



# EUROPE GOES LOCAL

Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level

## **Mapping Youth Work at the Municipal Level in the Countries Participating in the “Europe Goes Local” Project**

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## Introduction and methodological considerations

The project called EUROPE GOES LOCAL – Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level - represents a strategic partnership in the youth field supported by the Erasmus+ programme which gathers 21 National Agencies (AT; BEFL; CH; DE; DK; EE; FI; FR;HR; HU; IS; IT; LI; LT; LV; NO;NL; PT; SI; SK), the SALTO-YOUTH Participation Resource Centre, the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, the European Youth Forum and two networks: POYWE and InterCity Youth, all aiming to foster quality improvement in **youth work**, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organisations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders in line with the legal base of the Erasmus+ programme.

The first **research-based activity** of this project seeks to establish an evidence-base for municipal level youth work through a **mapping exercise** whose purpose is to gather knowledge on settings, structures, tasks and challenges of youth work at the municipal level and provide a solid foundation for the future planning by helping the partners in defining directions and themes for further project activities that should correspond to the needs of youth workers and other actors at the municipal level.

The mapping exercise and the resulting report are **structured** in a way to provide an overview of European level policies, actions and practices defining municipal-level youth work, especially highlighting their impact on the role of municipal authorities, but also to identify approaches of the countries participating in the project with a special focus on the role of municipal authorities.

Thus, due to the complexity and diversity of the subject, limited data availability and a challenging timeframe, this mapping exercise provides a glance at the situation perceived from different angles representing a starting point for future project-planning and a preliminary platform for the in-depth analysis of the relevant topics identified.

Acknowledging all of the above-mentioned challenges, the mapping exercise was based on a **content analysis** followed by two tailored **online questionnaires** (Annex 1), which were created in order to provide an overview of European and national approaches regarding:

- National level policy and legal frameworks that define the role, institutional structure and resources of youth work at the municipal level including the role of the National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Youth In Action Programme;
- Policy dimension of youth work at local level including (inter alia) the level of autonomy of municipalities in setting priorities, defining local policies and creating local programmes;
- Stakeholders of youth work at the municipal level;
- Methods, practices, challenges of youth work at the municipal level in the countries participating in the project covering the following matters.

### Setting the demographic and socio-economic context to the mapping exercise

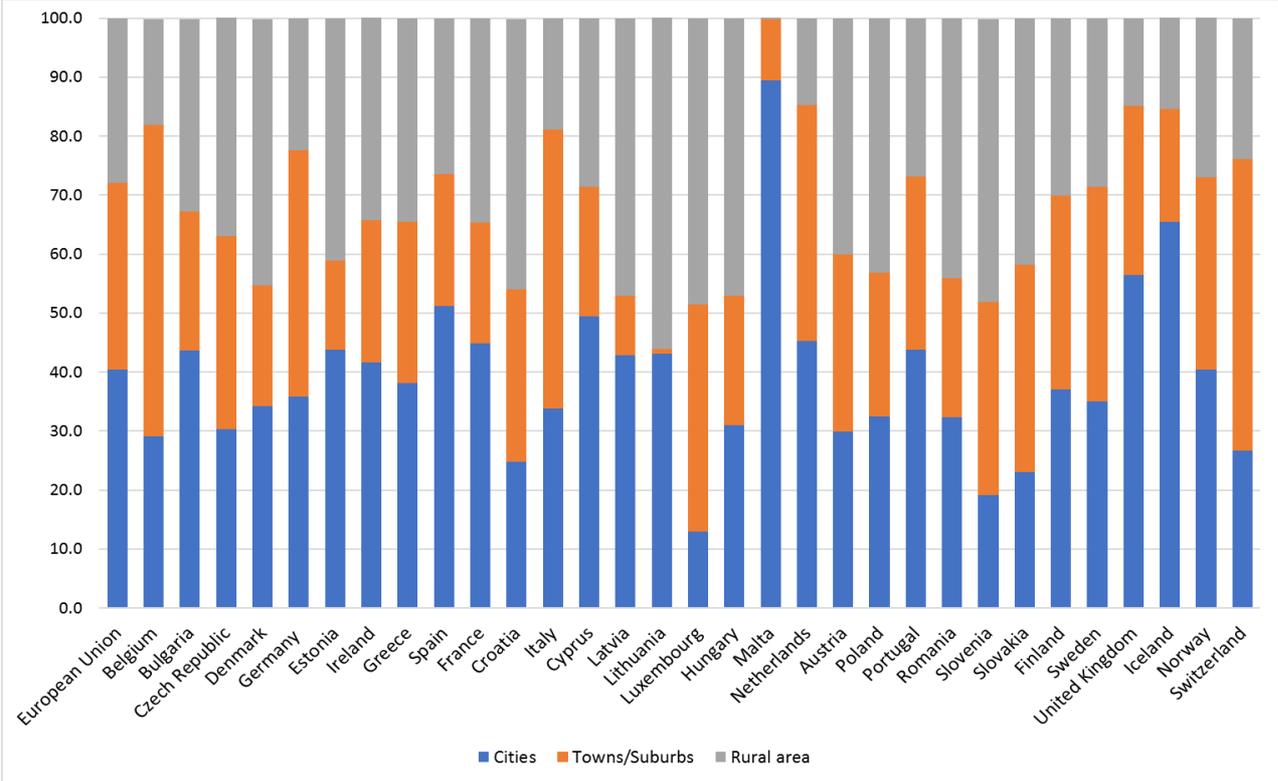
The situation in Europe regarding **population** shows great differences. There are altogether 64,814 **municipalities** in the 17 participating countries with completely different structures, sizes and economic situations and widely differing population compositions, for which we do not have data. Although population data are available on the NUTS3 level, combining them for this mapping exercise with the information received in the country questionnaires is not possible.

The following diagrams should highlight the **complex situation** which might be relevant for further research in the "Europe Goes Local" Project.

The distribution of the population between cities, towns and rural areas is completely different in Europe. It is seen as a general trend that **urbanisation** gains more and more importance, especially

for young people. "Young people tend to live in the suburbs of some of the largest cities in the EU. Aside from attracting (potential) business investment, cities also need to attract individuals: this can be done through the quality of what they can offer in terms of education, jobs, social experiences, culture, sports and leisure facilities, environment, or urban safety. The results presented in Chapter 8 suggest that a high proportion of Europe's ageing population lives in relatively small towns and cities (with a preference to live on the coast), whereas younger people are more likely to live in the suburbs within close proximity of capital or other large cities." (Eurostat 2016, p 13)

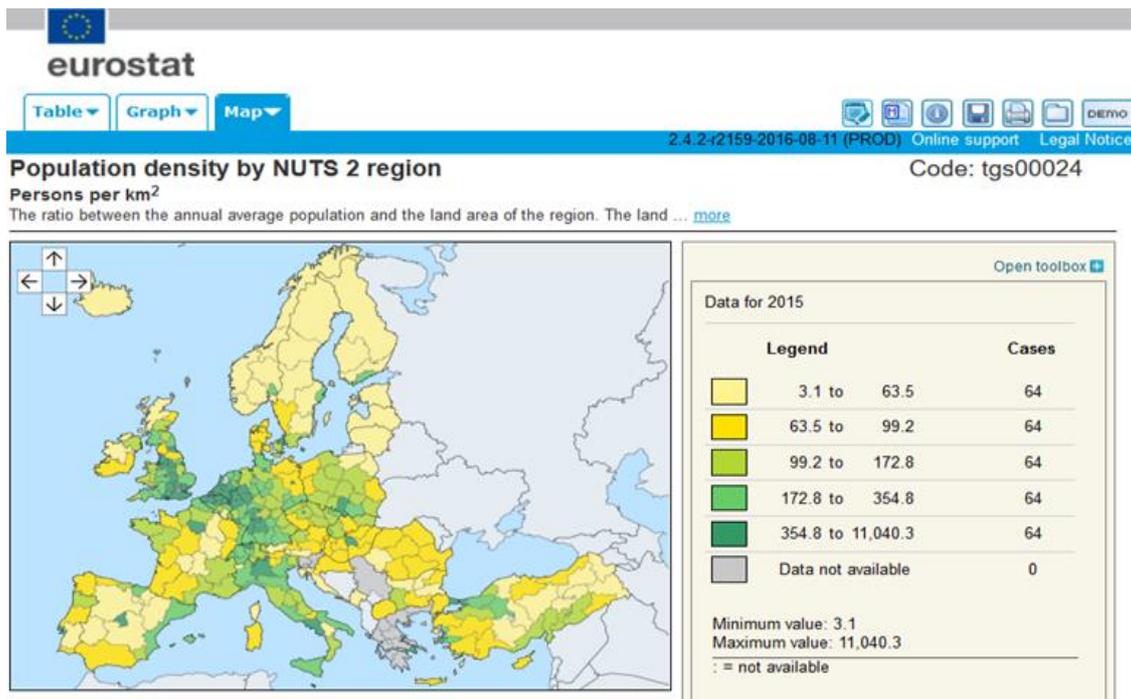
Figure 1: Distribution of population by degree of urbanisation



Data source: Eurostat

However, different regions also show different levels of population density within countries, as can be seen in this screenshot from the Eurostat webpage (based on accessible data and the MapTool).

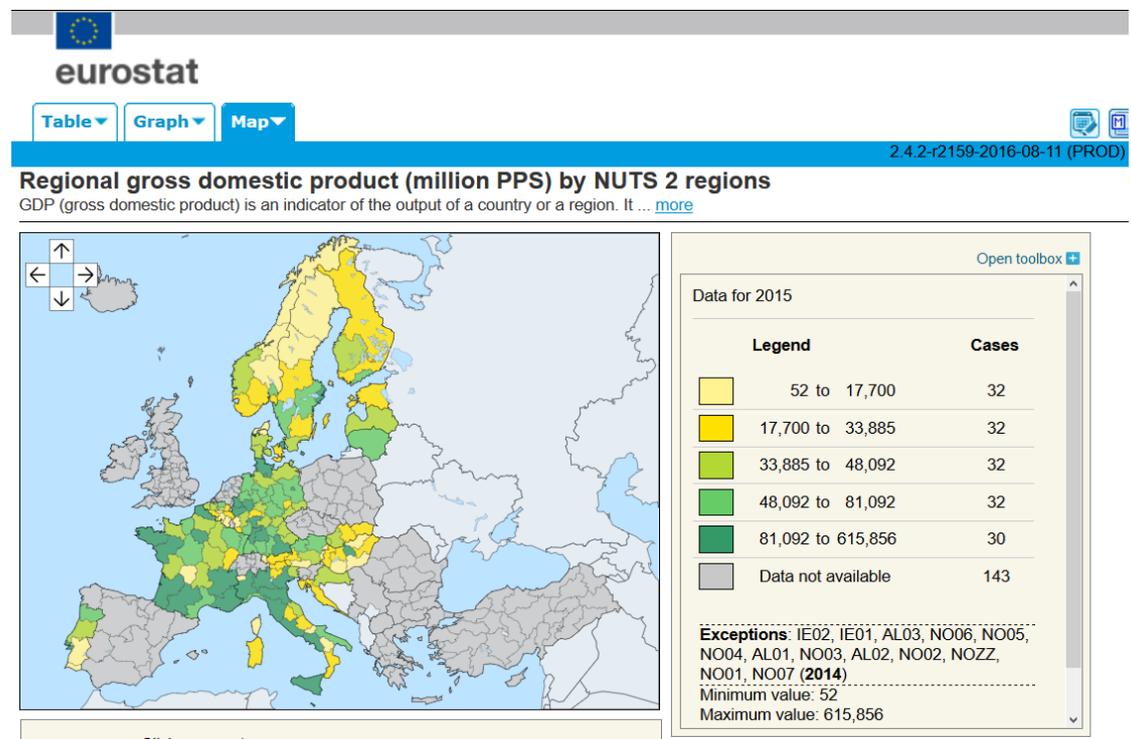
Figure 2: Population density in Europe



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Furthermore, the **economic** situation varies by region, which might have an impact on the wish/need to migrate or makes a region attractive as a target for migration.

