



THE STATE OF PLAY OF NATIONAL PROCESSES WITHIN THE BONN PROCESS SURVEY REPORT 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The establishment of a European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) was called for at the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (EYWC) in Brussels, Belgium, in 2015¹. Followed up on by the Council of Europe (CoE) with the 2017 Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work² and the Council of the European Union 2020 Resolution on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda³, the 3rd European Youth Work Convention marked the start of the implementation of the Agenda, known as the Bonn Process.

The European Youth Work Agenda and its subsequent Bonn Process intend to further develop youth work practice and policies in Europe, for example by strengthening the quality, recognition, and innovation of youth work. Through the Bonn Process, the European community of practice⁴ moves towards a common European response to structural and professional challenges in the field of youth work.

To support youth work development within the Bonn Process, 15 National Agencies and SALTO Youth Resource Centres for the EU youth programmes work together in a long-term cooperation project entitled “Strengthening youth work in Europe by supporting the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda! (SNAC

¹ Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention. Making a world of difference. Brussels, 27-30 April 2015. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262187/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85?t=1431337538000 [6 July 2023]

² Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work. <https://rm.coe.int/1680717e78> [6 July 2023]

³ 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). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2020:415:TOC> [6 July 2023]

⁴ “In the field of youth work, the youth work community of practice should be understood as a group of people, professional or non-professional, who share the same interests in resolving an issue, improving their skills, and learning from each other’s experiences. The youth work community of practice comprises stakeholders at all levels from local to European 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). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2020:415:TOC> [6 July 2023]



EYWA)⁵, which is coordinated by JUGEND für Europa, the National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport, and European Solidarity Corps in Germany. In addition, the European Service Centre for the Bonn Process⁶ was established as a unit at JUGEND für Europa as a follow-up engagement of the two hosts of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, the German Federal Youth Ministry and JUGEND für Europa.

The main areas of work of the SNAC EYWA and the European Service Centre include providing information and facilitating communication, organising networking opportunities, providing thematic impulses, mobilising the EU youth programmes for youth work development within the context of the EYWA, and supporting national processes. In this context, a range of activities supporting national processes within the Bonn Process are carried out all over Europe. Of relevance is the yearly Bonn Process Exchange Forum on National Processes, which brings together key stakeholders, who are involved in shaping national processes.

The first such Exchange Forum, held in May 2022, was preceded by a short survey on the existence of national processes in Europe. The survey revealed the gradual emergence of a process in 2022, however the youth work field was still struggling with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. With a focus on quality development and communication, altogether 18 national processes were known to have started in 2022⁷.

In preparation of the Exchange Forum 2023, a new and extended survey was carried out from April to mid-May 2023, aiming to get a more in-depth overview of the state of play of the Bonn Process. The survey was sent to 130 people⁸ in 39 European

⁵ The SNAC EYWA strategic cooperation project of the network of National Agencies aims to mobilise the EU youth programmes for developing and strengthening youth work across Europe and is run by 15 National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps and SALTO Youth Resource Centres. More information is available at: <https://www.bonn-process.net/about/snac/> [6 July 2023]

⁶ <https://www.bonn-process.net/about/european-service-center/> [6 July 2023]

⁷ Hofmann-van de Poll, Frederike/Kovačić, Marko (2022): One year into the Bonn Process – A preliminary analysis of national-level developments. Youth Partnership. Strasbourg, unpublished paper.

⁸ The 130 people in 39 European countries were composed of national contacts from the mailing list maintained by the European Service Centre, the participants of the Exchange Forum 2023 and the partners of the SNAC EYWA. There is no contact information for the European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process for France, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Romania, San Marino, and Vatican City. Belarus, which participated in the 2022 survey and then



countries⁹ and asked questions about stakeholders, priority areas, implemented and upcoming activities as well as needs for support and mutual learning. Of the 130 contacted persons, there were 31 answers, covering a total of 25 national processes and 23 countries. In five cases, two persons answered the survey for one national process, and in one case, the same person answered the survey twice. Within the framework of the analysis, these answers were combined to allow comparability between national processes.

With three national processes covering the three communities in Belgium, the following map shows the 23 countries (and subsequently 25 national processes), which the respondents of the survey covered:



Figure 1: The 25 national processes covered by survey respondents

confirmed the start of a national process, and the Russian Federation were not contacted for the 2023 survey, following Russia's exclusion from the Council of Europe and the suspension of the Council of Europe's relations with Belarus because of the Russian attack on Ukraine.

⁹ Reference to countries includes Belgium as one country. Reference to national processes splits the country Belgium into three different national processes: the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium (BE-FL), the French-speaking community of Belgium (BE-FR), and the German-speaking community of Belgium (BE-GER).



The present paper contains the findings of the 2023 survey and compares them, wherever possible, with the findings of the 2022 survey. The first section analyses findings on the development and coordination of the Bonn Process. Subsequently, the second section looks at the developments within the eight priority areas of the European Youth Work Agenda. The third section focuses on the challenges stakeholders face when implementing the European Youth Work Agenda and their needs in terms of coordination and support. Finally, the fourth section critically reflects on the findings in general and presents some conclusions.



1. OVERALL DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

Taking a general look at the 25 national processes covered in the survey, the data provides information on both the general development and the different models of coordination of the processes. These two issues are discussed in more detail here.

1.1. DEVELOPMENT

The development of a process like the Bonn Process, to be implemented in many different countries, can be observed in several ways. Firstly, a comparison of the data between 2022 and 2023 shows that the number of countries active in the Bonn Process has increased.

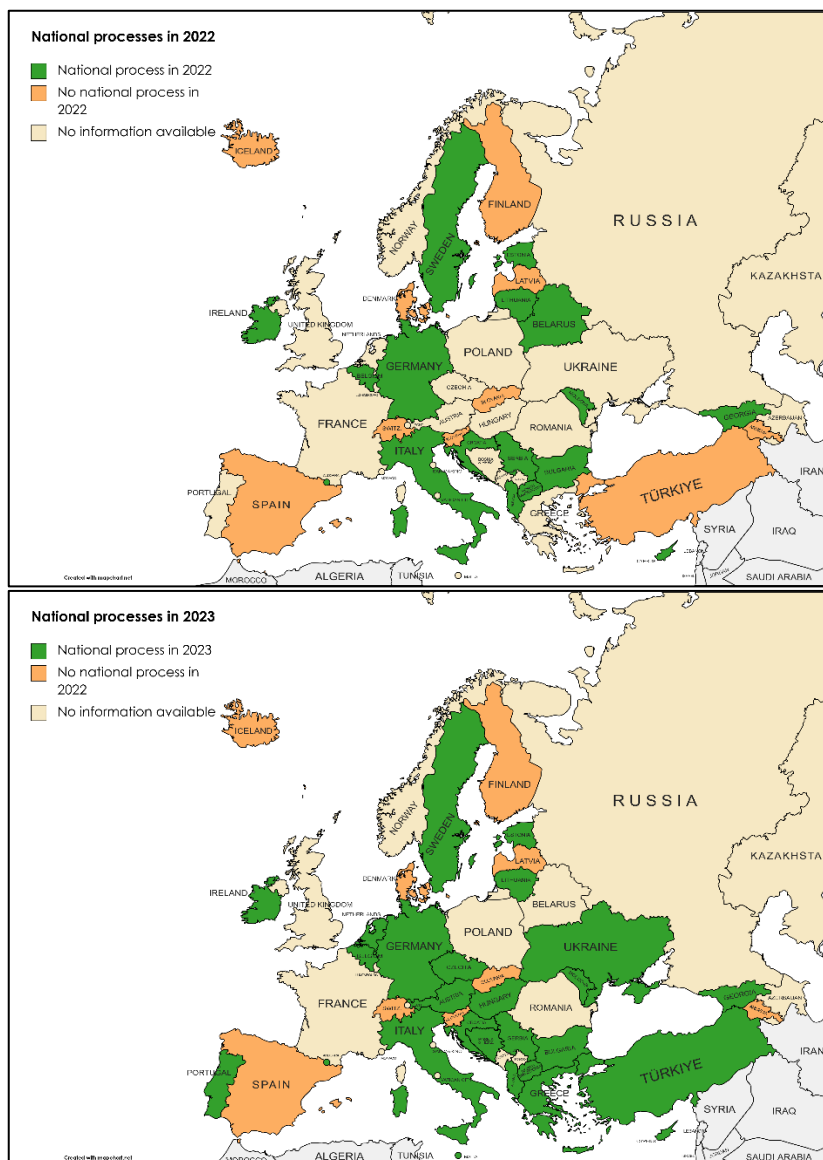


Figure 2: Development of the national processes; a comparison of 2022 and 2023



Based on the 2022 survey, 18 national processes were counted in 2022. By 2023, combining the 2023 survey and the mention of national contact points on the Bonn Process website, 39 national processes were counted. These include the three national processes in Belgium as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the implementation of the Bonn Process is anchored at regional level and regional processes have started¹⁰.

In the 2023 survey, participants were asked about the extent to which the Bonn Process has made progress in developing youth work. On a scale of 1 (no progress) to 4 (remarkable progress), it is noticeable that although development is recorded, it is very average. Progress is rated in most countries as between 1 (no progress) and 2.5 (fair progress), with positive outliers in Germany (remarkable overall development, national development, and European development) and Serbia (remarkable national development).

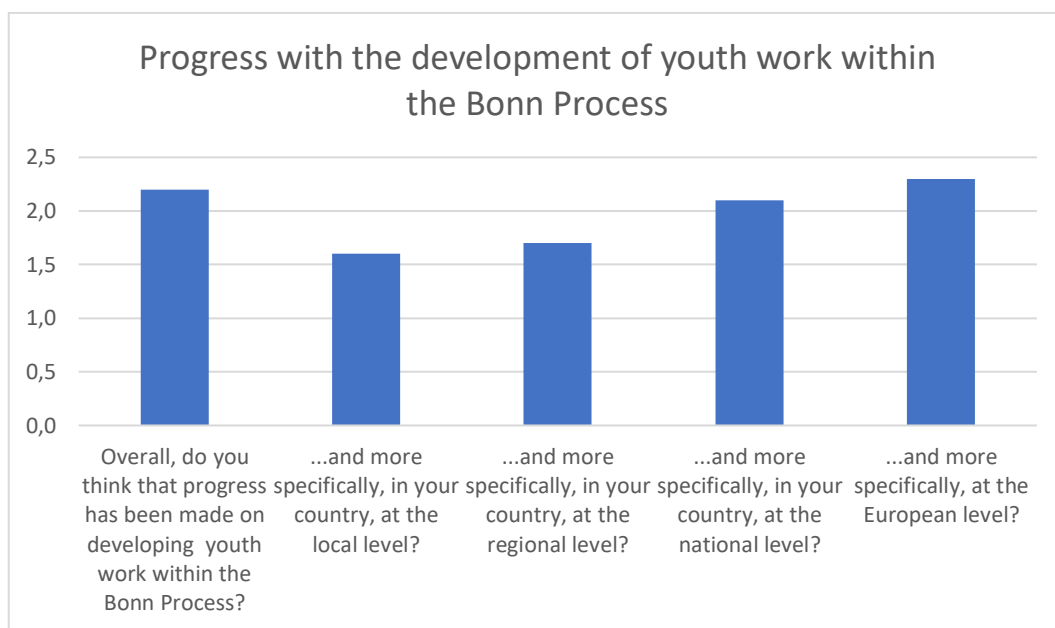


Figure 3: Progress with the development of youth work within the Bonn Process

At the same time, the findings also show slight differences when it comes to assessing progress at the different levels (local, regional, national, and European). The higher the level, the more people attribute youth work development through the Bonn Process to the level. This information may indicate that the Bonn Process

¹⁰ The responses to the survey only cover developments regarding the regional process in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

so far tends to be more European and national in scope, with little translation to regional and local levels. This tendency is confirmed by the data on process coordination.

