

# 1 Executive Summary

**Background of the study: existing data on youth work is unsatisfactory** (see page 13)

“Youth activities and youth work play a central role in fostering knowledge and commitment to civil society”. This idea has meanwhile gained full recognition within European institutions and policy but although there is a wide range and diversity of youth work experiences in European countries, there is still only limited specific information available on the youth sector. Existing data is scattered and unsatisfactory, so that the socio-economic importance of youth work is difficult to verify.

Against this background, the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the youth field, with its study on “**The Socio-economic Scope of Youth Work in Europe**”, intends to bring youth work and learning within youth activities to the foreground and increase their visibility.

**Participating European countries** (see page 14)

The study presented here has taken a number of important initial steps towards achieving a quantitative overview and analysis of youth work in Europe. The project was carried out in 10 European countries: Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, and Spain.

**Methodology** (see page 16)

The study proceeded in the following stages:

- qualitative national status reports on youth work,
- quantitative reports at national level,
- quantitative surveys of four municipalities in each country,
- interviews with experts.

**Definition of youth work and main activity fields** (see page 25)

As no generally recognised and officially established definition of youth work is available for either all European countries as a whole or any of the individual countries involved, the first phase of the project involved a systematic examination of the definitions and legal and structural circumstances of youth work. This has led to the following statements:

- The definition of youth work proposed by Peter Lauritzen, which was assumed as the basis of the project, is indeed the most comprehensive definition available, and the results of the project have not given rise to any need to improve it.

- The study identified the following activities as being the central fields of youth work in the ten European countries surveyed: extracurricular youth education, international youth work, open youth work, participation and peer education prevention of social exclusion/youth social work, recreation, youth counselling, youth information and youth work in sports.

Statements regarding the central task of the study – to provide an quantitative overview and analysis of

- the sectors of specific and related youth activities,
- the money and time invested in them,
- the number of people employed, and
- the young people participating in these activities

– can be made by pooling the results of the quantitative analyses conducted at both national and local levels. Because of the gaps in data found in all of the countries involved, merely combining available national data on youth work did not produce any satisfactory results.

The following can be said of the national data on youth activities:

- the best documented sectors are those of publicly supported youth work and of activities implemented by public providers;
- because participation in the investigations was on a voluntary basis, only partial sectors could be documented, even in the case of publicly funded measures (Austria, the Netherlands);
- in southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Spain), only data gathered at European level on youth information and on the implementation of the ‘Youth in Action’ programme was documented at national level; and
- the structures and services provided by youth associations are not sufficiently visible (Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Norway). In some countries, however, the share of youth work provided by non-public associations can be documented.

**No overview on basis of national data** (see page 58)

**Availability and restrictions regarding national data** (see page 67)

**Possible indicators at national level** (see page 70)

Taking in consideration the diversity of national data about youth work and the difficulties that have to be faced when reporting at European level has to be comparative, some available basic indicators could be identified as the starting point for a future reporting structure. They are based on statistics available from EUROSTAT as well as on data from the Eurobarometer 2007 Survey on Youth and available national data.

**Findings: sectors of specific and related youth work** (see page 115 and country reports on youth work page 30)

In all European countries that participated in the study a wide range of youth work is available. In most countries we find at least the nine field of activities of youth work defined in this study (extracurricular youth education, international youth work, open youth work, participation and peer education prevention of social exclusion/youth social work, recreation, youth counselling, youth information and youth work in sports). Wherever there are gaps in the data available at national level, information about availability can be found in the local setting and vice versa. Extracurricular youth education and recreation, each of them accounting for an average of 24%, are the most frequent activities offered.

There are nevertheless important distortions at national and indeed in some cases at local level – the consequence of divergences in each country’s understanding of what constitutes youth work, of differences in the categories used in the survey, and of the distribution of administrative responsibility. One example of this is youth sport. In countries where sport is considered part and parcel of youth work, and where it is documented as such, it accounts for a major quantitative share – at least one third to half – of all activities offered. Another example is, in Germany, activities for the prevention of social exclusion. No information is available for this field of youth work, one of the reasons being that most of the activities offered are activities relating to the employment market and falling within the competence of the job centres.

