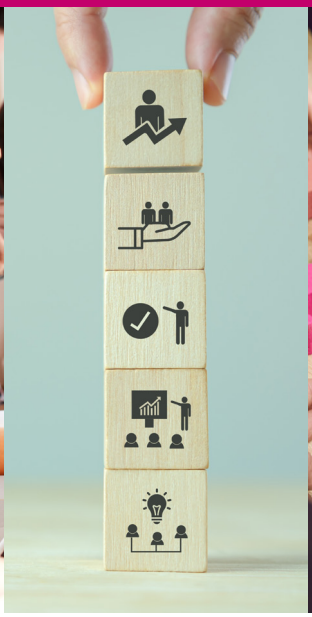
Putting the puzzle pieces together



Youth Partnership

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

EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Putting the puzzle pieces together

Study on models for the recognition of youth workers' competences in Europe

Final report

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1. Executive summary

The Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth (Youth Partnership) commissioned a group of consultants to make recommendations to the two partner institutions on possible scenarios for a common, cross-border and pan-European instrument for the recognition of youth workers' competences, based on existing practices at national and European levels. As a step towards ensuring the robust implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA), the objective was to make important advances in the recognition of youth work.

In the study, the consultants reviewed and considered potential country and cross-country models in Europe:

1. in higher education (Ireland, Estonia, Finland and Germany);
2. in vocational and further education (Austria, Portugal, Finland); and
3. in non-formal learning settings (Czech Republic, Serbia, Ireland).

In this report, two possible web-based models for the recognition of youth workers' competences are presented. Even though the two models share some similarities in terms of structure and methodology, they also differ in important ways.

In general, both models follow the same structure:

1. criteria and thresholds for the recognition of youth workers' competences;
2. governance, hosting, implementation and support structures and bodies; and
3. benefits of recognition.

The two models identified are as follows.

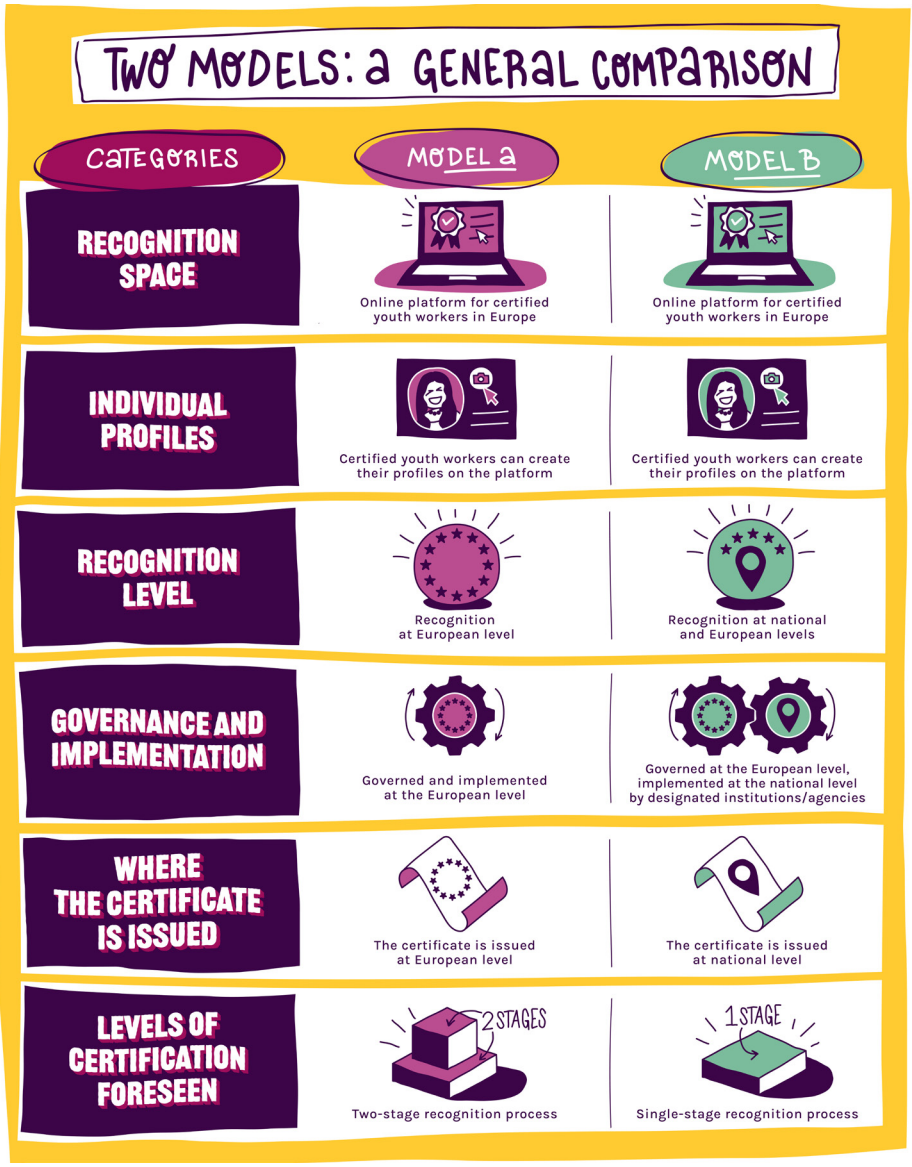
Model A comprises a two-stage accreditation system similar to those for comparable professions (such as photographers and trainers), which involves two possible models of attaining recognition: through self-assessment or through peer assessment. Model B, on the other hand, proposes a single-stage accreditation system for youth workers, primarily aimed at those youth workers who do not have easy access to recognition. Strengthening the voluntary youth sector's recognition and capacity is also an aim. Online portfolio-based self-assessment would be part of the process.

