MY CITY THROUGH TIME- RECOMMMENDATIONS

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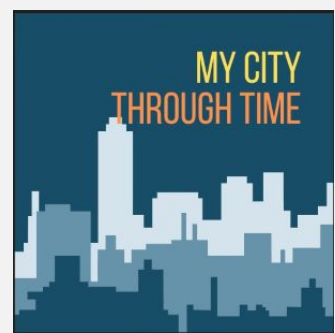
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INTRODUCTION

The publication with recommendations is the third result created in the scope of the project "My City through Time". The main aim of the project was to contribute to the recognition of youth work and its practices, by improving its methods and tools in the field of historic and civic education.

These recommendations contribute directly to this aim, by presenting the needs of the youth workers and youth and suggesting ways and methods how to improve youth work through historic civic education. In the last chapter of this publication, the partners included recommendations for local, national, and European policymakers, created with the same aim - to improve youth work and historic - civic education in their countries and Europe. They are concrete recommendations on further actions that can be implemented by other youth workers and policymakers on all levels, in order to improve youth work and specifically historic and civic education in partner countries and Europe.

The recommendations included in this publication, results are of the series of workshops and discussions conducted on the training for youth workers in Barcelona (March 2024) and on the final conference in Thessaloniki (May 2024). In these activities, the participants, youth workers, and experts in the field share their needs, thoughts, and opinions with the partners, who then compile them in the results you see in the following chapters. Finally, the partners also added their needs and opinions that were not mentioned by the participants.

The partners on the project, as well as the participants in the activities, are from various fields and deal with different topics and use different working methods. From these facts came out that their needs are also different. These variations are visible in the document, as well as the different contexts they are coming from.

The partners hope that these recommendations will be useful to other youth workers and organizations working on historic and civic education in improving their work, but also in advocating for their needs and improvement of youth work in their countries. Furthermore, the partners hope that the recommendations will be a useful tool in advocating to the policymakers for the needs of youth workers and the improvement of historic civic education.

Definitions and key terms:

1. **Youth workers** - the primary role of youth workers is to facilitate young people's learning, and to motivate and support them in becoming autonomous, active, and responsible individuals and citizens. In doing this, youth workers need to display leadership, commitment, creativity, and enthusiasm. Youth workers are often facilitators of young people's development, acting as role models for them. They are also seen as bridge builders to other social or public services for young people and the community. (COE definitions, Youth Work Essentials)

2. **Policymakers** - the partners consider policymakers in the broadest definition possible, including all the people responsible for making rules, laws, and decisions, and all of those in the position to change the position of youth workers and answer to their needs.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK AND HAVE A STRONGER IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE?

1.1 Recognition of the profession of youth workers

In some European countries, youth work is recognized as a profession and there are official programs at universities where youth workers can complete a formal education. However, in the majority of the countries of the European Union, youth work is not a recognized profession and that is often an obstacle - or can even be a problem - for the people and organizations active in the youth field. The lack of formal recognition makes it unclear how to define youth work as a profession, makes the position of youth workers unsafe, and makes their knowledge variable. Furthermore, in some countries, it is an obstacle and limits their access to schools and other educational institutions, and makes them dependent on motivated professors and other educators who understand why cooperation with organizations doing youth work is important for their students.

Recognizing youth work as a profession in all the European Union countries or even further, in Europe, is an important goal that contributes to making the position of youth workers safer and clearer to other individuals and institutions active in the field of education. This recognition will motivate universities to open courses to educate youth workers, which will then give them proper education in content, methodology, and other skills and competencies needed to improve their job and will provide a similar level of knowledge and skills. Education and recognition of youth workers will open more opportunities for collaboration with the educational system in their country and abroad, and will finally contribute to the improvement of education on local, national, and European levels.

The partners expect policymakers on the local, national, and European levels to get to know more about the impact and importance of non-formal education and youth work, organize regular meetings with the organizations active in the field to hear their needs, visit their activities and see the results and impact in practice. In this way, policymakers will get information and knowledge about youth work and its importance for the communities and young people and will be able to advocate for the recognition of their profession on national and European levels.

1.2 Unionise - organize youth workers to improve working conditions and rights

For youth workers, recognized as professionals or not, it is important to create unions, which will advocate for the recognition of the profession, and for their rights and working conditions. Having unions will increase the visibility of the youth workers and make their voices and needs heard on various levels, including local, national, and European, and will have more impact than each organization advocating for themselves.

The partners expect their national policymakers and other relevant national and European stakeholders to support youth workers' unions and to organize regular meetings with them to work together on the improvement of the rights and the working conditions of the youth workers

1.3 Work stability and decent pay

Youth workers often work in precarious conditions and mostly depend on project financing, which makes their position unstable. In these conditions, it is difficult for youth workers to plan their future. Precarious work conditions put youth workers under a lot of stress, which influences their work performance, creates dissatisfaction and consequently reduces mental and physical health. Stabile work conditions will ensure that their basic needs are satisfied and that they don't have to stress for their economic stability and future. Consequently, they will be more motivated to work and for professional development, which will reflect on the young people they are working with, in their local communities, and society.

