Youthpass

Unlocking Doors to Recognition

Setting up strategies for the better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/ learning in your context

salto|youth

JUGEND für Europa
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SALTO-YOUTH
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Education and Culture DG
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Welcome by SALTO's

Recognition is a complex topic with several levels, target groups, target issues, and stakeholders. You may want to convince your local authorities of the value of youth work, you may be interested in having your year of voluntary work accepted as a relevant learning experience in your university. You may wish that the young people you work with would have the opportunity to realize the learning value of the project that they've been involved in, and be able to describe their experiences and competences when they apply for future employment. Or you may simply be seeking appreciation for the quality of your work in the field.

This is a handbook for helping you find your own special way of dealing with recognition. It provides hands-on tools for establishing strategies for better recognition of the work you and your colleagues do. It will support you in making your contributions in the youth field more visible, better understood and more greatly appreciated. This handbook is a key that fits a large number of locks on different doors to recognition.

The Youth in Action Programme framework, including the European Commission and SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, have been working on the unlocking of these doors since 2005 – it was then that the concept of Youthpass was developed. Youthpass – the tool, process, and strategy of recognition in the youth field – has been actively used since 2007, by the end of August 2011, 120,000 certificates had been generated. The success of Youthpass is due to the joint effort required between the organisations running the Youth in Action Programme activities and the participants of these activities. This joint effort is also what supports the recognition of non-formal education/learning.

SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre has been supporting efforts to increase awareness and recognition of non-formal education/learning in youth work in South East Europe. It has done this through several support activities. In 2010, together with SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, it organised a long-term training course on how to set up recognition projects in youth work. The participants of the training course 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work' came from all over Europe as well as from three neighbouring regions. The geographical diversity of this training course reflects the high level of interest that exists in promoting recognition. This is not just something that is wanted in Europe; it is actively being looked at in neighbouring regions as well, regardless of cultural and socio-political diversity.

This publication was written by two authors, Darko Markovic and Gülesin Nemutlu Ünal, both of whom have extensive experience in the field of recognition, learning, education and youth work. It was written with the support of SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre and the Slovenian National Agency. It was inspired by the training course, 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work'. This combination of writers, and support and inspiration provided insights into various national situations regarding recognition, specific approaches taken for discussing the matter and numerous ideas that had been developed and shared. Many of these contributions found their way into this handbook, showing the variety of opinions and views in this field and at the same time providing 'real life' examples of what has been or is being done.

We hope that this handbook will inspire, motivate and support you in your further work on recognition.

Rita Bergstein, Kristiina Pernits, Sonja Mitter Škulj
SALTO T&C and SALTO SEE

Certificate for the Reader

With this certificate we confirm that;

has successfully reflected in the following areas:

Recognizing

- that **Everybody** is sure that **Somebody** would unlock the doors to recognition;
- that **Anybody** could have unlocked the doors to recognition;
- that **Nobody** has unlocked the doors to recognition;
- that **Somebody** got desperate because it was **Everybody's** responsibility to unlock the doors to recognition;
- that **Everybody** thought that **Anybody** could unlock the doors, but **Nobody** realized that **Everybody** wouldn't unlock the doors to recognition;
- that **Everybody** called on **Somebody** when **Nobody** did what **Anybody** could have done.

We hope that the owner of this Certificate is fully motivated to set up a strategy for the better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning in their own context.

A Certificate for Readers

Dear reader,

If you are a bit confused that the publication starts by presenting you with a certificate, that's totally fine! Our intention is to welcome you into the world of the recognition debate through this funny story and by challenging the common misconception that recognition is only about certification. We believe the recognition issue is a wider debate. If certification would be solely enough, this first page would also be the last page of this publication.

Wondering about the text in the certificate? It is inspired by an anonymous poem which appears in a wide variety of forms often titled as, 'That's Not My Job' or 'Story of 4 people'. It presents the link between complaining and getting into action. Do you think youth work is not recognised enough? Do you think non-formal education/learning could be appreciated more? Having cause for complaint can also be a base for getting into action. The recognition debate is waiting for your contributions!

Let's unlock the doors to recognition as we turn over the pages together. Enjoy your reading and your recognition practice!

How to use this Handbook?

After being certified and recognized for your interest in this topic and the handbook itself, you might be wondering "what is this handbook about?" and "what's in here for me?" Well, let's have a short walkthrough… One could say that working towards the recognition of non-formal education/learning and youth work is a rather long process and a path that is made while walking it. We would certainly agree with this and add that there are as many paths as there are different contexts where youth work and non-formal education/learning take place. So, the main idea of this handbook is to assist you in designing your own path, (or strategy), on how to work better and more effectively for the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning in your own working and living reality.

This handbook 'Unlocking Doors to Recognition' will offer you a series of points to consider when thinking about getting involved in your own recognition adventure. All the points are presented as both conceptual inputs and short do-it-yourself exercises, (marked with the icon: diy), allowing you to check where you stand in relation to the main aspects of any recognition strategy. We believe that after reading and using the handbook, you will have new tools and have a greater clarity about what needs to be done for recognition within your own context.

The handbook is structured in 5 parts: Firstly there are chapters 1 to 4, these introduce the you to the concept and the publication as a whole. Secondly there are chapters 5 to 8, these will build your body of knowledge and understanding of the key concepts in the field of recognition. Thirdly, chapter 9, which is an 'action chapter', provides guidelines on how to set up your own recognition strategy step by step. Fourthly chapters 10 to 12,

act as further inspiration by going deeper into the subject. Finally chapters 13 and 14 add technical and editorial information to close the publication.

In order to support your curiosity and sparkle inspiration, let's see what you might expect from the key parts of the handbook.

Parts of the handbook

Chapter 5 is entitled, 'The Value of Youth Work – the Wider Picture', and touches the key assumption that if something is to be recognized, it must be of 'value' and if so, this value needs to be reflected and communicated. This chapter explores the different values of youth work with particular emphasis on educational values as a means of preparing young people for knowledge-based society, (as part of the lifelong learning process), and civil society.

This is followed by chapter 6, 'Recognition?' This chapter puts more light on the conceptual issues, like the different types of recognition; formal, social, political and self-recognition. It also focuses on the different approaches and mechanisms needed in any chosen recognition strategy. Ultimately the chapter is designed to encourage you to reflect on what the recognition is that you are looking for in your context.

Each recognition strategy itself is an advocacy initiative. Therefore a sound knowledge on existing policy developments, (at national and European level), and trends in the related fields, (youth, education, social sector, and employment), are of the utmost importance for backing up your recognition efforts. Chapter 7 'European Policies and Practices in the Field of Recognition' provides some useful guidelines on how to navigate in this exciting, and often very complex area.

The road to recognition need not be a lonely one, rather it should be a joint venture with other partners and stakeholders. Chapter 8, 'Teaming up for Recognition: Stakeholders, Partnerships and Networks', offers insights and ideas on how to identify, involve and communicate with potential partners when setting up your recognition strategy.

Having read all these previous chapters and done all the exercises, you should have enough knowledge and hopefully motivation to start putting the pieces of your own recognition strategy together.
The following part of the handbook is a 'hands-on' set of steps for designing such a strategy. Chapter 9, 'Setting up your Recognition Strategy – Step by Step', is a call to action.

In case you would like to learn more about some best practice cases from different countries, the next part of the handbook provides this. In chapter 10, 'A Few Inspiring Cases and Good Practice in the Field of Recognition', you will find a number of examples of recognition of youth work and non-formal education/ learning in practice.

Chapter 11, offers numerous resources for digging deeper or travelling wider in the field of recognition.

Chapter 12, 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work' Training Course', provides some more information about the training course.

The handbook can be used in many different ways, based on your needs and interests. For example, you may start doing the exercises first and then read the conceptual texts or the other way around. In case you already have enough knowledge on recognition, youth work and non-formal education/learning you may wish to start immediately with setting up your own strategy, then jump to the action part. Or perhaps, if you wish to read some more inspirational examples of recognition efforts, then start from the end of the handbook.

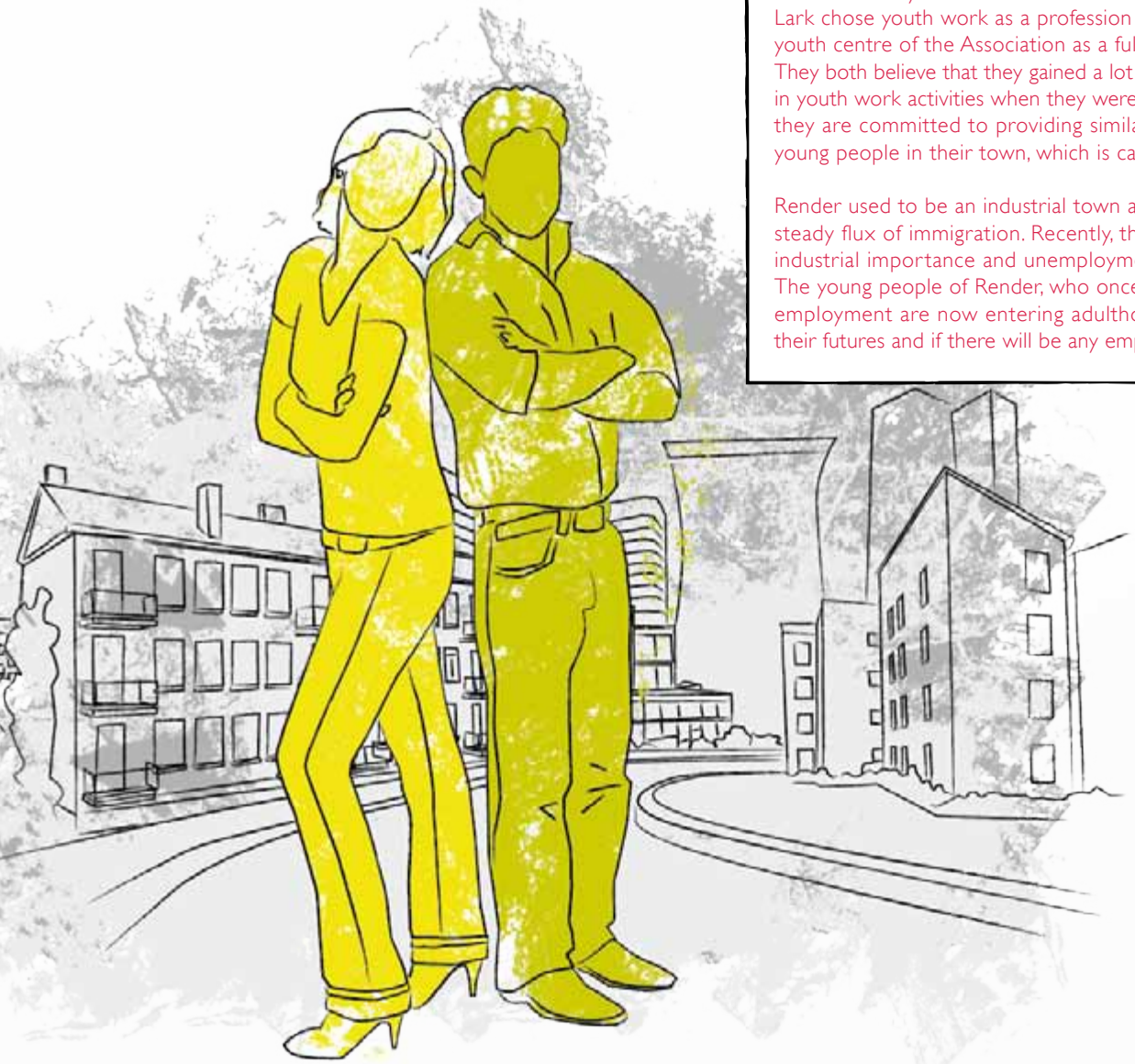
Finally, all the way through the handbook, you will be accompanied by our friends Robin and Lark who will think out loud, reflect together with you while working on their own recognition strategy. We hope you will find their cases inspiring and helpful throughout your reading.

The authors, along with Robin and Lark, wish you an exciting journey into the seas of recognition!

Let's meet Robin and Lark

Robin and Lark are two youth workers who started to get involved in youth work when they were in high school. Although Robin is currently studying she continues to volunteer as a youth worker at the Clouds Youth Association. Lark chose youth work as a profession and works at the youth centre of the Association as a full time youth worker. They both believe that they gained a lot through participating in youth work activities when they were younger and now they are committed to providing similar opportunities for young people in their town, which is called Render.

Render used to be an industrial town and used to have a steady flux of immigration. Recently, the town lost its industrial importance and unemployment started to rise. The young people of Render, who once could be sure of employment are now entering adulthood worried about their futures and if there will be any employment for them.



The Value of Youth Work - the Wider Picture

Considering the fact that you are reading this handbook, we assume that you are related to or interested in youth work and/or non-formal education/learning. We believe that youth work possesses a remarkable value for those involved in it as well as society as a whole. So let's start with some questions for a first reflection:

Everything changes so fast these days, probably the best people for me to learn from now will be my fellow youth workers. I can learn the most from them.

