

REPORT OF THE BONN PROCESS MEET-UP 2023

INTRODUCTION

The third digital Bonn Process Meet-up was held on 28 and 29 March 2023.

The Bonn Process Meet-up is an annual online event that invites the youth work community of practice to explore and better understand the eight thematic priority areas¹ of the European Youth Work Agenda (Agenda), share practices, exchange ideas, and network.

Youth work is currently facing many challenges across Europe (e. g. the shortage of skilled workers, mental health issues among young people and professionals, the lack of recognition for the field of youth work). The Agenda is a strategic framework for strengthening and developing youth work that provides a frame of reference within which actors in youth work can address these challenges together across Europe in the eight areas.

This year, around 100 actors in youth work from across Europe gathered for the Bonn Process Meet-up. The outcomes of this major community event are presented in this brief report.



¹ For more information about the eight thematic priority areas, please see here: <https://www.bonn-process.net/downloads/publications/42/fc160567b9e55215344553792e5b3e0c/EYWC2020%20-%20Factsheet%20Final%20Declaration.pdf> (last accessed on 03.07.2023)

WHAT IS HAPPENING ACROSS EUROPE IN RELATION TO THE BONN PROCESS?

The Bonn Process Meet-up was a place where actors in youth work were able to both present practices that are connected to the Bonn Process and discuss questions related to current challenges and developments in the field of youth work. As most participants were eager to participate, there were many contributions over the course of the two days. They provided an overview of what is happening in Europe in relation to the eight thematic priority areas of the European Youth Work Agenda. This brief report cannot cover everything that was shared. However, it can give you a glimpse of what is going on and provide links and resources to explore more on your own.

IT IS HIGH TIME FOR RECOGNITION

If you are looking for impetus to initiate processes that can lead to the **recognition and promotion** of youth work in your context, then there probably is no better time than the present. The Meet-up showed that many stakeholders in various European countries are benefitting from the momentum generated by the European Youth Work Agenda, the Bonn Process, the strategic documents of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and the work of the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.



HAVE YOU HEARD?

IN PORTUGAL: The Portuguese Association of Youth Workers (APP Juventude) and the Portuguese Institute for Sports and Youth (IPDJ) are working together to enable the recognition, validation, and certification of competences (RVCC) for youth workers as qualification according to the national legislation.

IN MOLDOVA: “Specialist in youth work” has been recognised as an occupation.

IN SERBIA: One of the goals of the new national Youth Strategy in Serbia says that youth work should be standardised and continuously implemented in the system of non-formal education.

IN BULGARIA: The newly adopted National Youth Strategy has a strategic priority “Development and strengthening of youth work on a national scale”.

The focus of the recognition processes differs from one country to the next. While in some, it is about recognising youth work as a profession, in others, it is about political recognition within **policy frameworks**. In many, efforts are directed at promoting youth work and strengthening its social recognition. Often all these processes are interconnected, with recognition in one area influencing similar developments in another.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

EUROPEAN COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH INFORMATION WORKERS

The European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) and Eurodesk have worked together to prepare and adopt two competency frameworks: Eurodesk Mobility Advisor and Youth Information Worker. "Youth Information Worker" has thus now been added as an occupation to database of the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, and Occupations of the European Union (ESCO), meaning that for the first time there is a unified definition of it in all European Union languages. ERYICA offers a well-established system for providing training to youth information workers.

What can you do?

What is the current state of youth work recognition in your country? Is there a window of opportunity in your context for working on recognition? How can you use the existing momentum to initiate or strengthen processes for any (or all) of the levels of recognition: self-recognition, social, formal, and political recognition?

GETTING TOGETHER FOR YOUTH WORK

In different corners of Europe, stakeholders in youth work are initiating processes to put youth work high on the agenda, both **within** and **beyond the youth work community of practice**. Various events are being planned, at which youth workers, policy makers, young people, and other actors can meet to discuss relevant topics.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

IN NORWAY: *Youth Work Norway* is organising round-table discussions with various stakeholders to promote the recognition and status of youth clubs and youth workers.

IN ITALY: A "youth agora forum" is being organised in Sardinia as part of the consultation process aimed at adopting a regional law on youth work.

IN BULGARIA: Different stakeholders work together in the *National Working Group for Youth Work* under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The group has drafted a definition of "youth work", developed a code of ethics and initiated research on youth work education and training.

IN AUSTRIA: To assist the youth sector in facing up to challenges, funding for youth was increased by 8.4 million euro (about 20 %) in October 2022.