The partners expect from their national policymakers the recognition of the profession of youth workers, which will define their working conditions and secure decent salaries for youth workers. Additionally, they expect more financial support for the organizations and individuals active in youth work, which will ensure stability and satisfying conditions for their work.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK AND HAVE A STRONGER IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE?

1.4 Stability of the programmes

Many youth workers depend on projects that have a limited duration and are not sure they will keep their position after those projects end. The job instability also limits them in implementing long-term programs for young people, which need more time to be piloted, evaluated, adapted, and implemented regularly. Once created, long-term youth work programs can be offered to schools and other institutions to be implemented regularly as a part of their activities and can contribute to the improvement of the educational systems. If there is no financing for these activities and other support for these activities however, many programs are not sustainable, as youth workers, in order to support themselves, have to start working on other, different projects.

That's why the policymakers should fund more stable and long-lasting programs for the youth workers and help them establish contact and entrance to schools and other educational institutions.

1.5 Support for mental health

Because of the insecurity of working conditions, youth workers are often working on many projects and activities at the same time. Furthermore, as motivated people, aware of the problems and needs of young people and of the community they work with, they often work on things they are not paid for or not adequately paid for and tend to overwork themselves. For all these reasons, together with working on sensitive and difficult topics and issues, youth workers are prone to mental health issues and burnout.

The partners expect their local and national policymakers to provide paid mental health support and confidential counseling for all the youth workers who need it. Mental health support and therapy can be included in their health insurance, which will then be financed by the state, and free for the youth workers in need. Policymakers can also organize training and education for youth workers, on which professionals in these issues will educate them on how to establish better work-private life balance, stress relief techniques, prevent burnout, etc.

1.6 Connection between formal and non-formal education

Youth workers also need better connections and easier access to schools and the formal education system. This connection and collaboration will be beneficial for both sides and the most for the young people who will participate in this kind of education. In addition, youth workers need their national policymakers to relax measures and speed up the process of approving their content to be able to access schools and to promote collaboration between formal and non-formal education and include it in their policies and curricula. Also, local and national policymakers can organize training, seminars, and other similar activities which will be the opportunity for teachers, youth workers, and other educators to meet, exchange knowledge and experience, and establish collaboration.

In this way, the youth workers want their policymakers to facilitate contact between the organizations active in youth work and the schools, and to promote programs and activities created and organized by the youth working organizations to the formal educational institutions.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK THROUGH HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION?

2.1 Educate youth workers on different topics, methods, and skills

As in the majority of European countries youth work is not a profession, there is no official education for youth workers. That's why the level of knowledge, competencies, and skills needed, might vary and it is not standardized. That's why youth workers should be provided with training on the contents they are dealing with, but even more on methods, skills, and competencies needed to handle groups, risk prevention, mediation, etc. Furthermore, youth workers should always learn, create, and implement new working methods that will make their activities better, more interesting, engaging, and relevant for the young people they are working with. In this way, they will ensure a stronger impact and attract more new youngsters to their activities.

These training and education can be organized by the local and national policymakers and other relevant stakeholders periodically, both locally and internationally, and can be facilitated by Experts from different fields (psychology, pedagogy, health...).

2.2 Invite time-witnesses and other relevant speakers

Meetings with time witnesses, who can share their stories and experiences of past events with young people, have proven to be a really effective way to raise their motivation, and develop a better understanding and emotional connection with the person and the events they are talking about. Because of this, the partners recommend to other youth workers active in the field to include as many meetings with time witnesses and other speakers in their activities. If witnesses are not available or cannot be reached for any reason, the video or audio recording, podcast or any similar way of passing the story to young people can be used.

2.3 Using various methods, including creative and artistic methods

Using various methods will make young people more engaged and motivated to participate. Furthermore, youth workers should be aware of the different strengths and interests of young people and the differences in the ways they learn and express themselves. Because of that, it is recommended to give youth several options, including creative, artistic, and more conventional methods, which will make them comfortable to express themselves in the way they feel is the best for them. Encourage young people by including creative and expressive items that they find interesting, giving them some autonomy and choice, and fostering sociability through group projects and peer interaction. Give them a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment and solicit their candid opinions to empower them.

2.4 Include multi perspectivity

For successful learning and a better understanding of historical events, it is important to give young people different perspectives and sources on the same event and give them the opportunity to make their own perspectives and conclusions on them. With this, the youth workers also support young people in developing their critical thinking.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK THROUGH HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION?