Questions for reflection:

→ Why do you believe that youth work is any good?

→ What would the world be like if there wasn't any youth work practice?

Your answers make up one valid part of a whole variety of possible answers. As youth work experience is so unique for everyone participating in it, and as the questions above are related to its values, the whole picture of answers would include very diverse perspectives. One way of having a better understanding of these various perspectives is to look at the values of youth work as four general values: the social; political; economic; and personal. Have a look through the following concrete examples.

Youth work holds a social value as it is a practice in which young people interact with each other and with other members of society. It encourages them to become active within their community by taking on responsibilities. Let's take a youth exchange activity as an example in which the topic is 'street art'. This youth exchange would involve a certain number of young people coming from different backgrounds. The programme of the activities would provide space for an intense social and communicative interaction between the participants, the organisers and the local community, through the theme of street art.

Youth work holds a political value as its social nature involves relations with authorities and those who hold power in the communities. Let's continue with our youth exchange on street art example. Through the participants exchanging their experiences and ideas about street art, they would probably tackle some major political questions like; 'who owns the streets?', 'what are the different practices in different countries when it comes to the use of public spaces?' They could also be confronted with a decision making process on, 'when, where and how should street art be practiced?'

Youth work as well holds an economic value as it is not happening outside any economic system. It is directly related to various resources, such as labour, capital, land and their use or consumption. One more look at our example of the youth exchange. The participants would need to use transportation to bring everyone together, they would need a space to sleep in and run their activities from, they would need food and drinks to take care of their nutrition, and they would need materials to be able to facilitate their sessions.

And finally youth work has a remarkable personal value. In our example of the youth exchange, the experience would leave unforgettable memories with its participants. It would be a space for some of the participants to be confronted with new and unfamiliar experiences, for example, going out onto the streets and acting in public spaces for the first time. For others the memories of late nights talking and sharing would remain their strongest impression. The youth exchange would be a part of the personal histories of all those involved in it.

Youth Work as an Educational Practice

Youth work takes place in various settings, through various approaches and methods. The politically agreed definition of youth work in Europe is:

"...'youth work' is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature both by, with and for young people."[1]

[1] 3046th Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting 18-19 November 2010 Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the member states, meeting within the Council, on youth work.

But why do we do youth work? What is the aim of youth work? Can we identify one common aim for such a diverse scope of activities? Is it needed to have one common aim anyway? What kind of function does youth work have so that it forms social, political, economical or personal values?

Youth work is an educational practice on the life-long learning path of young people which supports the forming of certain values. The learning that takes place in youth work practice is often termed 'non-formal education/learning' as it is the learning that happens outside of a formal institutional context, in other words out-of-school/university. The educational practice within youth work is the main anchor between youth work practice and non-formal education/learning.

To get a better understanding about youth work as an educational process, we can have a look at the commonly agreed principles and practices of non-formal education/learning, within the European youth work field.[2]

Within a non-formal education/learning process, learners participate in a structured programme of activities on a voluntary basis. The programme as such has defined learning objectives, yet, these objectives are shaped together with the learners and the responsibility of the learning is shared by

	Programme	Participation	Learning objectives	Documentation of achievements
Formal education/learning	Structured	Often obligatory	Set by the programme designer	Diploma confirming the qualifications acquired
Non formal education/learning	Structured	Voluntary	Set in cooperation between the learner and the programme designer	If any – certificate of participation, at times together with an assessment of competences (self-assessment or external assessment)
Informal learning	Mostly not structured	That's life	Set personally, if set set at all	Valuable life experience

the programme designer and the learners. This shared responsibility for learning impacts the relationships between the learners themselves, the learners and the programme designers, and the learners and the topic. At the end of the non-formal education/learning process the learner could be granted a certificate of participation often accompanied with a self-assessment of competences acquired by the learner.

In understanding youth work as an educational practice, we should consider the main principles of non-formal education. The principles listed above shows the learner-centred approach and the participative nature that non-formal education has. Together with the voluntary basis of participation, non-formal education has a big potential to meet the needs, wishes and interests of young people. This is also a key aspect of youth work as an educational practice.

When looking at youth work on a more practical basis; training courses, mobility actions and voluntary work compose a big portion of the diverse scope of activities within the youth work frame. All these activities are opportunities for young people to learn more about themselves, about people around them and about the norms and structures of their societies.

[2]The principles and practices listed here refer to various publications of the Council of Europe's Youth and Sports Directorate, the European Commission's Youth in Action Programme and the Partnership between the European Commission and Council of Europe in the field of youth. The list of some of these publications can be found in the references section of this handbook for further reading.

Through non-formal education/learning methods, young people not only gain knowledge but also build up skills for their personal development and social interaction. Non-formal education/learning includes a cognitive learning process and encircles it with emotional and social learning processes. Young people are also able to develop certain attitudes towards themselves as well as in interacting with others.

The combination of this knowledge, these skills and the attitudes, can be referred to as competences. Competences, in general, are what we use in 'shaping our own future'. Be it the interaction with the state as citizens, be it the interaction with the market as employees or employers, be it the interaction with members of society as individuals – our actions are based on our competences.

Youth work empowers young people to shape their own future through providing space for the development of their competences. The educational aspect of youth work lies within its principles and practices which empower young people. If you think the main objective of education should be empowerment, youth work and non-formal education/learning practices have a lot to contribute to the debate on how to ensure empowerment.

Competences Acquired?

By taking part in youth work and non-formal education/learning, we learn. We develop competences which we use to shape our future. Most of the time, it is difficult to name clearly what we have learnt when participating in a particular youth work activity. However, if you are setting up a strategy for better recognition of youth work, it could be necessary and helpful to be able to clearly define which competences young people have and are developing by participating in youth work activities.

Which competences did you acquire through youth work and non-formal education/learning?

During the 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning and Youth Work' Training Course, which took place in November 2010 in Milocer, Montenegro, we asked the above question to a group of youth workers/leaders coming from different regions; namely Western Europe, Mediterranean, South East Europe, and Eastern Europe and Caucasus regions.

Here are some of the answers; unedited and uncut:

- "Self confidence"
- "Leadership"
- "Intercultural skills"
- "An open mind"
- "Accounting skills"
- "Dynamics of change"
- "Trainer's skills"
- "Team work"
- "Language skills"
- "Curiosity"
- "Networking"
- "Presentation skills"
- "Project management"
- "Communication skills"
- "Understanding the others"
- "Acknowledging different cultures"
- "Conflict management skills"
- "Human resources management"

Can all these listed qualities be called competences? What is the difference between a skill and a competence? Why would it be important to identify what you acquire through youth work? With whom would you share your insights about your achievements?

Before reading any further you may want to take a second to think about the following question:

Questions for reflection:

→ Which competences have **you** acquired by participating in youth work and non-formal education/learning activities?

Identifying the competences developed is not the easiest exercise. What is a competence? What is the difference between competence and skill? What is a competency? What is the difference between competence and competency? What is ability? Knowing the correct use of these terms would make you become more 'competent' in communicating about competence development, which is one of the key aspects of any recognition strategy.

Participating in youth work activities made me realise two things about myself: I like working with people and I am good at dealing with numbers.

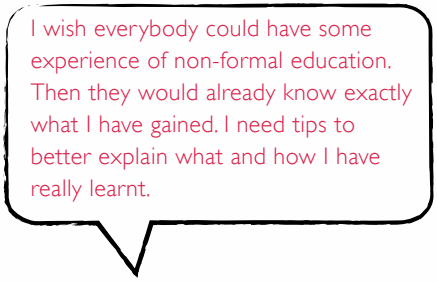
In everyday language, there is some confusing use of these terms and they are often used interchangeably. In the field of learning and development, the use of these words varies slightly. Let's have a closer look at these terms and see how they link with each other.

Competence is demonstrating the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to carry out a defined function effectively. Therefore, to be competent in

[3] The definitions given are compiled from various respected English language dictionaries as well as occupational dictionaries within the education and human resources fields.

a job, means having competence in all the required aspects that the role has. Competencies are at times used as a listed set of attributes required for a role to be performed, including the abilities and skills, qualities and characteristics that a person has.

Ability is the possession of the means or skill to do something. Whereas skill is the ability to do something well, mostly because you have practiced it. Therefore, having the ability to do something, means you have the necessary conditions for fulfilling a specific task, and skill adds a value to this ability with an implicit message that you can actually do that specific task well enough because you have probably done it before[3].



Found in Translation

While setting up a strategy for better recognition of youth work, it is helpful to transfer the competences acquired into the language of the field you are seeking recognition from. After all, clear communication eases understanding. Here are a few examples which you can use as tips while finding yourself in translation.

Language in the employment sector:

Today in Europe, many professions are defined by a list of competences that are needed in order to perform a specific job. In general, the list of competences for a job are clustered into two; generic competences and specific competences. Generic competences are mainly composed of soft skills whereas specific competences are generally about the hard skills.

Hard skills are the technical skills which are used to define the occupational requirements of a job and/or other activity. These are what make up the hard facts in a CV; which degree(s) you have and on which topic(s), what type of working field you have been involved in, what is your training and learning background, and so on.

Soft skills are social and communicative skills, such as personality characteristics, language abilities, personal habits, friendliness and skills in relationships with other people. In general they shape how you interact with your work. Soft skills complement hard skills and have a big effect on how you perform with your technical abilities in a given context.

Language in European citizenship:

A person's competences are an important part of their individual contribution and role within a society. We act and interact based on our competences. Life-long and life-wide learning shape our abilities and therefore influence our sense of belonging, responsibility, and expression, both personally and in the community.

The European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning[4] has identified 8 key competences in order to provide a European-level reference tool for policy-makers, education providers, employers, and learners. These competences facilitate national and European level efforts towards commonly agreed objectives, in order to make life-long learning a reality for all citizens in Europe.

The 8 key competences are namely: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical and scientific competence; digital competence; social and civic competences; learning to learn; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression.

[4]The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework is an annex of a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning that was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 30 December 2006/ L394. (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00100018.pdf)

Competences acquired through youth work and non-formal education/learning can be linked with the 8 key competences, for example, in Youthpass, learners can link their learning results to the key competences. Read more about Youthpass in Chapter 7, 'European Policies and Practices in the Field of Recognition'.

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Exercise: The Educational Value of Youth Work

In 2004, the Pathways Paper argued that;

"Non-formal education/learning in the youth field is more than a sub-category of education and training since it is contributing to the preparation of young people for the knowledge-based and the civil society". .[5]

This argument was later on embraced by the 'Pathways 2.0, Towards Recognition of Non-Formal Learning/Education and of Youth Work in Europe'[6] working paper.

Here are some questions for you to think about;

- What do you think non-formal education/learning in the youth field can contribute toward the development of a knowledge-based society?
- What do you think non-formal education/learning in the youth field can contribute toward the development of a civil society?
- How would you describe these contributions?
- What links can you identify between the youth work field and other fields which can contribute to the same objectives – knowledge-based and civil society?
- Can you relate any of the above discussions with your personal experiences?

[5] Pathways towards Validation and Recognition of Education, Training & Learning in the Youth Field". For the full text of the working paper, please visit: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Education_Training_ Learning/Policy/Pathways_towards_validati.pdf