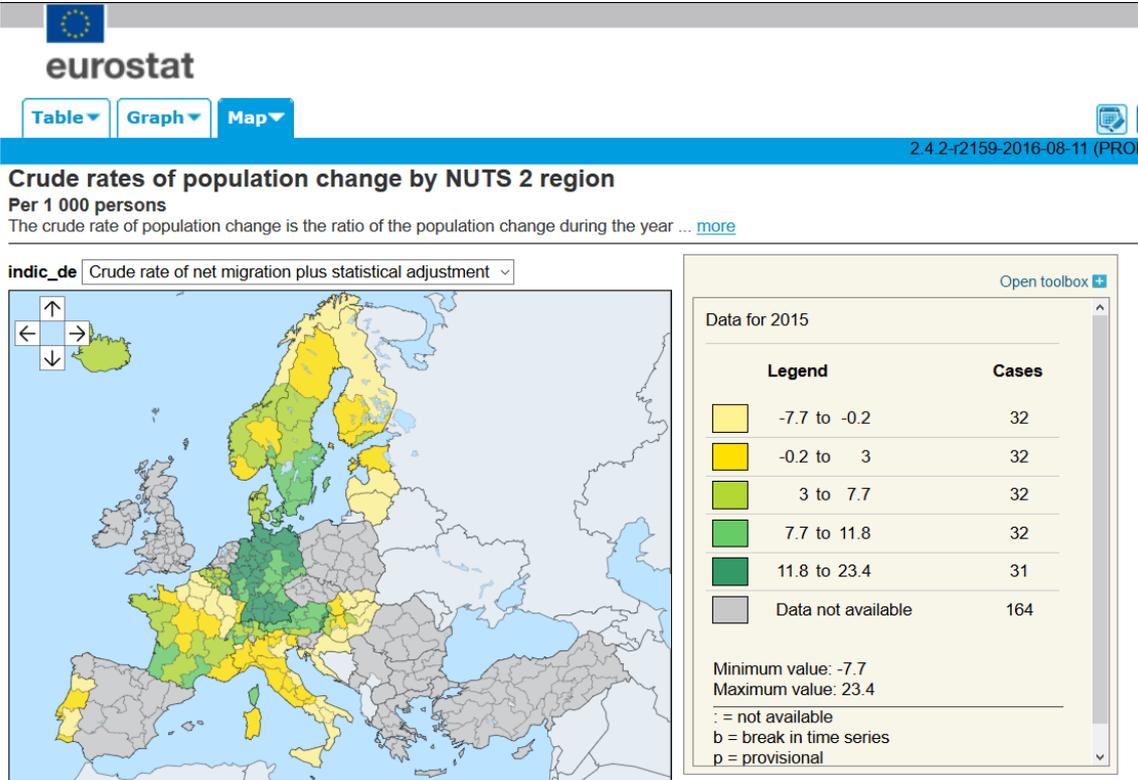
Figure 3: Regional gross domestic product in NUTS2 in the mapping mapped countries



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But the change in population has to be influenced by more factors than just the effects of the economy, as can be derived from the data of population loss or growth in the following diagram.

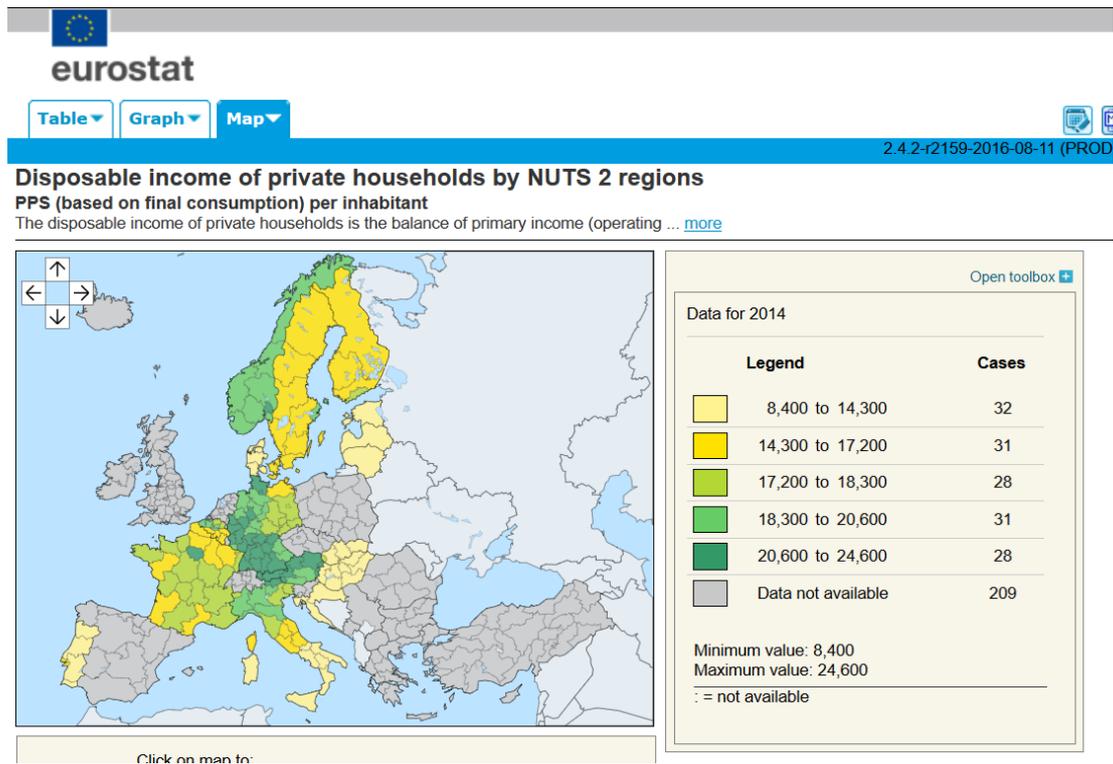
Figure 4: Change in population in NUTS2 regions of participating countries



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Individual (household) **wealth** also differs by region both within and between countries.

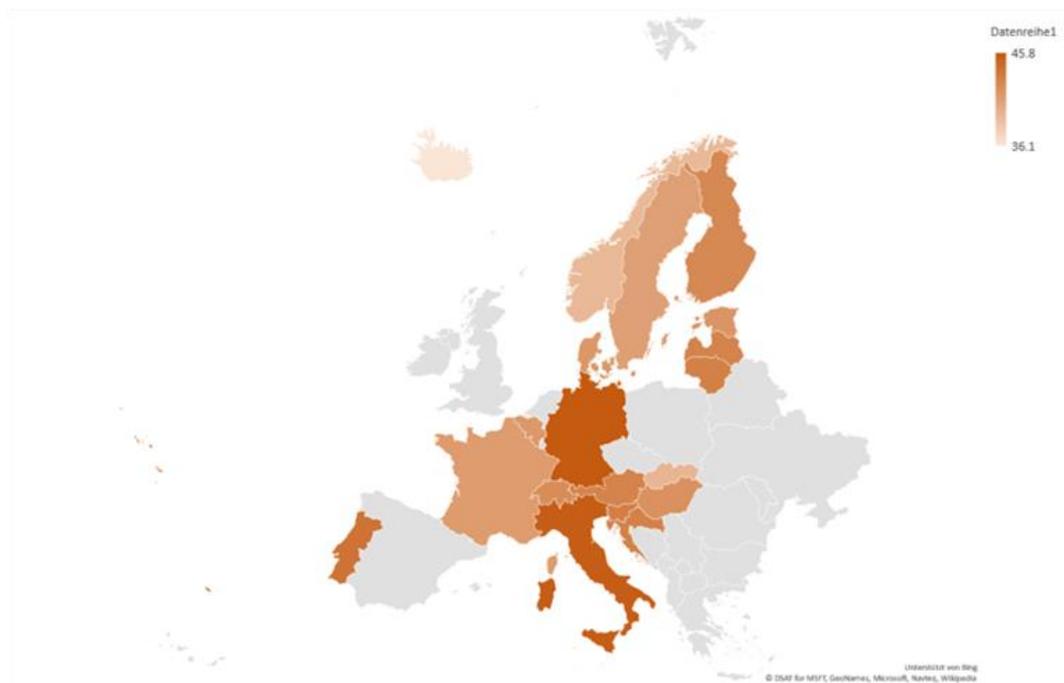
Figure 5: Disposable income of private households by NUTS 2 region in the mapping mapped countries



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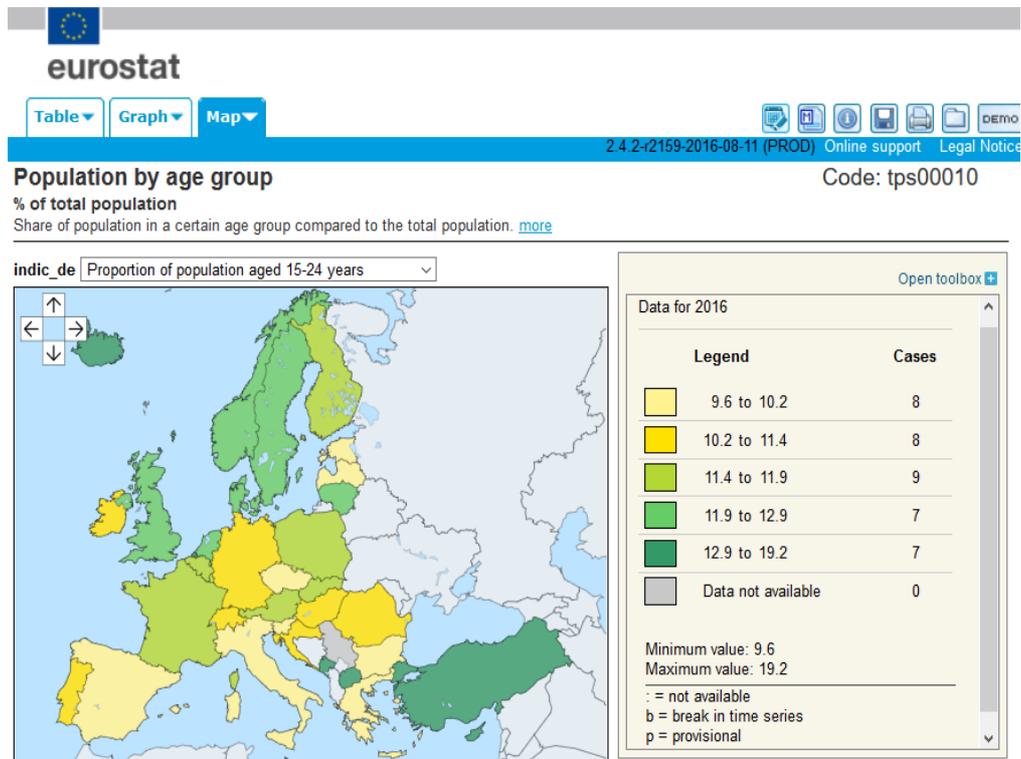
In addition, the **age distribution** of the population is also quite different from country to country. The median age in the mapping mapped countries varies between 36.1 (in Iceland) and 45.8 years (in Germany), as does the ratio of young people within countries.

Figure 6: Median age of the population in mapping mapped countries



Data Source: Eurostat

Figure 7: Ratio of 15- to 24-year-olds in the whole population by country



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These different conditions in the European regions should also point to the **limits of this mapping** exercise and at the same time indicate which concrete data within the frame of the project could / should be combined with the data that could be collected.

### 1. Overview of European level policies, actions and practices that define municipal-level youth work, with a focus on their impact on the role of municipal authorities

The **European Charter of Local Self-Government** (1985) considers the **local authorities** as one of the main foundations of any **democratic regime** which entails their endowment with democratically constituted decision-making bodies, as well as a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities; the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfilment.

The **European Commission White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth"** (2001) emphasised that youth affairs are largely the responsibility of the national, regional and **local authorities** of the Member States which play a major role in **providing the context for the development and empowerment of young people**.

The **Resolution of the Council of the EU on youth work** (2010) invites the member states and the Commission within their respective spheres of competence to **create better conditions and more opportunities** for the development, support and implementation of youth work at local, regional, national and European level. It stresses the importance of **recognising the crucial role of youth work as a provider of non-formal learning** opportunities to all young people in the context of the implementation of a competitive, inclusive and sustainable Europe 2020 Strategy and

therefore invites the Member States to **promote different kinds of sustainable support for youth work.**

However, the term “youth work” is defined and described in various ways in different countries. The late **Peter Lauritzen**, former Head of the Youth Department and Deputy Director of Youth and Sport, pointed out some elements of youth work to make it more concrete. He mentioned that youth work is a “summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. [...] Youth work belongs both to the social welfare and to the educational system. [...].

The **definition of youth work** is therefore diverse. While it is recognised, promoted and financed by public authorities in many European countries, it has only a marginal status in others where it remains of an entirely voluntary nature. What is considered in one country to be the work of traditional youth workers – be it professionals or volunteers - may be carried out by consultants in another, or by neighbourhoods and families in yet another country or, indeed, not at all in many places.” (Lauritzen, 2006)

On the webpage of the **Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio** – an online instrument for self-assessment of youth workers – youth work is described as “commonly understood as a tool for personal development, social integration and active citizenship of young people. The main objective of youth work is to create opportunities for young people to shape their own futures” (Council of Europe 2015). Furthermore, the Council of Europe Youth Department highlights that youth work is value-driven, youth-centric, voluntary, developmental, self-reflective and critical as well as relational.

