Research-based analysis of European youth programmes

Written by

Johannes Eick
Ashley Pitschmann
Kimberly Schwabe
Friedemann Schwenzer
Tanja Strecker

Research Report

RAY-COMP

2021–2024

Competence development for youth work through trainings in the European youth programmes

Transnational Analysis

‘Erasmus+ Youth’ has been part of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union in its current (2021–2027) and previous (2014–2020) programme generation. Together with the European Solidarity Corps, it constitutes the youth programmes of the European Union. The Network for the ‘Research-based Analysis of the European Youth Programmes’ (RAY Network), which includes the National Agencies of the European youth programmes and their research partners in 34 countries*, conducts research activities in the context of European youth work.

This RAY-COMP research report contains the transnational analysis of research activities conducted between 2021 and 2024.

The research work underpinning this report was designed and implemented by Youth Policy Labs in cooperation with the RAY Network.

The research work underpinning this report was co-funded through the Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) of Erasmus+ Youthand through the Networking Activities strand (NET) of the European Solidarity Corps.

This report, however, reflects the views only of its authors, and neither the European Commission nor a National Agency can be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.

* 34 countries in 2023/2024: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway[1], Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia[1], Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland[1], and Türkiye.

[1] These countries do not take part in the European Solidarity Corps.

Where available, national research reports can be requested from the respective National Agencies and their research partners

↓

www.researchyouth.net/network

Further RAY publications can be retrieved from

↓

www.researchyouth.net

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS
THE POWER OF TOGETHER.

FINNISH NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

YOUTH POLICY LABS

Published by Youth Policy Labs, Berlin

Johannes Eick, Ashley Pitschmann, Friedemann Schwenzer, Kimberly Schwabe, Tanja Strecker

Original design by Mursal Nasr & Paula Klattenhoff

Current design and layout by Andreas Karsten & Tom Pincus

This document as well as the accompanying annexes can be retrieved from researchyouth.net/comp

Version 20250925
September 2025

More information about the underlying research project can be obtained from

https://www.researchyouth.net/projects/comp/

9 783967 255553

Transnational Research Report

Competence development for youth work through trainings in the European Youth Programmes

Transnational Analysis
Berlin, 2025

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

COUNTRIES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

COUNTRIES

E+/Y Programme countries	These are EU member states, EEA countries and EU candidate/accession countries.
E+/Y Partner countries	These are countries from Southeast Europe, countries from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region as well as Mediterranean countries.
RAY countries	RAY Network members participating in the RAY-MON surveys as funding countries (Austria, Belgium, Bularia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye).

CURRENT THEMATIC RESEARCH PROJECTS

RAY COMP	A research project on educational approaches to competence development & capacity building of youth workers & youth leaders in the European youth programmes.
RAY DIGI	A research project on dimensions of digitalisation in the European youth programmes and on approaches to strengthen and support digital dimensions in youth work.
RAY LEARN	A research project on strategies and practices for organisational development and learning of networks, organisations and teams in the European youth sector.
RAY LTE II	A research project on the long-term effects of the European youth programmes on participation and citizenship – and our first longitudinal research project.
RAY NPC	A research project to explore key aspects of collaboration projects with neighbouring partner countries in the context of the European youth programmes.

PREVIOUS THEMATIC RESEARCH PROJECTS

RAY CAP	A research project on competence development and capacity building of youth workers and youth leaders through support activities in Erasmus+ Youth in Action.
RAY COR	A research project on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on youth work in Europe, including the European youth programmes, and the response of youth work.
RAY INNO	A research project on the impact, role and potential of strategic partnerships in Erasmus+ Youth in Action as instruments to foster innovation in the youth field.
RAY LTE I	A research project on the long-term effects of the European youth programmes on participation and citizenship of project participants as well as project leaders.
RAY PART	A research project on participation and citizenship education and learning in the European youth programmes, and the competences necessary to implement it well.

ABBREVIATIONS AND PROJECT PARTNERS

ABBREVIATIONS

CoE	Council of Europe
E+	European Union Programme Erasmus+ (2021-2027)
E+/YiA	Erasmus+ Youth in Action (2014-2020) – the youth strand within Erasmus+
ETS	European Training Strategy
EYP	European Youth Programmes
EYWA	European Youth Work Agenda
KA1+2	Erasmus+ Key Actions 1 & 2
LTTA	Long-term training activities
NA	National Agencay
NET	European Solidarity Corps Networking Activities
RAY	Research-based analysis of European youth programmes. The RAY Network consists of the National Agencies of the European youth programmes and their research partners
RAY-CAP	Research project on competence development and capacity building of Erasmus+ Youth in Action
RAY-MON	Research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+ Youth in Action and Erasmus+ Youth
RAY-SOC	Research-based analysis and monitoring of the European Solidarity Corps
SALTO	Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities-Centres for Youth
SNAC	Strategic National Agency Cooperation Activity
TCA	Erasmus+ Training and Cooperation Activities
ToT	Training of Trainers Long-term training activity
YiA	European Union Programme 'Youth in Action' (2007-2013) – the predecessor of Erasmus+
YOCOMO	YOuth Workers COmpetence MOdel
YWM	Youth Worker Mobilities

PROJECT PARTNER COUNTRIES

BE-FL	Belgium, Flemish Community
BG	Bulgaria
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
HU	Hungary
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LV	Latvia
PT	Portugal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research report that you, dear reader, are about to dive into, is the result of a collective effort. Projects within the RAY Network are always a collaborative endeavour, and RAY-COMP is an outstanding example of this in action.

We would like to thank our esteemed colleagues at the National Agencies of Belgium-Flanders, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and Portugal for their dedication to competence development and training in the European Youth Programmes, and for their financial support of the research project. Your contribution gave the study a solid foundation and purpose.

Of course, a research project would be nothing without its researchers. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Eva Feldmann-Wojtachnia, Justina Garbauskaité-Jakimovska, Stefan Georgiev, Daniel Oross, Ana Rothes, Barbara Tham, Adele Tinaburri, and the Institute of Baltic Studies and HARNO for their keen attention in conducting and analysing the various interviews and focus groups. Your thoughtful and astute insights have elevated every national report.

From identifying research objectives, to developing the research design and instruments, to discussing findings and refining the final report – the working group members of RAY-COMP never shied away from thematic or methodological discussions, even when it meant engaging in yet another revision cycle. Our deep gratitude goes to Rita Bergstein, Eva Feldmann-Wojtachnia, Inge Linne, Barbara Tham, and Adele Tinaburri, as well as Gisele Evrard and Blanka Thees, who provided invaluable support from SALTO Training & Cooperation.

Most importantly, we want to express our deep respect and admiration for the many research participants—youth workers and leaders—who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to supporting young people and continuously strive to improve both their work and the lives of the youth they serve.

This report is dedicated to you!

1 — INTRODUCTION

Being a youth worker is about empowering young people during one of the most critical phases of their lives. It is a profession of immense responsibility, where every interaction can shape a young person's growth. The complexity of this role mirrors the complexity of young people's lives—dynamic, challenging, and full of potential.

To live up to this task and implement high quality youth work, professionals themselves need support. In the European Youth Programmes, trainings are one of the pivotal opportunities for youth workers to develop competencies relevant to their everyday work. Their importance is visible on many levels: in the European Youth Work Agenda and the European Youth Strategy, which serve as policy context for the training sector; in the European Training Strategy as a comprehensive, strategic framework for quality development of youth worker education and training; and in numerous studies concerned with competence development and training activities in European youth work.

Impactful research projects within the European training sector shed light on expectations towards and learning effects through training activities ('RAY-CAP') (Bammer et al., 2019), on questions of quality in non-formal education and training and competence profiles of trainers (Fennes & Otten, 2008), and on youth work careers and opportunities for professional development from a structural perspective (Taru et al., 2020). The research project at hand aims to bolster the wealth of knowledge that already exists by providing a close-up investigation on training activities themselves. To do so, RAY-COMP looks at them from the perspective of all relevant actors: training providers, trainers, and training participants. This holistic approach enables us to delve into the complexities, potentials and limitations of a sector shaped by a variety of strategies, structural realities, pedagogical approaches, and concrete needs of youth workers. Ultimately, RAY-COMP aims to support both the quality development of trainings and the competence development of youth workers within the European Youth Programmes. Therefore, a strong focus has been placed on recommendations either made by research participants themselves or deducted from our research-based interpretations.
Overall, the research report presents a variety of insights into youth worker training. We hope it will provide an engaging and informative read for a wide range of actors involved in the European Youth Programmes and beyond.

Chapter 3 explores the relevant training needs for youth workers and the rationales behind them. This chapter might be particularly interesting for you if you are working for a National Agency and wish to reflect on your current training offers, or if you are a youth worker seeking to identify and assess your own professional development needs.

Chapter 4 discusses the principles and procedures that guide the development of training activities. This chapter may be especially helpful for National Agency staff looking to reflect on their objectives and approaches to training development, as well as for curious youth workers seeking a better understanding of the processes and reasoning behind trainings.

Chapter 5 takes a closer look at training implementation, from methodological approaches and participant group dynamics, to the role of trainers and the significance of venues and logistics. This chapter might be particularly useful for training providers looking for ways to support their trainers and provide conducive training conditions, but also for trainers to reflect on their pedagogical approaches.

Chapter 6 pursues a biographical approach, examining competence development over the course of professional youth work careers. This approach might hold special value for youth workers interested in reflecting on their own personal career trajectories, and for National Agencies (NAs) when thinking holistically about training development.

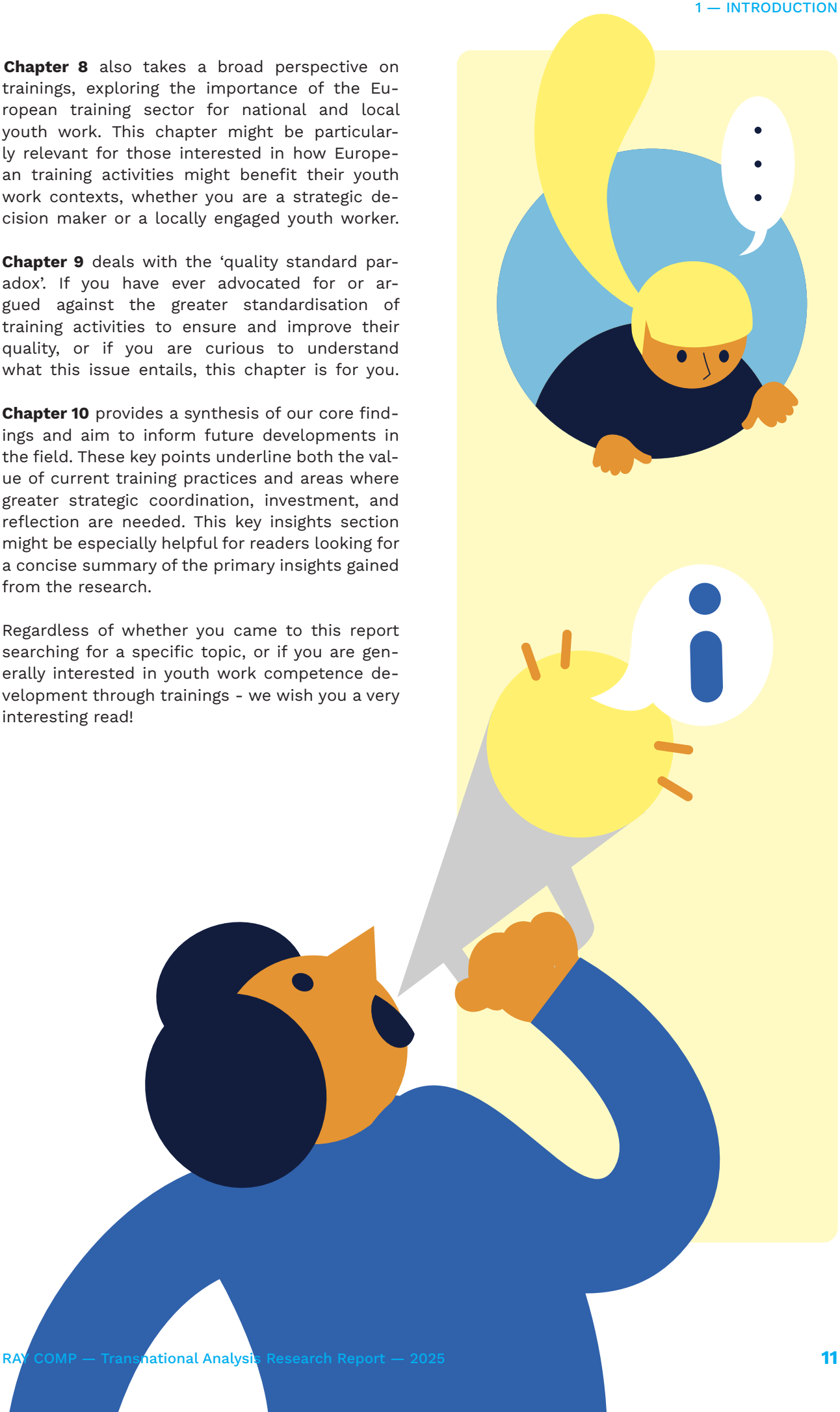
Chapter 7 zooms out to a macro point of view and investigates the relevance of existing strategies and frameworks for training development and implementation. This chapter is relevant for anyone who wants to learn more about how existing strategies can be utilised for competence development: from the individual youth worker thinking about their own professional development to the strategist working for a National Agency or SALTO centre.

Chapter 8 also takes a broad perspective on trainings, exploring the importance of the European training sector for national and local youth work. This chapter might be particularly relevant for those interested in how European training activities might benefit their youth work contexts, whether you are a strategic decision maker or a locally engaged youth worker.

Chapter 9 deals with the 'quality standard paradox'. If you have ever advocated for or argued against the greater standardisation of training activities to ensure and improve their quality, or if you are curious to understand what this issue entails, this chapter is for you.

Chapter 10 provides a synthesis of our core findings and aim to inform future developments in the field. These key points underline both the value of current training practices and areas where greater strategic coordination, investment, and reflection are needed. This key insights section might be especially helpful for readers looking for a concise summary of the primary insights gained from the research.

Regardless of whether you came to this report searching for a specific topic, or if you are generally interested in youth work competence development through trainings - we wish you a very interesting read!



2 — RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1. CONTEXT

As already stated, RAY-COMP aims to gain further insights into competence development through trainings in the context of the European Youth Programmes, with a special focus on potentials for improvement. We aim to explore the different perspectives on competence development in the youth sector. These include training providers' rationales for developing training offers; youth workers' and leaders' perceptions of their own training needs; and trainers' perspective on training objectives and issues both hampering and fostering their ability to respond to participants needs while implementing training offers. Because each perspective comes with benefits and limitations, they are complementary and can best show potential for improvement when looked at together.

RAY-COMP aims to address these overarching research interests through a series of core questions. The core research questions of the project are:

- How do training providers develop training offers and what are their intentions, concepts, and goals?
- How do trainers prepare and implement training activities for youth workers and leaders involved in the European Youth Programmes, in particular in relation to the provider's instructions and their perception of youth workers' and leaders' needs?
- What training needs are perceived by youth workers and leaders involved in the European Youth Programmes, and how do they relate to the training strategies in the field?

For an overview of the underpinning research questions of the project, please refer to p. 14: Underpinning Research Questions – Deep Dive.

2.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND SAMPLE

The conceptual approach of this study is to shed light on training activities by exploring and relating the different perspectives of involved parties, namely training providers, trainers, and training participants. Each lens is connected to one research module, with a fourth module adding a more transversal layer to the analysis of trainings.

Module 1 examines the perspective of training providers towards trainings, aiming to reconstruct in-depth data about relevant aspects affecting the development of training activities and the overall significance of trainings within the realm of European youth work and the European Youth Programmes.
Expert interviews were conducted with training providers from different countries by the transnational research team. TCA-/NET officers from different National Agencies and staff from several SALTO centres were also interviewed as the main bodies offering training activities. However, staff members from NGOs, which also offer trainings as beneficiaries under the umbrella of youth work mobility, were not included in the interviews. This limitation should be taken into account when interpreting the findings of the report.

Module 2 aims to clarify the perspective of trainers with respect to their role within trainings, particularly in relation to training providers and participants. It specifically addresses how trainers navigate the participants' needs and providers' objectives, and it also explores factors that either support or impede their ability to effectively respond to both groups.
Focus group discussions were conducted at the national level with youth workers and leaders working as trainers in the context of the European Youth Programmes. These discussions involved trainers with varying levels of experience both in trainings at the national and European level.

Module 3 was designed to explore the needs of training participants and assess the potential, advantages, as well as shortcomings, of the current training offerings.
National researchers held focus group discussions with youth workers and leaders with experience as training participants. The focus group discussions were held at the national level and supported by the transnational provision of guidelines. These discussions also involved training participants with varying levels of training experience with regard to trainings at national and European level and in different training contexts (KA1 and/or TCA/NET).

Module 4 explores the relevance of trainings for the overall competence development of youth workers and leaders. Competence in youth work evolves through a blend of formal, non-formal,

and personal experiences. This module examines training's significance in professional growth using a biographical approach, including narrative interviews at national and transnational levels.
The sample consisted of youth workers and leaders spanning different ages and levels of professional experience. Within RAY-COMP, we integrated a broad definition of youth workers and leaders to enable national research partners to select the most suitable research participants for their specific contexts. Our broad working definition was that youth workers and youth leaders are engaged in youth work on a paid or unpaid basis and collaborate with and for young people across diverse spaces and themes relevant to young people, utilising a wide array of youth work structures and methods. **Overall, we conducted 71 cases across all four modules:**

	Perspective	Total cases	Responsible research partners
Module 1	Training providers	10 interviews	Europe
Module 2	Trainers	15 focus groups	Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal
Module 3	Training participants	13 focus groups	Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal
Module 4	Youth workers and leaders	33 interviews	Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Europe

Table 1 - Research Modules

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

As is customary in research projects conducted within the RAY Network, the data analysis is a collaborative effort involving both national research partners and the transnational research team.
In RAY-COMP, national research partners can independently select their data analysis processes and employ analytical methods of their own choice to process material and produce findings. National module reports were submitted to the transnational research team using provided module-specific reporting templates, consisting of a section to summarise each interview/focus group and a section for preliminary analysis on the national level and subjected to secondary analysis, which was conducted by summarising content analysis according to Mayring (2014) and implemented with a software-assisted solution (https://www.qcamap.org/).

Regarding interviews conducted on the European level by the transnational research team, the following methods were employed: data obtained from expert-interviews under the umbrella of module 1 was also analysed using summarising content analysis. The analytical approach towards data obtained from narrative interviews under the umbrella of module 4 is based on narrative analysis according to Przyborski and Wohlrab-Saar (2014, p. 223-245). This method enables a comprehensive reconstruction of biographical narratives, including the identification of personal development trajectories and their process structures, general attitudes towards pivotal life events, theories of self and identity construction, as well as key motifs and personal values.

2.4. RESEARCH ETHICS AND DATA PROTECTION

The RAY Network uses the Code of Ethics of the International Sociological Association as a guiding ethics framework, which is available online at www.isa-sociology.org in English, French, and Spanish. National research partners may choose to use a non-conflicting code of ethics as a reference; for example, the code of ethics of their national association of sociology. National research partners are responsible for ensuring compliance with the national implementation of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation during their work on the national research components, while the transnational research team will ensure compliance during its work on the transnational research components.

2 – DEEP DIVE
RESEARCH DESIGN

UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Which systemic needs of the European youth field are perceive by training providers, and which role do they play when designing training offers?
- Which role do the European Youth Programmes and their priorities play when developing training offers?
- Which aspects foster and hamper the trainers' abilities to prepare and implement training activities with respect to perceived and/or expressed training needs of youth workers and leaders and the instructions given by training providers? Which of these aspects play a more decisive role, and how could they be tackled?
- Does the contract status of trainers (contracted by the National Agencies themselves or beneficiaries of the programmes) and the programme strand in which they are holding the trainings (Key action 1 or TCA / NET) influence the challenges, opportunities, and support mechanisms they observe?
- How does the ETS Competence Model for Trainers relate to obstacles and support mechanisms recognised by trainers?
- What training needs do youth workers and leaders within the European Youth Programmes assess themselves?
- How are possible changes in training needs discerned at the different levels, (youth workers and leaders, trainers, training providers) and how are these addressed?
- How do self-assessed training needs change over the course of the professional careers of youth workers and leaders?
- What obstacles do youth workers and leaders face regarding their participation in trainings (at both the individual and organisational level)?
- Which training approaches do youth workers and leaders deem appropriate for responding to their needs?
- How does the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers relate to training needs expressed by youth workers and leaders? [KS1]

3 — YOUTH WORK TRAINING NEEDS

In this chapter, we explore the training needs expressed by both youth workers and trainers with regard to the development of youth work competencies. Our analysis reveals that these needs are influenced by various factors, including specific conceptualisations of youth work, the profiles of youth workers, national contexts, and evolving personal needs. Additionally, new and emerging needs continuously update the landscape of competence development.