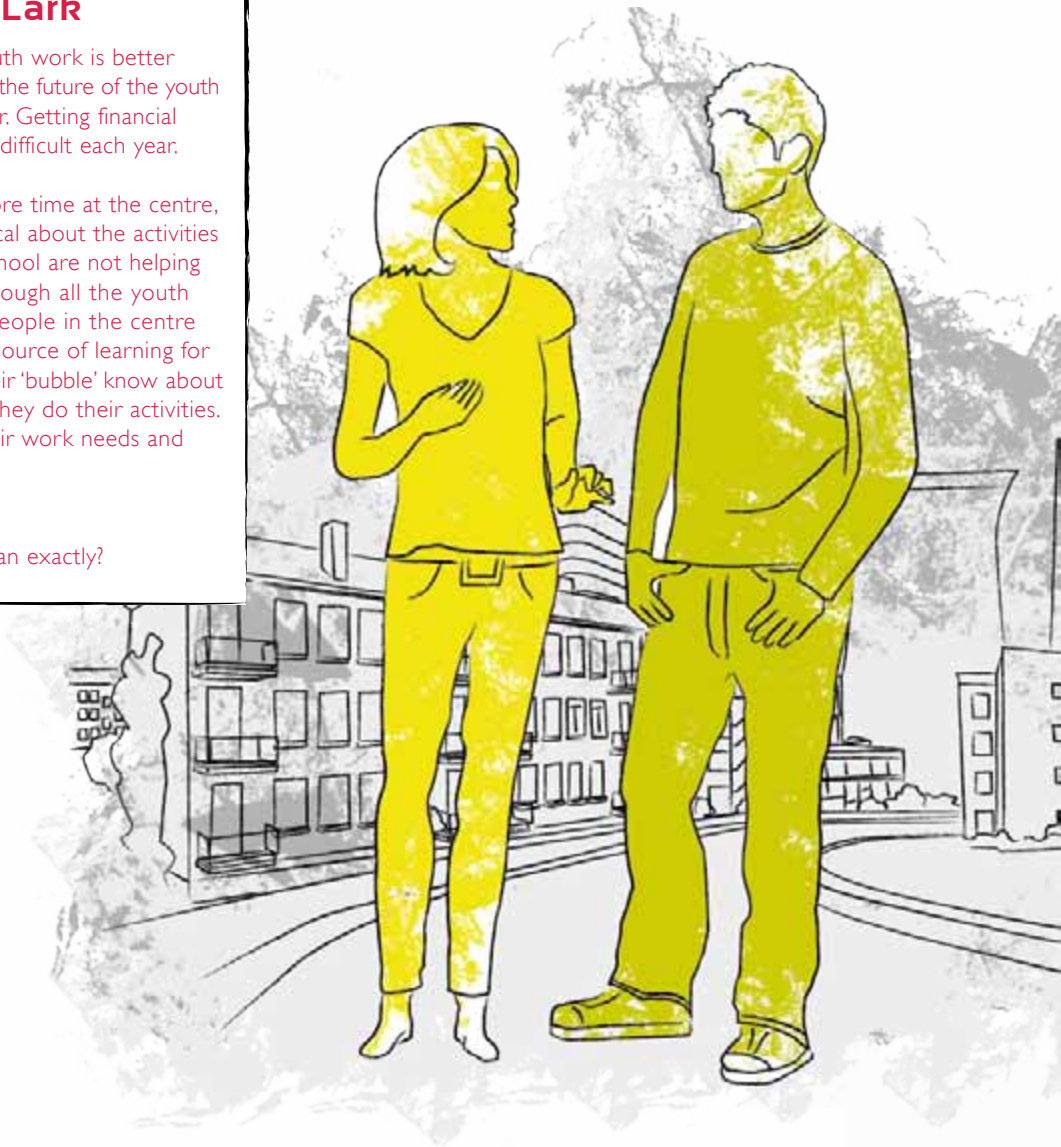
[6] For more information and the full text of the working paper, visit: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/ news_188.html

Robin and Lark

Robin and Lark realise that unless youth work is better recognised within the local community, the future of the youth centre and the association is in danger. Getting financial support is becoming more and more difficult each year.

As young people spend more and more time at the centre, some parents start to become sceptical about the activities being held there. Many teachers at school are not helping to change this conviction either. Although all the youth workers, volunteers and the young people in the centre agree that their activities are a good source of learning for young people, few people outside their 'bubble' know about what they do, why they do and how they do their activities. Robin and Lark are now sure that their work needs and deserves better recognition.

The question they have is:
How? And what does recognition mean exactly?



Recognition?

Using English as a common language in the international youth work context often leads to a false, (or at least a far too easy), belief that by using the same words we speak about the same thing. Indeed, we all agree that youth work and non-formal education/learning deserve better recognition, but what do we mean by recognition in our local context(s) and language(s)?

How do you say 'recognition' in your language?

→ In German we say: 'Anerkennung' which is used in the frame of our theme. But it means also 'Bestätigung' (affirmation, acknowledgement), 'Erkennen' or 'Erkennung' (cognition, detection, identification). So, if somebody in the street would ask me I would answer recognition is used in two ways:

1) I see somebody or something and I recognize them or it as something or somebody I know
2) I accept/recognize something/somebody, e.g. its/there value/position, etc...

→ In Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian we say 'prepoznavanje' or 'priznavanje' – it depends on the context. 'Prepoznavanje' means that you see something and recognize it and 'priznavanje' means that you see something as important.

→ In Moldova we say 'recunoaştere' and only 'recunoaştere', if you analyze this word, the essence of it has synonyms like 'acceptance' or 'knowledge'.

→ In Portuguese we say 'reconhecimento'. There are different meanings for it, depending on the context:

1) Acknowledge the truth or the value of something
2) To 'recognize' someone that you did not see for a long time
3) Military move made by scouts to trace an unknown territorial area before a bigger group crosses the area or before a bomb is launched.

→ In Russian we say '**Признание**' in general, it is something like official recognition. I guess, 'recognition' sounds nicer than '**Принятие**', (it is more understandable for people). This word means that something has adequate arguments so we can recognize it – '**принять**', '**признать**'.

→ In Turkey recognition is translated as 'tanınırlık' or 'tanınma' which means appreciation or acceptance. It is also used for getting to know or getting familiar with something or somebody.

→ In Ukrainian we would say '**Визнання**', this term is used in the same context of 'recognition' that we use when talking about non-formal education and youth work. This word has several meanings:

1) '**прийняття**' (acceptance, acknowledgement)
2) Being valued in society
3) An expression of guilt (confession)
4) Identification with something by somebody
5) Understanding something as something

It pretty much depends on the context...

→ In Egypt we say "إدراك" or "تمييز" and it means being familiar with the subject or object.

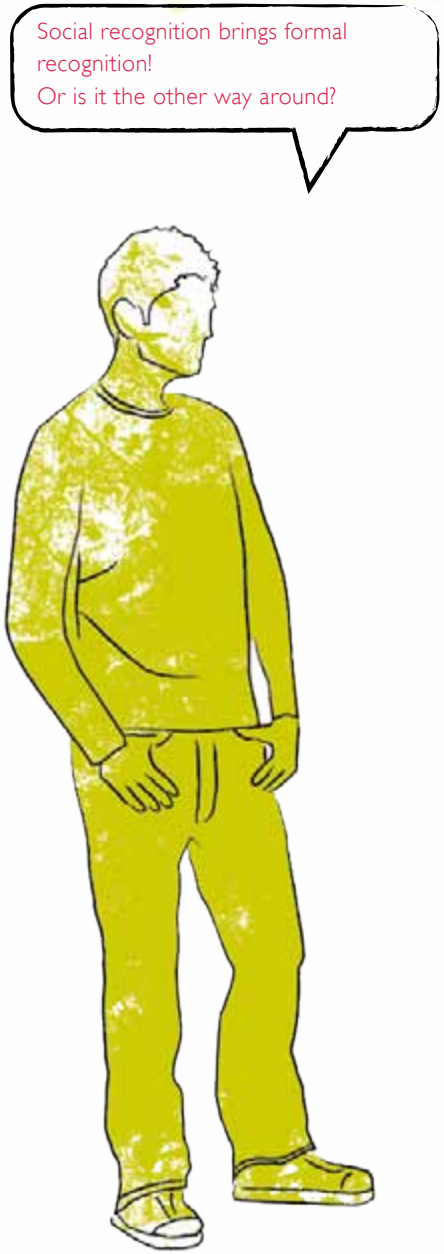
Quotes from participants of the:
'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work' Training Course.

What Kind of Recognition Are You Looking For?

In addition to these linguistic differences there are also different types of recognition. Sometimes these types are intertwined with and reinforce each other, but they may also be regarded as essentially different processes, requiring different steps to be taken with the involvement of different stakeholders.

Social recognition – is a process that leads to a better understanding and a more positive regard of what you are doing by others, it brings more visibility and more investment to your activities. In practice it means that both your community and the people from other sectors would not only know what youth work is, but would also have a positive attitude towards it.

Formal recognition – is an official status for different aspects of youth work and non-formal education/learning, (e.g. competencies acquired leading to formal qualifications; official accreditation of non-formal education/learning programmes by formal accreditation bodies; licensing of youth workers and trainers; officially recognized occupation of youth worker by the state, etc.).



Political recognition – refers to the development of relevant policies around youth work and non-formal education/learning in the youth field. It is also about putting youth work on the political agenda, (e.g. the Belgium presidency of the Council of European Union Ministers adopted a Resolution on youth work; 'youth work' as a term appearing in the new Youth Law in Serbia for the first time in 2011).

Self-recognition – means that recognition sometimes starts with us! Are we fully aware of the value of our own work? What evidence, (perhaps research data), do we have to prove it? How much do we support the development of quality in our own work? Are we aware of learning processes taking place within our activities? Could we list the competency's young people develop through participation in our projects?

Finally, if you're considering starting a recognition strategy for your context and reality, it makes a lot of sense to do a small piece of research in advance and answer the following questions: What recognition already exists in your context? What recognition is needed by the practitioners, (youth leaders and youth workers)? What recognition is needed by young people themselves? The exercise below 'Know Your Recognition Context' offers you a set of additional questions that may guide you in that process.

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Exercise: Know Your Recognition Context!

Social recognition of youth work and non-formal education

- In your community: how is youth work perceived by local institutions? How much is it understood and valued by ordinary citizens?
- To what extent is non-formal education appreciated and accepted in your local community?
- Are youth workers treated as partners when it comes to discussing local youth issues in your neighbourhood?
- How much is youth work present in the media?
- How much youth work and non-formal education supported financially or in-kind, (e.g. providing working rooms and space), by the local/regional/national government?
- Are young people seen as a resource and able to contribute to the political processes/developments in the community…? What role do youth workers play in these processes?

Formal and political recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning

- What is the status of youth work in your country? Is it usually regarded as voluntary work or as professional work? If there are professional youth workers, how do they become 'professionals'?
- Are there any laws on youth and/or youth work in your country? What do they say about youth work and non-formal education/learning?
- Are there any strategies dealing with youth, (e.g. national youth policy or local youth strategy), where you live? How is youth work treated in those documents?
- Are there any national/regional/local policies dealing with 'non-formal education' or 'non-formal learning'? What is the understanding of these terms in those documents? Is the youth sector seen as one of the providers of non-formal education/learning?

Youth work and formal education/social work

→ Is there any cooperation between the formal education sector, (e.g. schools/universities), and youth workers? If yes, how is the work of youth workers perceived by the institutions? Do the institutions see any educational value in youth work? Do you get any 'additional points' when enrolling in a school/university for having been involved in youth work?

→ Is there any connection between youth work and the public social work sector? If yes, what does it look like?

Youth work and employment

→ Is there any connection between youth work and the employment sector? Would any youth work experience help you get a job? Do employers see the benefits of skills gained in the youth sector?

Tools for recognition of non-formal education/learning

→ Are there any national/regional/local mechanisms and tools for the recognition of learning outcomes, (e.g. knowledge, skills, and attitudes), that took place in a youth activity? If yes, how much are these instruments used by young people?

→ Have you been using any of the European recognition instruments in your context, (e.g. Youthpass or European Portfolio for Youth Workers)? How do you see the value of these instruments in your context?

Self-recognition by youth workers

→ Finally, to what extent are youth workers themselves, (including yourself), aware of the 'educational value' of youth work? How would they describe it? What are the main benefits for young people?

To unlock the doors of recognition, Robin and Lark decide to draft a recognition context for their town of Render

Social recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning

In Render, youth work and non-formal education/learning activities are financially supported through sponsors, in-kind contributions and by available funds. The sponsors are mainly companies. The in-kind contributors are mainly from public offices. The largest fund is provided by the youth directorate at national Government level, some of the youth organisations are sceptical regarding this as the funding rules and selection criteria are not transparent enough.

In and around Render, youth work is mostly voluntary. There are also professional youth workers working in civil society organisations, (such as Lark). The youth work practice background of these voluntary and professional youth workers lies within civil society spheres.

The staff of the youth directorate could be, theoretically, considered as youth workers, yet they all have different educational and training backgrounds. The recruitment of these 'youth workers' is under the jurisdiction of the local authorities. Their official title is 'youth experts'.

Youth work is hardly visible in the media in contradiction to the young people themselves. Young people are usually presented with their reckless behaviour and its consequences. There is only one TV programme called 'Helping Hands' on the national channel, about the activities of civil society and at times they also broadcast from youth organisations.

Formal and political recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning

There is no law in the country or in Render itself that directly supports young people. There is one article in the national constitution which underlines the importance of young people for the future of the country. There is no law concerning non-formal education/learning.

Each municipality in Render needs to submit a youth strategy every 4 years. Strategies mainly consist of scholarships for schools and activities regarding the prevention of young people from using abusive substance. Youth work has not been mentioned in any of the strategies.

The closest policy regarding 'non-formal education/learning' is on 'mass education'. Municipalities and selected civil society organisations are granted the right to organise and run mass education activities in which the participants can be granted a certificate of participation at the end of the activity.

Youth work, formal education and social work

The most common type of cooperation between the schools and youth workers are out-of-school activities run by voluntary/professional youth workers from civil society organisations. The terms of cooperation depend on the agreement between the school and the organisation. The educational value of youth work is mainly perceived as providing recreational activities for students although some teachers see the value as social empowerment of the students. There is no connection between youth work and public social work sector.

Youth work and employment

Although there is no formal connection between youth work and the employment sector, experience in youth work is recognised as an asset by the majority of companies in their recruitment processes. The main skills that are recognised by the employees are to do with having experience of communicating with the wider public and organising activities.

Tools for the recognition of non-formal education/learning

There are no tools for the recognition of learning outcomes that take place outside of the formal education sector.

Robin has two Youthpass's from international training courses that she has attended. Lark once started to prepare his European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers but never managed to finalise it. According to Lark, the Portfolio provided the base for his job at the youth centre.

