A Competence Model

for Youth Workers to Work Internationally

YOCOMO

Contents

We developed this Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally in the framework of the → **European Training Strategy (ETS) in the field of youth**. The aim of the European Training Strategy(ETS) is to build a cooperation framework, strengthen the connection to recognition and validation mechanisms and support systemic change on all levels: micro, meso and macro.

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ROME
WASN'T
BUILT IN A
DAY.

1 A bit of background

Developing specific key competences has become increasingly important for youth workers to work internationally, and this development is starting to show up on the agenda of the European institutions. Providers of non-formal learning, training and education, as well as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes are today also paying closer attention to these competences. We are convinced that if we identify and describe youth worker competences better, this will help improve the image and recognition of youth workers in society. At the same time, we have developed strategies, tools and educational materials that will make capacity-building more effective.

Our approach connects youth and education policies to the objectives of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes and vice versa. The competence model adds an international dimension to youth work in Europe. Moreover, it helps define quality criteria and indicators (in and for youth work), as highlighted in the Council conclusions on quality of youth work (2010) and in the final declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (2015): '[...] there needs to be a core framework of quality standards for youth work responsive to national contexts, including competence models for youth workers, and accreditation systems for prior experience and learning [...]'.

We approached the task of developing a Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally in two ways:

a) We gathered existing documents related to learning mobility and to the competences of youth workers involved in transnational learning mobility projects.
b) We analysed the existing practise in international youth work – based on professional experiences and reports.

Intentions and target groups

1 Why was this competence model developed?

The Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally acknowledges that youth work is becoming more and more European and international, as are the lives of young people. The competence model makes these international youth work settings more explicit. It focuses for instance on working in international teams and on supporting young people in international learning mobility projects.

The competence model should further serve as a source of inspiration for organisers of youth worker training. It will help them pinpoint what competence areas to consider when designing the curricula for such training courses. Within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, this competence model serves as a reference document for National Agencies who offer youth worker training.

Further, this competence model supports youth workers themselves in assessing their own competences. This in turn helps them identify areas where they need further training.

This competence model also helps institutional stakeholders determine youth workers' occupational profiles and the recognition of this profession by society.

Most importantly, this competence model is a tool to play with and reflect on. Feel free to adapt it to your needs, contexts and target groups, because youth work realities vary.

2 Who is the competence model for?

The Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally is useful for

- youth workers who are involved in international learning mobility projects;
- educational staff and trainers who organise international mobility projects; and
- organisations and institutions that develop training strategies for youth workers.

If you already have some experience in the field of youth work at a European and local level, you probably can relate to this competence model. To work in this environment requires a good understanding of learning processes, of youth work mechanisms and of the socio-political and socio-economic contexts in which youth work is carried out. This competence model is to be seen as a supplement to already established youth work education, training and resources. It does not attempt to define minimum or maximum performance levels of youth workers.

A

GOLDEN KEY

CAN OPEN

ANY DOOR.

A few words regarding the competences

The competence model focuses on competences needed to prepare, implement and evaluate learning mobility projects. It is not meant to be seen as a 'must-have' list of competences. However, it includes a number of desirable competences and behaviours that reflect healthy underlying attitudes. This is a basic model and it is not exhaustive, i.e. some topics, such as digital competences, social media literacy, and environmental competences, were not included.

The Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally is a tool to support youth work activities that have an educational dimension. The model is not set in stone, but should serve as a dynamic framework that will keep on evolving.

The four dimensions of the competence model

In the competence model, we focus on the following four dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

- Attitudes (the youth worker's willingness) are the pre-requisite, the foundation for competence development. They lead to
- Knowledge (gained through experience, books, the Internet, etc.) and
- Skills (ability to perform a task, to apply knowledge and turn attitudes into actions), which will then lead to
- Behaviour which is appropriate and contextual.

Therefore, behaviour encompasses attitudes [and actions], knowledge, and skills. Through behaviour we can assess the competence level of the youth worker and whether it is sufficient for his/her work. In short: behaviour reflects the underlying attitudes of a youth worker.

Feel free to use behaviour as the starting point to develop indicators and tools to accompany this competence model.

Attitudes

Skills

Knowledge

Behaviours
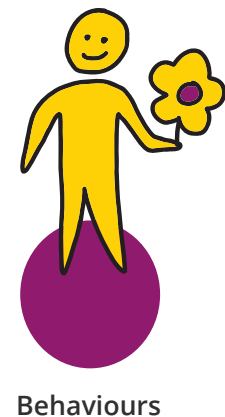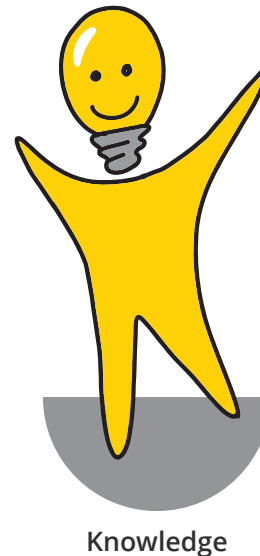
Imagine the competence framework as a pyramid or cylinder, but in no way as something linear. Competences are dynamic and all its elements are interrelated and interdependent – and could look something like this:
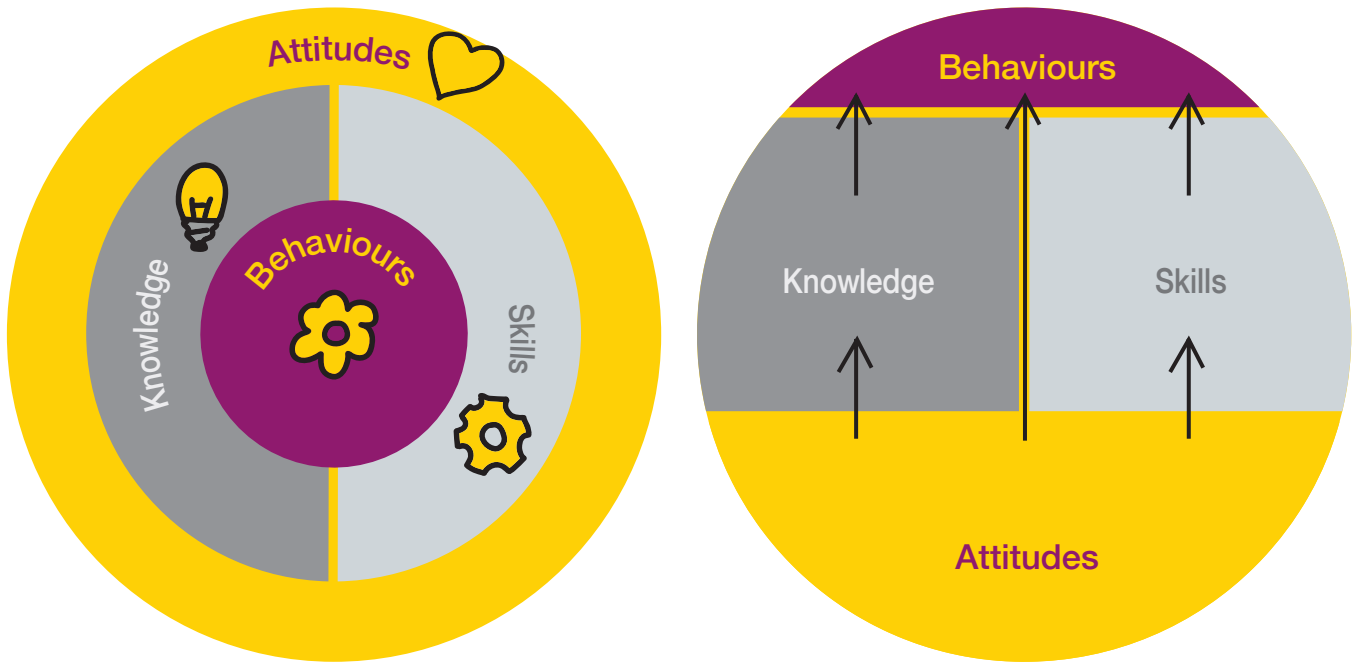
There is no hierarchy between the various elements mentioned in each competence area (under attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours, respectively). The elements mentioned first are no more important than those mentioned last.