Model A proposes a governing board to safeguard legitimacy, ensure quality and oversee the implementation of the recognition system. The board would comprise representatives of key stakeholders at European level.

Model B proposes three tiers of governance, hosting and implementation as follows: potential hosts of the web-based, an online platform (as in Model A) and member states that would designate an appropriate body for implementing the recognition system and evaluate and accredit applications for recognition.

The report also presents and analyses potential benefits accreditation could have for youth workers (higher fees, additional points for project grants, etc.), as well as the benefits of recognition for institutions, policy makers and youth organisations. Such benefits include, among others, clarification of the scope and size of the youth work field in Europe to facilitate better planning and investment, and enhanced visibility of the youth work sector as a policy-making and programme-development sector.

In conclusion, the report identifies the challenges regarding a common European framework of youth work accreditation that include: a lengthy process of development, issues of governance, hosting, budget and implementation, and benefits that might have significant implications for stakeholders in the youth sector.



2. Context and background

In 2022 and 2023, the Youth Partnership expanded its activities on youth work and strengthened its role in the implementation of the European Youth Work agenda in three priority areas:

- facilitating dialogue with the youth work community of practice;
- supporting better recognition of youth work; and
- supporting Council of Europe and European Union initiatives on youth work.

The aim was to make important advancements in the recognition of youth work to ensure the robust implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda. These efforts were also a response to a strong demand from the youth work community of practice, as highlighted in the EYWA, to enhance and recognise youth work practice.

In this context, the Youth Partnership undertook research on the recognition of youth work, in line with the policy decisions of both the European Union and the Council of Europe, for example Council Resolution 2020/C 415/01 on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda, the Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work.

As part of this initiative, the Youth Partnership commissioned a study on models for the recognition of youth workers' competences in Europe that would present and make recommendations to the two partner institutions on possible scenarios for mutual, cross-border and pan-European recognition of youth workers' competences based on existing European and national practices.

The main object of the study was to identify and propose models for the recognition of youth workers' competences that will further strengthen and enhance young work practice in Europe; support the development, empowerment and well-being of young people; and, in addition, address some of the structural problems that have an impact on the recognition and advancement of youth workers across Europe and provide a more level playing field for them in terms of recognition and opportunity.

These structural problems were reflected in the wide range of youth work policies, practices and structures and the varying levels of recognition and financial, educational and other support for youth work at national, regional and municipal levels across Europe.

The Steering Group on the Implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda (hereinafter "the Steering Group") oversaw the study and provided advice and guidance from the beginning of the process for the study team (Andreas Karsten, Darko Markovic and James O'Donovan) recruited by the Youth Partnership to undertake and write the study. Other experts who provided feedback and input to the study included Hilary Tierney (Maynooth University, Ireland), Ilona-Evelyn Rannala (Tallinn University, Estonia), Rita Bergstein (JUGEND für Europa, which is the national agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport and European Solidarity Corps, Germany) and Kristiina Pernits (SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, Germany).

An initial scoping paper was drafted by the study team and circulated to members of the editorial group in early September 2022. The scoping paper, which outlined and considered the roles of both paid and volunteer youth workers and existing approaches to the acquisition and recognition of youth workers' competences, set three objectives for the study:

- to identify and propose models for the recognition of youth workers' competences that will further enhance and supplement the qualifications of paid youth workers and those seeking a career in youth work and give recognition to volunteer youth workers for the competences they have acquired or can acquire;
- to identify and propose coherent, credible, user-friendly and workable frameworks or systems at pan-European level for the recognition of youth workers' competences and the strengthening and enhancement of youth work practice, and which are also compatible and capable of integration with existing national recognition frameworks and systems; and
- to identify and propose processes and procedures for the recognition of the competences of youth workers that are credible, rigorous, user friendly, purposeful, accessible and timely, and that will facilitate and promote effective and enhanced youth work practice across Europe for the benefit of young people.

A meeting (online) of the editorial group was held on 19 September 2022 to discuss the scoping paper and consider options going forward.

The Steering Group made a number of initial observations with respect to the study. First, the aim was to explore innovative and effective pan-European models for the recognition of youth workers' competences rather than the mapping and documentation of existing national recognition approaches. Second, the Steering Group pointed to other sectors, for example data protection and sport, as a resource for prospective models. Third, while recommendations on pan-European models would form the broader recognition framework they would also need to be compatible with and promote recognition at national level.

