

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres

Promoting Council of Europe values,
youth policy and youth work standards in Europe

A Programme of the European Steering
Committee for Youth



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Introduction: promoting Council of Europe values, youth policy and youth work standards in Europe

Youth holds significant importance for the Council of Europe, as evidenced by its active engagement since 1972, in not only formulating a youth policy but also implementing concrete youth work through extensive training, projects, and international encounters. This extensive involvement has served as inspiration for youth policy and youth work in numerous countries in Europe and beyond. The establishment of the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest stands as an evident outcome of the Council of Europe's permanent commitment to youth.

Several member states are closely following the Council of Europe's work in the youth field, drawing inspiration from the educational and political philosophy exemplified by the European Youth Centres. Many express interest in developing similar centres of excellence within their own countries in the framework of the Council of Europe youth sector.

At the same time, the Council of Europe is interested in multiplying its work by reaching out to the national, regional and local levels. Youth centres in the member states can be a powerful ally in this regard and therefore the Council of Europe is supporting initiatives of public authorities and other stakeholders in the youth field that are inspired by and committed to the educational and political philosophy of the European Youth Centres.

In 2008, the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) initiated a process to introduce a quality label for youth centres wishing to be associated with the youth work of the Council of Europe. Over time, this programme has not only proven to be an effective means of enhancing quality standards in youth centres but has also evolved into a valuable tool for fostering collaboration between the Council of Europe and national, regional or local youth centres. Additionally, it has become a mechanism for generating new projects and cooperation in the realm of youth work in Europe.

Since 2008, the Quality Label has benefitted both the Organisation and the associated centres, establishing itself as a significant component of the Council of Europe's youth policy.

The Council of Europe and its Values

The Council of Europe is the first institution of European co-operation. It is an inter-governmental organisation, covering nearly the entire European continent, with its 46 member countries. Founded on 5 May 1949 by 10 countries, the Council of Europe seeks to develop common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals throughout Europe. The primary aim of the Council of Europe is to create a common democratic and legal area ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These values are the foundations of a tolerant and civilised society and indispensable for European stability, economic growth and social cohesion. On the basis of these fundamental values, the Council of Europe tries to find shared solutions to the major issues and challenges the continent faces, including but not restricted to the violation of human rights, backsliding of democracy, corruption, organised crime, climate crisis, violence against children and women, and human trafficking. It seeks to do this through co-operation between all member states. The Council's objectives are:

- ▶ to find common solutions to the challenges facing European society
- ▶ to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity
- ▶ to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law
- ▶ to consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

The youth sector of the Council of Europe

Since 1972, the Council of Europe has become the main driving force behind youth policy development and youth work in Europe. The “Youth for Democracy” programme helps young people to become engaged and responsible European citizens who advocate human rights and participate fully in democratic life. The Council of Europe promotes opportunity-focused youth policies that empower young people and engage them in the development of democratic, inclusive and peaceful societies, thus “making” young Europeans “agents of change”.

The Youth Department of the Council of Europe elaborates recommendations, guidelines and programmes for the development of coherent and effective youth policies at local, national and European levels.

It provides funding and educational support for international youth activities aiming to promote democratic citizenship among youth, youth mobility and the values of human rights, democracy and cultural pluralism. It seeks to bring together and disseminate expertise and knowledge about the life situations, aspirations and ways of expression of young Europeans.

The European Youth Centres (EYCs) in Strasbourg and Budapest, established in 1972 and 1995 respectively, are the backbone of the Council of Europe’s youth sector. They are permanent structures for the implementation of the Council of Europe’s youth policy, hosting most of the Council of Europe’s “Youth for Democracy” activities.

They serve as educational laboratories for the development of quality standards for youth work and focal points for innovation in youth policy development.

The Council of Europe, through its European Youth Centres, provides young people and youth organisations—both formal and informal—across Europe and beyond with valuable opportunities and resources. These include advanced educational support, safe physical spaces with residential facilities, and access to various sectors of the Council of Europe. These resources empower young people to explore their concerns, advocate for their needs and drive social change.

"We set the Council of Europe on a new path of increased transparency and cooperation with its stakeholders, with strengthened visibility and sufficient resources. This should include a youth perspective in the Organisation's intergovernmental and other deliberations as youth participation in decision-making processes improves the effectiveness of public policies and strengthens democratic institutions through open dialogue."

* * *

"... Priority will be given to supporting the participation of young persons in democratic life and decision-making processes, including through education about human rights and core democratic values, such as pluralism, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability."

Reykjavik Declaration, 4th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Council of Europe, May 2023.

The thematic priorities of the Council of Europe Youth Sector focus on:

1. Revitalizing pluralistic democracy
2. Young people's access to rights
3. Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies
4. Youth work
5. Developing and improving youth policy based on Council of Europe standards.

Source: www.coe.int/youth



The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest are key facilities for implementing the Council of Europe's youth policy. Major youth campaigns, such as "All Different, All Equal" and "No Hate Speech," were developed and coordinated at these centres.

Most of the Council of Europe's youth sector activities are hosted at the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest. These include a wide range of training courses and seminars covering various topics aligned with the Council of Europe's priorities.

These facilities can be used for the activities of any external organisation, association, institution, structure or youth network which respects and defends the Council of Europe's values.



The decision-making meetings of the Council of Europe's youth sector – the Joint Council on Youth – alternate between the two European Youth Centres, turning these locations into key hubs for reflecting on and advancing youth work and policies.

The European Youth Centres

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres is informed by educational concepts and standards that have been established over many years through the practice of the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest.

The EYCs in Strasbourg and Budapest are international training and meeting centres with residential facilities. They provide a flexible and modern working environment for international activities, especially non-formal educational activities with young people, with meeting rooms equipped for simultaneous interpretation, and with libraries, audio-visual and computer facilities. The staff includes an “in-house” educational advisory team that provides educational and technical support in preparing, running and following up activities.

The EYCs act as laboratories for the development of innovative approaches to value-based non-formal education with young people and aim to train multipliers in the values of the Council of Europe. They produce their own educational materials and curricula in the areas of human rights education, intercultural learning and anti-racism education, education for democratic citizenship and global education. A key aspect of their work is to promote the value of international co-operation amongst young people, their representative organisations and a variety of youth structures. In this way, the EYCs promote the exchange of knowledge and good practice among professionals in the youth sector in member states of the Council of Europe and beyond.

The European Youth Centres’ approach to the multiplication of key human values among young people remains unique among equivalent international institutions. In more than 50 years of operation, they have succeeded in creating communities of practice and commitment to Council of Europe values. Through the residential nature of their activities, the European Youth Centres can achieve what is not possible through financial support in the form of grants alone: the European Youth Centres mark biographies and make memories, they create sustainable networks and co-operation, and they engage in development and build consolidated knowledge. This knowledge serves as a reference point for the youth policies of the member states of the Council of Europe, as well as other international institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations, and for non-governmental partners in the youth sector.

