

Motion

Supporting Youth Information: Combating disinformation and bridging the divide between formal education and non- formal education

signed by: National Youth Council of
Ireland (NYCI)

Explanation of the situation

Youth information is a branch of non-formal education which seeks to uphold the right of young people to full and reliable information. It helps them to make informed choices and promotes their autonomy, their ability to think critically and their active participation in society.¹ Youth information, according to the European Youth Information Charter, responds to the needs of all young people without exception. It provides practical, pluralistic, accurate and regularly updated information on a wide range of subjects, in a variety of forms. It also personalises information for each user, respecting confidentiality and anonymity while providing maximum choice, enhancing their autonomy and, when necessary, referring the user to a specialised information service.² Youth information is a specialised universal youth service; it can interact with young people of any age on any topic across sectors and can act as a very positive first contact with youth work for young people and for those already in the youth sector.

Youth information builds trust and establishes a relationship with the young people who engage with the service, breaking the regular flow of information that young people are subjected to from a multitude of different sources in their lives. The focus on co-creation and collaboration with young people when finding information through a youth information service provides young people with information and media literacy skills while practically learning through non-formal education. This, combined with the nature of youth information where work, education and everyday life are gathered in one space, means that youth information is uniquely placed within the youth sector, supporting youth work being delivered by specialised local voluntary and professional youth workers with a cross-sectoral approach, but not working in isolation or on independent programmes. For this reason, youth information cannot avail of many funding programmes and relies on limited alternatives. Youth Information is unique as it stands as a bridge between sectors,

from youth to education, employment, mental health and civic engagement. The area in which it exists means that it is more relevant than ever but falls into a grey area for funding, exhibiting a clear need for an adaptation of existing funding models or dedicated funding streams.

Across Europe, we are seeing a rise in misinformation and disinformation with 68% of Europeans reporting that they encounter fake news at least once a week³. Disinformation has been recognised as a threat to “fundamental values like freedom of expression and right to information”.⁴ With a significant majority (76%) of young Europeans believing that they have been exposed to disinformation and fake news⁵, youth information presents a clear way to work with young people by countering disinformation and responding to their specific needs. By building trust and a relationship with young people while co-creating and discovering the information with them, the practice of youth information builds key skills by confronting disinformation through non-formal education methods. Youth information critically breaks the ability of disinformation to affect young people by showing and challenging false claims or those made to harm young people. This builds confidence in trusted sources where reliable information can come from and acts as a reliable support. Youth information naturally works to combat misinformation and disinformation and is a key tool in confronting these problems facing young people by taking a holistic view of every young person.

Youth information has taken on many different forms across Europe, capitalising on its cross-sectoral approach and easy integration. For example, youth information workers have created school transition programmes supporting young people transitioning between different school levels and interfacing with the formal education system or working directly with students in schools. The introduction of non-formal education methods into formal education has created connections and strong partnerships between the local youth service and schools, main-

1 ERYICA (2018) Who we are. Available at: <https://www.eryica.org/who-we-are> (Accessed 19 March 2025)

2 ERYICA (2018) European Youth Information Charter. Portugal: General Assembly of the European Youth Information and Counseling Agency

3 European Commission (2018) Eurobarometer 464. Belgium: Eurobarometer Directorate-General for Communication

4 PARCU, Pier Luigi, ROSSI, Maria Alessandra, Policy changes to strengthen the protection of media freedom and media pluralism in the EU, EUI RSCAS, 2020/70, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) - <https://hdl.handle.net/1814/68782> Retrieved from Cadmus, EUI Research Repository

5 European Commission (2025) Youth Survey 2024. Belgium: Eurobarometer Directorate-General for Communication

taining the principles of voluntary participation core to non-formal education. This aids in supporting the challenges faced by young people moving to different educational levels and adapting to new workloads. Here, we can see how youth information services complement the formal education system and open pathways to non-formal education, with both systems' aims of supporting youth development at a point where these two different systems of education can be placed at odds. Within the youth sector, the value of youth information as a specialisation within the sector and its importance has been recognised through an integrated service model, with youth information workers working to support all young people across projects within a service, supporting and enriching the objectives of youth work.

In Ireland, one successful practice is the Youth Information Chat which has been in operation since 2020, providing young people with direct access to a youth information officer at designated times. This online chat service has proved incredibly valuable in helping to address accessibility issues for those living in more rural locations without access to physical youth services or supporting young people at times that suit them. As a very accessible first point of contact, the Youth Information Chat has further served to direct young people to youth services and truly address the roots of their queries, more broadly working towards the objectives of youth work, underpinning youth information's astonishing value as a specialised practice and encouraging young people to engage in youth work. In 2024, the chat service had 1,901 conversations with an average length of 14 minutes, highlighting the depth of conversations and the ability of youth information workers to discuss and respond to young people's questions, looking deeper and uncovering the root problems behind questions, thoroughly answering them.

Across Europe, we are seeing a clear issue arising in the form of disinformation. Youth information is a clear method to address this with a strong body of historical and new practice. In the youth sector we are also at a pivotal moment, with the 4th European Youth Work Convention, at the advent of a new EU Youth Strategy 2028-2036 and broader developments in the European Youth Work Agenda. This is a key moment to set the course across the youth sector. Through this motion, the European Youth

Forum is calling to increase support for youth information to address this rise in disinformation while leveraging practices from Ireland and across Europe by connecting the many different sectors that impact on young people through youth information. Furthermore, we are calling for the expansion of an online Youth Information Chat across the European Union, allowing all young people to gain access to youth information delivered by youth information workers that understand their local realities.

Call to action

Therefore, we, the European Youth Forum call on:

- Member States of the Council of Europe to support and resource dedicated local and regionally based youth information workers, through strong regional investment and support national youth information networks, connecting these workers to one another and driving positive collaboration and innovation in local, regional and national contexts.
- The European Union and the Council of Europe to form and adopt a common definition for youth information that recognises its specialisation within youth work, while still belonging in the youth sector and to more strongly support ERYICA and the achievement of the ERYICA European Youth Information Quality Label by youth organisations.
- The European Union and the Council of Europe to develop a framework that can be adapted to national contexts for the recognition and development of youth information as a sustainable professional field in line with the ERYICA Youth Information Worker Competence Framework.
- The European Commission to increase support to Eurodesk and youth information at the European Union level in the upcoming EU Youth Strategy, and to increase the visibility and facilitate better coordination as well as practice sharing within youth information, supporting access of young people to youth information services, recognising that youth information is specialised and often operates integrated within youth services but distinct from youth work programmes.

- Member States of the European Union to increase funding for youth information and, by extension, increasing the provision of youth information by local and regionally based youth information workers informed by existing models, supporting actions against mis- and disinformation and encouraging innovations in youth information such as further cross sectoral integration and closer collaboration between non-formal education and formal education. Furthermore, we call on member states to commit to the implementation of a youth information chat service operated by local and regionally based youth information workers without the use and completely distinct from any form of Artificial Intelligence, emphasising human connection.



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