AT EUROPEAN LEVEL: The "*Generation Europe – the Academy*" project coordinated by IBB e.V. from Germany seeks to initiate discussions on topics related to the Bonn Process and invites you to join its symposium on "Youth work in Europe – Mission [im] possible?". For more information, sign up for the [newsletter](#).



Some of the shared practices are notable examples of how actors in the field become more influential and more successful once they establish a **common direction for the youth work community of practice** and start working together on its implementation. Other stories show how real progress can be made if decision-makers and other stakeholders gain ownership of the issues and join the youth work practitioners in their efforts to step up youth work recognition and **promotion**.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH WORKERS
Nine national associations of youth workers are implementing an Erasmus+ “Strategic Partnership” project aimed at establishing a European-level network of national associations of youth workers. Supported by the [Estonian National Agency](#) for the Erasmus+ Programme and coordinated by the Estonian Association of Youth Workers, the project “[European youth workers unite to empower youth and youth field – Youth worker is a lifestyle](#)” will also analyse the current state of youth work recognition, investigate the needs of national associations and offer an online course on creating national associations in countries where there are none. The European Association will likely be established in March 2024, so more details will follow.

What can you do?

Is the youth work community of practice working together in your context? What are the main joint priorities, and how can you involve more stakeholders to support them? Can you identify potential allies among policy makers and actors in other fields, who can join the cause? How can you approach them?

IT IS ALL ABOUT QUALITY

Since the European Youth Work Agenda was adopted, greater attention has been paid to **developing the quality** of youth work and the youth work offer. In many cases, working on quality in youth work starts with youth workers’ skills and competences and focuses on developing occupational standards, establishing training and educational pathways for youth workers, and creating certification and validation models.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

IN MOLDOVA: Training courses for youth workers that are recognised by the government are regularly held, while there is also an annual long-term “train the trainers” course in the youth field.

IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: PRONI has already been using a Quality Assurance Mechanism in Community Youth Work for more than 20 years.

IN SERBIA: The professional association of youth workers (NAPOR) has developed a programme for supervising youth workers that is to be tested by the end of the year.

IN PORTUGAL: The professional association of youth workers (APP Juventude) works with the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ) to produce and publish 15 manuals that are to be used in training youth workers.

IN NORTH MACEDONIA: The national association of youth work providers (Union for Youth Work) and Agency for Youth and Sport are preparing to pilot previously adopted national quality standards for youth centres.



Practices related to new training and education programmes for youth workers dominated the Meet-up. But we also heard from stakeholders working on competence frameworks, self-assessment tools, accreditations, quality assurance mechanisms, and other approaches that can support the process of developing the quality of youth work. As a result of all these processes, youth workers are becoming better prepared for **developing and expanding the youth work offer** and increasing the quality of their work at the local level.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MASTERS' DEGREES IN YOUTH WORK

National associations of youth workers, universities and other stakeholders from Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia have been working together for a few years now on establishing formal education programmes for youth workers in higher education. As a result, master's degree courses in youth work have already been accredited in [North Macedonia](#) and Croatia and the first students are expected to enrol in autumn 2023. Serbia is to follow suit.

What can you do?

Competency frameworks, national portfolios for youth workers, occupational standards, educational pathways for youth workers, quality standards – do you have any of these in your country? Which of them is currently the most achievable? Considering the cultural, social, and political context, which other countries can you learn from in terms of initiating processes that increase the quality of youth work?

TIME TO MEASURE IMPACT

The large number of initiatives aimed at developing and piloting new tools for and approaches to measuring the impact of youth work shows that greater attention is being paid to this topic in the field of youth work. Most of the initiatives are being implemented as Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership projects, bringing together stakeholders from the fields of youth work, research, and higher education. The initiatives are already providing results that can be replicated by others in different contexts to advocate for greater **recognition** and support for youth work.



HAVE YOU HEARD?

UNITED KINGDOM: Many resources are already available that are related to measuring the impact of youth work, some present the impact, others point to [effective ways of measuring impact](#), while some also raise questions about the potential [consequences](#) of the shift to measuring impact.

AT EUROPEAN LEVEL: The Serbian professional association of youth workers [NAPOR] coordinates a [Strategic Partnership project](#) with other national associations of youth workers and universities that is aimed at developing and piloting innovative tools for measuring the social impact of youth work.