2.5 Involve youth in research of the topics

Youth workers should support young people to conduct their own research on the given or selected historical topics. In this way, youth will get better insight into historical topics and will understand it much better than if they just listen or read about them. This also means that they can be involved in a group process of research, with which they will have to collaborate with others and further develop their communication and collaboration skills.

2.6 Organize study trips, excursions, etc., and get young people in contact with the cities, heritage, memorials

For historic and civic education it is very important to take young people to different places, which they can explore and really get in direct contact with places they were learning about. That contact will make the learning process much more successful and impactful for youth, especially if it is a place that is familiar to them because they can connect emotionally with the location. During these visits, it is important to give them time and space to explore the location and also to motivate young people to approach these places critically.

2.7 Develop more materials and tools for youth workers active in the field of historical and civic education and exchange them between organizations

For successful work, youth workers always need more materials, sources, and tools that they can use. So, they should be supported in always developing some new ones, which will make their activities more interesting and motivating for youth, it is important to share good materials and tools with other individuals and organizations dealing with the same or similar topics and be more proactive in this exchange and dissemination.

METHODS THAT CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK AND HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION

General hints and tips for youth workers

- Someone working with young people should not be neutral on socio-political issues. Neoliberalism is the most powerful ideology and the one most easily caught in its traps. It is the task of youth workers to highlight these traps, draw attention to power relations in society, and strive for justice. The youth worker should be qualified, aware of different global discourses, and think about local implementation.

- It is essential for youth workers to attentively listen and thoughtfully respond to participants' perspectives. By guiding conversations with supplementary questions, they can delve deeper into themes and key points, aligning the dialogue with young individuals' interests. Ensure respect and a horizontal, collective, participatory approach between youth educators and young people.

- Encourage young people to do their research, read more, and be curious. Provide space for young people to share their opinions and stories in a safe environment, if they are reluctant to speak in in group, adopt alternative and creative methods to overcome/segway these barriers.

- Encourage actions that have an impact on the community, whether creative or political. Turn theoretical discussions into practical actions, teaching young people they can make a difference. Mix various methods to engage young people. Promote activities based on cooperation rather than competition.

Recommended methods in the context of historic civic education

1. **Start from the knowledge and experiences of participants.**
   In historic civic education, it's good to start from the knowledge and experiences of participants, as this grounds learning in familiar contexts and personal connections. By valuing what participants already know and have experienced, youth workers can build more relatable and engaging content that fosters deeper understanding and meaningful connections to historical content.

2. **Use discussions, different sources, and perspectives.**
   Discussions utilizing diverse sources and perspectives are vital in historic civic education. These conversations help participants appreciate the multifaceted nature of history, encouraging them to consider various viewpoints and develop a more nuanced understanding of historical events and their implications. Challenge participants to examine their perspectives in light of historical evidence and diverse viewpoints.

3. **Deconstruct texts and produce counter-texts and actions**
   Deconstructing texts and producing counter-texts and actions empower participants to critically analyze historical narratives. This method allows learners to challenge dominant perspectives, uncover hidden voices, and actively engage in creating alternative interpretations and narratives that reflect a more inclusive history.

METHODS THAT CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK AND HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION

4. Connect material objects with events and ideas

Connecting material objects with events and ideas bridges the tangible and the abstract in historic civic education. Objects serve as physical evidence of the past, making historical events and concepts more concrete and relatable, thereby enhancing participants' comprehension and retention. Using material culture to visualize complex systems in historic civic education helps participants grasp intricate historical processes and relationships. Artifacts, architecture, and other cultural objects serve as tangible representations of abstract concepts, making complex historical systems more accessible and comprehensible.

5. Use study visits and field exploration (museums, galleries, theatre plays, monuments, specific places)

Visits and field explorations, such as museums, galleries, theatre plays, monuments, and specific places, bring history to life. These experiences allow participants to immerse themselves in historical environments, providing a deeper, sensory engagement with the past and fostering a more vivid and lasting understanding of historical events and contexts.

6. Organize city rallies and role plays

Organizing city rallies and role plays transforms learning into an active, participatory experience. These methods encourage participants to step into historical roles and scenarios, fostering a deeper understanding of historical figures and events while promoting a dynamic and collaborative learning environment.

METHODS THAT CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK AND HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION

7. Use Theatre of the Oppressed methods

Theatre of the Oppressed methods, including image theatre, newspaper theatre, forum theatre, and legislative theatre, are powerful tools in historic civic education. They engage participants in interactive, reflective processes that challenge societal norms, explore historical and contemporary issues, and inspire transformative action and social justice.

8. Use trivia and fun facts to arouse interest and aid memory

Using trivia and fun facts in historic civic education can arouse interest and aid memory by making learning more enjoyable and accessible. These engaging snippets of information can capture participants' curiosity, making historical content more memorable and helping to reinforce key concepts entertainingly.