1.2. COORDINATION

The discussions at the 2022 Bonn Process Exchange Forum reveal very different understandings of “coordination” of a national process. This does not mean top-down coordination and implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda. Instead, “coordination” is a generic term for different approaches to shaping the Bonn Process, including the consolidation of measures and activities, communication, and support.

In this context, the conditions for a successful Bonn Process as discussed at the 2022 Exchange Forum certainly show that a certain degree of coordination and management is necessary. Accordingly, a national process is effective if a national coordinating body or working group is set up to plan, start and maintain the process. The development of specific goals, e. g. through an action or work plan, as well as the development of a communication plan also help start a national process¹¹.

The final declaration of the 3rd EYWC specifically called on countries to designate a contact point for coordination in their countries. As of May 2023, this has been the case in 32 national processes. A comparison of information on the European Service Centre website and the 2023 survey shows that most of these contact points are situated within the youth ministry or related governmental bodies (41 %), followed by the National Agencies for the EU youth programmes (21 %).

¹¹ “What is important when setting up an effective national process?”

- Creating a national contact point/coordinating body/working group to plan and start implementing the process
- Receiving political support from decision-makers
- Developing aims and an action plan/work plan
- Developing a communication plan
- Implementing mappings or gathering knowledge about youth work at national level
- Providing opportunities to discuss practice examples
- Strengthening commitment from all actors and partners/co-creating developments
- Reshaping the framing of ongoing activities and underlining the connection to the Bonn Process”

See “[Introduction to the national processes for national contact points](https://www.bonn-process.net/be-part-of-it/support-national-processes/)”, slide 9, available at <https://www.bonn-process.net/be-part-of-it/support-national-processes/> [6 July 2023]

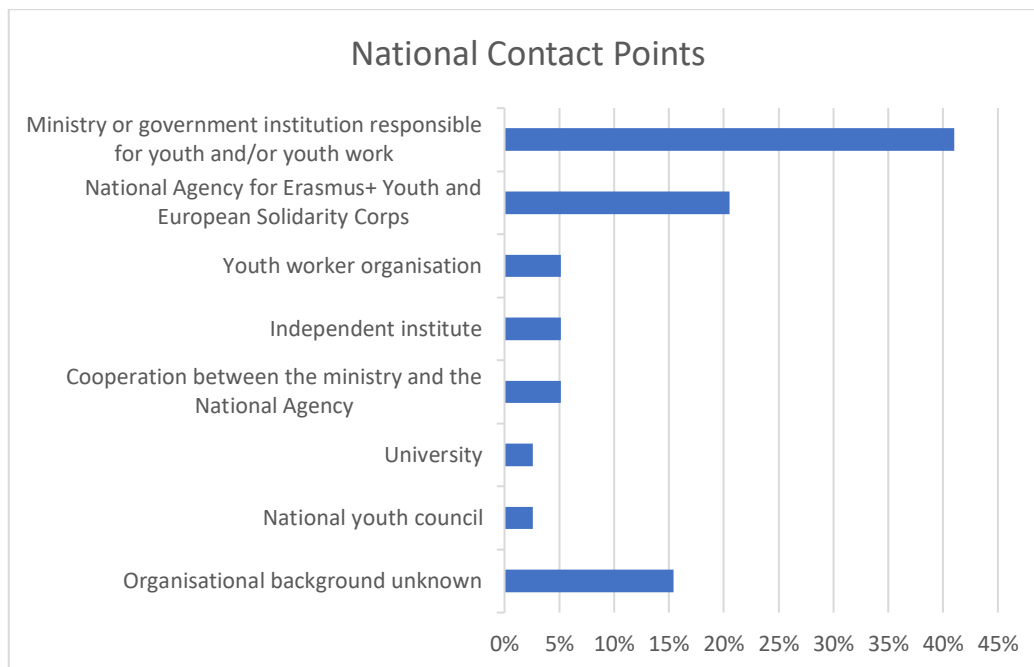


Figure 4: Organisational background of national contact points

In many of the 25 national processes that were represented in the survey, these contact points are also perceived as the bodies that coordinate the national processes and bring together activities (64 %) (Figure 5).

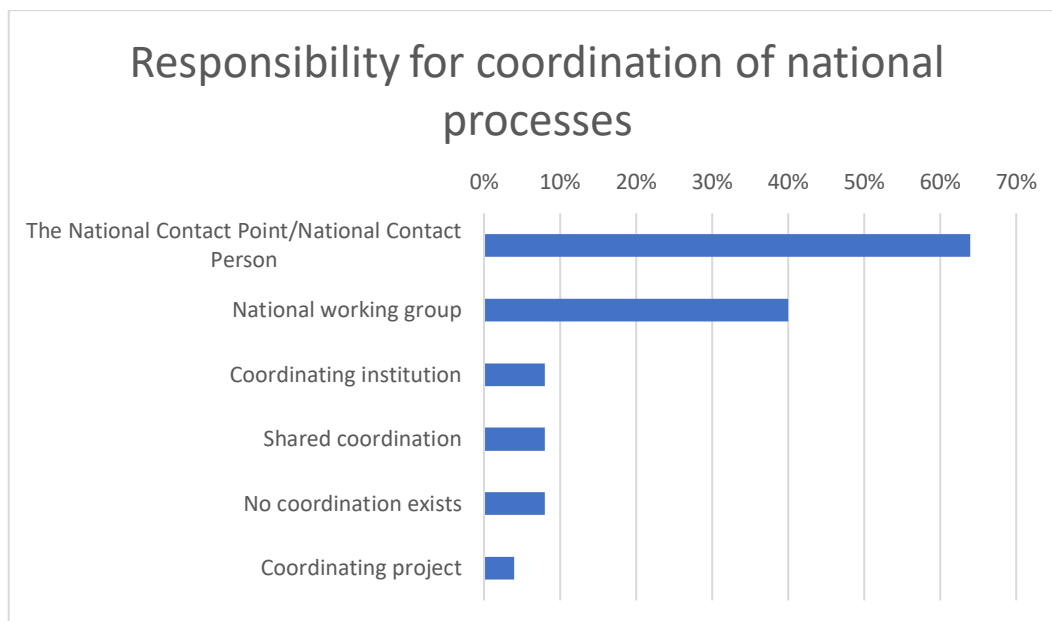


Figure 5: Who is principally responsible for managing/coordinating the Bonn Process in your country?

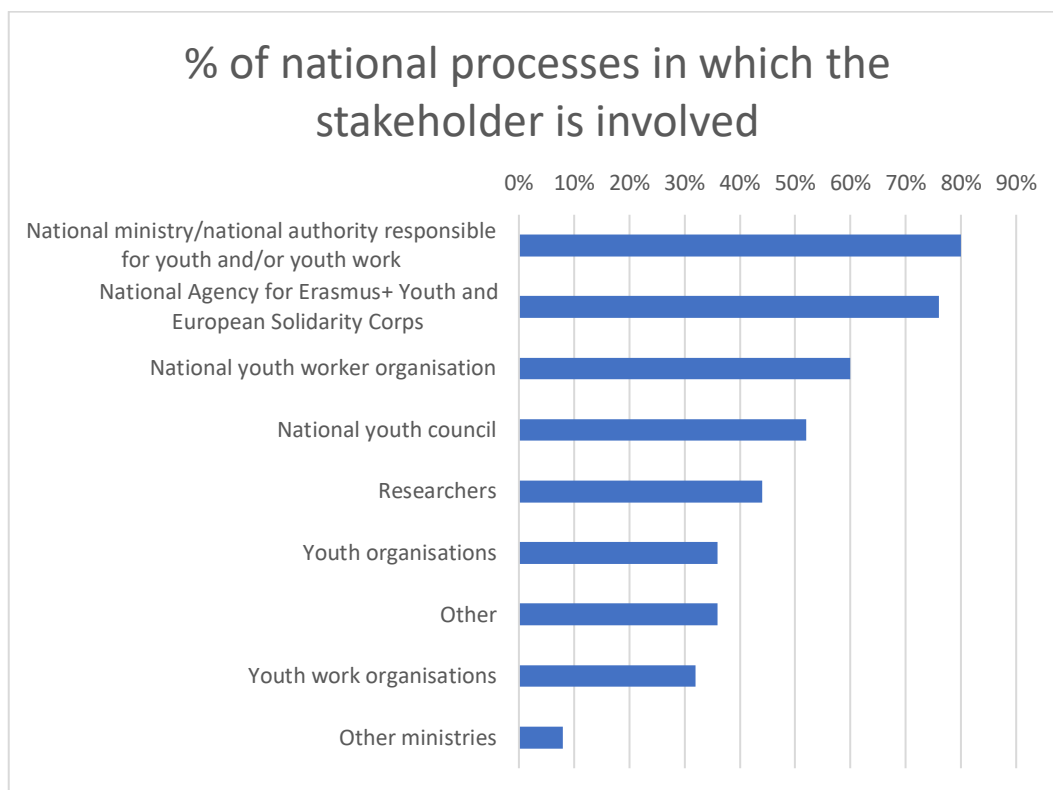


Figure 7: Which stakeholders are involved in the implementation/coordination of the Bonn Process?

This endorses the conclusion drawn before, with the Bonn Process still relatively strongly located at the level of national institutions and umbrella organisations. Although specialised organisations are involved, the processes barely seem to have reached the local level. Thus, future discussions on the implementation of the Bonn Process should consider how implementation can be spread not only broadly, i. e. in the various actor profiles, but also across levels.

2. THE EIGHT PRIORITY AREAS

The final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention¹³ mentions eight fields of action, which are commonly known as the eight priority areas of the EYWA.

These are:

- develop and expand the youth work offer
- quality development
- a common direction for the youth work community of practice
- beyond the youth work community of practice
- promotion and recognition
- innovation and emerging challenges
- policy frameworks
- a strategic framework for youth work development

The survey asked questions regarding the relevance of the eight thematic priority areas, the areas in which respondents are planning to be active in the upcoming year, and the areas which would be useful for cross-border inspiration and/or mutual learning. Although many respondents mentioned that they were still planning the coming year, the answers show some interesting tendencies (Figure 8).

Highly relevant are the areas of quality development (relevant in 84 % of the national processes) as well as promotion and recognition (relevant in 72 % of the national processes), which are also the areas in which most of the future activities are planned (52 % and 60 % respectively). This mirrors the findings of last year's survey, although by comparison more projects have been mentioned in 2023. This, too, points towards an increased establishment of national processes.

