RECOMMENDATION PAPER

on measuring impact
of youth work on
personal level of
young people

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RECOMMENDATION PAPER ON MEASURING IMPACT OF YOUTH WORK ON PERSONAL LEVEL OF YOUNG PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this article is to serve the project MEASURING IMPACT IN YOUTH WORK-MISSION (IM)POSSIBLE! implementation, which aims to create a mechanism that can be used for measuring the impact of youth work. This mechanism will be used for advocacy on EU and national level. The project aims to increase the quality of youth work and its recognition at national and European level by raising awareness about its centrality as an educational and learning tool for the youth of any generation and showing concrete and understandable impact outcomes that will foster further investment in innovative approaches.

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The objectives of the project aim at the creation of a mapping of **the existing impact measurement system and at the production of mechanisms and tools that allow the detection of the impact of youth work on young people and of the social impact**.

These specific objectives are clearly contributing to increasing the quality of youth work making visible and measurable the impact on medium and long terms of different projects and would provide a concrete tool for *defining better and in a more objective way what is quality in youth work and how quality and impact are related*. The project will provide mechanisms and related instruments for measuring the impact on youth. Measuring social impact will contribute to valorizing the role of youth work developing well-being, social inclusion and quality educational path in the local communities for young people. In this sense, the impact outcomes will be important for advocating, for a better recognition (professional, social and economic) of youth work and reinforcing links with the local institutions and authorities.

Achieving the general aim and specific objectives together will contribute to strengthening the link between the research and the work of institutions creating mechanisms and instruments that will lead to better understanding of the added value of youth work.

The project also contributes to the mapping and creation of a recommendation *paper on measuring the impact of youth work on the personal level of young people* (IO1). This activity will be followed by the development of **Booklet** "Mapping of leading practices at local, national and European level regarding youth work's impact on youth" containing up to 20 methods and tools, coming from Serbian, Portuguese, Italian, Macedonian and EU level.

Review on measuring impact tools/instruments/mechanisms in the field of youth work

The cooperation in the youth sector on EU level shall make the most of youth potential. It should support the youth participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement, but also has to ensure that **all young people have the necessary resources and competences to participate at all possible levels**. Youth work has a key role in the implementation of the goals of the youth policy. Kiilakoski (2020) summarizes that the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention describes the basic principles of youth work as "educative, empowering, participative, expressive and inclusive". In the first Youth Work Convention it is stated that despite of the complexity of youth work, what unites youth work in Europe is that "it is guided and governed by principles of participation and empowerment, values of human rights and democracy, and antidiscrimination and tolerance" (Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention). Kiilakoski outlines that the Council of Europe recommendation on youth work (2017) states that "The design and delivery of youth work are underpinned by **the principles of voluntary and active participation, equality of access, openness and flexibility**".

The Council Resolution on youth work (2010) points 8 fields (education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, creativity and culture) in which cross-sectoral youth policy initiatives should be taken and where youth work can contribute. Other important action fields in this regard are human rights and democracy, cultural div-

ersity and mobility. Youth work is complementary to the formal education, invites young people to take responsibility and to be accountable for their actions; provide the opportunity for young people to develop a wide range of different personal and professional skills; promote social participation and responsibility, voluntary participation and active citizenship; strengthen communities. In general, it has socio-economic potential. The youth work activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. This leads to the responsibility to gather clear and concrete evidence of the added value of youth work on individual and public life.

The results of the expert group set up under the <u>EU Work Plan for Youth for 2014 – 2015</u> describe the concrete value of the youth work in addressing challenges young people are facing, the so important youth work approach as a link and broker between young people and different fields, sectors and services, such as the local communities, schools, social services, media and police. The report focuses on the importance of the inclusion of the youth workers in the youth policy formulation – **youth work is "like a radar**, it is first in line and can pick up early indicators of changes, tendencies and trends among young people and help trigger quicker responses".

The new EU Youth Strategy (2019 – 2027) pointed out 3 main core areas of the youth sector: Engage, Connect, Empower. These 3 areas cover the general path how to engage young people to be part of the community life and to be creative architects of their own and community life, how to work together, to experience solidarity, to share best practices and to further work on effective systems of recognition and validation of gained competences outside the formal education. Last but not least, how to empower young people to take charge of their own life. **Youth work is addressed as a catalyst of empowerment**. "Youth work brings unique benefits to young people in their transition to adulthood, providing a safe environment for them to gain self-confidence, and learn in a non-formal way. Youth work is known for equipping youth with key personnel, professional and entrepreneurial competencies and skills such as teamwork, leadership, intercultural competences, project management, problem solving and critical thinking. In some cases, youth work is the bridge into education, training or work, thus preventing exclusion."

The Council of Europe Recommendation (CM/Rec (2017)4) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work states that the sustainability of European identity and the Council of Europe's core values (human rights, rule of law and democracy) relies on the creativity, competences, social commitment and contribution of young people and on their confidence in the future as well. It continues that the government policies should support young people in realizing their full potential as autonomous members of society, enabling them to develop life plans and exercise their democratic citizenship. Y**outh work makes an important contribution to active citizenship by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for civic engagement and social action**. The Recommendation underlines the **complexities and challenges of transition from childhood to adulthood and autonomy**, as well as the decline in opportunities for young people as a result of increasing unemployment, poverty, discrimination and social exclusion. It stresses the positive contribution of youth workers in all member States to empowering and engaging young people in developing inclusive, democratic and peaceful societies. The Recommendation gives a clear explanation of how to view youth work in sync, namely as "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. Despite different traditions and definitions, there is a common understanding that **the primary function of youth work is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large**". Through engaging young people in the process of non-formal and informal learning, they will gain knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which will strengthen their self-confidence, resilience and capacity to manage difficult situations in life.

Furthermore, youth work is defined as one of the elements of the youth policy triangle. In 2009 the CoE published the first volume of the series on the history of youth work, where youth work policy and practice were deconstructed and looked at from different perspectives. In the article "The history of youth work and its relevance for youth policy today"

it is recorded that Helena Helve "pointed to the history of Finnish **youth research** underpinning Finnish **youth work** and **youth policy**, the three forming a **"magic triangle" (Verschelden, Coussée, Van de Walle and Williamson**, 2009). **In the same** article **Verschelden et.al** (2009) continues that "youth work is rooted in very different practices, ranging from rather disciplined organizations protecting young people from moral decline and offering training programmes for better citizens to more emancipatory initiatives fostering participation by supporting young people's own efforts and movements. Several speakers showed that youth work should not take the shape of a formal organization, but nor should it be a wild movement".