9. Discuss utopias and good practices

Discussing utopias and good practices in historic civic education encourages participants to envision ideal societies and consider practical steps toward achieving them. These discussions foster critical thinking about historical progress, societal values, and the potential for positive change, inspiring participants to engage actively in shaping their communities.

10. Identify and address blocks to achieving these utopias

Identifying and addressing blocks to achieving utopias in historic civic education helps participants understand the challenges and obstacles to societal improvement. By examining historical and contemporary barriers, learners can develop strategies for overcoming these impediments, fostering an action-oriented mindset.

METHODS THAT CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK AND HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION

11. **Use reenactment to introduce topics playfully.**

Using reenactment to introduce topics playfully in historic civic education engages participants in a fun and interactive way. This method brings historical scenarios to life, encouraging active participation and creative exploration of historical events and figures, making learning both enjoyable and memorable.

12. **Discuss how different kinship groups have varied perspectives on the same history.**

Discussing how different kinship groups have varied perspectives on the same history highlights the diverse ways in which historical events are experienced and remembered. This method fosters empathy and understanding by exposing participants to multiple narratives, encouraging a more inclusive and comprehensive view of history.

13. **Teach media literacy and the importance of questioning sources.**

Teaching media literacy and the importance of questioning sources equips participants with critical skills to navigate and analyze information. This method emphasizes the evaluation of credibility, bias, and context, fostering informed and discerning readers of historical and contemporary media.

14. **Highlight the changing meanings of texts and objects over time.**

Highlighting the changing meanings of texts and objects over time in historic civic education underscores the fluidity of historical interpretation. This approach encourages participants to consider how historical contexts, cultural shifts, and evolving values influence the way we understand and ascribe meaning to historical artifacts and documents.

15. **Use curatorial 'neighborhoods' to create new meanings by juxtaposing objects.**

Using curatorial 'neighborhoods' to create new meanings by juxtaposing objects in historic civic education encourages innovative thinking and interpretation. By placing objects in new contexts, participants can explore unexpected connections and narratives, enriching their understanding of history and its complexities.

NEEDS OF YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORIC CIVIC EDUCATION

4.1. Feeling empowered to choose which topics to deal with

As in all other educational activities and topics, when dealing with historical and civic education, youth need to be empowered to choose the topics and methods they are interested in. To provide this opportunity, youth workers should offer various activities and use different methods, which will then attract young people to participate. Furthermore, youth workers can include young people in creating their programs and activities, which will make them even more involved and give them a feeling of ownership.

4.2. To be listened to

Young people need to be listened to and for their opinions to be understood and appreciated by the youth workers and other adults they are in contact with. That is crucial for their empowerment and motivation to become active citizens. Listening to young people is also important for others because it helps in exchanging perspectives and getting insights and ideas.

4.3. Mapping of youth needs

Youth workers should always be aware of the needs of the young people they are working with and continuously map these needs, to be able to adapt their work, activities, programs, and materials to the map needs. That will secure the impact on youth and will keep them motivated and empowered. The partners recommend a strong networking approach with different actors in the youth field: regular meetings with social workers, street workers, teachers, youth clubs, etc. that can help youth workers to identify needs and missing programs. Furthermore, to be successful in mapping the needs of young people, long-term relationships and working with them are necessary to collect first-hand information.

4.4. Organize and promote international and intercultural activities - and interdisciplinary to get different perspectives

For strengthening the development of the skills and competencies of young people and getting different perspectives, it is important to include them in as many international and intercultural activities as possible. That will allow them to share perspectives with their peers, to meet people from different cultures and other contexts, and will be the opportunity to develop their communication and presentation skills, specifically in English and other foreign languages, as well as to develop their intercultural competencies. These experiences will make young people more open to other perspectives, cultures, and people, more inclusive, and more active citizens.

4.5. Use of community-based approach in education

Community-based approach is extremely important in historic and civic education, but also in other types of education. It takes young people outside of classrooms or some open spaces and provides them with real-world experiences, which makes these educational activities more relevant and engaging for them. Being involved in meaningful activities that are relevant to the community they live in will be the opportunity for young people to try in practice the theoretical knowledge they acquired previously. Community-based approach will make young people work in teams, to collaborate with each other and will support the development of their critical thinking, and working on real issues will increase their motivation for further learning and taking part in similar activities and projects done by NGOs. With this approach, young people will also develop a stronger sense of belonging to the community and will be more motivated to contribute to it in the future.