IT'S NOT
THE SIZE
OF THE BOAT
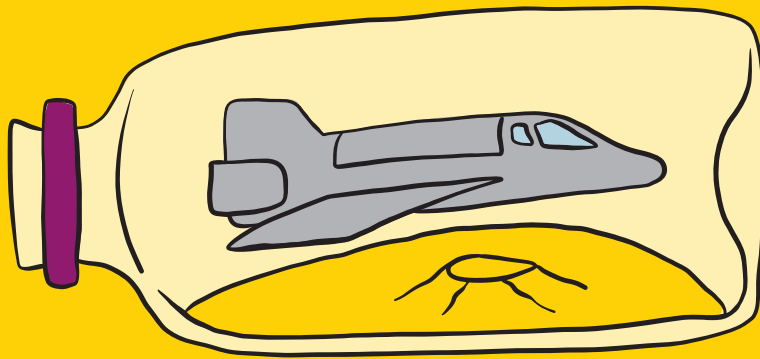
IT'S
THE MOTION
IN THE OCEAN.

2 The wider context

European and international dimensions

We developed the Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally within the context of 'European youth policies and programmes'. The competence model refers to the international dimension of these activities and the interaction in learning mobility projects.

It was challenging to decide what aspects to focus on in this competence model, especially considering its international dimension. For instance, should intercultural learning be a competence area in its own right or should we include it as an element that plays a part in all competence areas? Similarly, international youth work brings by default an international dimension to all competence areas.

In our model, international youth work has the following characteristics:

• Work is done together with international colleagues, often using a foreign language as a lingua franca,
• in a value-driven context, e.g. European programmes promote participation, inclusion, democracy, human rights, etc.,
• mainly in a residential setting, because living and working together 24 hours a day influences non-formal and informal processes,
• and with a link to the wider political context (European or global).

What is a youth worker?

Youth worker education and training varies throughout the different European countries. In some countries, youth work study programmes exist and in others not. In some, youth work is recognised as a profession and in others not. In some countries, youth work is mainly carried out by volunteers, in others by paid staff. Some countries have a longer tradition of youth organisations than others and different concepts and approaches have been adopted.

We took these different realities and challenges into account in the Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally. This competence model is based on Otten/Fennes' (2008) description of expectations towards youth work as a profession: '[...] given the demands and expectations of European youth work as described above, certain professional conditions must be stipulated and demands must be formulated which need to be met by educational personnel.

For example: a (specialised) scientific training beneficial to their type of work and own pertinent face-to-face experience in the field; an involvement in an organisation or at least an affiliation with a structure; a certain permanence and continuity; financial and social coverage; cooperative discourse; etc.'

We have formulated an even more precise definition: 'Youth workers work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal learning contexts, typically focusing on their young charges' personal and social development through one-on-one relationships and group-based activities. While acting as trainers/facilitators may be their main task, it is just as likely for youth workers to take a socio-educational or social work-based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions overlap.' [1]
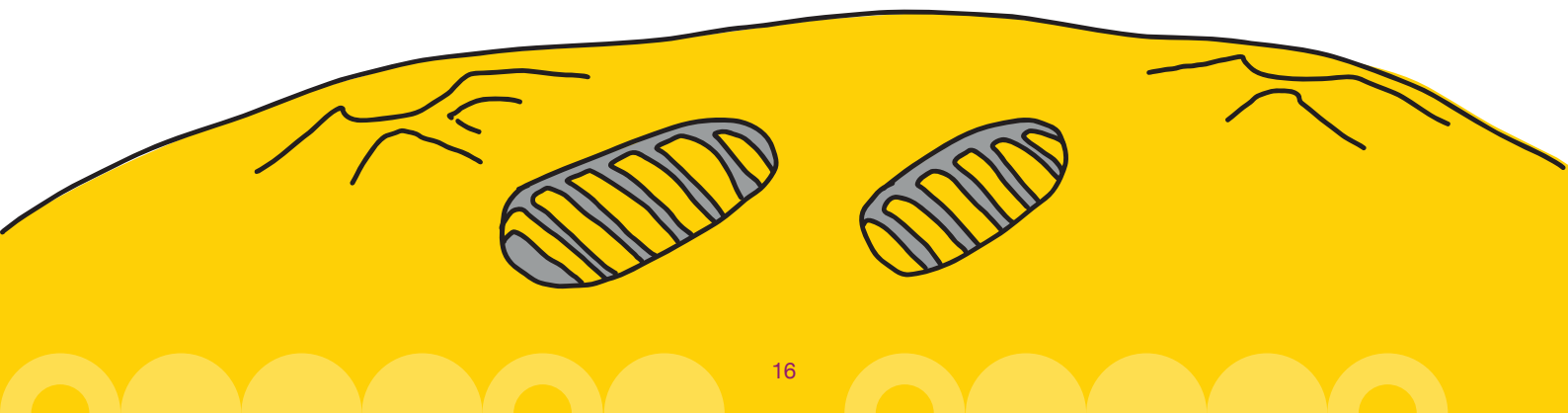
[1] → https://www.europeantrainingstrategy.net/glossary

IT
TAKES TWO
TO TANGO
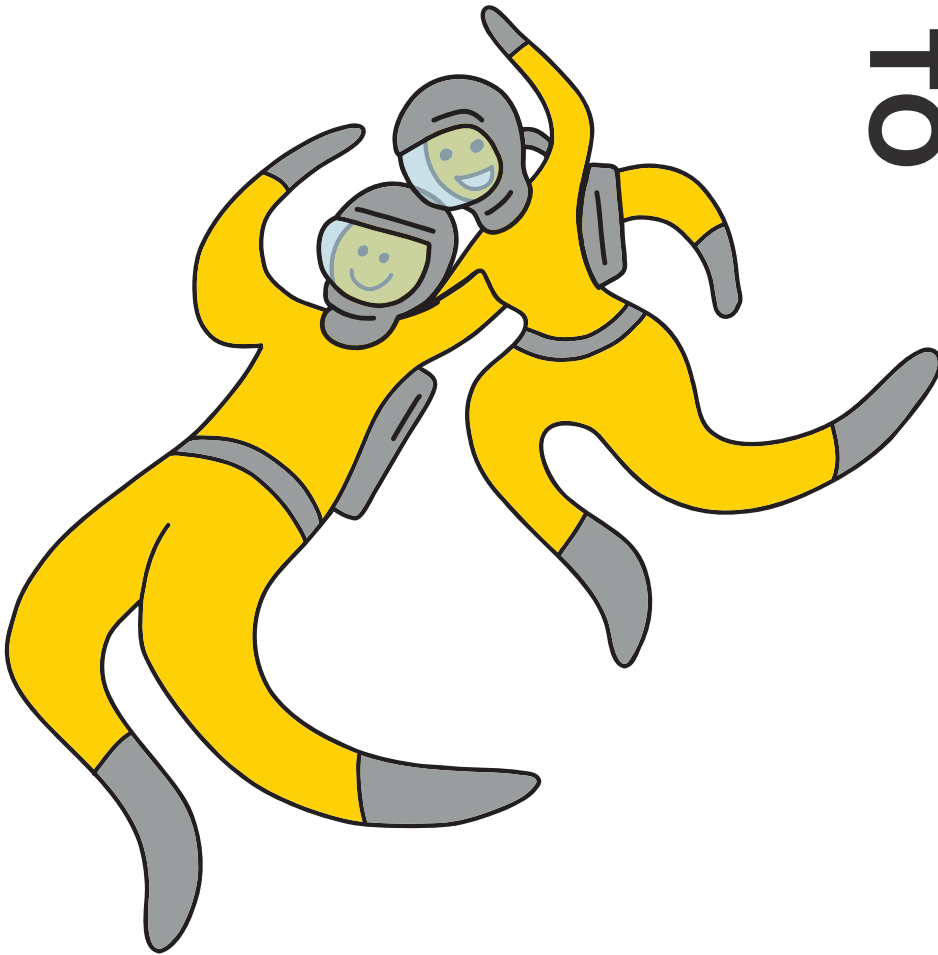
WALK
YOUR
TALK!