Before delving into the research findings, it is important to clarify what we mean by competencies. In relevant European-level competence frameworks, competencies are generally divided into three components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes/values (with behaviour sometimes included, as in the European Training Strategy) (CoE, 2015; Fennes & Otten, 2008; JfE & SALTO T&C, 2023). Participation in trainings funded by the European Youth Programmes supports the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills, and the reinforcement of attitudes and values. However, recognising developments in attitudes and values can be more challenging, as these require processes of self-reflection and are less about change than reinforcement (Bammer et al., 2019). It is important to note that youth workers are not expected to be exceedingly competent in every aspect of their practice. As Petkovic and Zentner (2017) argue, "The myth of super-competence in youth work should be avoided, while increased openness to share professional uncertainties should be encouraged." Therefore, competence frameworks do not provide exhaustive checklists but rather offer guidance for individually designed professional development. Competence development is a gradual and continuous process; it is not about achieving a fixed point of mastery. As Potočnik and Taru (2020) explain, "Possessing and making use of a particular competence is best described by a continuum, which may take on values from low to high level; it is not a present-or-absent feature."

3.1. A NON-COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF TRAINING NEEDS

This section outlines the training needs identified by youth workers and leaders, both as participants and trainers. These needs are often expressed broadly or relate to abstract concepts rather than specific competencies, making it difficult to differentiate between knowledge, skills, and attitudes/values.

We categorise these needs into core and specific training needs, a distinction that is often made by the interviewees themselves. Core training needs refer to foundational competencies essential for youth work, while specific training needs are context-driven, relating to issues like youth policy, socio-political developments, or technical skills necessary for organisational success. As specific training needs are context-driven and subject to continual updates, the list of these needs will be presented in section 4.2. Emerging, Specific Training Needs.

Core and specific training needs are, in practice, at risk to be associated with other terms such as "basic" and "advanced" training needs. Those phrases require careful consideration, as they may suggest that core competencies are only for beginners, which is misleading. Core competencies encompass the complexity of youth work and contribute to an ongoing development process. As one trainer emphasised, "It's not about breadth, but depth" (Trainer, Lithuanian report).
The categorisation reflects the diverse and multifaceted nature of youth work, following principles established by the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States (2015). According to these principles, youth work should:

- *Be attractive & bring added value or joy to life;*
- *Address the diverse needs, interests & experiences of young people as perceived by themselves;*
- *Be actively inclusive, reaching out to and welcoming all groups of young people;*
- *Be based on young people's voluntary & active participation, engagement & responsibility;*
- *Take a holistic perspective, treating young people as capable individuals and resources;*
- *Enhance young people's rights, personal & social development, and autonomy;*
- *Be co-designed, delivered, & evaluated together with young people;*
- *Be based on non-formal & informal learning;*
- *Have clear learning objectives relevant to the young people participating.*

Table 2 consists of core training needs mentioned by training participants and trainers during focus group discussions and interviews. It can serve as inspiration for training providers to evaluate

whether their offerings align with these principles and address the relevant training needs of their target groups. Just as the myth of super-competence reminds us that not every youth worker needs to be competent in every possible area, not every youth worker requires training in every aspect mentioned in this list (Petkovic & Zentner, 2017).

3.2. EMERGING, SPECIFIC TRAINING NEEDS

As youth work evolves, it is essential for youth workers to be aware of and adapt to socio-political developments, the changing needs of young people, and structural shifts within youth work sectors in their context. The emergence of new training needs is driven by the belief that youth workers must continuously adapt to these changes, staying engaged with current topics and evolving alongside the shifting landscape of youth work. This capacity to evolve ensures their practices remain relevant and effective. As previously stated, specific training needs are driven by context specific trends in youth work. Specific training needs, such as political education, digital youth work, and anti-discrimination training, are deeply interconnected with emerging needs. As youth work evolves in response to socio-political shifts, these emerging needs build on existing specific competencies, reflecting a continuous process of adaptation. Emerging trends deepen and enhance the specific skills required to remain effective in youth work. Lifelong learning is a core element of the professional identity of youth workers. One youth worker emphasised this aspect by saying:

> *"These days, I need to run different topics because the program goals are different"*
>
> (YOUTH WORKER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT).

This statement highlights the ongoing necessity for professional development to keep pace with evolving programme goals and broader societal changes.

Among the many training needs identified, two trends stand out for their lack of standing out: sustainable youth work and digital youth work. Despite their significance, these areas appear to be under-recognised in current training practices. Discussions reveal a lack of awareness about sustainable youth work, with the topic seldom mentioned as critical. Similarly, digital youth work, which is a priority within the European Youth Programmes, is sometimes dismissed as an overemphasised remnant of the pandemic, reduced to merely digital operations. One participant noted, "Personally, I feel like I am part of the

Non-exhaustive list of core training needs	
Pedagogy	
Intercultural competences	**Non-formal education** (fostering youth participation, participation orientation, promotion of independence and empowerment, group facilitation)
Communication (active listening, youthful communication, relationship-building with young people, conflict management)	**Soft skills** (flexibility, responsibility, initiative, critical thinking, teamwork, self-awareness of limitations)
Empathy (identifying subtle needs of youth)	**Youth-led activities** (application, design, implementation)
Diversity and inclusion (youth and gender, accessibility, outreach strategies for diverse target groups)	**Professional identity development** (community building, self-reflection, professional ethics/ attitudes/values)
Project management	
Organisational development (application, design, implementation, safety, multiplication of lessons learnt)	**Organisational management** (accounting, fundraising, management tools, time management, impact assessment and evaluation)

Table 2 - Non-exhaustive list of core training needs

'bored' group on the subject and don't seek out such training opportunities" (Training participant, Bulgarian report). Another added, "In my opinion, at least in our national context, there are other more pressing issues than digital transformation" (Training participant, Bulgarian report). Currently, training related to digital youth work often focuses on the use of AI, digital tools, and addressing challenges such as fake news. For a detailed list of other identified training needs from youth workers and trainers, please see p. 21: Other Identified Training Needs – Deep Dive.

The dynamic nature of youth work necessitates the continuous adaptation of training needs. By staying responsive to emerging trends and societal shifts, youth workers can ensure they remain effective and relevant in their roles.

3.3. TRAINING NEEDS ARE DEPENDENT ON YOUTH WORK CONCEPTIONS

An individual's understanding of youth work significantly influences the training needs they identify for themselves. Furthermore, because youth workers hold varying conceptualizations of youth work, the training needs identified from group discussions and interviews may not be relevant to all respondents. Examples that became apparent in our research were:

- **Participatory youth work** with highly motivated young people often requires support in practical areas, such as group facilitation and the use of non-formal methods.
- **Support-oriented youth work** with less motivated or vulnerable youth is linked to a need for skills in psychological counselling, crisis intervention, and outreach.
- **Relationship-driven youth work** emphasises the importance of soft skills such as empathy, compassion, and self-awareness.
- **Task-driven youth work** focused on specific topics is associated with a need for practical, topic-specific knowledge and skills.

These examples raise the question: How does one develop a specific concept of youth work in the first place? Our study suggests three different relevant aspects to be considered.
Training needs are shaped by 1) personal biographies, 2) professional experience and trajectories, and 3) national context.

3.3.1 Training needs are shaped by personal biographies

Youth work conceptualisations and approaches are deeply influenced by personal biographies. For some, these concepts emerge from their own experiences as participants in youth programmes. For example, one youth leader respondent, having experienced direct interaction with youth workers as a young person, defines youth work as simply engaging with young people on an equal footing. Feeling confident in this role, they see little need for additional training or education. Another youth leader, who received meaningful support during their own youth by participation in youth work activities, views youth work as a vehicle for personal development and aligns their approach accordingly.

Previous or secondary occupations also play a critical role in shaping perspectives on youth work. One respondent with a background in project management brings a managerial approach to youth work. Another has work experience in event management and perceives youth work less as ongoing engagement, but more as a series of impactful, short-term events. A third respondent who has a secondary occupation as a teacher is particularly focused on improving facilitation of group processes among youths.

Other occupational experiences not only have an influence on youth work approaches, but also on approaches to professional development in youth work. For instance, one respondent who took up a position as youth worker without previous experience, values training as the crucial tool for professional development and minimises the relevance of practical learning. In contrast, a volunteer who later became a youth worker has had a learning journey deeply rooted in meaningful experiences made in practical youth work settings. This individual relies heavily on experiential, on-the-job learning, and only supplements this background with formal training as needed.

3.3.2 Training needs are shaped by professional experience and trajectories

Our research underscores that training requirements evolve throughout an individual's professional journey and are contingent upon their unique career paths. This is particularly evident among different categories of youth workers—those transitioning from participants to youth workers, established youth leaders, or individuals

entering the field from other careers (for an in-depth discussion, please refer to chapter 6).
Less experienced youth workers seek out training that covers foundational knowledge, practical methods, and essential soft skills relevant to engaging effectively with youth. On the other hand, those with more experience in the field tend to pursue training focused on specific topics and seek a deeper understanding of complex issues as well as opportunities for self-reflection:

> *"At the beginning I had a lot of questions about techniques or wanted to know how to do things, but now (...) [it is much more] what I'm doing really goes somewhere and has an impact or not? Why am I doing this? Why am I proposing this activity?"*

(YOUTH WORKER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

This observation aligns closely with a typology of competence levels adapted for youth workers by Veigel (2015), originally developed for educators:

- **Novice:** Ability to implement practical methods, without further context-sensitivity
- **Advanced beginner:** Ability to connect practical experiences with theoretical knowledge
- **Competent youth worker:** Ability to identify and prioritise overarching learning objectives and design adequate activities
- **Proficient youth worker:** Mixture of deliberative analysis of pedagogical situations and intuitive decision-making
- **Expert:** Intuitive, context-sensitive decision-making

Overall, a lack of clarity and awareness regarding the role and responsibilities of youth workers complicates the ability of both youth workers and trainers to pinpoint relevant training needs. Inexperienced youth workers often find it challenging to accurately assess their own developmental requirements. Conversely, as youth workers gain experience, they become more adept at identifying relevant training needs. This progression highlights the importance of clear role definitions and competence frameworks in facilitating effective training and professional development in youth work.

Our research has identified distinct training needs across various professional trajectories within youth work. Focus groups with youth leaders indicate that initial engagement with youth work practice and training is often based on personal motivations, which are more associated with soft skills also relevant beyond the realm of youth work. With experience and time, however, this motivation shifts towards professional development and an increased interest in competencies specifically necessary for youth work practice.

Career changers new to youth work typically need foundational training in pedagogical skills to make a successful transition into the field. Individuals transitioning from participants to youth workers carry a wealth of informal learning experiences, especially in non-formal education principles, practical methods, and essential soft skills. To leverage these pre-existing skills effectively, it is crucial for them to systematise and clarify these implicit learning experiences, thereby enhancing understanding and placing these skills in a broader context. Furthermore, recognising and certifying these already-acquired competencies is vital to this group of youth workers. Additional training is also necessary to facilitate a smooth transition into their new roles. For example, training in project management is often essential, as highlighted by one of the youth workers in our study:

> *"As a participant, I was mostly focused on enjoying the activities and learning from them. As a youth worker, I realised I needed to develop skills in project management and facilitation to effectively run these activities myself."*

(YOUTH WORKER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Moreover, training on leadership and mentoring is essential, as highlighted by another youth worker:

> *"The need for leadership skills became apparent as I took on the role of guiding and mentoring new participants. Training on conflict resolution and group dynamics was crucial for this transition."*

(YOUTH WORKER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Therefore, it is recommended that training be specifically tailored for newcomers with a participant background to effectively address their unique needs and experiences.

3.3.3 Training needs are shaped by national contexts

Our research findings highlight how the national contexts in which youth workers operate influence their training needs, particularly due to country-specific legal and organisational frameworks. In countries lacking a legal framework for youth work, we observed increased uncertainty

about the conceptualisation of youth work. This uncertainty complicates both experienced and new youth workers' ability to navigate their professional development paths effectively. In countries where youth work structures are in need of development and youth workers are predominantly freelancers, self-managerial skills become more important. In countries with robust youth work frameworks—where youth workers are often employed by youth centres or NGOs—the focus of training only shifts from practical methods to managerial and advocacy skills as individuals advance in their careers.
For a deeper understanding of how national structures shape youth work practices and training needs, including theoretical frameworks for comparing youth work systems across Europe, see p. 22: Training Needs are Shaped by National Contexts – Deep Dive.

Additionally, the lack of specific higher educational programmes in youth work contributes to greater unawareness among newcomers, particularly in regions without dedicated academic tracks. Even within social work studies—a discipline that typically includes youth work courses—the focus on youth work, especially at an international level, is often marginal. This gap leaves those interested in youth work without the necessary conceptual understanding, increasing their reliance on training programmes or personal experiences as youth participants. This situation underscores the critical need for comprehensive entry-level training courses in (international) youth work to bridge these gaps.

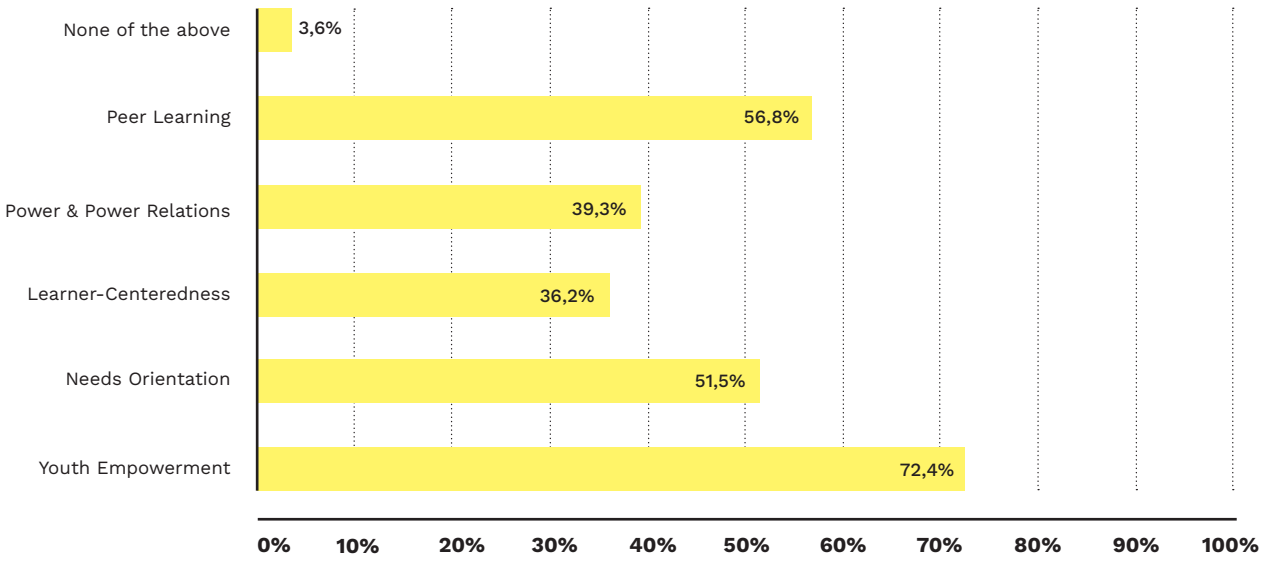
3.3.4 Training needs and training offers – a match?

Overall, training participants report satisfaction with the thematic variety of training available, although the match between demand and supply may vary depending on the topic. Our RAY-MON/-SOC data reveals that 96.4% of participants in YWM, TCA, and NET activities reported learning about at least one core feature of youth work as a result of their participation:

FIGURE 1

Also learned something about...

Youth Worker Mobility (YWM) activities in Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps, impact modules, multiple choice, **n=1309**



The need for training on mental health and well-being, both for youth workers and for young people, is a growing demand that must be emphasised. Another key issue that requires attention is the lack of awareness on sustainability issues. Further research is needed to examine both the current supply of training on sustainability in youth work and the overall sustainability competence of youth workers (Bianchi et al., 2022). This analysis will help to determine whether this aspect of youth work is already sufficiently addressed or if it remains largely unexplored.
Overall, the availability of entry-level training on foundational competencies is perceived as sufficient or even excessive compared to the demand. Given the high levels of fluctuation in the field

observed by training providers and sector-specific goals to attract newcomers to apply for projects under the umbrella of Erasmus+, a strong focus on entry level training is understandable. Some trainers and youth workers also emphasise the relevance of providing more and more training around core principles of youth work, rather than increasing specialisation in training topics. According to our MON and SOC data, 25.2% of participants in YWM, TCA, and NET activities have no prior experience with similar projects (Horta Herranz et al., 2024). This statistic highlights the success of attracting newcomers.

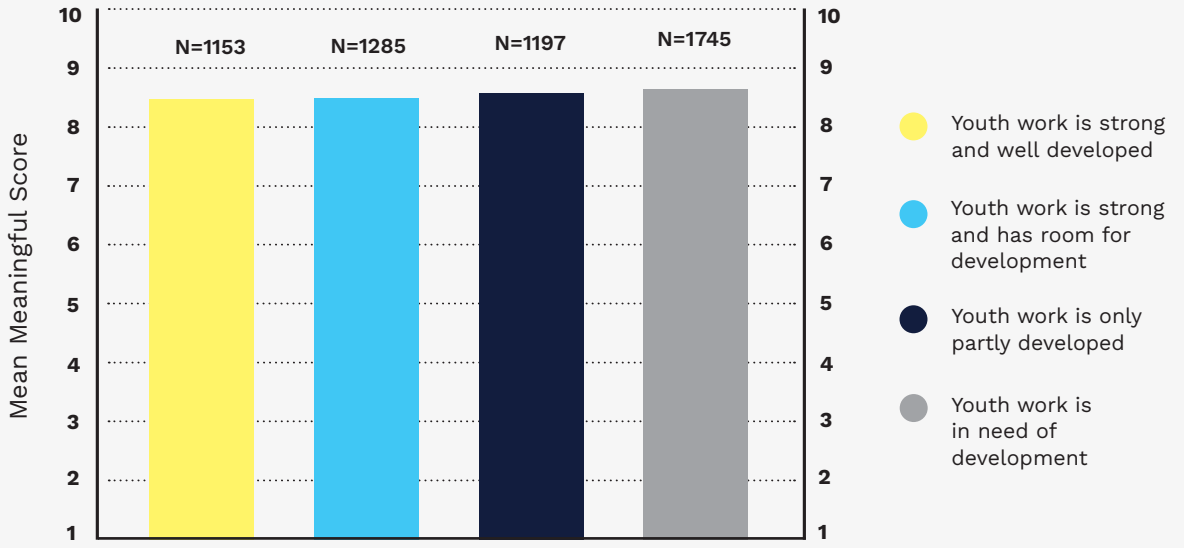
However, the focus on foundational competencies, especially when designed for entry-level participants, seems to come at the expense of training opportunities for more experienced learners. The reported lack of advanced training discourages experienced youth workers from engaging with the training sector, despite their expressed training needs. This finding aligns with RAY-CAP's results, which indicate that specialists and experienced participants criticise the lack of new knowledge and skills, as well as the relevance to their daily work (Bammer et al., 2019).

Interestingly, contrary to expectations, statistical data from RAY-MON and RAY-SOC reveals that when it comes to meaningful experiences in youth work mobility, TCA, and NET activities, there are no significant differences between participants with or without prior experience in similar projects. The mean satisfaction score for respondents with prior experience was 8.58 out of 10 (n=3911), while those without prior experience had a mean score of 8.47 out of 10 (n=1323). This seemingly contradictory finding suggests that the impact of these activities may not diminish significantly with experience, warranting further investigation into whether there is a diminishing return on training over time. The data also shows no significant variation in satisfaction across different national contexts:

FIGURE 2

How meaningful was the activity for you?