**A renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)** emphasises the support and development of **youth work as a cross-sectoral response** in meeting the overall objectives of the framework putting an increasing focus on (inter alia) the social inclusion, health and wellbeing of young people. Under this framework, youth work is a ‘keyword’ covering a large scope of activities of **a social, cultural, educational or political nature**. It belongs to the area of ‘**out-of-school’ education** and **leisure time** activities and is based on **non-formal learning** processes and **voluntary** participation and is managed by **professional** and/or **voluntary youth workers and youth leaders**. **Despite the fact that** available research studies have provided evidence of the value of youth work and the benefits that it brings for young people and for society at large<sup>1</sup>, it should be further examined and discussed as **an added value for its economic and social contribution** to achieving the overall objectives of the renewed framework of cooperation.

Importantly, the **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR) emphasised the economic relevance of the European Youth Strategy at the local and regional level in Europe because child- and youth-friendly municipalities and regions provide an attractive climate for families and thus for potential workforce and customers that stimulate the local economy. Therefore, it called on the European Commission and the Member States to involve local and regional authorities (in particular via their national and European associations and networks) and enhance transfer of experience and knowledge between relevant stakeholders (such as public authorities from all government levels, youth organisations and civil society organisations working with youth, actors from the education systems and social partners) in order to provide all young people with better opportunities.

The Declaration of **the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Youth Work Convention** sought to give new impetus to youth work policy in Europe in response to the economic ‘crisis’ since 2008 and the impact of subsequent austerity policies on the funding of both established and innovative youth work. Striving to define the concept and the principles of youth work in broader terms, the Declaration states that:

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: European Commission (2014) Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union.

*"Youth work is about cultivating the imagination, initiative, integration, involvement and aspiration of young people. Its principles are that it is educative, empowering, participative, expressive and inclusive. Through activities, playing and having fun, campaigning, the information exchange, mobility, volunteering, association and conversation, it fosters their understanding of their place within, and critical engagement with their communities and societies. Youth work helps young people to discover their talents, and develop the capacities and capabilities to navigate an ever more complex and challenging social, cultural and political environment. Youth work supports and encourages young people to explore new experiences and opportunities; it also enables them to recognise and manage the many risks they are likely to encounter. In turn, this produces a more integrated and positive attachment to their own identities and futures as well as to their societies, contributing purposefully to wider political and policy concerns around young people not in education, training and employment ('NEET'), health risk lifestyles, lack of civic responsibility and, currently, extremism."*

**Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work** represents a significant contribution to the advancement of youth work through European co-operation. Outlining the risks of not taking action, it emphasises the significant and indispensable contribution of youth work both to individual lives and to social cohesion sending a strong message to policy makers and practitioners to continue supporting and renewing youth work in Europe while recognising the valuable role that the Council of Europe plays in formulating youth work-related policy.

One of the added values of the Recommendation is that it is intended to promote and reinforce an understanding and awareness of, and commitment to, youth work as a key dimension of learning for living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and as a partner and contributor in dealing with some of the pressing challenges facing young people and Europe at the current time.

The Recommendation calls on member States to adopt a strategic approach to pro-actively supporting the development of youth work based on the key principles that guide its practice, setting out a vision whereby all young people across Europe can benefit from an offer of youth work opportunities and experiences.

At the very time when young people are required to make the best decisions possible in an ever more unpredictable world, the development and delivery of youth work across Europe is increasingly variable. While some countries are displaying commitment to youth work training, policies and practice, others have yet to make such commitment or, worse, in conditions of austerity, have reduced public expenditure on youth work. As a consequence, access to youth work and the experiences and learning framework it offers can be variable and sometimes unequal; there is an urgent need for some essential commitments to support the development of quality youth work across Europe.

Member States are encouraged to undertake their own situational analysis and plan co-ordinated action in response to the issues arising but the Recommendation draws special attention to the importance of establishing legal and political support; sustainable funding and structures; improved coordination across sectors and between the local and the national levels; a competency-based framework for the education and training of youth workers; and appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work.

The specific measures that member States are asked to consider in this regard are linked to two of the substantive Recommendations and cover the following:

- Establishing policies that safeguard and actively support the establishment and further development of youth work at all levels;
- Establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and

training of paid and volunteer youth workers.

At a European level there seems to be consensus that the value and impact of youth work justifies sufficient political and material investment; however, what happens at various subsidiary levels - national, regional, local - is still open to debate and youth work support for young people remains varied and disparate<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. Overview of approaches of the countries participating in the project, with a special focus on the role of municipal authorities**

**Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4** states that, with regard to its 'historical' evolution, youth work manifests itself in many different ways - while some countries have built and sustain a solid structure for youth work, others face substantial cuts, while yet others are still developing and establishing youth work.<sup>3</sup>

Responsibility for youth work rests, however, on the level of national governments and local authorities that often create a legal basis, national strategies or binding frameworks to safeguard and further develop quality youth work. It is also important to recognise that providers in the public or private sectors as well as those from civil society can deliver youth work.

### **2.1 Overview of the existing policy and legal frameworks for youth work development**

The results of the mapping exercise reveal that most of the participating countries have developed and adopted their national youth strategies - as overarching public documents indicating the major direction of youth policy - despite the fact that very often the concept of youth work and related mechanisms for its implementation are not explicitly defined and/or mentioned at municipal level.

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<sup>2</sup> Committee of ministers of the Council of Europe, CM Documents Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, Explanatory Memorandum.

<sup>3</sup> See the Youth Partnership's five-volume series on the 'History of Youth Work in Europe'. Available at: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>.



**The Regional Youth Policy-Strengthening Action Plan for 2015-2017** furthermore aims to strengthen the implementation of youth policy in **municipalities**, ensuring **inter-agency** and **inter-sectoral** cooperation and infrastructure taking into account the needs of young people.

An **Open Youth Work Support System** is in place as a result of a long period of legal reform including the **amendment in 2002 of the Act on Local Self-Governance whereby the State delegated the function of protecting child and youth rights to municipalities**. Taking this request into account, a decision was made in 2003 to set up a position of **youth affairs coordinator** in each municipality.

As a result of cross-sectoral cooperation initiated and promoted by the Department of Youth Affairs, amendments to the **Act on Minimum and Medium Child Care** were adopted in 2010 and **Open Youth Centres** were added to the list of institutions providing minimum care service. In 2010, the Director of the Department of Youth Affairs approved the Concept of Open Youth Centres laying down the main principles of open youth work and defining professional attitudes of youth workers together with the roles of local self-governments and other actors of youth policy.

Recent encouraging developments in Lithuania show that although the process of **seeking for systematic and general recognition of youth work is ongoing, a new chapter of legislation on the Youth Policy Framework has been initiated which will aim to determine the purpose, basic definitions and actors of youth work** (2014).

*Slovakia:*

**The Slovak Republic's Strategy for Youth for the years 2014-2020** defines youth work very explicitly as "A purposeful activity that reflects young people's needs and leads to the positive development of their personality. It is based on the principle of young people's voluntary participation, a partnership approach and mutual respect. Its role is to contribute to competence-building, to finding orientation in life and to self-knowledge as an individual as well as a group. Youth work is carried out by workers who are professionally prepared for this field."

**The concept of youth work development for the years 2016 - 2020** adopted in 2016 widens the youth work definition adopted in the Strategy by stating that: "Youth work is a purposeful activity reflecting young people's needs and leading to the positive development of their personalities so they are able to fully apply themselves in life". It is based on a principle of voluntary participation of youth, on a partnership approach and on mutual respect. It aims to foster maturity, finding life-orientation and self-knowledge both as an individual and as a group. It should create space for young people to co-decide on matters that concern them, to motivate them for engagement and thereby to contribute to building a civic society. The concept covers 5 areas: Young people's needs as a basis for youth work; Quality youth work; Stakeholders in youth work; Financing of youth work; and Raising the profile of, and recognising, youth work.

Another **legislative** document related to youth work at the national level is **Act No.282/2008 Coll. on Youth Work Support**, which defines it as an educational, societal, information and counselling-related activity, in addition to defining youth, a youth worker, the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS SR), the responsibilities of both regional and local self-governments, voluntary service within youth work, the financing of youth work and how accreditations are granted to educational programmes within the scope of youth work [4].

*Latvia:*

**The State Youth Policy Program and the Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020** outline measures to achieve the aims of the Youth Act by putting the main emphasis on the development of **youth work and youth organisations in municipalities**, strengthening cooperation between different stakeholders involved in the field of youth and developing competences of those working in the youth field. While it aims to facilitate the implementation and coordination of the national youth policy by identifying areas of action and creating a vision for the improvement of young peoples' quality of life, youth work is more of a responsibility at the municipal or local level.

The purpose of the **Youth Act** - the document that regulates implementation of the youth policy and youth work in the country - is to improve the quality of life of young people (13 - 25 years of age) by promoting their initiatives, working habits and patriotism, participation in decision-making and social life, as well as by **supporting youth work which is defined** as "A set of planned youth-oriented and practical measures, ensuring the implementation of the youth policy, the formation of values and the orientation and strengthening of the universal human values of young people."

According to the Youth Act, **the institutional system for youth work is comprised of:** youth affairs specialists [5]; Youth Centres; a Youth Council; and an Advisory Committee on Youth Affairs [6].

Apart from the Act, youth workers are also part of the common institutional system for youth work. Unlike youth affairs specialists, who design the youth policy, the youth worker is responsible for policy implementation and more practical steps to be taken with young people – implementation of specific activities, consultations on project ideas etc. While both the youth affairs specialist and the youth worker professions have their own standards, no appropriate education programmes have been developed for youth workers in the Latvian tertiary education system and there are two tertiary education programmes for youth affairs specialists (master's degree programme which is acquired within 2 years).

*Finland:*

**The Child and Youth Policy Programme (May 2015)** sets out both the **national child and youth policy objectives and guidelines for regional and local programme work**. It includes two key projects which support **youth work at municipal level**:

1) **Youth guarantee** towards community guarantee: Young people's life management skills and employment will be supported by means of strengthening social welfare and health care services as a part of the youth guarantee;

2) **Integration of services for children, young people and families** into a consistent whole. Basic services will be strengthened and the focus will be shifted towards preventive work as well as early support and care services.

*Belgium Flemish Community:*

Despite the fact that the most explicit youth policy and its instruments in the **Belgium Flemish Community** are defined at the **Community level**, the **Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan** mentions **youth work** only a few times (as a stakeholder/ a partner) while the related goals and actions are **not specifically defined**.

On the other hand, the **Flemish Parliamentary Act of 20 January 2012** on a **Revised Youth and Children's Rights Policy** explicitly defines youth work as "Socio-cultural work for non-commercial purposes for or by children and young people aged three through thirty, during leisure time and under educational supervision, to promote the general and overall development of children and young people who voluntarily participate in it and which is organised by young people, private youth associations, municipal public authorities or the Flemish Community Commission".

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, the **Decree on Local Youth Policy** of July 6 2012 gives **local authorities** more responsibility and freedom to pursue **a tailored youth policy**. In the Decree, the participation of children and young people is **institutionalised** through the creation or recognition of a local youth council. In addition, the procedure and the criteria governing the biennial "Award for the Youth Municipality of Flanders" are determined, as well as the funding of **youth work** in the bilingual Brussels-Capital and in its surrounding suburbs.

*Germany:*

Another type of documents **does not even mention** youth work as a concept, like **the Youth Strategy** - entitled "**Acting for a youth-friendly society**" - run by the **German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth**, but an overview of the different fields of action clearly shows that youth work plays and will continue to play a crucial role with regard to policy implementation. One of the **key measures** of the Strategy in this regard is **a pilot project run with 16 municipalities** representing the 16 Federal States of Germany. A common strategy for a youth-appropriate society/community shall be developed with these municipalities. In this context youth work plays a vital role.

**Social Book SGB VIII** as **the Child and Youth Services Act (1990)** defines youth work (inter alia in § 11 Youth Work) by stating that:

1. **Appropriate measures promoting the development of young people need to be provided through youth work;**

2. **Youth work will be provided by associations, groups and youth initiatives of voluntary and statutory youth services;**

3. **The focus of youth work** lies in: out-of-school youth education (with an emphasis on general, political, societal, health-related, cultural, natural science and technical education); youth work in sports, games and in sociality; youth work related to employment, school and family; international youth work; child and youth recreation and counselling. Additionally, § 12 clearly regulates support for **youth associations**, while § 13 sets forth what is known as youth socio-educational provisions (youth social work).

*Liechtenstein:*

Both forms of **youth work: open youth work and associative youth work in out-of-school settings and job areas are supported** based on Article 77 "Kinder-und Jugendförderung" of the **National Child and Youth Act**, the aim of youth work as indicated in the National Child and Youth Act being to support the personal development of young people and enhance their learning possibilities, facilitate intercultural understanding and inclusion and to promote human rights education among youth. A recent inter-municipal initiative also resulted in the creation of a mutual **foundation in 2015** (Stiftung Offene Jugendarbeit - OJA), which has created a **conceptual framework defining the aims and tasks of youth workers in the participating communities**.