This indicates that the youth work is seen as a significant area of the youth policy implementation and measuring its impact should be of constant concern to the various stakeholders – policy makers, youth organizations, youth researchers. Hence, conducting research on the existing impact measurement mechanisms will help to better understand the content and quality of the youth policy cycle. Such an approach answers the questions: "Do we have mechanisms/tools/instruments for systematic review of the impact of youth work on young people? How do we prove that the youth worker' interventions lead to positive youth development and support their transition to adulthood? How do we ensure that youth work motivates and supports young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life?How do we measure youth personal and social development and society at large?

Evaluating the effectiveness—knowledge on the effects of interventions under real world conditions—of the outcomes of policies and practice involving young people is important (Mundy-McPherson et al.2012). Policies concerning young people should guarantee that professionals and measures create a positive environment and in no way worsen the young person's condition. That's why the **systematic monitoring and impact evaluation is a crucial part** of policy implementation, "demonstrating accountability for funding allocation and for determining the effectiveness of various aspects of programmes implemented in different settings and with different groups of young people" (Mundy-McPherson et al.2012). Evaluations that are relevant to the whole of a sector are important building blocks for future sector development, whilst outcome evaluations which relate to the appropriateness of services use evidence to show that a policy, service or practice has had

intended results (Brownson et al. 2002). Research on the effectiveness of programs in achieving policy outcomes is important for several reasons. They serve to disseminate the lessons of meaningful experience. Evaluation of the outcome of the programs highlights what works and what does not work; identify individuals and/or groups who could/could not benefit from a particular service; and facilitates the ongoing creation of effective policy at both national and regional levels. (Law 2009). It is important to note that the evaluation of the effectiveness of youth work faces the problem that predefined specific indicators regarding the desired change and improvement are not always provided. Golden et al. (2004) gives four confounding factors: recipient diversity within and between programmes; diverse and often unreliable methods for measurement and delineating influential factors; insufficient human and financial resources for comprehensive and longitudinal assessments; and the often inappropriateness of in-depth assessments for maintaining youth worker and young people's relationships.

METHODOLOGY

Agreement between the partners and the researchers on the development of a methodology for the implementation of Outcome 1 was reached during the project meetings. This not only helps to harmonize the actions, but also increases the commitment of the project partners.
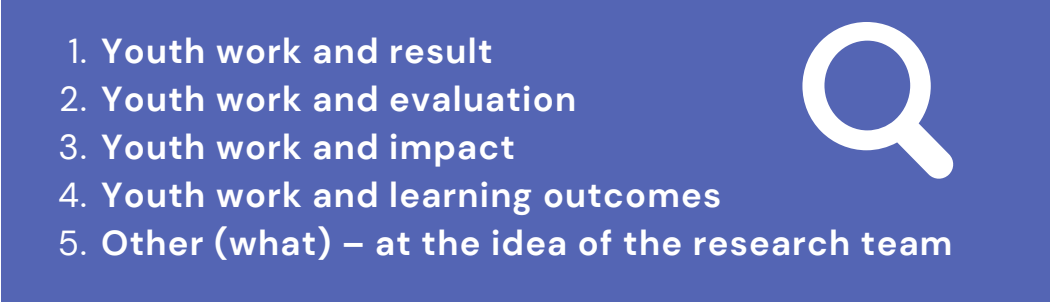
The structure presented below for desk research **on measuring impact tools/instruments/mechanisms** in the field of youth work and activities in the field of youth policies is in fulfillment of one of the key objectives of the project, namely, to achieve "**Collected local, national and EU leading practices in measuring youth work impact on youth and development of new mechanism enriched the capacity of national youth work associations** and resulted in advocacy initiatives grounded in evidence-based data."

Each national team organizes an independent desk research, looking for up to 10 examples according to set criteria. Each example deemed appropriate is accompanied by a description. Information is sought about something that has already taken place or is in an advanced stage of its implementation. Upcoming tools/instruments are not objects of review. Collected examples are project results, reports, scientific publications,

journalistic publications or anything else that it is or presents information about a **tool/instrument for measuring impact/learning outcomes/change** that occurred during an event, training, program, activity or some initiative that has already taken place.

Project partners are encouraged to collect whatever they see fit following the framework. It is then up to the researchers to analyze, draw conclusions and formulate recommendations. Also, researchers should do independent desk research at the European level. However, to support the work of the researchers, the project partners are asked **to highlight at least 4 results at local/national level** for measuring impact tools/instruments/mechanisms in their countries in the field of youth work (how the impact of youth work is measured) that have been completed or are at an advanced stage of implementation.

Researchers have arranged specific keywords to search on to facilitate and sync the process. Search keywords are as follow:

1. **Youth work and result**
2. **Youth work and evaluation**
3. **Youth work and impact**
4. **Youth work and learning outcomes**
5. **Other (what) – at the idea of the research team**

Setting keywords for desk-research in fulfillment of one of the main objectives of the project is "detection of the impact of youth work on young people and also of the social impact". It is particularly important to understand "what's quality in youth work and how quality and impact are related". Based on that, a main and important commitment of the researchers, after receiving the collected documents and examples, is to understand what evidence there is about the positive impact of youth work, what part of the work of youth workers, youth organizations and institutions is the process of establishing this impact and how different parties ensure that activities achieve their goals.

In the project intentions it is said that "The impact outcomes will be important for advocating for a better recognition (professional, social and economic) of youth work and reinforcing links with the local institutions and authorities". Taking into account that youth work is a major part of

the implementation of youth policy at local, national and European level and in this sense, it is very likely that the relevant stakeholders spend a public resource. This further requires clear evidence of what goals and what positive impact is being achieved. This will also protect the financial rationale.

RESULTS

The survey of existing practices in different countries highlights 13 examples. It can be seen that the collected examples are not balanced, and in some of the countries participating in the project, they note the absence of any example (Italy and Macedonia). It is important to explain that a lack of evidence is not an indication of a lack of effect, but rather indicates an incompleteness of the policy cycle.