Self-recognition by youth workers

Find Your Own Recognition Adventure!

There is no way to recognition; recognition is the way! Indeed there is no given and ready-made road to recognition, it is a path made while walking. This usually implies a long term process that starts with an a-la-carte possibility of selecting what you would like to get recognized, how and by whom. In essence it is about finding your own recognition adventure that will fit the needs of your working context the best. While on your journey you will need to think about what aspects of youth work, ('objects'), and which possible recognition mechanisms, (from more social to more formal ones), you would like to get recognized.

The exercise at the end of this chapter may help you clarify your recognition objectives. Choose the aspects on the left, (WHAT do you want to get better recognized?) and connect them to the mechanisms on the right, (HOW do you want them to be recognized?). Answering these questions and making the connections may lead to various recognition strategies and scenarios.

For example, you may wish to focus on recognition of the educational value of youth work; on how non-formal education/learning is perceived by other stakeholders in your community and on having better visibility of the competencies acquired by young people participating in your activities. In this scenario, you may wish to work on a 'stakeholder understanding' of what youth work and non-formal education/learning is about; to establish links and start a dialogue with the local formal education institutions, employment sector and/or local government. At the same time, you may wish to establish a tool for the self-recognition of competencies acquired by young people, (e.g. a tool based on self-assessment). Finally, you could work on having better visibility of these competencies and the benefits of participation in youth work through some nice promotional films or even a simple research project. The scenarios described above are visualised by the red lines in the example on the next page.

Another example would be to focus on the status of youth work and youth workers in your context. If you choose this road, you may wish to fight for better formal recognition of the youth worker profession, (through accreditation of professional youth workers and the recognition of the occupational profile by national authorities). You may also want to advocate for the development of relevant policies, (e.g. strategy on youth work in your region or country). Eventually, this should lead to more funds being available for youth work activities either from the local, regional or national authorities. The scenarios described above are visualised by the black lines in the example on the next page.

Of course there are many other options as well. What would be your approach to recognition? Have a look at the following exercise.

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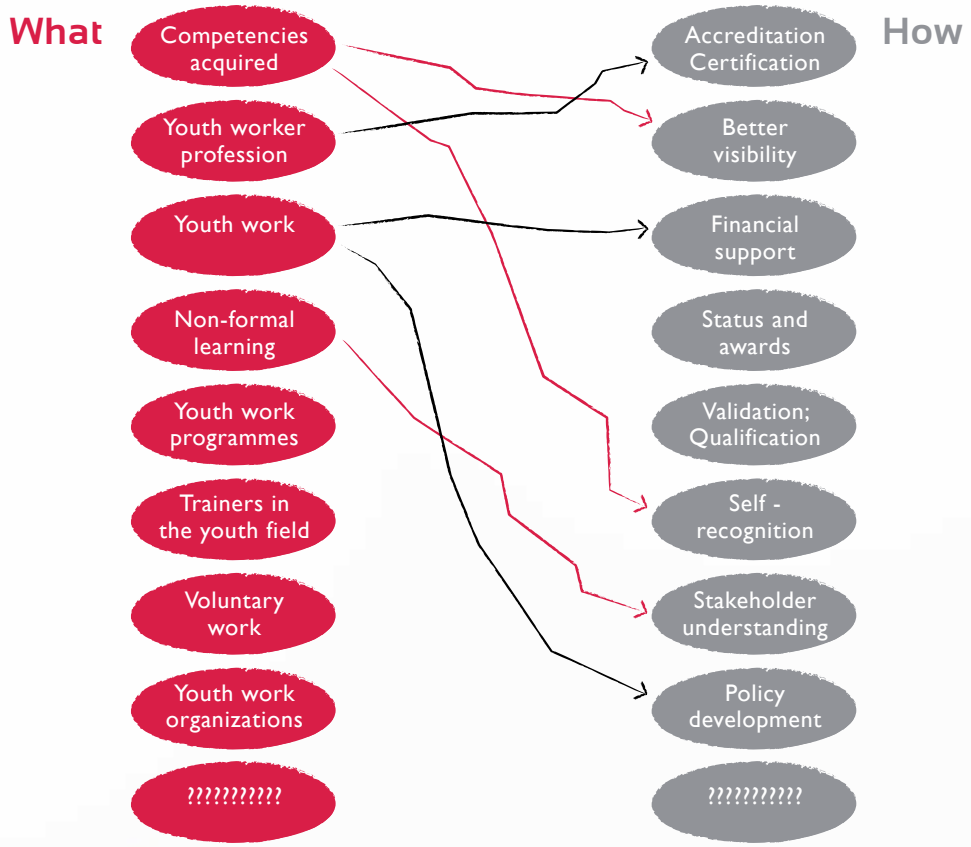
Exercise: Recognition Objects and Mechanisms

What is your way to recognition? Use the diagram below to draw lines connecting WHAT you would like to be better recognised, (on the left), with HOW you want it to be recognized, (on the right).



Robin and Lark

While finalising their recognition context, Robin and Lark found themselves in front of the computer, looking for strategies, legislation and policies regarding youth work and non-formal education/learning. Typing in the key words opened up a brand new world in front of them: the world of policies and practices in Europe. Having a look at the developments since 2000, they figured out that it is not just by chance that they are dealing with the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning now. They see a flow, a process – which they can benefit, learn from and use to support their cause in Render. Speaking foreign languages helped them in their research.

European Policies and Practices in the Field of Recognition

Working on better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning is advocacy work that often aims at changes in relevant policies and official decisions, while working towards the establishment of new mechanisms. In regards to other advocacy initiatives, it is not enough to just form partnerships on the way, it is necessary to have a sound knowledge and understanding of any relevant policies that can strengthen your position. Having an understanding of policies from other sectors may also help you in finding the 'common language' and establish inter-sectoral partnerships at local and national levels. More information on European policies and practices can be found in the following pages, but let's first hear the story about these developments at the European level…

The exciting story about European policy development on the recognition of non-formal education/learning in the youth field can be told from two perspectives – from the outside and from the inside of the youth sector. However, like in a dynamic omnibus movie these two stories often support each other, thus creating a joint story, while at other moments they continue along separate lines. The story from the inside begins with the growing youth sector, supported strongly by the establishment of the European Union's YOUTH programme in 2000 and activities of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport at the end of the 1990's. Such a growing field resulted not only in quantity growth, but also in an increase of quality and enhanced awareness of its own value – both by young people themselves and youth workers. This subsequently resulted in calls for better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning at a European level, (e.g. the CoE Parliamentary assembly recommendation and the EU's White Paper on Youth).

At the same time, in the outer story or call it the 'bigger picture', in 2000 the Lisbon Council of the European Union set a most ambitious strategic vision for Europe. The vision was that Europe should become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, achieving not just economic growth and better jobs, but also greater social cohesion. For the policy makers it was clear that the existing formal education systems, normally too slow to respond to the dynamic changes in life and technology, would not be enough to bring Europe closer to that 'knowledge based society'. Instead, another path was chosen – lifelong learning. This was the first time that European policies acknowledged that learning takes place in a variety of contexts, including formal, non-formal and informal, and should be valued. This path was followed by several initiatives in the field of education, in particular in the area of Vocational Education and Training, (VET). This saw the validation of informal and non-formal education/learning as one of the main tools for bridging gaps in the labour market and helping people get their qualifications in diverse ways. The enhanced cooperation among European countries in this field, led to the adoption of Common European principles for the validation of informal and non-formal education/learning in 2004 and later in more concrete guidelines in 2008. The other interesting process in the bigger picture was, 'the shift towards learning outcomes', which changed the perspective in education and put the focus on competences acquired. Eventually this led to the adoption of the common European framework; '8 Key Competences for Lifelong Learning', by the European Parliament in 2006.

In parallel, the debate on the recognition of non-formal education/learning in the youth field continued and links with the wider lifelong learning

agenda were sought and clearly established. Thanks to the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, the position of the youth sector was formulated in the 'Pathways' paper in 2004. The paper called for better social recognition of non-formal education/learning and youth work, having in mind that they should not be regarded as a sub-category of education. The paper also stressed them as a means to prepare young people for both knowledge based society and civil society. The Pathways paper recognized the need to establish closer links with other stakeholders, (formal education, employers, social sector, etc.), and to develop concrete tools for recognition in the youth sector. This process resulted in the development of the European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers in 2006 and the introduction of the Youthpass as part of the Youth in Action Programme from 2007 onwards. Both instruments gave more focus to the competences of youth workers and young people. Following the developments in the 'bigger picture' Youthpass built on and imported the European framework of 8 Key Competences in its self-assessment part, thus bringing closer the learning outcomes from the youth field to other educational arenas and other stakeholders. At the time of writing this publication more than 120,000 Youthpass certificates have been issued.

In the outer story, the process of working on the recognition of non-formal and informal education/learning continues. One of the future developments will be for better transparency of qualifications and competences in the European labour market. This should result in the opening up of the current Europass system for non-formal education/learning experiences, in the form of a newly developed European Skills Passport in 2012.

In the youth field, calls for better recognition were followed up in the 1st European Youth Work Convention in Ghent in 2010; this led to the Council Resolution on youth work in November that same year. As part of the new developments, the EU-CoE youth partnership published a new paper, Pathways 2.0, in January 2011. This initiated the debate on future actions and paths of recognition in the youth field. The general plan for these actions was laid down during the Symposium on the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning, in November 2011.

To be continued…

Key Policy Developments

European Union

Education Sector	Youth Field
→ European Commission's Memorandum on lifelong learning, 2000	→ White Paper on Youth, 2001
→ Communication on lifelong learning, 2001	→ Bridges for recognition – conference report, 2005
→ Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2004	→ European youth pact, 2005
→ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2006	→ Council of the European Union – Resolution on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field, 2006
→ European Qualifications Framework, 2008	→ Youthpass, 2007
→ European Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2008	→ EU Strategy for youth – investing and empowering, 2009
→ A strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training 'ET 2020', 2009	→ Declaration of the 1st European youth work convention, 2010
→ Youth on the Move, 2010	→ European Council Resolution on youth work, 2010

Council of Europe

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - Recommendation on non-formal education, 2000
- The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – Recommendation on the promotion and the recognition of non-formal education/ learning of young people, 2003
- European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers, 2006
- The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – Resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, 2008

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

- Pathways towards validation and recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field, 2004
- Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe, 2011

In addition to these, the process of recognition of non-formal learning is followed worldwide by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

For more info visit:
www.oecd.org/edu/recognition

Key Recognition Practices on the European Level

Youthpass

Youthpass is a tool and a strategy of the European Union to promote the recognition of non-formal education/learning within youth work. The framework for the development and implementation of Youthpass is in the EU's Youth in Action Programme. The aim of this strategic approach is to raise awareness, and support a professional and public debate concerning individual, social, formal, and political dimensions for the recognition of non-formal education/ learning and youth work. Youthpass as a tool –

a process and a certificate – makes the learning in the Youth in Action Programme projects conscious for the participant and the learning value visible to the outside world. It supports individual reflections, active citizenship of young people, social recognition of youth work, and the employability of young people and youth workers.

More information at: www.youthpass.eu

European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers

The European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers is an initiative of the Council of Europe. It provides youth leaders and youth workers, volunteers and/or professionals, with a tool which can help them identify, assess and describe their competencies based on European quality standards. In using this portfolio, youth leaders and youth workers will not only contribute to the recognition of their experience and skills, but also the efforts to increase the recognition of youth work and non-formal education and learning.

More information at: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Portfolio/Portfolio_en.asp

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Exercise: What is Your Favourite Recognition Quote?

Reading policy documents may be perceived as a not so fun exercise by most of the practitioners, (youth workers, youth leaders and trainers). However, if you really want to strengthen your recognition position in your advocacy initiative, it might be a good idea to select some of the most relevant quotes from national and European policies. Some examples are below. Have a look at the policy documents mentioned above and find your favourite recognition quote.

→ Non-formal and informal learning enables young people to acquire essential competences and contributes to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thereby improving their employment prospects.

Learning activities within the youth field provide significant added value for young people as well as for the economy and society at large such as capacity-building of organisations, benefits for communities, systems and institutions.

Youth in Action Programme Guide, 2011

→ ...INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

Promote different kinds of sustainable support for youth work, e.g. sufficient funding, resources or infrastructure. This also implies removing barriers to engaging in youth work and where appropriate create strategies on youth work.

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the member states meeting within the Council on youth work, 2010

→ Complementary to formal education, non-formal education for young people should be supported to contribute to Lifelong Learning in Europe, by developing its quality, recognising its outcomes, and integrating it better with formal education.