What is meant by youth?

The UN probably has the most flexible definition of youth: 'YOUTH is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because "youth" is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job.'

From a psychological perspective, young people are persons in the age range of 20 to 35, although youth starts earlier if we include the period of adolescence. Erik Erikson (1959) distinguishes the following stages of psychosocial development: the young adult stage (from 13 to 39) precedes early adulthood (from 20 to 39) and this precedes middle adulthood (from 40 to 64). Daniel Levinson (1978) and Rhona Rapoport (1980) add that '[...] for a variety of reasons, timeliness on young adulthood cannot be exactly defined – producing different results according to the different mix of overlapping indices (legal, maturational, occupational, sexual, emotional and the like) employed, or on whether a developmental perspective [... or] the socialisation perspective is taken.' For Erikson, the psychological crisis during adolescence is about 'fidelity'. Young people ask themselves the existential question: 'Who am I and what can I be?' They learn to position themselves in relationship to others.

Neuroscience defines adolescence as a '[...] period between the physical changes during puberty and the capacity of an individual to play an independent role in society' (Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, 2008).

Adaptation to specific contexts

The principles of non-formal learning

Competences are always connected to a specific context (intercultural work, youth work, social work, etc.). This makes them challenging to explore and assess. For this reason, competence development frameworks vary according to target groups, youth workers and work context.

Our proposed competence model supports training and quality in youth work. It offers the opportunity to develop training strategies, training courses and will allow you to analyse your own competences and address personal challenges. The competence model is a good basis for peer-support, peer-review and (self-) assessment. It gives impulses that will encourage youth workers to try out new things and invest in personal and professional development.

This competence model is specifically adapted to European youth work and the principles of non-formal learning. The following principles are applicable to every competence.

The principles of non-formal learning[2] behind this competence model are:

- Young person centredness (a focus on young persons and their development)
- Agreed on learning objectives between youth workers and young persons
- Transparency
- Confidentiality
- Attention to content and methodology
- Voluntariness
- Participation
- Ownership of the development process
- Empowerment
- Democratic values and practices

[2] Adapted from 'Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work'. Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten for SALTO T&C RC (2008).

YOU CAN'T **TEACH PEOPLE** ANYTHING.

YOU CAN ONLY HELP THEM **DISCOVER** IT WITHIN THEMSELVES.

Galileo Galilei

THE WORLD IS FULL OF
MAGIC
THINGS
PATIENTLY WAITING FOR
OUR SENSES TO GROW
SHARPER

W. B. Yeats

The 'magical dimension'

In the interaction between young people and youth workers, there are these 'magical moments' that end up having a decisive effect on the lives of young people. We hope that our list of attitudes and behaviours brings back memories of inspirational moments where you as a youth worker or youth work trainer made a difference. And even though these special moments are difficult to explain, they show the important role that a youth worker can play in a young person's life. This magical spark is not a competence one can acquire, but instead it is the magic of human interactions. It has to do with intuition, with being genuine and with believing in people. These things make it more likely for the magic to happen – sometimes without us even knowing.

9
Competence
areas

3 Youth worker competences

In this document, we understand competences as an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge that we use to successfully manage complex situations and tasks. Self-confidence, motivation and well-being are important pre-requisites for a youth worker to fully make use of his/her competences.[3]

We chose a multi-dimensional approach for this competence model. First, we describe the competences. Then each competence is divided into attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

The competences complement each other. Some aspects highlighted under a given competence might be repeated in others. We made a conscious choice of what fits best in which area. Therefore, it is important to see the competences together as a whole and not independently.

The competence model consists of the following nine competence areas:

Facilitating learning

Designing programmes

Managing resources

Collaborating in teams

Communicating meaningfully

Displaying intercultural sensitivity

Networking and advocating

Assessing and evaluating

Being civically engaged

We define the nine competences in more detail in the following tables.

[3] SALTO T&C RC, 'Training of trainers. Self-Perception Inventory'.

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Competence areas

Facilitating learning...

...means establishing dialogue and ensuring cooperation mechanisms with individuals, groups and communities. This means that the youth worker has the attitudes, knowledge and skills to support young people in identifying and pursuing their learning needs and to then choose, adapt or create methods, methodologies and digital tools in residential and online environments accordingly. Ideally, the youth worker and the young person trust each other. The youth worker actively supports and enhances young people's learning processes, self-responsibility, and motivation, and the youth worker empowers young people to improve their personal situation and to stand in solidarity with others to do the same.

Facilitating learning...

Attitudes

- Readiness to improvise and accept ambiguity
- Being open towards learning/unexpected learning (for oneself and others)
- Readiness to upskill and stay up-to-date with existing methods and related sources and tools
- Readiness to self-reflect to understand own motivations
- Readiness to apply self-discipline and self-directedness especially when learning online
- Readiness to be challenged and take risks
- Readiness to trust young people's capacity to direct their own learning
- Openness to using different ways and methods to encourage creativity, problem solving and 'out-of-the-box' thinking
- Willingness to address ethical issues as a source of learning about and from others. Being open and accepting that failure is a part of learning
- Awareness of digital divide and readiness to propose strategies to mitigate it, as well as workarounds to include participants who are in that condition too
- Readiness to include a space for emotions in all situations, including online environments

Knowledge

- Knowledge of learning styles, knowing methods to identify them and to work with them
- Knowledge of group processes, mechanisms and principles (including privilege and power relations)
- Knowledge of competence assessment principles and related methods
- Knowledge on how to look for information about methods and methodology and how to share the resources adequately
- Knowledge of the principles of methodologies used in the field of youth
- Knowledge about emotions and emotional mechanisms
- Knowledge about crisis mechanisms and management

Skills

- Skill of choosing appropriate methods and assessing young people's learning needs and objectives
- Skill of identifying, organising and referring to appropriate resources to support one's own learning
- Skill of initiating and supporting self-reflection on learning
- Skill of identifying dimensions and stages in group processes
- Skill of building up and supporting the self-confidence of young people
- Skill of empathising in a way that others can learn from one's experience
- Skill of addressing crisis situations
- Skill of enabling individual and/or group reflection on ethical issues
- Ability to facilitate learning towards community impact
- Ability to guide others to channel feelings into action, including in online environments, where appropriate.
- Ability to generate conditions where group members can show and build solidarity within the group

Behaviours

- Motivates and empowers young people
- Is honest, respectful and transparent
- Fosters democratic and active participation
- Respects ethical boundaries when working with (the group of) young people
- Raises young people's awareness of the power of change
- Supports young people in dealing with crisis situations in a fair and constructive manner
- Recognises own feelings and values and role models this process to others
- Creates a supportive environment to act on value, both residential and online
- Generates trust and maintains confidentiality, respects of privacy and data
- Acknowledges the experiences of others
- Encourages and actively supports collective actions
- Addresses factors supporting and blocking creativity
- Has the courage to improvise and experiment and recognises the importance of this
- Aims at reaching educational aims by using specific ways and methods that encourage creativity, problem solving, 'out-of-the-box' thinking, in different environmental aspects
- Is OK with imperfections, failures, and mistakes
- Confidently and constructively challenges a 'them and us' mindset

9

Competence areas

Designing programmes…

…involves a good understanding of the different groups and environments that a youth worker works with. This pre-condition is essential to being able to develop and design programmes – be it with an explicit educational purpose or not. The youth worker applies non-formal learning values and principles in the programmes and responds to the needs and realities of young people, which are more complex in an international context. This competence area includes, implicitly, how designing programmes can involve addressing political, societal, technological and cultural issues in youth work and how it can be opened up to include the wider community.