The European Youth Centres activities are primarily financed by the Council of Europe “Youth for Democracy” Programme. However, public authorities, non-governmental organisations and other services sharing the values of the Council of Europe and with an interest in or responsibility for youth affairs can use the centres for their activities on a self-financed basis.

Priority areas of work

The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest operate across five fundamental areas of work:

1. Value education

The activities of the European Youth Centres promote identification with and commitment to the values of the Council of Europe through non-formal education with young people.

2. Multiplication of social impact

The activities of the European Youth Centres aim to support young people to become actors of social change and not only their individual advancement and development.

3. Influence on youth policy

The European Youth Centres promote and host standard-setting activities in fields important to youth policy from the European level to the local level; intensive co-operation of youth work practice, youth research and youth policy is encouraged.

4. Knowledge development and educational innovation

The European Youth Centres act as laboratories for innovation in youth work and for the creation of knowledge about young people and how to work with them through value education. Knowledge development and innovation capacity is ensured through a team of in-house educational staff.

5. International co-operation

The European Youth Centres provide professionals and volunteers of the youth sector with the opportunity to exchange and learn across national boundaries.

The European Youth Centre ... shall be an educational establishment of the Council of Europe and a knowledge base on Youth Affairs, in particular Youth Policy and Youth Work, as well as emerging youth phenomena. As an instrument for the participation of European Youth in the building of Europe it shall contribute to implementing the youth activities programme of the Council of Europe.

From the Statute of the European Youth Centres (1972)

* * *

We will intensify our efforts to empower young people to actively participate in democratic processes so that they can contribute to the promotion of our core values. The Council of Europe Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation are important instruments to this effect...

* * *

The Council of Europe will further develop its unique position in the youth field.

3rd Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Council of Europe, Warsaw, 2005, from the Action Plan



The European Youth Centre Strasbourg (EYCS) is an international training, education and conference centre which hosts participants attending activities organised by the Council of Europe's youth sector and other sectors of the organisation.



The European Youth Centre in Budapest (EYCB) operates similar to the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. It enjoys diplomatic status under a seat agreement between the Council of Europe and the Hungarian State.

The Quality Label for Youth Centres: aims, components and added value

The Quality Label for Youth Centres programme aims at associating youth centres across Europe with the youth policy and youth work of the Council of Europe and connect youth centres with similar missions, priorities and approaches. It represents:

- ▶ an opportunity for existing or planned youth centres in signatory states of the European Cultural Convention to subscribe to the values of the Council of Europe and contribute to its youth work;
- ▶ a means of encouraging quality development and knowledge sharing among youth centres based on established standards for educational and policy approaches within the youth sector of the Council of Europe;
- ▶ an opportunity for international networking, exchange and cooperation between residential educational youth centres and their stakeholders,
- ▶ a mechanism for the promotion of quality standards in non-formal education and international youth work.

The Quality Label programme consists of five main components:

1. a Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres

- ▶ This label is awarded to youth centres that meet a set of standard criteria described in this document.
- ▶ The acquisition of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres provides labelled centres international recognition and validates their work, thanks to their institutional partnership with the Council of Europe, that has a long history of standard setting, and respected philosophy and approach of youth work and policy. This partnership can help centres to access recognition at home and abroad, and may help them to access support and resources to fulfil their mission.

2. an annual meeting of Youth Centres European platform for youth centres

- ▶ The annual meeting brings centres recognised with the label and those aspiring to its acquisition into contact with an elaborate infrastructure for international networking among professionals of the youth sector in Europe and further afield.
- ▶ It facilitates the establishment of connections with other youth centres that have effectively gained the label, enabling peer learning and receiving guidance. Additionally, it empowers the management of the participating centre to enhance their capabilities in strategic areas and encourages the exchange of knowledge among centres' leadership.

3. an annual Forum for educational staff of youth centres

- ▶ The Forum for educational staff of youth centres allows to learn about the educational standards of the Council of Europe's youth sector, to exchange educational practices and an ideal starting point for international collaboration between youth centres. It also allows them to discover other thematic based training activities of the Council of Europe for the benefit of the educational teams of the centres.

4. a scheme of educational advice and coaching

- ▶ Participating centres have access to specific support measures, including individual expertise and assistance in the development of their educational programmes. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe or other participating centres can offer this expertise through coaching, study visits, or specialised trainings.
- ▶ In addition, participating centres have access to the youth sector's extensive network of experts in training, youth policy, youth research and youth work across Europe.
- ▶ It is a valuable and tailor-made resource for self-paced development.

5. visibility of youth work conducted in youth centres

- ▶ Promoting youth work carried out in youth centres includes featuring it on official Council of Europe websites, disseminating examples of successful practices at the European level and representing the network in platforms such as the European Youth Work Convention.
- ▶ This not only amplifies the visibility of youth centres' initiatives but also enriches the exchange of good practices and fosters a broader, interconnected community dedicated to advancing youth work and youth policy development.

Expectations towards youth centres aiming to receive the Council of Europe Quality Label

The Quality Label for Youth Centres Programme is designed to benefit both the Council of Europe and the participating youth centres. The Council of Europe implements measures to support the development of quality youth work and centres of excellence at national level to multiply its efforts, as well as to foster exchange and multilateral cooperation among youth centres. The participating centres in turn actively contribute by sharing inspiring practices among its peers, taking national/local initiatives that promote the values of the network and the standards of the Council of Europe and participating in bilateral and multilateral youth projects and initiatives.

Every youth centre striving for the Quality Label preserves its unique character and functions within its specific context. However, it is essential for these centres to share the overarching vision and actively participate in similar areas of focus as the European Youth Centres.

This entails being active in the five key areas of work:

1. Value education
2. Multiplication of social impact
3. Influence on youth policy
4. Knowledge development and educational practice
5. International co-operation

The participating centres must analyse how these areas of action can best be covered in their specific context. Each centre will be able to contribute with its own strengths and make the best use of the opportunities available to it.

Furthermore, the participating centres are expected to contribute actively to the development of the network of youth centres labelled by the Council of Europe by attending the annual European platform for youth centres, sharing good practices and knowledge and participating in other activities supporting the development of the youth centers.

These missions can only be fulfilled by centres having their own infrastructure, adapted to residential non-formal youth activities and own permanent educational staff trained to work with young people. The participating centres are expected to encourage and support its staff to participate to the annual Forum for educational staff of youth centres and make use of the available resources of the Council of Europe.

Participating centres are expected to demonstrate a commitment to develop continuously the quality of its offer to young people and the broader youth sector in order to meet, maintain and develop the standards represented by the criteria of the Quality Label.