In all countries it can be observed that youth work is performed by different types of providers (public, semi-public and non-public or voluntary). Only in Spain could a predominance of public institutions be traced, as 60% of youth work activities at local level are provided by public institutions. In all other European countries, the non-public sector, with a share of at least 65%, represents the main provider.

The money and time invested in youth activities can be traced either by examining a country's legal provisions or the national budgets of the ministries dedicated to youth issues – in most cases exclusively –, or by looking at expenditure in individual municipalities. However, neither level gives more than an incomplete picture of total expenditure.

The main funding sources of youth work are municipal funds as well as national and European funds. In Austria, public spending covers at least 43% of total expenditure, making it the main source of finance. The Netherlands are an exception: here, membership and participation fees complemented by sponsoring funds make up the lion's share of resources to cover the costs of activities at local level.

However, municipal surveys also show that volunteers represent a considerable share of resources in youth work. In Greece, the survey documented a 48% proportion of honorary workers involved at local level, while in all other countries for which data was available, volunteers accounted for a 75% share of resources if not significantly more.

An overview presented in the study shows that the share of the budgets of youth-specific ministries in total public expenditure ranges from a minimum of 0.001% to a maximum of 0.04%. However, reliable information on the total amounts of time and money spent on youth activities will not be available until public spending at state or local level and the involvement of volunteers can also be documented.

When compared to numbers of volunteers, paid employees account for a significantly lower proportion of youth workers: 8% in the Netherlands to a maximum of 25% in Spain. With the exception of the Netherlands, where part-time contracts dominate, paid youth workers have full-time positions in at least 60% of cases and have had at least professional school education. While the survey shows roughly equal numbers of female and male youth workers at local level in Greece, in most other countries youth work is a primarily female occupation, with the proportion of female workers ranging from a minimum of 60% to 88% in Norway.

**Findings: money and time invested in youth activities**

(see pages 115 and 117)

**Findings: the number of people employed** (see page

117)

**Findings:  
young people  
participating in youth  
activities** (see page 119)

Data gathered at municipal level shows that the most popular youth work activities for the participants are extracurricular youth education, sports and recreational activities. The ratio of female to male participants is balanced in most countries; in Norway, male participants dominate with a proportion of 56%. Local surveys show that the main target group of youth work activities in most countries – with the exception of Norway and Romania – is young people up to the age of 19.

**Comments on the socio-  
economic scope of youth  
work in Europe**

The study has revealed three main findings with regard to the socio-economic effect of youth work.

In all the countries participating in the study, youth work represents a broad range of activities offered at local level. Local youth work is designed and provided not only by state institutions, but in particular by a variety of NGOs that contribute a wealth of time, money, resources and know-how.

Extracurricular youth education constitutes a central field of activity of youth work. Youth work therefore includes an extensive range of structured institutional offers involving non-formal educational activities.

Because of the many committed volunteers involved in youth work, we can claim on the one hand that youth work offers a broad range of opportunities for non-formal educational processes; but on the other hand, the high proportion of volunteers also shows that youth work is a field of activity that attracts and binds large numbers of committed persons.

**Reasons for the  
incompleteness of  
reporting at national level**  
(see page 51)

The present study has clearly shown that there is no country in Europe where the documentation of youth work at national level is free of gaps. None of the participating countries offer a comprehensive image of all actions undertaken in youth work, especially of those actions provided at local level by non-public associations – in particular youth associations or special youth groups within the framework of other associations – without financial support from public institutions. Furthermore, how complete the image of youth work is for a particular country depends very much on the existence and content of the concept of youth work in that country and on the allocation of responsibilities between the various administrative levels.

The main reasons for the situation described here are:

- Political impact:
  - that there is no political requirement for reporting, as youth work is not a priority and indeed sometimes not even recognised as a profession,
  - that the responsibilities for youth work are scattered between different ministries and there is no cross-sectoral cooperation in reporting, and
  - that youth work is performed and financed at local level, so that no need is felt for a national report.
- Financial impact:
  - that only publicly funded projects are registered, as in these cases spending of the public budget has to be duly administered and monitored.
- Cultural impact:
  - that there is a lack of routine for reporting among voluntary organisations, as they are not generally involved in reporting, and
  - that some countries lack the tradition of making funding structures transparent.
- Professional impact:
  - that the concept of youth work is vague and thus common indicators are missing.