Attitudes

- Willingness to research and stay up-to-date with the newest developments in non-formal learning-related practices
- Readiness to accept the 'unexpected' (elements, learning, etc.)
- Readiness to allow one's own views on educational approaches to be challenged and to revise one's views where needed
- Readiness to face external factors that can influence the development of the programme/practice
- Displaying genuine interest in the group's needs
- Willingness to see each young person in a holistic way
- Readiness to research and incorporate community needs into a programme design
- Readiness to open the group process towards the wider community
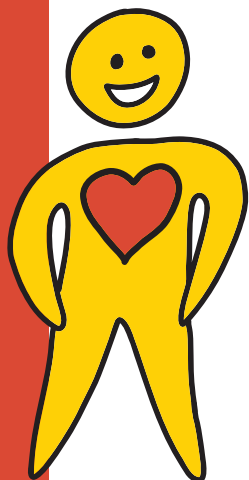
Knowledge

- Knowledge of the values and key principles of non-formal learning
- Knowledge of the young people involved and their community
- Knowledge of project management processes
- Knowledge of different educational methods and concepts; knowing how to tailor and apply these to respective needs
- Knowledge of assessment practices in non-formal learning
- Knowledge of appropriated methods of transferring knowledge to young people in different environments online and offline
- Knowledge about value systems and related mechanisms
- Knowledge of how to apply research into practice
- Knowledge about platforms, risks and benefits of using different digital tools
- Knowledge about power structures behind digital technologies and connected issues as datification, etc.
- Knowledge of the diverse tools and systems to acknowledge rights to authors, including copyleft.
- Knowledge of GDPR and their updates

Skills

- Ability to work with and on different values through a variety of [learning] approaches
- Skill of developing meaningful programmes that motivate and engage young people
- Ability to create conditions for young people to feel and show solidarity with different values, beliefs and worldviews
- Skill of identifying external influences on the development of practice of youth workers
- Skill of assessing/analysing the needs of young people and then involving them in developing a corresponding programme
- Ability to encourage and empower young people to recognise if and when the need exists for solidarity in the hosting community and to act on it.
- Skill of adjusting the educational approach to the needs of the young people
- Skill of taking the contexts of the young people and their community into account and from this deriving an appropriate educational approach
- Skill of adjusting approaches and methods based on [youth] research outcomes
- Ability to include activities in the community during and after the project for wider impact, including hybrid and blended learning formats.
- Skills to integrate digital tools, media and environ-ments in the activities when needed and beneficial
- Skills to increase inclusion for all participants when using digital environments for activities
- Skill to allow space for emotions and informal relationships, in particular when using digital environments for activities

Behaviours

- Assesses the needs of the young people before or at the very beginning of the activity (and proceeds with tailored adjustments if needed)
- Involves the young people in designing the programme, where possible
- Considers and applies the principles of non-formal learning when designing the programme with a particular focus on 'youth-centredness', 'transparency', 'democratic values', 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'social transformation'
- Keeps an eye on the objectives of the activity and the young people's needs
- Deals with programme-related ambiguity
- Deals with unexpended elements and dimensions that influence the development of the programme
- Is willing to challenge the values behind the programmes
- Sees the young person in a holistic way
- Maximises opportunities in programme planning for young people to connect to others that have different values.
- Applies GDPR regulations
- Critically reflects on copyright rules and issues, applying a diverse set of possible authorship's rights (copyleft, creative commons etc).
- Applies a do-it-yourself approach to technologies as in 'maker's culture' promoting self repairing, tinkering and expanding your own devices and technologies

9
Competence
areas

Managing resources…

…means understanding the values and working culture of youth projects and youth organisations. The youth worker understands the factors that influence such projects and organisations and that these are even more varied in the context of international collaboration and work online. The youth worker identifies leadership styles and assesses the impact they have on the target groups during an activity. They understand what motivates young people to take part in projects, how to nurture this motivation and manage risks accordingly. They consider what is needed to make a stronger impact on the wider community. This competence also includes knowledge of national legislation, data policies and financial resources management, with a special attention to the (often bigger) amount of resources needed to design, prepare and deliver activities of digital youth work.

Managing resources…

Attitudes

- Willingness to take on tasks that perhaps are not normally a part of one's role
- Readiness to be challenged with regard to leadership styles
- Readiness to share and to be open about one's own intentions
- Readiness for continued learning, e.g. on financial management
- Sincere interest in the young people's well-being
- Awareness of one's own competences and resources
- Readiness to work on becoming an 'inspirational leader'
- Readiness to think long term about the impact of the project on participants, the community, resources and the environment, including utilising digital tools to maintain it, where appropriate

Knowledge

- Knowledge of human resources management and inspirational leadership
- Knowledge about system dynamics and systemic approaches to human relations
- Knowledge of emotional mechanisms in groups and with individuals
- Knowledge of key players in the community
- Where relevant, knowledge of financial management (with a focus on projects/ programmes)
- Where relevant, knowledge of fundraising
- Where relevant, knowledge of policy and legislation on specific topics
- Awareness of the potential of one's own resources and those of other contacts and partners'.
- Awareness of the limit of resources, including personal ones

Skills

- Knowing how to apply human resources management tools to non-formal learning settings and to specific target groups
- Ability to use an inspirational leadership approach
- Skill of adjusting programme elements to resources management
- Knowing how to empower young people to organise and manage resources
- Ability to manage/deal with frustrations, conflicts and risks
- Ability to work with diverse groups in a learning context
- Strength in knowing how to foster collaboration among the members of the group, while taking their (individual) surrounding environment into account
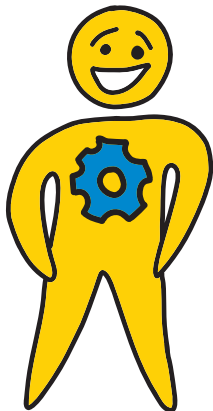
Behaviours

- Demonstrates self-management skills
- Develops programmes or activities based on a needs-and-opportunities analysis (including of the community, and of socialising activities)
- Builds and maintains a good relationship with individuals and the entire group of young people, taking their environment into account
- Provides support for young people to take risks, including bridging to others outside of their in-group
- Acknowledges and celebrates young people's efforts
- Recruits and manages volunteer and paid staff
- Pays particular attention to the young people's well-being
- Fundraises and manages financial resources
- Encourages and supports young people in managing resources – if possible in an environmentally-friendly and equitable way
- Builds on resources and opportunities from partnerships to increase quality and impact of the project, both offline and online

9

Competence
areas

Collaborating in teams…

…means that the youth worker contributes to team work and maintains good working relations with everyone involved with the project. The youth worker motivates and supports colleagues in achieving given objectives. This competence area also includes systemic cooperation and responsibility in an international context.

Collaborating in teams…

Attitudes

- Willingness to take on tasks that are not normally a part of one's role but that will ensure safety for the team and the group
- Openness to and ready for new challenges
- Readiness for continued learning
- Openness to different sources of learning
- Awareness of one's own competences
- Awareness of how much others can teach you and of the principles of 'to get and to give'
- Readiness to reflect upon and rethink one's own role
- Readiness to ask for support and to admit personal limitations in the context of the activity/group
- Readiness to support colleagues' learning needs
- Awareness that one is a role model, both as an individual and as a team
- Willingness to cooperate and learn from others who might hold different values
- Readiness to collaborate and teamwork online

Knowledge

- Knowledge about team work mechanisms in different contexts and of the possible outcomes of different approaches
- Knowledge about one's personal limitations and how to overcome them
- Knowledge about coaching methods
- Knowledge how to deal with emotions
- Knowledge about conflict prevention and transformation
- Knowledge about feedback techniques (how to give feedback, how to receive it, etc.)
- Knowledge regarding individual and collective interests and focuses

Skills

- Mastering methods and techniques that support a clear and fair division of roles and responsibilities
- Ability to contextualise and conceptualise team work practices with the principles of non-formal learning
- Ability to match team members' competences to the objectives of the activity and to the young peoples' profiles
- Ability to foster collaboration among the team members
- Ability to deal well with crisis/conflicts in the team
- Ability to work with various approaches, e.g. co-vision, supervision, collegial feedback, and cooperation
- Ability to develop a continued learning plan for oneself
- Ability to deal with emotions
- Able to feel and show solidarity with people with different values, beliefs and worldviews