This can also be used as a basis for specific work on this deficit, if of course it is identified as such. Thus, responsible parties can track and measure progress or regression over time, and inform stakeholders of the impact of their actions. The tracked examples are divided depending on the level of use – local/national and European. In those at the local/national level, the direct focus on youth work programs can be seen. Those at the European level are more related to different goals (youth empowerment, participation in decision making process, youth goals implementation, youth work portfolio) of youth work separately than to an overall integrated approach.

Local/national level

1. Impact Study of CARE's regional Youth Initiative (YMI)

CARE's long-term program in the Balkans, which CARE implements in cooperation with partners, non-governmental organizations, institutions and donors, covers a wide range of topics aimed at to change the behavior and attitudes of young people and provide them with new perspectives and opportunities. In the Balkan region, CARE International has over 25 years of implementation experience. During the wars and conflicts of the 1990s, CARE responded to the destruction, traumatization, displacement and inter-ethnic hatred with his extensive humanitarian work and working to save lives in the Balkans. Since 2000, CARE's orientation has been moved to development work and its goal in

the Balkans today is to ensure that social, economic and political rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups are recognized and respected, thereby contributing to sustainable peace in the region. CARE's program strategy is based on two pillars: a) socioeconomic inclusion of vulnerable minorities and other marginalized groups, which contributes to stronger capacities and improved opportunities for them, enabling them to integrate into society and realize their rights; b) gender equality of the vulnerable and marginalized group, which is achieved through promoting the values and practices of gender equality and diversity and non-violence, strengthening the capacity of local, national and regional actors for human rights and social justice and creating opportunities for innovation, participation, learning, collaboration and advocacy. CARE fosters partnerships with the local civil society sector and governments, committed contribution to positive changes in societies.

The aim of the impact study is to find out changes that occurred in places implementation in terms of perception, attitudes and behavior of young people in the period 2014–2020 year in key program areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) prevention of violence; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) prevention sexual violence, as a direct result engagement of CARE and its partners. This study also aims to identify which methods and which approaches (school workshops, school and/or community campaigns and Be a Man clubs - BMK) were the most effective in the given context and circumstances. It was outlined that CARE intended to determine the level and type of impact in the three related domains listed below with the five key areas listed above. Those three domains are:

● Change in the level of knowledge, skills and self-confidence of young men and women of high school age, as a result of direct participation in school workshops and/or campaigns in the community-based Program Y, as well as in Buda men's clubs;

● Change in attitudes and behavior in high school boys and girls, as a result of their participation in school workshops, campaigns and Be a Man clubs, as well as in their ability to adequately respond to the violence that happens to them or others;

● Methods and approaches that are used give the best to the context and circumstances results.

2. Youth work - one story with 40 titles

Publication of collected stories of young people and youth workers from Serbia about their experiences in youth work programs. It is in storytelling form. Young people and youth workers were interviewed by youth workers who had experience in journalism and conducting interviews. The results are as follow:

a) 18 young people were interviewed with the aim of showing in an affirmative way how young people are empowered through youth work programs and what their potential was;

b) the stories of 22 youth workers were collected with the aim of pointing out the competence of people who work with young people through youth work programs and explaining in simple language what it was the content of their work.

It is reported there were organized meetings with engaged youth workers based on the clear guidelines on the approach for the collecting stories. Youth workers were selected based on their experience in journalism and conducting interviews.

Due to a positive response by the wider audience, the storytelling is used in following 2 campaigns of NAPOR – *Youth work for better cities* (national campaign, involving people from other sectors to state impact on their institutions as a result of cooperation with youth workers) and *Youth work is a lifestyle* (showcasing the impact of youth work on personal and professional growth of youth workers in Estonia and Serbia).

3. IMPACT - Impact of entrepreneurship programs in young entrepreneurs' skills acquisition

The IMPACT project focuses on creating a self-assessment tool for transversal skills of young participants in entrepreneurship promotion projects within the framework of non-formal learning. The IMPACT project tool is based on the EntreComp framework published by the European Commission. In Estarreja, the project aims to promote youth entrepreneurship and innovation. The project tool aims to measure the acquisition of transversal skills in young participants of entrepreneurship programs, allowing them to assess their progress and development.

The main goal of the project is to provide a means for youth to assess their entrepreneurial skills based on the EntreComp framework. *Youth*

workers can use the tool to get group results and measure the collective impact of their programs on skill acquisition. The primary desired effect is to empower youth by providing them with a clear understanding of their *entrepreneurial skills*. By using the tool, ***participants can identify areas of strength and areas that need further development***, also to promote entrepreneurial and pro-active way of thinking and acting. Before the program, participants are introduced to the concept of entrepreneurial skills and the importance of self-assessment. During the program, participants are actively engaged with the IMPACT tool, assessing their skills and receiving feedback. After the program, participants can reflect on their results, potentially identifying areas for further training or development.

The IMPACT tool provides a sustainable means for youth to assess and develop their entrepreneurial skills. By understanding their competencies, participants are better equipped to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors, contributing to personal development and potentially stimulating economic growth. The tool's digital nature ensures it remains accessible and can be updated or adapted as needed, ensuring its continued relevance and utility.

4. Passport of competences

The passport of competences is a document in which knowledge, skills and values acquired through non-formal education in youth work are assessed. The passport shows *personal, social and work knowledge and skills*. The process encourages young person first to fill out an online questionnaire, then a mentor (youth worker assessor) to enter the same database and gives his/her assessment of how a young person progress and at the same time gives him/her feedback on whether he or she is aware of how well they have evaluated themselves. The next step is for young people to use the final document in front of the employers for job interviews. For the needs of the Passport is developed a training program for youth workers who will mentor and supervise young people and assess their competences.

Using an online tool, young people conduct a self-assessment of their competences and describe their experiences with the youth work program. At the same time, youth workers – assessors through the same base give an assessment of the development of young people's competences. The software then generates the results of self-assessment and assessment into a single document - the Passport of

Competence. With their passport, young people have the opportunity to participate in sample interviews with employers.

5. European Charter on Local Youth Work

The Charter is one of the main outcomes of the Europe Goes Local project and it has been developed through a Europe-wide consultation process, engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, municipalities, NGOs, youth organizations and councils, umbrella organizations and many more. It concerns the whole community of practice, which engages in youth work and wants to better the impact of it.

The aim of the Charter is specifically to contribute to the further development of local youth work. It settles principles and how to create an environment in order to meet these principles.

The Charter constitutes a common European platform for necessary dialogues on youth work. It is a free methodological tool, functioning as a checklist. The different principles are listed as a framework.