Following on the observations of the editorial group and the Steering Group, it was agreed that the initial phase of work on the study would be to review and consider examples of possible models of recognition in three dimensions:

- country and cross-country models;
- models from outside the youth sector; and
- pan-European models.

After completion of these reviews, the study team and members of the editorial group convened a meeting in Brussels in January 2023 to consider and discuss the scoping paper and the three reviews. A presentation on the progress of the study and emerging options was also made to the third meeting of the Steering Group in January 2023.

Building on feedback from the editorial group and the Steering Group, a discussion paper "Putting the puzzle pieces together – Towards a European recognition mechanism for youth workers" was drafted by the study team and presented at the symposium "Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe" which took place in Budapest from 31 May to 1 June 2023.

The discussion paper proposed two possible web-based models for the recognition of youth workers' competences.

Feedback from the symposium and additional responses from the editorial group and the Steering Group resulted in a summary paper that was presented to the fourth meeting of the Steering Group in September 2023 where consideration was given to the outcomes of the study, the two proposed web-based models for the recognition of youth workers' competences and possible ways of advancing the process in terms of both policy development and implementation.

3. Scoping the European landscape for potential models for recognition of competences

In considering potential models for the recognition of youth workers' competences, the study team undertook three reviews to elicit examples of possible models from across Europe under three criteria:

- country and cross-country models;
- models from outside the youth sector; and
- pan-European models.

3.1. Review of country and cross-country models

The review of country and cross-country models outlined and considered examples in the higher education sector, the vocational and further education sector and the voluntary youth sector in different countries that might contribute to possible models for the recognition of youth workers' competences.

The examples considered were as follows.

At higher education level:

- the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS) which works to ensure and promote quality standards in the education and training of youth workers on the island of Ireland;
- the use of occupational standards in universities and other higher level institutions in Estonia that provide programmes in youth work, where curricula have to be in accordance with national occupational standards; and
- a community educator programme in Finland that has a curriculum based on four different areas of competence and the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work in Germany.

At vocational and further education level:

- the aufZAQ certification system for non-formal education and training courses for youth workers in Austria;
- the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills for Youth Worker (Youth Technician) in Portugal; and

- the vocational education curriculum for youth workers in Finland.

At voluntary youth sector level:

- the OLINA online system in the Czech Republic, comprising self-evaluation, competence building and training;
- recognition of competences and development of vocational or occupational standards for youth workers by NAPOR (National Association of Youth Workers) in Serbia; and
- the National Induction Training Programme for Volunteers engaged in Youth Work Practice in Ireland.

The review concluded that two models for the recognition of youth workers' competences might be envisaged:

- one focused on countries with formal education and training for paid or professional youth workers or those seeking employment or career opportunities in youth work, with a strong state-supported youth sector, and where a competence-based approach to education and training, aligned with national qualification frameworks and the European Qualifications Framework, is promoted and facilitated at national and European level; and
- one focused on the voluntary youth sector employing a flexible, user-friendly, online system based on youth workers' acquired (or to be acquired) education, training, competences and prior experience, learning and self-assessment, with the national agencies as external evaluators and validating agents and as an integral part of a cohesive approach to strengthening capacity and quality assurance in the voluntary youth sector in Europe.

3.2. Recognition and accreditation models from outside the youth sector

The second review conducted by the study group was to collect examples of recognition from outside the youth field and/or outside of Europe that could inform and contribute to efforts to develop transnational recognition models in the youth field.

Professions that have diverse (mostly informal) educational pathways were initially considered, and these included: entrepreneurship and sales, communication and public relations, graphic design and photography, acting and music, coding and programming, data protection, personal training and healthcare.

From this initial exploration, six specific examples were selected for more detailed consideration:

- graphic design;
- photography;
- data protection;
- coding and programming;
- public relations; and
- personal training.

The review concluded with a number of common features that can be identified from among the examples considered above.

- Eligibility requirements – Most certifications require that individuals meet certain eligibility criteria, such as having a certain level of education, training or experience in their field.
- Examination or assessment – Many certifications require individuals to pass an examination or assessment to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in their field. This may include written, oral or practical tests.
- Continuing education – Many certifications require individuals to participate in ongoing professional development or continuing education to maintain their certification.
- Code of conduct or ethics – Most certifications have a code of conduct or ethics that individuals must adhere to in order to maintain their certification.
- Renewal – Most certifications require individuals to maintain their knowledge and skills by meeting certain continuing education requirements, and in some cases, re-taking the examination to demonstrate their proficiency.
- Recognition – Certifications are recognised by professional organisations, employers and clients as a demonstration of an individual's qualifications and skills in their field.

3.3. Pan-European models

Over the past 25 years, many European institutions and organisations have developed various tools, processes, projects and initiatives aimed at strengthening the recognition of youth work and non-formal leaning. However, a comprehensive and effective European model for the recognition of youth workers and their competences has never been created.

The third review conducted by the study team outlined and considered a number of European processes and tools that might be considered when developing a pan-European recognition model.