¹³ Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention. Signposts for the future. Bonn, 10 December 2020. https://www.bonn-process.net/downloads/publications/2/89567f5ed19ce0dc9732a4415bc256fd/3rd%20EYWC_fin al%20Declaration.pdf [06 July 2023]

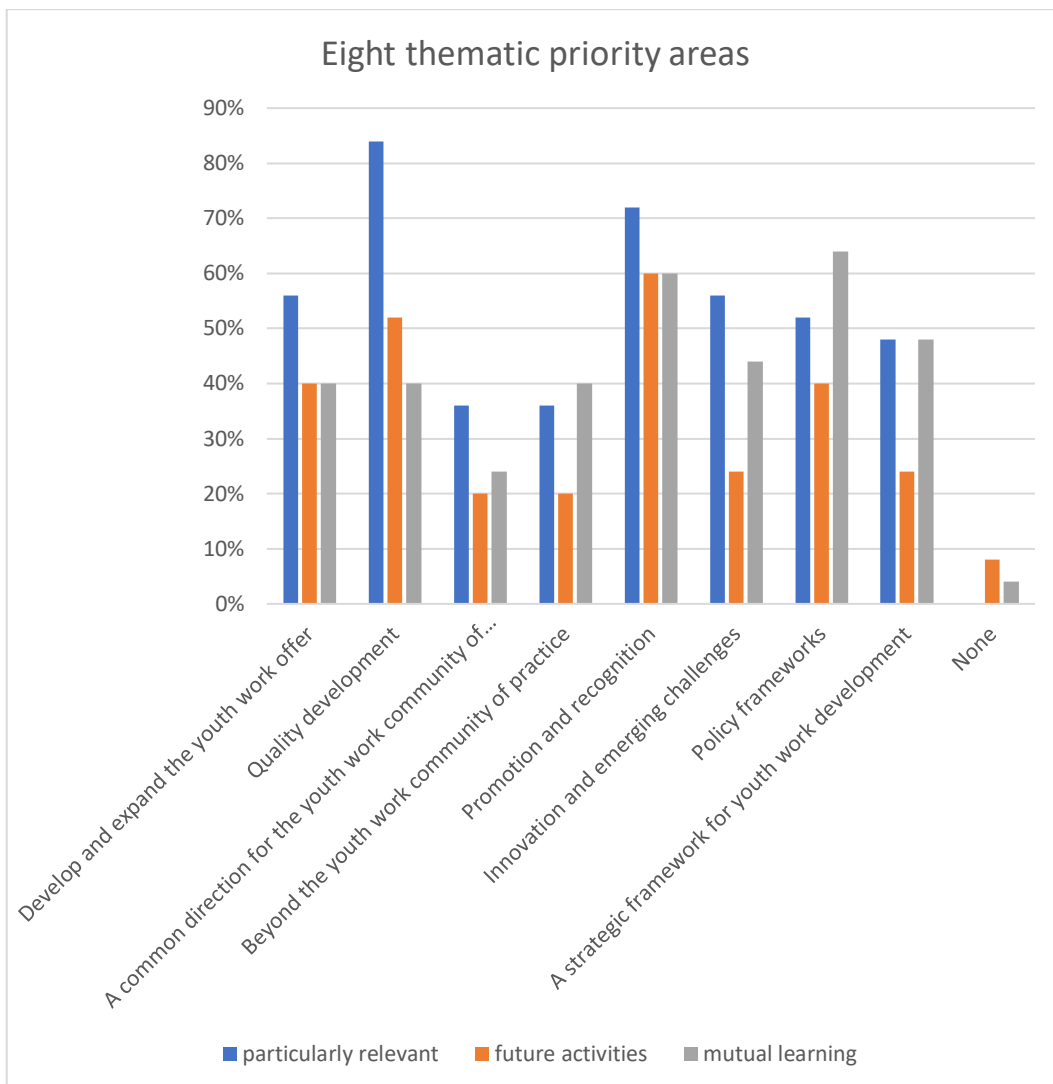


Figure 8: Relevance, planned activities, and interest in mutual learning of the thematic priority area in the national processes in %

Asked to give examples of activities implemented since the 3rd EYWC and planned for the coming year, policy frameworks turned out to be another priority area in which much activity is taking place. This is also the area in which cross-border inspiration and mutual learning are mostly sought, as are promotion and recognition. This interest was also expressed at the Exchange Forum, where participants were interested in the good practices of countries that had successfully integrated the European Youth Work Agenda within existing or new laws as well as in youth work action plans.

The following sections order the eight thematic priority areas according to their relevance for youth work development in the 25 national processes considered. This



relevance is not the rating as shown in Figure 8 above but is based on the number of past and future projects mentioned by the survey participants. After a short introduction to the priority area, past and future activities are introduced. The sections also address challenges to youth work development as mentioned by the respondents.

2.1. QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

The priority area “quality development” refers to a series of requirements to improve the quality of youth work. It is about better outreach and information about existing structures and mechanisms as well as a holistic approach to improve youth work through, for example, quality assurance systems.

Of the 25 national processes covered through the responses of the survey, quality development is relevant in 21 processes, except for Turkey as well as the French and German-speaking communities in Belgium. This relevance is mirrored in the number of measures and developments, which were mentioned by the respondents.

Measures

Three different focal points are being pursued: (1) education and training of youth workers, (2) quality standards for youth workers, youth centres, and youth work programmes, and (3) awareness of quality youth work.

Within education and training of youth workers, the University of Skopje in **North Macedonia** has developed a programme called “Master in youth work”¹⁴, which is to be piloted in September 2023. In **Serbia**, the national youth worker association NAPOR is currently developing a Master’s degree course in youth work in cooperation with the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade. Similarly, three universities in Estonia offer study programmes on quality youth work.

Vocational training programmes have also been set up. In **North Macedonia**, a vocational training programme for youth workers was officially recognised according to the occupational standard “Worker with youth”, and in **Serbia**, NAPOR revised its curricula for non-formal education. Other vocational training programmes were launched in **Hungary**, where one programme started offering 220 hours of training to practitioners, who deliver youth work without official recognition.

Whereas **Sweden** continues with digital and physical seminars on quality in youth work, often closely related to the Europe Goes Local Charter on local youth work.

¹⁴ <http://zfz.ukim.edu.mk/студиска-програма-пр-1-2-5-3-7-4-2-2-3-3-2/> [06 July 2023]



Similarly, **Bulgaria** and **Greece** developed a framework for the education and career paths of youth workers. **Portugal** published pedagogical manuals to support training programmes for youth work professionals in line with the new modules of the National Qualifications Catalogue. By May 2023, 15 manuals had been published.

Furthermore, the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth intends to create a training centre in its facilities, dedicated to the assessment and development of the professional youth worker profile, with skills recognition, validation, and certification. As part of these measures, **Portugal** is also planning a revision of the youth worker profile to increase the level of qualifications, providing young people with the basic and essential skills they need to become youth workers.



Figure 9: Countries considering quality development as a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-GER, no in BE-FL and BE-FR).

The second focal point in quality development are quality standards, for youth workers, youth centres, and youth work programmes. **Cyprus** is involved in an ongoing process, led by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, to develop occupational standards for youth workers. This process will be followed by a pilot implementation and its promotion among the stakeholders. Similarly, **Greece** developed a competences framework for youth workers, while **Serbia** is creating a



procedure to enable youth workers to gain national qualifications at levels V and VII of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

For youth centres, **North Macedonia** is piloting quality standards within a partnership between the national association of youth workers and youth work providers “Union for Youth Work” and the Agency for Youth and Sport. **Serbia**, on the other hand, revised the 2010 NAPOR standards for the quality of youth work programmes in 2023. These standards are an integral part of the accreditation process and obligatory for all NAPOR member organisations. During the process, which includes both mechanisms of self-assessment and assessment of appointed accreditors, the fulfilment of each standard is checked.

Thirdly, several countries raised awareness of quality youth work. Both Sweden and Malta initiated campaigns to develop quality youth work, with **Malta** running the non-formal education campaign “Create Your Shape: Discover Your Potential”¹⁵ throughout 2022, which highlighted the benefits of quality in youth work. **Sweden** is planning a seminar to train ambassadors, who can spread knowledge about quality in open youth work, and holds parliamentary seminars on quality in youth work.

Recently, **Bulgaria** developed a code of ethics for youth work. In **Austria**, a quality framework for youth work is in place. Other countries, like Slovenia, Malta, Germany, and Estonia, have taken a more knowledge-based approach to quality youth work. In **Slovenia**, quality youth work was mapped, whereas **Malta** is currently discussing the development of quality indicators for working with young people. In **Germany**, an expert discussion and online survey on the shortage of skilled professionals in youth work are currently being conducted. Finally, Estonia is setting up a national salary support system for all people working in the youth field.

Challenges

Two main challenges are mentioned in connection with the quality development of youth work. These are the visibility and measurement of the quality of youth work and its services, and the professionalisation of the youth worker profession.

The first, closely related to recognition of youth work, highlights the fact that little is known about the effects and impact of youth work. The quality of youth work in this sense is not visible or cannot be measured. Its services have barely been evaluated and valued in financial terms and quantitative numbers. Therefore, some respondents suggest developing quantitative research, i. e. developing indicators to

¹⁵ <https://youth.gov.mt/create-your-shape/discover-your-potential/> [6 July 2023]



measure qualitative youth work to demonstrate the nominal value of youth work vs. no youth work.

A second challenge can be summarised under the keyword “quality youth workers”. The respondents point out that it is increasingly difficult to find and retain qualified personnel. In some countries, qualified staff are lost to teaching positions. This also threatens the continuity of youth work. Youth workers are under constant pressure to professionalise their profession, although they have little time for professional development in their daily youth work.

To this end, some respondents point out the importance of developing a European common framework of basic skills and competences that youth workers must possess to practice their profession. Similarly, it was suggested that the competence-based education and training of youth workers should be improved by setting European standards.

2.2. PROMOTION AND RECOGNITION

The priority area “promotion and recognition” is about making youth work more visible and better understood as an independent field of work. The aim is not only to create awareness of youth work, but also to develop a common narrative through common language and terminology.

Recognition of youth work as a field of work is the second most important thematic priority area of the European Youth Work Agenda, considered to be relevant in 18 of the 25 national processes, according to the respondents of the 2023 survey.