Participating centres should contribute to the promotion of Council of Europe programmes and, more specifically, support initiatives undertaken as part of the Quality Label for youth centres.

Criteria for acquiring the label

Acquiring the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres takes place on the basis of a **qualitative assessment**. It is hoped that the criteria will give youth centres already in operation the impetus to improve their offer to young people and the youth sector. For youth centres in the planning stages, and yet to be established, the criteria can act as a guide and work plan.

Eligibility criteria

Criteria 1 to 6 are general pre-conditions for the acquisition of the label and are considered to be eligibility criteria.

The centre must:

- ▶ have, as its primary mission, the aim to serve the youth sector and young people
- ▶ have in-house educational staff competent in non-formal education
- ▶ have accommodation facilities within one campus with the working facilities
- ▶ cooperate with the public authorities
- ▶ promote international co-operation within the youth sector
- ▶ promote the Council of Europe's values and approaches

It is important to note that tourist and holiday centres, centres without a primary educational mission, youth hostels, youth centres that are independent of public authorities and for-profit commercial establishments are, from the outset, excluded.

Additional criteria

Once the eligibility criteria are met, the centre must then meet certain additional criteria. As reality differs from country to country, there is certain flexibility in the interpretation of these criteria. The indicators linked to the quality criteria serve as guiding principles for the systematic assessment of the criteria and informs to which extent they are met by a candidate centre.

Eligibility criterion 1

The centre has, as its primary mission, the aim to serve the youth sector and young people

Conditions needed to be fulfilled

- 1.1. The primary focus of the centre's programme is young people and those working with and for young people
- 1.2. The majority of the educational activities in the centre correspond to the profile of non-formal education
- 1.3. The centre is involved in training multipliers engaged in non-formal education with young people
- 1.4. The centre is involved in regional and national networks of the youth sector and cooperates with other actors of the youth sector

Space for young people and their organisations

Dedicated spaces where young people can explore their interests, develop their skills and build meaningful connections with peers allows them to fully develop their potential. Youth-focused spaces foster the development of youth leaders and agents of change, ultimately driving social progress and cohesion.

In the youth centres, the youth organisations find flexible working conditions that are adapted to their needs and meet the requirements of non-formal education.



The Lisbon Youth Centre in Portugal organises numerous activities for young people. The #RIGHTTOHAVERIGHTS Bootcamp is aimed at developing tools that foster active citizenship and democratic participation, while also enhancing physical and mental well-being.

The youth team at Timisoara Youth Centre in Romania regularly organises a wide range of activities to enhance and expand opportunities for young people across various fields. This photo captures a conference on mental health challenges faced by young people, held in the main hall of the youth centre. The event brought together young people, youth workers, and experts in psychology and mental health to discuss opportunities and solutions for young individuals struggling to maintain mental well-being.



The Sremski Karlovci Youth Centre in Serbia advocates professional youth work through existing national networks, especially through the National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR). The relationship between the centre and the association is mutually beneficial; in its efforts to promote high quality youth work, NAPOR uses the centre as an example for good practices in complying with their and the Council of Europe's youth work standards. The centre, on the other hand, benefits from its membership in NAPOR to have an outlet for the promotion of professional youth work at a national level.

Eligibility criterion 2

The centre has in-house educational staff competent in non-formal education

Conditions needed to be fulfilled

- 2.1. The centre has at least two internal educational staff members responsible for ensuring conceptual coherence, quality assurance, and support for activities, including those run by external educational staff
- 2.2. The centre's educational staff team is adequately large for the number and volume of activities run
- 2.3. The centre can demonstrate the competence of its educational staff for value-based, non-formal educational activities with an international dimension
- 2.4. The centre's management supports its educational staff to take part in the annual Forum for educational staff of Youth Centres or other trainings organised by the youth sector of the Council of Europe

Support for young people

A welcoming environment that fosters acceptance and understanding inspires young people to experiment and innovate. With the support of trained teams, their ideas can develop rapidly, allowing young people to build their own skills and competencies.

Youth centres' educational teams support young people and their organisations in implementing their ideas and projects.



The pedagogical concept of the Youth Centre Magdeburg, Germany, is broadly shared by the other labelled youth centres: "We see young people as experts for themselves, for their individual problems, their individual goals, their everyday realities and views. Our services are not intended to explain the world to them, but rather to help them make up their own minds and always encourage them to discover new perspectives, reflect on their own convictions and make use of the openness they have gained."

The educational team of Marienthal Youth Centre in Luxembourg supports audio-visual projects, such as animated films, imagined and produced by young people. Support includes state of the art material and advice by trained staff. Another branch of the team focuses on team-building activities and violence prevention programs.



The Brežice Youth Centre in Slovenia is actively involved in the cultural life of the municipality and its educational team offers a wide variety of cultural activities for young people. The centre strives to create opportunities for young people to engage in theatre workshops, documentary film screenings, as well as jam sessions and regular concerts by artists of their choice.

The Marttinen Youth Centre in Finland provides environmental education from a youth work perspective. It aims to strengthen everyone's relationship with nature and an environmentally friendly way of thinking.



Eligibility criterion 3

The centre has accommodation facilities within one campus with the working facilities

Conditions needed to be fulfilled

3.1. The centre has the capacity to provide board and lodging on one campus. Living together is an integral part of the educational concept / process

3.2. The centre has facilities that are such that the group does not have to move to another venue outside the campus for social activities, sleeping, and so on:

- ▶ Accommodation is provided indoors with suitable basic hygiene facilities
- ▶ Accommodation in tents and campsites is not eligible
- ▶ Rented space does not qualify

3.3. The centre has accommodation capacity that is adapted to the organisation of international study sessions or similar activities (i.e. to accommodating approximately 35 participants)

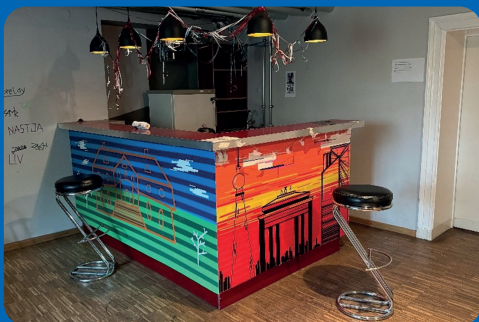
Unique experiences for young people

Spending several days together in the same space creates a collaborative environment where young people can engage in discussions, exchange ideas and learn from one another. These immersive experiences become memorable time capsules.

Youth centers mark biographies, create lasting memories and forge strong bonds between people.