- SALTO TOY (Trainers-Online-for-Youth)
- The Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio
- Youthpass
- European Training Strategy (ETS)
- ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations)
- SNAC (Strategic National Agencies Cooperation) projects and recognition of youth work
- the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations (AYWA)

When considering the possible creation of a pan-European recognition model for youth workers, the review emphasised the need to take into account existing national-level differences in youth work practice, policy and recognition and develop a model that would be open to youth workers coming both from countries with developed youth work recognition systems and from those countries where such recognition does not exist.

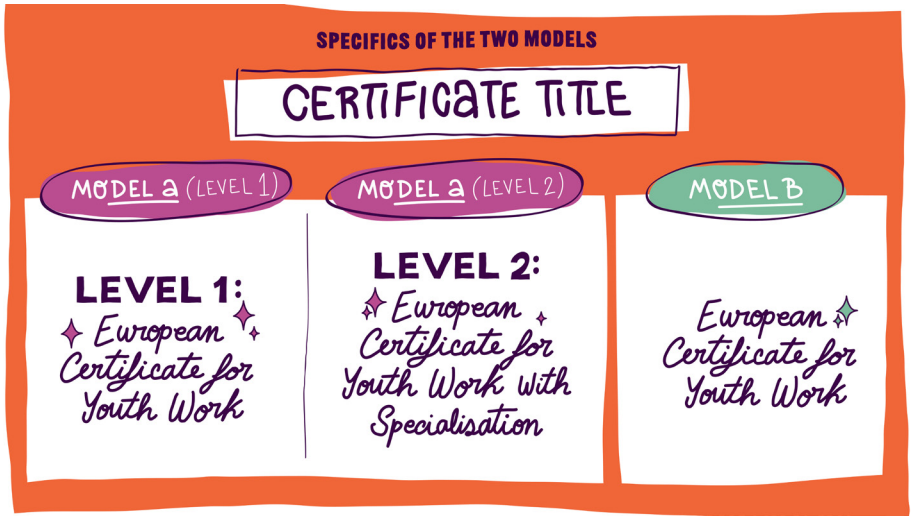
The review highlighted the following insights and questions.

- This review clearly demonstrates that there have already been significant efforts made and resources invested in recognition-related initiatives in the European youth work field.
- There are many existing recognition developments, significant learning and related elements that could be put together in a synergetic way within a future European recognition model.
- It is clear that a new momentum for recognition is here, so the need for more alignment and synergies between various initiatives and actors has become even more important in order to get the best possible result.
- The question of the ambition for a European recognition model remains. What is the desired level or type of recognition that should be developed and for which target group? Are we speaking about the increased visibility of youth workers or a full-scale certification process at European level?
- What should be the "entry points" for such a certification scheme: through the process of validation of existing competences and/or through accredited training schemes? How can we interlink youth work providers aiming to train youth workers and/or higher education stakeholders integrating this process in their curricula?
- Who gives the professional and institutional legitimacy for such a model? Who should be hosting and governing it?
- How can we make sure that the model responds well to the needs of the youth field, both current and emerging ones?
- Will it contain approaches for a centralised recognition scheme or be based on a decentralised approach – providing standards at pan-European level?
- What are the practical implications for organising a European recognition model? What methods for self-assessment and assessment will be used? What kind of support will be available?
- And finally, what resources are to be invested in the development of a pan-European recognition model?

4. Proposed models for the recognition of youth workers' competences

Based on the findings and insights from the three reviews, feedback from the symposium in Budapest and meetings of the Steering Group, as well as ongoing reflection and observations from members of the editorial group, two possible web-based models for the recognition of youth workers' competences have been proposed.

While the two suggested models have similarities in terms of structure and methodology they diverge in some significant respects.



4.1. Model A – Suggested scenario

Model A comprises a two-stage accreditation system that works similarly to those of comparable professions with diverse educational pathways (photographers and graphic designers are just two of the many examples). Stage 1 is based on self-assessment; Stage 2 on peer assessment. Similar to many other professions in which educational pathways are as diverse as in the youth field, a two-stage recognition system is suggested.

Stage 1 – Certified youth worker is based entirely on self-assessment. Youth workers, both paid and volunteer, can self-certify that:

- they have five years of youth work experience in a context that has allowed them to acquire relevant youth work competences, with a general documentation of their experience; or
- they have at least two years of youth work experience in a context that has allowed them to acquire relevant youth work competences, with competence-based and specific documentation that demonstrates their acquired youth work competences during that time; or
- they have a formal educational qualification as a youth worker; or
- they have a (partial) formal qualification in a related field (such as psychology, education or sociology) and a certain level of youth work experience, and they can demonstrate the acquisition of key youth work competences.

All recognised youth work structures, organisations and networks are acceptable as contexts that allow youth workers to obtain relevant youth work competences, including but not limited to:

- recognised youth organisations, networks and platforms;
- recognised national, regional and municipal youth centres and youth clubs;
- recognised general youth work providers; and
- recognised specialised youth work providers.