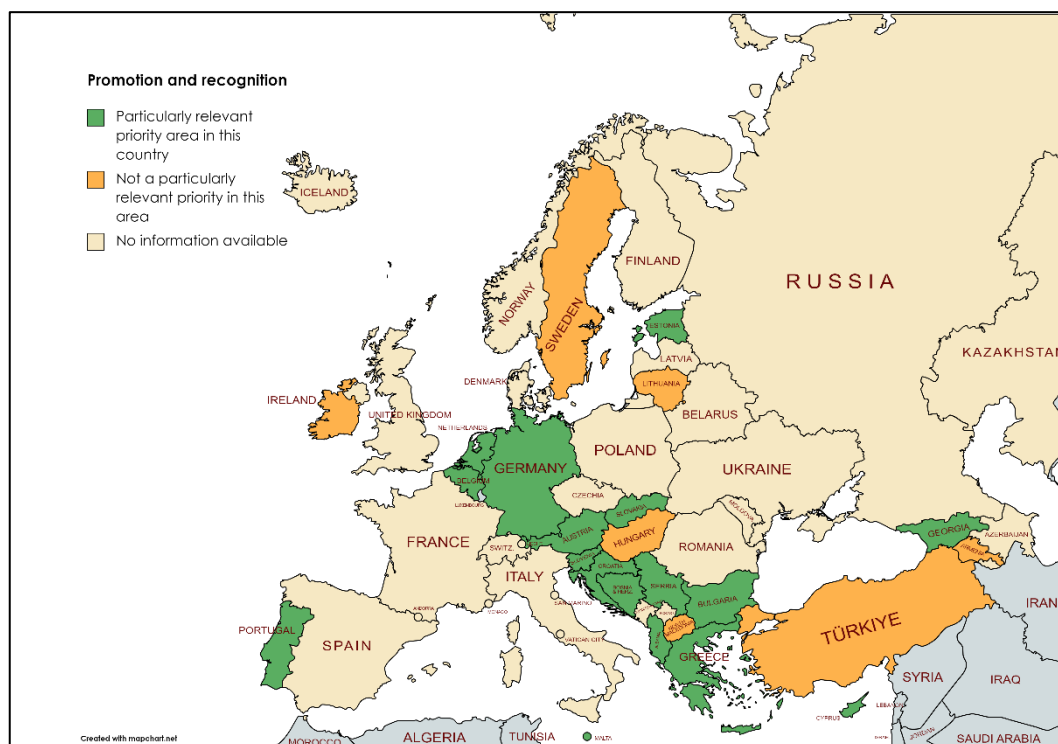


Figure 10: Countries that consider promotion and recognition to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-FL and BE-FR, no in BE-GER).

Measures

The developments that have taken place in this field in recent years or are currently planned can be divided into two categories: quality assurance for recognition and youth work awareness campaigns.

Closely related to the previous thematic priority area of “quality development” is the focus on quality assurance to gain recognition. Such quality assurance procedures are being developed in **Georgia**, and in the **Netherlands** a national register of child and youth work has been established. Recognition was a priority during the European Year of Youth 2022 in **Greece**, with a focus on developments towards the social and political recognition of youth work, including discussions on a professional framework for youth workers as well as competences that a youth worker should have.

In other countries, awareness campaigns were set up to improve recognition of youth work, such as an awareness campaign on youth work practices in **Cyprus** and the award ceremony “Youth Worker of the Year” in **Georgia**. This ceremony, held in December 2021 and planned to be repeated, was organised by the Youth Agency and presented at the annual Youth Workers Forum. The award winners were



selected based on an open call. In the **French-speaking part of Belgium**, videos were shot to promote youth work, while the **Netherlands** organised learning sessions on local-level good practices relating to the political recognition of youth work. Similarly, **Slovenia** started “stories of success”, a digital tool for participation and quality youth work.

Austria follows a slightly different course and has identified parents as important actors for the recognition of youth work. Accordingly, various campaigns and activities at local level have been launched and will be continued in 2023. **Slovenia** also has a specific target group in mind, introducing youth work to the headmasters of Slovenian high schools. This resulted in the publication “Youth Work in Schools”¹⁶.

Finally, several respondents highlighted the European Conference “Value and Recognition of Youth Work”, which is to be held from 4 to 7 December 2023 in Zagreb, **Croatia**, in the framework of the “SNAC EYWA” partnership of National Agencies and SALTO Youth Resource Centres. It is organised by AMPEU, the Croatian National Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, and JUGEND für Europa, the National Agency for the EU youth programmes in Germany. The aim of the conference is to make visible the broad scope of efforts being undertaken in the youth work field to strengthen the recognition of youth work, empower actors to continue their commitment, and support these actors with more resources, networks, strategies, etc.

Challenges

The main challenge youth work faces in the thematic priority area “promotion and recognition”, according to the respondents, is the fluctuating policy priority as well as the perceived lack of political and societal interest. Both are closely related. In many countries, the European Youth Work Agenda is perceived as something “European”, and respondents point out that political structures in the countries do not always see how such processes can influence the developments in the country. This means that the European Youth Work Agenda should be promoted and implemented as a document on its own.

This is aggravated by the fact that, according to some respondents, it is difficult to develop youth work qualitatively if there is no national understanding about what youth work is, or even a clear national framework. The different national practices of youth work as well as specific national contexts make (European) quality development more complex.

¹⁶ https://www.mlad.si/e-katalogi/Mladinski_sektor_v_solah/ [6 July 2023]



Related to this is the fact that according to the respondents, many political and social actors outside the youth work sector have no understanding or only an unclear understanding of how youth work impacts the lives of young people. At the same time, some countries point out that the profession of youth worker is neither recognised nor prestigious. Also, at the local level, in municipalities, there is a low level of awareness of what youth workers do.

This lack of recognition could be counteracted by stronger financial support and resilient youth work structures. More research into the impact of youth work could also be helpful, according to the respondents.

2.3. POLICY FRAMEWORKS

In the priority area “policy frameworks”, it is argued that youth work should be an explicit and integrated part of youth policy at all levels. This is followed by specific youth work strategies to support participatory youth policymaking and implementation as well as standards for research-based and rights-based approaches in policymaking and implementation.

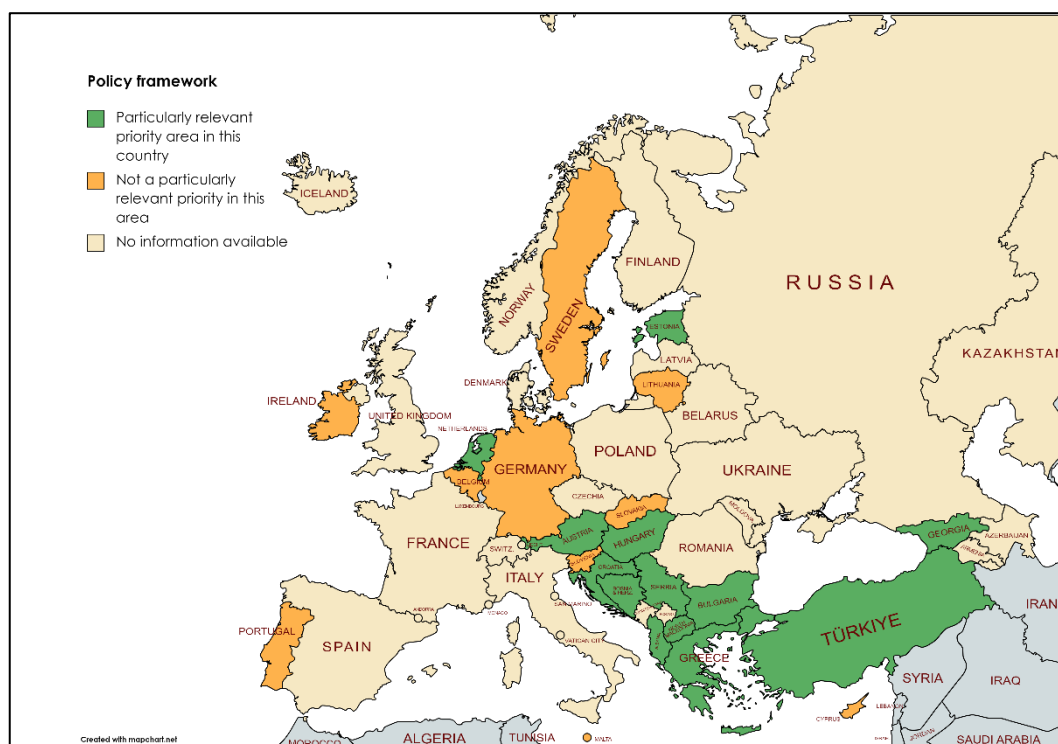


Figure 11: Countries that consider policy frameworks to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: no in BE-FL, BE-FR and BE-GER).

Although identified as particularly relevant in only 13 of the 25 national processes, many of the examples that were listed by the respondents of the survey are linked



to the priority area of policy frameworks. Similarly, it is one of the areas in which interest in mutual learning processes is highest.

Measures

In the past few years, measures in the priority area of policy frameworks concentrated on the integration of youth work and the European Youth Work Agenda in national strategies and legislations as well as increased knowledge-building on youth work.

The integration of youth work in national youth strategies and laws is being prioritised in many countries. One such example is **Serbia**, where the principles of the European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process will be incorporated into relevant legislative documents. This includes the new Youth Strategy 2023-2030¹⁷, in which youth work is now one of the five goals, while the youth strategy Action Plan, adopted in May 2023, further elaborates six measures dedicated to youth work. For November 2023, the adoption of a new Law on Youth is planned in Serbia. This new law will recognise youth workers as one of the main actors in the implementation of youth policy.

In a similar way, the government of **Georgia** has approved a State Youth Strategy 2023–2026 and an accompanying action plan (for 2023). The Youth Strategy lists five strategic goals, the first one being “Promotion of the development of young people and the full realisation of their potential”. It introduces measures regarding the development of quality youth work and the profession of youth workers.

In **Bulgaria**, the development and establishment of youth work at national level has been defined as a strategic priority in the National Youth Strategy (2021-2030), and youth activities and youth work are now mentioned as a key area of the National Program for Youth Activities under article 10a of the Gambling Act (2023-2025). Bulgaria uses gambling revenues to finance its National Programme for Youth Activities. The Bulgarian community of practice also developed a definition of youth work, which has been presented to the Ministry of Youth and Sports for this definition to be added in youth legislation.

Other examples of countries where youth work has been included in policy frameworks are **North Macedonia**, where a section on youth work and youth

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<https://mto.gov.rs/extfile/sr/1829/EN%20Youth%20Strategy%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Serbia%20for%20the%20period%20from%202023%20to%202030.pdf> [6 July 2023]

centres was included in the newly adopted Law for Youth Policy and Youth Participation, and **Slovenia**, where the Youth Action Plan 2023 and the Youth Strategic Plan 2023-2027/32 include measures regarding youth work. In other countries, there are plans to integrate the priority areas of the European Youth Work Agenda in national youth programmes (**Croatia**) or governmental statements on youth (**Albania**), but there has been no official adoption so far.

The second focal point, which is addressed in the policy framework priority area, is the management and creation of knowledge as a part of evidence- and knowledge-based youth (work) policy. It consists of research on youth work, like the 2021-22 “scan” of “Youth Work Development”¹⁸ in **Belgium-Flanders**, research on youth workers in **Hungary**, and the publication of an open youth work handbook, written by experts, in **Estonia**. Some countries are also conducting research specifically on the implementation of the Bonn Process, like **Croatia** and **Austria**. **Lithuania** is planning a research conference for youth work practitioners, whereas in **Germany** an Academic Network on Youth Work¹⁹ was formed.

Some countries also create and update knowledge portals on youth work, like **Portugal**, where the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth further developed its portal to promote services, products, and integrated activities with young people. Similarly, NAPOR in **Serbia** is in the process of creating a continuous Youth Work Knowledge Base. Such knowledge collection is called for in the Serbian Youth Strategy (2023-2030), which proposes that research and knowledge management in the field of youth work and non-formal education of young people be continuously conducted.