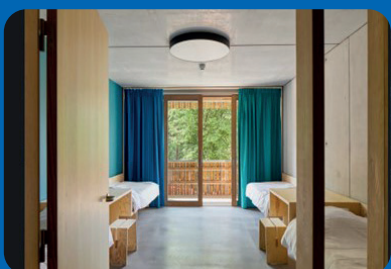


In De Hoge Rielen Youth Centre in Belgium the users can opt between a stay at a hostel, a building for groups or a campground. The infrastructure includes meeting rooms, restaurant, a picnic area as well as camp fire pits. It has established a lending service where groups can borrow different “trunks” which contain material and ideas how to use them with a group.



The catering standards in the wannseeFORUM Youth Centre in Berlin include a breakfast, lunch and dinner buffet. The centre always provide a vegetarian option. The professional catering team offers everything from snacks and drinks, from simple catering, to festive buffets with service. Their bar for social and informal gatherings during a group's stay was decorated by young people.

The Brežice Youth Centre in Slovenia features a bar that serves as a hub for social activities, also offering free access to the internet. The concert hall is an important space for concerts, round tables and fairs for and by young people. In addition the centre is equipped with smaller meeting areas, such as outdoor and indoor learning spaces, an info point and conference rooms.



The Destelheide-Hanebos Youth Centre in Belgium was renovated taking into consideration the Quality Label requirements for youth centres set by the Council of Europe. The creative infrastructure and the inspiring environment provide a unique and complete residential experience.

Eligibility criterion 4

The centre cooperates with the public authorities

Conditions needed to be fulfilled

- 4.1. The centre can provide evidence or official documents licensing their activities
- 4.2. The centre has the support from public authorities to apply for this Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres
- 4.3. The centre has established links and communication mechanisms with the public authorities responsible for youth policy. Evidence could be a contract, funding, support letter or another official document giving evidence of a structured relationship

Support to youth involvement

Young people bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas that contribute to the development of a dynamic and sustainable society. Their involvement as 'youth experts' in policy development not only strengthens their commitment to democracy, but also enhances their responsibility in shaping a shared future.

Youth centres create opportunities for participation of young people.



The youth team of Timisoara Youth Centre in Romania is committed to fostering cooperation and active participation in the local community. This image captures a meeting involving local decision-makers and young people, discussing possible future collaborations between youth, youth organisations, and municipalities. The event was part of a project aimed at revitalising the youth sector in Romania by promoting dialogue between youth NGOs, young people and decision-makers.

With the support of public authorities, the Killarney Youth Centre in Ireland is running a project where young people in state care collaborate to create an animated film highlighting the support they need as they transition to independent living as young adults.



The Braga Youth Centre in Portugal creates opportunities for youth participation, hosting numerous initiatives for this purpose, including activities of the Braga Municipal Youth Council. The centre also has a space dedicated to national youth policies, under the responsibility of the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth.

Eligibility criterion 5

The centre promotes international co-operation within the youth sector

Conditions needed to be fulfilled

- 5.1. The centre hosts and promotes international and multilateral activities
- 5.2. The centre can demonstrate that it is involved in wider European / international co-operation frameworks of the youth sector
- 5.3. The centre makes efforts to multiply good practices from the international level (Council of Europe, European Union, United Nations, specific networks) and spread the knowledge and values through training and promotional activities at national, regional and local levels
- 5.4. The centre contributes to the network of the Quality Labelled youth centres through participation in the European Platform for Youth Centres, the Forum for educational staff, knowledge sharing and international cooperation between participating centres

International experiences for young people

International experiences help young people broaden their cultural horizons and gain valuable perspectives and understanding of diversity, thus enriching their personal growth. Those with a global outlook drive innovation, deepen cultural understanding and promote sustainable development.

Youth centers, as permanent institutions and experts in youth work, serve as key partners for youth exchange programmes and intercultural encounters. Their stability and reliability make them indispensable for the successful implementation of these initiatives.



The Killarney Youth Centre brought together a group of young people from Ireland to participate in an exchange organised with Brežice Youth Centre, where they joined peers from Slovenia, Romania and Belgium in exploring human rights through nature and arts. This experience was particularly meaningful for the young participants, who developed important skills while collaborating in an intercultural setting.

The Magdeburg Youth Centre in Germany organises "OTTOPIA", a Children's City. In their own city, the participating children can try out different professions and make political decisions together. Adults are not allowed in, only children and the supervisors may enter the Children's City. With volunteers from various European countries involved, the dissemination of this good practice of youth work is effectively ensured.



With the support of Villa Elba Youth Centre in Finland and local youth workers, volunteers coming from different parts of Europe, sometimes from other youth centres, have set up international youth clubs in the different villages in the region. This creates space for exchange between young locals and volunteers, encouraging young people to start their own international projects.

The Stara Zagora Youth Centre in Bulgaria collaborates with the Ekocentar Radulovački Youth Centre in Sremski Karlovci, Serbia to exchange best practices in ecology and youth activities through non-formal education. Following the exchanges, youth workers apply these practices in various youth initiatives on the local level.



Eligibility criterion 6

The centre promotes the Council of Europe's values and approaches

Indicators

6.1. The centre's ethos, programme and working philosophy are grounded in the values of the Council of Europe: respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law

6.2. The centre promotes the priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector by actively addressing human rights education, intercultural learning, youth participation, active democratic citizenship and social inclusion of young people in its activities and working practices

6.3. The values of the Council of Europe are reflected in a human rights based code of ethics for the functioning of the centre

6.4. The staff of the centre know about the relationship to the Council of Europe and can give relevant information about it to participants

6.5. The centre promotes the activities of the Council of Europe (e.g. seminars, trainings campaigns, etc.)

6.6. Council of Europe publications are displayed and available for dissemination to participants and visitors

Empowerment of young people through Human rights

Understanding their own rights and those of others equips young people with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for fairness and equality. This empowerment not only motivates them to support justice and inclusivity, but also helps to build a more equitable society by fostering informed and engaged young people.

Through original activities and methods adapted to the different age groups, youth centres help bridge the gap between the institutions and young people.



In collaboration with emerging artists, the De Hoge Rielen Youth Centre in Belgium has crafted a captivating collection of illustrations centered on human rights. These artworks are prominently showcased across various mediums throughout the facility, engaging visitors and sparking meaningful conversations.

The Lisbon Youth Centre in Portugal attaches great importance to providing its users and decision makers key materials from Council of Europe in Portuguese, making them more accessible to a wider public. The centre regularly publishes translated versions of Council of Europe educational manuals on human rights education, youth participation and combatting hate speech online.



The Magdeburg Youth Centre in Germany regularly organises study trips to Strasbourg with the aim to familiarise young people with the institutions of the Council of Europe. Dealing with the topics of human rights and experiencing democracy on site in Strasbourg are important contributions to citizenship education.

The Timisoara Youth Centre in Romania regularly hosts and facilitates events where young people, youth organisations and decision makers come together. The pictures capture a consultation using the world cafe method, engaging young people, representatives of youth organisations and members of the Youth and Sports Commission of the Chamber of Deputies to discuss the new Youth Law in Romania. The consultation was organised in the context of the Democracy Here, Democracy Now campaign of the Council of Europe.