Youth Worker Mobility (YWM) activities in Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps, reflection module, cross-tabulation



Some training providers perceive an oversupply of training on certain topics, leading to unnecessary redundancies and negatively affecting participation rates. With more training options than necessary, potential participants are spread thin across multiple offerings, resulting in lower attendance per session. To address this issue, some National Agencies and SALTOs are working to reduce redundant offerings through better coordination. One training provider explained the situation:

> *"When you start to create activities on the international or European level without any coordination, you end up with duplicate or even triplicate activities that tackle the same goals. This causes problems with getting the right participants, as they don't know how to choose between all these similar activities. We were very much in favour of implementing a more strategic approach at the transnational level."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

3 – DEEP DIVE TRAINING NEEDS

3.2. EMERGING, SPECIFIC TRAINING NEEDS

OTHER IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Other recently identified training needs, based on input from both youth workers and trainers, include the following:

- **Fostering a positive connotation of the EU:** In response to rising Euro-scepticism, there is a need for training that promotes a positive understanding of the EU.
- **Political education, knowledge and pedagogy:** With shifting political landscapes and the rise of ideologies that may threaten inclusivity, training in political educational methods, current political knowledge, and fostering active citizenship and civic engagement is essential to prepare youth workers to educate and empower young people.
- **Anti-discrimination training:** The rise of misanthropic ideologies underscores the need for training that addresses discrimination and promotes inclusivity.
- **Mental health and well-being:** The pandemic's lasting impact has created a need for training focused on the mental health and well-being of young people.
- **Self-care for youth workers:** The demanding nature of youth work requires training focused on burn-out prevention, stress management, resilience, and psychological well-being, ensuring youth workers maintain their long-term health and effectiveness.
- **Dealing with war:** The impact of ongoing conflicts has created a need for training in trauma-sensitivity, refugee work, and peace-building, equipping youth workers to support displaced youth and foster environments of healing and reconciliation.
- **Dealing with cyberbullying & school bullying:** The increase in online hate speech highlights the need for training on addressing cyberbullying and school bullying.
- **Managerial training:** Neoliberal tendencies within the youth work sector, visible in the necessity to rely on project funding rather than structural funding, adhere to demands for improvement of financial efficiency, and consider impact orientation in application development, has led to a demand for training in managerial skills.
- **Youth-led project facilitation:** With the European Youth Programmes placing greater emphasis on youth-led activities, there is a need for training on how to facilitate these projects effectively.
- **Reversing the decline in youth participation:** The perceived decrease in young people's interest in international projects necessitates training to address this trend.
- **Prevention and crisis management:** With increasing incidents of violence, mobbing, and substance abuse, youth workers need training to act effectively in unstable or volatile situations, ensuring they can prepare for and manage crises when they arise.
- **Post-colonialism and global learning:** As global awareness increases, there is a growing need for training that addresses post-colonial issues and encourages global learning, enabling youth workers to foster critical thinking and inclusivity in diverse youth communities.
- **Programme specifics:** To effectively manage, for example, volunteer programmes in the European Solidarity Corps, youth workers need training in providing guidance and support for volunteers, fostering community-orientation, and emphasising value-based volunteering that aligns with broader social and ethical goals.

- **Youth policy:** With varying policies at the European and national levels, there is a need for comprehensive training that covers European youth policy, strategic frameworks, and the influence of the EU on personal life, ensuring that youth workers can navigate and advocate within these structures effectively.

- **Foster youth employability:** High youth unemployment rates, especially in certain regions, require training that equips youth workers to foster employability skills.

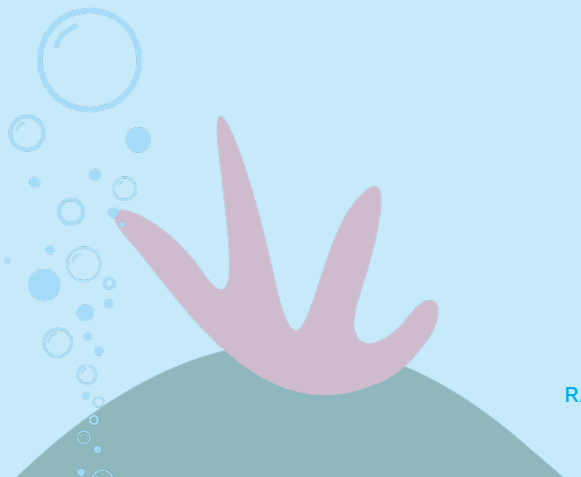
- **Entrepreneurship:** In the face of economic challenges, there is a need for training that cultivates entrepreneurial skills among youth, encouraging innovation and the creation of new opportunities that can benefit both individuals and communities.

- **Networking and advocacy skills:** To promote and support youth work, training is needed in describing youth work, advocating for youth, stakeholder cooperation, and collaboration in multidisciplinary working environments, ensuring that youth workers can effectively navigate and influence their broader contexts.

- **Educational justice:** The need to promote fairness and address inequities in educational access and outcomes is crucial, calling for training that equips youth workers to champion educational justice and support marginalised groups effectively.

- **Ethical leadership:** In a world where ethical dilemmas are increasingly prominent, there is a need for training that develops ethical leadership skills, guiding youth workers to lead with integrity and moral responsibility.

- **Youth, sexuality, and relationships:** As youth navigate complex social dynamics, training is needed to help youth workers understand issues of sexuality and relationships, providing the support young people need to form healthy, respectful, and informed relationships.



3.3 TRAINING NEEDS ARE DEPENDENT ON YOUTH WORK CONCEPTIONS

TRAINING NEEDS ARE SHAPED BY NATIONAL CONTEXTS

Youth work in Europe has long been acknowledged as a colourful mosaic of national structures, practices, and cultures. A key methodology for categorising these national contexts into distinct youth work regimes stems from the IARD Study in 2001 (Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001). This study operationalised differences across various national frameworks based on dominant concepts, main issues, main settings, and education and training. It identified four regimes:

- **The universalistic /paternalistic system;**
- **The liberal/community-based system;**
- **The conservative/corporatist system;**
- **The Mediterranean/sub-institutionalised system.**

A more recent analysis by Kiiakoski (2018, 2020a) introduces another framework for examining and grouping national contexts of youth work, termed youth work architectures. According to Kiilakoski, youth work architectures are structured along three dimensions:

- **Cultural-discoursive arrangements** ("sayings", professional vocabulary, professional recognition and theories of how good practice is organised);
- **Material-economic arrangements** ("doings", physical and economic realities which shape practice);
- **Social-political arrangements** ("relatings", social relationships and power).

Within these dimensions, national contexts are qualitatively measured and clustered in four practice architectures. Kiilakoski further argues that educational paths in youth work are shaped by the national practice architecture in which they are embedded. From a theory of social learning-perspective, country-specific legal and organisational arrangements, their theoretical and symbolic repertoire, and the constitution of a national community of practice impacts learning processes around both youth work practices and identity (Kiilakoski, 2018, 2020a).

4 — TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

This chapter explores the objectives, underlying rationale, and frameworks guiding the development of training programmes—in essence, it addresses the reasoning behind and methods of designing training initiatives. This discussion encompasses not only the development of individual training sessions but also strategies for advancing the broader training sector. The sections on training objectives and content identification primarily draw upon interviews with training providers, while insights into the collaboration between providers and trainers are informed by both sources.

4.1. TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of training in the European Youth Programmes, as outlined in the 2024 Erasmus+ Programme Guide and the European Solidarity Corps Guide, include:

- **Providing** non-formal and informal learning opportunities for educational and professional development.
- **Building** a community of youth workers and strengthening local youth work practices.
- **Enhancing** the qualitative and strategic impact of the European Youth Programmes

Our research indicates that training providers' objectives can be categorised into three overlapping clusters: participant-oriented objectives, sector-oriented objectives, and programme-oriented objectives. While these categories often overlap, different training providers tend to emphasize different aspects, leading to variation in training priorities and approaches.

4.1.1. PARTICIPANT-ORIENTED OBJECTIVES

Participant-oriented objectives primarily focus on competence development. Relevant competence areas mentioned by training providers are in line with the training needs voiced by trainers and training participants. They range from core principles of youth work on project management and aspects specific to the EYPs, to practical methods and approaches to emerging needs such as crisis management and adaptability or advocacy and lobbying (see chapter 3.)

Participant-oriented objectives align most closely with the attitudes of both trainers and participants themselves regarding the aims and objectives of trainings. As a consequence, it is very likely that trainings that are tailored to the needs of participants have the highest consensus between participants, trainers and training providers on their objectives. As one interviewee stated:

> *"Overall, it's important that people learn something. That there is a strong educational level. This is the main goal"*

(TRAINER, LITHUANIAN REPORT).

4.1.2. SECTOR-ORIENTED OBJECTIVES

Training providers emphasize broader goals that extend beyond individual competence development to impact the youth work sector at national and European levels. This includes:

- **Building** and **qualifying** national youth work sectors, particularly in countries lacking funding or policy frameworks.
- **Establishing** a common ground of knowledge and skills for youth work practitioners and fostering a sense of belonging and youth work identity (see chapter 8).
- **Fostering** networking opportunities between training participants at both national and international levels, as well as between practitioners, policymakers, and the non-profit and for-profit sectors (see chapter 5.3).

National Agencies, as key players with funding and policy influence, play a critical role in shaping training initiatives. Transnational support is essential to balance the responsibilities carried by these agencies. One provider stated:

> *"There is no other structure on the national level in the field of youth but the NA. So, this youth NA in [country] is super important in this sense. Also, the field sees it like that."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Another described the burden of this responsibility: *"It's a big responsibility that we are kind of steering the development of youth work in the country."* (Training provider, Transnational report)

Several interviewees from NAs advocate for the ability to offer more national trainings, as these would allow them to teach more youth workers the basics before advancing them to more complex international training. Such national trainings would require fewer resources and be more accessible for national youth workers, as they would involve less travel and require a lower level of English proficiency. Allowing NAs to conduct more national trainings would not diminish the international training dimension but rather support it, as it would help produce more and better-prepared participants for international trainings. One provider underscored the significance of national differences in shaping these needs:

> *"It's very different in each country (...) Value things, priorities things and actions which are connected and we are all on maybe not on the same page but close in this way of how we are thinking about it but when we watch at, the devil is in the details, when we watch at this smaller scale then we see these differences and there are a lot of them and I think one of the most important differences are in this aspect of who and how you can come as a youth worker and also the tradition of youth work as well."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Several interviewees from National Agencies highlighted the need for additional resources to enhance sector-wide professionalization efforts, particularly to improve accessibility and inclusivity in training opportunities.

4.1.3. PROGRAMME-ORIENTED OBJECTIVES

Another rationale for training development is to support the European Youth Programmes (EYPs). Training serves as a tool to enable youth workers to apply for projects under Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps. Providers highlight the systemic role of training in ensuring programme quality and effectiveness, as stated by one training provider:

> *"I tend to think about it from the programme point of view because we also have to take care of the fact that there are enough applicants and the applied projects are good enough."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

While some trainers recognize programme-oriented objectives, others express reluctance, perceiving them as overly top-down and misaligned with learner-centred approaches. The challenge lies in balancing structured programme priorities with a more organic, needs-based approach to training implementation.

National Agencies acknowledge that ensuring the success of EYPs through training requires more than just increasing the number of applicants. They emphasize that the quality of training outcomes plays a key role in preparing youth workers to submit well-developed applications and successfully implement projects. However, structural barriers—such as bureaucratic complexities and access inequalities—cannot be addressed solely through competence-building efforts. This limitation is also reflected in how some trainers perceive the tension between programme-driven goals and participant-focused learning:

> *"Trainers are aware of the programme-oriented goals, but there is a tension between focusing on project outcomes and ensuring the personal development of youth workers."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Moreover, some providers highlight that programme-oriented objectives must be balanced with sectoral development—ensuring that training does not merely serve as a mechanism for producing more applications but also contributes to the professionalization of the youth work sector as a whole.

4.2. APPROACHES TO IDENTIFYING TRAINING CONTENT

In our research, we asked training providers how they determine the focus of their training courses and offers. Interestingly, the responses reveal a wide arsenal of instruments used to identify and assess training needs. While most of the interviewed NAs and SALTOs employ multiple methods to gather information and make decisions, certain providers tend to prioritise specific approaches. However, in some cases, the development of training content appears to be rather intuitive and not necessarily based on concrete evidence of training needs.

4.2.1. BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES

Bottom-up approaches focus on identifying training content based on the needs of youth workers and practitioners.

Several strategies are employed to achieve this:

- **Participant-driven agendas:** Some providers involve youth workers in shaping training topics either through preparatory consultations or by allowing flexibility in training content during sessions.
- **Trainer insights:** Many providers rely on trainers as intermediaries who understand practitioners' needs and can propose relevant training topics.
- **Sector-wide needs assessments:** Surveys, interviews, and open forums help providers collect feedback on training gaps.

However, challenges arise in this approach, such as the overrepresentation of experienced youth workers in consultations, which may not fully reflect the needs of those new to the field. Additionally, some providers report that practitioners do not always express interest in training that aligns with strategic priorities. As one training provider succinctly put it: "*Practice has become more stubborn.*" (Training provider, Transnational report)

This highlights a common challenge where training providers, particularly those emphasising an expert-driven approach, must balance practitioner preferences with sectoral and programmatic needs.

4.2.2. TOP-DOWN APPROACHES

Top-down approaches focus on identifying training content through structured sectoral analysis and alignment with broader policy objectives. Providers employing this approach use:

Sectoral mapping and thematic analysis: Identifying priority areas where expertise is needed and addressing existing training gaps (please refer to p. 21: Other Identified Training Needs – Deep Dive).

- **Policy alignment:** Ensuring training topics contribute to European Youth Programmes' priorities and strategic policy objectives.
- **Monitoring trends and socio-political developments:** Adapting training content to address emerging needs based on data and sectoral developments.

Providers highlight that while structured approaches support consistency, they sometimes risk overlooking emerging practitioner-driven needs. Additionally, a balance must be found between programmatic priorities and the realities faced by youth workers. A key challenge in this approach is ensuring that training needs identified at the policy level align with the realities of youth workers on the ground:

> *"We have to read a lot from trends. Or bring together many assessments from colleagues."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT).

Some training providers stress that not all practitioner needs can or should be met through EYP-funded training initiatives:

> *"The field needs more than what the programme needs. Here is always finding this balance. (...) They will just give you their general needs and then you have to see maybe not all can be catered by the programme, not all are relevant for us unfortunately."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Internal strategic frameworks also play a role in guiding top-down training development. Some providers develop detailed multi-annual work plans based on European policy frameworks, while others rely on internal institutional strategies. These strategies vary in their connection to external European initiatives, with some aligning closely with the European Youth Strategy, while others focus more on national priorities.

By integrating both bottom-up and top-down strategies, training providers aim to design programmes that are responsive to practitioners while ensuring alignment with European youth policy objectives.

4.3. COLLABORATION BETWEEN TRAINING PROVIDERS AND TRAINERS

Collaboration between training providers and trainers is critical in ensuring high-quality training that meets both programmatic and practitioner needs. Successful collaboration depends on clear trainer selection processes, transparent communication, and co-development approaches that balance structured objectives with trainer autonomy. Challenges identified include:

- **Administrative burdens in trainer selection**, affecting quality and inclusiveness.
- **Unclear communication and expectation setting**, leading to frustration.

- **Limited trainer autonomy**, with excessive top-down control hindering adaptation to participant needs.
- **Financial precarity of trainers**, particularly due to delayed contracts and lack of payment assurances.

Training providers that foster long-term collaborations and trust-based working relationships tend to report better training outcomes. Addressing these issues is key to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the training sector.

For a detailed discussion on the collaboration between training providers and trainers—including selection processes, mutual expectations, challenges, and factors for successful cooperation—please refer to p. 27: Collaboration Between Training Providers and Trainers in Training Development Processes – Deep Dive.

Recommendations to foster training development

- **Increase recognition of National Agencies:** To strengthen sector-oriented objectives, increase recognition of the pivotal role of National Agencies as drivers of national youth work sector development, by:
  - Providing National Agencies and other training providers with the means and opportunities to offer more trainings at the national level.
- **Provide follow-up support:** To strengthen programme-oriented objectives, offer systematic follow-up counselling for training participants who become motivated to apply for EYP projects after their training participation.
- **Promote good practice sharing:** Initiate dialogue on and share good-practice approaches to needs assessment and content selection among training providers to draw on the wealth of existing innovative practices.
- **Allocate resources for quality and inclusiveness:** Commit sufficient resources to training selection processes to ensure both high-quality training and inclusiveness for new trainers.
- **Ensure transparent communication:** Establish transparent communication and expectation management throughout the training process—before, during, and after the sessions, including decisions on prioritising the participant, sector, and/or programme-orientation of training objectives.
- **Encourage co-development:** Initiate co-development processes on equal footing, particularly regarding participant selection.
- **Provide timely contracts:** Provide timely contracts for trainers that grant payment assurances in cases of cancellation.
- **Empower trainer autonomy:** Ensure the autonomy of trainers in mediating training objectives and agendas with the actual needs of the participant group in the spirit of non-formal youth work principles by:
  - Establishing mutual trust that empowers trainers to adjust activities on the spot, without fear of reprimand.
  - Providing resources to develop and apply “tailor-made approaches” on the spot, particularly sufficient time between sessions and technical material to maximise options.
  - Designing training agendas that include designated time to listen to participants’ needs and opinions and to develop a professional sense of group dynamics.

4 – DEEP DIVE
TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

4.3 COLLABORATION BETWEEN TRAINING PROVIDERS AND TRAINERS

COLLABORATION BETWEEN TRAINING PROVIDERS AND TRAINERS IN TRAINING DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

This section examines the collaboration between training providers and trainers in the development of training programmes. Drawing from the experiences of both training providers and trainers, it begins by outlining standard selection processes before discussing mutual expectations, perceived challenges, and conditions for successful collaboration.

SELECTION PROCESSES OF TRAINERS

The selection of trainers is crucial for ensuring smooth collaboration and high-quality training. The approach to selection varies depending on the scope of the training (national or international), the provider's selection practices, and, when permitted, the staff's experience and preferences.

In some cases, trainer teams are pre-selected as part of the training package, eliminating the need for a separate selection process. Generally, international trainings, developed in collaboration with multiple NAs, offer the least flexibility due to the application of numerous national regulations. The main selection methods include:

- **Open calls**
- **Calls within trainer pools**
- **Direct invitations to preferred trainers**

Administrative procedures at the training provider's institution often dictate the method of choice, as direct invitations may be legally restricted, and some contexts may rule out open calls. While open calls are seen as essential for promoting inclusion, they are also criticised for creating an additional workload without necessarily enhancing training quality. As one training provider explains:

> *"I detest open calls. I hardly ever- people look so different on paper from what they do in practice that I rely on what they do in practice"*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT).

Securing high quality trainers has become even more crucial and also challenging, as some training providers observe a rise in the number of trainers in the field who unfortunately lack the skills necessary to fulfil their role:

> *"We have a massive amount of young adults who want to be a trainer and want to train and want to organize activities without knowing how."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

In many cases, trainings are conducted by a team of trainers, allowing for a combination of selection approaches within the same training. For example, training providers often pair an international trainer (selected through an open call) with a national trainer (from a national pool) to balance international and local expertise. Some providers strive to ensure that all trainers in a pool receive a similar number of assignments annually. One provider selects a primary trainer through the established process, then allows that trainer to recommend a co-trainer, fostering smooth collaboration and introducing new trainers without formal open calls.

Regardless of the selection method, there is always flexibility, as criteria are weighted and can be contradictory. Experience is often a key factor, but providers also recognise the importance of promoting new trainers or giving experienced trainers opportunities to work on new topics. Additionally, some providers adjust their selection strategies based on perceived drops in training quality. For instance, one NA has shifted focus from international trainers to local experts, while

others rotate trainers regularly, believing that consistent quality requires variation in the team. As stated here,

> *"But then we had the same people working on the activity for a long time and we somehow noticed the quality dropping instead of increasing. Because you know I think it's logical that this happens, that simply people don't put so much effort anymore, because they have implemented it so many times and you know and then you don't somehow approach it with the same level of enthusiasm or something I don't know how I would call it. Or time investment. And it somehow showed."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Training providers seldom offer feedback on rejected applications, and opportunities for constructive feedback with trainers are almost non-existent. Systematic application assessments are rare, and one training provider noted that when time is limited, selection processes become more pragmatic, leaving little room for reflection or improvement.

More sophisticated selection processes, when implemented, increase the workload both for applicants—who may need to answer a large number of specific questions—and providers, potentially reducing the inclusiveness of the process. This might contribute to the underrepresentation of individuals facing barriers in national training pools or as employed trainers, according to our interviewees.

As the number of trainings provided by NAs increased significantly, many of them established trainer pools. The management of these pools, however, requires more resources over time.

The management of trainer pools can entail:

- Opening and closing of the pool
- Selection of applicants to be included within the pool
- (Renewal of) contracts with trainers
- Regular meetings with the pool
- Training of trainers
- Onboarding processes for new trainers
- dentifying and attending to trainers' needs

While having a trainer pool is a common practice at NAs, the management of these pools varies. Several interviewees emphasise the need to train their trainers and use various methods: incorporating training into their regular meetings, onboarding process with trainings, job shadowing and assessments, or contractual obligations. Trainers' needs are identified in various ways, such as during the call for (renewal of) the trainer pool, annual meetings, or surveys. There is also a growing recognition that supporting trainers must go beyond ensuring their qualifications and training.

> *"We don't need many trainers, we need good trainers and want to have a close connection to them"*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT).

ROLE OF TRAINING PROVIDERS IN PREPARATION PROCESSES

Training providers decide the what (goals, content) and the who (target group) of the training and select the trainers. However, trainers can often influence these decisions. For instance, during initial preparation meetings, trainers can suggest adjustments by offering their expertise, such as highlighting if the training goals are overly ambitious or too much content is being included.

> *"We try to single out this is what we want for the participants to happen and then it's the trainers' role to create the process for it. Many times they also comment on what has been planned (...) so there is a lot of this kind of discussion."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

> *"What separates my work from the trainers' is that I need to be clear what I want to get out of the training. So, we have to agree on that but then their job is to figure out how."*

(TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

The role of training providers involves several key responsibilities that are essential for the successful execution of any training activity. They are tasked with the overall project management, ensuring that everything is coordinated effectively from start to finish. This includes defining clear objectives for the training and continuously monitoring the achievements against these objectives to ensure that the desired outcomes are being met.