Few ongoing projects on measuring impact were presented at the Meet-up. But there was a thematic discussion that provided those in the field, who are interested in this topic, with the opportunity to connect and establish a platform, on which to exchange practices. More meetings will take place in the future. If you are interested, please [contact](#) the European Service Centre for the Bonn Process.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

YOUTHWORK works [De Ambrassade](#) and the [University of Leuven-Limburg \(UCLL\)](#) in Belgium have worked on research in the Flemish youth work community of practice looking at making the impact of youth work more visible. Some first insights are already [available](#), though currently only in Dutch. The results are expected to contribute to and shape the upcoming youth work conference [#youthworkworks](#) in June.

What can you do?

How is the impact of youth work measured in your context? Do you know of any tools or practices that youth organisations, youth centres, or other youth work practitioners can share? Who in your community might be interested in piloting some tools for measuring impact that are currently being developed?

NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW APPROACHES

As new **challenges** emerge for youth work, the field responds by developing new and **innovative** approaches and methodologies. The challenges are many and diverse, ranging from global issues, such as climate change, the ongoing economic crisis, and the war in Ukraine, to the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on the youth sector and the insufficiency and instability of youth work funding.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

IN ARMENIA: “[Innovarium](#)” is a five-month interactive blended game at the end of which the youth teams that started the game can implement an innovative community action. The game is managed through the mobile app Badgewallet of Badecraft.

IN AUSTRIA: In 2022, the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Culture created a Climate Action Award for young people and youth organisations so that they can contribute to climate action.

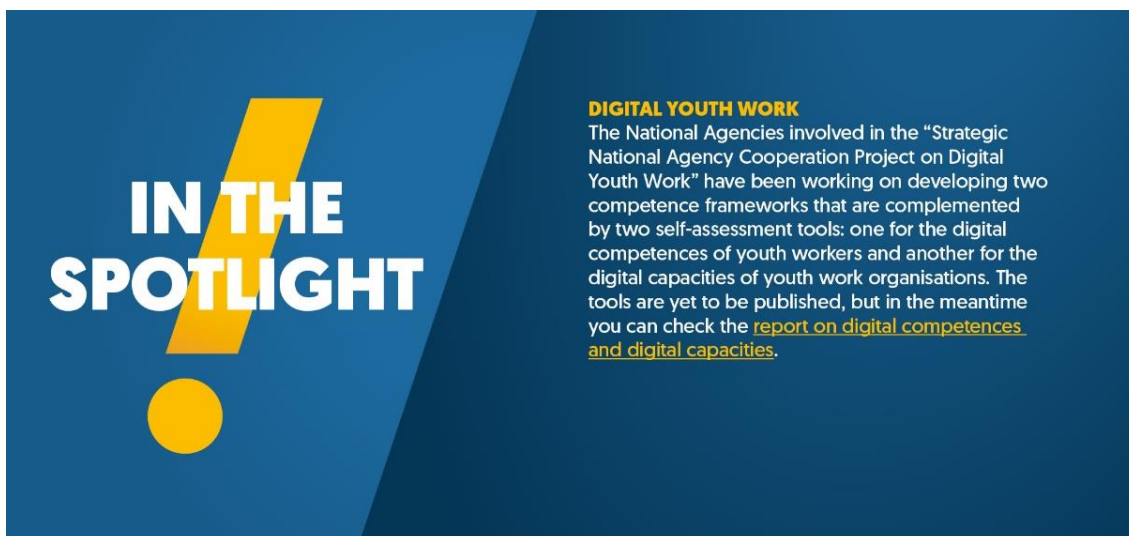
IN SERBIA: The “[Do \[not\] Digitalize Me](#)” initiative implemented by [Connect](#) aims to promote the meaningful use of digitalisation in youth work by offering evidence-based policy recommendations.

AT EUROPEAN LEVEL: A group of organisations is implementing the “[GAD project](#)”, a digital learning game based on augmented reality. Its aim is to improve educators’ digital literacy and increase their ability to create digital learning environments.

AT EUROPEAN LEVEL: The Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe ([DARE](#)) Network implemented the “[Unsung Heroes Dialogues](#)” project that focuses on the economic situation of civic education providers in Europe. The results are already [available](#).

AT EUROPEAN LEVEL: The [RAY network](#) has a new [research project](#) on digitalisation in youth work. Results will be published by the end of the year.

The Meet-up showed that stakeholders in youth work are closely following current technological developments, with many of the practices exploring the possibilities and implications of digitalisation and gamification. The thematic discussions on the more global challenges centred around the need to build more coalitions and develop more unified and synchronised approaches to lobbying and advocacy for youth work.