European level

1. The Council of Europe Youth work Portfolio

The Portfolio is a tool for assessing youth work competence and for planning how to develop it. This process is very important, because youth workers are bound to be life-long learners and youth work itself is a field constantly under development. The Portfolio helps members of the community of practice to: identify, assess and record their competencies, describe their competences to others; set their own further learning and development goals. The Portfolio is a tool which helps people and organisations doing youth work to consider how they contribute to helping young people acquire the competence to be active citizens. It asks them to consider how their knowledge, attitudes and skills can contribute to the fulfilment of this key task of youth policy.

The **tool is relevant for measuring the impact/learning outcomes/ desired change, etc**. Although the tool is primarily aimed at youth workers, it has a major impact on the bottom line that youth work has, namely: supporting young people to become active citizens and architects of their own lives. It provides a list of functions and competences. Some of the written competencies are a good basis for creating an additional impact measurement tool, as they can be converted into indicators.

2. A Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally

The Model is developed in the framework of the European Training Strategy (ETS) in the field of youth. The aim of the ETS is to build a cooperation framework, strengthen the connection to recognition and validation mechanisms and support systemic change at all levels: micro, meso and macro.

The competence model makes these international youth work settings more explicit. It focuses for instance on working in international teams and on supporting young people in international learning mobility projects. It also serves as a reference document for National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ programme who offer youth worker training. Further, this competence model supports youth workers themselves in assessing their own competences. This in turn helps them identify areas where they need further training and it helps institutional stakeholders determine youth workers' occupational profiles, as well the recognition of this profession by society.

3. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a global structured non-formal education and training programme that challenges young people to dream big, celebrate their achievements and change the world around them.

In the program, the young person formulates his own goals with the support of a mentor and leader in three main areas: volunteering, physical activity and skills. Also at the end of each level you must realize an adventure trip in nature.

An online system has been set up to record participant's progress. The young person must spend 1 hour each week to achieve their goals and record their progress in the system. The mentor, in addition to monitoring live, also monitors online how the participant is progressing on the way to their goal. The mentor also gives his/her consent regarding the described progress.

4. New research highlights positive impact of youth work with schools

An independent review of the impact of youth work delivered with schools, commissioned by the National Youth Agency, reveals youth work significantly improves engagement with learning and attendance, as well

as boosts young people's mental wellbeing and confidence.

The **_Better together: Youth work with schools_** report, published in June 2023, is the result of a call for evidence and a survey of schools and youth work organisations to illustrate where youth work is taking place with schools and alternative provision, the different models of delivery and the impact on pupils.

5. The Impact of Universal Youth Work

In 2015 a <u>critical review of the literature on Universal Youth Work</u> conducted by the Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium and University of Edinburgh found that: "Universal youth work has the potential to contribute to a range of important outcomes and achievements for young people, in particular health and wellbeing, educational attainment and employment".

The purpose of the literature review is to critically examine the variety of influences shaping contemporary youth work and to identify how practice benefits the development of young people in society. It offers examples of contemporary youth work practice, with particular emphasis on the purposes and outcomes of universal youth work, undertaken for its benefits to the personal development of all young people who choose to participate. A broad definition of youth work is adopted, to subsume provision with a focus on particular kinds of content such as sporting or cultural activity, alongside more broadly-based youth work programs. The <u>YouthLink Scotland</u> statement on the nature and purpose of youth work outlines the meaning of youth work in terms of the following three essential features which will lead to seven outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1: Essential features and outcomes of YouthLink network

Features	Outcomes
1. Young people choose to participate; 2. The work must build from where young people are; 3. Youth work recognizes the young person and the worker as partners in a learning process.	1. Young people build their health and wellbeing; 2. Young people develop and manage relationships effectively; 3. Young people create and apply their learning and describe their skills and achievements;

Features	Outcomes
	4. Young people participate safely and effectively in groups and teams; 5. Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control; 6. Young people grow as active citizens, expressing their voice and enabling change; 7. Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking.

6. CHANGE TRACKER

Self-assessment tool for identifying the impact and social change occurring as a result of youth political participation in municipal decision making. This self-assessment tool aims at identifying successful engagement with decision making within youth political participation activities. It is designed to quickly assess how effective youth political participation activities are at influencing municipal decision making and what changes they create. The tool should be used to assess ONE youth political participation **activity** you have run which aims to enable young people to influence municipal decision making. An activity can be a single event, an ongoing initiative, or a short programme of activities.

The implementation of the tool is in 4 steps:

● Complete the Youth Political Participation: Basic Checklist in Section 1;
● Identify people who will be involved in the self-assessment exercise;
● Complete Section 2: "Quality and impact of engagement with decision makers";
● Complete Section 3: "Impact on involvement of youth in local democracy".

There is a Youth Political Participation Basic checklist which includes 4 sections with 9 questions to identify if the youth activity is a youth political participation activity. Then the tool proposes 15 indicators that focus on which decision makers are involved with a youth participation activity. Involving the right decision makers is crucial to ensuring that the activity can make an impact on policy making. The next section describes

different aims and presents indicators to check impacts of any given youth political participation activity on development of opportunities to involve young people in local democracy. The main focus of the indicators is on systemic impacts towards involvement of young people in local democracy, not on individual developments and learning. This is true even in the case of developmental aims: the indicators in this instance cover creation of learning opportunities within political participation activities, but do not assess their effectiveness to learn as individuals. Four types of aims in youth political participation are presented: rights-based aims; empowerment aims; efficiency aims and developmental aims.

7. Evaluation in the Youth Field: Theoretical Framework for Evaluation Implementation on the Youth Goals

This publication brings together current evaluation theories with an ambitious purpose of making the evaluation as such into a more widely understood and subsequently also a more frequently used tool in the youth sector. Wide audience is necessary in order to achieve this goal: practitioners, policymakers, youth researchers, as well as the general public. Practitioners may find evaluation useful when critically approaching their own everyday practice in order to both collect evidence of quality work and improve when necessary. Policymakers may get inspired and put evaluation mechanisms in place as part of the policy implementation phase, therefore enabling the evaluation to serve as a continuous tool to provide evidence and help optimize as well as assess the implementation process as well as the policy itself. Youth researchers may appreciate another viewpoint on the research methods they are already familiar with and utilize them in a different way than usual next time they design a research project. And the wide public, particularly young people as beneficiaries of the youth policy measures, may strengthen their understanding and critical thinking on existent policies and the debates around them.