The experts interviewed in the course of the study identified the following four key issues as the main reasons for the limited availability of youth work data:

The first issue is recognition. In all countries the argument was mentioned that youth policy and especially youth work is not a highlighted issue. In several countries experts called for greater efforts in establishing and improving youth work structures. This also includes the fact that in many countries youth work is not sufficiently well established as a profession.

**Experts point of view  
on reporting about  
youth work** (see page 133)

The second issue concerns funding. To have a well established reporting system requires funds. On the one hand, the experts noted that volunteers are not interested in documentation. Thus data about youth work realised in youth associations is not particularly well surveyed. Youth work structures that rely strongly upon volunteerism have greater difficulties in documenting their work. But monitoring also costs money. The experts argued that additional documentation tasks can only be realised with supplementary funds.

The third issue is know-how. In general, the experts stated that there is no tradition of monitoring and documentation in youth work. There are many uncertainties regarding concepts and indicators, and professional communication needs to be improved. The experts also explained that there is no tradition of defining the processes of non-formal learning in youth work. Furthermore, the great variety of youth activities offered requires intensive work on common categories. In all the countries of the survey, the experts called for more research on youth-related issues.

The fourth issue is visibility. Visibility is a requirement for recognition. It means that the outcomes of youth work need to be transported into public, professional and political opinion. Experts agree that youth work is not visible enough, sometimes even for the young people and the professionals themselves, and that lack of networking between professionals is one of the main reasons for the lack of data.

**Local data is basically available**

However, the fact that the present study was able to document some local-level youth work – not all of it, but nevertheless large segments – shows that the reason for the limited mapping of youth work at national level is not that there is no youth work going on in the countries concerned but rather that there is no reporting system (and consequently no know-how regarding how to set one up) and that policy-makers see no need for statistical management of youth work at national level, partly because of the application of the subsidiarity principle but also because youth work is not a priority in the country's political agenda.

The following recommendations can be drawn from the conclusions of the present study:

*Because of the different national historical contexts and as a result of its orientation to the various life situations of its target groups, youth work is a complex and diverse field suffering from a lack of basic definitions and indicators that could serve as a basis for common reporting. There is therefore a need for*

- working more intensely on defining and systematising the relevant concepts,
- establishing central indicators, and
- clarifying the basis for systematising the documentation of youth work from a European perspective.

#### Recommendation 1

We therefore recommend:

- increased exchanges between experts in the field to intensify and bundle shared knowledge, particularly with regard to the central concepts of youth work;
- intensified debate among experts to explore how useful data might be gathered on the condition of the field of youth work and its socio-economic effects, and agreement on relevant indicators needed for this purpose.

*Because youth work is basically a local issue, and because there is therefore little need for management and data collection at national level, youth work continues to be poorly documented at national level.*

There is therefore a need for

- increased coordination with regard to information management between local, state, national and European or international levels.

**Recommendation 1:  
work on concepts and  
indicators** (see page 135)

**Recommendation 2:**  
establish a reporting  
system with the  
cooperation of all  
responsible levels (see  
page 136)

## **Recommendation 2**

As a result, we recommend:

- increased exchanges with the competent, in some cases newly established national ministries to prepare for the creation of a European reporting system on youth work, and
- in this context ensuring that local levels are involved, adequately visible and represented.

*Target group orientation is another reason why youth work is such a highly diverse field distributed among many competencies. While a number of individual fields of activity can be clearly allocated to youth work and identified as such, others, for instance youth sport, youth vocational counselling and certain areas of salutogenesis are not so clear-cut.*

There is therefore a need for

- more intensive cooperation between fields of activity and stakeholders.

Recommendation 3:  
improve co-operation  
between actors and  
sectors of youth  
activities (see page 137)

## **Recommendation 3**

As a result, we recommend:

- stronger cooperation among stakeholders, particularly governments, youth associations and perhaps also professional groups to contribute to a common documentation of youth work, and
- more intensive cooperation among the various sectors to identify and document those fields of activity of youth work that, as a result of differences in national traditions, are not sufficiently visible and cannot be clearly allocated to youth work.