

Position Paper

Asserting Space: Youth Work Through Rights and Recognition

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Introduction

Youth work is a practice dedicated to supporting, educating, and empowering young people beyond formal education systems. As a fundamental pillar for youth empowerment, it offers tools, spaces, and opportunities for young people to grow, participate, and shape their own lives. Rooted in non-formal education, civic engagement, and community building, youth work fosters inclusion, strengthens active citizenship, and helps young people access their rights. Through these experiences, they develop practical and professional skills, laying the foundation for their futures – socially, culturally, economically, educationally, and politically.

Despite its proven impact, youth work, and the crucial role youth organisations play in delivering, structuring, and sustaining it, continues to be under-recognised, undervalued, and insufficiently funded. This lack of investment hinders the capacity of youth organisations to sustainably support young people, scale impact and contribute meaningfully to policy processes at all levels.

Youth organisations – including National Youth Councils (NYCs) and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) – are democratic, youth-led, non-profit structures for young people. We define youth organisations as organisations (associations, clubs or movements) that are set up to serve young people, led by young people and are democratic, non-governmental and not-for-profit.¹

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) highlights the key characteristics that distinguish youth work from other educational approaches:

- **Voluntary participation** in youth work – young people must be free to engage in youth work activities by choice underpinned by equitable access, without obli-

gation, allowing them to develop personally, gain civic engagement experience, and acquire skills on their own terms.

- **Volunteer-based youth work** – youth work is often delivered by volunteers, in grassroots, peer-led, and community settings. This model stimulates innovation, collaboration and inclusion, while ensuring youth work remains reflective of young people's lived experiences and needs.

As the leading voice for young people and the largest platform of youth organisations in Europe, the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations play a crucial role in advocating for the recognition, support, and advancement of youth work at European, national, and local levels. A successful youth work ecosystem requires dedicated support and recognition in all governance processes.

This position paper reaffirms our commitment to strengthening youth work, ensuring that it remains youth-led, rights-based,² and embedded in broader policy frameworks as well as strategy and programme developments. At the European level, this includes embedding youth work within key frameworks and mechanisms, building on the **European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA)**. It also involves shaping the next EU Youth Strategy and ensuring the future Erasmus+ programme is responsive to the needs of youth organisations and young people. Notably, the 4th European Youth Work Convention in May 2025 in Malta must seek to incorporate these principles into the resulting roadmap for national implementation, and bring a European dimension to youth work at all levels.

This paper addresses the aims and principles of youth work, its methods and approaches, and places a strong emphasis on the essential

1 As defined in the Study on the Social Value of Youth Organisations, https://www.youthforum.org/files/YFJ_StudyOnTheSocialValueOfYouthOrganisations_1P1.pdf

2 See European Youth Forum's [policy library on youth rights](#)

role of youth organisations. It calls upon **European institutions, national governments, policymakers, and local authorities** to recognise, support and scale up youth work through taking action at the appropriate level(s) of decision making to implement concrete policy, funding and implementation commitments.

I. The aims and principles of youth work

Unlocking potential – for young people, by young people

The pivotal role of youth work in empowering young people to actively shape their lives and futures is too often overlooked and undervalued. Youth work holds the potential to enable young people to participate fully and meaningfully in society. In order for this transformative outcome to be delivered, the following contributions of youth work must be better recognised and supported.

1. Youth work as pathway to personal development and soft skills

Through youth work, young people develop and gain diverse skills, complementing traditional formal education. It supports their transition to adulthood by providing a space to develop key personal, professional and entrepreneurial competencies such as confidence, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and resilience.³ Youth work also instils important values in young people, such as democracy, human rights, intercultural understanding, peace, diversity, active citizenship, and solidarity, by fostering dialogue, participatory learning and civic engagement.⁴ However, these skills often remain unrecognised or undervalued in formal education and employment systems.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- National governments, formal education providers and employers to formally recognise youth work as both an independent and complementary field of learning, along with the acknowledgment of the skills it yields. Through youth work, many young people acquire practical competencies, leadership abilities, and personal growth that formal education systems fail to provide.
- National governments to integrate non-formal education into national qualification frameworks, enabling youth work experiences to translate into accredited, tangible skills to strengthen the link between youth work and employment. Youth workers can support young people's transition into employment by acting as a bridge to public employment services.⁵

3 From the [EU Youth Strategy](#), C 456/5

4 Per the Values and Principles of the [YFJ Strategic Plan](#)

5 [Position Paper on Youth the Guarantee: How to support young people finding a pathway](#)

- European institutions and governments at all levels to increase and sustain funding for youth work initiatives that foster skill development. Sustainable and non-project-based funding is needed to expand training and mentorship programmes, ensuring all young people can benefit from non-formal education.