Recognition can be documented through the official registration of documents, or if these are not available or obtainable, through other relevant and documented evidence of a recognised youth programme at European or national level.

All self-assessment competence tools available are acceptable as ways in which to demonstrate that key youth work competences have been acquired, including but not limited to:

- the Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio;
- the European Training Strategy Competence Model for Youth Workers;
- the EU's Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations classification;
- Youthpass for youth workers that connects to the European Training Strategy's competence model for youth workers;
- national, regional and municipal youth work self-assessment tools;
- youth work self-assessment tools hosted by civil society organisations; and
- self-assessment tools based on national qualifications frameworks.

The recognition platform will not offer its own self-assessment tool, but link to existing ones.

All formal degree courses in youth work or related fields are acceptable as sources to document formal qualification as a youth worker, including but not limited to:

- degree courses for youth work;
- degree courses for social work with a focus on youth;
- degree courses aligned to occupational standards for youth work.

Stage 2 – Accredited youth worker with a specialisation is based on peer assessment. Youth workers, both paid and volunteer, can submit a portfolio for this second stage of accreditation, which is assessed independently by two peer reviewers. In this portfolio, they can document that:

- they have 10 years of youth work experience in a context that has allowed them to acquire relevant youth work competences, with general documentation of their experience; or
- they have at least five years of youth work experience in a context that has allowed them to acquire relevant youth work competences, with competence-based and specific documentation that demonstrates their acquired competences during that time; or
- they have a formal educational qualification as a youth worker.

The ways in which the 10 years of experience, competences acquired or qualifications acquired can be demonstrated remain the same as for the first stage.

Specialisations can be, but are not limited to:

- municipal, regional or national youth work;
- international or European youth work;
- open youth work or street youth work;
- youth work connected with sports, or visual or performing arts;
- social work with young people or youth welfare services;
- youth work management or youth work leadership; and
- youth work research.

Specialisations can be combined.

Peer reviews must always be conducted by two different organisations, which cannot review youth worker portfolios from their own organisation. The peer-reviewing organisations can be, but are not limited to:

- European and national associations of youth workers;
- European and national networks of youth work providers;
- national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations (INGYOs);
- European umbrella platforms of youth non-governmental organisations (NYCs and INGYOs); and
- youth work education and training providers.

If peer reviewers do not arrive at a consensual review, a third reviewer will be involved. The results of reviews can be appealed. The appeal mechanism has yet to be determined.

4.2. Model B – Suggested scenario

Model B comprises a single-stage accreditation system for all youth workers, but its main aim is to provide, in particular, recognition for volunteer youth workers who have acquired or will acquire considerable competence, for which they may have

little or no recognition, or may not be in a position to easily access relevant education or training. An associated aim would be to strengthen the recognition and capacity of the voluntary youth sector.

The process would involve individual, online self-assessment based on portfolios, in which youth workers, both paid and volunteer, would need to provide appropriate data and verification that they have met the following criteria:

- they have at least seven years of youth work experience in the last 10 years and relevant formal and non-formal education and training that have facilitated their acquisition of key youth work competences during that time; or
- they have at least three years relevant youth work experience in the last five years, and relevant formal and non-formal education and training and can provide evidence that they have acquired key youth work competences during that time; or
- have a formal qualification in youth work and three years relevant youth work experience.

The details, criteria, evidence and thresholds for meeting the requisite experience, education and training would need to be further developed and determined. The method of evaluation or validation of applications is set out in Section 3.4.

With regard to the provision of evidence of acquired youth work competences, it is suggested that a competence framework based on, or commensurate with, one or more of the competence tools or frameworks set out in Model A and linked with, or compatible with, the European Qualifications Framework should be developed.

This possible alignment with the European Qualifications Framework would also allow for further expansion and upgrading of recognition, for example for youth workers in a leadership, managerial or supervisory role.

4.3. Model A – Governance, hosting, implementation and support structures and bodies

Model A proposes a governing board, hosting bodies and support structures and bodies as follows.

4.3.1. Governing board

The role of the governing board is primarily to safeguard legitimacy, ensure quality and oversee the implementation of the recognition system.

The board could comprise representatives of key stakeholders: the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership, the European Youth Forum, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centres, Erasmus+ National Agencies, the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations or other umbrella organisations, universities providing youth work studies, providers of youth work qualification training, international youth work organisations, youth work experts, etc.

The governing board should meet regularly (at least once a year) to make strategic decisions and provide guidance for the implementation of the recognition system. It should have a particular role in creating conditions for the practical or institutional recognition of youth worker accreditation within European youth programmes and national-level qualification systems. It should also ensure the coherence of and clear links between the recognition system and youth work studies at national level and youth worker training programmes at national and European levels.

4.3.2. Hosting and implementation

Potential hosts of the recognition system could include:

- national agencies for Erasmus + and the European Solidarity Corps;
- the future European umbrella of youth worker associations;
- EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership;
- SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centres.