Behaviours

- Promotes communication and collaboration amongst the team members to nurture qualities and deal with resistance
- Identifies diversity, strengths and weaknesses in the team
- Requests and offers support where needed
- Ensures that knowledge, skills, styles and preferences in the team are shared and communicated
- Deepens knowledge of particular topics/issues
- Coaches colleagues – where possible and requested – based on the approach of non-formal learning
- Helps build team spirit and trust
- Demonstrates empathy
- Self-reflects on their own values, beliefs and attitudes
- Acts authentically
- Applies feedback techniques
- Allocates adequate resources and time to team building
- Steers collective and individual emotions in a positive direction, including towards action where relevant
- Receives and expresses criticism in an open, respectful and constructive way
- Deals with frustration in a constructive manner
- Uses own privilege and power for the benefit of others

9

Competence
areas

Communicating meaningfully…

…means building positive relationships with individuals and groups. The youth worker is a master in interacting well with young people as well as with international partners and contributes to smooth communication regarding programmes and projects. Communication is one of the key aspects of youth work. This competence area goes beyond simple communication models and pays attention to the notion of asynchronous communication and to the related-diversity of communication tools. This area is also about how the youth worker constructively handles emotions, inspiration, intuition, empathy and personalities.

Communicating meaningfully…

Attitudes

- Openness to expressions of feelings and emotions (one's own and others')
- Readiness to challenge oneself and others
- Readiness to take a step back and reflect (e.g. on one's own perceptions, understanding, feelings)
- Awareness of the unique yet complex approach to one's identity and how to deal with it when working in a group
- Sensitivity and openness to diversity
- Willingness to learn about the backgrounds/contexts/ realities of the young people
- Awareness of the different ways to share feelings, emotions, opinions, as well as to show solidarity, both online and offline
- Confidence and courage to act in solidarity.
- Commitment to address and challenge a 'them and us' mindset in a group.
- Commitment to critically reflect on different sources of information
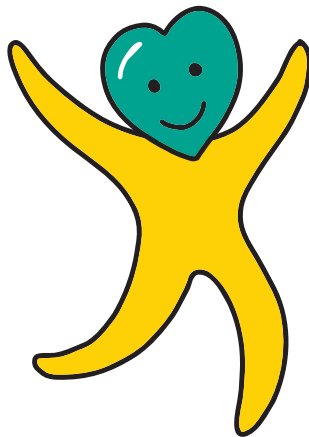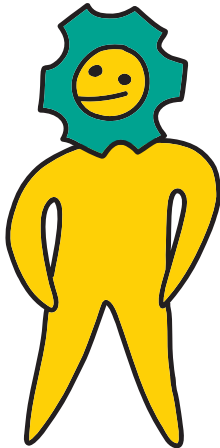
Knowledge

- Knowledge of the different dimensions and elements of active listening and non-verbal communication
- Knowledge of empathy-related mechanisms
- Being up-to-date on current concepts and theories with regard to diversity
- Knowing about the different dimensions of identity
- Knowing various methods and approaches in working with different groups of people
- Knowledge about hate speech and fake news phenomena and how to address them
- Understanding of different ways in which solidarity can be acted on/expressed, including online

Skills

- Ability to actively listen
- Being able to encourage sharing and mutual support within the group
- Knowing how to develop, adapt and apply methods that support awareness of one's own identity and its intrinsic elements
- Ability to demonstrate empathy in a way that others can learn from it
- Ability to deal with fake news and other information disorders in a way that others can learn from it
- Ability to deal with emotions and to ask for support when needed
- Ability to speak in another language than one's mother tongue, where needed
- Ability to communicate at eye level with everyone involved

Behaviours

- Matches knowledge, theories and experiences to the reality and the identities in the group (explicitly or implicitly)
- Listens carefully to others, without judgement, interruption and, if possible, in an unbiased manner
- Is attentive to body language
- Demonstrates understanding of what sparks emotions and how to deal with this accordingly
- Self-reflects to determine own feelings and emotions and understands their impact on others
- Addresses others' unexpressed concerns, feelings, or interests
- Is transparent about their personal emotional state and shares thoughts in a simple manner
- Creates an environment, both online and offline, where feelings and emotions can be freely and respectfully expressed

9

Competence
areas
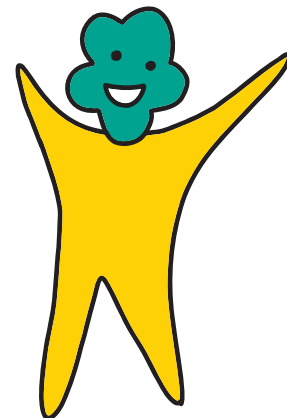
Displaying intercultural sensitivity…

…is the ability to support successful communication and collaboration among people from different cultural contexts and backgrounds. The youth worker has to address and deal with attitudes and behaviours behind this intercultural competence in [international] training and youth work and tackles underlying values. The youth worker approaches 'culture' from an identity perspective and understands ambiguity, human rights, solidarity, self-confidence, acceptance versus own limits, and how geopolitical conflicts influence one's understanding of these aspects. The youth worker takes these intercultural dimensions into account in their work. In the digital environment, this area means to also pay particular attention to the issue of representations when producing and using media.

Displaying intercultural sensitivity…

Attitudes

- Readiness to reflect on one's own in-/out-groups and how they impact on feeling-and-acting in solidarity
- Openness towards the unexpected and towards ambiguity in the group and in the learning process
- Openness and willingness to look at identity, culture and related aspects from different perspectives
- Readiness to confront others and be confronted in a respectful and constructive way
- Willingness to support and empower individuals and groups
- Carefulness to use methods that do not implicitly reinforce stereotypes and discrimination mechanisms
- Awareness that culture is a dynamic and multifaceted process
- Empathy towards people who hold different values and worldviews - beyond in-groups, bubbles and circles.
- Perceiving solidarity as a fully inclusive concept that applies to all humans, as well as our planet.
- Commitment to address and challenge 'them and us' mindset in a group
- Being aware that specific groups such as online communities have precise identities and behaviours to comprehend when reaching out and interacting
- Being supportive to young people to express their identities, being aware of the possible implications, especially online
- Readiness to go beyond stereotypes in people representation, especially when producing digital media

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the notions and concepts of acceptance of ambiguity and change
- Knowledge of the mechanism of bias and how it affects feeling and acting
- Knowledge of identity-related mechanisms and theories (with a focus on cultural contexts and senses of belonging)
- Knowledge of how a cultural environment can shape the understanding of different concepts (such as solidarity or inclusion)
- Knowledge of the concept of a European identity, the values behind and ways in which it supports solidarity
- Knowledge of the theories and concepts of privilege and power relations
- Knowledge of the mechanisms linked to stereotypical constructions of reality
- Knowledge of discrimination mechanisms and how to address them
- Knowledge of human rights, human rights education methods
- Knowing how to speak at least one foreign language