Additionally, training providers play a vital role in organising all logistics and technical aspects, ensuring that the necessary resources and facilities are in place for the training to be conducted smoothly. Another critical role is the selection

and management of participants. This includes conducting a thorough needs assessment to identify the right participants and managing their involvement and communication throughout the training process.

Training providers are also responsible for conducting evaluations with participants to gather feedback and assess the effectiveness of the training. Finally, they must ensure that open communication channels are maintained between the providers and the trainer to facilitate smooth operations and address any issues that may arise during the training.

Trainers report differences among training providers depending on whether they are NAs/SALTOs or NGOs. From their perspective, trainers are less likely to be responsible for technical and logistical aspects, but also less involved in participant selection processes if they are contracted by NAs or SALTOs. When collaborating with NGOs, trainers tend to have more agency and flexibility in training design, but they also have to take on additional work and carry more responsibility. As far as compensation, trainers report that NAs tend to pay and value trainers better than NGOs. As one trainer states:

> *"In relation to the salary issue the NA pays well, it pays fairly, I think, but the rest of the youth sector [in Portugal] doesn't keep up. There's another issue that doesn't have to do with payment, it has to do with the employment relationship, the precariousness in which you find yourself (...)."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

Another trainer adds to this sentiment:

> *"About the support, I think precariousness is the main issue. there's a European level where I honestly think you earn reasonably well and I think there are opportunities, although it's always within the system of freelancing. Now at a national level when you go to any type of organization that you have this know-how and that's it, it can be for projects as it can be for other things. you earn very, very badly, in other words, it's not a good job."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

ROLE OF TRAINERS IN PREPARATION PROCESSES

Trainers are responsible for developing the how of the training, including the overall flow of the programme and methods. The common procedure is that after an initial preparation meeting, they create a plan for implementing the training. Training providers can influence this process by using digital tools to monitor progress, reviewing general drafts, and later assessing detailed scripts. When multiple providers collaborate on a training, they may assume different roles, with varying levels of involvement. In some cases, there is no further contact with the trainers until the training occurs.

A major role trainers ascribe to themselves is that of a mediator. Pre-formulated training objectives and planned activities, regardless of how focused they are on the target group, are not completely congruent with the needs of the actual participant group. In fact, trainers often describe a discrepancy between training goals and the needs of the actual participants, resulting in a tension that leads trainers to assume the role of a mediator. A crucial factor for training success is their ability and freedom to adapt and translate the providers' objectives to youth workers' realities. Rather than resolving these tensions with a one-sided approach, trainers emphasise the pragmatic combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches in training implementation by adapting providers' objectives to the very specific target group on the spot:

> *"Ideally, in a training course, you should be able to have a prior formulation asking about your expectations, your needs, [and] put something together based on that, and then, when you receive the group, look at it again, and realise that, based on this group, this moment, there are things that can and should be changed. Sometimes we make compromises there, which is to keep the fundamental objectives, some structure, but change one thing or another that we think will [meet the participants' needs]."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

> *"I think, is about being agile and being able to change the program in a way that maintains the objectives set but tailors the program to the needs of the participants. I don't think I've ever been to a training session where I didn't have to change something in the weekly program."*

(TRAINER, HUNGARIAN REPORT)

Another trainer described their role as *"a filter, a detective, to detect youth workers' needs and combine them with objectives provided at European level by institutions"* (Trainer, Italian report). Some training providers seem to recognise the challenging nature of the trainers' role. They describe the need for trainers to possess near 'superpowers' to handle a multitude of issues, from participants' competence gaps to personal problems, all while following an approved script and adapting on the spot. Trainers, striving to meet all of these demands, emphasise that authoritative behaviour towards them from training providers is counterproductive. Demanding strict compliance with pre-established objectives and procedures hampers the autonomy required for professional facilitation and contradicts non-formal and participant-oriented training approaches.

It is evident that an essential prerequisite for success is the autonomy and flexibility of trainers. Our research showed clearly that the freedom of trainers is crucial in order to mediate training objectives and agendas with the actual needs of the participant group and follow non-formal youth work principles, such as openness, participation, and participant orientation. Trainers require:

- **The providers' trust** to adjust training activities on the spot, without fear of reprimand;
- **Resources to develop and apply** "tailor-made approaches" on the spot, particularly sufficient time between sessions and technical material to maximise options;
- **Training agendas** that ideally include designated time to listen to participants' needs and opinions and to develop a professional feeling for group dynamics.

Overall, trainers value and protect their autonomy in training implementation and are critical of excessive interference from providers. They reject being *"puppets doing what we are asked for, passive puppets"* (Trainer, Italian report).

CHALLENGES IN COLLABORATION

Trainers often face significant challenges in collaboration, primarily due to a lack of time and resources from both providers and trainers. One of the key issues is the insufficient opportunities for trainers to adequately prepare for training sessions. This lack of preparation stems from various factors, including poor communication, vague calls, and an overall lack of awareness regarding the training objectives. Furthermore, trainers frequently find themselves excluded from the selection process, leaving them unaware of the group composition and without access to application forms. This exclusion, combined with the absence of contracts until right before the event, leaves trainers in a precarious position. They are often put on hold, fearing lost investments if the event is cancelled. As one trainer explains:

> *"This aspect is relevant because you fix the dates, verbally, which for us is equal to signing an agreement, but then the agreement does not come. Only very close to the activity, and it may happen that the activity is deleted. If you do not have the agreement, you cannot do anything. If you say something, it seems as if you are doing something wrong. But this is very basic."*

(TRAINER, ITALIAN REPORT)

Additionally, when trainings are organised on short notice, time constraints can have a negative impact on creativity and hinder deeper cooperation between providers and trainers. This also limits the consideration of participants' needs as expressed in their application forms.

Trainers often encounter differing expectations regarding their roles and responsibilities, further complicating collaboration. Moreover, excessive bureaucracy and rigid procedures, particularly in cooperation with NAs, create additional burdens. A trainer highlights this issue, stating,

> *"I cannot buy a pen without public procurement. This is very difficult for me"*

(TRAINER, LITHUANIAN REPORT).

Overall, the current collaboration between training providers and trainers has significant potential for frustration. This perspective is indirectly reflected by a training provider who believes that trainers feel constantly judged, which hampers their ability to develop freely.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION

The success of training programmes hinges on a few critical conditions: transparent communication, co-development processes on equal footing, and long-term cooperation grounded in trust while maintaining the autonomy of trainers.
Clear, transparent, and well-established communication is essential throughout the training process—before, during, and after the sessions. Training providers should manage expectations

transparently, taking into consideration the trainers' experiences and capabilities.
As noted in one report:

> *"Probably the most helpful thing is the proactive role of the customer. To be clear about what we expect, what we expect from you as a trainer, what the end result should be, maybe even in the long term. So that we as trainers have a clear understanding of where we are going and where the whole process should take us."*

(TRAINER, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

However, opinions vary; experienced trainers might see fixed conditions, such as the structure and objectives of the training, as limitations to innovation, while newer trainers may find these guidelines helpful for orientation.

It's important to address power imbalances and dependencies sensitively and to manage conflicts considerately and safely. An empathetic and transparent relationship between trainers and providers, often fostered by preparatory on-site meetings, supports a better mutual understanding.

Co-development processes should place trainers and training providers on equal footing, avoiding top-down directives. Providers should involve trainers early on in designing the training and selecting participants, which helps trainers understand the objectives and the group's needs. Conversely, trainers should take a lead role in the development of training designs, either through co-creation or by providing feedback, which both strengthens the alignment between objectives and methods and builds trust.

Additionally, trainers need contractual safety well ahead of the training activities, including payment assurances in cases of cancellation. The presence of a representative from the providing organisation during training can foster understanding and allow for professional ad-hoc deviations from the planned training designs. Such an approach can help to avoid situations as described here:

> *"In the end, the only thing that the organisations that pay us see is a questionnaire that has questions about the objectives of what they've asked us to do."*

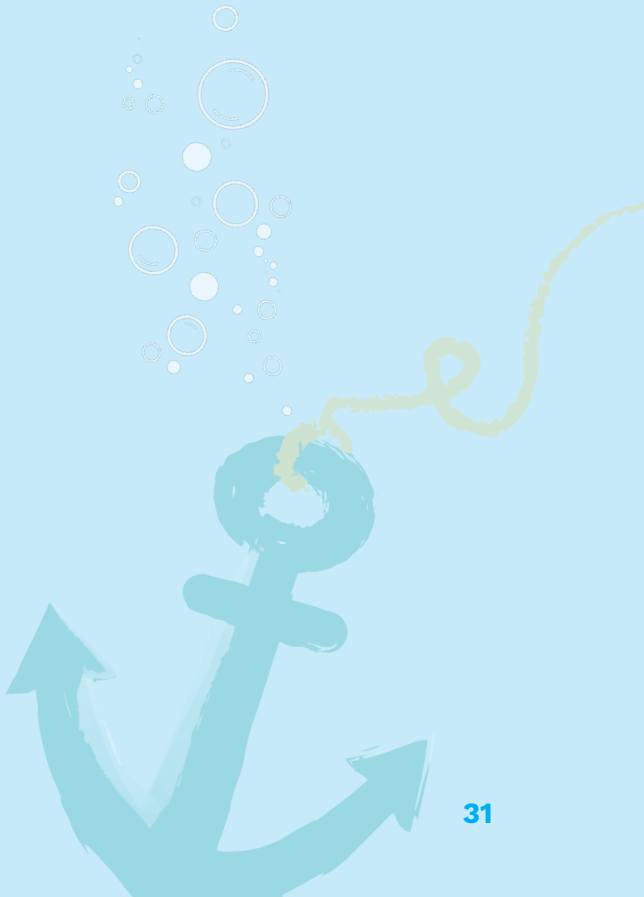
(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

Long-term collaborations built on mutual trust are vital. They allow for greater autonomy for trainers and facilitate a clear role distribution, which simplifies communication and better addresses each participant's needs. Such collaborations also enable trainers to contextually frame their specific training offers within the broader objectives of the providing organisation. Constant dialogue beyond specific training events helps maintain overall cooperation and the quick resolution of issues, as informal relationships can bridge institutional gaps.
Structures like LTTAs and SNACs are beneficial for fostering trusted, long-term relationships, as echoed in one report:

> *"In terms of organisations, what I'd like to highlight is that well-structured, long-term partnerships and collaborations end-up favouring later on the relationship with the organisations."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

The typically small size of national youth work sectors often means that trainers and providing organisations are likely to develop close relationships, which can significantly enhance the training outcomes.



5 — TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

The effectiveness of youth work training programmes relies heavily on the participation, engagement, and diverse contributions of the individuals involved. Participants, whether youth workers or trainers, form the backbone of non-formal education, where peer learning, active engagement, and knowledge exchange are essential to success. However, several challenges can impede productive learning environments, from mismatched participant profiles to logistical barriers such as language and financial constraints. This chapter delves into the multifaceted role of participants in youth work training, examining the selection processes, motivations, and obstacles that shape their experiences. Through a combination of survey data and focus group discussions with trainers and training participants, we explore how structural conditions and on-site dynamics influence training experiences and propose conditions for fostering more effective and inclusive training environments.

5.1. STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES AND OVERALL TENSIONS

Youth work, especially in the context of European youth programmes, faces numerous structural challenges that directly affect the quality of training implementation. Particularly in countries where the youth work infrastructure is in need of development, NGOs delivering Erasmus+ training often operate under precarious financial conditions. These fragile foundations can lead to a range of issues that compromise the effectiveness of training programmes:

- **Focus on quantity over quality:** To secure necessary funding, some NGOs prioritise the quantity of training programmes over their quality. This results in limited time and resources being allocated to each training initiative. As a consequence, training design often caters more to fulfilling reporting criteria than fostering genuine competence development in youth workers.
- **Pressure on trainers:** Trainers working for NGOs that are financially driven often face the challenge of bridging the gap between well-sounding applications and the lack of resources for effective implementation. This creates additional strain on trainers, who may already be working under precarious conditions.
- **High turnover rates:** Financial instability within these organisations leads to reliance on volunteers or poorly compensated staff and high turnover rates. This affects organisational knowledge management, making it difficult to build long-term expertise and maintain high standards in training delivery.

These issues not only reflect a divergence from core youth work values but also underscore a growing divide between the ideals of European Youth Programmes and their practical implementation.

5.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

Training in the youth work sector is primarily grounded in non-formal education methods, which emphasise flexibility, reflection, participation, and experiential learning. This section outlines the five core training approaches identified in our research, focusing on their effectiveness and the challenges they face within the youth work landscape. These approaches are summarised below. For more detailed information and background on this topic, please refer to p. 38: Exploration of the Five Core Training Approaches identified in our research – Deep Dive.

- **Non-formal education methods:** Non-formal education has become the backbone of youth work training, with methods ranging from participatory workshops to hands-on projects.
- **Reflective learning approaches:** Reflective learning is another key approach, encouraging youth workers to engage in self-assessment.
- **Blended learning approaches:** Blended learning, which combines in-person and digital training elements, has gained traction in recent years, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach allows for more flexibility in terms of time and location, making it accessible to youth workers in remote or underserved areas.

- **Adapting to participant needs:** Another critical aspect of training implementation is the ability to adapt to the specific needs of participants. Trainers emphasised the importance of conducting thorough needs assessments before the start of each training cycle to ensure that the content is relevant and tailored to the target group.

- **Entertainment vs. in-depth learning:** In recent years, the balance between meaningful content and entertainment within youth work training has become a growing concern. Training providers, trainers, and participants have observed a shift where training activities increasingly prioritise visibility and entertainment over in-depth learning.

5.3. NETWORKING AND PEER EDUCATION

Networking and peer-to-peer education have long been considered fundamental components of youth work training. The RAY-CAP study emphasises that networks and partnerships are essential for the successful implementation of international youth projects and represent one of the most significant outcomes of youth work training activities. Nearly all participants interviewed in RAY-CAP reported that they had made new contacts through the training sessions they attended. While networking often happens naturally in informal settings—during meals, evenings, or social trips—the study also highlights the need for designated time within training agendas to foster more intentional partnership development. RAY-CAP advocates for structured networking opportunities, with concrete purposes and collaborative objectives that go beyond casual interactions (Bammer et al., 2019). The immense value of networking in training activities is also apparent in RAY-COMP, for example in the following statement by a participant:

> *"One of the biggest advantages is the meeting with peers. This is no matter how well planned the activities are and the quality of the organisations. The exchange of experiences is invaluable, regardless of the learning value of the project itself.*

(PARTICIPANT, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

Peer education is another highly valued aspect of youth work training. This approach allows participants to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices, contributing to a sense of mutual respect, shared responsibility and overall positive group dynamics:

> *"Peer learning is fundamental (...) because if we have a good group that pulls even the person who is perhaps weaker or more lost, they can easily align themselves with the rest.*

(TRAINING PARTICIPANT, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

Peer-to-peer learning fosters a sense of community among youth workers and helps facilitate professional development through shared best-practices, insights and feedback in an informal yet structured environment. According to a trainer, "*In our field, the participant is probably a transmitter of knowledge equal to or greater than the facilitator himself*" (Trainer, Portuguese report). Overall, peer-to-peer learning aligns with the values of empowerment and participation that underpin the youth work sector.

The importance of networking is also reflected in the data collected through RAY-MON and SOC surveys, where 84.7% of participants in YWM, TCA, and NET activities agreed or strongly agreed that their networks had expanded meaningfully as a result of their participation (Figure 3, p. 40)

Our research findings also suggest that LTTAs provide particularly fertile ground for sustainable collaboration and partnership building. Due to their extended duration, LTTAs allow for in-depth exploration of topics and the development of lasting professional relationships. These long-term engagements enable participants to collaborate on joint projects and develop shared strategies for addressing youth work challenges across Europe.

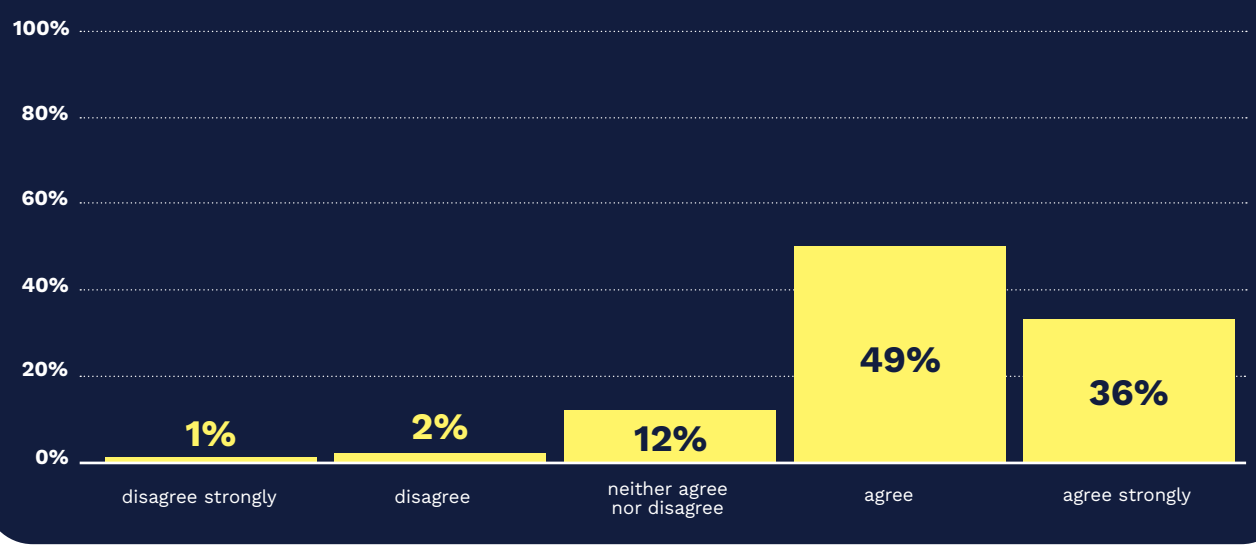
5.4. ROLE AND POSITION OF TRAINERS

The role of trainers is pivotal to the success of youth work training programmes. As highlighted by both the RAY-CAP findings (Bammer et al., 2019) and our focus group discussion data, trainers are instrumental in shaping the training atmosphere, fostering team spirit, facilitating peer learning, and ensuring the overall quality of learning outcomes. However, for trainers to be effective, two key factors are necessary: they must be competent in their role, and they must work within well-balanced, complementary teams.
A well-balanced team of trainers, composed of individuals with diverse personalities, experiences, and expertise, is crucial for fostering a positive group dynamic and providing varied

FIGURE 3

My networks have extended meaningfully.

Youth Worker Mobility (YWM) activities in Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps, impact module, **n=5399**



opportunities for participants to engage meaningfully in the training. Synergy within the trainer team enhances the learning experience and ensures that participants' needs are met in an inclusive and supportive environment.

In terms of the competencies required for trainers, a broad range of skills and attitudes were identified by both participants and trainers themselves, including the following:

- The ability to facilitate learning and self-reflection processes;
- Strong interpersonal skills to develop relationships with participants;
- Effective moderation of group dynamics and peer learning;
- Flexibility in adapting to changing circumstances;
- Methodological versatility and thematic expertise;
- Expertise in experiential learning techniques.

The trainers' authenticity and their capacity to create an open, inclusive atmosphere are also highly valued. As one trainer noted:

> *"Accepting diversity, but adopting an attitude, remaining in dialogue, inner relaxation, accepting things and letting them stand, even if you don't agree with them yourself. Showing attitude means showing authenticity, appearing authentic, not pretending.*

(TRAINER, GERMAN REPORT)

These competencies align closely with the ETS competence model for trainers working internationally, which emphasises skills such as facilitating learning processes, communicating meaningfully, and working effectively in teams. The ETS provides useful tools for assessing and strengthening these competencies, helping trainers reflect on their professional growth and fostering more cohesive training teams (JfE & SALTO T&C, 2014, 2018).

However, trainers face significant challenges due to precarious working conditions in the youth work sector. Many trainers report that inadequate pay forces them to juggle multiple jobs, leaving limited time and energy to dedicate to each training session. The financial dependence of trainers on training providers (sometimes referred to as "clients" or "customers") also fosters a service-oriented approach. This threatens to tip the balance one-sidedly in favour of the providers when setting training objectives and addressing participants' needs, thereby hampering the trainers' freedom to innovate and make professional adjustments on the spot. One interviewee notes:

> *"As a trainer, I do what the client told me to do. You make your own suggestions, of course. But somehow, sometimes you have to keep some of your positions for yourself too."*

(TRAINER, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

The overwhelming responsibilities assigned to trainers, often beyond their expected role—such as handling participant selection, venue coordination, and logistical arrangements—add further

pressure. The combination of financial insecurity and excessive workloads leads to mental stress, burnout, and, in some cases, withdrawal from the youth training sector altogether. Trainers consistently emphasised the need for more stable employment conditions, higher pay, and clearer job descriptions to alleviate this burden and ensure they can focus on delivering high-quality, impactful training.