Criterion 7

The centre offers a tolerant and safe working environment respectful of diversity and human dignity

Indicators

7.1. The centre demonstrates coherence of deed and action in relation to a tolerant, respectful and safe environment through its working practices and structural make-up

7.2. The centre is accessible to young people with special needs, both in terms of programming as well as physical means

7.3. The centre can provide documentary evidence that national standards are being respected with regard to fire security, work safety, accessibility and health and hygiene



The Braga Youth Centre in Portugal prominently features playful displays throughout the building that highlight human rights and notable advocates for human rights and democracy.



De Hoge Rielen Youth Centre in Belgium spans a vast nature area, with infrastructure spread across more than a square kilometre. The site's traffic concept has been completely redesigned to ensure a pleasant and safe environment.



The Plovdiv Youth Centre in Bulgaria supports the inclusion of Roma youth through its experienced Roma mediators as part of their educational team, and with an integrated approach to sports. The centre works in the densely populated neighbourhood outside Plovdiv, which is home to one of the largest Roma communities in the Balkans.

The Magdeburg Youth Centre in Germany is the leading hub for international youth work in Saxony-Anhalt and is a steadfast advocate for human rights in the public arena. It launched together with the Diocese the "One Week of Peace" project, offering young guests from Ukraine a week full of light-heartedness and normality far away from the war in their home country.



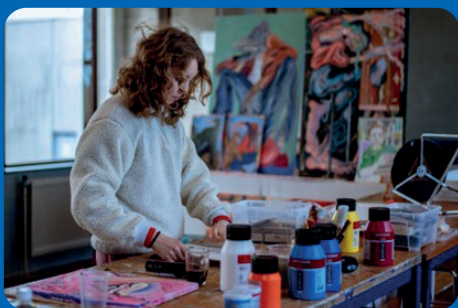
Criterion 8

The centre offers appropriate working conditions for activities of the youth sector

Indicators

8.1. The centre offers flexible and adequate working conditions for activities using non-formal education methodology and an atmosphere suitable and favourable to international activities

8.2. The centre's staff understand how non-formal education works and that their role is to support the activities



The Destelheide-Hanebos Youth Centre in Belgium is a space made for the artistic expression of young people. It provides a unique infrastructure for artistic activities including, among others, dance rooms, visual arts rooms, a music room, a theater and a recording studio. Thanks to an artist-in-residence programme, the young people can benefit from direct contact with professional artists during the workshops, as well as during their stay.

Some groups prefer to prepare their own meals. At the Marienthal Youth Centre in Luxembourg, youth groups have the option to dine at a restaurant or self-cater. Those choosing self-catering can prepare their meals in a fully equipped kitchen.



The Timisoara Youth Centre's spaces are suitable for various non-formal educational settings, from traditional setups to digital ones. The centre provides flexible and adequate working conditions that support an enabling atmosphere. The picture shows a digital art class for young Ukrainians and Romanians to ensure an easier integration of refugees in the local community through art. The session utilises non-formal education methodologies, with the centre ensuring all necessary materials for effective training.

At the Marttinen Youth Centre in Finland groups have the opportunity to rent equipment and use it independently in the area of the centre. The centre is located on an island, in a beautiful natural location in central Finland.



Criterion 9

The centre provides minimum infrastructure suited to international activities with diverse groups of participants

Indicators

9.1. The working conditions in the centre are suitable to different formats of activities, interactive methodology activities, as well as seminars, conferences and policy meetings

9.2. The centre can provide solutions for groups who wish to work with simultaneous interpretation

9.3. The centre should be equipped with a range of digital tools and equipment to meet the diverse needs and interests of today's youth such as: internet connectivity, safety and consent measures to ensure a secure and respectful online environment, interactive displays, and possibility for on-line meetings and conferencing.

9.4. Key staff (management, reception, education, security) have foreign language competencies (especially English or French). Language courses should be provided in order to improve the skills of those who already speak foreign languages, and for those in the team who are starting from scratch.



The wansee FORUM Youth Centre in Germany, comprises several buildings with many different features. They offer spaces suitable for one-day events, or seminars lasting several days with full board and lodging for the youth groups. The houses have modern conference facilities and the technical resources to provide for the guests' needs.

The Lisbon Youth Centre in Portugal continually builds and strengthens connections with other youth centers and organisations, actively fostering new partnerships. It regularly hosts study visits from countries across Europe and beyond. The picture displays a meeting of the network of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.



StudioStar is a project of the network of Council of Europe's Quality Labelled Youth Centres. In this project, young people from different countries go through a creative process and make their voices heard about human rights. The Destelheide-Hanebos Youth Centre hosted the two first editions of this project, which takes place on 10 December, on the international Human Rights Day.

Criterion 10

The centre contributes to the development of the quality of youth work

Indicators

10.1. The centre regularly implements evaluation of their youth programmes and activities as a basis for learning, self-improvement and development of quality youth work

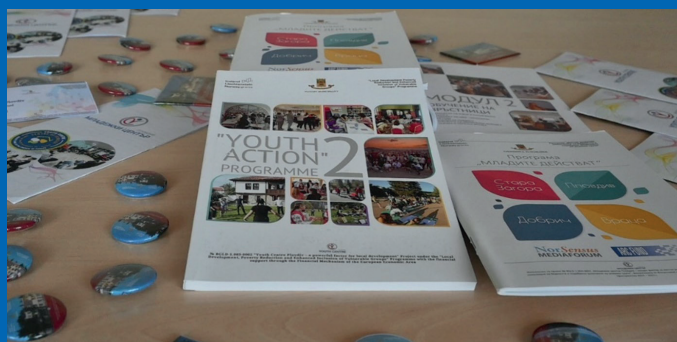
10.2. The centre is developing new and innovative youth work models

10.3. The centre shares its experience in youth work with other actors of the youth sector (nationally and internationally)

10.4. The centre documents its educational concepts, approaches and practices and shares it nationally and internationally

10.5. The centre promotes Council of Europe youth work standards and participates in European and international development processes in the youth work field.

The Stara Zagora Youth Centre in Bulgaria regularly organises training sessions for youth leaders. This image shows the National Conference on "Perspectives for the development of youth policies and institutionalisation of youth centres in Bulgaria".



The Plovdiv Youth Centre in Bulgaria has developed a handbook on youth work. The most recent handbook focused on digital and media literacy training programmes.

The Killarney Youth Centre in Ireland hosted a study visit for Ukrainian youth workers. The purpose of the study visit was to develop the competencies of representatives of youth centres in Ukraine in the field of child and outreach youth work and trauma-informed youth work.