An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering, 2009

→ Recognition generates four different types of benefits:

- economic benefits by reducing the direct and opportunity costs of formal learning and allowing human capital to be used more productively
- educational benefits that can underpin lifelong learning and career development
- social benefits by improving equity and strengthening access to both further education and the labour market, for disadvantaged groups, disaffected youth and older workers
- psychological benefits by making individuals aware of their capabilities and validating their worth

OECD, Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Pointers for policy development

→ The youth sector must find a common ground to further define and implement strategies for recognition of youth work. The whole sector of youth work is concerned, diverse disciplines, various methods and approaches, comprising all forms of learning as well as all forms of recognition, be it formal, social, political. There must be a common understanding of what should be recognised, how and by whom... It must also be made clear, who plays which role in this process and which responsibilities the various groups of actors have.

Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe

→ Recognition of non-formal learning plays a crucial role for social inclusion by "ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life, particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning".

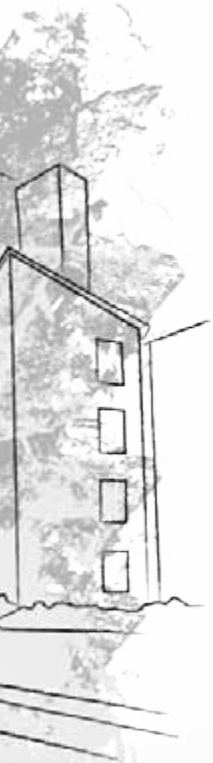
Resolution of the Committee of Ministers on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, 2008

→ **Which is your favourite recognition quote?**

Robin and Lark

Having a look through the numerous policies on different aspects of recognition inspired Lark and Robin. They started to come up with ideas, one after another, until they were overwhelmed. Robin then proposed that she focus on identifying the direction of their recognition adventure while Lark should start to note down all the action ideas they had for better recognition. One thing was clear, advocating for social, formal and political recognition was far too big a goal to be achieved alone. However they were positive about the commitment that they would get from all the youth workers and young people at the Clouds Youth Association. It was also obvious that they needed some other allies on this recognition adventure. But whom they should address to team up with? Who would be interested to join them in their plan and who would be against it? Could they get people from their town of Render on board? Was it necessary? If not, then who, for what and how should they contact them?

Teaming up for Recognition: Stakeholders, Partnerships and Networks



In the process of setting up your recognition strategy and in parallel to getting more familiar with European policies there is often a need to team up with others for your recognition process. Whichever type of recognition you are aiming at, (social, formal, political or self-recognition), you can benefit from the lifting effect of a partnership and/or the supporting effect of being in a network.

A partnership can be defined as a relationship between individuals or groups, which is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility for the achievement of a specified goal. A network is a system consisting of many similar parties, (individuals, groups or institutions), that are connected to allow movement or communication within. Networks may also, based on the common interest among the similar actors, enable a stronger message to be broadcast to the outside.

In identifying partners or networks to be engaged with, the term 'stakeholder' can provide some further insight. A stakeholder is commonly defined as a person, a group or an organisation that has an interest in a common goal and shared responsibility towards the achievement of that goal. In other words, stakeholders have a stake in something common.

Depending on the type and scope of recognition you are advocating for, there can be a whole list of stakeholders who have a common interest in your goal and/or in your recognition process. For example, if you are advocating for the social recognition of youth work; families, friends, civil society organisations, funders and the media could be some of your stakeholders. In case of formal and/or political recognition, schools, universities, political parties, employers and vision setters could get into your list of stakeholders. For self-recognition, your stakeholders could be peer individuals, educators, coaches and/or your colleagues.

In practical terms, while setting up your recognition strategy, it is crucial to identify the stakeholders involved and to approach some of these to become partners or to engage in a network with them.

Tips on Partnerships for Recognition

Building partnerships is one of the key aspects of any advocacy work on recognition for three good reasons. First of all, the pure existence of a partnership is a recognition action in itself, it means your partners have recognised the value of your cause prior to becoming an advocate together with you. Secondly, the process of partnership building supports your understanding of the language, concerns and passions of your potential partners. This then helps you to formulate your cause more realistically. Finally, through partnership, you can share the ownership of your cause with your stakeholders and, as your cause becomes their cause, the responsibilities in reaching the goal can be shared.

How to set up partnerships for recognition?

Similar to any kind of relationship, partnership neither happens in one day nor without any investment. Here are some tips on creating and maintaining a partnership:

- Recognise and accept the need for partnership: When initiating a partnership, be sincere and clear about what you need the partnership for. Clarity and sincerity will help in identifying your potential partners as well as in communicating your need and what you can offer to your targeted partners. The people, groups or organisations you approach with your partnership proposal may have different goals and priorities in their field of action. While presenting your need for partnership, you should be patient in listening to the goals and priorities of your potential partners and be constructive in finding links between the different goals. Similarly to yourself, your potential partners should also be able to recognise the need for this partnership. Leave enough space and time for this process as this is the basis for a long lasting relationship.
- Develop a clear and realistic goal: Once the need for and the requirements of the partnership are clear for all the parties involved, it is time to define a common goal. At this stage, both you and your partners should be ready and flexible to find common ground. If you manage to identify a common goal which serves the overall interests of both parties; congratulations, you are one step closer to creating a partnership.
- Ensure commitment and ownership: Clear and realistically identified goals not only serve the interests of all the parties involved but also create commitment and ownership. Continuous communication and the sharing of tasks are ways of ensuring that commitment and ownership. This is also the stage at which partners should be sincere with themselves and with each other about their capabilities and limitations. If you and your partners feel it necessary, you may also like to consider putting your agreements on paper. The components of the arrangement should be acceptable to all the parties involved.
- Develop and maintain trust: Partnership is a relationship towards a common goal. The path to achieve a goal is set with responsibilities and challenges. For a sustainable and functional partnership, all the parties involved should have a certain level of trust in each other. The trust condition should not to be taken for granted; it should be developed and maintained mutually.
- Create practical and clear cooperating arrangements: When creating a partnership, all the parties involved will have expectations about each other for the achieving of the goal. These expectations should be explicitly shared at this stage. This is the stage at which, based on the expectations, capabilities and limitations, a practical and clear cooperating arrangement should be drawn up. The key questions here are quite similar to those of any planning process: what is to be done, by whom, when and how? The answers to these questions should be agreed mutually.
- Monitor, evaluate and learn from the partnership: For a sustainable partnership, similarly to any other relationship, the process should be monitored, evaluated and learnt from. The initial partnership agreement, regarding the roles and responsibilities, can change over time as a result of changing capabilities and limitations. An on-going evaluation of the partnership process is very important as well as the assessment of how close you are to reaching the common goal.

Tips on Networking for Recognition

One sure fact: you are not the only one advocating for the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning, probably not in your own context and definitely not on a European level.

Being a part of a network may provide several opportunities and advantages. You can have access to new knowledge, different innovative practices, successful and not so successful recognition actions, potential partners, and finally the supportive feeling of 'not being alone in the field'.

Here we will share with you some tips based on different experiences of networking.

Networks are like nets: If you are new in networking, start with the people that you know. Identify clear communication tools and get in touch. Surely they are also connected to some other people, so you will also be able to establish new contacts through them.

Networks mobilise: Networks not only mobilise people, they also mobilise ideas and thoughts, which is equally important. Sharing your ideas or practices in the right network can bring you feedback and inspiration.

Givers get: When involved in a network, you should give time to follow and support the ideas and projects of other members of the network. Sometimes spreading their voice can be enough support for the other members to keep supporting you.

Do what you say, and say what you can't do: Networks are based on relationships. Different links in the network may ask for support from each other. If you would like to be a part of a supportive net, do what you say you will do and say what you can't do.

If you want to create and manage a network, make sure that all the parties involved know the ground rules of your network; how to get involved, how to communicate, what is/is not acceptable in the network, how to depart from the network, etc. No centre of any network can control all the communication between the links, that's not the idea of networking, anyway. Actually it is the opposite. So set the rules with the initial links and make them known to all the members. A functioning network is the one which is easy to get in, easy to stay in and easy to leave.

Robin and Lark

While Robin, Lark and their friends from the Clouds Youth Centre were having meetings to create partnerships, their cause had already become a topic of interest for others in the civil society circles of Render. The women's association called 'Render is Female!' mentioned the importance of youth work for the empowerment of young women twice in their recent policy reviews. They also volunteered to run some workshops at the Centre. The outcome of the meetings with the Municipality made it obvious that the Municipality will only support their work on recognition, if they would be willing to have a special focus on the prevention of abusive substances among young people. On the on-line platform of the youth organisations network, Lark realised that they needed a name for their strategy, a name that would catch attention, a name that would summarise their cause. They choose the name 'Unlocking Doors for Youth Work'.

This is exactly the moment that we need to create a long-term plan. Now we know who and what surrounds our cause, let's write down a path for 'Unlocking Doors', let's draw up a strategy.

Right, but also it must be a flexible strategy that can be changed when it needs to be.

Setting up Your Recognition Strategy - Step by Step

Before getting to the step by step exercise of setting up a strategy, let's take a moment and question why we need a strategy anyway. Strategy can sound like something bigger, broader and more complicated than a project. Can't we achieve what we want through simply implementing a project?

Miracles can happen every day, but on experience, recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning does not happen in a day. It is a long term adventure in which the road is made by walking it. Non-formal education/learning practice is outside of the conventional approaches to learning, empowering and interacting. Aiming towards recognition needs a well-planned long term process, which should always have room for flexibility and adaptation. Therefore what we may need is broader than a project. We need to have a strategy.

In very simple terms, a strategy answers the following questions:

- → Situation: What is the current situation which you want to change?
- → Target: What do you want it to become?
- → Path: How do you plan to achieve this change?
- → Checkpoints: How will you know if you have achieved any of the steps for change?

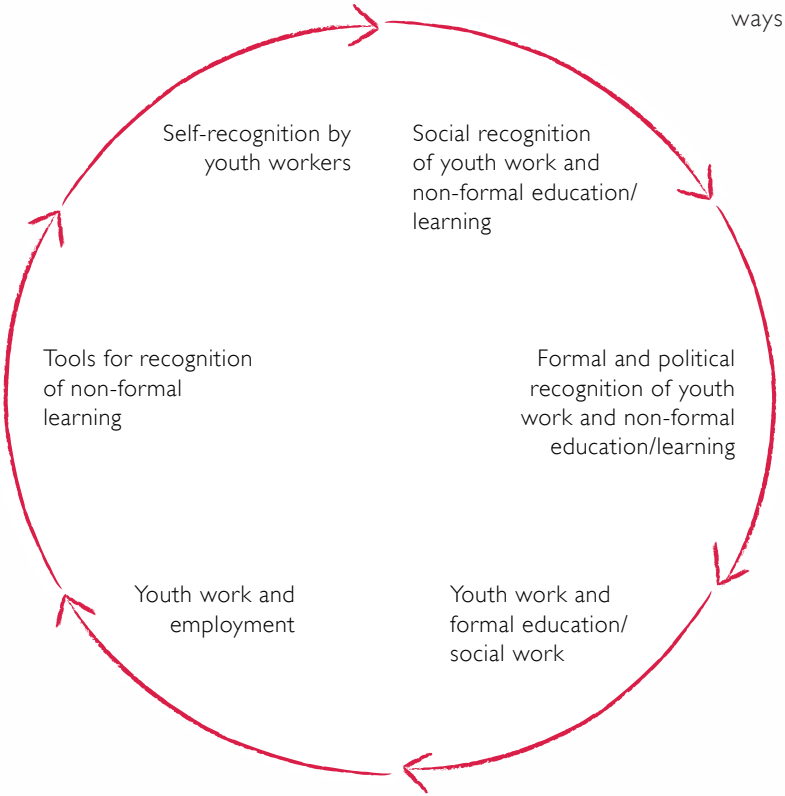
These four key questions also make up the structural frame while setting up a recognition strategy. In this handbook we present 7 Steps for designing your own recognition strategy in your own context. In the following section, you will find tools and questions which you may find helpful:

7 Steps to Your Recognition Strategy

Step 1:
Know your recognition context

The first step is all about identifying the current situation in the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning in your own context.

