evaluation could be a peer review carried out by a team from another QL-youth centre.

Guiding questions for self-assessment

Context:

Were there any policy changes which affected the youth centre?

How was the exchange with youth policy makers?

Are there any new regulations?

Did any major developments occur within the youth centre?

Vision, mission, goals and objectives:

Are the target groups still relevant?

Does the centre have strategic documents (concept paper, strategy, action plan, etc.)?

Are the centre's strategic documents still relevant to national/regional/local development priorities?

Does the centre's strategic documents paper still reflect the latest trends in youth work in Europe?

Space for young people:

Are the facilities up-to-date concerning the regulations?

Are the facilities still suitable for youth activities?

Does the centre have sufficient facilities for leisure activities?

Is the youth centre easily reachable by public transport?

Were there any suggestions by users concerning improvements to the facilities?

Does the centre still have a pleasant atmosphere giving the young people a sense of belonging?

Does any specific equipment need maintenance or replacement?

Are the boarding and catering services still satisfying?

Does the youth centre promote the participation of young people in the development of the centre?

Educational activities:

Was the youth centre able to meet its targets? (Compare results with the initial planning)

To what extent is a youth-centred approach implemented in the educational activities?

Have any problems been identified?

Have any new demands concerning the programme offer been identified?

Multipliers:

Does the youth centre have training offers or has it developed support material for people working in the youth field?

Have any new co-operation partners been identified?

What practices could serve as examples of good practice?

Has the youth centre disseminated any of its experience or good practices?

Does the youth centre offer training opportunities for individuals in its field of expertise? (volunteers, apprentices)

Does the youth centre have co-operation activities with the local community?

Focal point for networking:

Did the youth centre organise platforms or seminars enabling exchanges within the youth sector?

Did the youth centre have any exchanges with institutions or other people involved in youth policy development?

General management:

Did the youth centre make efforts to attract groups or individuals from other countries?

Did the youth centre co-operate with partners on a European level?

Did the youth centre organise any specific activities promoting human rights?

Space for young people:

Is it standard practice to monitor and evaluate achievements of the objectives of the centre?

Is the management structure still adequate and appropriate?

Are each person's responsibilities clearly defined?

Did the management react to new developments?

Where adaptations made on the basis of the latest assessment?

Were the financial resources sufficient?

How does the management see its relationship with its funders and donors?

Is it standard practice to carry out a risk analysis?

Did the centre progress towards its strategic goals?

Does the youth centre collect, analyse and use information for effective planning and decision making?

Is it standard practice to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the youth centre's quality management system?

Is the centre compliant with existing or new regulations? (GDPR, HACCP, etc.)

Human resources:

Were the human resources sufficient?

Does the youth centre have a code of conduct for its collaborators?

Are the job descriptions still up-to-date?

Does the youth centre take care of support staff by clearly defining their responsibilities, and by evaluating their performance on a regular basis?

Are suggestions, comments and criticisms of the staff being taken into account?

Is the staff associated with changes put into operation by the management?

Communication:

Are the online communication tools up-to-date? (website, social media accounts, etc.)

Are the mission and offers of the centre known to the relevant institutions?

Are the services and activity offers known to potential users?



ACT

ACT

Drawing conclusions from evaluation

■ The conclusions of self-assessment can be reported in different ways, but should include the following four elements.

Achievements

The main focus of an evaluation should consist of an analysis of the results compared with the initial planning. The core question is to what degree the youth centre has achieved its objectives. If the work plan was established in an easy to use way, the comparison of results with the initial plan should be easy.

Lessons learned

“A lesson learned is knowledge or understanding gained by experience. The experience may be positive, as in a successful test or mission, or negative, as in a mishap or failure. [...] A lesson must be significant in that it has a real or assumed impact on operations; valid in that is factually and technically correct; and applicable in that it identifies a specific design, process, or decision that reduces or eliminates the potential for failures and mishaps, or reinforces a positive result.”

– European Space Agency

Evaluation helps to draw lessons concerning the actions of the youth centre, with clear pointers for adaptations and improvements. It should feed directly into the planning of the next actions of the youth centre and enhance progress.

Threats and opportunities

Threats are anything that can adversely affect the youth centre or achievement of its goals. Internal threats may occur, for example, from changes in staff, or an accident during an activity. External threats include, for example, new regulations, new and existing competitors, or unstable political situations. Sometimes a threat can be turned into an opportunity. For example, a new political priority may have as a consequence that the youth centre is no longer supported to deliver a specific programme, but it may create an opportunity to give the youth centre a new – more innovative – orientation.

New opportunities could create conditions to improve a youth centre’s services and actions. Some opportunities can be foreseen, such as the rise of new political priorities (e.g. promotion of new skills such as “entrepreneurship” or “digital skills”), while some may occur by chance, such as a request for co-operation by an important organisation. If the team can think far enough ahead, it may even be able to create some opportunities.

Strategy for the future

The analysis of the lessons learned, the threats and the opportunities should be considered within a broader trend, as well as in the progress toward longer goals and mission fulfilment. It should help to develop a vision for the future.