The hosting and implementation institution should:

- ensure technical conditions for the web hosting of the system;
- develop necessary tools for the implementation of the system;
- provide support training, ensure quality and manage support staff (for example peer reviewers, coaches/mentors);
- develop quality assurance and appeal procedures for the beneficiaries;
- communicate and promote the system within the youth work field;
- maintain close co-operation between the training providers and universities providing youth work studies;
- strive to ensure concrete incentives for the accredited youth workers at European and national levels;

- provide guidance and opportunities for the process of re-accreditation (criteria for further development, further training and learning opportunities for youth workers, etc.).

4.3.3. Support structures and bodies

In addition to the governing board and the hosting institution, there should be several bodies created and involved in the implementation of the system, as well as some complementary support systems:

- the pool of peer reviewers that need to be trained in how to do assessments;
- the pools of mentors/coaches who should be able to guide and support candidates in the process of portfolio development;
- processes for evaluation and monitoring of the system from the beginning of its implementation;
- easing the cross-border recognition of youth worker qualifications, from country to country;
- additional national-level incentives.

4.4. Model B – Governance, hosting and implementation

Under Model B there would be three tiers for governance, hosting and implementation as follows.

- Potential hosts of the online platform: National Agencies for Erasmus + and the European Solidarity Corps, the European Youth Forum, the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations or other umbrella organisations, the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership and SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centres, would be primarily responsible for the development, maintenance and promotion of the platform.
- Member states would designate an appropriate institution, agency, association or non-governmental organisation for implementing the system and evaluating and accrediting applications for recognition (except where national agencies were the host organisation). The designated authority would also be responsible for promoting and supporting the initiative at national, regional and local levels and liaising with the host of the platform.
- The host organisation and the member states' designated authorities would meet twice a year to review, monitor and evaluate the initiative and make proposals for its further development and future role.

5. Benefits of recognition

5.1. For youth workers

For youth workers, the core benefits of the recognition system would be:

- enhanced professional self-awareness and self-recognition;
- confirmation of professional credentials;
- better visibility within the professional field.

In addition, the accreditation received under the system should lead to some concrete benefits for youth workers. These might include:

- higher fees for the accredited youth workers in the projects funded by European youth work programmes – Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and the European Youth Foundation (EYF);
- additional points in the selection of Erasmus+, ESC and EYF projects involving the accredited youth workers;
- recognition of prior learning through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) recognised by national providers of youth work studies;
- access to advanced professional development courses for accredited youth workers.

5.2. For institutions, policy makers and the youth sector

The added value of such a recognition system for the related institutions, namely the European Commission, the Council of Europe, relevant national-level ministries and the wider youth sector would be:

- greater clarity on the scope and size of the youth work field in Europe that can be useful for better planning and investment in youth work development;
- facilitation of cross-border recognition of youth workers' competences and qualifications between countries;
- a supportive European instrument for enhancing the national-level recognition of youth work and the youth worker profession;
- greater visibility and stronger positioning of the youth work sector at societal and institutional level in policy-making and programme-development arenas.

6. Study outcomes and conclusions

While the study proposes two possible models for the recognition of youth workers' competences, the criteria, methods and processes for recognition are only outline proposals and, if agreed in principle, require considerable further work and development before they could be practically applied. They also involve many difficult and even contentious issues and options that need to be resolved.

Many of these challenges are reflected in feedback from members of the editorial group, in particular:

- issues of certification and standards for recognising prior experience and learning;
- comparability of formal qualifications and prior experience and learning;
- the definition and recognition of relevant or key youth work competences;
- the comparability of all self-assessment competence tools and how account is taken of occupational standards;
- the level and content of relevant formal qualifications at vocational, higher and further education level;
- the duration and content of prior experience and learning;
- the use, form and purpose of portfolios;
- the nature and context of specialisations;
- the qualifications and criteria for selection of mentors;
- criteria for peer reviews and assessment.

While the two web-based models for recognition proposed have similarities in terms of structure and methodology, they diverge in some significant respects. Issues of governance, hosting, implementation and benefits have potentially significant implications for stakeholders in the youth work sector, including the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership, the Erasmus+ National Agencies, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centres and the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations or other umbrella organisations.

Members of the editorial group have all raised issues relating to the role, terms of reference and functioning of the proposed governing body and proposals on hosting and implementation that imply a substantial expansion in the role of the institutions concerned and a presumption that the additional resources required would be provided. Consultaion with all relevant stakeholders would therefore be necessary before proposals could move forward.