Challenges

The challenges mentioned by several countries in policy frameworks are like those in the area of promotion and recognition. Youth work is subject to highly fluctuating policies and political priorities at national, regional, and local levels. The resulting lack of longer-term political continuity, paired with lack of financial support and political will for substantial changes in the youth sector, is seen as a critical challenge for youth work actors. However, this is also a challenge for those countries where a policy framework exists.

¹⁸ https://ambassade.be/nl/attachments/view/210313-amb_jeugdwerkwerkt%20eng-digi%20spreads [6 July 2023]

¹⁹ <https://bundeskongress-kja.de/wissenschaft-kja-eng/> [6 July 2023]



In other countries, challenges are even more fundamental, with a policy framework defining and structurally funding youth work and its actors missing altogether. We can only overcome the challenge of introducing such a policy framework if the development of youth work in general and the implementation of a national process in the context of the Bonn Process are tackled both systematically and structurally.

2.4. A COMMON DIRECTION FOR THE YOUTH WORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

For the community of practice to move in a common direction, the European Youth Work Agenda proposes in the priority area “a common direction for the youth work community of practice” creating concrete opportunities for the community of practice to meet and exchange information. These concern all levels and vary from stronger cooperation between individual groups in the community of practice to information provision and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

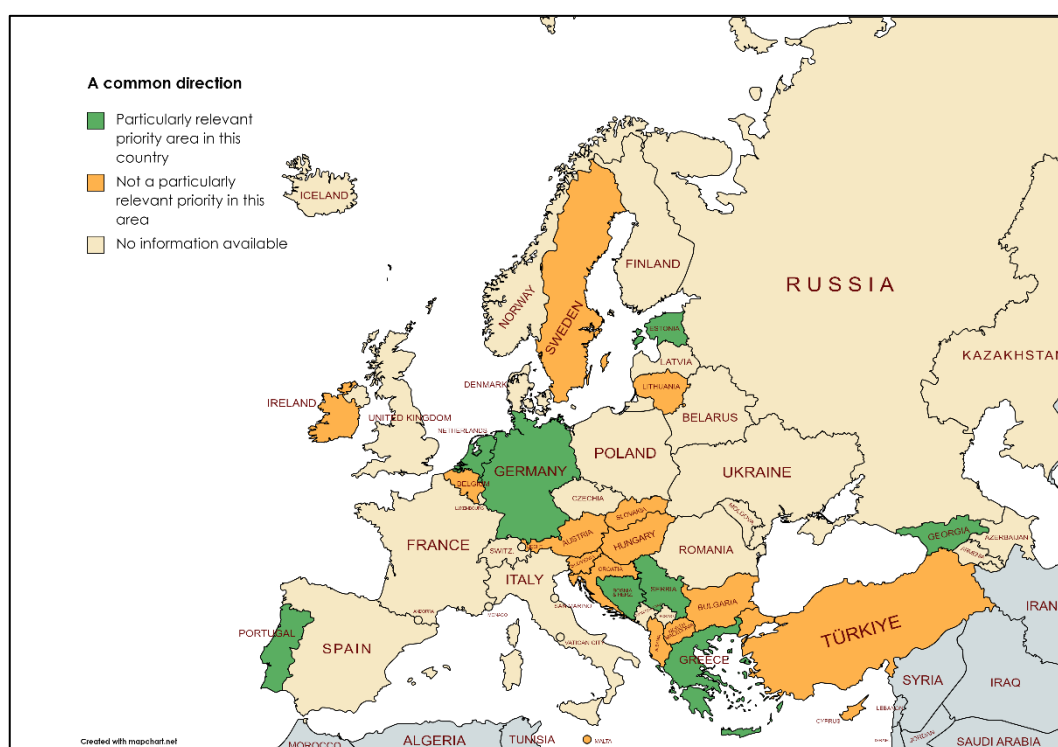


Figure 12: Countries that consider a common direction to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-FL, no in BE-FR and BE-GER).

With only nine out of 22 national processes, this priority area “common direction” is currently considered particularly relevant in only a few countries. Nevertheless, numerous examples were given of activities that have been carried out in this area in recent years. This could be an indication that many countries have already left the



first stage of common direction and are now more likely to select substantive topics (quality, recognition) to work on within the framework of the Bonn Process.

Measures

The list of examples of activities in common direction is large and can be roughly divided into three parts. These are translations, communication formats, and meeting spaces.

Croatia as well as **Slovenia** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina** mention that they have translated the final declaration of the 3rd EYWC into local languages. The website of the European Service Centre for the Bonn Process also lists translations into eight other languages.

In addition, the survey participants gave many examples of how the community of practice was informed about the Bonn Process through different means of communication and exchange. Digital formats are used to inform the community of practice and thus contribute to a common ground. **Slovakia** and the **French-speaking community of Belgium** report using videos to explain what the Bonn Process is, while **Sweden** and **Germany** use podcasts on specific topics of the European Youth Work Agenda.

Thirdly, many countries mention conferences where the community of practice can meet to discuss the further development of youth work in their country. In July 2021, the Youth Agency in **Georgia**, together with the Youth Workers Association, in cooperation with the EU technical support project (Skills4Jobs²⁰) and UN agencies, held a two-day conference "European Youth Work Agenda 2025". The conference aimed to raise the level of awareness among youth work actors about the Bonn Process and the European Youth Work Agenda and to develop a three-year action plan in line with the final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention.

In June 2023, large Youth Work Conferences with the community of practice were held in both the **Dutch-speaking community of Belgium** and in **Bosnia-Herzegovina**. In addition to subjects from the Bonn Process, specific topics of local interest were discussed. In **Germany**, the 4th Federal Congress on Youth Work is planned for autumn 2024. **Georgia** and **Armenia** together are planning an international conference on youth work in the Caucasus in 2023/2024.

²⁰ <https://www.sev.org.gr/protovoulies-kampanies/skills4jobs/> [6 July 2023]

In different countries, online and in-person workshops were also realised, both in general about the Bonn Process (**Turkey, Estonia**) and as a follow-up meeting to the 3rd European Youth Work Convention (**French-speaking community of Belgium, Slovakia**), and about specific topics, such as the [Europe goes local](#) project (**Sweden**) or rural youth work development, culture and youth work, outreach and detached youth work, etc. in **Serbia**.

Challenges

To achieve a “common direction for the youth work community of practice”, a common (European) understanding, a common ground is needed. Many respondents describe the lack of such a common ground as a challenge for the European development of youth work. This perceived lack of a common and consolidated understanding of youth work within and beyond the youth (work) sector is caused by the different practices of youth work in Europe.

These different practices, reinforced by different political frameworks, in which youth work operates, strengthen the respondents’ perception that different understandings of youth work prevail in Europe. The definition of youth work set out in both the 2017 Recommendation on youth work of the Council of Europe and the 2020 EU Resolution on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda, as well as the development of the European Youth Work Agenda as a strategic framework has not changed this perception.

One of the biggest challenges, according to the respondents, is therefore further developing a common understanding of youth work between the different countries and narrowing down the existing European concept of youth work. This also includes raising awareness of existing common ground. Care must be taken to follow a path that appreciates the diversity of youth work in different national contexts, thus uniting rather than dividing people and countries in this regard.

2.5. A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENT

Strongly related to the previous areas is the priority area “a strategic framework for youth work development”, which encourages the community of practice to reflect on how it can contribute towards the development of youth work itself. This might include, for example, setting up national working groups to coordinate joint undertakings and providing (better) conditions for youth work development at local level.



Figure 13: Countries that consider a strategic framework for youth work development to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-GER, no in BE-FL and BE-FR)

In half of the national processes, the development of a strategic framework is considered a relevant area for youth work. The measures focus on the definition of national priorities and the establishment of national working groups. Both are closely related to each other.

Measures

Of the 15 national processes where a national working group is known to have been established, the establishment of a national working group was mentioned in four countries as an example of an action in the priority area “a strategic framework for youth work development”. In **Bulgaria**, the Ministry of Youth and Sports established a national working group on youth work, while in the **Netherlands** the initiative of a national working group on Europe and youth work came from the National Agency. This working group holds quarterly strategic meetings with all relevant (national) stakeholders on youth work. In **Sweden**, the national working group was reported to have developed a working routine, and in **Slovenia** a national steering committee with regular meetings was formed.

This was followed by national priorities or joint action plans in many countries. In the **Netherlands**, work was done in the first half of 2023 to mobilise stakeholders



and jointly draft a plan for investing in all areas of the European Youth Work Agenda, which will be followed by concrete activities later this year. **Estonia** developed a youth work development plan until 2035 and took first steps to update the Youth Work Act. Similarly, **Slovenia** adopted and implemented a Youth Work Action Plan until 2023.

Germany, the **Dutch speaking community in Belgium**, **Georgia**, **Sweden**, and **Malta** used conferences and workshops to set national priorities together with the community of practice. **Sweden** pointed out that it considers the European charter on local youth work as an important document in uniting national actors. Finally, the initiative of establishing a European Network of National Youth Workers Associations was referred to by several respondents.

Since November 2021, an ongoing Erasmus+ project has been running under the name “European youth workers unite to empower youth and youth field – Youth worker is a lifestyle”²¹, which is expected to formalise this European network by 2024. The project is supported by the Estonian National Agency, and it involves national youth worker organisations from nine countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Malta, Serbia, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, and North Macedonia), while a few other national associations are also interested in joining the initiative.

Challenges

Challenges in the priority area “a strategic framework for youth work development” refer to Europe as well as to the national level. As with the policy frameworks, there is criticism at national level that decision-makers show little interest in youth work development. Accordingly, it is a challenge to encourage decision-makers at all levels to prioritise youth work and take measures for the development of youth work.

Looking at the European level, some respondents point out that the objectives of the European Youth Work Agenda are unclear. This makes it more difficult to translate the Agenda into national policy. This criticism also applies to the engagement of the network of National Agencies and SALTO Youth Resource Centres in their long-term cooperation projects “Strategic National Agency Cooperations” (SNACs), some of which are related to the European Youth Work Agenda. The criticism here is that there are no concrete actions or plans. The last point could be remedied in future through intensified cooperation between the National Agencies.

²¹ <https://enk.ee/eng/youth-worker-is-a-lifestyle/> [6 July 2023]



2.6. DEVELOP AND EXPAND THE YOUTH WORK OFFER

The core objective of youth work is to create opportunities for young people. Thus, a further priority area is to “develop and expand the youth work offer”, which focuses on measures to establish quality youth work offers mainly at the local level. This includes the use of quality standards, the mobilisation of European funding programmes for the development of youth work as well as accessible and sustainable funding.

Although this priority area is considered relevant in 14 of 25 national processes, only few activities are presented compared to the other priority areas of how the youth work offer is concretely developed and expanded in the national processes. The latter may be since youth work is offered first and foremost at the local level, whereas the setting of strategic priorities mainly takes place at national level.