The youth centre’s response to the lessons learned, tied into the understanding of upcoming risks and opportunities, feeds

into the youth centre’s strategy for the future.

The conclusions from the evaluation should be recorded in a written document.

A tool: the SWOT analysis

■ A widely-used tool for carrying out the reflections described above is a SWOT analysis (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats)

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a framework used to evaluate a service and to develop strategic planning. SWOT analyses assess internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential.

The name is an acronym for the four parameters the technique examines:

Strengths: characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others

Weaknesses: characteristics of the business that place the business or project at a disadvantage relative to others

Opportunities: elements in the environment that the business or project could exploit to its advantage

Threats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project.





REPORT

REPORT

Reporting

■ Youth centres are accustomed to producing annual reports and they fulfil this task with varying degrees of enthusiasm. However, over recent years there has been an increasing demand for organisations – across both public and third sectors – to provide more information about their work and their results. Youth centres are not in any exceptional situation in this regard. Very often this demand is seen as an additional pressure, as it implies additional work.

For some people, reporting the work of a youth centre may seem too difficult and time-consuming to do. Funders, however, mostly understand that not every youth centre has the means to carry out full social-impact reporting. They simply need to understand clearly what the youth centres are doing.

Reporting should be seen as a powerful tool for communicating what organisations do. It helps to strengthen the relations with funders and donors. A good report is also a validation of the staff and its work. Furthermore, in a broader context, it enables the public to be informed about the work of the youth centres – raising awareness not only of the issues that concern the youth centres, but also of the things they have achieved. “Do good and talk about it!” is a well-known phrase used in marketing. If the youth centre does good things, then people should know that.

On the previous pages, different possibilities to describe the work of a youth

centre are mentioned. These elements can be assembled into a coherent impact measuring and reporting system.

A good report needs to be clear. It needs to be easily understood by the general reader as well as by relevant professionals. Ideally the report is written in a way that it is interesting for a large audience: funders, donors, policy makers, government bodies, other organisations, and beneficiaries.

It should also be easily available and appropriately distributed. The most obvious channel is the website of the youth centre, where the report should be available to download. Printed copies are still useful to address specific audiences.

Outline for reports

■ It is up to each youth centre to decide on the best way to draft its reports. This very much depends on the context of the youth centre and the target group to which the report is addressed.

However, each report should include the following elements:

- definition of the missions of the youth centre
- description of the infrastructure, staff, budget, etc. (e.g. grid “input”)
- description of innovations introduced during the year
- description of the educational offers: programmes, training courses, projects (e.g. short description of the offers and grid “actions” and grid “output”)

- description of the quality approach (e.g. grid “process quality”)
- evaluation (lessons learned, threats and opportunities, strategy for the future)
- outlook (programmes, infrastructure, human resources, financial sustainability, etc.)
- conclusion



Glossary

QL-Youth centre

■ By QL-Youth centre we mean youth centres which have already acquired the Council of Europe Quality Label for youth centres.

Non-formal education

■ We refer to the definition adapted from Lasse Siurala (2005) in ‘European Framework for Youth Policy and Compass – A Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People’:

“Non-formal education is a purposeful but voluntary educational process that takes place in diverse settings where learning is not necessarily their only activity. These settings may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities may be staffed by “paid” learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities are planned, but may not be organised according to conventional curricula. They often address specific groups. They document and assess learning achievements in non-conventional ways.”

Non-formal educational activities can be characterised as:

- *voluntary*
- *accessible to everyone (ideally)*
- *organised processes with educational objectives*
- *participatory*
- *learner-centred*
- *about learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship*
- *based on involving both individual and group learning with a collective approach*

- *holistic and process-oriented*
- *starting from the experience of the participants.*

Youth work

■ We use the term “youth work” in a broad sense as defined in the “Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work”:

Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people’s active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision-making.

Non-formal education activities in QL-Youth centres are a specific type of youth work.

Sources

T-Kit 10: Educational Evaluation in Youth Work, Partnership in the Youth field between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, 2007

Proposed approaches to social impact measurement, European Commission 2014

EFQM Excellence model, European foundation for Quality management, 2012

How to measure and report social impact – A Guide for investees, The Social Investment Business Group, January 2014

'Quality Youth Work – A common framework for the further development of youth work', Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, European Commission, 2015

Promoting Council of Europe values, youth policy and youth work standards in Europe

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres provides an opportunity for youth centres with a structured relationship to a public authority to benefit from the Council of Europe's approach to youth work and youth policy. It offers residential educational youth centres a framework within which to develop the quality of their offer to young people and the youth sector at their own pace.

This brochure describes the approach chosen by quality-labelled youth centres to address quality, quality management and reporting. It describes the concepts of "structural quality" and "process quality" and proposes tools to develop quality youth centres' work such as guiding questions for reflection, check-lists and assessment grids.

The initiative 'The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres' is part of the intergovernmental cooperation programme of the Council of Europe's youth sector.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

Council of Europe Publishing

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