NEEDS OF YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORIC CIVIC EDUCATION

4.6 Connect the content with the reality of today and local history

To secure the impact and relevance of the activities for young people, youth workers should connect the topics and content from the field of historic and civic education to today and the lives of young people. Only with these connections, young people will understand why historical topics are relevant to them and how these issues influence their lives and the society they live in. With involving more topics from local history - history of their cities, neighborhoods, schools, etc. it is much easier for young people to emotionally connect with this history and in this way, youth workers ensure a stronger impact and better understanding of the complex topics.

Being involved in activities with the topics and methods from historic and civic education, young people will improve their practical use of the theoretical knowledge they get previously and will be more aware of its relevance for their lives, and for the society and community they live in.

4.7 Include common history, especially explore bordering countries

While it is important to include the local history of young people, it is not good to limit all the activities only on it. For young people, it is equally important to include the common and shared history of Europe and also of the neighboring and bordering countries. It is crucial for their knowledge and understanding to realize that history is often shared and that many issues and problems are common. That will help them to get out of their national narratives, and get a more balanced and broader picture of the shared elements and history among various countries.

4.8 Create a safe space to express opinions and ideas

Youth workers should create a safe space in their activities with young people to be able to express their opinions and ideas without being judged. That is the crucial precondition for youth to be open, motivated to participate, and express themselves. The partners recommend that youth workers be trained around the practices of "Safer space" and "braver space", in order to ensure the well-being of their target groups.

4.9 Develop media literacy and critical thinking

For the life of young people, it is very important to develop their critical thinking and media literacy skills. Content and methods used in historic and civic education can be very good for achieving these goals, but only if used properly. Youth workers always need to adapt their activities to these aims and be sure that the materials and methods they are using are supporting young people in developing them.

4.10 Intergenerational exchange

Intergenerational exchange, between different generations of young people but also among youth and older people is very important for historic-civic education. With this exchange, both sides will get new perspectives, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn from each other. Furthermore, older people can be used as time-witnesses and can share their experiences, stories, and information about past events with younger generations, which will improve their knowledge and understanding of historical events. Intergenerational exchange will contribute to developing empathy and respect across the generations. Older people can also become role models and even mentors to the younger generations, sharing their experiences and knowledge. Cooperations of youth workers' organizations with pension houses and senior clubs can be a possibility to foster this exchange.

HOW TO EMPOWER YOUTH THROUGH HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION?

5.1 Provide agency and show youth that they can change the present

It is important that youth workers show the youth that they don't just have to follow the structure that is already presented, but that they have the power to change whatever they think is needed. Young people need to realize that different structures are possible and that our society and reality are not set in stone. This can be done by promoting the feeling that individual ideas matter, by listening to young people's ideas, opinions, and suggestions and showing respect for them.

To be able to understand the present and start to be active in asking for change, young people need help in understanding the context of history in which they live. Here, the methods of historic civic education are important because they can make youth understand the structures of society in the past and today and support the development of their knowledge and critical thinking skills. Getting new knowledge and understanding and developing these skills is important because it helps youth to make critical-minded and informed decisions in their life. In that way, they can also better understand that they can have an influence on the society in which they live. Today, when we live in times of pandemic, wars, climate changes, etc., it is crucial for young people's future to be equipped with skills and tools to deal with their present and all the challenges that are around them. To get young people interested and motivated to be active and start the changes, youth workers need to use methods in which direct impact and tangible results can be observed. Also, it is important to connect the content with young people's lives, and problems that are relevant to them and integrate elements of their local context and biographical experiences, which can help them to better connect with the content and topics.

5.2 Provide youth with examples of actors that brought about social change in the past

For young people, it is important to present them with examples of changemakers in history that they can identify with and get inspired by. Here, it is important to include individuals from different groups, like women, and representatives of the ethnic, cultural, religious, LGBTQI, and other underrepresented groups, because it is easier for young people to identify with somebody from their own group. To achieve that, youth should get in contact with time witnesses, researchers, and activists to connect them to the issues and make them more real. Youth workers need to give them examples of resistance and positive empowerment which contributed to the improvement of the societies and in starting the change. It is important to give young people examples of daily-based and common activities that have positive impacts, to change the perception that only big and heroic acts can bring change.

HOW TO EMPOWER YOUTH THROUGH HISTORIC AND CIVIC EDUCATION?

5.3 Multicultural awareness: Learn about people with different backgrounds and provide cultural exchange

To better understand present-day societies and to be more open-minded and inclusive, youth workers should organize activities in which they bring different communities together and embrace a community-based approach. Furthermore, it is important for young people to create opportunities for experience-based learning seeing through different lenses and understanding different perspectives. To support multicultural learning and exchange, organizing youth exchanges, field trips, and excursions, and providing young people with the opportunity to get in touch with their peers from different countries, cultures, religions, etc. is crucial.