Skills

- Being able to deal with ambiguity and change
- Being able to deal with tension and conflict
- Ability to raise awareness about each other within the group
- Ability to work with interrelated dimensions of culture and identity
- Being able to initiate critical reflection
- Being able to address human rights topics through different methods (human rights education)
- Being able to recognise discrimination and to understand the related mechanisms in order to react properly
- Being able to conceptualise, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information about or in the group
- Being able to speak at least one foreign language
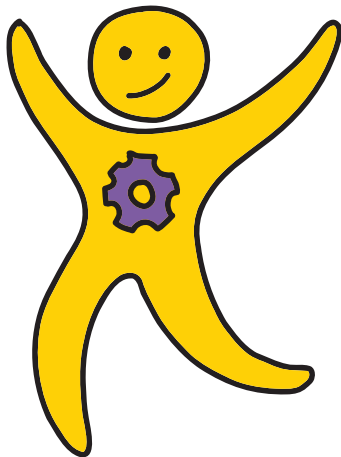
Behaviours
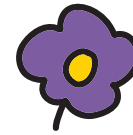
- Reflects on theories, concepts and experiences and applies these with regard to ambiguity and change
- Explicitly wrestles with their own biases, assumptions and behaviours regarding stereotypes
- Uses appropriate tools and methods to support the group in deconstructing and reconstructing reality (wrestling with stereotypes, prejudices, assumptions, etc.)
- Reflects on own values and senses of belonging to increase self-awareness and understanding of difference
- Encourages young people to reflect on their own identity and related elements
- Explores the complex connections between identity, personal experiences, politics, society and history
- Identifies and deals with issues of power and privilege in and with the group
- Facilitates awareness-raising with regard to conflicts that exist in the society and how they relate to intercultural dialogue
- Recognises and interprets words, body language and non-verbal communication in a culturally-appropriate manner
- Encourages self-confidence and demonstrates [a framed] flexibility in cultural and communicative behaviour
- Is willing to speak a foreign language and overcomes resistances and inhibitions
- Is aware of who is included and who not, and uses words and actions to include others
- Encourages young people to reflect and exchange ideas regarding issues such as solidarity, social justice, promoting/protecting human rights, discrimination, dignity and equality
- Acknowledges power and privilege, highlighting the potential for it in acts of solidarity

9

Competence areas

Networking and advocating…

…involve developing and managing partnerships with other relevant actors. Youth work does not happen isolated from the rest of the world. Youth workers facilitate networking with others (in their community and outside it) and advocate for the value of youth work. They are conscious about (political) values and beliefs at play in youth work and support young people in developing independent 'political thought'.

Networking and advocating…

Attitudes

- Willingness to collaborate with other actors and stakeholders
- Appreciation of the added value of new partnership and collaboration opportunities
- Being careful regarding young people's safety and well-being (and of all people who are involved)
- Readiness to allow being confronted with other views and work approaches
- Readiness to accept compromise while guaranteeing young people's interests and rights
- Readiness to embrace solidarity as a concept that treats people as equals
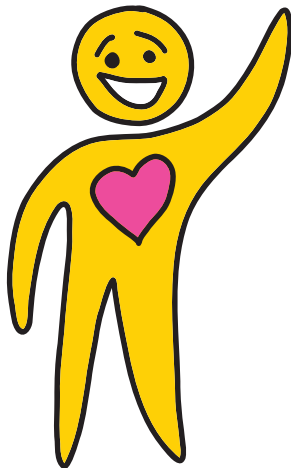
Knowledge

- Knowledge about youth policy and youth work in one's own context (community, region, etc.)
- Knowledge of the socio-political and economic background of the young people
- Knowledge of the needs of the community
- Knowledge about youth rights
- Knowledge about mobility-related regulations regarding young people
- Knowledge about media and promotion mechanisms with regard to youth work, as well as rules and regulations, including copyright
- Knowledge about digital tools for networking and collaboration, and more inclusive approaches
- Knowledge of advocacy approaches and methods in a youth work context
- Knowledge of which structures and systems favour more solidarity for/with all
- Knowledge of how structural and systemic obstacles can limit people's possibility to act in solidarity
- Knowledge of the potential and limitations of online solidarity and its polarities.
- Knowledge of the importance of global solidarity

Skills

- Being able to identify relevant partners in different environments (especially in an international setting)
- Being able to identify and name the European/ international dimension in one's work
- Ability to network with a variety of external systems and actors
- Ability to transfer/communicate and share the learning potential of international mobility experiences
- Ability to include other community members during or after the project for wider impact
- Ability to identify underlying privilege and power relations and mechanisms, and to assess their consequences and potential for acts of solidarity
- Ability to research and access relevant information.
- Ability to create and disseminate digital contents as videos, podcasts, memes, digital presentation formats etc.

Behaviours
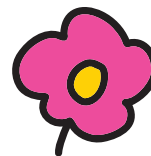
- Supports partnerships with other actors
- Takes a pro-active role in networking with other actors and organisations/structures in line with the interest of the young people
- Takes a pro-active role in working on the political dimension of networking, making steps towards concrete actions
- Uses social relationships as a resource towards overcoming structural and systemic obstacles
- Promotes and explains the [learning] potential of international mobility experiences
- Transfers/shares knowledge of youth and social rights and related formal regulations with potential partners and the young people
- Where relevant, overcomes resistance to new partnerships through assessing the potential of that given partnership
- Addresses power relations in a way that primarily focuses on the interest of the young people
- Role-models and stimulates self-reflection and discussion around privilege in the society and how to use personal privileges for acting in solidarity.
- Encourages equity in relationships
- Deals with and uses media in a careful manner, ensuring the safety and rights of young people, other stakeholders
- Uses digital media and tools proficiently to spread and disseminate positive and supportive messages and as platforms to act in solidarity
- Advocates for digital rights, closing digital divide and positive impact of digitalisation on societies

9 Competence areas

Assessing and evaluating…

…means for youth workers to work on helping and empowering young people, the environment, and society to change for the better – supporting the development of collective and solidarity actions that stimulate change and transformation. Youth workers support actions that change policy and practice. This area also means to pay attention to the data gathered through online and digital tools.

Assessing and evaluating…

Attitudes

- Openness to different evaluation and [self-] assessment approaches in non-formal learning environments
- Readiness to learn about evaluation and assessment
- Interest in processes of change
- Readiness to be challenged and challenge other with regard to transformation
- Readiness to present and share the outcomes of a programme/project with a wider audience
- Being aware of the fact that no information/data is 100% reliable (with regard to its collection and use)
- Willingness to find the learning and enact positive changes from negative evaluation results
- Openness to evaluating own impact on the project and vice versa
- Readiness to think long term about the impact of the project on participants, the community, resources and the environment

Knowledge

- Knowledge of evaluation processes, assessment mechanisms and tools
- Knowledge about where and how to secure adequate data/material for evaluation
- Knowledge about how to apply the different/chosen evaluation approaches to a non-formal learning context
- Knowledge about quality assurance and what it includes
- Knowledge of the different phases of impact assessment.
- Knowledge of ICT-related techniques with regard to assessment and evaluation
- Knowledge of what can generate change and of how to adjust the dissemination and use of results accordingly
- Knowledge of different methods to collect data and of different formats for presenting it
- Knowledge about current [youth] research which can support the evaluative process
- Knowledge of the different communities involved (hosting, sending, online)
- Knowledge of how to measure change, including baseline measurements
- Awareness of which change is measurable and how to include unmeasurable aspects in evaluation
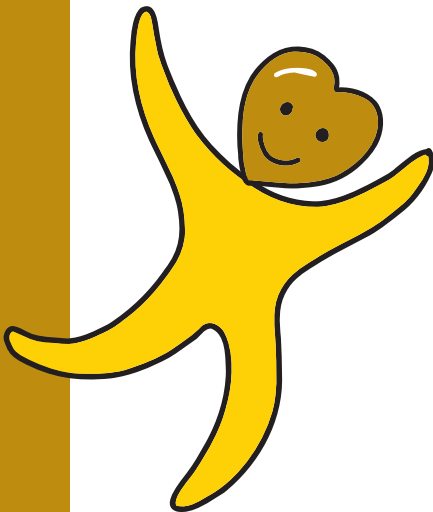
Skills

- Being able to identify the most appropriate evaluative approach with regard to the needs of the young people and the objectives of the activity
- Skill of ensuring that the impact assessment of the young people's needs suit the objectives identified
- Skills to write reports and to present them to diverse audiences
- Ability to work with both quantitative and qualitative information/data to evidence change
- Ability to interpret information/data according to the context of the activity
- Ability to plan an experience's follow-up while taking into account the outcomes of the programme/project
- Ability to incorporate practices that increase community impact
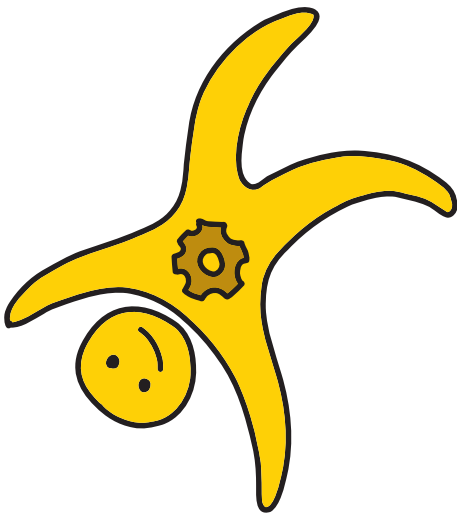
Behaviours