Although the title refers to the European Youth Goals, this tool can serve as a theoretical framework for evaluating different fields and elements of youth policy. It gives a detailed idea of what an evaluation is, what types of evaluation there are, which are described in detail based on different criteria: purpose; phase; relationship; timepoint; or/and others. This will support better preparation when planning any evaluation process. Guidance is also given on how to approach choosing an appropriate methodology.

It should be noted that the document also pays special attention to the place of ethics in evaluation. Also indicating the main dimensions according to the American Evaluation Association: systematic inquiry; competence; integrity and honesty; respect for people; responsibilities for general and public welfare. A short description is given to each dimension.

8. Valuing youth work – Research-informed practical resources for youth workers: Reflecting on the value and evaluation of youth work.

This study is the second of the two studies on grassroots open youth work of Dr de St Croix, a Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Youth & Childhood at King's School of Education, Communication & Society. This study is focused on how monitoring and evaluation processes affect youth work practice. The first study documents grassroots youth workers' perspectives and experiences and finds that the youth workers are committed to and passionate about their work, but often feel marginalized in decision-making relating to policy and practice. Some elements of their work (particularly bureaucratic monitoring procedures) challenge the development of person-centered, trusting relationships with the young people they directly work with, despite these informal connections being key to successful youth work.

In the following article "The everyday and the remarkable: Valuing and evaluating youth work" (Doherty and de St Croix 2022) are highlighted tensions in measuring and evaluating youth work. The authors argue that the way practice is recognized and valued by young people and youth workers is disconnected from the way it is measured, monitored and evaluated. Also, the authors suggest that the evaluation "must be more clearly rooted in the needs and realities of practice by exploring the following questions: a) Does evaluation suit the setting? b) Does evaluation reinforce or challenge unequal power relations? c) Does evaluation capture and value both the everyday and the remarkable elements of practice?

DISCUSSION

This project helps to highlight specific achievements in the field of youth work. The evaluation of the result from the point of view of a methodology, as well as from the point of view of already carried out activities in the field of youth work, allows a new stage and a new way of deepening the results of youth work. They are valid both for critical

feedback on each individual activity and project, and also for the development of youth work itself as an independent activity in countries with different experience and history of this sector. In other words, the presence of good practices in youth work outcome impact assessment contributes to the improvement of the quality of each case considered, but they are also convertible and, on this basis, stimulate the development of the field of youth work itself as a specific activity.

Secondly, the significance of the project results thus presented lies in their scope and diversity of cases. Each of the described cases leads to a diversity of approaches and parties concerned. It can be seen that youth work does not only concern the actors directly involved but is part of the bigger picture of youth policies and on this basis refers to a wide range of participants. This is an important innovation and is a prerequisite for new levels of activity and improvement of the approach based on the knowledge of achieved results of youth work.

The introduction of the term "public policy" according to Tomova (Tomova/Braykova 2003) means that all actions, regardless of whether they refer to different sectors, have different consequences and affect different communities of people, have "a common logic of implementation, and their development, application and evaluation are subject to common technology". Tomova further says that this helps the choice of actions to be no longer a consequence of the value system through which the one whom the citizens have chosen is identified (or at least not solely), but of the skills of that someone to "manage" the environment, to "produce" public benefit from their policy-making skills. Public policies will refer more to **the process** of searching for a rational result, realized in interaction between group interests in individual sectors and searching for a relationship with emerging problems that seek their resolution.

It should also be pointed out that public policies are the consequence of choices that are based on previously developed alternatives. Public policy is "everything the government chooses to do or not do" (Dye 1972). The choice must assume that a better state will be achieved. In this sense, public policies are both the intervention and non-intervention of governments. They "consist of the political decisions for the application of programs in order to achieve the public goals" (Cochran 1998), and the goal itself is not presupposed, but is formulated in the specific situation by the specific participants. Political decisions can also create problems,

which become an occasion for new intervention.

The public policy approach foregrounds two main features of politics. On one hand, this is the understanding of politics as a process of introducing rationality into social processes. On the other hand, this is the thesis of politics as a process of formulating a universally valid and consensual solution to the intervention in relation to social processes and relations.

Policies do not simply create benefits, they create a new state **that can be evaluated through rational methods**. How is this established? How is it understood that what has been achieved is a consequence of the implemented policies? Analysis is needed to establish two states – what actually happened after the policies were implemented and what would have happened if the policy had not been implemented. The result of the policy should be sought in the difference between the product and the forecast estimate for a realized product, which would have been realized even without the policy. This suggests that public policy should also be understood as "a purposeful series of actions followed by one or a group of actors to address a problem or problem area" (Anderson 2003).

Accepting that political power has primarily the trust it generates, the way it maintains and develops it, and that this is the basis of its effectiveness, it becomes increasingly important for politicians who propose **what specific public policies, why and with what effect**. The decision-making process, its implementation and evaluation must be organized in such a way as to increase the possibility of good governance of society. Actions must be organized in a clear cycle that covers certain phases, helps the predictability, effectiveness and controllability of the processes.

The policy cycle consists of five successive stages: policy agenda, formulation of policy objectives, policy decision, policy implementation, evaluation. The management and implementation of the full policy cycle is **a guarantee of achieving results and effects of the set goals**, as well as measuring the relevant added value of the implemented policy, i.e. to make sure that the change is a consequence of the relevant intervention. At the last stage of the process of public policies - evaluation, an answer is given to the question: "Does the policy work, does it achieve its goals?" (Anderson 2003). Outcome evaluation is an assessment of changes in society that would not have occurred if the institutions' actions had not been implemented. Policies **must create public benefit/good** – that is

the justification for their existence. At the same time, the public must know and believe that the policies create such a benefit. A direct role of the interested actors involved in the policy process is to ensure the creation of the benefit and at the same time to maintain the approval of the public groups for the measures taken. This requires different parties to have a harmonized understanding of all stages of the policy cycle, it is also essential how the public resource spent achieves the public strategic objectives set. This is an important issue not only for policy makers but also for the policy community (community of practice).