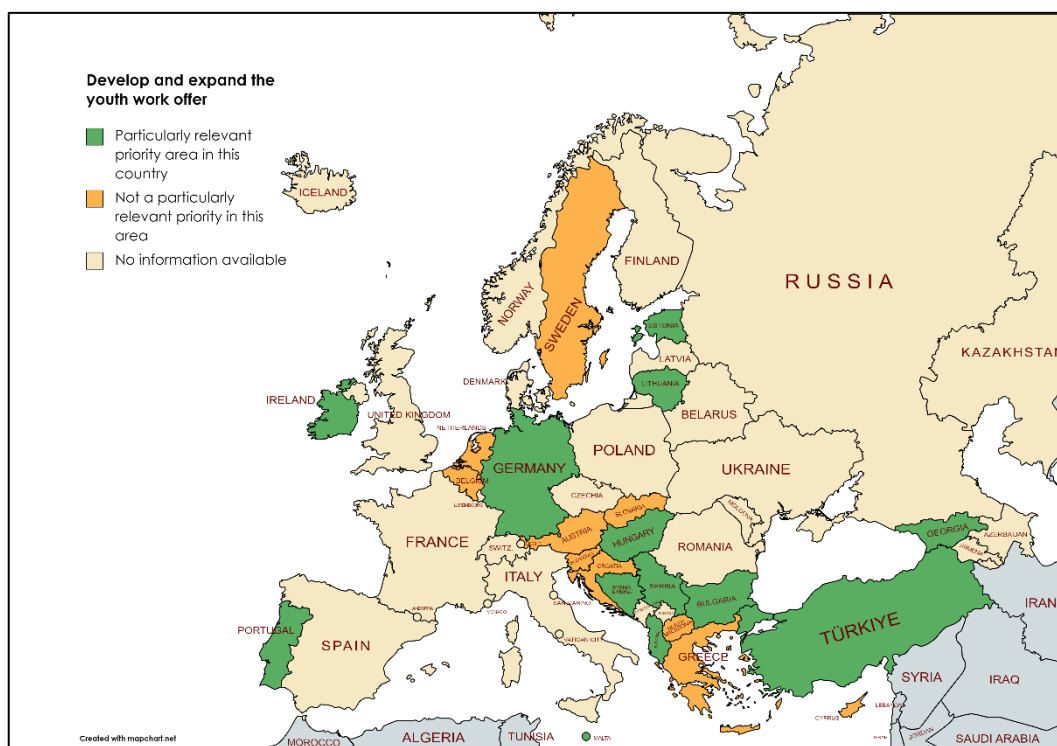


Figure 14: Countries that consider developing and expanding the youth work offer to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-GER, no in BE-FL and BE-FR).

Measures

In some countries, youth organisations are given concrete support to increase their capacities (**Georgia**), or existing capacities are reviewed (**Croatia**). Further measures concerning the development and expansion of the youth work offer focus

particularly on the local level. The newly adopted Youth Strategy (2023-2030) in **Serbia** defines securing local youth work offers as one of its main priorities. The Action Plan, adopted in May 2023, further elaborates on this goal. The respondents point out that such national support for local offers is key to the successful expansion of local youth work offers.

Bosnia and Herzegovina can be said to have introduced better approaches towards ensuring space for youth and their growth in recent years, with more investment in youth centres in the country. Especially local authorities are investing more money in youth projects, as an online tool for monitoring youth policy and work with young people²² suggests.

In **Georgia**, NGOs are lobbying for the introduction of at least one youth worker in each municipality, while in **North Macedonia** youth work models in rural areas are being developed and piloted. In **Bulgaria**, the capacity development of youth work and improved employability of youth workers at local, regional, and national level are being supported by the national programme for youth activities, which is financially supported through the Bulgarian Gambling Act.

Challenges

Throughout Europe, the lack of human and financial resources is a key challenge to the development and expansion of the youth work offer. This challenge manifests itself in various forms. A high turnover among youth work professionals, including losing youth workers to teaching positions, makes long-term capacity-building challenging. The high turnover is amplified by a shortage of skilled workers. Even in countries where the youth work sector progresses at national level, the provision of continuous youth work at the local level is critical.

The lack of political support and slow implementation of policies from the national to the local level compound the problems. Such lack of support is also reflected in the financial resources and funding of the offers. Some countries report that structural funding (e. g. staff, buildings, insurance) is being cut back and more emphasis placed on short-term initiatives. Efforts to establish or maintain a long-term youth work structure are therefore being obstructed.

2.7. BEYOND THE YOUTH WORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Although youth work will be further developed as an independent field of work, it does not exist in isolation, but is part of a very diverse life world of young people. It

²² <https://www.tipra.me/> [6 July 2023]



is therefore vital that youth work also cooperates with other sectors that are important for young people. Within the framework of the priority area “beyond the youth work community of practice” cross-sectoral and horizontal cooperation should be strengthened at all levels.

In only nine of 25 national processes is cross-sectoral cooperation currently considered relevant. Interestingly, however, it is an area in which many countries can well imagine a peer-learning activity (cf. chapter 3.3).



Figure 15: Countries that consider beyond the youth work community of practice to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-FL, no in BE-FR and BE-GER).

Measures

Only a few activities were reported in this area; these were mainly attempts to establish partnerships with other sectors. Only in **Malta** was there a specific report of a project where youth work has an impact on another sector: last year the Civic Education Programme in School was extended. This programme uses youth work methods to reach young people in schools.

North Macedonia, Serbia, and Estonia all reached out to different stakeholders, building connections between various sectors, and aiming to introduce the value



and benefits of youth work to local and national authorities, NGOs, universities, other ministries, and partners, and thus leading to the recognition of youth work.

Other partners come mainly from the social work field, although in Serbia stakeholders representing rural life and culture were also contacted. **Germany** will organise a conference in autumn 2023 on the topic of youth work and youth social work. Additionally, **Serbia** is currently preparing an analysis of five sectors (social welfare, education, culture, sport, and employment) aimed at identifying possible vacancies for youth workers in institutions.

Challenges

Various challenges exist in terms of cooperation beyond the youth work community of practice. At the heart of all challenges lies the perceived lack of recognition by other sectors, which has been mentioned in the priority area “promotion and recognition”, but which was also identified as an independent challenge regarding cross-sectoral cooperation. Lack of recognition, in turn, gives rise to numerous other challenges. There is competition with other fields of social work and youth welfare, and the challenge of retaining youth work as an independent field of work.

Developing cross-sectoral cooperation is also a challenge, and requires a lot of resources, political will, and different approaches for different sectors. Lack of data and evidence on how youth work benefits young people and communities makes these tasks even more difficult. An Erasmus+-funded project between National Associations of Youth Workers from Serbia, Italy, North Macedonia, and Portugal, in cooperation with two research institutes from Serbia and Bulgaria, is trying to tackle the data problem by developing and testing a mechanism and instrument for measuring the social and political impact, but also the economic aspects, of youth work.

2.8. INNOVATION AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

The lives of young people are currently being shaped by several crises, which also have an impact on youth work. The challenges that come with these crises are the focus of the priority area “innovation and emerging challenges”. Mental health, climate change, digitalised life-worlds, and shrinking civil spaces are just some of these challenges. Through innovations (e. g. smart youth work, green youth work) and the development of resilient youth work structures, attempts are being made to meet these challenges.

As the figure shows, more than half of the national processes, in other words 14 national processes, identify innovation and emerging challenges as relevant for youth work. At the same time, only a few activities are mentioned that have been



carried out in this area. The two topics mentioned are digitalisation and the challenge of dealing with the post-Covid situation in Europe.

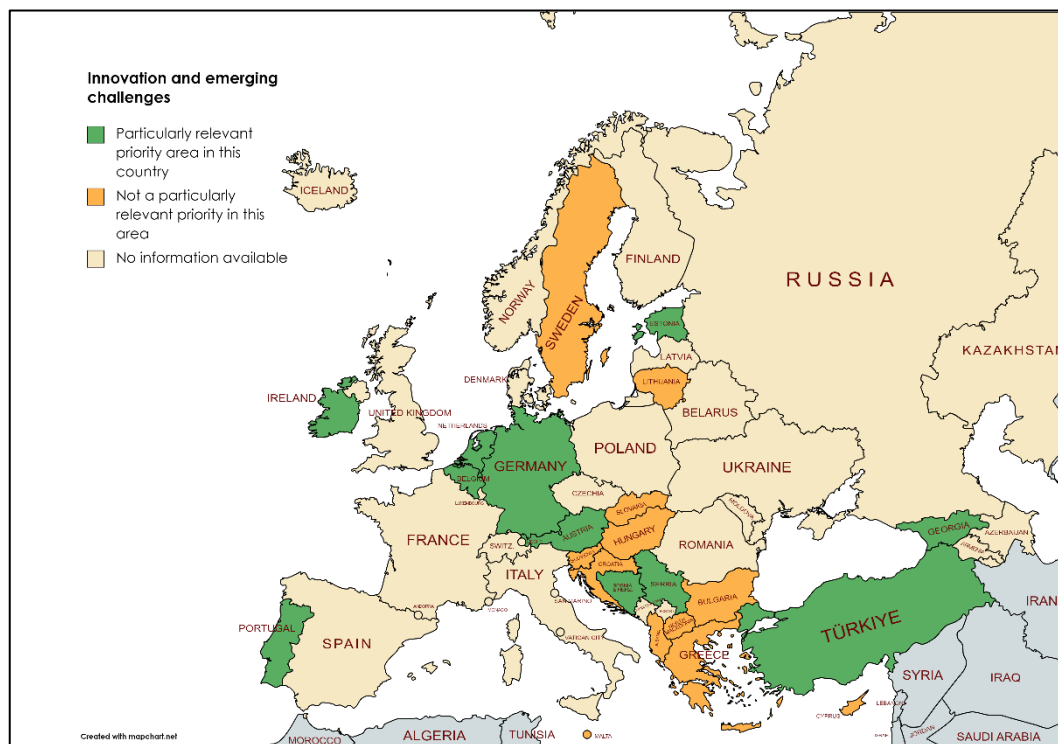


Figure 16: Countries that consider innovation and emerging challenges to be a particularly relevant thematic priority area when it comes to youth work (Belgium: yes in BE-FL, BE-FR and BE-GER).

Measures

In **Portugal**, the digital transition in the youth work field and in youth organisations is promoted by the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, which installed a “Safe Internet” Consortium to promote young people’s digital literacy and skills. In **Serbia**, there is also a focus on digital youth work. In 2022, a national consultation process for the development of the National Programme for Digital Youth Work and Work with Youth took place. The consultation process was coordinated by NAPOR, together with the National Youth Council and the National Association of Youth Offices and supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Youth. Development of the programme is due to be completed by the end of 2023.

In view of the post-Covid situation in Europe, free mental health trainings for youth workers are now offered in **Estonia**. Another practice comes from **Ireland**, where a Training and Cooperation Activity (TCA) is being developed in cooperation with the GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums). Under the title “Intergenerational Storytelling”, this national training will focus on post-Covid communities, explore ways to integrate intergenerational approaches and examine



the role of the GLAM sector in youth work and adult education. In doing so, it will support the development of strategic alliances between the GLAM sector, youth, and adult education organisations. Young people (18+), older adults, museum educators, youth workers, and adult educators will participate in experiential learning led by experts in storytelling and museum education. The aim of this training is to support the community of practice in intergenerational learning activities between young and elderly people.