*Slovenia:*

The **Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013-2022** mentions youth work in regard to the **youth policy principles** stating that (in accordance with the Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector) youth policy is a harmonised set of measures of various sectoral public policies with the purpose of promoting and facilitating the integration of youth in the economic, cultural and political life of the community as well as of providing **appropriate support mechanisms for the development of youth work** and youth organisations, which is carried out in cooperation with autonomous and democratic representatives of youth organisations and other professional organisations. Accordingly, youth work is an important work area of the youth programme. Youth and non-governmental organisations conduct youth work programmes on non-formal education and training in youth work, voluntary youth work, information and advice for young people, participation, active citizenship, human rights, international youth work, mobility and access to research financing.

The **Public Interest in the Youth Sector Act** defines for the first time (inter alia) **youth work and structured dialogue**. The Act on Public Interests **defines youth work** as an organised and target-oriented form of youth action for the youth, within which the youth, based on their own efforts, contribute to their own inclusion in society, strengthen their competences and contribute to the development of the community. The implementation of various forms of youth work is based on the volunteer participation of the youth regardless of their interests, cultural preferences, principles or political orientation.

*Austria:*

**Extracurricular youth work** and the youth council are integrated parts/partners of the **Austrian Youth Strategy** which means that youth work was and is involved in setting its aims and goals, discussing implementation and contributing expertise.

Similar examples of countries like **Sweden and Denmark**, which **do not have overarching national youth strategies**, show that the youth perspective could be **mainstreamed** into relevant public policy areas including education, employment, culture & leisure, participation, health and security (Sweden), or specific sectoral policies (the Danish Ministry of Culture published a strategy for young people's encounter with art and culture in 2014). In **Switzerland**, for example, **the Child and Youth Promotion Act** governs the support of institutions, cantons and municipalities for **extra-curricular work with children and young people**, which is defined as association-based and open work with children and young people together with easy-to-access activities, services and facilities. Evidence, however, shows that sometimes local authorities are not aware of these sectoral policies and, accordingly, they do not implement mechanisms in place.

There are alternative approaches (FR) whereby the legal system does not recognise the concept and profession of youth work/worker as such but it does officially recognise related professional statuses, such as youth organisers; advisers in social and professional integration; or prevention educators.

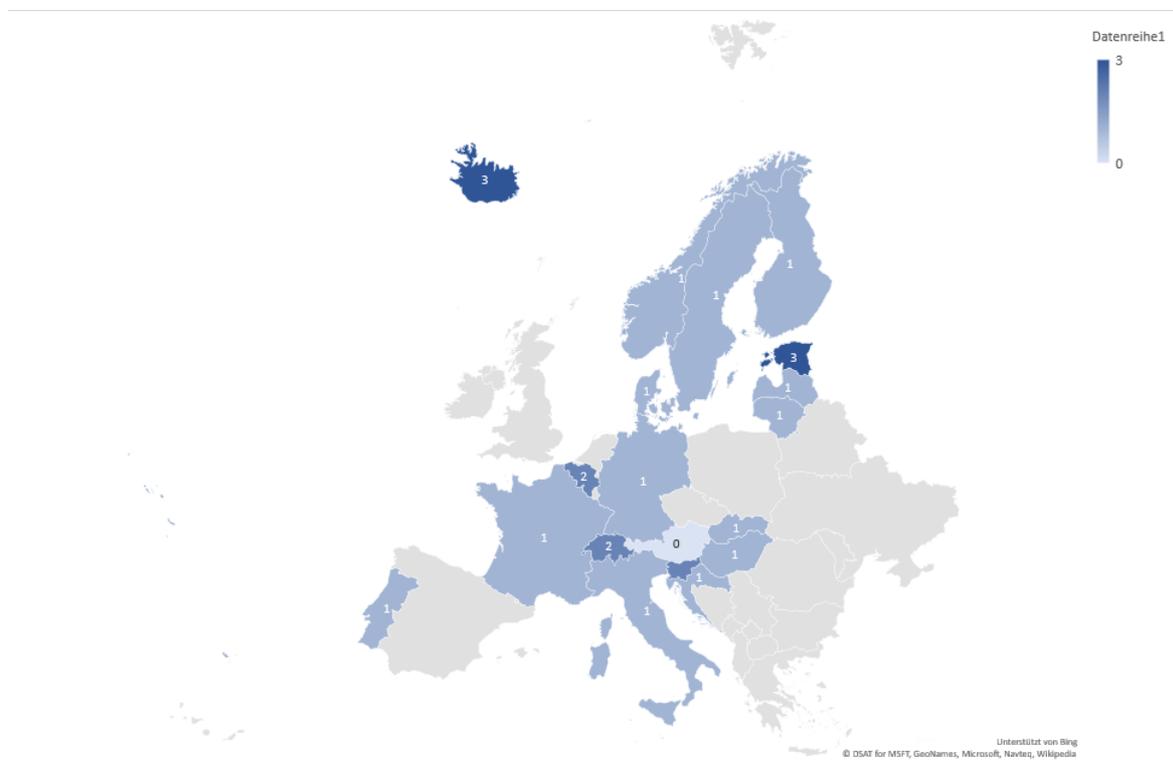
In **Italy**, no specific legislation on youth work exists but it is referred to in “some initiatives at regional and local level” and also some laws dealing with child and youth issues are established. Furthermore, in the Italian case it is highlighted “**that young people and youth leaders critically assess the lack of a national youth strategy**”.

Finally, current debates in **Croatia and Hungary** are focusing on the importance of the legal definition and professionalisation of youth work (focusing on the municipal level); recognition of youth work; and an evidence-based approach (situation analysis).

## 2.2 The level of autonomy of municipalities in setting priorities, defining local policies and creating local programmes

“Since municipalities and towns are autonomous, they can choose to what extent and by what means to fulfil the objectives of the state policy”.

Figure 9: Autonomy of municipal youth work/youth policy



Explanation: 2 = Targets, indicators, programmes and methods are defined entirely at the local level; 1 = The central government sets targets and indicators but municipalities are independent in creating local programmes and methods; 0 = other

Most of the respective participating countries reported that decision-making processes were mainly **centralised** and so strategic documents created at the national level defined objectives and visions which were applied at the local level (usually through their local youth policy plans) but without clearly defined monitoring and evaluation frameworks (especially the **outcomes and indicators**).

<b>Country</b>	The central government defines targets and sets programmes local governments should implement.	The central government sets targets and indicators but municipalities are independent in creating local programmes and methods.	Targets, indicators, programmes and methods are defined entirely at the local level	Other/varied
Austria				x
Belgium/Flanders			x	
Croatia	x			
Denmark		x		
Estonia			x	
Finland		x		
France		x		
Germany		x		
Hungary		x		
Iceland			x	
Italy	x			
Latvia		x		
Liechtenstein		x		
Lithuania		x		
Norway		x		
Portugal		x		
Slovakia		x		
Slovenia			x	
Sweden				
Switzerland			x	
<b>Total (#)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

### *Belgium Flemish Community:*

*In 2014 and 2015, the local youth policy plan was included in a new multi-annual strategic planning of municipalities and funds for youth were "earmarked". From 2016, this link was also cut and the funds were added to the Municipalities Fund. It is only since January 1 2016 that local authorities have been able to autonomously develop a local youth policy. The Municipal Fund is one of the main sources of revenue for local governments. About one fifth of the revenue of local governments stems from the Flemish subsidy. The fund is distributed to municipalities based on various criteria. The local administration can use these untied funds at its discretion.*

### *Denmark:*

*The state sets targets and indicators but municipalities are independent in creating local programmes and methods as long as they relate to the legislation. Danish municipalities have a high level of autonomy in relation to the national legislation. However, there is an essential difference between legislation targeting marginalised young people (e.g. the Act on Active Employment Initiatives and Consolidation and the Act on Social Services), which is perceived as being much more fixed and defined, and legislation targeting non-marginalised youth (e.g. the Act on Youth Schools and the Act on Public Enlightenment), which is more open to interpretation. In this regard, the municipalities are - to some extent - working to make the legislation more flexible and more relevant to the specific target groups and their specific priorities/needs.*

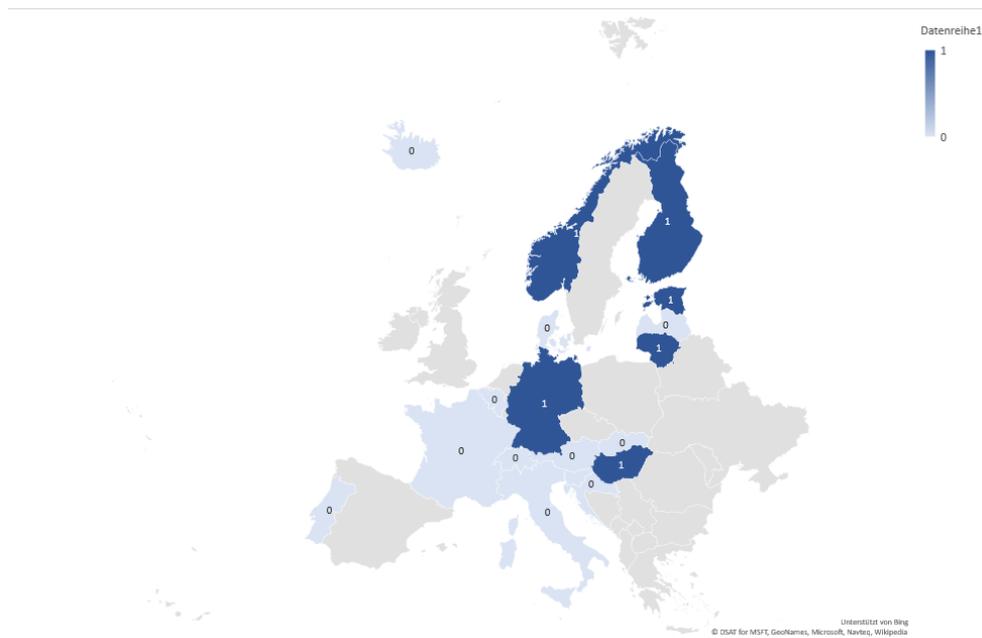
## 2.3 The obligation of municipalities to provide services for youth

Most of the countries reported that self-governments were **not obliged to provide specialised services related to youth work** in their respective countries, although there were some exceptions (as illustrated in the map below). On the other hand, there are alternative ways of putting incentives in place at provincial and/or federal level (**Austria**) that encourage municipalities to invest in services for youth (e.g. family-friendly, youth-friendly municipality) apart from obligations that municipalities already have (e.g. to maintain youth-related infrastructure such as schools or playgrounds).

By contrast, the existing legal acts in **Finland** explicitly state that **it is mandatory for municipalities to provide youth services according to** the self-governance principle of the Youth Act, but the municipalities are entitled to decide on how the services are going to be provided as long as they respect another **legal requirement** which is **to consult youth in the decision-making process**. In a more flexible manner, the existing legal basis outlines that **it is mandatory to assure youth rights protection at the local level**, while each municipality decides on its priorities (Lithuania). Some others are free to **delegate the functions of public services to private companies or non-profit organisations** who are the main providers of youth (work) services (like in Estonia).

However, the existence of legal acts in some other countries, e.g. Hungary, **does not guarantee** quality service design and delivery at the local level. Hungary's **Act CLXXXIX of 2011 on Local Governments in Hungary makes it obligatory for a local authority to undertake 'some kind of action' targeting youth** but it neither specifies the type of action nor stipulates the funding attached, which makes the implementation challenging and dependent on the ambitions of local leaders.

Figure 10: Is it mandatory for municipalities to provide social services for youth?



Explanation: 1 =yes; 0 = no

Another vague provision, namely “appropriate measures promoting the development of young people need to be provided through youth work” used in the existing regulations **obliging municipalities to provide youth work services for young people in Germany** (Social Book SGB VIII) gives rise to heated debates about **the degree of this obligation**. Although the exact meaning of “appropriate” is not clearly elaborated, the General Assembly of the German Youth Council (Bundesjugendring – DBJR), importantly, **reinforced the legal obligation for youth work** in its recent conclusion (26.10.2013).

In **Norway**, **the degree of obligation depends on the policy domain** where municipal services connected to education, health and welfare, inclusion and participation for youth with special needs are **regulated by law, are mandatory** for municipalities and are executed by public municipal actors (but sometimes outsourced to private actors), while volunteering, general participation, community building and exchange programmes are **not mandatory** for municipal administrations.

Regardless of the legal framework, a common way of governing youth (work) services at the local level in most of the countries is through **local public authorities - offices** - as executive governing bodies dealing with social affairs, education, culture and youth at the local level. “**Youth desk officers**” employed by municipalities are responsible for carrying out youth public tasks, coordinating youth-related services organised within the area of responsibility of the local government. These desk officers often hold the position of a direct “bridge” between the local government and the representative bodies of the age group.