Hence, bearing in mind the theoretical framework in which the policy would achieve the best possible results for the welfare of society, we will look at the available practical examples to draw possible conclusions and concrete recommendations. The examples at the national level are provided by the partners in the project according to a developed methodology. This approach is preferred because of the language barrier. At the European level, the same methodology applies using keywords, but in English. This must assume some restriction on the search.
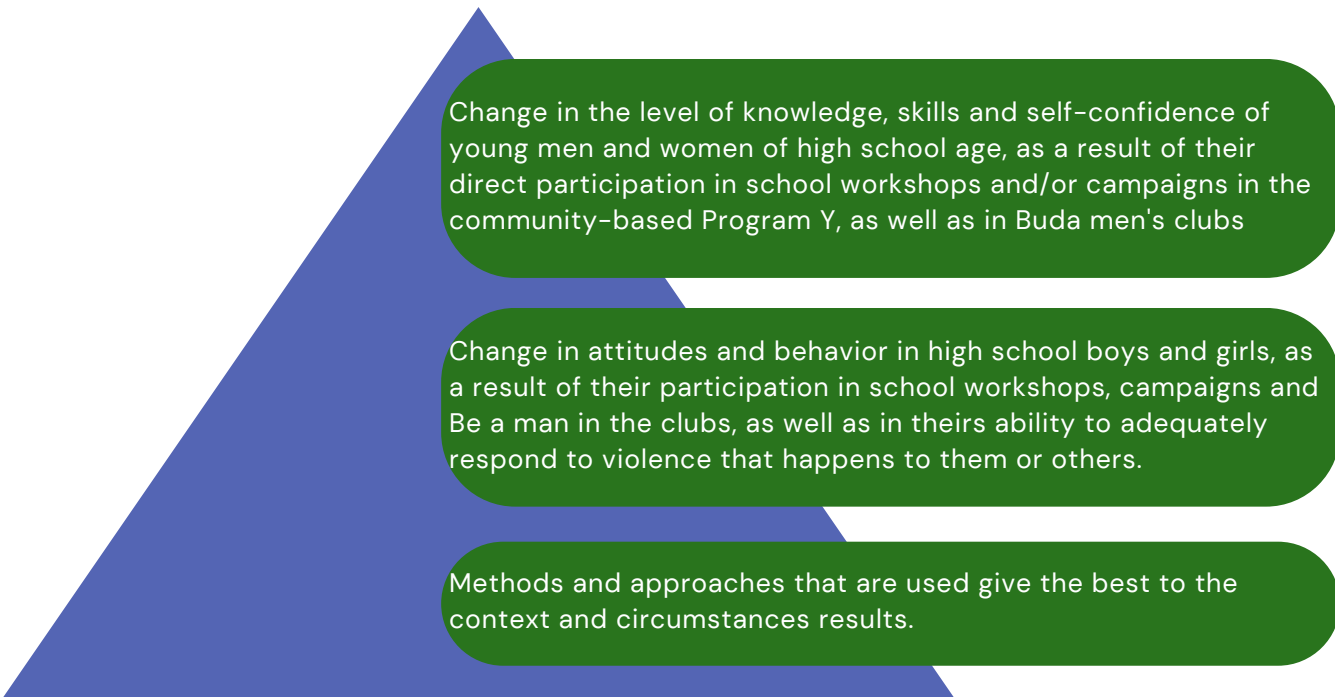
The examples are divided into two groups depending on the scope of use and potential for impact and because of the language in which they can be found. As mentioned, the lack of examples in some partnering countries will not be seen as a lack of impact, but only as a note of the current status. Not surprisingly, various examples were provided by the project's lead organization. Possible reasons for organizations to start the development of such a project is to a large extent to share its good practices; to look for evidence of such from partners, and/or create a new product, service, practice based on common good experience.

The first interesting and considered example is the Impact study of CARE's regional Youth initiative (YMI), which looks at the impact of the Y(Youth) programme. The essence of the YMI intervention is educational manual Program Y (youth), which includes a series of group educational workshops accompanied by a campaign of social norms which promote critical and personal thinking about gender, masculinity and health, with a strong focus on prevention of violence.

The study implies the application of different quantitative and qualitative research methods, including analysis of different types of documents, as well as conducting a large number of interviews and focus groups. Findings from all target locations indicate that participants experience significant and positive changes at the **level of personal and social**

skills. They claim to have gained "self-esteem", "self-confidence", to "express their views more openly", "accept diversity", to have "developed a council resistance to peer pressure", "perfect their communication skills", "improve critical thinking" as a direct result from the Program activity. They state that thanks to the Program they "participated more actively in the home work", as well as that they "take better care of their own sexual and reproductive health". Participants unanimously agree the combination of workshop, campaign and participation in Be a Man clubs is the most important factor in these changes. The workshops are marked as participatory, this creates a clear understanding among the participants about their roles and tasks.

Program Y (Youth) as an educational curriculum evidence-based "aims to develop functional knowledge, attitudes and psychosocial skills of young people", which are of exceptional importance for smooth transition from childhood to adulthood. According to the study, program Y (Youth) represents documented success in the Western Balkans allowing high direct range and levels participation. The purpose of this study is to assess for 6 years period the impact Program Y in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo* and Serbia in its key program's areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) prevention violence; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) prevention of sexual violence. Dušanić (2023) further identifies methods and approaches that have contributed to the success of the Program, as well as to present obstacles and limitations. All of the five key areas are connected with three domains:

Change in the level of knowledge, skills and self-confidence of young men and women of high school age, as a result of their direct participation in school workshops and/or campaigns in the community-based Program Y, as well as in Buda men's clubs

Change in attitudes and behavior in high school boys and girls, as a result of their participation in school workshops, campaigns and Be a man in the clubs, as well as in theirs ability to adequately respond to violence that happens to them or others.

Methods and approaches that are used give the best to the context and circumstances results.

The whole process involves the following phases: a) initial research, b) participation in the Program Y, c) final survey. This final survey method allows the results before and after the program intervention to be compared and to register eventual change.

Important specificity of the program is that it takes place in a school. Youth work primarily affects young people's free time, which implies more out-of-school time and activities. The program seems to have more added value to the education system than to youth work in the various countries.

From the data presented, it can be seen that the approach to measuring the impact of the program gives concrete results. It is clearly shown how the behavior changes and that change is visible, clear and demonstrable by those involved in the program. This approach can be seen as a **good example** for measuring the impact of the program aimed at positive behavioral change. No matter if some of the results do not show a positive change to the degree that is wanted, or the measures do not even show an influence, the intention of the action is the key to understand to what extent these interventions lead. The reflection of the real situation gives the possibility for a reasonable extension of a program or a corresponding change in some of its methods and topics. Also measuring, apart from the specific topics of the program itself, gives clarity **on the accumulation or non-accumulation of various competences, which may be an indirect result**.