2. Youth work as an enabler of active citizenship

Young people have the right to be active contributors to everyday democracy, beyond voting and formal political processes. Youth work is one of the strongest tools that equips young people with the various skills to actively engage and take action in social and civic life. Youth work should be recognised as an essential enabler of civic and democratic engagement, encouraging young people to actively participate in their societies and communities. Youth work plays a central role in equipping young people to tackle cross-cutting contemporary challenges, from the climate crisis to discrimination, disinformation and polarisation, through capacity building, community mobilisation and awareness-raising.⁶

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and governments at all levels to embed a rights-based approach into youth work policies, recognising young people as civil and political rights-holders,⁷ not just beneficiaries of youth work. Young people are active citizens with rights to participation, education, and self-determination.
- European institutions and governments at all levels to allocate dedicated funding to support youth-led civic initiatives and movements, including those led by NYCs and INGyOs working transnationally to promote democracy, peace and inclusion through youth work.
- Regional and local governments to provide specific training and resources for youth workers to support young people's civic education and activism.

⁶ See EU-CoE Youth Partnership's [The role of the youth sector in addressing young people's climate emotions](#) (2024)

⁷ See YFJ's [The universal recognition of the rights of young people](#) (2024)

3. Youth work as a driver of social cohesion

Young people are not a homogenous group – they represent a wide range of backgrounds, social groups, ages and intersectionalities,⁸ including those who are vulnerable and marginalised. It is essential to recognise that some young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment, poverty, discrimination, violence, displacement, and barriers to education and healthcare, which can reinforce cycles of exclusion. Adopting a rights-based approach is essential to empower them as active agents of change.

Youth work actively addresses these structural inequalities by creating spaces for connection, personal growth and community engagement, equipping young people with the tools to organise around issues of concern to them. As part of a wider community safety net, it offers consistent support beyond home or school, fostering belonging, inclusion, and resilience. Youth work contributes to positive mental health and well-being and strengthens young peoples' capacity to navigate individual and collective challenges.^{9 10}

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- Regional and local governments to support the youth work sector in conducting targeted and inclusive outreach to marginalised youth to ensure equitable access to and participation in youth work activities. Youth work should serve all young people, not only those who already have access to opportunities.
- Regional and local governments to dedicate targeted and earmarked funding to address intersectional barriers – ensuring that young people from marginalised

backgrounds, including those facing structural discrimination or exclusion, can access meaningful opportunities for participation in youth work activities.

- Governments at all levels and healthcare providers to provide substantial and sustained investment in youth work as a key contributor to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing.
- Local governments to guarantee access to trusted, trained adults for young people outside of their home and formal education. Youth workers provide guidance, mentorship, and support, particularly for those facing mental health struggles, discrimination, or unstable living environments.

⁸ These intersectionalities encompass various ethnicities, races, religions, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, and neurodiversities, and more.

⁹ See YFJ's [Exploring Social Factors in Youth Mental Wellbeing](#) (2023)

¹⁰ [Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on youth work policy in an empowering Europe](#) (2024)

II. The methods of youth work

Meet young people where they are

Youth work occurs across multiple spaces and through diverse methods, with the aim of ensuring all young people, regardless of their background, have access to meaningful engagement, support, and development opportunities. Whether taking place in physical, digital or civic spaces, youth work should be youth-led, based on the methods of non-formal education, and delivered by youth workers with access to sufficient training. For youth work to be effective, it must be accessible, participatory, flexible and sustainably well-resourced.