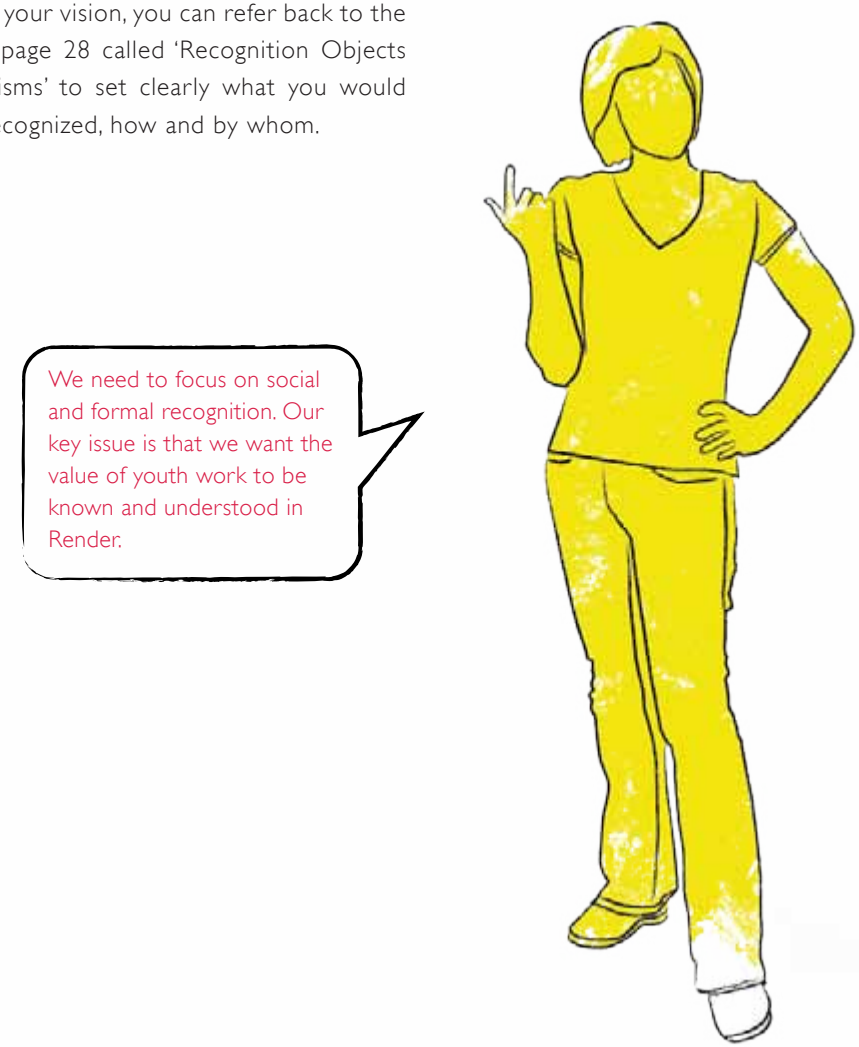
Do a small research on the status of youth work and non-formal education/learning in your community and country. This will help you make informed decisions and choose the best possible ways to work on recognition in your context.



The exercise on page 28 called 'Know Your Recognition Context!' could be a good tool to use. By using the tool, you will be able to explore social, formal, political, and self-recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning in your own context. You will also become more familiar with their relation to formal education, social work and employment. Added to this you will get acquainted with any tools for recognition that already exist in your own context, if there are any.

Step 2:
Visioning recognition

The second step is identifying what you want the current situation about recognition to become in the future. And for that, dreaming is the key action. Our suggestion is to dream and dream it out loud. After setting your vision, you can refer back to the exercise on page 28 called 'Recognition Objects and Mechanisms' to set clearly what you would like to get recognized, how and by whom.



The text below can help you in visioning for the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning.

Visioning for Recognition

…allow yourself to dream and create…
…prevent yourself from saying "yes, but"…
…enter the world of possibilities…
…feel free to imagine…
…a picture in 10-15 years time…
…when youth work and non-formal education/learning have received their recognition…
…all you have struggled for…
…the recognition they deserve…

→ How does it look like?

→ How does it feel to be recognized?

→ What does it mean for your colleagues - youth workers?

→ What are the benefits for young people in your community?

→ What does the cooperation with formal education look like?

→ What does recognition mean for the funding of youth activities?

→ What about the employment sector, how do employers see non-formal learning in the youth field?

→ Have any tools for the recognition of learning been developed and used?

→ How many youth workers are present in the media?

→ What do politicians say about youth work?

→ What is the understanding of non-formal education/learning in your community?

…Keep this image in your mind for a while…
…observe the details…
…take a photo of it…
…Now, take a paper and pen to document this image…
…either as a drawing or a description…

If you use this visioning text, keep the outcome of it, (your description or your drawing). It may help you in responding to the 'Recognition Objects and Mechanisms' exercise.

Step 3:
Formulate your recognition adventure

Now it is time to formulate the path between the current situation and your vision of recognition.

Here we suggest you use a tool from management practice; usually referred to as 'Problem and Solution Tree analysis'. This analysis tool will enable you to get a better understanding of the causes and the effects of your core issue. By understanding these better, the tool will help you to identify your aim, the objectives that will take you to your aim, and the potential outcomes as you reach towards your aim.

But first, let's have a look at the core issue.

Having completed step 2 you should be clear on:

→ **What** you would like to get better recognition for?

→ **How** you would like it to be recognised?

→ And **by whom** you would like it to be recognised?

The collective answer to these three questions makes up the core issue of your strategy.

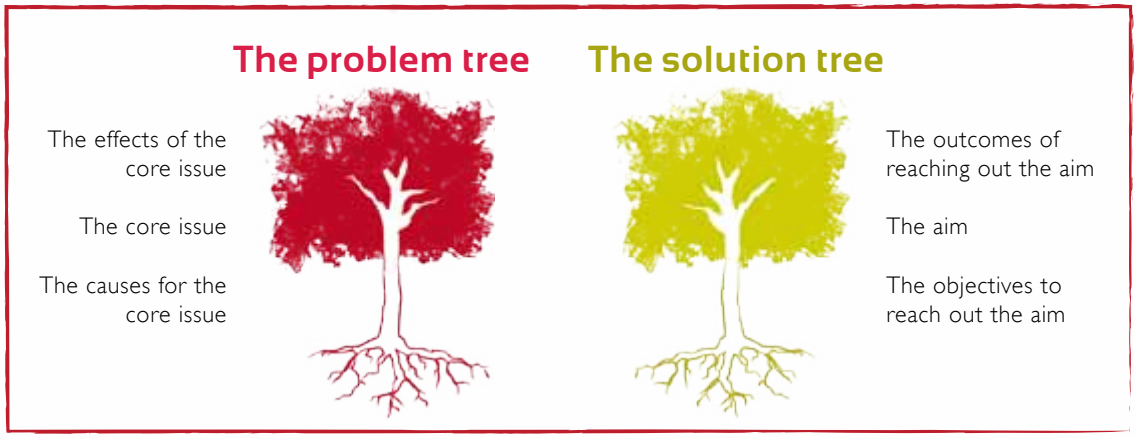
Let's see some examples of core issues:

→ Youth work to be socially recognised by funders and sponsors through increased financial support

→ Youth work profession to be formally recognised by public institutions through an accreditation process

→ Non-formal education/learning to be recognised in recruitment procedures by employers

Once you have your core issue, it is time to draw two trees; a Problem Tree and a Solution Tree. Each tree should have three main parts: the roots, the trunk and the leaves. In each tree, these main parts represent the concepts which will guide you to formulate your adventure. Here they are;



First, let's draw up the Problem Tree. On the trunk of your Problem Tree, you write the core issue. On the roots, you write the causes that feed the core issue. And finally on the leaves, you write the effects of the core issue.

Let's take an example of a core issue from above; 'youth work to be socially recognised by funders and sponsors through increased financial support'. Possible root causes could be that funders do not have enough information about youth work or funders can't predict the competences gained through youth work. The effects of this core issue, (the leaves), are the difficulty in finding financial support for youth work activities from funders and/or sponsors.

What about the Solution Tree then?

The Solution Tree is a positive reflection of the Problem Tree.

You reformulate and re-write the issue, the causes and the effects from the Problem Tree so they become the aim, the objectives and the outcomes – the Solution Tree.

Let's take the same example about youth work and funders. The main aim of the strategy would be; 'to achieve social recognition by funders and sponsors'. The objectives to reach this aim would be providing information to funders about youth work and about competences gained through youth work. The outcome of the strategy will then be that it would be easier to find financial support from funders and sponsors since youth work is recognised.

A realistic Problem Tree/Solution Tree analysis needs a good knowledge of your recognition context and also a clear vision for the future – basically the previous two steps of setting up your recognition strategy.

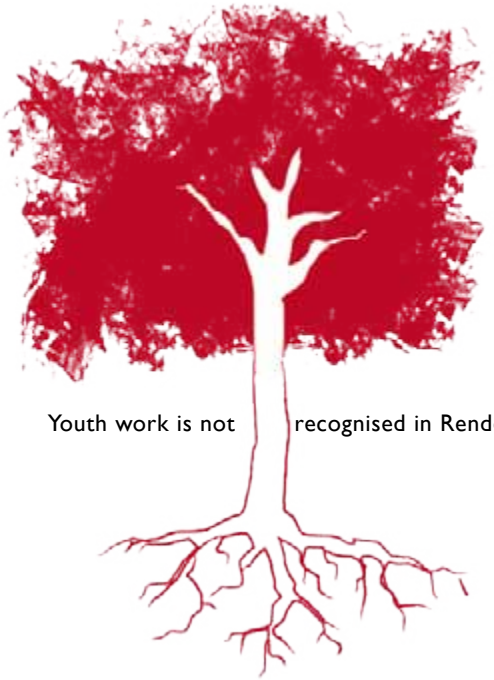
Let's check the Problem and Solution Tree Analysis done by Robin and Lark as an example:

The Problem Tree for Render

The achievements of young people stay unknown.

Youth workers are known as young adults who are resisting growing up.

It is hard to get support for youth work.



Young people cannot name what they gain through youth work.

The media does not provide information on youth work.

The municipality does not consider youth work in its yearly plan.

Companies are mainly interested in supporting other charity work.

Schools consider youth work as a provider of fun activities to keep young people busy.

Families are sceptical with anything that young people do out of school.

See how the roots, the trunk and the leaves have changed.

The Solution Tree for Render

The achievements of young people are known by families and employers.

Youth workers are known as facilitators for learning.

Youth work is financially and socially well supported.

Youth work is recognised in Render.

Young people can name what they gain through youth work.

The media provides information on youth work.

The municipality includes youth work in its yearly plan.

Companies are interested to support the social development of young people.

Schools consider youth work as a milieu for education.

Families support young people to take part in youth work activities.

Obviously some objectives can be reached sooner than others. We need to decide which one to focus on first?

Step 4:
Room for development: knowledge on policies

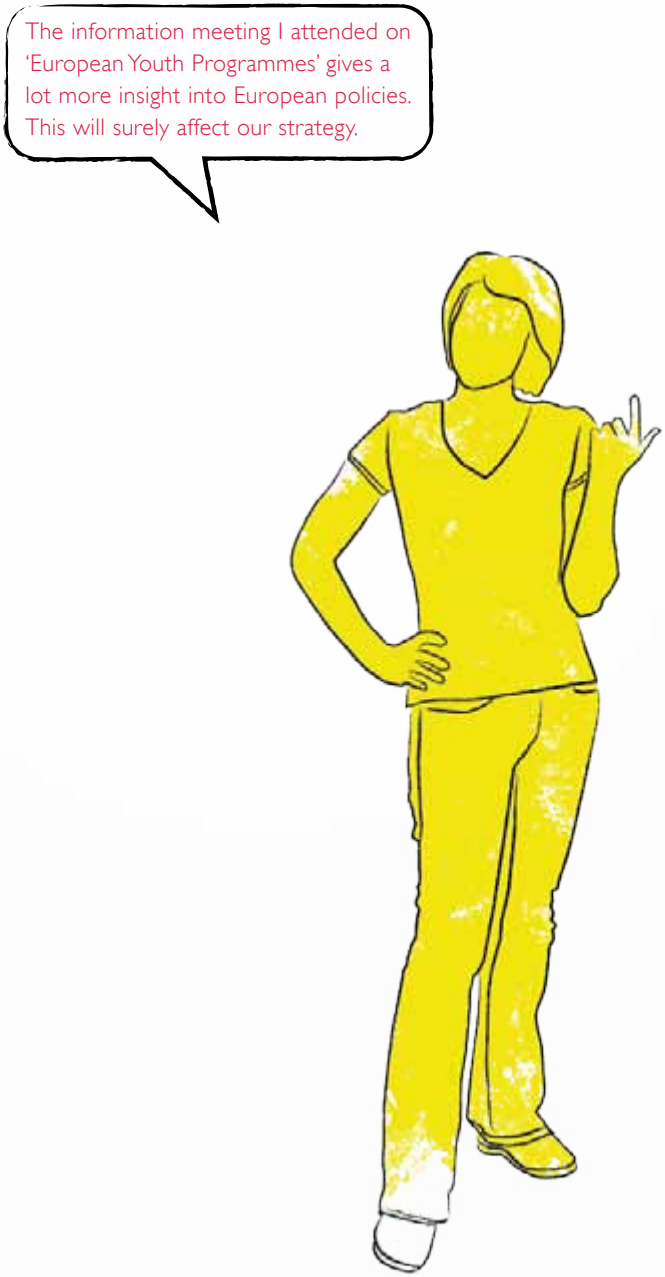
After drawing up your Solution Tree and identifying your aim and objectives, you may face the reality that the current resources and capacity of your organisation or initiative may not be enough to reach all the objectives. If this is the case, take a deep breath and stay cool, because this is just as expected.

A good strategy is a strategy in which there is room for further development. While moving towards the achievement of the objectives you are already capable of dealing with, it is recommended that you develop yourself and your organisation to be able to deal with the objectives which do not seem to be feasible for the moment. The following questions may help you in prioritising your objectives and putting them into a time frame.