Based on the results of the quantitative research and qualitative research from focus groups and interviews, it is clear that the Program is a success. The workshops are highly rated and effective in increasing knowledge and change of attitudes, where as much as 80% participants state that during the workshops, they learned a lot. The campaigns are successful in raising awareness about the Program and its goals, and Be a man clubs are the most influential in terms of change in behavior, where the participants report deeper connection with their peers and increase the sense of security and establishment of long-term friendships.

Additionally, such an assessment can create evidence-based recommendations that direct attention to new key areas, new approaches, or improvements to current ones, as well as opportunities to improve various related procedures and principles. It also mentions the role of state policy and the support it should provide to similar programs,

especially when they mean added value to positive social change. The creation of national youth programs to support, on the one hand, the administrative capacity of youth organizations and organizations working with and for young people, and on the other hand, to multiply the scope of the program's content.

The fact that the program is implemented in different countries makes it possible to follow its action in different national and local situations and to outline more specific approaches. This document shows how the impact of a program should take into account the political, social, economic, and cultural context. It is noted that, just as there are similar achievements, there are also differences, as they have their own assumptions. Such research makes it possible to create harmonized international policies that preserve local diversity. It should be noted that the object of the study are primary teachers and other educated personnel, but not with youth workers. Despite this, the same model can be used for programs in the organization, which work in the free time of the young people.

Looking at the Passport of Competences and The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award system, it can also be highlighted the positive characteristics of these tools in terms of the process of competence recognition, which is the purpose and essence of their use. Although the formal recognition[1] (CEDEFOP) of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) requires a process which goes through validation and award of qualifications by an accredited body (recognition), the awareness and recording of possible knowledge and skills is a key step in the recognition process. Also, these registrations facilitate social recognition of participation in youth work programs and possible knowledge and skills developed. This could boost efficient planning of professional and personal development of young people, also the understanding of the effect of youth work on young people's and community's life.

Additionally, young people have the opportunity to understand and adequately present their knowledge and skills to future employers, which will contribute to their awareness of their own achievements, as well as economic and family independence.

[1] Formal recognition: process of granting official status, by an accredited body, to knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences of an individual through:
- award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles);
- validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers.

Social recognition: acknowledgement of value of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences of an individual by economic and social stakeholders.

Moreover, in the article "The everyday and the remarkable: Valuing and evaluating youth work" Doherty and de St Croix argue that the way practice is recognized and valued by young people and youth workers in the UK is disconnected from the way it is measured, monitored and evaluated. It is important to underline that "dealing with complex situations has become part of everyday youth work", and these complex situations are often not subject to a process of monitoring and evaluation. Doherty and de St Croix (2022) investigate in their research how youth impact and evaluation mechanisms are enacted in youth work settings, and how the evaluation and monitoring of youth work are experienced and perceived by young people and youth workers. In the article the authors emphasize that they find significant examples of the impact of youth work on the competences and lives of young people, but are seriously concerned about the way in which monitoring and evaluation processes are carried out. They define them as "disconnected" from the authentic reality and advocate for a grassroot democratic approach which is in favor of youth work development.

Although the research is about open youth work, it brings out data and raises questions that may be valid for youth work in general. Doherty and de St Croix continue that evaluation can be an opportunity for mutual learning and practice development, but it is also a practice of neoliberal governance in which organizations must compete to survive. Accountability mechanisms are performative; in other words, they do not merely represent practice but shape practice, often rendering it standardized and comparable (Ball, 2003). Asking young people to complete complex and intrusive paperwork can undermine the informality of settings and obstruct relationships between youth workers and young people (de St Croix, 2018). It is important to note that the authors do not dispute the meaning and necessity of monitoring and evaluation and of impact measurement, but raise the question and provide significant answers as to how this should be done.

Youth work follows basic principles which are related to **voluntary participation, informality and the young person's leisure time**. This implies a wide variety of practices in the field of youth work, and in this sense a universal monitoring and evaluation approach will be difficult to apply. Care should also be taken not to create a feeling in young people that they are participating in a similar process known from formal education – filling in forms, answering questionnaires, participating in focus groups, etc. This makes the overall task before the various

stakeholders quite complex. On the one hand, organizations and public institutions must demonstrate accountability to the public resource and explain what impact the policy has, on the other hand, young people must maintain a sense of informality and voluntary participation.

It should also be taken into account that introducing separate methods for each practice may be practically impossible. Such an approach will require good levels of competence in the various involved, additional resources and the appropriate coordination to implement tailored monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement processes. Often evaluation claims to be about the 'learning' process, there is a need to reflect on whether this is how it is experienced from the participants. Ethics need to be considered, because any possibility of pressure, feeling of discomfort, suppression, insult, etc. must be avoided. It happens precisely because of these feelings that the participants refuse to answer frankly. Especially if they have to indicate ethnicity, gender, economic status, etc.

Like any humanitarian subject, youth work pays much more attention to the relationships between people, to the depth of human feelings and how they are experienced and developed, to the connections between different participants in specific situations and the inner dynamics. Youth work is not mathematics and it is not simple two plus two. Often a youth worker's conversations with a young person can save a life, change a career, mend a broken heart, strengthen family relationships, restore a love of learning, help self-esteem, etc. These aspects of youth work might perhaps be best represented by qualitative research – whether interviews, story-telling, focus groups or creative research methods – although sensitive 'tick box' questionnaires (with the option of qualitative comments) might be practical in some situations (Doherty and de St Croix 2022).

In this sense, a solution to balance the position of different parties can be to deepen the understanding of the meaning of conscious participation and self-observation, as well as reflect with a practitioner about the possible accumulated knowledge and skills, attitudes and values from participation in youth programs and activities. All these tools must come into use. It is important to say here the actions must be in accordance with the level of participation. For example, ordinary youth activities require a much simpler and brief self-assessment and evaluation, it is quite different to participate in a decision-making

process together with politicians and/or to advocate and lobby for youth interests and needs.