1. Where youth work should operate: ensuring adequate spaces for youth work

1.1. Youth work in physical spaces:

Many young people lack dedicated spaces where they can freely and safely be themselves and develop their fullest potential, through non-formal education, social connections and personal development.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- Governments at all levels must establish, continuously invest in, and renovate spaces such as youth centers and youth clubs. These spaces must also be made sustainable and energy-efficient, reflecting a commitment to sustainability and long-term investment in youth infrastructure.¹¹
- The European Commission and EU Member States to prioritise and secure funding for infrastructure for youth, including youth centres, youth clubs, and shared community spaces, through the successor to Next Generation EU, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and other relevant funding mechanisms. Specific investment streams must be dedicated to the development and maintenance of infrastructure for youth.
- European institutions and governments at all levels to support cross-border and international youth work spaces,¹² including those that foster international youth mobility and intercultural learning.

11 See the [Council of Europe's Quality Label for Youth Centres criteria](https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/mission-and-mandate) as well as the aims of the two European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/mission-and-mandate>

12 Good practices include the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest

- Regional and local governments to establish youth information centres, such as integrated service models.¹³ Access to opportunities and information concerning work, education, and everyday life should be gathered in one space, to foster a cross-sectoral approach where different youth workers can collaborate to provide holistic support. Centres should be easily recognisable, low-threshold, and free of stigma.
- Regional and local governments to guarantee accessible infrastructure and inclusive programmes – ensuring that youth work spaces are physically accessible, well-equipped, open to all young people, and designed to accommodate diverse requirements.
- Regional and local governments to ensure physical youth work spaces are free of violence, safe and inclusive – creating environments where young people feel secure and supported, with clear policies to actively prevent discrimination, harassment, and exclusion, especially intended for the safeguarding of marginalised groups of young people.

1.2. Youth work in digital spaces¹⁴

Young people's lives and youth engagement have increasingly shifted online, thus digital and smart youth work have become crucial in complementing traditional methods and bridging geographical divides. While digital platforms can enhance flexibility and expand access, particularly for rural and marginalised youth, they must not replace in-person engagement, recognising that young people's lives are organised across both offline and online spaces. The ideal is to meet young people where they are, wherever they are, as

challenges such as digital literacy gaps, online safety concerns, and unequal access to technology still persist.¹⁵

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- Local governments to offer flexible participation options, such as collaborative digital platforms, making youth work adaptable to young people's needs and different occupations.¹⁶
- European institutions, governments at all levels and formal education providers to invest in closing the digital divide by ensuring affordable access to digital tools and digital literacy training.
- National governments to produce ethical guidelines for digital youth work regarding data privacy and online safety, relying on provisions of EU regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation and Digital Services Act. Similarly to physical spaces, the online world presents other challenges and needs specific policies to address those, such as protecting young people's personal data and preventing online harassment.

1.3. Youth work in civic spaces

With increasing shrinking civic space driven by broader democratic backsliding, and tokenistic youth engagement, youth work plays an active and vital role in ensuring young people's civic engagement in democratic and social movements. Through youth work, active citizenship can be strengthened by empowering young people with the skills, confidence, and opportunities to engage in democratic and community life. Similarly, youth work requires a healthy and enabling civic space to be carried out meaningfully.

¹³ See example of [One-Stop-Shop Guidance Centres](#) for young people in Finland, Ohjaamo, as well as [European Commission Guidance](#)

¹⁴ [Council conclusions on smart youth work](#) (2017/C 418/02)

¹⁵ As of 2021 30% of those aged 16 to 29 lacked basic digital skills. See [Digital literacy in the EU: An overview](#) + European Youth Forum [Position Paper on Youth the Guarantee: How to support young people finding a pathway](#)

¹⁶ See European Academy on Youth Work '[Futures of Youth Work](#)' (2024)

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and governments at all levels to protect young people's right to assemble, express themselves and mobilise through advocacy,¹⁷ social and grassroots movements, with youth workers serving as key support figures in this mobilisation, particularly for young people from historically excluded communities who face greater restrictions on civic expression due to systemic discrimination.
- Regional and local governments to lower barriers to participation in youth work activities – ensuring accessible, inclusive engagement opportunities through targeted outreach and dedicated funding for marginalised young people.
- European institutions and governments at all levels to recognise the key role that NYCs and INGYOs play in maintaining a healthy civic space and enabling youth participation in decision-making processes.
- Governments at all levels to support local youth councils through sustainable funding and greater recognition, with a view to increase youth-led decision-making power in local governance.¹⁸

2. How youth work should operate: empowering through youth work

Within all spaces where youth work is carried out, whether physical or digital, a youth-led and participatory approach must be at the core of its delivery, allowing young people to shape their own social, political and personal development.