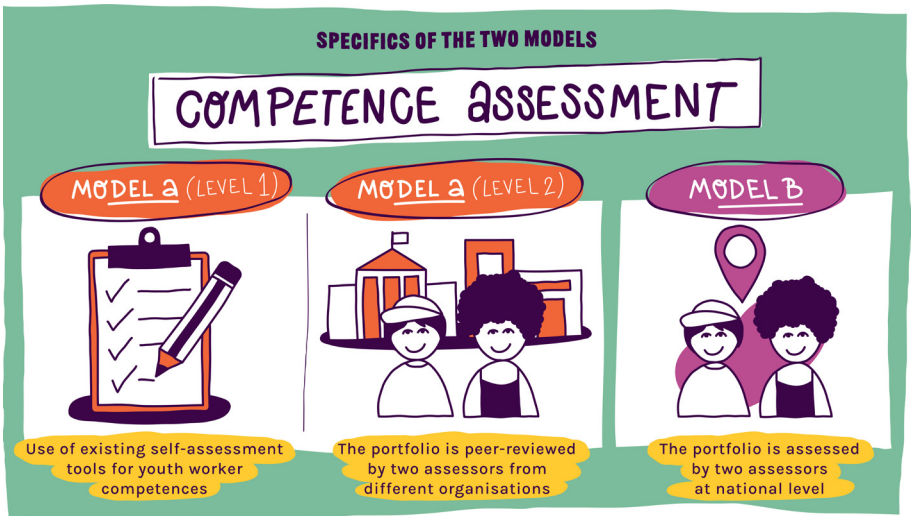
Concern was also expressed with regard to proposed funding and access benefits for accredited youth workers that would create barriers for the implementation of EU youth programmes and projects. In this context, the projects supported by Erasmus+ and ESC were seen as remaining open to all relevant stakeholders regardless of prior experiences or qualifications and accreditation under the proposed recognition system. While quality in programme implementation was important, it was argued that this should be achieved through a supportive approach in the operation of the programmes rather than through providing specific benefits for accredited youth workers.

Provided that these issues and concerns could be effectively addressed and resolved, and if a recognition system were to be agreed and developed, it would still need to be piloted before embarking on Europe-wide implementation.

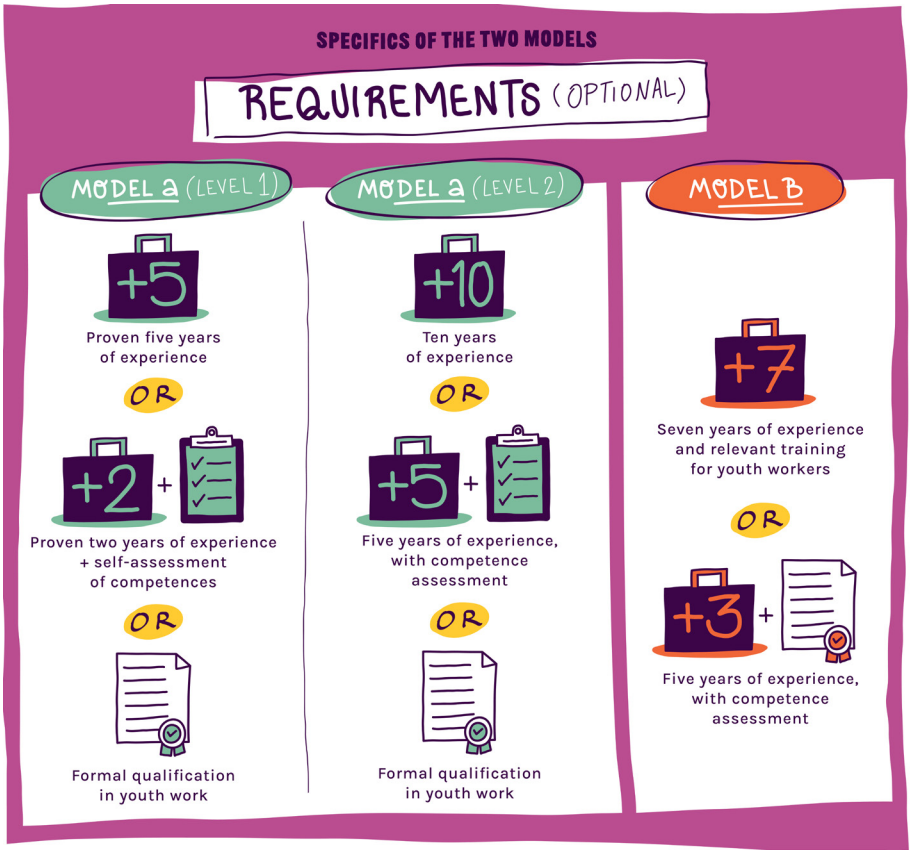
Finally, at the moment, issues of governance, hosting and implementation are largely policy matters, which might be considered and discussed by policy makers and relevant stakeholders in the youth field with a view to reaching conclusions and clarifying the policy landscape before proceeding further.