Challenges

A worrying challenge identified by several countries is young people's declining interest in organising and taking part in youth work activities. Reasons cited include apathy on the part of young people, demographic trends, and a general decline in civic participation and engagement. Furthermore, the visibility of youth work for its target group is questioned. It is also pointed out that the future target group of youth workers is decreasing as fewer students are enrolling in university courses on youth work.

Ireland is trying to counteract this development and increase active participation through a TCA called "VR Youth Tube". In this eight-week blended training, young people and youth workers are brought together to explore virtual reality as a tool to leverage youth voices. Supported by experts in VR, the participants will explore ways of using and creating safe VR environments to engage and empower young people.

2.9. CONCLUSIONS ON THE EIGHT PRIORITY AREAS

Looking at the data on the eight thematic priority areas, four conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, it can be stated that youth work is a field of action in which a lot is currently happening. In many countries, activities are being undertaken and planned to further strengthen and develop youth work within the framework of the European Youth Work Agenda and its thematic priority areas.

Secondly, however, the analysis of the examples given by the respondents in the survey shows that much of the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda is about "making the Agenda known" and setting up processes to further strengthen and develop youth work. This comes as no surprise, as it is only two and a half years ago that the European Youth Work Agenda was announced with the EU Council Recommendation and the start of the Bonn Process was declared by the community of practice with the Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention. At the same time, several initiatives were taken to give shape to the thematic contents of the process.



Thirdly, as far as the content is concerned, it is noticeable that there is a thematic focus on quality and recognition of youth work, with a need for peer learning in the thematic priority area of policy frameworks. Quality and recognition of youth work are closely related, as the respondents consider the quality of youth work to be one of the preconditions for the recognition of youth work. This means the topic of recognition must be seen in a tripartite way. It is about youth work being recognised as an independent field of action by the youth sector and by other sectors and youth workers being recognised as an independent profession.

Similarly, in terms of the quality of youth work, a distinction must be made between the quality of the services and the competences of the youth workers. This interlinkage between the priority areas makes it difficult to discuss the thematic priority areas as standalone areas of development. Similarly, it is difficult to align measures to single thematic priority areas. Many measures and initiatives taken are implicitly or explicitly related to several thematic priority areas and the challenges that come with them. These linkages between the thematic priority areas could be given more attention in the future.

A fourth conclusion is that the development of some priority areas is also considered to be a challenge for the advancement of youth work in general. Quality youth work, as well as existing policy frameworks, for example, are prerequisites for recognition.

This leads to a situation, in which challenges arise from the development of the thematic priority areas and which are then discussed as independent challenges within the framework of the priority areas “innovation and emerging challenges”. The close connection between the challenges that have emerged from the thematic priority areas and those that are discussed independently as “emerging challenges” should therefore be considered in the discussion on possible solutions on a continual basis.



3. CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT

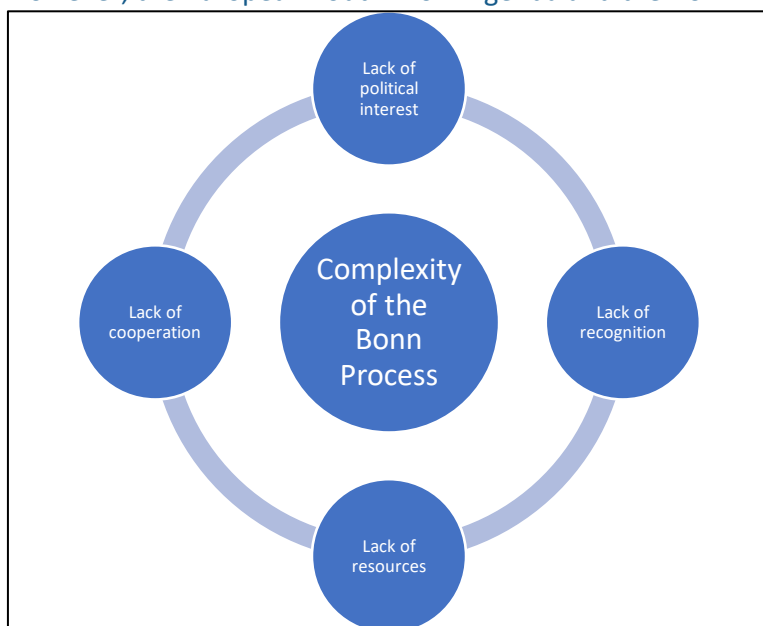
Starting a process with different actors from different backgrounds always brings challenges, and the actors involved in the process require different types of support. The European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process, followed up in the various national processes, are no exception. This chapter discusses challenges regarding the implementation of the Bonn Process as well as forms of support, which include proposals for mutual learning processes.

3.1. CHALLENGES FOR THE BONN PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION

The challenges to the Bonn Process identified by the respondents of the survey can be divided into five groups. Four of them are like the challenges already mentioned in the eight thematic priority areas, namely lack of political interest, lack of political and societal recognition, lack of cooperation, and lack of resources. On top of this is the complexity of the Bonn Process as the fifth challenge, which makes it difficult to overcome the other challenges.

The complexity of the Bonn Process and its relation to national processes is a major challenge. One question that is raised several times is the added value of the Bonn Process and the European Youth Work Agenda for the development of youth work in the countries. It is pointed out that in many countries, youth work in the national context is already dynamic and developing. In this sense, the goals of the Bonn Process are already being implemented.

However, the European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process are often



described as an additional layer to national policy. This makes it more difficult to explain the added value of such a “European” process to the national, regional, and local community of practice. Added to that is the complexity of the process, reinforced by the rather abstract notion of “Bonn Process” and

Figure 17: Challenges of the Bonn Process



“European Youth Work Agenda”, and confusion about the different terms and how they relate to each other.

It was suggested that the name “Bonn Process” should be abandoned since it causes confusion rather than achieving clarity. In some countries, the perceived lack of clear instructions, goals, and methods, which is due to the non-binding nature of the European Youth Work Agenda, makes implementation more difficult. The fact that different countries have different stages of development of youth work increases the complexity.

A major challenge is the repeated lack of political interest and consequently the lack of political strategy when it comes to the European Youth Work Agenda and its implementation. This pervades at all levels and applies to the Agenda itself as well as to youth work in general. Regarding the Agenda, the lack of interest and commitment at regional and local level is taken into account. Several countries point out that it is difficult to get the local level interested in the European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process.

This could also be attributable to the perceived complexity and lack of awareness of the added value of the European process mentioned above. The respondents' statements suggest that the general lack of political interest is aggravated further in the federal states.

Closely related to the lack of political interest is the lack of political and societal recognition. It starts with the different understanding in the youth work sector, politics, and society of what youth work is, what it is supposed to do, and who a youth worker is. The European context can only help to a limited extent, as the framework in which youth work takes place in individual countries is often narrower.

In this sense, the respondents suggest that national recognition processes should be started or continued based on the different national realities in Europe. Recognition – e. g. youth work being included in the law, being appropriately paid, or having its own master's degree in higher education – both politically and socially is a slow process, whose biggest advocates are youth workers.

Another challenge, which is at least partly a consequence of the lack of interest and recognition, is the lack of resources, both human and financial. There is a lack of financial means to further develop youth work (cf. chapter 2.2. and chapter 2.3), but also of financial means to further promote, disseminate, and implement the European Youth Work Agenda. Bureaucracy makes it difficult to open new sources of funding. Human resources are also dwindling.



The high turnover as well as the fact that youth workers are becoming teachers, which was already reported on in chapter 2.6, makes it difficult for the remaining staff in youth work to deal with European processes (or those perceived as European), such as the European Youth Work Agenda “on top” of their work with young people. In addition, it is reported in several countries that the national working group must reorganise itself due to personnel changes and find a new way of working. This also complicates the implementation process, as it is the national working groups that play a kind of coordinating role in many countries.

These four challenges lead to a fifth challenge, which relates to the thematic priority area “beyond the youth work community of practice”. This is the lack of cooperation. From different countries it is reported that it is difficult to find common ground amongst different stakeholders, both within the youth work community of practice as well as beyond, regarding the question of which priorities should be set or indeed whether to initiate cooperation and coordination at all.

Especially regarding cooperation with actors outside the youth work sector, it seems to be a challenge to initiate cooperation between equal partners and consequently to set cross-sectoral youth work policy priorities. Furthermore, it is pointed out that youth organisations barely cooperate. However, it is unclear whether this refers to cooperation within individual countries or between countries.

3.2. SUPPORT

The question of how to tackle these challenges leads to the question of what support is needed. This can be provided, on the one hand, by the national contact points or the national level, and on the other hand, by the European level. Figure 18 shows the needs for national and European support. For comparison, data from 2022 is included.²³

²³ In the 2022 survey, only information, mutual learning, practical support, thematic events, and knowledge-building were given as possible responses. The survey also only asked about support from the European level.

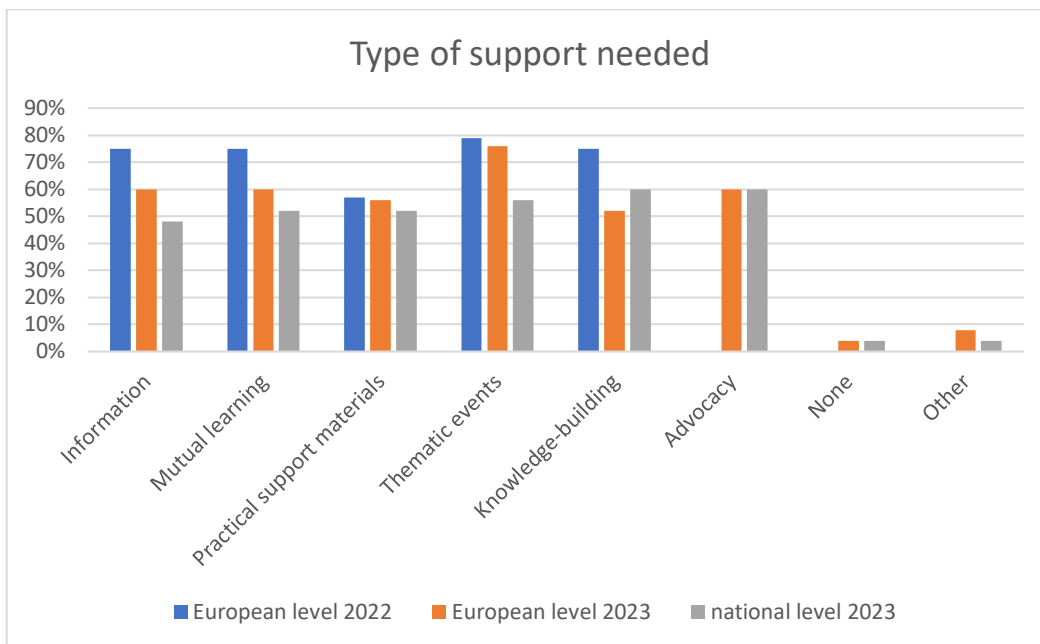


Figure 18: % of respondents who specifically needed support from the European level in 2022, from the European level in 2023, and from the national level in 2023

Against the background of the challenges, it is interesting that both levels ask for stronger support in advocacy. It can be assumed that this means stronger support from the national and European level to anchor the Agenda more firmly at the local level.