- Plans and applies a range of participative methods of assessment and evaluation
- Develops adequate assessment approaches
- Verifies that the outcomes of an evaluation properly match the methods used for the evaluation design and impact assessment
- Deals explicitly with the notion of change and transformation
- Uses research methods before and after the project to assess the needs of the community and the impact on them
- Supports young people in challenging their views and capacity to envision next steps
- Encourages creativity when dealing with the follow-up of a given experience
- Demonstrates skills in report writing and presentations geared towards a variety of audiences
- Defines appropriate ways to collect relevant information/data
- Uses findings to influence practice
- Interprets information/data according to the profile and contexts of young people
- Where relevant, uses digital tools to support the assessment and evaluation process, or the data analysis
- Disseminates and uses results of the project to build social capital in and around the community (bonds and bridges)
- Makes decisions responsibly for a positive long-term impact on the community and the environment

9 Competence areas

Being civically engaged…

…means being aware of and taking a principled stance on political and societal issues affecting young people, challenging power dynamics, supporting value-based processes, co-creating with young people, and supporting them in their critical civic engagement in their societies, in Europe, and beyond.

Being civically engaged…

Attitudes

- Trust in young people's potential and their competences for meaningful participation and change-making
- Being curious about political and social developments, including in the digital sphere
- Readiness to critically reflect on one's own values, perception of privilege, personal motives and urge to take social and political action
- Readiness to stand up and speak out when social injustice occurs, no matter the perpetrator or the victim
- Readiness to engage with relevant political and social processes and the life of the community and society(ies)

Knowledge

- Understanding of challenges to young people's engagement (e.g., digital divide, social, cultural and own biases) and their impact on political and social developments
- Understanding the systemic framework and specific mechanisms that influence young people's meaningful participation and engagement with socio-political processes, including how to use and challenge them
- Understanding of local, global and human rights issues, particularly those deemed sensitive and controversial and how they affect each other
- Knowledge of relevant policy frameworks, political and social actors, stakeholders, and community(ies) and their potential for impact
- Knowledge of the potential risks of critical civic engagement processes in specific contexts

Skills

- Skills to encourage and empower young people to recognise the need to engage, and (inter)act constructively by raising their voices and/or taking action
- Skills to support young people to reflect on their values critically and those they are confronted with
- Ability to create and co-create opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate and critically engage with socio-political processes
- Ability to identify disinformation and misinformation and to support young people in acknowledging and dealing with them
- Ability to interact constructively with different socio-political actors for the benefit of young people and their civic engagement
- Ability to set boundaries and take care of one's own and young people's well-being when engaging critically with issues
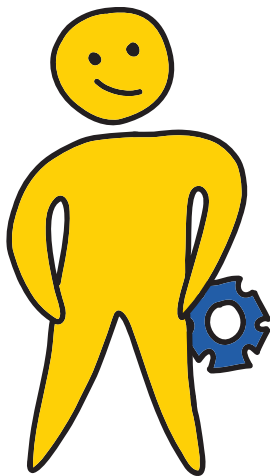
Behaviours

- Works towards engaging young people of different backgrounds in the social and political dialogue
- Addresses the challenges to young people's engagement (e.g., fake news and other information disorders) and their impact on political and social developments
- Encourages young people's connections inside groups (bonding), with others (bridging), and with those with power (linking)
- Self-reflects on their own identity, values, privilege, power, and power relations, and ways in which they are put into action
- Role-models advocacy by speaking out against injustice in a socially responsible and effective manner
- Actively works on overcoming structural and systemic obstacles for critical youth civic engagement
- Co-creates actions with young people to address local and global, progressive social and human rights issues
- Assesses and addresses potential risks when supporting young people in their critical civic engagement to ensure their safety
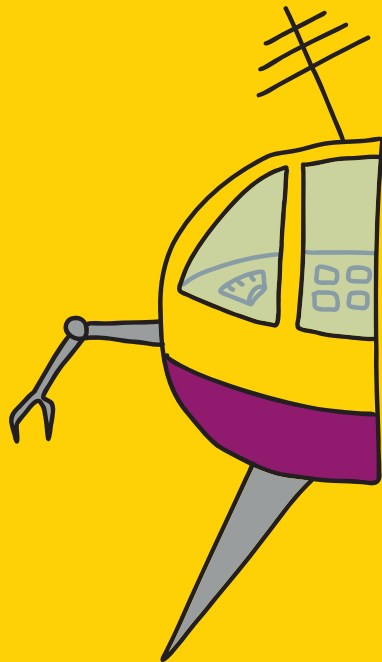
DIVIDING AN ELEPHANT IN HALF, DOES NOT PRODUCE TWO SMALL ELEPHANTS.
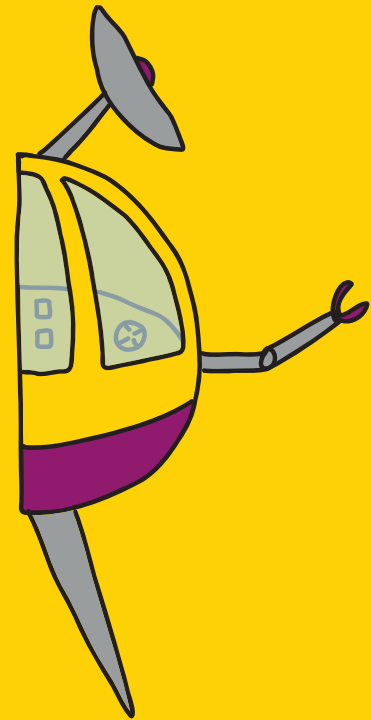
The Fifth Discipline:
The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization,
Senge, P. 1990

4 Developing quality support measures

If we want to use the **Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally** to develop quality support measures, we need to give special attention to a series of elements. Harvey and Green (1993) listed the following elements in their Total Quality Management (TQM)[4]:

1. Ethics
2. Integrity
3. Trust
4. Training (process, contents and methodology)
5. Full involvement and participation of the learner
6. Quality culture and approach
7. Recognition
8. Communication (including partnerships)

This goes in line with the principles of non-formal learning as developed by Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten in **Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work** (2008).

Any assessment mechanisms should take the elements above into consideration. However, competences evolve and depend on their context. So any curriculum and quality standard is bound to be biased – no matter whether you use self or external assessment. Within youth work, we therefore recommend integrating other dimensions in quality assessment than only quality standards and indicators. We prefer a holistic and systemic approach to quality.

[4] Initially developed by W. Edwards Deming, Joseph. M. Juran and Armand V. Feigenbaum (1989), and later revised by Cua, McKone and Schroeder (2001) in their nine common Total Quality Management (TQM) practices.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN
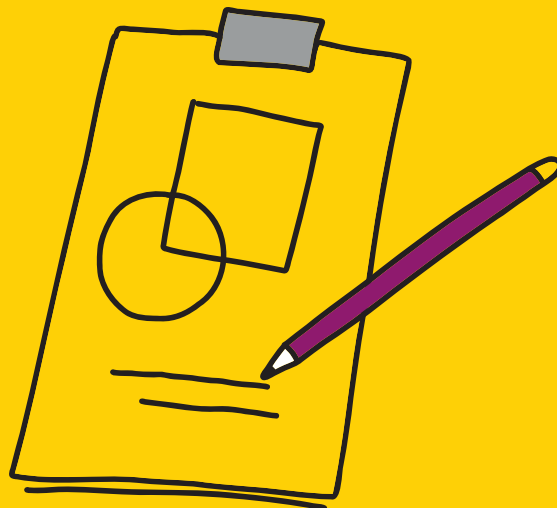
WORDS.