5.5. VENUES, LOGISTICS, AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Venues, logistics, and technical aspects play a significant role in shaping the training experience, influencing both the atmosphere and the capacity of trainers to implement various non-formal education methods. These logistical elements often determine whether trainers can successfully foster dynamic group interactions and employ creative approaches to learning. In fact, the environment in which a training occurs is just as important as the content delivered, and coherence between the training's thematic focus and its setting reinforces the overall learning experience. For example, a paradox arises when sustainability is a core theme of the training, yet the setting and logistics fail to reflect these values, creating a dissonance that affects participants' engagement with the content:

> *"We are part of an international seminar on sustainability, but nothing is sustainable—neither the prices, the food, nor the working conditions. There's a gap between the content we teach and the environment we work in."*

(TRAINER, ITALIAN REPORT)

Furthermore, tourism-oriented venues can detract from the learning experience, feeding into the tendency to prioritise the entertainment aspects of training over its educational goals.

A well-equipped venue, with adequate space and necessary digital tools, is essential for creating a conducive learning environment. Training participants frequently pointed out the importance of having suitable facilities to support the methods used in non-formal education, such as group work, presentations, and interactive activities. For example, insufficient space or inadequate technical setups can hamper creativity, restrict participation, and undermine the authenticity of a training session.

Unfortunately, logistical aspects are sometimes treated as an afterthought in the planning process, leading to significant challenges during the actual training implementation. Trainers sometimes find themselves burdened with the responsibility of organising venues and managing technical aspects, which adds to their workload and detracts from their primary focus.

5.6. PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPATION

Participants are central to the success of any training, contributing not only through their active involvement but also through the group dynamics they help shape. In a non-formal learning environment, where peer-learning and knowledge exchange are critical, the composition and attitude of the group of participants can make or break the learning experience. Therefore, participant profiles, motivation, and expectations are key factors in creating a productive learning atmosphere.

Training participants repeatedly emphasise the pivotal role of a well-matched group of participants for a meaningful training experience. Our findings indicate that the quality of group composition is influenced by two factors: 1) the homogeneity of the participant group in work and training experience; and 2) the fit between overall training objectives and participant profiles and expectations. Having a similar level of youth work and training experience among participants is important, as varying levels of experience require distinct pedagogical approaches and methods of content delivery (see also chapter 3.3). A significant disparity in experience can results in some participants feeling excluded:

> *"Part of the group was youth workers who had been working for three years, and another part had been working for three days or three weeks. For those who were new, the training was very good. For us, who had been working for longer, we didn't bring anything more from it."*

(PARTICIPANT, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

Secondly, achieving a high level of coherence between training objectives and participant profiles and expectations can be challenging if participants are generally unaware of their own needs for development or come unprepared.

> *"What I've noticed more recently is that often now participants come with almost no expectations, sometimes they haven't even read what the goals of the training are. It seems to me that they come unprepared, in other words, in a very casual way, it seems that they don't really know what they want."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

At times, the lack of awareness on personal needs is also connected to passive or consumerist attitudes, undermining the participatory and peer-learning nature of non-formal education as well as the essential role of active participation, self-reflection, and engagement for fostering a productive learning environment. This sentiment was reflected in feedback from trainers, who reported instances of disengaged participants: *"There is sometimes almost a passive attitude in some of the participants"* (Trainer, Portuguese report). Such attitudes not only reduce individual learning outcomes but also disrupt group dynamics, making it difficult for trainers to maintain positive momentum during training sessions. Similarly, unmotivated participants contribute to a lack of focus and direction, as noted here:

> *"Sometimes it's bad because of the participants. I've been to several trainings where the participants expressed the wish to leave earlier, even though the program was supposed to end later. I was so confused. Am I the only one who wants to learn here?"*
>
> (PARTICIPANT, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

A more extreme version of lack of motivation becomes apparent in the issue of so-called "training tourists". As one trainer describes, *"This tourist participant [who] does not bring anything to the table, and their main motivation seems to be the plane ticket"* (Trainer, Italian report). These individuals who attend training sessions more for personal vacation than professional development not only waste resources but also detract from the collective learning process. Despite attempts to filter out such participants during the application process, many still manage to secure spots in training activities. The limitations of application processes for careful group composition are brought up repeatedly and exacerbate feelings of frustration among trainers and training providers.

> *"Because he might be sitting behind a desk, he might be working with young people, he might be training somebody. But it's hard to find what's behind the words of the application letter."*
>
> (TRAINER, HUNGARIAN REPORT)

Training selection and motivation of participants
Youth workers select training programmes based on various factors, including personal training needs, organisational requirements, and the perceived quality of the training. Several considerations influence their decision-making, such as:

- **Specific required competencies**: Some organisations mandate participation in specific training programmes based on the needs of the organisation.
- **Urgency of training topics**: Youth workers are often drawn to training programmes that address current or emerging issues in their work.
- **Investment-outcome relation:** Participants assess the expected outcomes of the training in relation to the effort required to attend, including travel and time away from work.
- **Quality indicators:** Factors such as the trainer's reputation, the training provider, accreditation status, and the content of the training programme influence participants' choices.

For a more detailed discussion on training selection, the motivations of participants, as well as ongoing challenges to participation, please refer to p. 40: Training Selection, Motivation of Participants and Challenges to participation - Deep Dive.

5.7. HIGH THRESHOLD, HIGH REWARD: LONG-TERM TRAINING ACTIVITIES AS GOOD PRACTICE

LTTAs are highly valued by both National Agencies and SALTO staff, often seen as well-structured initiatives that address systemic topics within the European youth work sector. From the perspective of training providers, LTTAs represent a focused and organised way to address sector-wide challenges. However, some training providers express concerns that the top-down structure of these activities, while beneficial for addressing broad issues, can sometimes hinder innovation and spontaneity. One training provider reflected on how the rigidity of LTTA structures might limit the more playful and experimental spirit of training initiatives:

> *"The LTAs—the idea behind them is good, but the recuperations, like how much money it takes, how many external people we have to pay to do stuff... it creates a lot of work, and we get stuck in these structures we made ourselves. I remember when we just decided, 'what the hell, let's try it out!' And I think we've lost this playfulness."*
>
> (TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Youth workers and trainers, on the other hand, consistently emphasise the positive aspects of LTTAs, which they regard as examples of best practice. The extended duration of these programmes allows for a more in-depth exploration of complex topics and encourages deeper engagement with the content. Many participants appreciate the opportunity to delve into subjects that would otherwise be difficult to cover in shorter training sessions. One Italian trainer highlighted the limitations of short-term training by asking, *"How can I unpack mental health in one week?"* (Trainer, Italian report)
Additionally, LTTAs foster stronger connections between the theoretical aspects of the training and participants' day-to-day practice, ensuring that the learning is relevant and applicable. The extended timeline also provides sufficient opportunities for participants to engage in self-reflection, a crucial aspect of professional development. This ability to reflect on personal growth and development over time is one of the key strengths of LTTAs.

For further information on the topic of LTTAs, including additional benefits as well as challenges that they pose, please refer to p. 41: Additional Benefits of LTTAs and Challenges They Pose – Deep Dive.

Recommendations on fostering training implementation

- **Implement accreditation processes:** Implement accreditation processes for organisations in TCA and KA2 strands, ensuring quality and structural stability for trainers and providers.
- **Introduce a Creative experimentation strand:** Introduce a strand for creative experimentation in training, allowing flexibility and innovation without the fear of failure.
- **Support career development:** Provide transparent information and support for trainers' career development, including needs assessments by National Agencies and funded training opportunities.
- **Expand mentoring and long-term training:** Strengthen mentoring programs and expand long-term training of trainers' initiatives, which are recognised for their positive impact on trainer competence.
- **Establish quality standards for trainer pools:** Establish quality stan-dards for trainer pools while providing accessible development opportunities to help trainers meet these criteria and promote greater recognition of trainers in European Youth Programmes.
- **Ensure well-equipped training venues:** Ensure training venues are well-equipped, aligned with youth work values, and compatible with hybrid approaches when applicable, maintaining safe spaces for participants.
- **Develop a European-level venue pool:** Develop a European-level pool of suitable venues to streamline selection processes and maintain quality.
- **Align participant profiles with training needs:** Match participant profiles, expectations, and experience levels to enhance participation & peer learning.
- **Improve application processes:** Improve application processes to select committed participants and raise thresholds to deter disengaged "training tourists."
- **Communicate training objectives:** Clearly communicate training objectives and consider preparatory meetings for alignment.
- **Promote language inclusivity:** Expand training beyond English and promote language sensitivity, ensuring inclusivity through native language programmes at national levels.
- **Offer language courses for youth workers:** Offer language courses to support youth workers participating in international training.

5 – DEEP DIVE
TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

5.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

EXPLORATION OF THE FIVE CORE TRAINING APPROACHES IDENTIFIED IN OUR RESEARCH

This section provides a more in-depth exploration of the five core training approaches identified in our research.

Non-formal education methods
Non-formal education has become the backbone of youth work training, with methods ranging from participatory workshops to hands-on projects. These methods prioritise active engagement and participation, aligning closely with the needs of youth workers who often operate in dynamic, informal settings. Especially participative approaches are highly valued for their potential to positively influence group dynamics:

> *"Because I think it immediately changes the whole dynamic of the training and the way in which the trainees are predisposed to be there watching and effectively if it's a participatory action or if it's just being there."*

(TRAINING PARTICIPANT, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

Furthermore, non-formal education offers the flexibility required to adapt to diverse contexts, as highlighted in our interviews with national trainers. One trainer explains:

> *"The beauty of non-formal education is that it allows us to meet young people where they are, both geographically and emotionally. We can adjust our approach to be relevant to their local context, their social realities."*

(TRAINER, GERMAN REPORT)

Despite its strengths, non-formal education also presents challenges. Trainers report that maintaining the balance between flexibility and structure is difficult, especially when dealing with large or highly diverse groups. Moreover, non-formal methods require a high degree of facilitation skills, which not all trainers possess. Training providers have expressed concern that some trainers, particularly those early in their careers, struggle with implementing non-formal methods effectively due to a lack of comprehensive support and mentorship.

Reflective learning approaches
Reflective learning is another key approach, encouraging youth workers to engage in self-assessment and reflection as part of their professional development. This method builds on the idea that learning is not a static process, but rather a continuous journey shaped by personal and professional experiences. Reflective practice is often embedded into training activities through structured debriefing sessions, journaling, or group discussions, allowing participants to critically assess their experiences and draw meaningful lessons from them.

A youth worker from Italy shared:

> *"Reflective learning has been transformative for me. It's not just about acquiring new skills but about understanding how my past experiences—both positive and negative—shape my approach to youth work."*

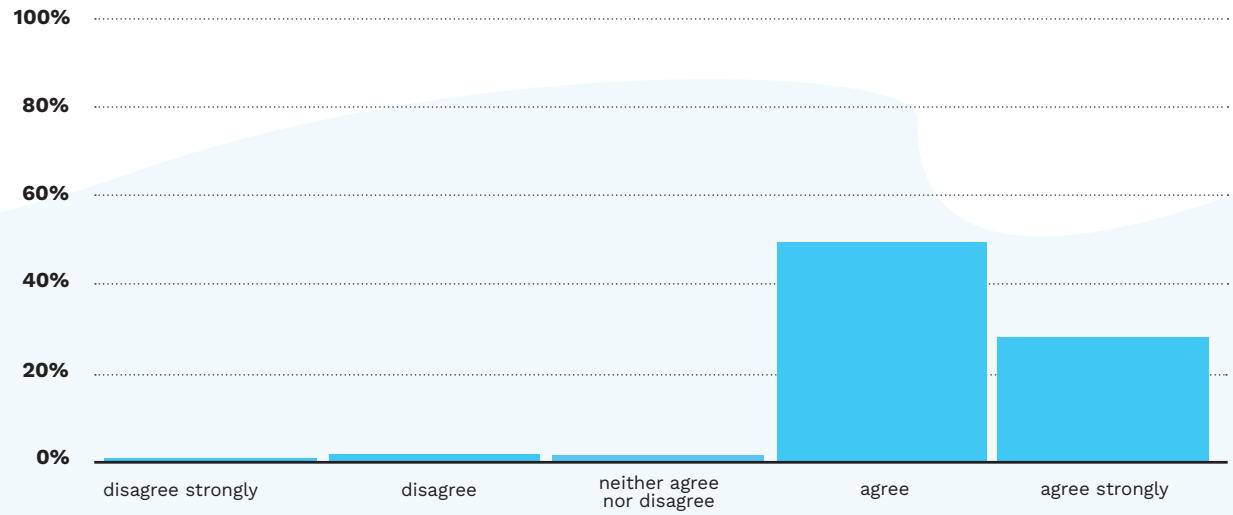
(YOUTH WORKER, ITALIAN REPORT)

Our data from the RAY-MON/-SOC survey supports this reflection, revealing that 82% of participants in YWM, TCA, and NET activities agreed or strongly agreed that their participation had a noticeable impact on their work (Figure 4)

Reflective learning, while beneficial, can be time-intensive and is often side-lined due to resource constraints. Trainers who wish to incorporate reflective learning need more support in terms of time allocation and structured guidance, as current training schedules rarely allow for this level of introspection.

FIGURE 4 **My participation in the activity already had an impact on my work**

Youth Worker Mobility (YWM) activities in Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps, impact module, multiple choice, **n=5387**



Blended learning approaches

Blended learning, which combines in-person and digital training elements, has gained traction in recent years, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach allows for more flexibility in terms of time and location, making it accessible to youth workers in remote or underserved areas.

A case study from Estonia demonstrated the effectiveness of blended learning in delivering comprehensive training without requiring participants to travel long distances. Trainers noted that the integration of digital tools allowed them to expand their reach and engage a more diverse group of participants. One youth worker explained:

> *"The online component gave me the flexibility to manage my time better, while the in-person sessions allowed me to connect with my peers and trainers on a deeper level."*

(TRAINER, ESTONIAN REPORT)

While blended learning presents numerous advantages, it also poses challenges. Not all trainers are comfortable with digital tools, and some youth workers lack the technical infrastructure to fully engage with online platforms. Moreover, the digital divide remains a significant barrier in certain regions, limiting the accessibility of blended learning programs.

Adapting to participant needs

Another critical aspect of training implementation is the ability to adapt to the specific needs of participants. Trainers emphasised the importance of conducting thorough needs assessments before the start of each training cycle to ensure that the content is relevant and tailored to the target group. These assessments often include surveys, interviews, or focus groups that gather insights into participants' prior experiences, learning objectives, and challenges (see also chapter 5).

> *"We always start with a needs analysis. It helps us to tailor the training to what people actually need, rather than just following a set curriculum."*

(TRAINER, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

This approach ensures that trainings are participant-centred and responsive to the diverse contexts and backgrounds of youth workers across Europe. By focusing on the specific needs of participants, training providers can create more meaningful and impactful learning experiences.

Entertainment vs. in-depth learning

In recent years, the balance between meaningful content and entertainment within youth work training has become a growing concern. Training providers, trainers, and participants have observed a shift where training activities increasingly prioritise visibility and entertainment over in-depth learning. This trend has raised alarms regarding the long-term impact on the quality and perception of youth work training.

As the quantity of training opportunities increases, there is concern about the quality of these activities. Some trainers have noted that many training sessions are now focused on superficial engagement, catering to a more passive audience, rather than offering deep, reflective learning experiences:

> *"There is a very large supply of training, and you have to be careful about the quality because there is a lot of low-quality training where it's completely superficial, scratching the surface. This creates an image of training courses that prioritise nice parties, travel, and talking superficially about peace-building, instead of fostering actual learning."*

(TRAINER, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

The shift toward entertainment-driven training is particularly concerning for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and National Agencies (NAs). NGOs, acting as training providers, may face pressure to secure funding by offering training activities that appeal to a broader audience, thus diluting the focus on content. Meanwhile, NAs are pressured by quantitative performance measures, such as participant numbers and satisfaction rates, potentially leading to training that prioritises broad appeal over meaningful learning outcomes. Overall, some interviewees mentioned that NA-provided trainings still tend to focus more on actual learning, while NGO-provided trainings may lean toward entertainment.

This trend risks undermining the credibility of the entire training sector, as the perception grows that training sessions are more about fun and networking than actual learning and professional development.

5.6 PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPATION

TRAINING SELECTION, MOTIVATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS AND CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATION

Training selection and motivation of participants
Youth workers select training programmes based on various factors, including personal training needs, organisational requirements, and the perceived quality of the training. Several considerations influence their decision-making, such as: specific required competencies, the urgency of training topics, investment-outcome relation, and quality indicators.

Many youth workers prefer shorter, more accessible training sessions, despite the fact that longer programmes are often seen as providing more in-depth learning opportunities. Recommendations from colleagues and previous personal experiences with trainers or providers also play a significant role in the decision-making process.

However, participants face several challenges when selecting training programmes, including an overwhelming number of training offers, a lack of standardised accreditation, and difficulties in assessing the quality of international training providers. These challenges can be particularly daunting for newcomers. The lack of clear guidelines or quality assurance mechanisms can make it difficult to navigate the training landscape.

Challenges to participation
Several barriers to participation in training were identified, including precarious financial situations, lack of time, and organisational restrictions. In particular, freelancers and youth workers with second jobs struggle to allocate time for training while maintaining financial stability. Additionally, geographic distances and the high workload of youth workers often make it difficult for them to commit to training opportunities, even when they recognise the value of these opportunities. One participant notes: "*We have so much work, there is no time left for travel*" (Participant, Lithuanian report).

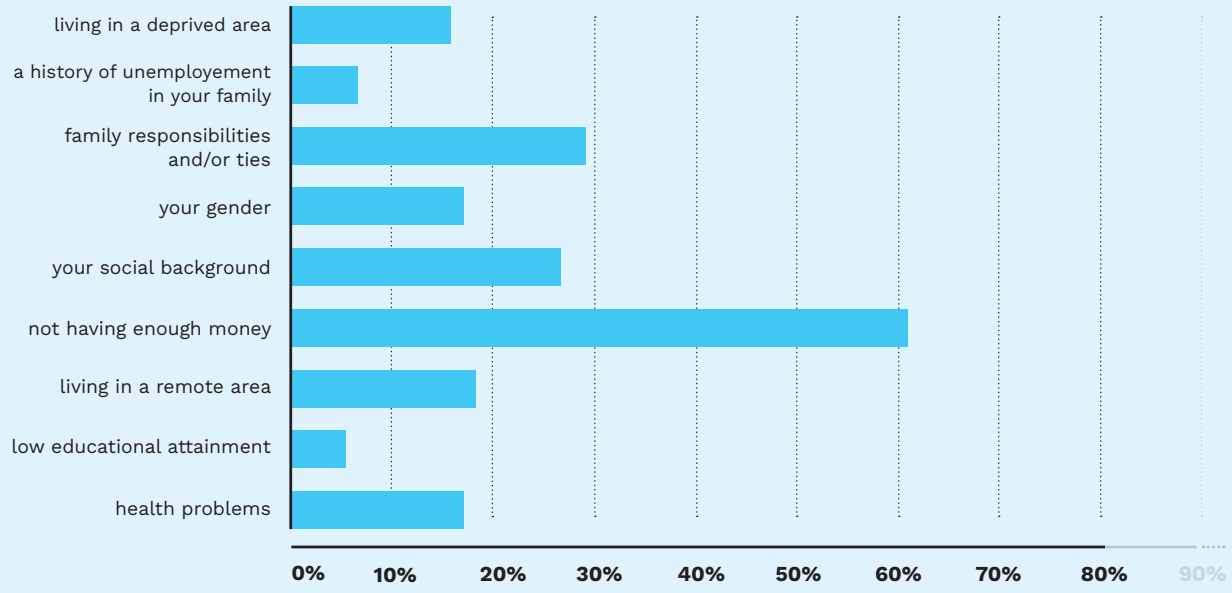
The unpredictable working conditions of youth workers were highlighted in RAY-MON and SOC data, illustrating the challenges faced by participants. Of the 5437 surveyed respondents participating in YWM, TCA, and NET activities, 45.3% reported facing barriers that prevented them from achieving their full potential. Among these, financial constraints were the most significant, followed by family responsibilities and social background (see Figure 5).

Language barriers also remain a significant issue, especially for youth workers who do not speak English. This deficit can drastically reduce the learning outcomes for those who attend but struggle to fully engage with the content, or even prevent youth workers from participating in training in the first place.

Furthermore, the organisational context plays a role in participation. Some organisations are more supportive of professional development through training, while others are hindered by a lack of understanding of the importance of such opportunities. Municipal youth centres, in particular, face difficulties when local authorities fail to recognise the need for investment in international training courses.

FIGURE 5 **Are these barriers related to...?**

Youth Worker Mobility (YWM) activities in Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps, closing module, **n=1806**



5.7 HIGH THRESHOLD, HIGH REWARD: LONG-TERM TRAINING ACTIVITIES AS GOOD PRACTICE

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF LTTAS AND CHALLENGES THEY POSE

Another significant advantage of LTTAs is their capacity to help participants build sustainable professional networks. The time spent together allows youth workers to form deeper connections with their peers, which increase the chances of forming long-term collaborations and joint projects. This networking aspect is highly valued, as it enables participants to extend their professional circles in meaningful ways.