Alternatively, there are **representatives** dealing with youth matters at the local government (or a commission dealing with youth matters) like in cases of **Croatia** and **Flanders (BEFL)**, where **legal acts regulate the specific structures** (which support youth work development at the local level more or less directly). For example, according to **the Act on Youth Advisory Boards**, each of the administrative units in Croatia (counties, municipalities and towns) are obliged to have a **Youth Advisory Board** and an official responsible for its logistics. However, the implementation of this act seems to be problematic as more than 50% of the local authorities still does not have youth advisory boards. Similarly, Flanders (BEFL) does no longer impose obligations in respect of conducting and

performing a local youth policy. There is, however, one exception: every local government has the obligation to establish a **Municipal Youth Council**.

Finally, it is important to note that there are cases (like in **Latvia**) where, despite the fact that **neither national nor local legislation determines mandatory youth services** to be provided by the municipality, **youth work is being organised in almost every local unit**. A common practice in most municipalities is to organise informal and leisure activities with youth either in schools, recreation centres and/or in youth centres. Most of the services mentioned above are funded by municipalities and through projects, although some municipalities manage to advertise open calls for local youth initiatives to be organised by youth organisations or non-formal groups. Mostly in an effort to foster financial support in the youth field, municipalities seek to obtain funding from different EU funds.

#### 2.4 Bodies providing professional support concerning youth matters to municipalities and lines of accountability of municipal youth policy

Municipalities and cities receive professional support in youth matters from various organisations/institutions which could be (not surprisingly) categorised into two main groups: a) **public sector entities** (ministries, institutes and agencies at the national and provincial level); b) **non-governmental sector entities** (NGOs, associations and foundations operating at the national and regional level). **Private service suppliers**, on the other hand, were rarely mentioned (e.g. Switzerland).

However, **the lines of accountability of municipal youth policy were usually not clearly elaborated and sometimes not even existing**, such as in the case of **Slovenia** (according to the Court of Auditors of the Republic of Slovenia, which audited the implementation of national youth policy in 2016).

Overall, the main actors of youth policy at the local level are **“the municipalities and the institutions subjected to them, as well as the institutions subjected to line ministries and their local structural units”**. Each local government creates its own institutional system for youth work by appointing an institution or employees in charge of implementing youth work.

##### **Lithuania:**

*One example of the structured national level support to municipalities on governing, framing and implementing youth policy at the local level was given by **Article 8 of the Act on Youth Policy Framework of the Republic of Lithuania** (Official Gazette, 2003, No. 119-5406; 2005, No. 144-5238), which states that:*

- 1. Municipal institutions shall frame and implement a municipal youth policy.*
- 2. A municipal co-coordinator for youth affairs shall assist the municipal institutions in the performance of such function. He shall be a public servant.*
- 3. A permanent municipal council for youth affairs (for the duration of the term of office) or an ad hoc municipal council for youth affairs (for the examination of specific matters) may be set up by a decision of a municipal assembly. A municipal assembly shall approve regulations of a municipal council for youth affairs. A municipal council for youth affairs shall be set up on the principle of parity from representatives of municipal institutions and agencies as well as youth organisations. A regional youth council shall delegate representatives of youth organisations to a municipal council for youth affairs.*

##### **Belgium Flemish Community:**

***VVJ is the Association of Flemish Municipal Youth Services**, which supports municipal youth services in the conduct of local youth policy. Local youth work initiatives, which are members of or are affiliated to a national federation or movement, are also supported by their national and regional/provincial secretariats. **The Youth Department of the Ministry of the Flemish Community** also provides various types of support by:*

- *stimulating training and exchange on chosen themes*
- *dissemination of good practice examples on chosen themes*
- *initiating research on local youth work (e.g. on local youth work practices, youth work with certain target groups, local youth policy development and implementation)*
- *developing a systematic approach to monitoring local developments in the future.*

#### **Finland:**

The **Ministry of Education and Culture** provides direct government subsidy to municipalities (projects, youth house rent etc.). It finances and oversees the Finnish National Youth Centres and national service and development centres for youth work like Koordinaatti - Development Centre of Youth Information and Verke - Counselling and the national Development Centre for Digital Youth Work in Finland.

**The Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI)** provides direct government subsidy to municipalities (youth workshops, outreach youth work) and evaluates the sufficiency, quality and reach of youth services. AVI also arranges continuing education for youth workers and collects youth work indicators for nuorisotilastot.fi (Finnish youth work statistics).

#### **Slovakia:**

**IUVENTA (Slovak Youth Institute)**, an organisation established by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS SR), is the Youth Department which organises diverse information provision, educational and consultancy-type activities for self-governments. The activities are aimed to support the creation of a modern youth policy at the local level including youth work and youth participation (workshops, seminars, information days, creation of methodologies and publications and the like). The self-governments are only one of several target groups and plenty of activities and initiatives depend on the guidelines and financial means received from the MESRS SR (under an annual contract between these two organisations).

The "**Komunita pre mladých**" ("Community for the Young" Programme) was established in 2016 by the MESRS SR. Its priorities were set based on negotiations with and recommendations of the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS<sup>4</sup> = ATCS). The ATCS (ZMOS) emphasised the need for stronger methodological support for self-governments. The Programme's priorities were focused on mapping the quality of young people's life (according to the areas specified in the Strategy for Youth) and the state of local youth policy. Despite positive outcomes, the continuation of the programme is questionable due to national budget cuts.

#### **Germany:**

In Germany, youth matters are the responsibility of the **Federal States**. The so-called Highest Youth Authority of the Federal States (generally the ministry responsible for youth) has the task of encouraging and fostering the work of public and voluntary youth welfare bodies and the further development of youth welfare.

**Social Book SBG VIII** obliges the Federal States to establish a Landesjugendamt (Land Youth Office) **transferring the entire responsibility for child and youth welfare into the competence of the cities and rural districts**. The Youth Office is composed of the **administration of the Youth Office** and the so-called **Youth Service Committee**, where also voluntary organisations and young people have a say. The Youth Service Committee is to be regarded as the body exercising locally the management function of the child and youth services.

**Land Youth Offices provide various types of support to the cities and rural districts such as:** advising the municipal service providers; financially supporting local services, facilities and activities; planning, motivating, supporting and running pilot projects for the further development of youth welfare; assuring quality and training the personnel of youth welfare.

#### **Hungary:**

**The New Generation Centre: Non-profit Public Interest Ltd** is a professional service provider background organisation for national youth policy working towards the objectives of the Programme for the Future of New Generations. It promotes its work and makes it available for youth in an innovative style

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<sup>4</sup> ATCS/ZMOS is important, since it is the umbrella organisation for all communities and towns of Slovakia.

*adjusted to the requirements of the target group. It coordinates several programmes and also runs a network of public spaces in many locations of the country, at both regional and local levels.<sup>5</sup>*

*There are also interesting examples of how youth (work)-related issues were mainstreamed across the governmental and sectoral policies. In these cases, the **ministries define the overall regulatory environment** (some more rigid than others), while the **municipalities are responsible for administering and implementing the tasks and sometimes have freedom in creating the local youth strategies.***

#### **Norway:**

*Although Norway does not have a separate youth policy but, rather, particular youth priority areas under sectoral policies, such as education, employment and social inclusion, the lines of accountability follow the sectoral lines rather than the age groups. However, youth work in Norway is traditionally "grassroots" and is "decentralised" to local municipalities which have a high degree of autonomy in youth policy and practice.*

#### **Denmark:**

*Various aspects of youth work fall under the responsibility of a number of different ministries, with no ministry having the main responsibility. Thus, youth work is a cross- governmental responsibility with no central body responsible for the area or the coordination of activities across ministries. The municipalities receive professional advice and guidance via a range of different ministries that work with youth in different ways and operate within different law complexes. These ministries include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Employment.*

## 2.5 The main methods of funding youth work at the municipal level

As most of the **challenges** regarding the social situation of young people and the support of their well-being and autonomy occur at local level, the responsibility for dealing with them (inter alia, through youth work) lies to a large extent at municipal level, as the nearest political and administrative structure in most European countries.

The data analysis reveals that the **forms, methods and amounts** of financial support provided by municipalities across the participating countries are very different depending on the circumstances in which they operate. However, it is clear that the most of them follow the same trend - as the vast majority of youth work is financed from **municipal budget allocations and/or through municipal grants** (see table below). This is of particular relevance because the budgets of local governments often considerably reflect regional disparities and inequalities between different settlement types.

It is also true that municipalities with better infrastructure, economic opportunities and younger citizens are more likely to use **diverse resources** – as they seem to be more successful in tender-writing or simply better able to delegate fund-raising activities to external partners (usually NGOs).

Alternatively, municipal youth work is funded by **regional** (FR), **cantonal** and **federal subsidies** (CH) or donations and membership fees, while **private** sector intervention has been mentioned very rarely.

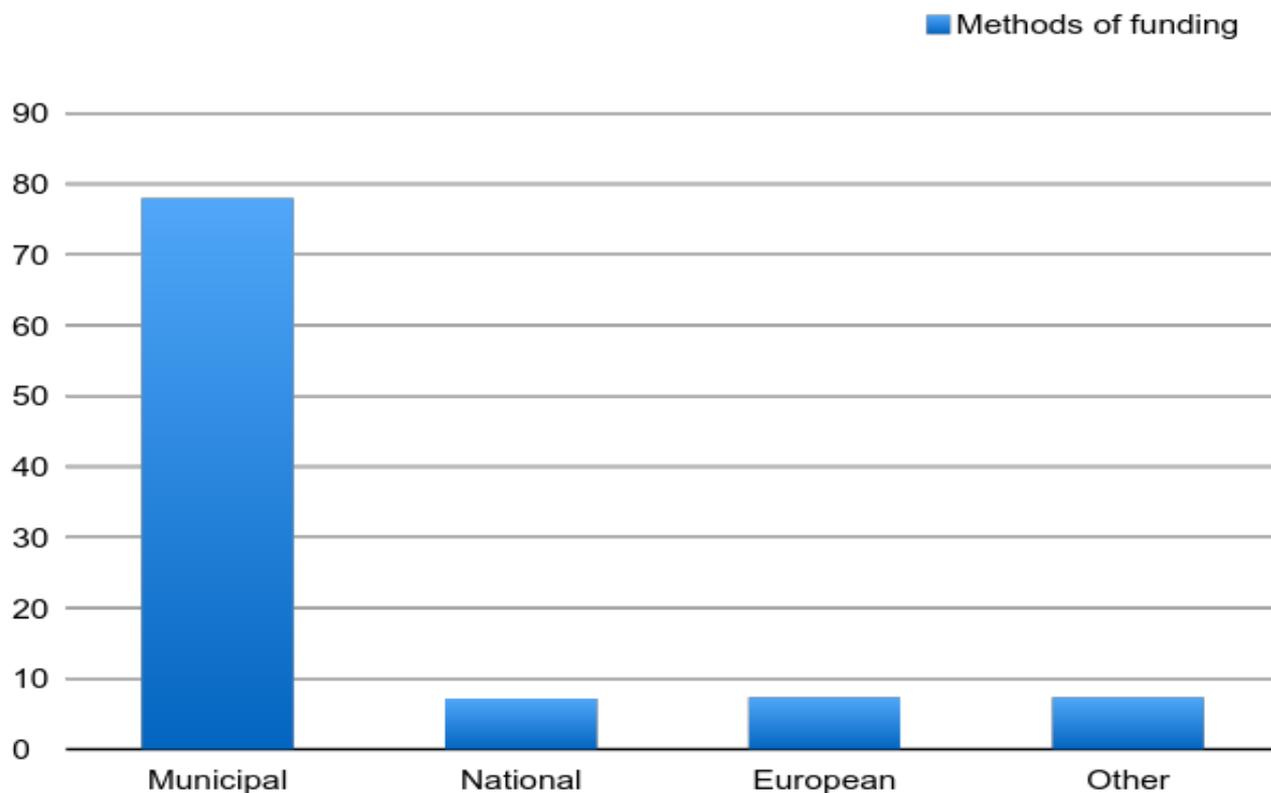
Another tendency is that national funding seems to go hand in hand with EU funding (ESF, EEA regional and Erasmus+) aiming to support municipal youth work structures, capacity-building and activities involving youth. It is alarming, however, that in some cases it was reported that **the funds allocated through the national tenders did not reach the local/municipal level (SK), which inevitably raises the question of accountability.**

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ujnemzedek.com/hu/uj-nemzedek-kozpont>

**In this regard, only 9 out of 19 participating countries were able to indicate the ratio of funding coming from different sources** (estimated value, average of the respondents participating in the research), while the remaining 9 (CRO, PT, HU, LV, LT, NO, FR, CH, PT, IS) reported that there were no data available on this.

Figure 11: Methods of funding for local youth work



The overview of strategic and policy frameworks for development of quality youth work at the municipal level reveals multiple **knowledge and policy gaps** which are mainly related to the lack of accountability mechanisms and models for effective horizontal and vertical cooperation between the different layers of governance.