5 Glossary of terms

Competences

The term 'competences' refers to a system of values, attitudes and beliefs, and skills and knowledge that can be applied in practice to manage various complex situations and tasks successfully. Confidence, motivation and well-being are important prerequisites for someone wishing to successfully apply developed competences.

Formal education

Formal education is a form of purpose-driven learning that takes place in a distinct institutionalised environment. This environment is designed for teaching/training and learning, is staffed by qualified and examined educators, is geared towards specific topics and levels, and usually serves a clearly defined category of learners (age, level and specialisation). Formal education (and hence formal learning) is organised and formalised by means of national curricula. Formal education is built up in a way that allows successful students to move up to the next level and obtain a corresponding degree, diploma or certificate. Typical formal education institutions include primary and secondary schools, vocational colleges and universities. Most formal learning is compulsory.

Identity

Identity is understood as a cluster of elements and dimensions that define an individual at certain times and in certain situations, contexts and settings. Identity encompasses not only dimensions such as gender, sex, persona, culture and ethnicity, but also includes processes such as identity (personality) change and social transformation. Developing ones' identity is a dynamic process.

Informal learning

Informal learning is not necessarily purpose-driven and is generally unstructured (i.e. it lacks defined learning objectives, predetermined learning settings or educational materials). Informal learning takes place in everyday contexts in the family, at work, during leisure time and within the community. While informal learning does have outcomes, these are rarely recorded, virtually never certified, and are typically not immediately visible to the learner. These informal learning outcomes do not necessarily have an inherent value for formal education, training or employment purposes.

Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence as developed and demonstrated within the framework of youth work includes a set of qualities that people need so they can live in contemporary, pluralistic societies. It enables them to actively confront social injustice and discrimination and promote and protect human rights. Intercultural competence requires an understanding of culture as a dynamic, multifaceted process. In addition, it calls for an increased sense of solidarity that allows individuals to negotiate their insecurity and fear of the 'other' e.g. through critical thinking, empathy and by accepting ambiguity.

Quality

In the framework of this competence profile, quality is to be understood as encompassing dimensions such as ethos and coherence, adherence to defined objectives, change, and innovation.

Quality of training in the youth field

Training quality plays an essential role in promoting the recognition of non-formal education and youth work; the role of trainers and of training for trainers is thus essential. The criteria pertaining to training in the youth field represent agreements on which existing training courses in the youth field are based. These criteria may include the following:

- The training is based on the values and principles of non-formal learning;
- The training is aligned with the evidence-based knowledge about mutual needs of learners and society and promotes a defined set of competences:
- The training responds to the needs, competences [abilities] and the individuality of learners and leaves room for both expected and unexpected outcomes;
- The training is carefully planned and executed in terms of its educational impact and practical organisation;
- Sufficient resources are made available in advance, and are employed in a clearly results-oriented and efficient manner;
- The training is evaluated based on jointly agreed criteria;
- Its results/outcomes are recognised and visible.

Quality of trainers

The quality of trainers – i.e., their professional expertise combined with their ability to perform within an educational framework – has a crucial impact on the quality of the training activities they deliver.

For stakeholders and training organisations, composing a team of trainers who are able to function and deliver according to expectations ought to be a permanent concern. Trust and transparency are of particular importance in this process. Special attention must be paid to the ability of each trainer and to the importance of the smooth functioning of a given team of trainers. It must hence be ensured that all areas of competence relevant for the educational activity in question are addressed, that the individual trainers can work together as a team, and that the necessary sex/gender and geographical balances are safeguarded.

Learner

A learner is a participant in the learning process. The training is always targeted towards the learner and his/her competences are developed through it. The terms 'training participant' or 'trainee' are often used as synonyms.

Learning

Learning is a process that results in permanent social transformation and change in a learner's competences and actions. Learning allows them to become a more experienced, self-aware and self-directed individual. Based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle, one of the learning cycles that can be observed in many youth work situations encompasses the following four steps: observe, stop, reflect, and adapt.

Meaningfulness

In this model we use the term meaningfulness as the capacity to clearly express an emotion or an idea with or without words. Meaningfulness also refers to something that is important, that has a value (for a person, for a group of persons) and that relates to a purpose. For some, meaningfulness goes hand in hand with the notion of mindfulness, meaning the ability to remain fully present and aware in the 'here and now', acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations in a non-judgmental manner.

Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning is a targeted learning process that supports the development of an individual: their social transformation, potential, creativity, talents, initiative and social responsibility as well as the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It is understood as a form of learning that takes place outside institutional contexts (e.g. school). Non-formal learning in youth work settings is often structured, based on learning objectives, takes place during a certain period of time, involves specific learning support, and is intentional (and voluntary). Non-formal learning is based on a series of educational values and principles.

Principles of non-formal learning

The principles of non-formal learning are agreements on which the organisation of non-formal learning is based: a focus on the learner and their development; transparency; confidentiality; voluntariness; participation; ownership; and democratic values.

Trainers in the youth field

'Trainer' is traditionally used to refer to those who shape, guide and accompany the learning processes of individuals or groups. In the youth field, trainers design and implement educational activities based on the values and principles of youth work and non-formal learning, they create conditions that promote the learners' individual development, and they shape the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for youth work.

Training in the youth field

Training in the youth field means a targeted educational activity based on the principles and values of youth work and non-formal learning. Training in this area is targeted at young people and those who create the conditions for young people to engage in activities that foster their individual development (youth workers, youth trainers, public officials, leaders, counsellors, etc.). They do so by supporting the development of young people in various ways and by promoting the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are necessary for quality youth work.

Values in non-formal learning

'Values in non-formal learning' means a set of convictions and beliefs that guide the choices and approaches applied in non-formal learning. In the youth field, the values of non-formal learning are connected to personal development (e.g., independence, critical thinking, openness, curiosity, creativity), social development (e.g., the ability to interact, participative democracy, solidarity and social justice, responsibility, problem-solving) and ethics (e.g., acceptance of others, human rights, intercultural learning, intercultural dialogue, peace and non-violent behaviour, gender equality, and intergenerational dialogue).

Youth and young people

The UN probably has the most flexible definition of youth: 'YOUTH is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because "youth" is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job'.

From a psychological perspective, young people are persons in the age range of 20 to 35, although youth starts earlier if we include the period of adolescence. Erik Erikson (1959) distinguishes the following stages of psychosocial development: the young adult stage (from 13 to 39) precedes early adulthood (from 20 to 39) and this precedes middle adulthood (from 40 to 64). Daniel Levinson (1978) and Rhona Rapoport (1980) add that '[...] for a variety of reasons, timeliness on young adulthood cannot be exactly defined – producing different results according to the different mix of overlapping indices (legal, maturational, occupational, sexual, emotional and the like) employed, or on whether a developmental perspective [... or] the socialisation perspective is taken'. For Erikson, the psychological crisis during adolescence is about 'fidelity'. Young people ask themselves the existential question: 'Who am I and what can I be?' They learn to position themselves in relationship with others.

Neuroscience defines adolescence as the '[...] period between the physical changes during puberty and the capacity of an individual to play an independent role in society' (Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, 2008).

Youth work
Youth work is an extra-curricular field of work, in that it involves specific leisure activities and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. It promotes young people's development in a multi-faceted manner, enabling them to become active outside their families, formal education, and work. Youth work activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under the guidance of educational staff (either full-time or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders) and can develop and change in line with various dynamics. Youth work is organised and delivered in different ways (e.g., by youth-led organisations, youth organisations and informal groups, and by youth services and public authorities) and is shaped at the local, regional, national and European level.

Youth workers
Youth workers work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal learning contexts, typically focusing on their young charges' personal and social development through one-on-one relationships and group-based activities. While acting as trainers/facilitators may be their main task, it is just as likely for youth workers to take a socio-educational or social work-based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions overlap.

Reference documents

We gathered existing material related to learning mobility and youth worker competences for international mobility projects. We list the sources and materials that we used for the competence model below.

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- The 2nd European youth work convention (2015) – → final declaration.

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9

Competence areas

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