Moreover, LTTAs are regarded as providing a higher level of participant engagement. The commitment required for long-term training encourages greater involvement, resulting in more active participation compared to shorter, more superficial programmes. This is particularly evident in the Training of Trainers (ToT) programme, which is frequently highlighted as a transformative experience for youth workers. One trainer noted that *"Salto's training-the-trainer gave the whole thing another big push"* (Youth worker, German report), referring to the profound impact of these training programmes on their personal and professional development.

One of the most appreciated aspects of LTTAs is the use of modular training formats, where each session builds on the previous one, creating a systematic and consistent path for competence development. This method allows for comprehensive learning, as participants can absorb new knowledge in stages, applying what they've learned in between sessions.
Interestingly, there appears to be a gap in perception between training providers and participants. While some providers assume that participants may not fully appreciate the value of LTTAs, the feedback from participants suggests otherwise. However, participation in LTTAs is not without its challenges. Many youth workers find it difficult to balance the demands of their regular work with the commitment required for long-term training. The tension between managing ongoing professional responsibilities and attending extended training programs can be a significant barrier for many.

Participation in LTTAs requires careful planning and dedication, as the long-term nature of these programs demands a high level of commitment. However, despite these challenges, the benefits of LTTAs—such as deeper learning, stronger networks, and personal growth—are widely acknowledged by those who take part. In this sense, LTTAs offer a high reward for the investment they require, making them a crucial element in the professional development landscape of European youth work.

6 — TRAININGS AS PART OF PROFESSIONAL CAREERS

This chapter takes a step back from dissecting individual training sessions and shifts focus to a broader perspective—one that spans the entirety of a person's life. It offers a broad perspective beyond individual training sessions and explores the entire career journey of youth workers. By weaving together the stories of those who have chosen youth work as their profession, we gain insights into their attitudes toward the field and the fundamental role that training plays in their development.

Drawing from narrative interviews conducted by both national and transnational research teams, we examine how various educational and professional backgrounds, as well as life experiences, contribute to competence development in youth work. These interviews reveal how competencies are applied within different contexts, highlighting the impact of diverse learning environments and significant life events.

Through this exploration, we aim to connect the training needs of youth workers with the broader concept of competence development, offering valuable insights into professional and personal growth within the youth work sector.

6.1. YOUTH WORK AS A HOLISTIC PROFESSION

Youth work is deeply intertwined with personal identity and values, making the entry into this field both transformational and powerful. Whether through volunteerism, a job application, or a chance encounter, the initial steps into youth work often ignite a value-based professional identity that shapes one's career. Despite diverse entry points, these pathways share a common thread: profound personal motivations drive individuals to dedicate themselves to youth work.

From our narrative interviews, three common pathways into youth work emerged:

- **Participant/Volunteer-Turned-Youth Worker:** Many began as volunteers or participants. Personal experiences in these roles often lead to greater responsibilities, paving the way for a career in youth work. One youth worker shared,

> *"Through volunteering in the youth sector as a student, I got acquainted with this whole field, and in a natural process of growing up, I started to take on more responsibilities and get involved in youth leadership. At some point, with the experience from abroad, I put this label 'youth worker' on myself and recognized myself as one."*

(YOUTH WORKER, BULGARIAN REPORT)

- **Youth Work by Not-So-Happenstance:** Some individuals describe finding their way into youth work through unplanned, yet transformative experiences. They describe these experiences as pivotal turning points that seemingly came out of nowhere and widely exceeded their expectations. In fact, upon closer examination, the emotional significance of the first contact with youth work is frequently connected to an intrinsic origin, such as personal character traits or past experiences. For these individuals, youth work became the vocation they had not initially sought but ultimately embraced.

- **Plain-and-Simple Applications:** Although less common, some applied directly for youth work positions without prior experience. This highlights the need for greater recognition and accessible entry points in the field.

These pathways often share strong personal motives. Some youth workers seek to professionalise personal interests, such as volunteering, theatre, or sports, while others are driven by family experiences, transnational identities or a desire to give back. For a more in-depth discussion of these journeys as well as information on "Trainings in the holistic identity" please refer to p. 46: Discussions of Youth Work Journeys and Concepts of Trainings in the Holistic Identity – Deep Dive.

6.2. TRAININGS AS ONE PIECE OF THE LEARNING CONTINUUM

Youth workers' professional development is multifaceted, involving various learning opportunities that shape their effectiveness and identity. Our research shows that youth workers utilise a blend of informal, formal, and non-formal learning opportunities, collectively forming a "learning

continuum" in youth work (Chisholm, 2008). The learning continuum of youth work is complemented by lifelong learning experiences outside the traditional youth work context, which are also crucial for comprehensive competence development.

A closer look at the scientific discourse reveals that each type of learning serves distinct functions. For example, informal, on-the-job learning is vital for understanding youth work culture and identity, while non-formal training develops specific skills. Formal education, such as higher education, provides theoretical knowledge for reflecting on practices (Corney et al., 2024). Although all three learning types are essential, they are valued differently in terms of formal recognition and validation (Thompson & Shockley, 2013; Kiilakoski, 2020b). A deeper look at youth workers' learning pathways—exploring formal, non-formal, informal, and lifelong learning—reveals how diverse experiences shape competence development. While briefly summarised here, these learning modes are analysed in more depth on p. 47:: Different Learning Modes – Deep Dive.

6.3. SELF-DIRECTED APPROACHES TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our findings indicate that youth workers must adopt proactive attitudes and high levels of self-management to navigate the scattered and unstructured professional development landscape in European youth work. Unlike other fields, there are no well-established, institutionalised paths to becoming a youth worker, aside from specific study programs in social work and youth work.

Trainings are often perceived as isolated experiences rather than part of a structured career path. In countries with strong youth work architectures, EYP trainings tend to be utilised later in one's career, while in countries with structures in need of development, these trainings often serve as entry points into the field.

Youth workers build their competence portfolios through a mosaic of unconnected training experiences, making each professional journey unique: *"Each training contributes to the mosaic of my skills"* (Youth worker, Belgium report). Strategic trajectories, if they exist, are typically based on subjective experiences, personal interests, or peer recommendations rather than formal concepts of youth work. This process demands proactive behaviour, consistent effort, and the ability to leverage informal professional networks.

These findings support Chisholm's (2008) hypothesis that active, self-directed learning is a hallmark of youth work, particularly in open-designed learning environments. However, this approach may be inherently exclusive, as less resourceful youth workers may find it challenging to navigate the complex landscape of professional development on their own, especially when employed in precarious working conditions. For example, one youth worker highlights the struggle of self-directed professional development, explaining that despite their extensive experience in youth work, they struggle to find time for international training due to team responsibilities and limited institutional support. Their story underscores the challenges youth workers face in balancing their commitment to ongoing learning with their daily workloads:

> *"I would love to attend more international trainings, but the reality is that balancing my workload and team responsibilities makes it hard. There isn't enough institutional support for this kind of external development."*

(YOUTH WORKER, BELGIUM REPORT)

6.4. MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS

Criticism of the self-directed nature of learning in youth work highlights the importance of guidance and support. Our interviews highlighted the vital role of mentors—trainers, colleagues, partners, and family members—in supporting youth workers. Mentors inspire through their passion for youth work, they *"live and experience the youth work with their skin"* (Youth worker, Bulgarian report). First of all, mentors act as role models and support competence development. One youth worker noted:

> *"It is usually the case that you have some kind of authoritative figures in those youth organisations, and you see what qualities they possess and then try to learn from them"*

(YOUTH WORKER, LITHUANIAN REPORT).

Mentors inspire youth workers to adopt similar professional and ethical standards and assist in implementing training approaches and advancing professional skills.

As another youth worker shared:

> *"I had my opening jokes, I had my routines. And I knew that it worked (...) And then I met professionals, and that helped me to take it to the next level"*

(YOUTH WORKER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT).

Furthermore, mentors provide professional guidance and emotional support, helping youth workers navigate job-related decisions, open doors to new opportunities, such as trainings and professional networks, and are even influential in the decision to become a youth worker in the first place. One interviewee, who worked various jobs and studied in different fields before ultimately finding their vocation in youth work, highlights how a conversation with an internship coordinator set them on their path:

> *"And she said 'have you thought about youth work? Maybe you should, because it would suit you.' And I thought to myself that maybe I should"*

(YOUTH WORKER, LITHUANIAN REPORT).

These findings align with existing research on the critical role of mentors in youth workers' professional development (Hartje et al., 2008; Kiilakoski, 2020b; Petkovic & Bárta, 2020; Thompson & Shockley, 2013). Hartje et al. (2008) highlight that "Mentoring not only helps new staff develop and enhance their job skills but also promotes social networking within the organization." Petkovic & Bárta (2020) emphasise the importance of mentoring in home organisations, particularly in countries needing further development in youth work practices.

Kiilakoski (2020b) argues that mentoring is essential during the induction phase for newcomers, addressing not only professional development but also personal and social dimensions. However, he notes that this critical phase has received insufficient scientific and structural attention, leading to a lack of knowledge and systematic policies in youth work.

6.5. CALLING FOR A SYSTEMATIC, HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

A strong desire for a systematic and holistic approach to competence development emerged as a common theme throughout our interviews and focus groups with youth workers.

The call for a **systematic approach** to competence development is connected to several observations:

(1) Youth workers often lack orientation in their subjective competence development journey, especially inexperienced youth workers and in national contexts without legal frameworks on youth work;

(2) Self-directed navigation in a scattered training landscape currently requires a strong pro-active attitude, high level of self-management and the capacity to constantly commit resources, which stands opposed to the lack of resources available to youth workers;

(3) Trainings are predominantly molecular learning opportunities that don't relate to, build upon or lead to other training opportunities, while at the same time their objectives are connected to larger strategies and goals;

(4) Competence development is a complex, constant process that is at risk of being simplified by isolated, short-term training offers: *"false expectations like becoming a youth worker attending a 5-day training course. in any other profession, you need to train and train, while in our wonderful bubble we behave differently"* (Trainer, Italian report).

Competence development should be seen as a continuous process rather than a series of disconnected events. A systematic approach would enable youth workers to:

- **Establish** coherent professional development paths and identify relevant trainings;
- **Connect** complex layers of practices, methods, concepts, and theories;
- **Achieve** sustainable competence development beyond isolated training experiences;
- **Leverage** motivation gained in trainings through follow-up activities.

This approach is connected to the need for wider recognition and quality standards in the field (see also chapter 9).

A **holistic approach** is also necessary, as training is only one aspect of a youth worker's professional journey. It allows for the integration of different understandings of youth work, influenced by personal experiences that often go unnoticed but are crucial for shaping youth work practices.

In practice, the objectives of the European Youth Programmes (EYPs) often merge with the personal goals of youth workers, as well as those of organisations and young people.

This leads to the perception of personal and professional development as interconnected. A holistic approach would enable youth workers to:

- **Connect** their role to their personal biography;
- **Reflect** on how personal experiences influence their understanding of youth work;
- **Transfer** competencies acquired beyond youth work into the field of work;
- **Maximise** peer learning by drawing on diverse knowledge and experiences.

The concept of a systematic, holistic approach to competence development is not new. Potočnik & Taru (2020) previously identified the lack of long-term strategies and challenges in youth worker education and training. Similarly, the ETS advocates for a more systemic and coherent path in designing training activities (JfE & SALTO T&C, 2022). Our research strongly supports this strategic direction.

Recommendations for a systemic, holistic approach to competence development

- **Recognise youth work as a holistic profession:** Utilise the holistic character of youth work professionalism by pro-actively combining professional with personal development in training activities.
- **Foster community belonging:** Utilise training activities as opportunities to foster a sense of belonging to the youth work community of practice by strengthening peer support, networking, and shared learning.
- **Include support for mental well-being:** Include mental well-being in training support.
- **Promote structured training paths:** Promote diverse, easy-entry pathways to youth work.
- **Ensure reliable training frameworks:** Create a reliable training framework for youth workers to ensure that competence development is not solely dependent on personal enthusiasm or resources.
- **Support accessible competence development:** Support the ETS in providing systemic, accessible competence development opportunities.
- **Develop guided, self-reflective training processes:** Provide guidance for the development of personalised training paths that connect to prior learning and career goals.
- **Utilise self-assessment tools:** Draw on existing tools, such as learning journals, and link self-assessment tools to specific training activities.
- **Offer follow-up activities:** Offer follow-up activities after training activities to sustain enthusiasm and ensure long-term impact.
- **Expand long-term trainings:** Promote long-term trainings as a best practice and reduce barriers to participation.
- **Scale up mentoring systems:** Utilise and scale existing mentoring and individual coaching programmes into a comprehensive mentoring system.

6 – DEEP DIVE TRAININGS AS PART OF PROFESSIONAL CAREERS

6.1 YOUTH WORK AS A HOLISTIC PROFESSION

DISCUSSION OF YOUTH WORK JOURNEYS AND CONCEPT OF TRAININGS IN THE HOLISTIC IDENTITY

One practitioner was introduced to youth work by a mentor, and at the time of the interview he had close to 20 years of experience in the sector. He traces his motivation for youth work back to the experience of his mother caring for children as a nanny, resulting in him also spending a lot of time around children:

> *"I remember my mom kind of working with the young people, the kids, children, young, young children. And at some point I was thinking what to do. And then I thought, OK, youth work is the thing that I could do."*

(YOUTH WORKER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

Another youth worker's story started with getting in contact with a volunteer organisation, which then evolved into participation in about 15 Erasmus+ projects as a youth. He emphasises that his choice to become a youth worker was strongly driven by his desire to give something back:

> *"The fact that I am a young person and I see that someone has taken care of me and it has helped me a lot, I want to pass it on to someone else"*

(YOUTH WORKER, BULGARIAN REPORT).

Initial experiences in youth work often serve as powerful catalysts, fostering a strong emotional connection and a deep sense of belonging within the youth work sector. One youth worker noted,

> *"Voluntary service through [National Volunteering Programme A] after leaving school is a super formative time; it sets points in your biography that you can't undo. I was in contact with young people in [Country A] every day. That's when I realised that I can do this somehow, that I have an approach that works."*

(YOUTH WORKER, GERMAN REPORT)

The professional identity in youth work is holistic, involving the entire person rather than just a work-related role. Interviews reveal a shared value-driven, relationship-oriented, and human-centred approach to life, aligning with perceptions of youth work as a value-driven profession. One interviewee explains that their occupation in youth work is rooted in their urge to contribute to society, while others emphasised their commitment to social justice and support for vulnerable communities.

Close relations within the community of practice further accelerate the profound intertwining of professional youth work and personal life.

> *"Since then, this sector of what is now called European youth work has been very important. When I describe it, it's the tip of the iceberg in my life. And one thing that makes me very, very happy is that I have found this path for myself. "*

(YOUTH WORKER, GERMAN REPORT).

> *"A sense of belonging to the youth field—I feel it as a living part of my life; I even feel it as a professional distortion. I couldn't get away from it in the future."*

(YOUTH WORKER, BULGARIAN REPORT)

Trainings in the holistic identity

Training in youth work connects to, utilises, and fosters personal identification with the youth field. As opportunities for networking and community development, trainings are effective in strengthening personal relations between practitioners. Furthermore, just as youth work is holistic, training can address participants on a holistic level. Training approaches that merge profes-

sional and personal development and provide "*knowledge that you can use in practice and in life*" (Training participant, Hungarian report) are particularly effective. Youth workers report that training experiences often spill over into personal development:

> *"It is certain that one's personality changes, but I am sure, I know that it was useful, because I feel that the way I developed, and the trainer's lectures, the underlying knowledge, and so on, all helped me, because I was there, I learned, and I did it."*
>
> (YOUTH WORKER, HUNGARIAN REPORT)

On the other hand, strong personal identification with youth work can occasionally blur the boundaries between professional and personal life, underscoring the importance of training that addresses issues of mental well-being and work-life balance for youth workers. In one case, a youth worker with an IT background, whose passion for youth work was sparked coincidentally through her collaboration with schools, described her commitment to youth work beyond that of merely a 'job'. For her, volunteering, work, and leisure time merged into a single entity, with no concern for overtime: *"I noticed that these children and I and youth work merge*" (Youth worker, German report).

6.2. TRAININGS AS ONE PIECE OF THE LEARNING CONTINUUM

DIFFERENT LEARNING MODES

Formal learning - Higher education
Youth workers often pursue higher education through programs either directly or indirectly related to youth work. Disciplines like intercultural didactics, cultural management, and psychology indirectly contribute to youth work. As one youth worker noted:

> *"I think psychology gives me a chance to be more, you know, more empathic or more supportive of the youngsters"*
>
> (YOUTH WORKER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT).

For those who choose programs directly related to youth work, options include either youth work studies itself, if available, or pedagogical studies and social work. Higher education is often pursued at different career stages, between a school-to–work transition but also as part-time studies complementary to working as a youth worker, offering both theoretical knowledge and opportunities for systematic contextualisation of and reflection on daily practices. One youth worker reflected:

> *"To study child psychiatry, educational sciences, special pedagogy, intercultural learning, I mean, to start to reflect on something that was part of my daily experience and to become aware that I had lots of knowledge, I was already competent, but I did not know before. It was cool!"*
>
> (YOUTH WORKER, ITALIAN REPORT)

Non-formal learning -
Training courses in youth work
Training courses are perceived differently depending on individual backgrounds. For some, especially career changers, these trainings are crucial for professional development. Others see them as complementary to on-the-job learning. Training opportunities are offered through various channels, including EYP Trainings by SALTOs, NAs or NGOs, CoE trainings, local and regional trainings, and national trainings, which are sometimes preferred due to easier transfer of knowledge. One interviewee noted:

> *"You can gain good experiences in international programs, but I don't relate to them as much as the national level training."*
>
> (YOUTH WORKER, LITHUANIAN REPORT)

Informal learning - On-the-job learning
Informal learning is integral to youth work, where competence is developed through practical, day-to-day experiences, including peer-to-peer learning, learning by doing, self-reflection, and direct feedback from youth participants. Cooperation projects and formalised learning opportunities like job shadowing also contribute to learning on the job.

Lifelong learning -
Experiences beyond youth work
Lifelong learning outside of youth work also plays a significant role, supporting the identification of personal preferences, priorities, and values that serve as trajectories for professional development.

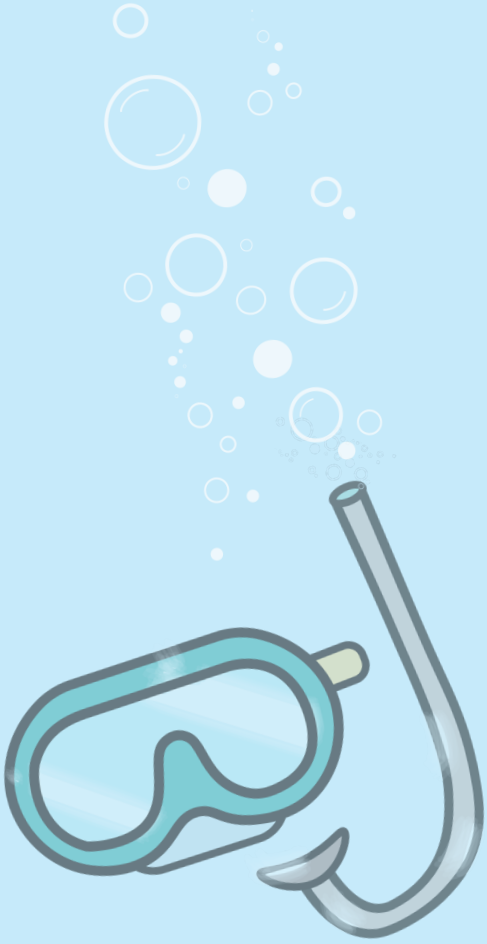
> ***"The purpose [of lifelong learning] is to make visible the entire scope of knowledge and experience held by an individual, irrespective of the context where the learning originally took place"***
>
> (Colardyn, Bjornavold, 2004).

Previous roles in fields like project management and international event management provide valuable skills transferable to youth work. Interestingly, in nearly all of the narrative interviews it was pointed out that their previous occupational background has proven to "*have spilled over into the profession*" (Youth worker, Hungarian report) and be relevant within youth work - even if the interviewees had worked as bankers, cooks or forest engineers. Furthermore, training outside of youth work also has a beneficial influence on professional development, such as training in media education or sports coaching. One youth worker emphasises the search for training opportunities beyond youth work to be an explicit strategy for professional development:

> *"[I did] a sewing course, an advanced Excel course, an image processing course, anything that I think might help my career or the organisation"*

(YOUTH WORKER, PORTUGUESE REPORT).

These diverse learning experiences—whether from formal education, non-formal training, informal on-the-job or lifelong learning—collectively enhance the holistic development of youth workers, enriching their practice and effectiveness in the field.