This is of particular relevance, given the non-binding nature of European regulations and the fact that most of the participating countries have **centralised** systems of governance combined with a low level of municipal autonomy in deciding and creating youth policy and practice.

Despite a variety of acts regulating sectoral youth-related practices (but not necessarily youth work as such), it is clear that municipalities in most of the participating countries have a very **low level of obligation** (and capacities) in respect of designing and delivering services for youth. This is mostly due to the fact that majority of laws related to the local and regional self-government does not recognise youth as one of the areas where local units have jurisdiction and therefore provision of local services for youth is not obligatory. Similarly, the national youth strategies advise local authorities on priority policy domains and recommend preferable measures to be implemented with no legal obligation.

Consequently, **municipal capacities** for quality youth work development are **very limited** although there is a clear **tendency in the development of legal and policy support** towards the empowerment of municipal-level youth service providers (including “youth workers”).

In many cases, however, it seems that there is a lack of **political steering and sensitivity** towards the recognition of not only the social value of youth work but also of the potentials embedded at the community level for development and innovation of the service design and delivery targeting youth.

Overall, it can be said that the factors such as the **size, location, capacity** (human and financial resources) and **level of autonomy** of the municipality determine the scope and quality of service design and delivery at the local level. This means that, for example, bigger municipalities and towns can ensure youth work related services either through **schools** or through **Youth Centres**, while the smaller ones are struggling even to provide the “basics” aligned with the higher legislation.

The “**tradition of associations**” (and the values attached to it) was mentioned as another factor whereby every municipality has a diverse range of associations and see the involvement of young people through those structures as an important part of **youth work** that aims at community building and helps to keep young people in the municipality (and avoid migration into cities).

### 3. Managing youth work at the local level

#### 3.1 Structure and organisation of youth work at the local level

In general, one can observe the broad diversity of approaches to municipal youth work in Europe; different ways of organising youth work can be found even within a country. These forms of organising youth work at the local and municipal level are influenced by three main drivers: a) the (in)dependency of local policy and administration of national and regional in general, b) the involvement of municipalities and cities in the organisation and implementation of youth policy and c) the youth work tradition.

In countries where youth work is traditionally run by volunteer organisations like scouts or church-based organisations we also find these approaches strongly represented at the municipal level (e.g. Austria, Germany, Belgium). In countries like the Netherlands and UK youth work is more strongly connected to social work and thus the public administration is far more directive for the youth work approach.

A main distinction between methods of organisation of youth policy administration can be observed, whether youth is seen as an independent policy topic or whether it is handled as a recipient group among others for certain offers. The first approach leads to municipalities focusing on young people and organising offers and services for them and thus defining youth work as a means of implementation of (local) youth policy. The latter approach highlights the administration and organisation of services as a task of municipal policy for the inhabitants including young people.

These two approaches are reflected in the different models of administrative structure: if youth is perceived as a single issue we commonly find the establishment of a youth office or department in the municipality (in smaller entities this can be narrowed down to a single person whose working time is not even entirely dedicated to youth). Therefore, in these cases youth issues are dealt with in a youth office, a youth department, by a youth affair specialist or coordinator.

#### **Portugal:**

*The municipality normally has a department and a councillor for youth that can be integrated into other relevant areas such as education, culture and/or sport. Act 6/2012 creates the legal regime of the Youth Municipal Councils, which are municipal youth policy advisory bodies assisting in formulating and implementing municipal youth policy and ensuring its articulation and coordination with other sectoral policies, particularly in the following sectors: employment and professional training; housing; basic, secondary and higher education; culture; sports; health and social welfare, as explained in Article 3 of Act 6/2012. The Youth Municipal Councils*

(CMJ) adopt their own Rules of Procedure. They are composed of local youth organisations, youth parties and student organisations and chaired by the President of the municipality.

#### **Latvia:**

Each local government creates its own institutional system for youth work by appointing an institution or employees in charge of realising youth work. A local government is authorised to recruit a specialist on youth affairs, establish a youth centre, an Advisory Committee on Youth Affairs or a Youth Council. There is often a youth work specialist in the municipality and a youth worker employed in the youth centre. Sometimes one person has to fulfil both responsibilities.

#### **Estonia**

The organisation of youth work depends on the possibilities of the municipalities (financial possibilities, qualification of youth workers, international contacts, cooperation etc.). In the municipalities there are very different practices. They vary from having a qualified youth work specialist, many youth centres with qualified youth workers, NGOs, hobby schools etc. to having just one youth centre with a part-time non-qualified youth worker. Usually, the more populated areas have better situations and youth work can reach more youth so it is frequently organised in an almost ideal way. Although it does not mean that rural areas could not be as well organised as populated areas (in and around big cities). There are also municipalities in rural areas that have very well organised youth work.

#### **Hungary:**

In the case of local governments, it is within their own scope of authority to decide whether they want / can employ youth consultants. [...] The consultants themselves have many different backgrounds and role perceptions; for example, there are some specialists with formal education and also actual youth workers. Most of these consultants do not do their jobs in an independent sphere of authority and there are even more who do not work full time.

If young people are seen mainly as one group of clients for social work or as one group of users of different NGO offers, the municipalities are mainly focusing on support for clubs and organisations and for running the social services.

#### **Croatia:**

Generally, local and regional self-administrative units have no legislative or fiscal autonomy and share their functions with the state authority. An administrative body or a committee under the assembly or the council which would work directly on youth issues or youth policies does not exist. Within such framework, the measures incorporated in the National Programme for Youth can only be implemented by some administrative departments which act in the field of social activities, culture, sport etc.

An approach that can be mentioned as a third alternative is the interpretation of youth as the main receiver of education, which is organised at the local level, as is the case in Slovakia, or in Estonia, where youth work is defined as extra-curricular education mainly run in hobby schools.

In most countries, a variety of these approaches co-exist and it is often up to the towns and cities to decide which approach to follow.

### Financial and structural organisation of youth work

In the majority of countries, youth work at the local level is organised by the municipalities themselves by employing youth workers to run youth centres. Other forms of youth work, such as outreach or detached or mobile youth work are not mentioned, only occasionally in connection with the employment of youth workers. The alternative form of actively organising youth work is to commission NGOs to fulfil these tasks.

Beside this, municipality-organised forms of youth work run by NGOs from different backgrounds, such as sport clubs, cultural or educational organisations, as well as youth-led organisations, e.g. scouts and such, also exist in Central European countries, e.g. Austria, and, as a long-lasting tradition, in Belgium or Germany.

### **Germany:**

*§ 4 of Social Book SGB VIII defines cooperation between public bodies responsible for the statutory youth services and the voluntary sector (youth associations, voluntary organisations etc.) and sets forth the principle of subsidiarity. This principle says that public bodies do not need to provide their own services insofar as appropriate services of recognised voluntary organisations (NGOs etc.) exist.*

### **Switzerland:**

*Youth work is often offered by the municipalities themselves. In some cases, youth work is organised regionally (amalgamation of and joint provision by several municipalities), or smaller municipalities participate in the provision offered by central municipalities. Specialist staff are employed in the administration, but mostly work externally, e.g. in a youth centre. Some municipalities choose a model in which an association is responsible for open child and youth work and the municipality finances the association.*

### **Finland:**

*The main stakeholder is municipal youth services. In smaller municipalities youth services might be a combination of youth work, sport and cultural services. A very important part of municipal youth work is also collaboration with different civil society associations and informal groups of young people.*

### **Austria:**

*The municipalities besides the provincial government are the biggest funders of child and youth work and can finance organisations themselves or engage independent associations for that purpose. In many cases, the municipality bears the costs of infrastructure such as youth centres, playgrounds and sport fields.*

### **Italy:**

*The main actors are employees of the municipalities coordinating the actions carried out by public bodies. Often, the public institution coordinates the work of other private organisations such as NGOs, service providers, faith groups or sport clubs as documented by the results of the RAY-CAP and RAY\_LTE<sup>6</sup> research.*

*In Italy, the National Civil Service represents a valid opportunity for the municipalities to organise initiatives.*

### **Sweden (KEKS):**

*In KEKS (and in Sweden) youth work is mainly run and carried out by youth workers employed by the municipality and is based in youth centres. The main current trend is that small units are merged into bigger ones and also do more mobile/detached youth work. There is, however, no decrease in funding.*

*The size of the community is an important determinant of the intensity of youth work. This influences, on the one hand, the resources available for youth work and, on the other hand, the demand for youth work or social work offers. Therefore, elaborate municipal youth work is a domain mainly for the big cities or the municipalities with a strong youth population.*

*At this point, it is also worth mentioning that urban concentration is often seen in connection with a stronger impact of social distinctions and thus more young people are perceived as disadvantaged and hence a target group of youth work. This, on the other hand, implicates municipalities' stronger commitment to youth work.*

### **Estonia:**

*Municipalities in more populated areas (in and around big cities) have youth work specialists on their staff, youth centres with qualified youth workers, NGOs, hobby schools, etc. As these areas are more populated and youth work can reach more youth, it can be said that frequently it is organised in an almost ideal way. However, in rural areas there are municipalities where there is only one youth centre with a part-time and non-qualified youth worker. Youth work practice varies widely by location.*

### **Slovakia:**

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<sup>6</sup> RAY stands for Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme., RAY-Cap is a part of the research focusing on capacity development in the YiA projects and RAY-LTE stands for the long-term evaluation.

The smallest municipalities have neither schools nor other organisations in place for youth work, such as for instance Youth Centres (organisations established by the School Act for out-of-school activities for children and youth), Enlightenment Centres/Cultural Centres with staff.

Bigger municipalities and smaller towns (up to 50 000 inhabitants) usually have a primary school, which becomes a scene for activities for children and youth within the self-government. In some towns, there are also secondary schools (colleges), which belong under the regional self-government – therefore co-operation with a local self-government is not obvious or automatic. Within every self-government there is an employee whose workload also involves the theme "youth", namely - as a rule - up to 5% of their workload.

Bigger towns (over 50 000 inhabitants) have in their territories several primary and secondary schools (colleges) as well as universities (branches) and also several organisations established by the self-government, such as e.g. culture centres. Generally, a youth centre, which is established by the self-government, operates here. The youth centre bears responsibility for organising the town's activities for children and youth; as a rule, they also coordinate the town's youth parliament (formed out of primary school pupils and secondary school students).

#### **Croatia:**

The organisation of youth work at the municipal level is mostly present in bigger cities and bigger municipalities, often (in terms of staff involved) comprised of an administrative officer, more rarely of a sector or office, in charge of youth. The youth work at the local level is mostly performed by youth NGOs (youth clubs, youth info-centres and such).

Furthermore, the general societal developments have a strong impact on the organisation of youth work. For example, in Portugal it is mentioned that due to the ageing of society the youth sector is not well-developed. Also in **Germany**, a strong decline of youth workers is mentioned: "In 1998, 44,560 people worked in the child and youth work sector. This number decreased to 29,126 by 2014. One of the possible reasons is demographical change with increasingly fewer young people (above all in rural areas and in Eastern Germany)."

In summary, the description for **Denmark** can hold for all the questionnaires included in the mapping exercise:

The extent and nature of youth work in the individual municipalities is influenced by:

- political focus on youth work
- economic resources (taxes, etc.)
- the group of young people (cultural resources and tradition for participation)
- temporary external factors (for example the refugee influx)

Examples of good practice:

#### **Croatia:**

Hardly any municipalities deal with youth work and practically none of them have instituted a proper youth work mechanism, a welcoming space or a service guaranteeing adequate youth work. In the north of Croatia, the city of Velika Gorica is an exception as it made headway in youth work when it decided to establish a city-funded youth club and later on, in partnership with the NGO Zamisli, to embark on the journey of youth information.

#### **Denmark:**

A radical approach to youth work - A YOUTH POLICY (UNG POLITIK) and a "mobile youth office".

In Gentofte Municipality, they have taken drastic steps in the development of a youth policy. The municipality has got its own youth policy (referred to as UNG POLITIK) that has been developed in close cooperation between young people and politicians. Out of a number of different initiatives, one is the establishment of a "mobile youth office". The municipality has given young people the opportunity to develop and operate a "mobile youth office", which is to drive around in the municipality and involve other young people in different activities. The young people are given free scope to organise and conceptually develop the "mobile youth office" that will both serve as a food truck and have a scene on the roof. In combination with a resourceful group of young people, the political prioritisation provides the municipality with good opportunities to involve young people in concrete activities and even policy development.