Criterion 11

The centre ensures the involvement of young people, youth organisations and associations in the development of their concepts and programmes

Indicators

11.1. The centre takes into account the situation and concerns of young people in the development of its programme

11.2. The centre is an ally for youth civil society in advocating for decision makers and power holders to take young people's points of view and concerns into account when making and implementing policies

11.3. The centre calls on the expertise of youth organisations, associations and structures that have relevant specific competence to enrich certain activities, and considers them as consultants

11.4. The centre develops key activities and best practices in a participative manner with young people, youth organisations, associations and structures

11.5. The centre strives to reach out to new youth groups and young people in vulnerable setting to include larger and more diverse cohorts of youth in their work



The wannseeFORUM Youth Centre in Germany established a Youth Advisory Board as an integral part of the foundation that runs the center. Through representation on the Board of Trustees, regular consultations with the pedagogical team, and the ability to independently carry out projects and present their ideas, the youth voice is structurally embedded within the foundation.



The Stara Zagora Youth Centre in Bulgaria invited young people to design a project for an eco-themed escape room, providing them with a dedicated space in the youth centre and offering educational support throughout the process. Upon completion, the escape room became a permanent feature of the youth centre's programme.



The Villa Elba Youth Centre in Finland actively integrates young people from other European countries into its team. Through the European Solidarity Corps, these volunteers take on various responsibilities within the centre's youth programmes, contributing significantly to its diverse range of activities.

Criterion 12

The centre contributes to the orientation and implementation of youth policies

Indicators

12.1. The centre follows developments in the field of youth policy, both nationally and internationally, and supports its implementation on local, regional or national level

12.2. The centre's management and educational staff are familiar with national youth policy priorities

12.3. The centre is a space where different stakeholders come together to discuss youth work and policy

12.4. The centre is engaged in direct advocacy for sound youth policies, in other words, for a stronger link between the on-the-ground reality of young people and the content of youth policies

12.5. The centre has regular exchange on youth policy with the public authorities responsible for youth



During the revision process of the local youth strategy in the municipality of Sremski Karlovci, the Ekocentar Radulovački Youth Centre in Serbia ensured that their youth workers facilitated the participation of the local youth communities and acted as an intermediary between young people and the municipal authorities.



The Marienthal Youth Centre in Luxembourg regularly holds national conferences and various events focused on youth policy implementation. The photo shows a youth conference dedicated to eco-responsibility and its implications for youth work.

Criterion 13

The centre is practicing corporate social responsibility

Indicators

13.1. The centre is aware of its social role and contributes positively to social enhancement of young people and the community at large

13.2. The centre contributes through its actions and approaches to the sustainable development goals

13.3. The centre ensures positive treatment of all employees. This includes fair employment consideration for all individuals

13.4. The centre pursues an environment friendly approach by reducing pollution, waste, natural resource consumption and emissions

13.5. The centre ensures transparent and timely financial reporting

13.6. The centre can demonstrate that relevant financial management and accountability mechanisms in conformity with national tax and not-for-profit regulations are in place

The Braga Youth Centre in Portugal is raising young people's awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals by displaying them in an original and attractive way in strategic locations throughout the building. The presence of the goals in the public spaces as well as the bedrooms prompts informal discussions and awareness of sustainable living throughout the stay.



Many Council of Europe quality labelled youth centres make considerable efforts to obtain eco-labels or other labels such as the Fairtrade label. The Villa Elba Youth Centre in Finland has achieved several labels, among which the labels "Green Key" and "Welcome Cyclists".

For Council of Europe Quality Labelled youth centres, mutual respect is a guiding value, both in the educational work with children and young people and in the day-to-day dealings with all employees and guests. The photo shows the staff of the wannseeFORUM Youth Centre in Berlin discussing the Respect Charter that has been drawn up on a basic consensus and guideline.



Criterion 14

The centre adopts quality management approaches

Indicators

14.1. The users / clients of the centre are systematically asked to provide evaluation and feedback about the service delivered by the centre

14.2. The centre's management take into account user / client evaluations and feedback to improve the quality of service on an ongoing basis

14.3. The centre regularly implements self-evaluation of its operations as part sound management culture

14.4. The centre's management applies a whole staff approach in its self-evaluation and development processes

14.5. The management promotes the inclusion of young people's views in the centre's development processes



Youth centres use various methods to collect feedback from the participants of their activities. This helps to develop the quality of their offers continuously. The Marienthal Youth Centre in Luxembourg has developed an original way to visualise and discuss the appreciation and the experiences of the young people taking part in the centre's programme activities.

The Council of Europe Quality Label must be renewed regularly, which means that the centres work continuously on the quality development of their services and programmes.

In addition to participating in the annual exchange meetings of the network of labelled centres, they can draw on the expertise of the Council of Europe's youth sector. The photo was taken during the official label ceremony in the Plovdiv Youth Centre in Bulgaria.



The managers of the youth centres meet annually to discuss quality development of their centres. They benefit from the diversity of approaches and experiences made across Europe. These meetings help create a common understanding and to progress together. This photo was taken during the Platform Meeting in the European Youth Centre Budapest during which the topic of "Narratives of youth centres and efficiency in communication" was addressed.

The annual Forum for educational staff of youth centres allows to exchange educational practices and to discuss quality in youth centres' educational work. The informal moments are fertile ground for subsequent joint projects, which can be developed bilaterally or in a multilateral context. The photo was taken during a training at the European Youth Centre Budapest.



Criterion 15

The centre can demonstrate a sustainable operating model

Indicators

15.1. The centre can provide evidence that its structural context supports continuous functioning under conditions comparable to those during the assessment phase

15.2. The centre demonstrates the sustainability of its social and financial governance model

15.3. The centre shows that it has secured funding for its educational staff

15.4. The centre demonstrates that its management approach is sustainable

15.5. The centre can demonstrate strategic partnerships, collaborations with key actors and sufficient political support for the sound and sustainable running of the youth centre

15.6. The centre implements regular risk analysis



The Braga Youth Centre in Portugal can rely on a large number of collaborations and partnerships with diverse institutions and organisations and cover the local, regional and national levels. The centre works strategically and successfully with the Braga municipality, ministries, institutions and associations. This network helps ensure financing of the centre and is solid ground for future developments.



The Ekocentar Radulovački Youth Centre in Sremski Karlovci, Serbia, has its origins in an organisation based on voluntary work and still today, volunteers play an essential role in its functioning. This ensures continuity during periods when financial resources are difficult to mobilise.

Procedures

The procedure to acquire the Quality Label takes place in several stages:

1. Expression of interest

The candidate centre prepares an expression of interest for the Quality Label. There is no deadline for submission; expressions of interest are accepted on an ongoing basis. Candidate centres receive an expression of interest form from the secretariat. Usually an interested youth centre takes part in some of the Quality Label activities, before formalising its request.