In order to identify the first feasible objectives, the answers to the following questions should be positive:

- → Do we have enough knowledge to reach this objective?
- → Do we have the necessary skills to reach this objective?
- → Do we have the necessary financial and organisational sustainability?
- → Do we have prior experience which we can use to reach this objective?
- → Are we motivated to tackle this objective?

If any of the answers to the above questions is not positive, then there is room for personal and organisational learning and development.



Remember that working on better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning is advocacy work. Often it aims at changing policies and official decisions. You may want to go back to page 28 of this handbook, to the section on 'European Policies and Practices in the Field of Recognition' for further inspiration. This could support you in your learning toward and in your arguments for reaching your objectives. We would also like to encourage you to once more research any policies that exist within your own context at local, regional or national level for the same purpose.

Step 5:
Team up for recognition

Now as the path is getting clearer, it is time to team up for recognition.

It is not possible to walk the path to recognition alone. All recognition strategies, (even the ones on self-recognition), need secondary parties like partners and networks. You need to get out of your comfort zone and get connected with new people, institutions and structures.

The tool which you can use at this step for identifying your partners is commonly called the 'Stakeholder Matrix'.

In this matrix, the stakeholders are plotted against two variables; the influence (power) they may have on the implementation of your strategy and the importance (interest) they hold for the outcomes of your strategy.

		Importance of the stakeholder (interest)			
		Unknown importance	Little / No importance	Some importance	Significant importance
Influence of the stakeholder (power)	Significant influence Some influence	C		A	
	Little / No influence Unknown influence	D		B	

The stakeholders that fall in categories A, B and C are the key stakeholders you want for your strategy. The specificities of each category are summarised below:

Category A:
Key players, to be involved, encouraged and managed

These are stakeholders who have a high degree of influence on the implementation of the strategy and who are also of high importance for its success. This implies that the implementing organisation will need to construct good working relationships with these stakeholders. These stakeholders are potential partners that you would like to have during your implementation but they may also be hard to get. The section, 'Tips on Partnerships for Recognition' on page 28, can give further insight on creating and keeping partnerships.

Category B:
Stakeholders to be acknowledged and informed

These are stakeholders of high importance to the success of the strategy, but with low influence. This shows that they will need to be involved in special initiatives if their interests are to be activated and maintained. It is necessary to keep these stakeholders informed. It is also important to know their needs, priorities and practices. Being in the same networks as these stakeholders can be a good way to keep the communication flow.

Category C:
Stakeholders to be monitored, managed and kept a close eye on

These are stakeholders with high influence, who can therefore affect the implementation of the strategy, but whose interests are not necessarily in line with the core aims of your strategy. They may be a source of significant risk and therefore they will need careful monitoring and management.

Category D:
Stakeholders to be monitored with a minimum effort

The stakeholders in this category, with low influence on and importance to the strategic objectives, may need limited monitoring or evaluation, but are of a low priority.

While teaming up for recognition; you may remember the proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go further, go in company."

Let's check the Stakeholder matrix done by Robin and Lark as an example:

		Importance of the stakeholder (interest)	
		Unknown importance / Little / No importance	Some importance / Significant importance
Influence of the stakeholder (power)	Significant influence / Some influence	C: High-schools in Render	A: Youth organisations in Render; Mass Education Centre of the municipality, University, Families
	Little / No influence / Unknown influence	D: Civil society organisations from different fields in Render	B: Companies in Render, Public authorities in Render, Local media of Render

Step 6:
Plan for change

This step is often taken as a first step, yet it is very difficult to begin any plan without having gone through the previous steps. It is these steps that help you to understand your context better and that support you in getting a deeper insight into the issue that you want to tackle. It is these steps that enable you to get to know the people who have the power or interest which can influence the implementation of your strategy.

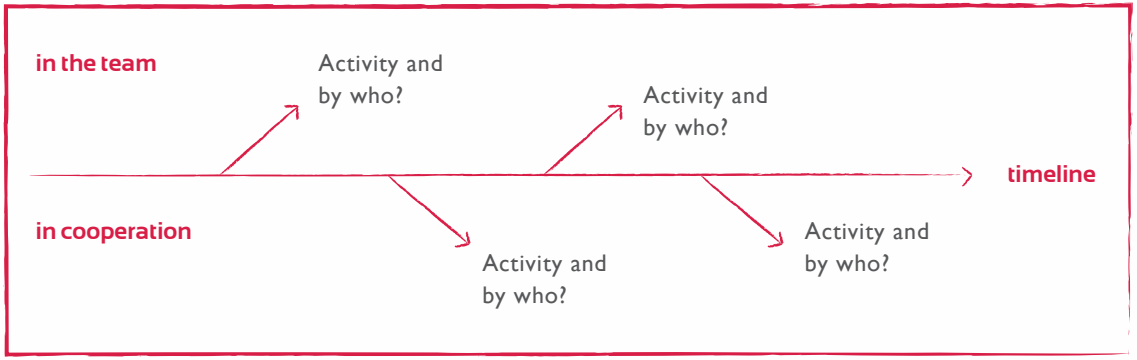
A poor plan is the one which only lists the actions that should be taken. Although poor, it is still a plan. A better plan is the one which also identifies who does which action. And an even better plan is the one which lists the actions to be taken, identifies who does which action and also puts everything in a timeframe. And the best plan is the one which has all the above mentioned elements with a good sense of flexibility.

Here are some examples; your recognition plan could look like one of these…

Objective focused plan: Once you have your objectives clear, you need to list down all the activities that are needed in order to realise each objective. Following this list, you should identify a certain amount of time for each activity and assign the people who will realise them.

	Timing →	→	→	→	→	→
OBJECTIVE 1						
Activity	By who?			By who?		
Activity		By who?			By who?	
Activity			By who?	By who?		By who?
Activity	By who?				By who?	
OBJECTIVE 2						
Activity	By who?			By who?		
Activity	By who?					By who?
Activity		By who?			By who?	
Activity				By who?		

Actor focused plan: You can also draw up a plan which focuses on the actors, (your team, your partners, stakeholders), who will realise the activities rather than focusing on the objectives. Then your plan could look something like this.



In any version that you use, your recognition plan should involve WHAT is to be done, by WHOM and WHEN it is to be done by.

Here are some tips which you can use in listing down your activities within your plan.

Not all recognition plans need to answer all these questions. They are shared here for inspiration and further food for thought.

Is it all about coordination?

→ What type of activities will you need in order to coordinate your strategy?

→ Do you foresee regular coordination meetings?

Long-lasting partnerships need attention

→ What kind of activities do you need in order to initiate long lasting partnerships?

→ What kind of activities do you need to keep your partnerships alive and working?

Recognition is also about being seen

→ Who do you plan to inform about the achievements of your strategy?

→ Which communication tools do you plan to use to inform them?

Resources for recognition

→ Time, money, material, people-power! What resources will you need on your path to recognition?

→ Where and how do you plan to get what you need?

Action for learning

→ How will you develop your competences while reaching your strategic objectives?

→ How do you plan to learn from your experiences as you travel along your recognition path?

Let's check the overview of the plan done by Robin and Lark as an example:

in the team

- Activities within youth centre on self-recognition
- Preparation of the 'Unlocking Doors' youth festival with the young people and partners
- Meetings with companies and institutions about the strategy and the festival

timeline

in cooperation

- Regular consultancy meetings with schools and families
- Research on the needs and interests of young people in Render
- Yearly 'Unlocking Doors' festival
- Checkpoint for next year's strategy

Media coverage on all activities

At the festival, we will have workshops run by the young people on the issues that concern them. They can organise performances if they want to. Families and teachers will be invited to attend and organise workshops following the outcomes of the regular meetings throughout the year. Representatives from the public institutions, companies and universities will be invited to a symposium within the festival to further explore the value of youth work.

Is it that easy?
You can never know without acting!

There it is. We will work on all our strategic objectives through the year and make the outcomes visible at the 'Unlocking Doors for Youth Work' festival at the end of the year. We will try to get the municipality on board as a partner. The Festival will also be the space to ask for formal recognition. If we don't ask for it we won't get it!

Each year the festival will have a different aim. The first year we will help all our stakeholders to better understand youth work. Next year, we will look at how the municipality's yearly strategies can support youth work.

Step 7:
Checkpoints - Act, monitor, adapt!

This is the last step of setting up a strategy for recognition.

In simple words:

Take the actions according to the plan, monitor the results and be ready to adapt your strategy on the way.

Recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning is a long journey. But as with all journeys they start with a first simple step. On the path to recognition, from time to time, you may need to stop, take a look back along the way you have already walked and reflect on your journey so far. How does it look? Has the initial situation about recognition changed? In which direction has it changed? Is it in line with your vision or have things happened in a completely different way? Are there any recent changes or developments in the relevant policy scene? How do they affect your strategy? What is your experience with your partners so far? How about the team?

Basically, while drawing up your recognition strategy, you should foresee that from time to time you will need to stop and evaluate the actions you have taken up to that point and monitor any changes you may have caused.

Right from the beginning, be prepared for a longer journey than you expect. And remain open for learning and adapting along the way.

Overwhelmed?

Need more inspiration?

A present for you…

42 Activity Ideas for Your Recognition Strategy

During the 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning and Youth Work' training course, which took place in November 2010 in Milocer, Montenegro, we asked the following question to a group of youth workers/leaders coming from different regions; namely Western Europe, Mediterranean, South East Europe, and Eastern Europe and Caucasus regions.

What would be the top 42 activity ideas for the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning?

Campaigns, projects, educational activities, advocacy actions, research, communication, publishing, demonstration, art, translation, games, on-line tools, rewards, gadgets, street actions, etc. were all welcome!

Here is a list of things that your recognition colleagues came up with in a really short time. Feel free to get inspired!!

42 ideas for recognition

1. Publication about non-formal education/learning in your language
2. Collect and publish stories about non-formal education/learning
3. Research about non-formal learning in youth work
4. Video project about the value of youth work and non-formal education/learning
5. Make an inventory of youth work and non-formal education/learning providers
6. Seminar for mixed stakeholders about non-formal education/learning
7. Translate relevant policies/documents
8. Write an article in education/youth magazines
9. Gallery of famous youth workers
10. Computer game for young people
11. Public debate (for high schools)
12. Youth worker award
13. Network internet platform
14. List of employers recognising non-formal learning
15. Common Facebook for youth work events
16. To make an awesome training for professors
17. E-learning programme about non-formal learning
18. Camp for kids of influential people
19. To live it and implement it myself
20. T-shirts 'I love non-formal education' to school kids
21. Festival of youth work/invite groups

Ideas (continued)

→ 22. TV and radio programmes
→ 23. Movie about different experiences in non-formal learning in Europe
→ 24. Regular reports on web/TV/radio/adult audience
→ 25. Street action/flash mob/circle in the street
→ 26. Info points about youth work and non-formal education
→ 27. Online network of students and volunteers for informing about non-formal education
→ 28. Living Library in universities and high schools
→ 29. Slogans on stickers
→ 30. Use street art
→ 31. Fair of non-formal education
→ 32. Concerts/theatre... about formal and non-formal education
→ 33. Workshops for parents
→ 34. Pressure on stakeholders
→ 35. Billboards as road signs to non-formal education
→ 36. Manual to libraries for teaching
→ 37. Advocacy for strategy on non-formal education/learning
→ 38. Campaign about youth work and non-formal education
→ 39. Training for human resources managers about non-formal education
→ 40. Training for people from education departments
→ 41. Quest for non-formal education/treasure hunt
→ 42. Energy drink 'feel young go non-formal'

Wondering why the number 42? In the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, a science fiction comedy series created by Douglas Adams, the number 42 is the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything! The answer was calculated by the computer named Deep Thought.

There is also another quotation from the same series which we like a lot and also use many times when implementing a recognition strategy:

"Don't Panic!"

Well done Robin and Lark!!

Four years have passed since Robin and Lark started to question the recognition of youth work in the town of Render. The partnerships they created became rock solid. Activities on the self-recognition of youth work became an integral part of the work at the Clouds Youth Association. In time, the meetings they initiated for families and teachers became so popular, that adults were appearing more and more in the youth centre, which turned out to be a bit uncomfortable for many of the young people. After a series of consultations, these meetings were transferred to the Mass Education Centre of the Municipality. Once every month, youth workers organise workshops with families and teachers there.

The process of social recognition of youth work by companies and businesses also went on remarkably well. In the second year Robin and Lark were informed about an 'International Conference on the Competences of Young Adults and Employment'. As soon as they heard about it they immediately got in contact with the participants of a symposium they had organised during the, 'Unlocking Doors for Youth Work' festival, the year before. Two human resources experts, from local businesses, took up the challenge to participate in the conference where they presented their involvement in the Youth Work festival. Both are now strong allies of the Youth Centre.

Although they asked for formal recognition from the Municipality in the second year, through having youth work in the municipality's yearly plan, they only got it at the end of the fourth year. As it is a new initiative, the municipality has asked for quite a lot of paper work in exchange for financial support. Lark is already considering raising the issue of excessive paperwork in the yearly evaluation meeting at the Municipality.