The **main actors** of youth work are, consequently, the **employees** of municipalities organising and delivering youth work, youth-led organisations, NGOs and sport clubs as well as church-based organisations and social NGOs. Table 1 provides an overview of the approaches mentioned (i.e. that these are the ones mostly observed in the countries but we should not assume that they are the only actors that are active at the local level)

Country	municipality employees	commissioned youth work (private / NGOs)	youth-led organisations / youth work organisations	Sport- / culture- / social organisations / churches	other (e.g. schools)
Austria	x	x	x	x	
Belgium	x	x	x		
Croatia	x	x	x		
Denmark	x		x		x
Estonia	x		x	x	x
Finland	x	x	x	x	
France	x		x	x	
Germany	x	x	x	x	
Hungary	x			x	x
Iceland	x		x	x	
Italy	x		x	x	x
Latvia	x		x	x	x
Liechtenstein	x		x		
Lithuania	x				x
Norway	x		x		
Portugal	x		x	x	x
Slovakia	x		x	x	x
Slovenia	x		x		
Sweden	x				
Switzerland	x	x	x	x	
Total (#)	20	6	17	12	8

**In summary,** it can be concluded that at the local level in all countries youth work is carried out by employees of the municipalities, mostly in youth centres, but other providers also exist. This does not imply that in all municipalities in all countries youth work is organised in this way. In many countries, the financial situation of the local administration forces them to focus on issues other than youth work.

Work with young people is also conducted by NGOs from different sectors like traditional youth organisations like scouts but also by sport clubs, culture organisations or schools.

In countries where youth policy is on the agenda of the municipalities, youth work is seen as the main instrument to implement local youth policy.

### 3.2 Objectives of municipal youth work

The main aims of youth work at the municipal level are in all countries similar to the national aims of youth work, but we can also see some very interesting additions.

In general, we can say that youth work aims at the social and personal development of the young person and supporting him/her in the transition to adulthood and inclusion in society, by offering opportunities for participation. It also provides non-formal and informal learning opportunities for skills development and capacity building. Thus, youth work also plays a role in preventing social exclusion, fostering employability and promoting innovative capacity.

The resolution of the Council and of the representatives of member state governments meeting within the Council on youth work describes it as follows: Youth work takes place in the extra-curricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics. Youth work is organised and delivered in different ways (by youth-led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities) and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level, dependent e.g. of the following elements:

- the community, historical, social and policy contexts where youth work takes place,
- the aim of including and empowering all children and young people, especially those with fewer opportunities,
- the involvement of youth workers and youth leaders,
- the organisations, services or providers, whether they are governmental or non-governmental, youth-led or not,
- the approach or method used taking into account the needs of young people.
- In many Member States local and regional authorities also play a key role in supporting and developing local and regional youth work.

[...]

Youth work - which complements formal education settings - can offer considerable benefits for children and young people by providing a wide and diverse range of non-formal and informal learning opportunities as well as appropriate targeted approaches.

Youth work invites young people to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions by giving them an active role in its development and implementation. Youth work can provide a comfortable, safe, inspirational and pleasant environment, in which all children and young people, either as individuals or as part of a group, can express themselves, learn from each other, meet each other, play, explore and experiment.

[...]

In transmitting universal values regarding human rights, democracy, peace, anti-racism, cultural diversity, solidarity, equality and sustainable development, youth work also can have added social value because it can:

- promote social participation and responsibility, voluntary engagement and active citizenship;
- strengthen community building and civil society at all levels (e.g. intergenerational and intercultural dialogue);
- contribute to the development of young people's creativity, cultural and social awareness, entrepreneurship and innovation;
- provide opportunities for the social inclusion of all children and young people;
- reach young people with fewer opportunities through a variety of methods which are flexible and quickly adaptable.

Nevertheless, the aims – maybe also the hidden, non-official targets – of youth work at the local level seem to be somehow also more profitable also for the local community. So on the one hand identification with the municipality and region can be a declared aim of local youth work in some countries to prevent migration; on the other hand youth work is often aimed at preventing vandalism, violence, and risk behaviour and keeping the young people from the streets.

#### **Austria:**

*The main aim of municipal youth work seems to be quite naturally the inclusion of young people in community life on all levels (including political participation – this is also due to the fact that in Austria young people have the right to vote starting at 16). Having active citizens that participate in associations and thus gain a strong identification with the municipality is seen as essential.*

*Especially for smaller, rural municipalities it seems to be very important to keep the young people in the region and avoid migration to urban areas. Since this is of course also related strongly to offers of education and employment it can be tackled only partly at the local level alone.*

#### **Sweden:**

*In Sweden, in general youth work is still mainly a "keep the boys off the streets through providing fun leisure time activities" business. It has a weak identity and low status in relation to school and social services.*

#### **Slovakia:**

*Self-governments want to have "trouble-less" youth that will be active and obedient, which, of course, differs from the reality.*

#### **Iceland:**

*The main aim is to provide youth with facilities and support to engage in leisure activities with their peers in a safe environment, often through participation in programmes and events organised by professional youth workers.*

## **4. Developing the quality of youth work policy and practice**

### **4.1. How do municipalities recognise youth work and actors of youth work?**

Recognition of youth work has been a strongly discussed topic in recent years. The EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering (EU 2009) already asked for the support of youth work and its recognition for its economic and social contribution. The last big European symposium on Recognition of Youth Work and non-formal education was held in Strasbourg in 2011. The discussion often focuses on the value of youth work for young people and the validation of voluntary activities as well as non-formal and informal learning. Regarding youth organisations, a study entitled "Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU" stated: "Taken together, legislation provides a basis to not only regulate the sector in terms of youth work provision, but in some cases to provide the necessary funding mechanisms for the delivery of services and to serve as a tool for the recognition of the work that is undertaken within the youth work arena. (EC 2014, p. 92)." This study also refers to the recognition of youth work as a profession and points out its diversity among the European countries

(EC 2014, pp. 115). Furthermore, a Council Resolution adopted in 2015 invites the EU Member States to “promote better recognition of the contribution of youth policies to the overall goals of European policies addressing young people, considering positive effects on active citizenship, employment, social inclusion, culture and innovation, education and training as well as health and well-being” (EU 2015/C 417/01).

What is recognised as youth work at the local level is – consequently – even more diverse, and the forms of appreciation of the value of youth work for the local community shows the whole spectrum from ignorance to highlighting excellence.

It was pointed out that the public often perceives voluntary or professional youth workers as “those playing with children” and youth work is perceived as spending free time (**Slovakia**) or that the “actors’ work is rarely recognised, even when they are city employees, they have lower hierarchy and their work is considered as less important” (Croatia). Also in the German answer to the questionnaire the (rather) negative public image was regarded as an element of pressure for youth work and thus “... the German Child and Youth Welfare Organisation (AGJ) demands from the field a much more self-confident presentation of their services. At the same time, it is necessary to make sure of the positive impact of the services and to publicly account for them.” (**Germany**) Reference is also made to social pedagogue Deinet who “observes a ‘mixture of stagnation and frustration’ among municipal youth workers given the manifold problems like financial cuts, (youth) political failures, facilities resistant to any kind of change, distrust between different organisations in the field, overaged staff etc.” (**Germany**).

In **Italy**, with reference to the latest RAY research, it is pointed out that people involved in youth work do not feel recognised as youth workers – and often do not recognise themselves as such either.

In the majority of countries, a positive development regarding recognition of youth work can be observed, e.g. in Austria, where “the establishment of national structures for different forms of youth work and the financial support for them has given a boost to quality development and recognition. In the past ten years job profiles, quality criteria catalogues and quality development tools have been developed and are being implemented.” (**Austria**)

Recognition of youth work at the national level – via the status of a profession or with nation-wide accepted educational pathways – can be found in **Estonia**, in **France** or in **Finland**; also the Flemish Community in Belgium attests “youth leader’s trainings, organised by recognised national youth organisations, federations or movements” (**Belgium**). Also in Croatia, the first steps towards a national recognition of youth work are mentioned.

In various countries, youth work is recognised at the local level - because they employ youth workers or rely on grant funding for organisations providing youth work and they also appreciate the impact of youth work for the life of young people and the value for the community - but to different degrees and often depending on the interest and the understand of the politicians.

#### **Slovakia:**

*Positions of youth workers have been created within several self-governments, which is evidence of an increase in the significance of youth work, at least in the eyes of some mayors.*

#### **Denmark:**

*All municipalities are increasingly oriented towards voluntary communities, associations and (partly) self-organised citizen-driven initiatives within the youth area. Municipalities consider these actors as valuable sources of knowledge and insight into specific target groups and access to the youth environment, which would otherwise be difficult to reach, according to the municipalities. All municipalities in this mapping exercise especially welcome local voluntary environments and increasingly wish to engage in collaboration with them.*

### **Slovenia:**

*Youth work is recognised very differently. In municipalities where local structures have some knowledge on what youth work is and how it contributes to society through helping young people, the work, efforts and impact of youth workers are recognised quite well. But that is the case for a minority of Slovene municipalities. Most of the municipalities do not have any knowledge about or interest in youth work or anything connected with it. Thus, youth work is not recognised or supported in a sufficient manner.*

### **Iceland:**

*In general, youth work delivered by both municipalities and NGO's is recognised mainly at the political level as a source for healthy and organised leisure activities and as a mechanism of drug and alcohol prevention.*

**Examples of very ambitious methods of recognition** can be found in Finland and in the Baltic states. Here the work and value of youth work is recognised via contests and awards.

### **Estonia:**

*The Estonian Youth Work Centre holds recognition contests to award the best actors in youth work (School Youth Worker of the Year; Youth Centre Youth Worker of the Year; Hobby School Youth Worker of the Year; Youth Union of the Year; Youth Camp of the Year; Municipality of the Year; Hobby School of the Year; Event of the Year in Youth Work).*

*The actors and their work are also recognised by municipalities. The main aim is to highlight the people and organisations that have contributed to youth work and improved the youth field. Municipalities have the right to choose categories in which they give recognition. In some municipalities they choose the Youth Worker of the Year where in other municipalities the list is longer (Youth Worker of the Year, Best Hobby School of the Year, Youth Centre of the Year, Long-Time Contribution to the Youth Field etc.).*

### **Latvia:**

*At the national level, a "Work with Youth" contest is organised every two years by the Ministry in cooperation with the National Youth Council of Latvia and the Representation of the European Commission in Latvia. The main idea behind the contest is for the Ministry to express its recognition to municipalities, persons involved in the youth field and youth organisations and NGO's for their investment in improving youth life quality.*

*In **Sweden**, the organisation KEKS tries to increase the recognition of youth work through information for communities. KEKS' clear and common aims have made youth work more recognisable in the eyes of both society and politicians. We (KEKS staff) do seminars around youth work for politicians and we also visit different city councils in order to talk about youth work. Since our idea about youth work (that it should be based on participation and non-formal learning) differs from the traditional Swedish idea about youth work as leisure activities and 'entertainment' for young people, this is an important task for us and we feel that we are making progress even if much remains to be done. (KEKS / Sweden)*

Overall, it can be concluded that the recognition of youth work, the actors and the value of youth work lacks institutionalisation in most countries. It often depends on local initiatives and the individual approach of policy makers at the local level. The employment of youth workers in the towns and cities or the commission of NGOs to fulfil these tasks is only the first step towards raising the profile of the issue.

## **4.2. Monitoring and quality development**

The approach to monitoring and evaluation of the work done and the organisation of youth work at the local level is very heterogeneous, ranging from no monitoring system at all to a strict top-down methodology of control. In the questionnaire from Germany it is stated that "quality in youth work (understood as an educational process) is never really measurable" (nevertheless Social Book SGB VIII obliges in § 79 the public bodies responsible for youth services to develop appropriate standards for the assessment of quality and to undertake measures to guarantee their implementation).

In the questionnaire of **Croatia** it is regretted that there "is virtually no quality assurance or support to quality development" because every form of youth work at the municipal level is welcomed.

In some countries evaluation is linked to the funding of youth work, implying that the initiatives and organisations providing youth work have to deliver reports and evaluations of their work to the municipality's administration to justify further funding. This approach is followed for example in the Flemish Community in Belgium. The situation is quite similar in Slovenia, where also the youth work providers are in charge of monitoring and quality assurance of their own offers. "In the case of youth centres, that is done on the level of each centre and in the framework of their umbrella organisations (Youth Network MaMa). Youth work providers among youth organisations are either left on their own (local youth organisations) or are stipulated to monitor and evaluate their youth work in the framework of organisational models that are developed at the national level" (**Slovenia**). For the latter, the scout movements are mentioned as good examples.

In **Slovakia**, the State School Inspection is auditing youth centres since they are closely connected to the education system. The municipalities do not interfere with this, nor with the quality development of NGOs conducting youth work.

In **Latvia**, monitoring of the municipal youth policy is conducted via a questionnaire that is sent out to all municipalities. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Science is carrying out youth policy monitoring every two years in order to collect data as a basis for the further development of plans and measures. It is mentioned that it is generally "a matter of finances and work capacity which municipalities lack for organising monitoring and quality development measures".