7 — THE RELEVANCE OF (TRAINING) STRATEGIES AND COMPETENCE FRAMEWORKS

This chapter deals with the relevance of (training) strategies and competence frameworks for trainings on European youth work from the perspective of training providers, trainers, and training participants. Overall, training activities within the European Youth Programmes are embedded in a policy context consisting of the European Youth Strategy, the European Youth Work Agenda and Bonn Process, the Youth Goals, and, if existent, national youth policies. On a strategic level, training activities within the European Youth Programmes are supported by the European Training Strategy (ETS), the Youth Participation Strategy, the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, and the Youthpass Strategy. Within this research, we paid special attention to the reception of the European Training Strategy, reflecting the prominent status of the strategy within the training sector of the European Youth Programmes.

7.1. THE EUROPEAN TRAINING STRATEGY

Awareness of the European Training Strategy (ETS) varies significantly. While some are well-versed in the ETS, participate in ETS-related trainings, or use the competence models, others have little to no knowledge of it. Often, those with only vague familiarity express appreciation for the strategy but are sceptical about its implementation and its limited dissemination among youth workers. Trainers tend to have more nuanced views on the ETS compared to youth workers, with awareness often linked to experience—more seasoned youth workers seem to be more likely to be familiar with the ETS. This suggests that engagement with the ETS is not an entry-level step, but rather one that comes later in a youth worker's career. Training courses related to the ETS are mentioned positively, particularly for their high quality, low barriers to access, and specific programs like YOCOMO (Youth Workers COmpetence Model), which are highlighted as good practices.

Training providers often use the ETS when setting training objectives and planning activities, but there is ambivalence about its utility. The ETS is seen as a reference framework, but detailed knowledge of it varies widely.

Providers generally trust that their training offers fit into the ETS framework, yet many struggle to pinpoint specific connections to the ETS, indicating a lack of in-depth understanding. This leads to the ETS being frequently reduced to its competence models. Apart from training activities like YOCOMO or the ToT, which are explicitly designed with the ETS in mind, the strategy is seldom utilised as an instrument to develop concrete training activities by NAs.

> *"If we would look at what are the things that we want from the trainings they would fit nicely in the competence model but for me it's all a mystery. I just trust they fit nicely."*
>
> (TRAINING PROVIDER, TRANSNATIONAL REPORT)

As training providers with more experience with the ETS explain, the hard-to-grasp character of the ETS lies in its conceptual structure itself. First of all, it is meant to be an *"intellectual basic model of what the competencies of the target groups are or should be"* (Training provider, Transnational report). However, because national youth work realities differ widely, it needs to be abstract enough to allow for common ground and needs to be further adapted to national contexts when utilised. The downside of its necessary generalisation is that it is harder to grasp from a practical point-of-view.

At a personal level, training participants and trainers value the ETS for a number of reasons. They view it as 1) a tool for self-reflection and orientation for professional development, 2) a useful framework that provides a common understanding of youth work and makes the wealth and variety of aspects in daily practice visible, and 3) an instrument to support project design. Overall, the ETS, and their competence models for youth workers and trainers in particular, act as guidelines in a field with few standards, enabling youth workers to assess their competencies and identify areas for further development. One trainer described the ETS as "*a compass for professionals, where they are, where they want to go, what else they need*" (Trainer, German report), which is in line with the conceptual intent of the strategy (JfE & SALTO T&C, 2023).

However, trainers and participants experience certain challenges when engaging with the ETS, most of which are related to its perceived complexity. A trainer expressed frustration:

> *"For me ETS means suffering, because it is a very complex thing (...) it is very difficult to make use"*

(TRAINING PARTICIPANT, ITALIAN REPORT).

A connected criticism is the accusation that ETS competence models place too many requirements on the youth worker profile, even though the ETS "does not attempt to define minimum or maximum performance levels of youth workers." (JfE & SALTO T&C, 2023). Despite persistent misconceptions about the intended purpose of competence models within the community of practice, the ETS holds significant potential to guide individual professional development. However, this potential heavily depends on individuals' capacity to utilise the strategy themselves, as the ETS does not provide training providers and trainers with systematic means for implementation:

> *"We would like to implement some structured action about the competence model for youth workers but how to do it?"*

(TRAINER, ITALIAN REPORT).

Another point of criticism is that it lacks usefulness when it comes to practical implementation due to its generally abstract character. This is especially relevant for youth work at the national and local level, as one training participant emphasises:

> *"It is good, but at the national level their practical application is lost. The documents are ok, but there are no conditions for their implementation"*

(TRAINING PARTICIPANT, BULGARIAN REPORT).

A recurring theme among trainers and training participants when discussing the ETS is its perception as a resource-intensive add-on to professional development. This sentiment is connected to the notion that the ETS is an instrument for experienced youth workers rather than a point of entry to youth work. Newcomers already have difficulty navigating professional development, let alone the wealth of information presented by the competence model. Furthermore, our research shows that newcomers to youth work generally tend to be more interested in practical methods, tools, and practices rather than in-depth understanding and self-reflection processes (see chapter 3.3). These dynamics are exacerbated by the perception of the ETS as a luxury intended for specific purposes that stands in conflict with an already demanding day-to-day practice.

On a structural level, the ETS is valued for promoting a common understanding and recognition of youth work across Europe, supporting the validation of competencies. The ETS presents a unifying framework that is particularly relevant in Europe's varied landscape of youth work practices. One of the strategic directions of the ETS is to be a "strategic supporter that nurtures and inspires regional and national processes" (JfE & SALTO T&C, 2022).

However, its effectiveness is questioned in countries with youth work architectures in need of development, where the lack of basic foundations hinders the ETS's implementation. A participant noted,

> *"It doesn't do us any good if we don't have our own at the national level. We don't even know what youth work is, we don't understand each other. We don't have a definition of youth work yet. If there is no definition of what it is, there is no way to implement a strategy."*

(TRAINING PARTICIPANT, BULGARIAN REPORT)

Another pointed out the challenges of applying a European framework without considering local contexts:

> *"Copying someone else's framework without taking local characteristics is totally nonsense"*

(YOUTH WORKER, BULGARIAN REPORT).

Respondents suggested that National Agencies need to play a key role in adapting and promoting the ETS, including translating the strategy into respective native languages. Also, further efforts are required to consider the diverse realities at the local level and adapt the competency requirements and implementation processes accordingly:

> *"There is some difficulty in transposing the models to the national realities and the micro realities [of youth work] for instance, the competences and knowledge of someone working in a municipality are vastly different from someone working in an association."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT).

Next to quality development purposes, the ETS is also understood as a supportive document for advocacy, since it proves the relevance of youth work in the EU.

> *"ETS is a good political signal that we have been waiting for a long time, which was set politically from the top and then implemented again from the top down in the Bonn process. That's why the signal from Europe is important. In order for trainers to gain more recognition for their international youth work at a local level."*

(TRAINER, GERMAN REPORT)

Overall, the ETS is appreciated for its potential to unify and guide youth work, despite the fact that its complexity, abstract nature, and the challenges in applying it across diverse national contexts limit its effectiveness. There is a clear call for more support in adapting and implementing the ETS at national levels to better align with local realities.

7.2. THE EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AGENDA

The European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) is one of the most relevant policy pillars for the ETS:

> ***"As a strategic framework embedded in the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps Programmes' priorities and objectives, the ETS supports, develops and links different initiatives in youth work through a strong connection with and contribution to the European Youth Work Agenda."***

(JfE & SALTO T&C, 2022)

The EYWA itself strives to further develop and strengthen youth work policies and practices, and shape youth work development across Europe. Among the eight priority areas of the so-called Bonn process for implementation of the EYWA are development and expansion of youth work offers, quality development of structures and networks, and overall promotion and recognition of youth work while acknowledging local contexts and realities (JfE, 2021). The survey report 2023 on the *State of play of national processes within the Bonn process* highlights that national initiatives on education and training of youth workers are supportive to reaching the goals of the EYWA, but also points out that training initiatives risk falling short when the structural realities of youth workers, such as lack of time and work pressure, don't allow them to engage in professional development in their daily youth work (Hofmann-van de Poll, 2023).

With the training sector being a relevant driver for the EYWA, how is the agenda received by actors in the field?

From the perspective of training providers, the EYWA barely plays a role within the training sector. In the interviews with TCA-/NET-officers and SALTO staff, the EYWA was not brought up once. Hence, the conclusion is drawn that when it comes to goals, rationales, and approaches to training construction, the EYWA and the training sector remain unconnected.

From the perspective of trainers and youth workers, the European Youth Work Agenda does not play a relevant role in the training sector either. In fact, neither the EYWA nor the Bonn Process seem to be commonly known. As a document that targets structural development, the EYWA is perceived to be more relevant for funding bodies than for practitioners. As one youth worker notes:

> *"It is rather a topic for specialist events and conferences because it rather addresses political framework conditions than youth work on the ground"*

(YOUTH WORKER, GERMAN REPORT).

Nevertheless, the agenda has the potential to advance the training sector. On one hand, trainings are perceived as a powerful means to inform the community of practice about the EYWA when incorporated as explicit training content, helping to spread the agenda's goals and encouraging proactive involvement in the Bonn Process. On the other hand, acceleration of the Bonn process can create political tailwind for NAs to strengthen their training sector. This is especially relevant in countries where youth work lacks formal recognition and education, making the training sector crucial for establishing and bolstering national youth work sectors.

In this context, the EYWA presents an opportunity to link individual competence development through training with broader structural development of youth work on national and local levels. This recommendation becomes particularly evident when considering the importance of European-level trainings for national and local youth work structures (see chapter 8).

7.3. OTHER STRATEGIES RELATED TO THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES

The Inclusion and Diversity strategy as well as the Participation strategy are at times mentioned by our interviewees, but without being highlighted for their particular relevance to the construction or implementation of training activities. Youthpass is rarely mentioned in its strategic dimension, but rather discussed as a tool for recognition (see chapter 8).

7.4 TRAINING STRATEGIES AND COMPETENCE FRAMEWORKS BEYOND THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES

> *"The ETS is not the only model for all of the youth work field. Non-formal education should not be limited to SALTO."*

(TRAINER, PORTUGUESE REPORT)

A research project on youth work careers and opportunities for professional development reveals that among youth workers using competence frameworks for self-reflection purposes, around 50% have used European frameworks. The others utilised competence models provided at the national level (Potočnik & Taru, 2020), underscoring the wealth of existing frameworks in youth work around Europe. The study further highlights a high relevance of competence frameworks for youth workers in general: 85% were aware of at least one competence framework, 62% have used one for organisational development, 88% selected 4 or 5 on a 1-5 scale when it comes to the importance of competence frameworks for organisational development, and 56% have used competence frameworks as self-assessment tools.

At the European level, the ETS competence models are not the only existing frameworks. The Youth Work Portfolio, the competence framework and assessment tool from the Council of Europe, (CoE, 2015) is also highly regarded:

> *"The competency model [of the CoE] is very helpful. It helps me to describe what I do in international youth work. I wasn't able to do that before. The competency model helps me to clarify what I want to learn and achieve."*

(TRAINING PARTICIPANT, GERMAN REPORT)

From a practitioner's perspective, it seldom matters whether training in European youth work is offered under the umbrella of the European Youth Programmes or the Council of Europe. In our interviews and focus groups, trainers and youth workers frequently emphasised the importance of the Council of Europe for their competence development and youth work practice.

However, there is a perception that activities offered by CoE and within the EYPs sometimes overlap, highlighting the need for stronger alignment between these initiatives. When it comes to training design, the ETS Competence Models for Trainers Working at International Level (JfE & SALTO T&C, 2018) is also not the only supportive document. For example, some trainers refer to the Quality Assurance Manual from the European Youth Forum (European Youth Forum Working Group on Non-Formal Education & Pool of Trainers and Facilitators of the European Youth Forum, 2013) as a valuable resource for training design and implementation, despite being a manual designed not only for trainings but for non-formal activities in general.

Recommendations to strengthen the impact and relevance of training strategies and competence frameworks

- **Intensify outreach for ETS awareness:** National Agencies should intensify outreach efforts to ensure that youth workers, including newcomers, are well-informed about the ETS and have access to its resources, allowing for both foundational and advanced engagement in youth work.
- **Provide practical guidance for ETS implementation:** Provide simplified, practical guidance for implementing the ETS so that training providers and trainers can more easily understand and incorporate the ETS into their activities, overcoming barriers of perceived complexity.
- **Promote local adaptation of ETS:** Promote flexible adaptation of the ETS to diverse local contexts by encouraging National Agencies to translate and

contextualise ETS materials, ensuring relevance to different national and regional youth work practices.

- **Develop practical ETS tools for daily use:** Focus on practical tools that support daily application of the ETS by developing resources youth workers can immediately use in their practice, addressing the demand for accessible, hands-on methods within the ETS framework.

- **Utilise ETS trainings to promote the EYWA:** Utilise ETS-linked trainings to raise awareness of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) by including EYWA-related content in trainings, connecting youth workers with the broader strategic goals in European youth work and inspiring active participation in the Bonn Process.

- **Encourage alignment with other European frameworks:** Encourage stronger alignment between the ETS and other European frameworks by fostering collaboration with the Council of Europe and other key initiatives, ensuring consistency in competency development across Europe.

- **Advocate for labour market recognition of youth work competencies:** Advocate for labour market recognition of youth work competencies gained through the ETS by promoting the strategy as a validation tool for youth worker skills, increasing professional recognition at both the national and European levels.

8 — THE RELEVANCE OF EUROPEAN TRAININGS FOR YOUTH WORK AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

One of the programmatic objectives of training activities both under the umbrella of YWM and TCA/NET is to develop local and national youth work practices. Furthermore, the European Youth Work Agenda identified "a need for significant additional investment to strengthen the provision of quality youth work at local level", which it primarily pursues through the support of building local communities of practice and national (youth) policy frameworks (JfE, 2023). Training is not explicitly mentioned as a means to foster quality youth work on a local level, but Hofmann-van de Poll et al. (2019) show that in the case of Germany, a country identified as having a strong practice architecture (Kiilakoski 2018), trainings are one path to transfer European youth policy into local youth policy.

However, Merico et al. (2019) caution that the influence of European youth work, including trainings provided at the European level, can also have a negative influence on national youth work. In the case of Italy, identified as a country with a youth work architecture in need of development, they point out that the structures, practices, and identity of European youth work risk overriding national youth work traditions when they are not sufficiently anchored in legal, organisational, and conceptual terms:

> *"It [the European Youth Programmes] also allows Italian youth workers to (re)define their training and professional trajectories, which are now located and engaged within a strictly international horizon (...). However, it should be noted that (...) it is necessary to avoid the risk that this path will flatten exclusively within a model based on the international dimension. The research bears witness to the often tacit, but by no means less pressing, urgency of constantly putting in critical relation the model proposed by the European programmes with (...) the national and local traditions."*

(Merico et al., 2019)

Our findings also indicate that the relevance of the training sector is dependent on the state of national youth work architectures. In countries with **strong youth work architectures**, European trainings are perceived as valuable complements to national offers. Anchored in institutionalised youth work practices and identities, youth workers are able to integrate opportunities offered on European level into existing structures. This is also reflected in the tendency to perceive European trainings as later steps in youth work biographies instead of points of entry into the field.

In countries with **youth work structures in need of development,** youth workers face a precarious and murky environment, often performing roles that overlap with facilitators and educators. There are typically no higher education programs directly related to youth work, and the sector is underfunded at both the national and local levels. The lack of common concepts hinders both the formal recognition of youth work and the identification of specific training needs. Consequently, youth workers struggle to explain, promote, and defend their work to stakeholders, leading to limited training opportunities at national, regional, and local levels. The lack of national training pushes youth workers towards the European training sector for professional development. In such contexts, European trainings are utilised as key starting points for advancing local youth work structures. These trainings help to qualify, expand, and innovate local youth work by transferring approaches, techniques, methodologies, and practices. However, knowledge transfer is challenging due to inadequate local structures, uninformed partners, and the abstract nature of European values.

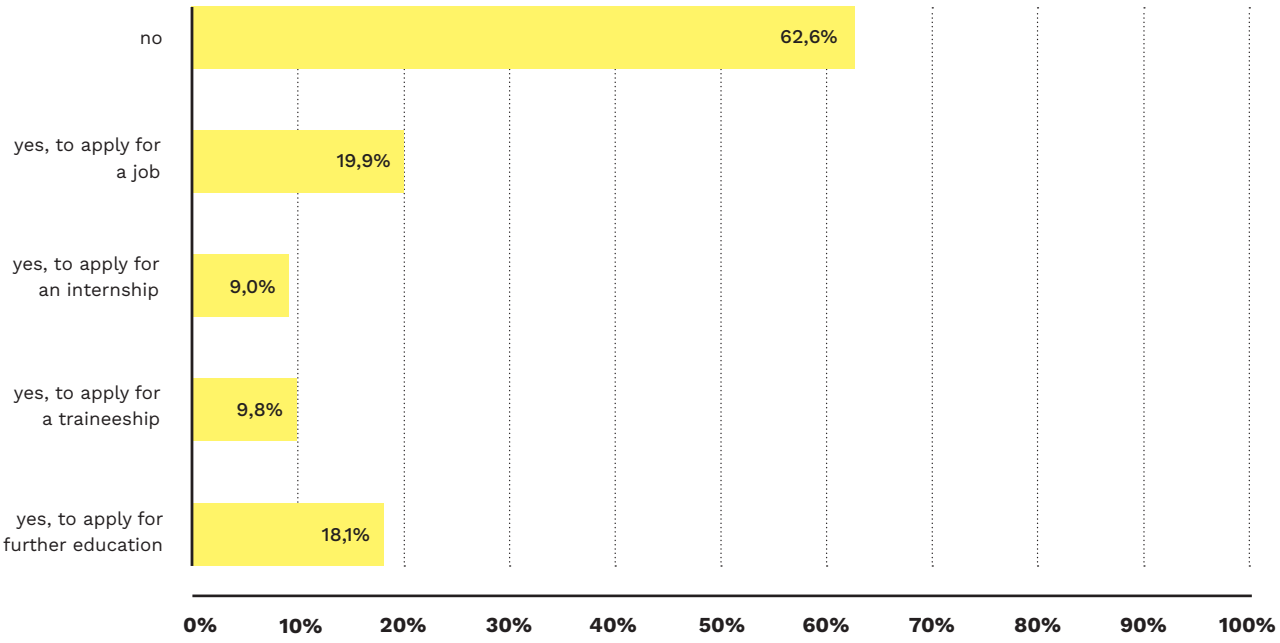
The European Youth Programmes and the Council of Europe play a crucial role in promoting the recognition of local youth work. European strategies around youth work legitimise and emphasise its importance, with tools like Youthpass aiming to formalise qualifications. However, the effectiveness of Youthpass is questionable; monitoring data from RAY-MON/SOC indicates that over 60% of participants in YWM, TCA, and NET activities who received a Youthpass certificate have never used it.

Highly trained youth workers often face frustration due to the lack of recognition from local stakeholders and limited job opportunities.

FIGURE 6

Have you ever used a Youthpass certificate?

Youth Worker Mobility (YWM) activities in Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps, youthpass module, multiple choice, **n=6140**



As Merico et al. (2019) argue for the Italian case, the formal recognition of a profession without a national legal definition is ineffective:

> ***"This is particularly evident when focusing on the perception of the YouthPass [...]. The respondents generally recognise its positive contribution in terms of reflexivity and for the self-assessment of learning. Starting from this, almost contextually, it comes called into question the 'expendability' of the tool within the organisational context as well as in the national labour market, which is struggling to recognise its validity. [...] In general, the strategies adopted by the respondents encounter a very significant obstacle in the national legislative vacuum on NFE [Non-Formal Education] and the valorisation of the skills of youth workers."***

(Merico et al., 2019)

In countries with youth work architectures in need of development, the European training sector provides an opportunity to grant funding, provide quality standards and build capacity, create a community of practice, and introduce a shared understanding of youth work. However, lacking any foundation to build on, it is rather adopted in the logic of a fragmented field of work with organisations fending for themselves, which individually use the European training sector to apply patches to imminent problems such as high staff turnover and lack of funding. Thus, structural development is equally important to sustainably anchor (international) youth work on a local level, as a Hungarian trainer accurately sums up:

> *"The lack of recognition of youth work is the reason why we think in terms of projects and not in the long term. I think it is very typical in Hungary, and in the neighbouring countries, that there is a constant lack of resources, a lack of appreciation."*

(TRAINER, HUNGARIAN REPORT)

Recommendations to foster cohesion between the European training sector and national youth work

- **Support professional development with structural development**: The professional development of youth workers through European training has to be accompanied by the structural development of youth work practice on the national and local level.

- **Embed the training sector in the Bonn Process:** The training sector should be systematically embedded into the Bonn process.

- **Strengthen connections between youth work sectors:** Strengthen connections between local, national, and European youth work sectors by:

  - Involving other stakeholders, such as local policy makers, in the identification and development of synergies;

  - Establishing structures for European youth work actors (NAs, umbrella NGOs, European youth organisations, etc.) to act as advocates and advisors on national youth policy;

  - Offering trainings for relevant target groups beyond the youth work community, such as political decision-makers or local authorities;

  - Advocating for the recognition of completed training courses and certificates in the labour market, especially for high-investment, long-term trainings.