7. Appendix – Visualisation of the specifications of the two models

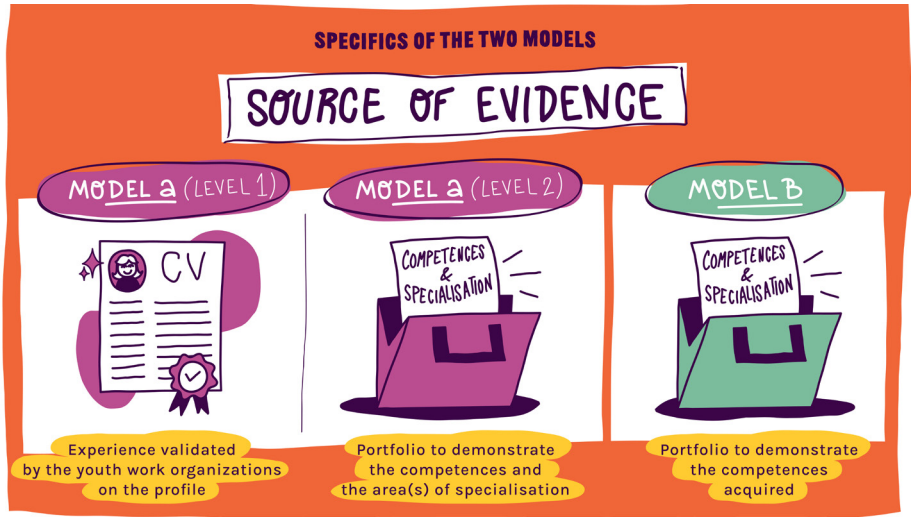
a. Method of assessment



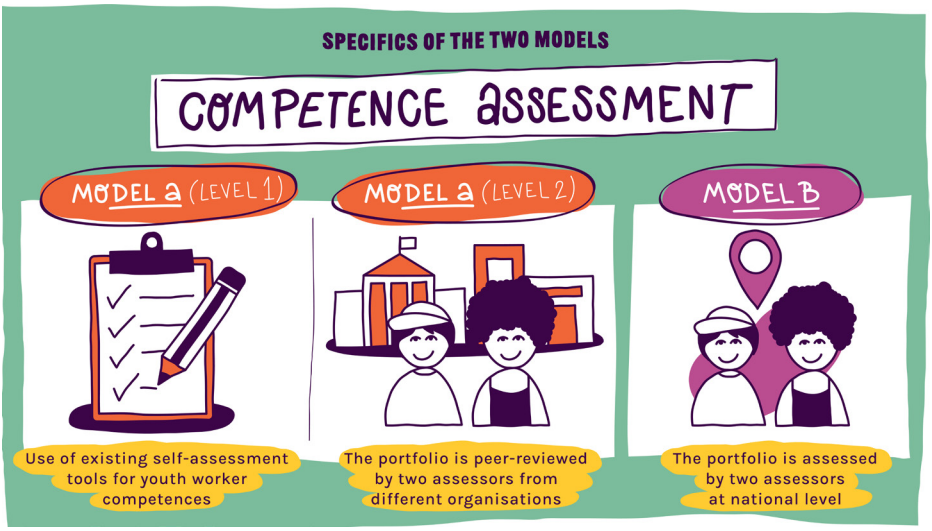
b. Requirement



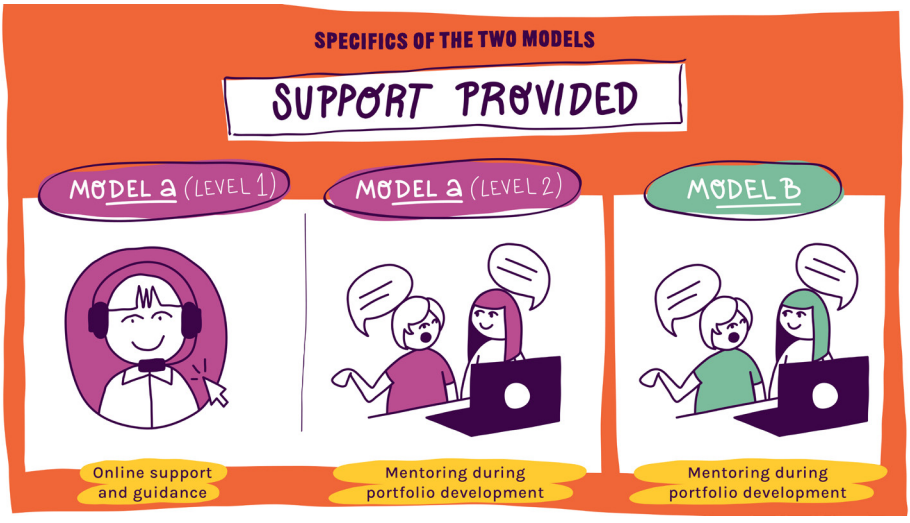
c. Source of evidence



d. Competence assessment



e. Support provided



In 2022 and 2023, the Council of Europe and the European Commission decided to enhance their co-operation on youth work. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work, the 3rd European Youth Work Convention (2020) and the consequent European Union Council Resolution on the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) in 2020 were key milestones in this direction. In line with these developments, the EU–Council of Europe Partnership in the field of youth stepped up its activities on youth work and on the implementation of the EYWA, among others, by supporting better recognition of youth work.

The aim of this study was to make recommendations to the two partner institutions on possible scenarios for a common, cross-border and pan-European instrument for the recognition of youth workers' competences, based on existing practices at national and European levels. As a step towards ensuring the robust implementation of the EYWA, the objective was to make important advances in the recognition of youth work. In this report, two possible web-based models for the recognition of youth workers' competences are presented, which may be taken into consideration in discussion about this widely debated issue, hopefully contributing to the shaping of future youth policy initiatives.

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