2.1. Youth-led

By young people, for young people – youth work must be a bottom-up process driven by the aspirations and rights of young people.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- Governments at all levels and youth work practitioners to commit to co-creation over hierarchy. Young people must have a say not only in defining initiatives that affect their lives, but in how these initiatives are shaped and delivered.
- Regional and local governments and youth work practitioners to follow youth-led governance models. Youth workers must be trained in participatory youth-led approaches, promoting youth work as an equal partnership between them and young people.
- Youth work practitioners to integrate peer-to-peer mentorship models into youth work structures. By supporting each other, young people can foster confidence and social skills in dynamic learning environments.

2.2. Non-formal education

Education goes far beyond the formal classroom, and non-formal education is a cornerstone of youth work. The European

¹⁷ See European Youth Forum [The universal recognition of the rights of young people](#) (2024)

¹⁸ See example of [Finnish Local Government Act](#) which requires all municipalities to have a local youth council or a youth participation channel.

Youth Forum defines non-formal education as an organised learning process outside formal education and training systems.¹⁹ Participation is voluntary, enabling young people to be self-fulfilled, inspired, action-oriented, and committed to a life of purpose. It offers accessible and inclusive spaces that value diverse cultural, social, and neurodivergent ways of learning and expression. In youth work, non-formal education is key for building skills through interactive and participatory methods, such as workshops, peer-learning and creative activities, including outdoor activities, leisure, sports and cultural activities and events.²⁰

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and national governments to recognise non-formal education. Young people gain valuable and legitimate applicable skills through non-formal education, which are essential for their professional and personal development.
- National governments and formal education providers to strengthen the integration between non-formal and formal education systems – establishing clear pathways for non-formal learning to be validated, accredited, and connected to career opportunities; as well as information about non-formal education opportunities to be shared in schools.
- National governments to create schemes whereby the role of youth workers and youth leaders is recognised, ensuring their access to youth centres and training opportunities.²¹
- European institutions and national governments to actively involve youth organisations in shaping, co-creating and implementing policies and standards for non-formal education recognition.

19 See European Youth Forum [Revised Policy Paper on Non-Formal Education: A Framework for indicating and assuring quality](#) (2011) and more [Access to quality formal and non-formal education](#)

20 See Council of Europe's [Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life "Have Your Say!"](#)

21 See example of [Youth Leader Card 'Juleica'](#), a nationwide, standardised ID card for youth leaders in Germany.

III. Support and recognition for providers of youth work

Providers, not just beneficiaries

1. Youth organisations as key providers

Youth organisations are the backbone of youth work, providing essential spaces for participation, inclusion, and development. They operate in core dimensions of youth work: as direct providers in the implementation of youth work, and as policy actors shaping, monitoring, and evaluating youth work-related agendas. A large part of youth work is delivered by youth organisations, often through trained volunteers or community members, alongside paid youth workers. Youth organisations also serve as vital mediators between institutions and young people, bridging the gap between policy frameworks and the lived experiences of youth.

1.1. Recognising and strengthening the role of youth organisations

To fully harness the potential of youth organisations in delivering impactful youth work, it is essential to support their status and integration within youth policy implementation at all levels.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and national governments to formally recognise youth organisations as key and equal-status providers of youth work, including but not limited to those already involved in the European Youth Work Agenda, alongside public services providing youth work activities. Youth organisations need to be integrated into national and European strategies for the implementation of youth work.

- European institutions and governments at all levels to recognise youth organisations as essential stakeholders in the youth work community of practice at local, national and European levels.²²
- Governments at all levels to strengthen local and community-based youth work models. Youth organisations often operate at the local level, and youth work interventions are most effective when they best reflect the specific needs of young people in their communities.