Is youth work better recognised in Render now? The two colleagues keep on asking this question of themselves and keep finding new fields for action. And so the adventure continues.

A Few Inspiring Cases and Good Practice in the Field of Recognition

In this section, you will find examples of good practice recognition strategies in both the local and the national context. The selected examples vary in terms of their aims for recognition as well as the recognition methods and activities used. First there are examples aimed at the recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal education/learning by 'CreativWerkstatt' and 'Stardiplats'. Next there are cases focused primarily on better social recognition of non-formal education/learning by a variety of stakeholders, for example, 'Grupa "Hajde da…"' and 'Kids in Action'. Finally, there is also a case focused on formal and political recognition of youth work and the youth worker profession by a national umbrella organization 'NAPOR'.

case 1 Cultural Competency Record Recognition of Competencies Acquired through Cultural Education

By CreativWerkstatt (Germany)

How did it all start?

Due to a lack of funding, especially for bigger projects like theatre plays, art festivals, etc. CreativWerkstatt started to work in cooperation with the local Volksbank more than 10 years ago. A 'Small' contribution was transferred to CreativWerkstatt to implement extra projects. CreativWerkstatt promoted Volksbank in their publications and leaflets, etc. The visibility of Volksbank and the good quality of the projects by CreativWerkstatt, convinced Volksbank in 2008 to change their sponsoring concept toward a more sustainable, longer term approach and to further develop the partnership. Since 2008, Volksbank has financially supported the training of trainers and facilitators from CreativWerkstatt in the use of the recognition tool 'Kompetenznachweis Kultur', (Cultural Competency Record). They support the time the trainers and facilitators spend with the young people who are working on their Kompetenznachweis Kultur. Volksbank has also committed to pay the participation fee for disadvantaged young people who want to get involved in the Kompetenznachweis Kultur process.

Key aims of the initiative

- Individual recognition for the young people participating in the Kompetenznachweis Kultur process and the final certificate
- Social recognition for CreativWerkstatt, (as a competent organisation that is able to implement the amount of projects they do)
- Political recognition for CreativWerkstatt, the commune of Herten, (as host of the CreativWerkstatt), and for Volksbank
- Public recognition for CreativWerkstatt and the young people involved when the young people are presented their Kompetenznachweis Kultur Certificates at a public presentation by the Mayor of Herten and the Chairperson of Volksbank

Key stakeholders involved

- Young people
- Youth workers from the CreativWerkstatt
- The respective partners from Volksbank who play an important part in improving the quality of the projects and developing common ideas through annual meetings

Key methods and actions taken

- Annual meetings to reflect on the partnership, which includes the sharing of needs and analysing the situation of young people. This has led CreativWerkstatt to start providing activities for young people in the transition period between school and employment
- Developing their programme offers, according to the needs identified with the Volksbank, with a strong focus on the non-formal learning/out-of-school context – of course in a creative manner and suitable for young people
- 2-yearly public presentation of the projects of CreativWerkstatt including the presentation of Kompetenznachweise Kultur Certificates to young people

Key outcomes

- Using the Kompetenznachweis Kultur Certificate to support young people in their self-reflection about personal and professional development. The Kompetenznachweis Kultur programme is available to young people from 12 to 27 years of age. However it is mainly used by those who are in the phase of looking for professional development
- The CreativWerkstatt offers a large number of courses and projects which are open to all young people for which there is financial support
- Sustainable cooperation has grown over the years and from this there has developed a common discussion about the situation of young people, especially for the bank and how they see the trainees they hire

More info

CreativWerkstatt: www.creativwerkstatt-herten.de (only in German)
Kompetenznachweis Kultur: www.kompetenznachweiskultur.de
Volksbank: www.vb-ruhrmitte.de

Contact details

Thomas Buchenau or Brigitte Surmann, creativwerkstatt@herten.de

case 2 Recognition of Young People's Non-Formal Learning in Their CVs

By Stardiplats (Estonia)

How did it all start?

When young people apply for work they don't usually have official working experiences, however if they have been participating in youth work and have non-formal learning experiences, through youth work, they will have developed a number of social skills. The idea was to show young people that they should recognize their experiences, analyze them and then write them in their portfolio or CV. Generally, the aim was also that wider society, (for example; teachers and employers), should accept and recognize these experiences, as real experiences, relevant for future employment. That's how the website called Stardiplats, (Starting Place), was created. The website is the place where young people can gather and write down all of their formal education and working experiences, as well as all the different kinds of non-formal education experiences. The young people are also invited to analyze their experiences and write them down in their CV, this process makes them more compatible for the labour market and helps them to find work.

Key aims of the initiative

- Enhancing youth employability through better visibility of competencies gained in the non-formal learning context
- Better social recognition of young people's non-formal learning experiences by young people themselves, but also by employers, teachers, parents, etc.
- Supporting the recognition of non-formal learning by Universities, through encouraging young people to use different possibilities for the recognition of prior learning, e.g. the VÕTA portfolio in the Estonian context

Key stakeholders involved	Young people, career advisers, youth workers, employers, other specialists in the youth field
Key methods and actions taken	Website where young people can create their CV, get news about labour and job offers, international projects, voluntary work, etc. It is a space where they can get some fresh ideas about how to get more experiences and how to develop themselves. There are also tips like how to behave at a work interview, how to start your own business, etc.
Key outcomes	• Over 2,300 registered users who have started to collect their non-formal learning experiences • New technical opportunities developed for new users
More info	www.stardiplats.ee
Contact details	Liis Kuusk, Liis.kuusk@entk.ee

case 3 Social Recognition of Non-Formal Education/Learning

By Grupa "Hajde da…" (Serbia)

How did it all start?

The field of non-formal education/learning has grown intensively in Serbia along with the development of civil society. In the 1990's the sector was largely focusing on peace work, capacity building of NGO's and psycho-social interventions. At the same time, some similar educational initiatives were developing in other sectors, (e.g. employment and social sectors), but there were very few mutual contacts or common understandings of approaches to non-formal education/learning. In 2004 following the European wave of recognition policy developments, as well as using available European Integration funds, 'Grupa "Hajde da…"' implemented its strategy for the recognition of non-formal education/learning involving different stakeholders. Some of the results of this initiative occurred quite quickly while others only came about after several years.

Key aims of the initiative

- To promote the concept of non-formal education/learning in Serbia
- To start a dialogue about non-formal education/learning amongst different sectors
- To share information about European developments in the field of recognition
- Explore ways to start working on recognition in Serbia

Key stakeholders involved

NGO's, adult education institutions, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, National Employment Service, Schools, professional institutes, freelance trainers…

Key methods and actions taken

- Establishing contacts and networks with relevant stakeholders
- Development of a training manual and training for trainers course
- 10 local seminars on the recognition of non-formal education and learning at national and European levels
- The publication of 'Non-Formal Education', a collection of articles about non-formal education and recognition from local and European perspectives
- Project documentation with recommendations for further actions
- Planning future actions

Key outcomes

- Non-formal education/learning is a concept that has started to be used more often
- A dialogue amongst stakeholders established
- The National Employment Service has started to take into account non-formal and informal education/learning
- Set the stage for some later legal developments when the issue was tackled in the National Youth Policy, the Youth Law, and the Adult Education Law

More info

- www.hajdeda.org.rs/nfe/
- http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/Publications/ Coyote/11/nfe_serbia_montenegro.pdf

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case 4 Evidence Based Recognition of Non-Formal Learning

By Kids in Action (Greece)

How did it all start?

Following the need to have a say in the debate on the recognition of non-formal education/learning in Greece and building on recent developments at a European level, 'Kids in Action' started a long term recognition strategy. Several approaches and projects were used, including research, mapping of youth work, and the documenting of young people's testimonies, etc. All of this resulted in the production of several publications. These were later collectively promoted at the exciting internet portal called 'My Learning'.

Key aims of the initiative

- To strengthen a conceptual understanding of and an evidence based debate on, non-formal education/learning in Greece
- To increase awareness of and appreciation for the learning outcomes of non-formal education/learning processes, by the actors, (young people, youth workers/trainers), and society in general
- To set a long-term strategy on the social recognition of non-formal education/learning in Greece

Key stakeholders involved

Young people, youth NGO's, youth trainers

Key methods and actions taken

- Mapping of non-formal education/learning and youth work in northern Greece
- Conceptual mapping of non-formal education/learning in the publication 'Here2Stay'
- A qualitative action research project on non-formal education/learning in the youth field
- Documentary movie to promote the recognition of non-formal education/learning among less privileged Greek young people
- Web portal as means of sharing resources and experiences

Key outcomes

- Better understanding of non-formal education/learning in the youth field in Greece
- Evidence based position on calls for better social recognition
- Increased awareness of the value of non-formal education/learning in youth activities
- Long term strategy for social recognition set

More info

www.my-learning.gr/

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case 5 Political and Formal Recognition of Youth Work

By National Association of Youth Work Practitioners - NAPOR, Serbia

How did it all start?

Over the past ten years the number and scope of youth work projects in Serbia has been constantly increasing. The need for professionalization, standardization and quality assurance within the youth work field became obvious. This created a demand for the recognition of youth work by other actors in society, especially public administration. One of the major issues was the variety of qualifications of the practitioners who delivered youth work. With no system and no standards, youth workers had been gaining their qualifications through varied educational pathways. These qualifications never underwent a systematic verification process, which is an alarming concern, especially in relation to child and youth protection. The response to these issues was the establishment of the 'National Association of Youth Workers', (Serbian: Nacionalna Asocijacija Praktičara/ki Omladinskog Rada – NAPOR), as a union of civil society organisations. It was officially registered in March, 2009. It embraces 80 organisations that deliver Youth Work. It lobbies, advocates and participates in the development of and the implementation of Youth Work professionalization.

Key aims of the initiative

- Quality assurance and professionalization of youth work in Serbia
- Political and formal recognition of the youth work profession
- Social recognition of youth work

Key stakeholders involved

80 member organizations, Ministry of Youth and Sport, University of Novi Sad, Ministry of Education

[7] NAPOR – the english translation of the Serbian word 'Napor' is 'Effort'.

Key methods and actions taken

- Conferences on the professionalization of youth work
- Promotional movies on youth work
- Advocacy initiatives for adopting the Youth Law
- Partnership with universities in setting up youth work studies
- Defining an ethical code for youth workers
- Setting the occupational standards for youth work in Serbia
- Registering a youth worker occupational profile in National vocational registry

Key outcomes

- Better conceptual understanding of youth work in Serbia
- Definition of youth work included in the Youth Lawoi
- Setting professional standards of youth work in Serbia
- Better social recognition of youth work
- Development of training and higher education possibilities for youth workers

More info

www.napor.net/

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- SALTO-YOUTH Training & Cooperation Resource Centre. Youthpass Unfolded, to be published in 2012

About 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work' Training Course

This handbook was largely inspired by the long term training course 'Let's Train: Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work', organized within the Let's Strategy[8] of the regional SALTO Resource Centres. This particular training course was co-organized by SALTO Training and Cooperation and the Slovenian and Turkish National Agencies. The course included two seminars and a project phase in between.

The first seminar in Montenegro gathered youth workers from all three partner regions and programme countries. It gathered people who were interested in working on better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning in their contexts. During the seminar the participants had opportunities to share their realities on the status of youth work and non-formal education/learning, work together on strategies for better recognition of youth work and get to know better the recent European policy developments in this field. In addition, the seminar emphasized the need to work in partnership with other stakeholders, (outside of the youth field), and the necessity to design recognition strategies that will fit the needs and the resources of each local/regional/national reality. After putting all these into practice the stage was set for the development of the participants recognition strategies – which they started to implement in the project phase of the course.

During the project phase the participants were supported by the team through coaching sessions on-line, held regularly once a month. A networking internet platform was established for this phase. The platform was also used as an additional discussion forum, further project partnership building and a resources sharing space.

Finally, the group met in the 'Let's' follow up seminar to evaluate and recognize their own work. They also had the opportunity to share it with participants from other 'Let's' training courses held in the same year, ('Let's Train on Peace Education' and 'Let's Train on Civil Society, Democracy and Participation').

The authors of this handbook, (also trainers on the course), would like to thank all the 'Let's Train for Recognition' participants, for their commitment and outstanding motivation to work on better recognition of non-formal education/learning and youth work. Special thanks goes to all who actively and generously contributed to the products and ideas used in this handbook.

[8]About Let's strategy: www.salto-youth.net/about/events/let-s/

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Unlocking Doors to Recognition

Setting up strategies for the better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning in your context

Do you think youth work is not recognised enough? Do you think non-formal education/learning could be appreciated more? The recognition debate is waiting for your contribution.

'Unlocking Doors to Recognition' is a handbook for you to explore your way of dealing with recognition. It explains the key concepts of the field of recognition, and provides guidelines on how to set up your own recognition strategy, step by step. Finally, the cases presented in the handbook will hopefully act as further inspiration. The handbook is here to help you make your contributions in the youth field more visible, better understood and more greatly appreciated.

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You can download it for free from the Youthpass website at www.youthpass.eu.

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