2. Assessment of the expression of interest

■ The candidate centre's expression of interest is reviewed by the expert group composed of members of the European Steering Committee for Youth, staff of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and selected consultants.

■ The expert group decides on the initial eligibility of the candidate centre for a visit by an expert group in accordance with the preconditions outlined above. Candidate centres that clearly do not fit the eligibility criteria will be informed that the process will not be pursued any further.

Candidate centres that are considered eligible will be contacted to agree on the details of a visit by an expert group. Candidate centres can expect to be contacted about eligibility within three months of the submission of their expression of interest.

3. Self-assessment

The centre completes with its staff a self-evaluation based on a form produced by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. This process is self-paced and should include all staff of centre allowing for a wide reflection on its current operations and programmes as well as future vision of the centre. During this development phase the centre has the possibility to collectively make infrastructural, administrative, managerial and policy improvements in accordance with the quality criteria. The management of the centre and the expert group mutually determine the length of the self-evaluation and development phase so that the candidate centre has the chance to develop at its own pace. Once this is concluded, the self-evaluation is submitted to the Youth Department.

4. Visit of the expert group

■ The expert group visits the candidate centre to assess how the centre already meets certain criteria and to advise on which criteria require development.

■ This assessment takes place in dialogue with the management of the candidate centre through an open discussion on all aspects of the criteria. The discussion is based on the self-assessment of the centre, additional documentation and a visit of the premises. The expert visit often includes meetings with other stakeholders, users and beneficiaries of the youth centre.

■ On the basis of the visit, the expert group prepares its interim evaluation report. This report

- ▶ takes stock of the criteria already met
- ▶ recommends whether the centre concerned should further pursue the acquisition of the Quality Label
- ▶ requests improvements / changes that would allow for the label to be awarded.

■ The expert group shares the interim evaluation report with the candidate centre within two months of the exploratory visit.

■ The candidate centre communicates any comments or issues it may have with the report to the secretariat.

5. Award of the Quality Label

■ On the basis of the evaluation visit(s), the expert group makes its recommendation to the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) on the award of the Quality Label to the centre concerned.

■ The final decision to award the label is made by the European Steering Committee for Youth based on the recommendation and report of the expert group. The expert group includes a member of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ). The CDEJ meets twice a year to take decisions, in March and in October. The label comes to force on the beginning of the following year.

■ The award of the Quality Label takes place at a ceremony during which the centre receives an award certificate and a plaque.

Maintenance of the Quality Label

The Quality Label is awarded for an initial period of three years, during which the centre is expected to maintain the standards demanded by the criteria. The centre should also work on the recommendations formulated during the visit of the expert group. It should take advantage of the peer exchange and knowledge sharing within the network of Quality Labelled youth centres.

An application for renewal is mandatory after the previous period expires. This application should include documentary evidence of how the quality criteria are being upheld and how other improvements are being made. The renewal period of the label depends on the evaluation, the progress made in the previous period and the commitment and contribution to the informal network.

A visit of the expert group can be organised to re-evaluate the status quo. In some cases, this may lead to a further development phase before the label is renewed.

The label can also be retracted in cases where the centre has departed too far from the criteria (for example, in the case of a change of profile from youth centre to another kind of centre).

General conditions

Financial conditions

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres is awarded free of charge to eligible centres. The Council of Europe's inter-governmental programme in the field of youth will cover the majority of costs related to the expert group's participation. Candidate centres are expected to cover board and lodging costs for all evaluation visits of the expert group.

Relationship with the Council of Europe

The award of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres does not confer the status of "European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe".

European Youth Centres are institutional structures of the Council of Europe, funded by that institution and subject to all the privileges and constraints of its diplomatic mandate. The centres being awarded the Quality Label will remain, institutionally and financially, independent from the Council of Europe.

Further information & contacts

For further information, please contact the Youth Department of the Council of Europe at:

Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres

European Youth Centre Budapest

Zivatar utca 1-3

1024 Budapest, Hungary

Tel + 36 1 438 1030

email: youthcentres.quality@coe.int

More information about the Council of Europe, the Youth Department and its

European Youth Centres can be accessed at:

www.coe.int/youth and www.coe.int/qualitylabel

Glossary of terms

Active citizenship: Active citizenship stands for the active participation of citizens in economic, social, cultural and political life. In the youth field much emphasis is put on learning the necessary competences through voluntary activities. The aim is not only to improve the knowledge, but also motivation, skills and practical experience of young people to be active citizens.

Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ): The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) is made up of 30 representatives from youth NGOs and networks who provide opinions and input on all youth sector activities. It is part of the co-managed statutory bodies of Council of Europe's youth sector. It also ensures that young people are involved in other activities of the Council of Europe. For more information see:

[Advisory Council on Youth - Youth](#)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR): Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating management model that helps an organisation or company to be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, also called corporate citizenship, organisations and companies can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental.

To engage in CSR means that, in the ordinary course of business, an organisation or company is operating in ways that enhance society and the environment instead of contributing negatively to them.

European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ): In addition to the educational and training activities implemented within the framework of the European Youth Centres of Strasbourg and Budapest and of the European Youth Foundation, the Council of Europe's action in the field of youth is also carried out through inter-governmental co-operation focusing particularly on the development of youth policies in the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention. The promotion of this co-operation, which involves ministries or public administrations in charge of youth affairs in the different countries, is the main responsibility of the European Steering Committee for Youth, which supervises a programme of activities involving policy makers, youth researchers and youth work practitioners. For more information see:

[European Steering Committee for Youth - Youth \(coe.int\)](#)

Formal education means the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to university. It takes place, as a rule, at general or vocational educational institutions and leads to certification. (EDC/HRE Charter – CM/Rec [2010]7)

Formal education is purposive learning that takes place in a distinct and institutionalised environment specifically designed for teaching /training and learning, which is staffed by learning facilitators who are specifically qualified for the sector, level and subject concerned, and which usually serves a specified category of learners (defined by age, level and specialism). Learning aims are almost always externally set, learning progress is usually monitored and assessed, and learning outcomes are usually recognised by certificates or diplomas. Much formal learning provision is compulsory (school education).

Human rights education means education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (EDC/HRE Charter – CM/Rec [2010]7)

Human rights education involves three dimensions:

- ▶ Learning about human rights, knowledge about human rights, what they are, and how they are safeguarded or protected;
- ▶ Learning through human rights, recognising that the context and the way human rights learning is organised and imparted has to be consistent with human rights values (e.g. participation, freedom of thought and expression, etc.) and that in human rights education the process of learning is as important as the content of the learning;
- ▶ Learning for human rights, by developing skills, attitudes and values for the learners to apply human rights values in their lives and to take action, alone or with others, for promoting and defending human rights. ([Compass](#))

Informal education means the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, peer group, neighbours, encounters, library, mass media, work, play, etc.).