5.4 Participation: Motivate youth to take part in public discourse

To motivate youth to participate in public discourse and be proactive, youth workers should empower them to ask questions and promote active listening to others but also to express disagreement. Young people should be educated in dialogue, non-violent communication, and listening, so they will be able to have successful communication and not impose their own knowledge and opinions on others. To achieve this, youth workers should promote the participation of young people in debates, dialogues, and other activities that teach them how to better communicate and support the development of critical thinking and the creation of different points of view. Methods from historic-civic education can be useful in developing these skills and competences, as well as to better understand the past to be able to decide on the positions they want to take in society. Also, to achieve this goal, young people should access safe spaces to express themselves, support them in gaining confidence in creating opinions, stances, and decisions, and empower them to raise their voices when faced with injustice. Methods that involve different senses, artistic, creative, and embodied activities (simulations, role plays, etc) can be really useful in this sense, too.

5.5 Self-Organized Learning: Provide spaces for horizontal learning and mutual empowerment

To motivate young people to exchange and learn from each other, not just from the older and more experienced people, youth workers should Include them in interactive activities to support peer-to-peer learning. In this sense, it is important to promote learning by doing project-based learning, research, and engaging young people in exploring and learning in a more interesting and impactful way.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED FROM POLICYMAKERS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK?

A: FROM LOCAL POLICYMAKERS

1. Cooperation between youth workers and policymakers in the form of dialogue

In order to improve their work and to be more successful, youth workers want to establish a dialogue with the relevant local policymakers, so they can communicate their needs directly. With such cooperation, policymakers will be more aware of the needs of the youth sector and will be able to adapt their calls and policies to them. The partners suggest establishing a regular discursive / networking format for policymakers to offer to youth workers (stakeholders sessions twice a year, etc.). This could include stakeholder sessions or round tables every six months, aimed at reaching concrete agreements and fostering collaboration.
Educational programs need continuity to be truly effective. This continuity is only possible with a stable foundation, including a defined area of work, a reliable budget, and cooperative partners or institutions.

2. Financial support

To have more impact on the youth in their local communities, youth workers need more financial support from their local policymakers. Specifically, they need more stable and, whenever possible, institutional support, so they can implement their programs fully, evaluate them, and adapt them following the feedback. In this way, the youth workers will have more chances for trial and error methods, and even if they fail to achieve their goals they will have assurance that they will be paid. To achieve this, the partners suggest to the policymakers on all levels to open more often calls and provide organizations dealing with youth work with more opportunities for stable and institutional financing. The calls should be made according to the identification of the needs of youth workers and their organizations made beforehand.

3. Support in the form of spaces to work and infrastructure

To be able to work more efficiently, youth workers need appropriate offices, in city-owned spaces with rent which is regulated for NGOs, cultural organizations, etc. As they often lack institutional support, the youth workers' organizations often struggle with the costs of rent, and bills, and also it is difficult for them to secure basic infrastructure needed for their work. The partners suggest to local and national policymakers to make adequate spaces available for the youth workers organizations, and to adapt the regulations of the renting of the space specifically for NGOs. Also, the organizations need support in buying equipment, materials, etc, for these offices, which can also be provided by the policymakers.

4. Visibility and dissemination through official channels of policymakers

Some youth work organizations are struggling with reaching young people and other target groups for their activities. Also, they are producing valuable results, but not many people and organizations outside of their networks are aware of them. If the local policymakers are willing to share information about the organization's activities and results on their official communication channels, their reach will be much broader and their impact on young people will also increase. In addition, their activities would gain more official recognition.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED FROM POLICYMAKERS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK?

5. Help youth workers to claim a regular spot in schools as part of educational programs
Local policymakers are the founders of the schools in their local communities and they have direct contact with the educational system. Youth workers often struggle with access to schools, especially in countries where youth workers are not recognized as a profession. In these cases, they often depend on motivated teachers to invite them to schools or on Ministries and other state institutions to approve their content. Because of these obstacles, youth workers are facing, they need their local policymakers to support them in accessing schools and having a more direct impact even on formal education.

6. Finance field trips for school students and youth
To enhance historical civic education, local decision-makers might consider backing youth workers and allocating funds for excursions to nearby sites of remembrance and other historically significant locations. Through these visits, young people could cultivate a more profound comprehension and emotional attachment to the subjects, thus fostering improved retention.

7. Encouraging interactive ways of teaching
Local policymakers can influence and encourage schools and formal educators to introduce more non-formal methods in their work and make their classes more interactive, and attractive for the students. Alternatively, offer additional courses or introductory programs where they can learn more about non-formal education strategies. These courses should be considered part of their working time or offered free of charge. Given that teachers are already overwhelmed with demands and expectations, integrating non-formal methods should not be presented as an additional requirement.

8. Listen to professionals and experts in the field
When making their policies, and decisions and implementing new measures in the field of education and youth, local politicians can approach practitioners in these fields and ask for their opinions, expertise, and needs, to help them make more informed and need-based decisions.