Several ideas were proposed on how the European and national levels can provide more support to the Bonn Process and its actors. They range from very practical suggestions – like more information in different languages and ad-hoc financial resources for decision-makers to implement the Bonn Process – to more general ones, like European support for national advocacy or European recommendations for cross-sectoral cooperation.

Bringing all the suggestions together, there is a desire for the development of a common European advocacy and recognition framework with respect to national processes. Existing European instruments should be used to provide advocacy, guidelines, and pressure to national processes. From some countries, proposals for process monitoring have been made, or letters have been sent to authorities urging them to start or support national processes in the framework of the European Youth Work Agenda. Both proposals show the perceived powerlessness that actors face in the absence of political will.



At the same time, the question arises as to what extent these proposals to build up pressure on national governments by European means are helpful or purposeful in view of the distribution of competences between the European level (EU and Council of Europe) and national governments. The Bonn Process and the national processes that follow on from this is a community process led by the community of practice. The desire to exert pressure from the European level on the national level would thus be a top-down approach, which contradicts the bottom-up idea of a joint initiative of the youth work community of practice.

As a bridge to the topic of mutual learning (see below), many countries expressed the wish to see how other countries have initiated the Bonn Process and share their experiences and good practices. This includes concrete methods and approaches to implement the Bonn Process as well as strategic action plans for the development of youth work.

3.3. MUTUAL LEARNING INTERESTS

Mutual learning, also known as peer learning, is a format that is often used between countries to promote certain topics. The survey asked in which of the eight thematic priority areas there was interest in mutual learning, and it requested concrete examples of possible peer-learning projects. These results are presented here.

The requests for mutual learning projects refer, on the one hand, to topics that have already been started in many countries – policy framework and recognition – and, on the other hand, to exactly those topics where only few projects are known – beyond the youth work community of practice (cf. chapter 2.7).

There is much need for an exchange on good practices on how to set up a national working group and how to set up a national youth work agenda or strategy. This also raises the question of how youth work could be embedded in youth policies at different levels.

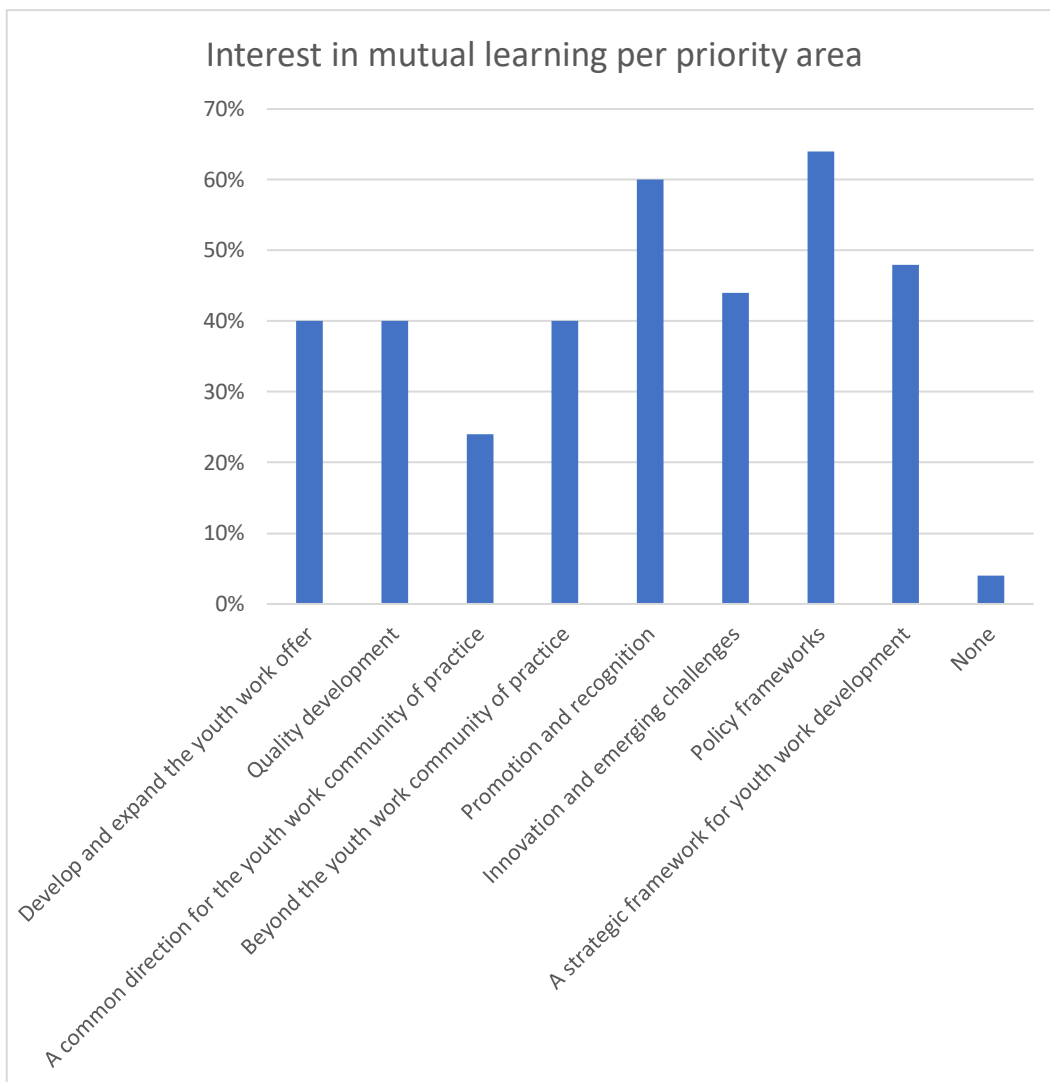


Figure 19: % of respondents who would like to see mutual learning projects in the respective priority area

There is a great need for mutual learning in recognition, although many projects are already being carried out here. This indicates that there is a need for more communication between different projects and a platform where actors can find out about other projects. Concrete demands included recognition of youth work and implementation of EYWA priorities, as well as better networking opportunities at European level to promote recognition and the quality development of youth work. The planned conference on recognition in December 2023 in Croatia could be the kind of platform that is required.

The last area where concrete suggestions for mutual learning topics were made is that of cross-sectoral cooperation. Possibilities could be study visits where



participants learn from each other's experiences of cooperation between youth work and other sectors, or the start of a European thinking process to strengthen cross-sectorial alliances in the youth work field.

To keep such mutual learning processes low-threshold, one respondent suggested organising regular online or face-to-face meetings to share best practices regarding the implementation of the Bonn Process at national, regional, and local levels, and to discuss how articulation and cooperation between the different actors at these three levels have worked.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Summarising the previous chapters, the following ten conclusions can be drawn from the survey data:

1. The number of countries with a managed national process in the context of the Bonn Process is steadily increasing.
2. The higher the level, the more progress is perceived regarding youth work development in the framework of the Bonn Process.
3. The implementation of the Bonn Process is so far anchored mainly at the national level.
4. There is a perceived lack of interest in implementation on the part of political decision-makers, despite Ministries taking a prominent role in coordinating and managing the Bonn Process.
5. A lot of work on the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda is about making the Agenda known.
6. Implementation priorities are set on quality, promotion and recognition, and policy frameworks.
7. There is uncertainty and/or a lack of knowledge about how the Bonn Process and subsequently national processes are to be implemented.
8. A particular need for mutual learning relates to the development of youth work through strategic and policy frameworks.
9. Implementation of the Bonn Process, and thus the further development of youth work, is hindered by a lack of political interest in youth work, a lack of financial and human resources, a lack of cooperation between actors and sectors, and a lack of societal and political recognition of youth work.
10. The complexity of the Bonn Process raises further questions about the added value of European youth work processes for local, regional, and national youth work.

The findings of the survey, summarised in these ten conclusions, raise several questions.

A first point relates to the geographical location of the survey data. Looking at Europe as a whole, the data indicates that activities to implement the European Youth Work Agenda are concentrated in Southern and South-Eastern Europe. This raises the question as to whether this is simply a bias created by the national processes considered – the majority of which come from Southern and South-Eastern Europe.

Another explanation could be that the fact that most of these countries actually responded is already a first indication that they have a greater interest in the Bonn Process and the European Youth Work Agenda compared to Northern and Western



European countries. This open question would be worth looking at again in the next survey and then discussing at the Exchange Forum.

A second point is the contradiction between the perceived lack of interest of political decision-makers, on the one hand, and the finding that in many countries the ministries manage the Bonn Process. The question arises as to whether in some cases the role of the ministry is perhaps only an official one and the actual coordination – as suggested in at least one case – lies rather with the National Agency or other actors.

Another explanation could be that the lack of political interest relates more to higher hierarchical levels in the ministries, which may offer little scope for the working level managing the national processes to initiate any significant changes. Furthermore, many respondents point out that the lack of interest from decision-makers applies not only to the national level, but also and explicitly to decision-makers at the local level. This raises the recurring question of how processes from a community of practice active at the European level can be carried down to the local level. A study or project that looks at examples from different countries could be helpful here.

Subsequently, the data raises the question of how more political support and advocacy can be mobilised. Simply anchoring youth work in national legislation and the European Youth Work Agenda in national action plans and youth policies is obviously not enough, because even countries where youth work is already anchored in legislation would like more political support. This raises the question as to what elements would be needed to ensure broad political – and subsequently also societal – support. It is not only a question of anchoring the European Youth Work Agenda at the various levels, but also of broadening the group of actors involved.

Finally, there is the pressing question as to what constitutes a “good” Bonn Process and when “youth work development” is successful. Practice shows that there is widespread uncertainty about how to implement the European Youth Work Agenda, and there are no criteria to measure this implementation. Nor are there any criteria to measure the success of subsequent youth work development. Given the non-binding nature of the European Youth Work Agenda, this is not surprising.

At the same time, there is an obvious need to establish such criteria, or at least to clarify what a national process and youth work development should look like and what makes it a success. Although it seems a monumental task to establish criteria given the many different structures and stages of development of youth work in Europe, a discussion on what constitutes a “good” national process and when it is



“successful” in developing youth work could help to narrow the existing and very broad common ground somewhat, making the European Youth Work Agenda more manageable. The recommendations developed in this regard at the Exchange Forum 2022 could be useful as a basis for further discussion²⁴.

A look at the challenges mentioned in this paper suggests that for youth work development to be successful, the existence of a policy framework that frames youth work is as important as a certain level of youth worker training and education as well as political and social recognition. These questions thus interlink the eight thematic priority areas with the overall idea of setting up national processes. Discussing them, both in the framework of existing formats like the Exchange Forum, but also beyond to include as many actors within the youth work community of practice as possible would enrich the further development of the European Youth Work Agenda and thus help to grow youth work across Europe.

²⁴ See Footnote 11, Cf. [‘Introduction to the national processes for national contact points’](https://www.bonn-process.net/be-part-of-it/support-national-processes/), slide 9, available at <https://www.bonn-process.net/be-part-of-it/support-national-processes/> [6 July 2023]