DIGITAL YOUTH WORK
The National Agencies involved in the “Strategic National Agency Cooperation Project on Digital Youth Work” have been working on developing two competence frameworks that are complemented by two self-assessment tools: one for the digital competences of youth workers and another for the digital capacities of youth work organisations. The tools are yet to be published, but in the meantime you can check the [report on digital competences and digital capacities](#).

What can you do?

What are the main challenges currently facing youth work and young people? What could be done by the community of practice and by decision-makers to overcome them? Is there an innovative or a different approach that you could try? What about using technology and digital tools: Is there anything you are excited about that you could experiment with?

BRINGING THE BONN PROCESS HOME

Unsurprisingly, many of the Meet-up participants were interested in how the Bonn Process can be initiated and implemented at national level. Participants spoke about the challenges they face in their own contexts, and they also shared ideas and practices. It turns out that each country has a different reality, and instead of one “proper” way, there are multiple different directions you can take to initiate the process at national level.

Based on those practices that were presented, different stakeholders can provide support to or coordinate national working groups, action plans, or other ways of organising national cooperation. In some countries it is the national authorities in the field of youth (ministries, agencies, etc.), while in others it is the National Agencies for the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. In some, such as Greece and Serbia, the supportive or coordinating role is taken on by the national association of youth workers. You can find out who is the national contact person for the Bonn Process in your country [here](#).

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

BONN PROCESS ESTABLISHED IN BREMEN

In addition to the national level, it is also possible to initiate the Bonn Process on a regional and even local level. Bremen is a good example. [NaturKultur e.V.](#), together with Bremen Jugendring and ServiceBureau Jugendinformation, started an initiative to bring the European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process to the local level in Bremen. They have already had meetings with the local youth authorities to brainstorm ideas about the process. Now they are planning a conference for the community of practice in Bremen as well as a comparative analysis of what already exists and what should be improved, all in an attempt to develop a roadmap for implementing the Agenda.

Regardless of who initiates and leads or supports the process, it is essential that the whole community of practice is invited to take an active role in implementing and contributing to national level activities.

What can you do?

Do you know if there is a national working group or any way to implement the European Youth Work Agenda in your country? If there is, are you following what they are doing? Have you been in touch with them about the possibility of getting involved? If there is not, who are the actors in the field of youth work and beyond that you can work with to establish a national working group? Feel free to check the [Bonn Process website](#) for ideas and inspiration.

A JOINT VISION FOR YOUTH WORK?

At one point during the Meet-up, participants were asked to share their vision of youth work in one word. Recognition came out on top, with almost 30 % of all participants saying their vision is recognised youth work – at all levels. Other contributions were about better quality, more support and finances, more cooperation, and more participation of young people.



WHAT NEXT?

A lot was shared at the third Bonn Process Meet-up, and there is a lot more still to come. If you are interested in national and/or European processes connected to the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda, then keep an eye open for upcoming events, processes, and publications. Here is a taste of what is coming up soon:

European Conference on Recognition in Croatia At the end of the year, the Croatian National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme will host a conference that will aim to contribute to achieving greater recognition of youth work in Europe. The conference will be an opportunity to share and explore practices and strategies, to learn from recognition practices in other sectors, to create an overview of the current state of recognition of youth work, and to develop strategies and steps of action to further strengthen the recognition of youth work. The conference will be held from **4 to 7 December 2023**. Stay tuned via [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) for more information.

European Youth Work Platform The European Commission is working on developing an open and multilingual dedicated European digital platform on youth work. An expert group (Sub-Group on Youth Work) was created to accompany and advise on the process. The pilot phase begins soon, in the meantime you can check out the [final report](#), which summarises and presents the outcomes of the work conducted by the Sub-Group on Youth Work.

Studies and publications from the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership coming soon:

- Mapping study on the implementation of the EYWA and youth work ecosystems at European level
- Study on potential European cross-border models of recognition of skills and competences of youth workers
- Two MOOCs: Essentials of Youth Policy (in spring) and Essentials of Youth Research (in autumn). The MOOC on [Essentials of Youth Work](#) is already available.
- Manual on developing youth work strategies

STAY IN TOUCH

As you eagerly await the next event within the framework of the European Youth Work Agenda, we invite you to stay connected and up to date about the Bonn Process by

- connecting in our [community space](#) on the DINA platform,
- following Bonn Process updates on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#),
- [signing up](#) to the Bonn Process newsletter.

You are also warmly invited to [contact](#) the European Service Centre for the Bonn Process if you would like to share your work – be it an event, a project, or any other inspiring initiative connected to the Bonn Process – with the European community of practice.