When crafting policies and implementing new measures in the context of education and youth, local politicians can adopt a consultative approach by actively engaging with practitioners in these fields. By seeking out their opinions, expertise, and insights, policymakers can make more informed and needs-based decisions that are responsive to the realities and challenges faced by educators, youth workers, and other stakeholders in the field of youth work.

One concrete methodology for soliciting the mentioned input is through stakeholder consultations, where policymakers convene meetings, focus groups, or advisory committees consisting of representatives from schools, youth organizations, community centers, and relevant professional associations.
Additionally, policymakers can use surveys, questionnaires, and interviews to gather feedback from a broader range of stakeholders (teachers, youth workers, parents, and students themselves). These data collection methods enable practitioners to express their opinions and preferences anonymously, fostering open and more direct communication.
Indicators for measuring the achievement of policies and initiatives in education and youth development encompass various areas, such as evaluating student engagement and satisfaction, educational performance, teacher and practitioner satisfaction, the engagement of the communities, etc. These could be assessed/measured via surveys, feedback sessions, and similar formats.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED FROM POLICYMAKERS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK?

B: FROM NATIONAL POLICYMAKERS

1. Recognition of historical facts

Youth workers who use historic civic methods in their work, expect their national policymakers to recognize historically and juridically established facts they work with and not to deny and distort them. Also, national policymakers should be open to inclusiveness and multiperspectivity and not intervene in the content taught by the workers.

2. Directives and support for educational materials

National policymakers draft directives for educational materials, disseminating them to all educators, including youth workers. This approach facilitates the creation of materials that align with ministry guidelines, securing approval processes and ensuring accessibility in schools. However, youth workers specializing in historic civic educational methods possess special expertise in this domain and understand the needs of young people, which enables them to develop valuable educational resources. In such instances, policymakers should prioritize making these materials accessible to teachers and other educators.

3. Stable funding - institutional support

Many youth work organizations depend on project financing only, which is not stable and doesn't allow them to develop longer-term programs they want to work on and which they find important. So they expect their national policymakers to provide them with more opportunities for applying for institutional support and overall to invest more funds in this form of support. This will enable youth workers to be more effective in their roles by easing the constraints of individual project calls and their specific requirements, as well as reducing bureaucratic burdens.

4. Support projects that are continuations of past ones

Youth workers need their national policymakers to support the projects that proved to be successful and have an impact on young people. With this support, these projects can be continued, improved after the evaluation, and turned into programs that will be implemented on a broader, maybe national or even European level.

5. Problem with centralization of funds - regulation of division of funds between local actors

Centralization of funds in educational systems can present challenges, particularly regarding the regulation and allocation of resources towards local actors. When funds are concentrated at the national level, decisions regarding their distribution often become subject to bureaucratic processes and centralized decision-making structures. By decentralizing funding mechanisms and promoting greater local autonomy, policymakers can foster innovation, responsiveness, and equality when it comes to educational resource allocation, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education and youth work initiatives. For a successful education program, it is crucial not only to explore new topics with each project but also to sustain and deepen ongoing discussions. It is essential to engage with the challenges of certain research topics over longer periods, which can only be achieved with more stable funding.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED FROM POLICYMAKERS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK?

6. Advocate for people working in the NGO sector for working rights

Policymakers should stand up for the labor rights of people in the NGO sector. First, ensure that NGO workers have access to fair wages and benefits. Just like workers in other sectors, they should receive fair compensation for their work. This includes offering health insurance, retirement plans, and paid leave to provide financial security and promote their well-being.

Also, create policies that ensure safe and healthy working conditions for NGO workers. They often work in challenging environments and it is important to protect them from harm and provide them with the resources they need to perform their duties safely.

Establish clear regulations that recognize the unique nature of NGO work and provide job security. Many NGO workers face uncertainty due to short-term funding cycles. Policies should aim to provide more stable employment conditions and support career development opportunities. Additionally, this would encourage dialog between policymakers, NGOs, and workers themselves to better understand their needs and challenges.

7. Recognizing youth work as a profession

Policymakers should take immediate action to recognize youth work as a profession as for now it is not a "formal" profession anywhere in Europe.

First, policymakers should establish clear standards and qualifications for youth workers. This includes establishing recognized training programs and certifications that ensure youth workers have the necessary skills and knowledge.

It is also important to adequately fund youth work programs. These funds should support both services for young people and the professional development of youth workers.

Policymakers should also promote public awareness of the importance of youth work. This can lead to increased collaboration with other sectors such as education, health, and social services, and create an integrated support system for young people.

Finally, it is important to offer youth workers competitive salaries and benefits. Recognizing youth work as a profession means that these workers must be fairly compensated for their efforts.