Hence, examples as *Youth work – one story with 40 titles* could be very supportive seeking a deeper approach to understanding the impact of youth work. What counts as an undeniable positive is that the tool is user-friendly. Young people are happy to share their experiences about youth work, especially if they are led through the conversation by a youth worker they know and with whom they have a good relationship. The approach is participatory, but it confesses some limitations connected with the quality of the stories. The recommendation is related to the quality assurance of the stories. Working with committed youth workers to create the framework and lead the conversation can also be a good idea. These youth workers know the process very well and can recall specific moments and provide a nice depth to the story. But, on the other hand, this carries a great risk of subjectivity and navigating in the "right direction". Specifically for this example, it is said that better quality will be achieved if a process framework is introduced that is provided by a professional. This will ensure the avoidance of subjectivity, suggestiveness as well as peaceful participation of various social groups and the provision of ethical standards.

In general, it can be said that the collected practices show that there are different actions and instruments in the field of youth policy. It is seen that reviews and studies are being carried out regarding the impact of youth work (Impact study and Youth work – one story 40 titles in Serbia, Better together: Youth work in schools, The impact of Universal Youth Work and Rethinking the Impact, Evaluation and Accountability in Youth work in England), and that various stakeholders are producing tools to facilitate the process and increase quality (Passport competences in Serbia, Impact tool in Portugal, The Council of Europe Youth work portfolio, Change tracker, Evaluation in the Youth field: Theoretical Framework for Evaluation Implementation on the Youth goals). Apart from being good examples and shared knowledge, these publications are practical experience, and some of them can be directly applied in practice.

Also makes the impression that, to a large extent, the tools produced are in line with the nature of youth work. The tools are primarily for self-assessment, which promotes empowerment of young people and youth workers through the development of knowledge, skills, values and

attitudes to strengthen self-confidence and real assessment of achievements. It can be seen (Table 2) how there are self-assessment tools available to be used directly by young people and youth workers, as well as methodological tools to be used by a wider range of stakeholders to carry out an assessment.

Table 2: Self-assessment and methodological tools for quality assurance

Self-assessment tools	Methodological tools
Passport of competences	European charter on Local Youth Work
The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award system	Evaluation in the Youth Field
CoE Youth Work Portfolio	
Competence model for Youth Workers to work internationally	
Change tracker	

It is evident that in recent years, the issue of monitoring and evaluation as well as impact measurement has excited the community of practitioners. However, what also makes a serious impression is the large degree of fragmentation and parallelism of the processes. A few years later, after the last Youth Work Convention, there is still no single base where different good examples and tools can be found. Rather, they are available in national databases and largely in the national language.

In addition to this, the _Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA)_ identified as one of the ongoing challenges facing youth work is **credibility**. The explanation covers the fact that "practices in the field of youth work need to be promoted in society, and the quality of youth work must meet the expectations and requirements of the field and of society, and be consistent with the nature, self-image and professional practices of the field, in order to ensure that the role and importance of youth work, as well as the results it delivers, are acknowledged beyond the field itself. In order to meet these

requirements, the **quality of youth work must also be improved, monitored and evaluated**. Research should be carried out in the area of youth work, but without creating unnecessary bureaucratic burden". The creation of the EYWA also aims to "regularly monitor and evaluate the state of and developments and challenges in youth work, analyze the needs of young people and trends relevant to youth work, involve young people when developing strategies and encourage the youth work community of practice in cooperation with other sectors concerned, to respond to these developments and continue to develop their ways of working accordingly".

In a sense, to promote youth work in the society it is important to outline the potential of this know-how for the quality of the socialization process and its impact for the development of democratic values and participatory activities. The transformation of young people into responsible, engaged, active citizens who carry within themselves the meaning of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is largely covered by both the educational system and youth work. In the survey conducted Hofmann-van de Poll (2023) pursues in section Quality development three different focal points: (1) education and training of youth workers, (2) quality standards for youth workers, youth centres, and youth work programmes, and (3) awareness of quality youth work. The three indicators are tracked at what stage of development they are. To some extent, these three indicators help to track quality assurance, but they should be complemented by **other important ones**, for example: monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; available data from regular longitudinal studies on positive changes that have occurred; recorded added value through different methods; capacity of the community of practice; available stable infrastructure that ensures financial support, information flow and registration of occurring changes (positive and negative). These indicators can be part of subsequent reviews of the situation and through them comparative analysis can be made and trends reflected in the impact of youth work at local, national and European level.

Based on the information provided and the analysis made, some conclusions and recommendations can be made.

Conclusions

1 One of the first conclusions is that finding different mechanisms and tools at the local and national level is a complex task – on the one hand, there is the language barrier, on the other hand, there are not many established practices;

2 The general impression is that, despite the declared importance of youth work, not only in the life of a young people, but also in the implementation of youth policy, it seems that the collection of evidence and an assessment of its added value remains far from the priority tasks of both practitioners and those responsible for the policy cycle;

3 Evidence on the impact and outcome of youth work is hard to find, perhaps due to the fact that there are no clearly defined intentions to track specific indicators over an extended period of time;

4 In some cases, there may be parallel results (no connection) in how youth work is perceived and valued by young people and youth workers and as a result of formal monitoring and evaluation;

5 A careful balance must be achieved between the fact that organizations and public institutions must demonstrate accountability to the public resource and explain what impact the policy has, but young people must maintain a sense of informality and voluntary participation and enjoyment in meaningful way of their leisure time;

6 It is important to conclude that the lack of evidence is not an indication of lack of effect, rather, it indicated incompleteness of the policy cycle and it mark a state, which is a reason for public action/intervention;

7 In general, the collected practices show that there are different actions and instruments in the field of youth policy. However, what also makes a serious impression is the large degree of fragmentation and parallelism of the processes.

Recommendations

1 It is clear that youth work is an essential part of the youth policy framework of both the Council of Europe and the European Union and this automatically places the need for systematic monitoring and impact assessment at all levels to ensure that professionals and measures influence positively on the lives of young people;

2 Monitoring and evaluation process should reflect the complexity of youth work achievements and not just be a formal process;

3 Without disputing the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of youth work, care must be taken so that their implementation as processes does not lead to the obstruction of the relationship between young people and youth workers;

4 The need to create a common database in which to collect the created tools and mechanisms for self-assessment and evaluation support is visible. This could also be the activity of a supranational network of youth work;

5 Last but not least, the creation of new tools is a visible result of each project, but the use is part of the sustainability of project results and follow-up activities. The tools and mechanisms must be made meaningful through their use at local, national and European level. This also includes measuring their usefulness.

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