1.2. Investing in the development and resilience of youth organisations

Without reliable, sufficient and sustained investment and support, youth organisations can not fulfil their role in delivering quality youth work services. Long-term investment is essential to build a resilient and adaptable youth work ecosystem where youth organisations can be empowered.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- Governments at all levels to sustainably fund youth organisations to strengthen youth work. With long-term investments, youth organisations can maintain their services, expand outreach, and provide support for volunteer-based youth workers. Funding mechanisms for youth organisations should be flexible, adaptable to their needs, and prioritise structural grants over short-term, project-based funding, to ensure the sustainability of their activities. This includes recognising that sustained national investment in local authorities is essential to prevent youth work from being deprioritised. Earmarking funding for youth work at

²² See Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01) Annex II

local and regional levels can help mitigate these effects and protect essential youth services.²³

- The European Commission and National Agencies to create structural regranting schemes within Erasmus+ managed by international umbrella organisations in the field of youth to guarantee that the European Commission fully taps into the potential of INGYOs as key intermediaries to national and local youth work, and ensure that EU funding reaches youth-led, democratic and not-for-profit youth work initiatives across Europe.²⁴
- European institutions, notably the European Commission, to facilitate peer-learning and the exchange of best practices among youth organisations – including via the Erasmus+ KA2 programmes strand and the creation of opportunities as part of the European Commission's synthesis of Member States' Future National Activity Planners to spark potential bilateral or multilateral projects in youth policy topics including youth work.²⁵
- European institutions and governments at all levels to fund capacity-building for youth organisations, enabling them to maintain and enhance quality services, particularly by supporting training programmes for organisations working with marginalised youth and ensuring that both staff and volunteers are best equipped.²⁶

2. The recognition of volunteer-based youth workers

It is crucial to highlight the nuanced nature of youth work: it is carried out by both paid professionals and volunteer youth workers. Volunteer-based youth work is a fundamental pillar of the sector. Many community-led and youth organisations rely on volunteer-led efforts, reflecting a bottom-up approach which ensures that youth work takes place close to young people, particularly those from under-represented and marginalised backgrounds, and is rooted in their lived experience and needs. In parallel, volunteering is also a form of non-formal education, equipping young people with civic engagement opportunities and personal skills.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and national governments to formally recognise volunteer-based youth work as a legitimate and essential method of youth work.
- European institutions and national governments to recognise volunteer-based experiences in formal qualifications, including via the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and national recognition schemes, enabling volunteers to have their contributions recognised across educational and employment contexts.²⁷
- European institutions and national governments to fund training and capacity-building programmes for volunteer youth workers – ensuring volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver quality work with and for young people.

23 In Ireland, youth work funding is distributed via regional Education and Training Boards, but annual budget cuts have been common. See NYC's [#YouthWorkChangesLives](#) campaign.

24 See more about participatory governance in [The future of the Erasmus+ Programme](#)

25 See [Future National Activities Planners](#).

26 The Bonn Process (European Youth Work Agenda) emphasizes the need to invest in the skills and competencies of youth workers to ensure high-quality, adaptable youth work across Europe.

27 See [The European Qualifications Framework](#)

- European institutions and national governments to allocate sustainable funding for volunteer-led youth work initiatives – securing long-term financial support for youth work activities run by volunteers, particularly those in grassroots and community-based organisations, to ensure stability, reach, and impact.

3. Supporting all youth workers

Youth workers and youth organisations can reach out to young people in ways formal structures can not, particularly those who may feel alienated by such institutions, through local outreach, community networks and grassroots activism. Whether volunteer or paid, both need resources, training and support.

Like volunteers, paid youth workers play a critical role in youth work. By having stable contracts and job security, they can offer ongoing support for youth engagement, particularly in youth organisations. For youth workers to carry out their roles meaningfully, they must be adequately supported.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- National governments and employers to guarantee fair wages and stable contracts to prevent precarious employment. Youth workers have the right to secure employment and dignified working conditions that reflect the importance of their role. They must be supported and enabled to organise collectively through a union, strengthening their ability to advocate for fair treatment, better conditions, and long-term sustainability in the sector.²⁸
- Regional and or local governments to ensure specialised capacity-building and training opportunities. Youth workers must have access to continuous professional development that meets the evolving needs of young people.

The European Commission, National Agencies and Member States to maintain youth worker mobility as a priority action within Key Action 1 of Erasmus+. Youth worker mobility facilitates international networking, fosters skill development, and promotes intercultural understanding, empowering youth workers to

bring innovative approaches and a European dimension to their local youth work.

The European Commission and National Agencies to maintain their support for the SALTO Resource Centres and the European Training Strategy,²⁹ offering educational pathways for paid and volunteer youth workers through competence-based approaches.

29 See SALTO's [European Training Strategy \(ETS\)](#)

IV. Youth Organisations at the heart of policy frameworks and quality standards for youth work

Beyond consultation: a seat at all tables

Youth organisations possess the unique ability to operate at all levels of policymaking. Their connections to local communities and young people allow them to understand and represent the needs and aspirations of youth on the ground.