In summary, recognizing youth work as a profession involves establishing clear qualifications, providing sufficient funding, raising public awareness, and ensuring fair compensation.

8. Directives to work with organizations of youth workers by including non-formal education as part of the school program

Policymakers should issue guidelines for cooperating with youth workers' organizations to integrate non-formal education into the school curriculum. This collaboration will help develop and implement effective non-formal education programs in schools. These programs should focus on practical skills, personal development, and social awareness and ensure that they align with overall educational goals. To promote the benefits of non-formal education to parents, educators, and the wider public. Encourage schools to create flexible schedules that allow for the integration of non-formal education without disrupting the existing academic schedule. To establish mechanisms for ongoing collaboration between schools and youth-serving.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED FROM POLICYMAKERS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK?

C: FROM EUROPEAN POLICYMAKERS

1. Long-term funding

Youth workers need various forms of support from policymakers to enhance their effectiveness, recognition, and impact. To improve their work, EU policymakers should consider ensuring stable and adequate funding for your programs, organizations, and initiatives. This includes grants, subsidies, and other forms of financial support.

2. Professional Development

Invest in training and professional development opportunities for youth workers. This can include workshops, certifications, exchange programs, and conferences to help them stay updated with best practices and new methodologies practiced in other European countries.

3. Recognition and Validation

Acknowledge the critical role of youth workers in social and community development. Establishing formal recognition through certifications, awards, and career development pathways can enhance the professional status of youth workers.

4. Involvement in policy processes

Involve youth workers in policy-making processes. Their insights and experiences can inform more effective and relevant policies. This can be facilitated through advisory councils, consultation processes, and collaborative planning sessions.

5. Access to Information and Research

Provide access to relevant research, data, and information that can help youth workers design evidence-based programs. This can include databases, publications, and access to academic research.

6. Supportive Legislation

Develop and implement legislation that supports youth work, ensuring that it is adequately funded and protected. This includes laws that safeguard the interests of young people and create a favorable environment for youth work.

WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS NEED FROM POLICYMAKERS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK?

7. Support the creation of regulations, in cooperation with youth workers

Youth workers and European policymakers should cooperate in the creation of regulations regarding the teaching and learning of historic and civic education. These regulations, while not restricting in forms or content, should be aware of the potential threats and provide common guidelines, such as: do not use discriminatory content…

8. Support the life-long learning of educators

Youth workers benefit from taking part in training and activities that improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities. In educational work, that includes fast-paced challenges and is based on the need to understand and include diverse young people, with different backgrounds and needs, it is important that youth workers receive free-of-charge formation, to tackle these new challenges.

Training and formation courses also represent new opportunities for networking and exchange, as well as include diverse profiles in youth work, such as tour guides and other professional figures

9. Include additional opportunities for intergenerational collaboration
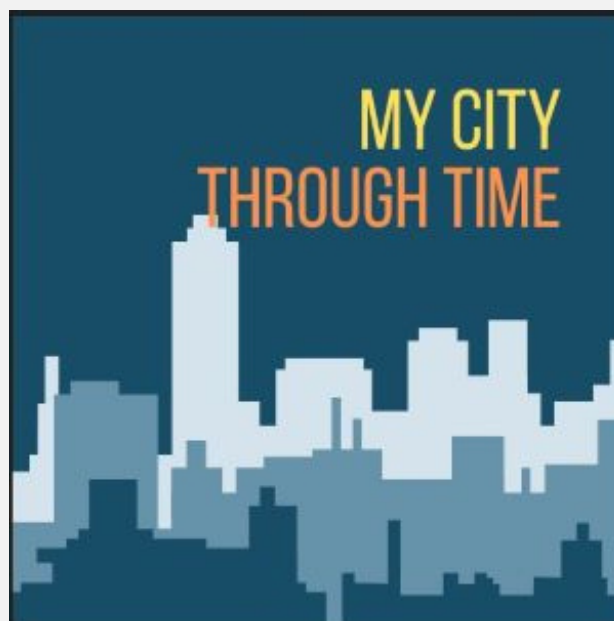
Many programs targeting youth have strict age limits or are connected to enrollment to universities. For this reason, many people - that are for example in between the end of studies and looking for job opportunities, or are interested in participating in European-funded activities but are aged 30+, sometimes find it challenging to get similar opportunities. Cooperation and collaboration among different generations is a fundamental step in the exchange of different experiences, points of view, perspectives, and values, that are at the base of democratic living

10. Availability of communication channels

Coordinate procedures for reporting that are more focused on the content of the activities (quality and content-wise) - guarantee open communication channels with the donors, which would provide more active communication in application processes and reports (more space for trial and error); as well as would simplify administration and bureaucratic processes from both sides of donators and youth workers. *question: donators or policymakers?*

THANK YOU

This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.