

STATUTORY FORUM

Youth work: the role of local and regional authorities

Resolution 463 (2021)¹

1. The Council of Europe (the “CoE”) recognises young people as powerful agents for change and identifies youth work as an important contribution in this field. Compared to formal education and social services, youth work may be a relatively small sector but no less important in view of its impact on young citizens as they engage in a participatory process and seek information about their rights and opportunities.

2. Both indicators of the well-being of a society and major drivers of change, young people need to be acknowledged as fully-fledged citizens who contribute to shaping European societies. Effort must be made to accompany them by the development and implementation of innovative youth policies, as well as new ideas for youth work adaptable to individual needs and to local contexts.

3. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has made a recommendation to member States on youth work ([CM/Rec\(2017\)4](#)) in a seminal political document on the subject, emphasising the positive impact and central role that youth work can play in preventing and addressing social exclusion and in promoting the values of democracy and human rights.

4. In addition, youth work is one of the priorities of the CoE youth sector strategy 2030 ([CM/Resolution\(2020\)2](#)), the specific focus being on strengthening, recognising and promoting youth work policies and practices by embedding youth work in the youth policy framework, in particular through a European youth work agenda and its implementation in close co-operation with the European Union.

5. Along with the aims set by the CoE, and taking inspiration from the work of the CoE youth sector, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (“the Congress”) has long been vocal on the importance of empowering youth and on the urgency to implement youth work as a means to achieve the goal of building more inclusive and democratic societies.

6. Nearly two decades ago, in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life adopted in 2003, the Congress defined youth participation and active citizenship as “the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society”.

7. The Congress is also committed to promoting youth participation within its own institution. To pursue its dialogue with young people and to involve them in its work, it invites one youth delegate per country, between the ages of 18 to 30, from the 47 national delegations to attend two sessions alongside delegation members and to take part in all discussions and meetings during one year.

8. In line with the above, the Congress,

a. recognises that local and regional authorities must support young people so that they can achieve their full potential as autonomous members of society, not only by providing services but also by co-ordinating relevant activities at local level, with the objective of enabling them to plan their own future and exercise their democratic citizenship;

¹ Debated and adopted by the Statutory Forum on 12 February 2021 (see Document [CG-FORUM\(2021\)01-02](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Ilсур METSHIN, Russian Federation (L, ILDG) and Thomas ANDERSSON, Sweden (R, ILDG).

b. acknowledges that local and regional authorities are primarily responsible for successfully implemented youth work which requires specific attention to how given resources are used and how procedures are adapted to the living and working conditions of young people if effective and efficient youth work is to be carried out;

c. takes into consideration the differentiated circumstances, needs, interests, ideas and experiences of young people;

d. notes that the work undertaken with and by youth is crucial to finding solutions for a safer, healthier and more inclusive world, starting with the implementation of United Nations sustainable development goals (in particular, regarding climate change and environment-related action) and when dealing with crisis situations (such as the recent refugee and COVID19 crises and the impact they had and have on social cohesion, the labour market, the economy, schooling and the health sector);

e. strongly encourages local and regional authorities of its members States to take the lead in developing contacts with youth initiatives and organisations and youth workers in their territories for this purpose.

9. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities to:

a. invest sufficient resources, both human and financial, in youth work, both when provided by the authorities and by NGOs and integrate a future-proofing approach into their planning, with procedures to regularly assess the impact of legislation, policies and activities related to youth work, keeping in mind the well-being of future generations;

b. provide (if youth falls within their competences, which may not always be the case for regional authorities) sufficient spaces for youth work and training for youth workers (professional and volunteer) for the delivery of quality youth work, with particular attention to the situation of isolated or disadvantaged youth who are often not directly in touch with various municipal or regional programmes and projects;

c. ensure that information is gathered and disseminated in a way that enables young citizens to take part in discussions starting from the same knowledge and to interpret it from their own perspective, bearing in mind that such information gathering requires the development of relevant, clear and measurable aims and indicators, followed by concrete analyses, tools, quality development and adoption of innovations as well as common efforts of all stakeholders to cooperate around these goals;

d. develop partnerships with NGOs and youth organisations for joint environmental initiatives aimed at building the capacity of youth as future leaders and driving forces behind a new climate change regime;

e. refer to Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work when devising policies and strategies for youth work and make use of the CoE youth work portfolio, and participate actively in the five-yearly reviews of CM/Rec(2017)4, the first of which is to be held in 2022;

f. promote the Council of Europe's "Gender Matters" manual on addressing gender-based violence affecting young people, and support youth work on issues of gender equality and gender-based violence through sustainable funding and structures and a competency-based framework for the education and training of youth workers;

g. consider applying for the CoE quality label for youth centres for local youth centres and to set up youth centres if there are none;

h. cooperate with and encourage local youth NGOs and associations to apply to the European Youth Foundation for funding of pilot activities.

10. Finally, the Congress reaffirms its intention to pursue its co-operation with the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Democracy, in particular, the Youth Department, on promoting youth participation and access to social rights for youth.