NYCs have a strong role to play in shaping national youth policy. Simultaneously, INGyOs' capacity to engage with European institutions and decision-makers enables them to advocate for youth rights and influence the direction of youth work policies across Europe. This multi-level role positions youth organisations as essential actors in shaping an encompassing youth work landscape that is responsive, inclusive, and empowering for all young people.

1. Youth organisations as policy actors

Youth organisations are often excluded from the policy and decision-making spaces that directly impact their everyday work and the young people they serve. As direct implementers of youth work, youth organisations must have a say in shaping the regulations and policies that govern the field. They have the competencies and expertise in proper implementation of youth work.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and governments at all levels to legally recognise youth organisations as key stakeholders in local, national and European youth work policy, acknowledging the role of youth organisations in bridging the gap between institutions and young people.
- European institutions and governments at all levels to integrate youth organisations in their various processes, ensuring their role in policy is legally formalised and not symbolic, tokenistic or consisting merely of consultative processes.
- European institutions and governments at all levels to institutionalise co-creation between policy-makers and youth organisations in youth work governance – from youth organisations' grassroots realities to the institutional level. Governments and institutions must establish mechanisms that include youth at all stages of the decision-making, policy design, implementation and evaluation process, ensuring that young people's rights are adequately reflected and protected.

- European institutions and national governments to embed a strong and dedicated chapter on youth work as a mandatory component in all national and European youth strategies. Youth work must be recognised as a core pillar of youth policy, with youth organisations co-defining objectives, investment priorities, and implementation mechanisms.

2. Youth organisations setting quality standards

Youth organisations must be central actors in defining, monitoring and upholding quality standards in the youth work sector. Their active participation in setting benchmarks will ensure that youth work practices consistently meet the requirements and norms of the field. This involvement will also strengthen the sector's commitment to continuous improvement and monitoring, fostering an environment where young people can expect and receive the best quality services and support.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

- European institutions and governments at all levels to ensure the direct and formal involvement of youth organisations in defining, setting, evaluating, and enforcing quality standards for youth work in all governance processes. Quality standards must reflect the lived realities of youth workers and young people, not solely institutional priorities. Youth organisations should co-develop local, national and European quality benchmarks for youth work.
- European institutions and national governments to implement impact assessment tools such as the Youth Test – ensuring youth policies are rights-based and reflective of young people's needs. Youth organisations must be involved in the regular assessment of the implementation of youth work policies to ensure their meaningful impact.³⁰
- European institutions and national governments to develop European and national frameworks for quality assurance in youth work, co-created with youth organisations, ensuring that frameworks

are dynamic, inclusive and adaptable to the diversity of youth work models across Europe.

- Member States to fully implement and monitor adherence to the quality standards and recommendations already outlined in:
 - At Council of Europe level: Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work;
 - At Council of Europe and EU level: Signposts for the Future The Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention (2020);
 - At EU level: Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01);
 - At EU level: Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on youth work policy in an empowering Europe (2024).

- Maintaining youth work as a focus area of The Council of Europe and EU Youth Partnership.

Moving forward, the European Youth Forum calls for Member States to commit to supporting and reinforcing youth work through:

- The outcomes and roadmap of the 4th European Youth Work Convention, which must reinforce youth-led principles and the role of youth organisations in quality youth work development;
- The development and implementation of the next Multiannual Financial Framework at the EU level;

V. Conclusion

Securing the future of youth work

We cannot afford to lose the impact of youth work. Undervaluing it means young people lose safe spaces, trusted mentorship and vital opportunities for growth. Without strong and sustained youth work, young people in society risk facing greater exclusion, disengagement, and the loss of significant potential. Investing in youth work is investing in a stronger, more connected, and more resilient society for all.

Now and in the future, youth work must be **well-funded, well-recognised, and embedded in policy frameworks, with youth organisations at the forefront as key providers and advocates**. Youth work should be a **right, not a privilege**, ensuring all young people have equitable access to the support and tools they need. Governments must invest in youth work **now**, securing its future as a vital force for empowerment, inclusion, and civic engagement.

Youth work shapes communities, societies, organisations and most importantly **lives**. The time to act is now – before we are forced to look back and see what has been lost.



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