(EDC/HRE Charter – CM/Rec [2010]7)

From the learner's standpoint at least, this is non-purposive learning, which takes place in everyday life contexts in the family, at work, during leisure and in the community. It does have outcomes, but these are seldom recorded, virtually never certified and are typically neither immediately visible for the learner nor do they count in themselves for education, training or employment purposes.

Intercultural learning: Intercultural learning is the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one's own culture and other cultures around the world. The aim of intercultural learning is to increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. The learning process itself is a constant movement of cultural

awareness - from the freedom and comfort of expecting others to be like oneself, to the shock and constraint of one's emotions and projections when they prove not to be. The Council of Europe youth sector is a pioneer in developing intercultural learning as an approach to value-educational work with young people.

Multiplier: In the context of the work of the European Youth Centres (Youth Department/ Council of Europe youth sector), a multiplier is a person who receives training or participates in some form of capacity building activity (through formal, non-formal education or informal education), and who subsequently passes on their new knowledge and experience to others, often within the same organisation, network or youth group as part of an explicit or implicit purpose. This ensures that the knowledge and experience acquired through the program impacts on a larger number of young people.

Non-formal education: *means any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting.* (EDC/HRE Charter – CM/Rec [2010]7)

Non-formal education is a purposeful but voluntary educational process that takes place in diverse settings where learning is not necessarily their only activity. These settings may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities may be staffed by “paid” learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities are planned, but may not be organised according to conventional curricula. They often address specific groups. They document and assess learning achievements in non-conventional ways.

Non-formal educational activities can be characterised as

- ▶ voluntary
- ▶ accessible to everyone (ideally)
- ▶ organised processes with educational objectives
- ▶ participatory and learner-centred
- ▶ about learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship
- ▶ based on involving both individual and group learning with a collective approach
- ▶ holistic and process-orientated
- ▶ starting from the experience of the participants

Professional of the youth sector: This is a paid member of staff who works for any institution with a youth policy or a youth programme. They can work in any part of the sector - the practice of non-formal education, policy making and implementation, or research. They are referred to as professional because they have decided to make working in the youth sector their profession.

Social cohesion: Social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the wellbeing of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation.

Statutory bodies of the youth sector of the Council of Europe: The statutory bodies are the governmental and non-governmental committees that make up the co-management system in the Council of Europe's youth sector - the European Steering Group for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council (CCJ). Co-management refers to a model of

youth participation practised within the Council of Europe youth sector. Representatives of both the governments and the young people decide together on the priorities, main budget envelopes, implementation of the work priorities and the allocation of the resources of the youth activities of the youth sector. For more information, see: [Co-management - Youth \(coe.int\)](https://coe.int)

Voluntary youth worker / leader: A voluntary youth worker / leader is an unpaid member of staff of a youth organisation or other youth structure who works with other young people in a position of leadership and / or in educational activities. In terms of training and even qualifications, such voluntary youth workers / leaders can be just as “professional” as paid staff. They are not referred to as professionals because they do this work on a voluntary basis and do not intend to make it their profession.

Youth Department (YD): The Youth Department is part of the Directorate for Democracy of the Council of Europe. The Department elaborates guidelines, programmes and legal instruments for the development of coherent and effective youth policies at local, national and European levels. It provides funding and educational support for international youth activities aiming at the promotion of youth citizenship, youth mobility and the value of human rights, democracy and cultural pluralism. It seeks to bring together and disseminate expertise and knowledge about the life situations and aspirations of young Europeans, and how they express themselves.

Youth participation: Youth participation is the term used by government agencies, researchers, educators, and others to define and examine the active engagement of young people in non-governmental organisations, civil society, politics, school, the public sphere, governance, community development and many other aspects of their everyday lives and those of the communities in which they live.

Young people: For the purposes of the youth policies of both the European Commission and the Council of Europe, young people are those aged between 13 and 30.

Youth policy: The purpose of youth policy is to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to be actors of democracy and to integrate into society, in particular playing an active part in both civil society and the labour market. The key measures of youth policies are to promote citizenship learning and the integrated policy approach. Evidence-based youth policies are youth policies that are not only based on political and moral objectives, but also on accurate information on the social situation of young people across society and their changing expectations, attitudes and lifestyles. One important source of information is independent, objective and professional research and statistics. Furthermore, reliable empirical information on the implementation of policies is needed to learn from experiences and further develop goal setting, policy approaches and youth work methods and activities.

Youth Policy of the Council of Europe: The approach of the Council of Europe’s youth sector to youth policy is one that aims to support young people’s participation as citizens and their - often complex - transition to autonomy. In this approach, youth policy combines a multi-dimensional concern with ensuring young people’s well-being, providing them with relevant learning opportunities, increasing the probability of their successful integration into society and transition to autonomy, and enabling

them to participate in decision making and civil society. This multi-faceted focus on different aspects of young peoples' lives is supported by a set of principles on which sound policy making (youth or other) should be based.

Specifically, this policy is reflected in the implementation of the Council of Europe's youth sector programme "Developing European youth co-operation through youth policy, youth work and non-formal education / learning".

Youth research: Youth research is a specialist area of social science that focuses on the life-phase "youth" in all its respects - including what counts as "youth" in the first place. It considers individual development, analyses of the life-course, cultural expression and social change in the way they relate to the youth phase. It seeks to describe the realities of young people and to interpret these in the light of ideas about the youth phase.

As a result, it is a multidisciplinary and multidimensional field of research and draws on many theoretical traditions, epistemological perspectives and methodological approaches. European youth research became a distinct specialist field in the early 1990s. Both the Council of Europe and the European Commission have supported the development of this transnational and intercultural scientific community. It seeks to support the development of sound European policies and programmes based on reliable research evidence of the situation, needs and concerns of young people in Europe.

Youth work: *Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.* (CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work)

Youth work is no longer just the means or mechanism for supporting wider youth policy aspirations – it is now a distinctive arena of policy and practice. There is never, however, room for complacency. Youth work is essentially a social practice, both connecting with and challenging the prevailing and changing structures of the societies in which it operates. It can be subject both to doubts about its value and inflated expectations of what it can achieve while amidst all it finds its 'centre of gravity'. Its political and financial support can never be taken for granted, as youth work itself seeks to navigate a path that cements its place as a 'small but important part of social and educational policies'. Indeed, robust debate and self-critical reflection within the youth work community of practice must be matched with concerted and collective advocacy for a more secure infrastructure for youth work that can enable effective practice on the ground. It is the balance between its base and infrastructure that, ultimately, will determine youth work's sustainability and growth.

(Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, Signposts for the future, Bonn, 10 December 2020)

All terms adapted from <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>, www.coe.int/compass, www.nonformality.org, or developed for the purposes of this brochure.



www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

