



BE YOUTH WORKER TODAY (BYWT)

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Barcelona Meeting, 25-27 November 2015 European Network COOPERATIVE WORKSHOPS CONCLUSIONS

BLOC 1. THE CREATION OF A NETWORK, WHY AND WHAT FOR

Which are young people's needs and how are we responding to them?

There is a big diversity of young people profiles which youth workers work with. Most of youth workers work with young people in vulnerable situations. Others work with young people at a global level.

Young people's needs:

- They want to be trendy
- Leaving the city, no place!? (but feeling strong conditions)
- Diversity
- No long term expectations
- Link of confidence
- Not part of the project, only elements
- Happiness
- Dignity
- Respect
- Powerless, confused
- Disappointed
- Excited about new experiences
- Different feelings
- Refugees
- Vulnerable
- Identity
- Like us!
- In group
- Specific things
- Foreign people

Youth workers use different strategies to work with young people. But there are some common ways to work to respond to young people's needs:

- Counselling
- Community work
- Policies
- Express yourself (who you are!)
- To free young people (from normative)
- Workshops, soft skills; training
- Life skills, competences



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- Leisure (vulnerable groups)
- Street work
- Information
- Empower
- Create confidence (get closer)
- Connect young people
- Integration
- Mobility
- Network

Basic elements to define a professional network and its purposes

- Why a network?
 - *The power vortex:*
 - Trust
 - Cooperation
 - Knowledge
 - Power for change
- How to work in a network?
 - *Bridges over trouble waters:*
 - Openness
 - Diverse
 - Meetings recharge energies
 - Sharing getting expertise
 - Sharing
 - Communication Tools
 - Resources
- How to create a network?
 - *The line of sustainability:*
 - Common goals
 - Structured institutionalisation
 - Members
 - Positive impact
 - Sustainability
- Which are the common goals:
 - Capability approach
 - Open our perspectives, open context to rethink the system
 - Improve practice
 - Focus on talent and potentialities, not in problems
 - Standardise the profession
 - Analyse trends on the map and research; share
 - Know and promote the convention of children; work based in human rights
 - Debate, built and define the professional identity of youth workers



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Each work in network creates positive synergies, so it's necessary to continue promoting networking. For the moment, an institutionalisation process of a youth workers network is not necessary, but we must use the existing resources and make more informal actions of network.

BLOC 2. SKILLS AND METHODOLOGIES. THE SOCIOEDUCATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth Workers competences

Youth workers count or should count on a list of basic/key competences:

Personal	Personal - Professional	Professional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-awareness - Learning from mistakes - Authenticity - Self-esteem. - Humour - Positive thinking - Motivation - Passion - Being present and available. - Self-awareness development program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allowing expressing ignorance - No judgement - Every person is a holy being - Soft skills - Curiosity - Empathy - Mind and heart openness - Critical thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creativity (theatre as a tool) - Proactivity - Believing in the other's abilities - Ability to accompany youth - Ability to empower youth - Networking - Knowledge of the rights and legal framework (youth, local, regional, national, European) - Pragmatism - Prevention - Project Management. - Communication - Orientation - Risk management - Theories and practices

Youth Workers training

Competences are developed or learned in different contexts:

Formal:



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- Specific profiles of youth workers have different training. The most common training are social work and social education, not equally shared by countries
- None of the present countries has a specific training, official or recognised, for youth workers
- We still have the challenge to reach a better recognition of youth work

Non-formal:

- There are different trainings that allow us to focus on some of the aspects of youth work
- Associations are a key learning context and so it is youth work in itself. Learning by doing, peer learning and learning from youngsters

Do we need a specific training, official and recognised one, only for youth professionals?

We are not sure. What we are sure about is what we expect a youth worker to have:

- Practical experience, either professionally or on a volunteer basis
- Basic training/education, does not need to be official, recognised or formal

Personal Experience	Formal Education	Non-Formal Education
/ Training to improvise / Learning from mistakes / Faith / Passion / Mandatory VS Freedom / Build yourself / Family / Life Experiences	/ School, High school, University / Ongoing / continuous / Institutions / NGOs and associations What's the importance we really give to formal education in youth work?	/ Community / Peers (colleagues) / Youngsters / Models or referents How does Non-Formal Education influence youth work?

BLOC 3. THE YOUTH ATTENTION SYSTEM. THE SENSE OF YOUTH WORK, WHY AND WHAT FOR

Doing

The variety and diversity of approaches, contexts and experiences generated a rich mix of points of view and deep debates amongst the different individuals. Anyway, some consensuses were reached through the common reflections:



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Youth workers can be seen from very different points of view: from information to guidance, from sharing advice to the advocacy for the different young opportunities. In any case, we can identify a stream of activities from the following fields: promotion, participation, early intervention, system information, voluntary engagement and empowering.

About empowering, it has to be said that it has a twofold perspective: on the one hand, empower young people, giving them skills and tools and, on the other hand, what is most important, to share the power with the youth. That means a fundamental change, changing the horizon of expectations and forcing the projects to go further beyond.

Even though each context is different, what is common is the not mainstreaming of young programmes and policies. Youth projects are generally (small) parts of vast systems of attention, not very well connected to the rest, being many times a kind of appendix of the whole. There is a clear conscience that this framing is determined by the ideology, power position and use of budget.

Finally, dialogue is a door to open the projects and to create new possibilities. In such a sense, what is wanted is the contact with new agents. Youth workers ought to be in the middle of the different dialogue directions, trying to find a balance amongst individual, groups, system and needs.

Needs / Opportunities

First assumption to assess the needs is that young people are not a problem, and consequently services don't have to be final solvers, responding to the situations via urgency treatments. That brings to the idea of changing the frame and the limits in which young people and services for young people are enclosed: culture, law, society, gender gap between generations, prejudices.

There is an obvious financial help needed to keep the different project and services, but also an extra motivation is necessary to being able to identify, understand and cope with the new situation, problems and opportunities that young people face. It is needed an active attitude of the professionals to be capable of address those issues.

Concerning potentialities, services ought to focus on developing new skills and competences. Anyway, an eye has to be kept on the "mantra" of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is not a universal "panacea" for social, working and educational problems, disguising at the end a particular ideological interest. A more adequate assertion would be the absolute right to make mistakes.

Must do (changes)

The proposed classification of dimensions was considered as adequate.



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Mind-set

It is critical to be proactive and stay positive. This is the way of keeping an open vision. An example would be these two phrases used by Dutch projects: “always win or learn” or “try to be the best you can be”.

Organisation

Accountability ought to be addressed not only for governments, or funding partners, but also for the young people: they have the right to know what are the youth workers are doing and why. Consequently, cooperation and respect are pillars of the daily work and long-term strategies.

Professional competences

Ironically, there is a lack of some competences associated to youth or youth languages as communication, networking or emotional intelligence. There is also a demand for better budgeting skills.

Inter-professional and inter-organisational development

A mathematics formula is a metaphor for the spirit of cooperation: $1 + 1 = 3$. In other words, “The power of Us Together”, or in other words, “Be Youth Worker Today”.

Why and what for

Answers are exchangeable: a better world can be both, a reason or, a finality. All the same with creating positive changes, empowering, living together, offering opportunities and guidance, promoting participation, addressing a better future or promoting better opportunities.

Youth work is an appeal to an ethos of respect, pathos of empathy, and logos of empiric knowledge.