- **Build and support a national community of practice:** Build and support a national community of practice by:

  - Organising meetings of the national community of practice in attractive formats;

  - Offering opportunities for peer-learning from best practices on a national level to address context-specific realities and encourage self-empowerment, such as through national tool fairs;

  - Providing more trainings at the national level to cover relevant topics and structural realities, while leveraging the networking potential of trainings to strengthen the national community;

  - Facilitating discussions on everyday challenges in youth work to promote collective engagement with shared struggles and counter the tendency to individualise structural issues or feel personally at fault or overwhelmed, particularly in countries with underdeveloped youth work infrastructures.

9 — THE QUALITY STANDARD PARADOX

9.1. A CALL FOR QUALITY STANDARDS IN YOUTH WORK AND YOUTH WORK TRAINING

One cross-cutting theme that was strongly emphasised at different points in our study is the lack of, and desire for, commonly agreed-upon, codified, and effective quality standards.

> *"We cannot discuss what is quality training if the quality is not defined at all"*

(TRAINER, BULGARIAN REPORT).

Such standards are highly valued for guiding training development by training providers and trainers, as well as supporting youth workers in their professional development journeys, particularly when choosing trainings and assessing training quality by training providers, trainers and participants.

The demand for rigorous quality standards in youth work training programmes is not a novel concept, but a recurring theme highlighted in numerous studies. Petkovic and Zentner (2017) underline the importance of such standards across diverse environments, stating:

> *"Independent of the structure of youth work in different countries under different regimes, approaches, and methods, it is obvious that quality youth work and certain standards should be reflected in youth work education and training."*

(Petkovic & Zentner, 2017)

This assertion emphasises the universal need for consistent and high-quality benchmarks in youth work training, irrespective of the geographic or political context.

Further elaborating on this theme, Fennes and Otten (2008) address the multifaceted concerns of various stakeholders involved in European non-formal education and training in the youth field. They state,

> *"Quality in European non-formal education and training in the youth field has been an ongoing concern for the stakeholders and actors involved: for participants/learners in training and non-formal education activities, who want a quality learning offer; for trainers, organizers, and organizations, who want recognition of the quality of their offer in the field of non-formal education and training; for sponsors and public authorities, who have an interest in an effective use of the funds and the support they provide in this field; for policymakers to ensure an effective achievement of the respective policy aims and objectives; for all actors in the non-formal education sector to gain recognition of the sector as a whole, in particular of the offers in this field and of those who offer it – trainers, organizers etc."*

(Fennes & Otten, 2008).

9.2 QUALITY STANDARDS VS. NON-FORMAL PRINCIPLES IN YOUTH WORK: A PARADOX?

While the introduction of standardisation processes aims to enhance the quality of youth work, these efforts sometimes encounter fundamental challenges due to the inherent nature of the sector. Youth work, deeply rooted in non-formal principles such as openness and sensitivity to diverse contexts, may find top-down standardisation at odds with its foundational ethos. Implementing these processes from the top down potentially risks undermining the essential bottom-up, participatory approach that characterises effective youth work.

Moreover, our research findings indicate a diverse landscape of influences on and opportunities for competence development in this field. Training programmes represent just one avenue among many for skill acquisition. The imposition of formalised quality standards, while possibly elevating the prestige of formal training sessions, could inadvertently marginalise other valuable forms of competence development. Particularly at risk are informal learning opportunities, such as on-the-job training, which might be devalued in the face of structured, formalised criteria.

The ongoing discourse on quality and codified standards in European youth work and youth work training, presented in scientific research and policy-level strategies, fully acknowledges this potential paradox. A brief review of key documents reveals how existing standards harmonise

foundational youth work principles with structured quality improvement:

- In 2015, an expert group commissioned by the European Commission to analyse youth work quality systems in EU member states emphasised a collaborative approach to developing joint quality frameworks and indicators. They advocated for engagement from all relevant stakeholders to ensure comprehensive perspectives and a unified understanding of youth work quality (Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, 2015).

- The European Commission's 2017 Handbook on Quality Development in Youth Work acknowledges the tension between structured quality development and the grassroots nature of youth work. The European Commission states that "working with indicators, quality tools and systems is crucial to the continuous development of youth work and has great potential to contribute to an enhanced credibility and recognition of the youth work sector as a whole." Likewise, they highlight flexibility as one of the core features of youth work: "Youth work ought not to become so institutionalised that it cannot respond to the changing needs and interests of young people". The handbook serves as a guide for organisations to establish their own quality systems, ensuring flexibility to meet the evolving needs and interests of young people (EC, 2017).

- Accreditation processes in Erasmus+ require adherence to quality standards. However, the European Commission specifies these as "minimum standards to follow," allowing organisations the freedom to pursue self-directed development while contributing to the programme's objectives (EC, 2020).

- The Council of Europe follows a similar approach in its framework, establishing 15 quality standards for activities organised by or in cooperation with its Youth Department. These standards, meant to provide a common baseline, take into account the varied cultural, social, and institutional contexts that shape quality perceptions (CoE, 2016).

- In their research project on "Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work", Fennes and Otten define generic standards for non-formal education in European youth work, stressing the need for context-specific adaptations. They outline standards that ensure activities are principled, need-based, well-planned, adequately resourced, and effectively monitored, while contributing to broader European policy goals in the youth field (Fennes & Otten, 2008).

This overview illustrates a careful balancing act between the institutionalisation of standards and maintaining the adaptive, participant-focused ethos central to youth work.

The analysed documents underscore the importance of a thoughtful and reflective application of professional standards and strategies. These standards should not be rigidly followed or treated as strict guidelines. Instead, it must be recognised that youth sector development takes place in a practical and dynamic environment, directly engaging with young people. A flexible approach to using strategic documents can support these processes, striking a balance between benefiting from structured standards and rules and the need to maintain structures that are responsive to evolving developments on a socio-political level and among young generations.

Recommendations for the development of quality standards for trainings within the European Youth Programmes

- **Implement flexible quality standards:** When considering the implementation of quality standards as a means to systemic quality management of the European training sector, seek a flexible approach that strikes a balance between benefiting from structured standards and rules and the need to maintain structures that are responsive to evolving developments on a socio-political level and among young generations.

- **Build on existing quality approaches:** Build upon existing approaches to quality development which acknowledge these complexities within youth work.

10 — CONCLUSION: TOWARDS STRONGER SUPPORT FOR YOUTH WORK TRAINING

This report has examined the landscape of training within the European Youth Programmes, drawing on data from youth workers, trainers, and training providers across Europe. The findings point to a dynamic, multifaceted training sector—rich in potential but also marked by structural challenges, evolving needs, and systemic gaps.
The insights presented below offer a synthesis of our core findings and aim to inform future developments in the field. These key points underline both the value of current training practices and areas where greater strategic coordination, investment, and reflection are needed.

1. EYP trainings as instruments for professional development

European Youth Programmes (EYP) training activities are recognised as crucial tools for professional development. These trainings provide youth workers with opportunities to develop both core and context-specific competencies, aligning with the European Training Strategy. Data from the Research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+ Youth in Action (RAY-MON) and Research-based analysis and monitoring of the European Solidarity Corps (RAY-SOC) surveys support this, showing that 96.4% of participants in Youth Worker Mobility (YWM), Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA), and Networking (NET) activities reported their participation already had an impact on their work. Participants highlighted how these trainings contributed significantly to their professional competence, making them feel more equipped to engage with youth work in diverse settings.

2. Thematic variety and matching demand

While there is general satisfaction with the variety of themes in the training programmes, the alignment between supply and demand varies by topic. According to the RAY-MON/-SOC data, a large percentage of participants expressed satisfaction with learning about themes such as youth empowerment, learner-centeredness, and peer learning. However, the data also indicates mismatches in demand and available training offers, particularly in specialised topics like sustainability and digital youth work, which are often underrepresented. Training providers also acknowledged an oversupply of certain topics, which can dilute participation in other critical areas.

3. Evolving training needs

The training needs of youth workers are constantly evolving due to socio-political changes and emerging global challenges. For instance, the need for mental health and well-being training has grown significantly due to the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, rising Euroscepticism has led to an increased demand for training that promotes a positive understanding of the EU, while political education and anti-discrimination training have become essential in response to global democratic erosion and the rise of misanthropic ideologies. Peace-building, cyberbullying, and digital youth work are other prominent emerging needs.

4. Concerns about training quality

Training providers, trainers, and participants are increasingly concerned about the quality of European trainings, particularly the shift towards entertainment-focused activities at the expense of deep learning. The focus of training sessions on providing high-visibility, entertaining, yet superficial trainings which prioritise immediate engagement over lasting competence development is traced back to NGOs having to increase quantity and attractiveness to secure sufficient funding in a precarious youth work environment, and National Agencies having to comply with quantitative controlling measures, such as high levels of satisfaction and high participant numbers.

5. Balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches

Training providers often find themselves navigating the tension between the top-down programmatic goals set by European Youth Programmes

and the bottom-up needs expressed by participants. Trainers play a pivotal role in mediating this tension, adapting the training objectives to meet real-time participant needs while maintaining the integrity of programme goals. The flexibility of trainers to modify content on the spot is crucial, and both trust and pedagogical freedom are key factors in ensuring effective training delivery. Providers acknowledged that allowing trainers this autonomy results in more participant-centred learning.

6. Professional development is personal development

Youth workers strongly identify with their roles, seeing professional development as a deeply personal process. Youth workers often feel that their engagement in non-formal learning and participation in training activities goes beyond professional skills—it fosters personal growth and contributes to their self-perception and sense of purpose. This connection between personal and professional development encourages higher motivation for attending these trainings and applying the lessons learned in their daily work. Furthermore, youth workers commonly express a high level of emotional engagement in their role.

7. A need for resources to facilitate strategic development

While there is a substantial amount of resources available for competence development activities, training providers—including national agencies—lack sufficient resources to guide the usage of these resources strategically. Volunteers and staff implementing competence development activities tend to be so occupied with the managerial aspects of their work that not enough time remains for strategic reflection and development. We recommend making resources available specifically for that purpose.

8. A systematic approach to competence development

Youth workers face two main challenges in navigating trainings. First, without structural support to assess training quality and adequacy for their professional needs, they have to employ self-directed, creative methods to identify appropriate activities. Second, trainings are seen as isolated opportunities, with no coherent educational path. Youth workers described piecing together their learning experiences like assembling a mosaic. The European Training Strategy (ETS) provides a structured, though underutilised, framework to professional development and needs to be strengthened in its capacity to guide cohesive competence development journeys.

9. Long-Term Training Activities: High threshold, high reward

In interviews, youth workers consistently expressed a strong appreciation for long-term training activities (LTTAs), viewing them as transformative and highly rewarding. Participants emphasised that these trainings fostered deeper professional and personal growth compared to shorter programmes. However, many acknowledge that high participation thresholds—such as balancing time commitments with the demands of regular work over an extended period of time—can present hurdles. Nevertheless, LTTAs offer a high reward for the investment they require, making them a crucial element in the professional development landscape of European youth work.

10. Dependency on national and local structures

The ability to transfer learning from EYP training heavily depends on national and local youth work structures. Youth workers from countries with robust local infrastructures reported greater ease in applying what they learned, while those from countries with youth work architectures in need of development often struggled to integrate their new knowledge. To fully capitalise on the benefits of EYP trainings, stronger national and local structures are needed. Therefore, we recommend fostering better alignment between training opportunities and the development of youth work structures across Europe, for example, by systematically integrating the training sector into the Bonn process.

11 — LITERATURE

(1) Bammer, D., Karsten, A., Pitschmann, A., Roth, C. L. (2019). RAY-CAP. Competence development and capacity building of youth workers and youth leaders. Research report. Vienna: Generation and Educational Science Institute. https://www.researchyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RAY-CAP_Final-Research-Report_20191108.pdf

(2) Bianchi, G., Pisiotis, U., Cabrera Giraldez, M. (2022). GreenComp. The European sustainability competence framework. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. http://dx.doi.org/10.2760/13286

(3) Chisholm, L. (2008). Das Lernkontinuum und Kompetenzorientierung: neue Schnittmengen zwischen der allgemeinen und der beruflichen Bildung. In: Gramlinger F., Schlögl, P., Stock, M. (ed.): Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik in Österreich. Oder: Wer „macht“ die berufliche Bildung in AT? Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik online. http://www.bwpat.de/ATspezial/chisholm_atspezial.pdf

(4) Corney, T., Marion, J., Baird, R., Welsh, S., Gorman, J. (2024). Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-Formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work. Child & Youth Services 45(3), 345-370. https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2023.2218081

(5) Council of Europe (CoE) (2015). Youth Work Portfolio. A Tool for the Assessment and Development of Youth Competence. Strasbourg: European Youth Centre. https://rm.coe.int/1680699d85

(6) Council of Europe (CoE) (2016). Quality Standards in education and training activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. https://rm.coe.int/1680703013

(7) European Commission (EC) (2017). Youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union: handbook for implementation. Luxembourg: European Commission Publications Office.

(8) European Commission (EC) (2020). Erasmus Accredication in the Field of Youth. Erasmus Youth Quality Standards. Brussels: European Union. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/calls/2020-erasmus-accreditation-in-the-field-of-youth

(9) European Youth Forum Working Group on Non-Formal Education, Pool of Trainers and Facilitators of the European Youth Forum (2013). Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education. A Framework for Youth Organisations. Manual. Brussels: European Youth Forum. https://learningforchange.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Quality-Assurance-in-Non-Formal-Education-EYF.pdf

(10) Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States (2015). Quality Youth Work. A common framework for the further development of youth work. Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf

(11) Fennes, H., Otten, H. (2008). Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work. https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3305/TrainingQualityandCompetenceStudy.pdf

(12) Hartje, J. A., Evans, W. P., Killian, E. S., Brown, R. (2008). Youth Worker Characteristics and Self-reported Competency as Predictors of Intent to Continue Working with Youth. Child & Youth Care Forum 37(1), 27-41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10566-007-9048-9

(13) Hofmann-van de Poll, F. (2023). The state of play of national processes within the Bonn Process. Survey report 2023. Bonn: JUGEND für Europa. https://www.bonn-process.net/downloads/publications/52/Bonn_Process_2023_State_of_Play_Survey_Report.pdf

(14) Horta Herranz, A., Karsten, A., Pitschmann, A., Schwenzer, F., Eick, J., Schwabe, K., Strecker, T., Pincus, T. (2024). RAY-MON Research Report 2021-2023: Effects and outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme. Transnational Analysis. Berlin: Youth Policy Labs.

(15) JUGEND für Europa (JfE) (2021). European Youth Work Agenda. Factsheet. Bonn. https://www.bonn-process.net/downloads/publications/48/210520%20EYWC2020_Factsheet_Agenda.pdf?version=3c9cd3b-9935085794fa835763af2f16b

(16) JUGEND für Europa (JfE), SALTO Training & Cooperation Resource Centre (SALTO T&C) (2014). European Training Strategy II. Amended version of competences for trainers working at international level with criteria and indicators. Bonn. https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3862/ETS-Competence-Model%20_Trainers_Amended_version.pdf

(17) JUGEND für Europa (JfE), SALTO Training & Cooperation Resource Centre (SALTO T&C) (2018). European Training Strategy. A competence model for trainers working at international level. Tools to get started. Bonn. https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3858/Booklet_Tools_to_Get_Started_Final.pdf

(18) JUGEND für Europa (JfE), SALTO Training & Cooperation Resource Centre (SALTO T&C) (2022). European Training Strategy for youth work. Bonn. https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4307/European_Training_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf

(19) JUGEND für Europa (JfE), SALTO Training & Cooperation Resource Centre (SALTO T&C) (2023). A Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally. Bonn. https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4385/ETS_Competence_Model_Youth_Workers_final_2023.pdf

(20) Kiilakoski, T. (2018). Diversity of practice architectures. On education and career paths for youth workers in Europe. An analytical report. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262400/Kiilakoski-final/525aef72-4871-1855-8fb2-72f2b7824d74

(21) Kiilakoski, T. (2020a). Diversity of practice architectures: education and career paths for youth workers. In Taru, M., Krzaklewska, E., Basarab, T. (ed.): Youth worker education in Europe: Policies, structures, practices. Youth Knowledge, 26. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 57-90.

(22) Kiilakoski, T. (2020b). Early career perspectives on the educational pathways of youth workers. In Taru, M., Krzaklewska, E., Basarab, T. (ed.): Youth worker education in Europe: Policies, structures, practices. Youth Knowledge, 26. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 149-167.

(23) Mayring, P. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution. Klagenfurt. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/39517

(24) Merico, M., Crescenzo, N., Quarta, S. (2019). Training, Recognition and Professionalisation of Youth Workers in Italy: the Contribution of Erasmus+/Youth in Action. Italian Journal of Sociology of Education 11(02), 115-130. https://doi.org/10.14658/pupj-ijse-2019-1-6

(25) Petkovic, S., Bárta, O. (2020). Ethical standards in youth work and how they support the development of education and career pathways of youth workers. In Taru, M., Krzaklewska, E., Basarab, T. (ed.): Youth worker education in Europe: Policies, structures, practices. Youth Knowledge, 26. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 115-136.

(26) Petkovic, S., Zentner, M. (2017). Education and training for the development of professional youth work practice and quality standards. In Schild, H., Connolly, N., Labadie, F., Vanhee, J., Williamson, H. (ed.): Thinking seriously about youth work: and how to prepare people to do it, Youth Knowledge, 20. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 271-284. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261623/Thinking+seriously+about+YW.pdf/6b620a71-f7be-cf80-7da9-17408a3960ba?t=1509707518000

(27) Potočnik, D., Taru, M. (2020). Youth workers' competences and learning in non-formal training. In Taru, M., Krzaklewska, E., Basarab, T. (ed.): Youth worker education in Europe: Policies, structures, practices. Youth Knowledge, 26. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 169-180.

(28) Przyborski, A., Wohlrab-Saar, M. (2014). Qualitative Sozialforschung: ein Arbeitsbuch. München: Oldenbourg Verlag.

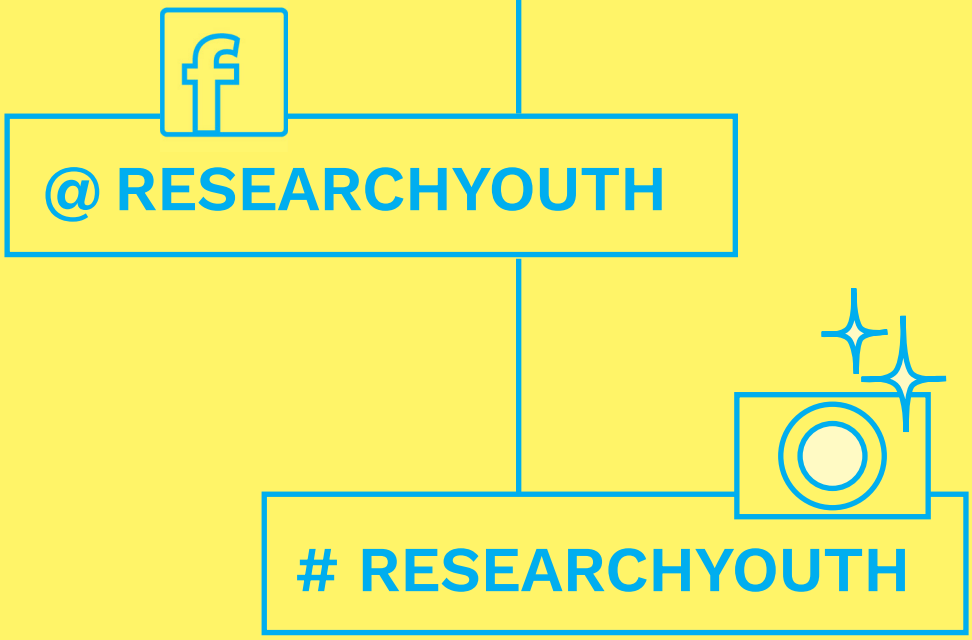
(29) Schizzerotto, A., Gasperoni, G. (2001). Study on the state of young people and youth policy in Europe. Milano: IARD. https://www.youthpolicy.org/uploads/documents/2001_Youth_Policy_Europe_Eng.pdf

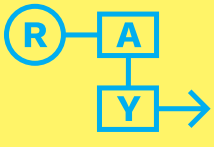
(30) Taru, M., Krzaklewska, E., Basarab, T. (2020). Youth worker education in Europe: Policies, structures, practices. Youth Knowledge, 26. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261623/Web-PREMS-051920-Education-of-youth-workers-in-Europe.pdf/484a2b36-7784-d953-bfc4-2a34c988e854?t=1592400488000

(31) Thompson, A., Shockley, C. (2013). Developing youth workers: Career ladders for sector stability. Child and Youth Services Review 35(3), 447-452. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.12.019

(32) Veigel, M. (2015). Formation of youth worker professionalism: problems in Estonia. Problems of Education in the 21st Century 68(1), 84-96. http://doi.org/10.33225/pec/15.68.84

Join the network!





Research-based
analysis of European
youth programmes