The monitoring system is also organised top down in **Norway**. It is the responsibility of the county governors, whose offices represent the central government in the 19 counties, "to check and make sure that the municipalities solve the tasks designated by the central government according to set standards and by law". Furthermore, "the municipal administrations need to report to (and are monitored by) ministerial or executive agency actors if they receive funding from specific grant schemes or solve specific tasks designated for them by the ministry/executive agency" (**Norway**).

In **Finland**, the regional state administrative agency (AVI) has the task to develop and implement national youth work and youth policy at regional level. Among other tasks, AVI awards and controls subsidies and also evaluates the sufficiency, quality and reach of youth services. Municipalities design their strategy for a term of 4 years, defining priorities and methods of operation to be carried out. The results are monitored by the municipalities themselves.

In **Austria**, no consistent system of quality assurance in local youth work is established. Nevertheless, incentives and support from the federal and regional level (like quality development tools, awards, funding etc.) exist to foster quality development of youth work in the municipalities.

The Danish approach is not unified, either; in the questionnaire, different models are mentioned, including evaluation research, support of municipalities for quality development, or inter-municipal cooperation and exchange. Municipalities in **Denmark** are responsible for auditing their own tasks yearly using external audit companies. This revision has to be submitted to the National Audit Office of Denmark, which, in turn, can conduct thematic audit visits in the municipality.

A multidimensional approach is in place also in **Germany**, where a huge consensus exists that quality development is a shared task of both the public bodies responsible for the youth services and the voluntary sector (youth organisations, NGOs etc.). Methods used include e.g. interviews with youth, regular team meetings, supervision, cooperative counselling, active human resource development, regular planning meetings and conferences, the implementation of quality circles or external counselling for quality development of youth work.

### **Lithuania:**

*In Lithuania, a methodology for quality assessment of youth policy in municipalities was developed to maximise efficiency of the programmes and measures implemented in the field of youth policy at the national and local levels and harmonise development of youth policy in all municipalities of Lithuania. Each assessment report describes the local context and contains data collected according to 9 indicators and their analysis (preconditions for youth policy implementation; youth participation; support for young people; youth non-formal education, youth training and counselling; youth information, inter-agency dimension, cross-sectoral dimension, integrity of youth policy, improvement and innovations of youth policy, international relations and cooperation), good practices and an assessment summary. The reports are made public and are also available online.*

*Furthermore, the Department carries out the monitoring of open youth centres and spaces, initiates and takes part in the discussions involving leaders and officials responsible for sustainable development of youth policy in municipalities. In parallel, the Department implements training courses on youth work and open youth work for the representatives of other systems and institutions, e.g. police, sports, culture, children day care centres etc.*

### **Estonia:**

*Municipalities use a youth work quality evaluation model as a tool to map strengths and also areas in need of development. Based on the results it is possible to plan future developments and monitor progress. The evaluation is voluntary for the municipalities. It is carried out by comparing the local governments' good practices in youth work, which is reflected in the youth work quality evaluation models developed by the Estonian Youth Work Centre. Procedurally it means a self- and external assessment. [...] In 2016, there were 53 municipalities which took part in quality evaluation.*

### **Germany:**

*In recent years, an instrument known as "quality- and efficacy dialogue" (Qualitäts- und Wirksamkeitsdialog) has attracted increasing attention in the quality debate at the local level. This instrument is especially based on the idea that it is only in a common process and common dialogue between all stakeholders and providers of youth work that the effects and impacts of this field can be discussed and monitored.*

One problem for quality development is a lack of clear accountability between the national, regional and municipal levels and towards the providers of youth work.

It seems that in many countries the local level is obliged to implement national youth policy approaches but can do this with a great degree of freedom and self-determination. Results and success are seldom systematically monitored and used for further development.

## **5. Users of local youth work – Reaching out to marginalised groups**

Generally, it can be summarised that youth work is in all countries open for all young people and is not restricted to certain groups; however, we do find a wide variety of internal differentiations – mostly by age but also by category, such as pupils or students and other groups that are addressed by highly targeted forms of youth work.

### **Finland:**

*As a part of public youth services, youth work activities should be equally open for every young individual living in Finland.*

### **Germany:**

*In general, there are no extra defined target groups for youth work. According to law, youth work should be open for all young people. This is what clearly distinguishes it from other fields of youth welfare, such as youth socio-educational provisions (youth social work).*

The age groups cover a range from 5 to 29 years – in different countries and with different offers:

In **Slovakia**, where youth work is strongly connected to schools, the primary age groups are children and youth aged 5 to 14, older youth being reached by traditional youth organisations. In **Latvia**, youth work is connected with the Youth Guarantee and thus reaches out to young people (not in education, employment or training – NEET) aged 15 to 29. Different age groups are targeted with various youth work opportunities in other countries.

As it is pointed out in the answer from Croatia, youth work reaches “different groups of people, but more due to the versatility and a wide spectrum of NGO work. So, the NGOs consider all of the above-mentioned groups, while the local governments and youth sectors of the Croatian employment service mostly have a general approach to youth” (**Croatia**).

We can observe two main directions: either youth work – being theoretically open and accessible for all young persons – offers opportunities to mainstream youths already engaged in society and interested in participation and does not reach disadvantaged youths, or youth work is accepted by certain groups at risk of social exclusion.

Examples for the first characteristic can be found in Latvia, where (inter alia) the “main groups reached by youth work on the level of municipalities are mostly young people active either in social life in schools, leisure activity places and/or youth organisations” (**Latvia**). In the **Flemish Community of Belgium** it is pointed out - regarding local youth initiatives that are in general very successful reaching approx. 500.000 young people - that “Nevertheless, it remains a fact that most initiatives reach the “mainstream” child and youth population, sometimes described as “white middle class youth”. In this respect, youth work only succeeds in reaching out to some target groups when specific initiatives and strategies are developed.” (**Belgium**)

In **Denmark**, both excluding forms of youth work are present, reaching – as it is described – groups of either marginalised or non-marginalised young people: “The non-marginalised young people are not divided into further groupings. Focus is placed on initiating activities that can enrich young people’s everyday life and support young people’s opportunities for participation in various democratic processes, for instance by the opportunity to engage in a youth council or in a municipal task committee.” But not all of them can be reached by youth work. Marginalised young persons “can be divided into several sub-groups, for example young people with substance abuse problems, young criminals, mentally vulnerable or ill young people, young people receiving social benefits, young people with physical or mental disabilities, young people with a refugee background, young people outside the education system and/or job market and the like. Within this grouping, the target groups for the municipalities are defined by the challenges/issues mostly present in the individual municipality” (**Denmark**). In one questionnaire it is also stated that “despite the standard to be open for all young people, youth work is always in need to work with specific target groups that are in the political focus because they are causing problems.” (**Germany**) And for France it was stated that “every city has its own target group. Often, the most disadvantaged young people are favoured, but with real difficulty. Indeed, generally the policies targeting the most disadvantaged young people fail as they are perceived by these young people as stigmatising. Thus, cities most committed in their policies in the direction of young people try to register these target groups in a more global approach by addressing certain groups of young people with particular attention regarding follow-up of the most disadvantaged young people.” (**France**) “As a rule of thumb, the larger the municipality (by population) the more targeted services are catered to specific groups.” (**Norway**)

But in many countries, youth work shows “a growing concern with unemployed young people, NEETS and social excluded” (**Portugal**). “Some target groups have their youth organisation organised at the national level (e.g. LGBTQ), or on regional level (e.g. some youth organisations for young people with disabilities). Targeted youth work on a local level mostly deals with young people in long-term unemployment, in socially vulnerable situations, or from diverse cultural backgrounds in migrant

communities or ethnic-cultural minorities. Youth work of this kind is mostly to be situated in central cities and bigger municipalities." (**Belgium – Flemish Community**)

An example for such an approach is also Iceland, where it is stated that "The general goal of all youth work is to be open to all young people with an emphasis on reaching marginalised youth. Larger municipalities organise specific youth work for young people with mental disabilities. LGBTQI youth work is mostly organised by NGO's but significant steps towards complete acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQI youth have been taken in the last few decades." (**Iceland**)

In Switzerland the "services and facilities offered by OKJA (open child and youth work) are, in principle, open to all children and young people in the catchment area. However, experience shows that the provision tends to be used more heavily by boys than girls, many of whom, in turn, have a background of migration. In principle, open child and youth work makes available a diverse range of services, facilities and activities in order to appeal to different young people." (**Switzerland**).

Also "youth work in Finland recognises the needs of different target groups and some work might be targeted to certain groups according to resources and needs of municipality e.g. outreach youth work. Important target groups are also informal groups of young people and NGOs" (**Finland**).

It is also pointed out, that youth work at the municipality level aims to have an offer for all groups of young people (frequently in the same youth house, club or centre) but often in "reality the one or other "subgroup" can "occupy" a youth centre and prevent other groups of coming to this youth centre. Youth workers endeavour to offer matching activities for different target groups like gender-based." (**Liechtenstein**). This problem is also highlighted in the French questionnaire, where the predominance of boys and young men in public spaces and in youth facilities as opposed to girls and young women is mentioned. In **Germany**, too, the over-representation of youth with migrant background in youth centres is noted. Also, "in Sweden in general youth centres reach mainly boys (ca 80 %) with a living situation a bit more problematic than the average (working class, migrant background, etc). The "official" target group is most often "all young people", but the "un-official" one is boys that are hanging on street corners" (**KEKS/Sweden**).

In general, it can be said that all the aforementioned subgroups of youth are reached in youth work, but not in all municipalities, not with the same intensity and not with the same success. A group which is seen as very difficult to include in municipality youth work are young people with disabilities.

A new group that, following the questionnaires, will gain importance are young refugees.

Objectives and dialogue groups of youth work correspond in all countries. Officially, youth work is open to all young people but it is also clear that not all young people attend what youth work offers. According to the country's tradition, youth work addresses either the well-established middle class young people or marginalised youths. Self-development, inclusion in society and participation are the main objectives but fostering employability or prevention are also mentioned as aims – but always in response to the target groups.

## **6. Challenges and problems for youth work at the municipal level**

The main challenges for youth work, besides its poor image and efforts to gain recognition, are seen, on the one hand, in the main emerging challenges for young people and, on the other hand, in major societal developments changing and endangering traditional forms of youth work, namely: rising unemployment of young people in some regions, migration to bigger cities or emigration to other countries, the roll-out of full-time schooling leaving less and less leisure time for young people, changes in the composition of the population (by ageing, migration, refugees), the need of cooperation and cross-sectoral approaches, digitalisation, information overflow and more.

### **Belgium Flemish Community:**

*A discussion in this respect is also the potential development of youth work within communities of migrants or ethnic-cultural minorities:*

- *to find an answer to the future demographic development of more and more children and young people living in urban environments, and more specific in the 13 central cities and Brussels. [...]*
- *finding and keeping young volunteers in local youth initiatives.*

### **Finland:**

*It is challenging to support the engagement of young people. This means finding the right methods to activate and empower young people, finding them (outreach work) and to respond quickly to the changing trends of young people. Also, the digitalisation among young people is happening faster than suitable youth work methods can respond.*

### **Lithuania:**

*After the change of a City council, the repetitive work to prove the added value of youth work and voluntary service slows down the development of services. Emigration (from small cities to big cities, as well as to foreign countries).*

### **Croatia:**

*There is an overall lack of vision by the local politicians, which makes it virtually impossible to ensure a proper local youth policy.*

### **Denmark:**

- *Lack of interdisciplinary collaborations (as the SSP) that have a holistic approach towards young people: It is a challenge that e.g. particular political committees oppose to be linked together.*
- *Lack of resources of time, economy, and human resources (enthusiasts who are involved in youth work as something other than just a nine-to-five job).*
- *Lack of competencies (particularly when dealing with new youth groups such as refugees).*

Furthermore, impending and existing financial restrictions and lack of resources in the municipalities are seen as the most important challenge for youth work. It was mentioned in almost every country. Besides the unavailability of financial resources, the lack of qualified personnel – induced by and connected with a high fluctuation of human resources in the sector – is also mentioned as a challenge and not only for youth work at local level but also for support measures.

Last but not least, the lack of political recognition and support – at the local, regional and often national level – as well as the absence of sustainable political planning are perceived as challenges.

## **6.1 Integrating European projects in everyday municipal youth work**

It is not an easy task to integrate international youth work in everyday municipal youth work since youth work already lacks the deserved recognition on the local level. From the point of view of the European partners of local youth work, a main challenge lies in the fact that the environment is too bureaucratic, not youth-friendly and too hierarchical. "Sometimes, employees of municipalities in charge of youth feel isolated within the municipality because there is ignorance from colleagues about their work, about youth work, about the importance to include young people in decision-making" (SALTO Participation). But also, the quality of municipal youth work is seen as critical and challenging for further development, while the competencies of the staff are often not sufficient and the monitoring or evaluation of their work is not implemented.

## **Concluding remarks**

The overall results of the mapping exercise tell us that there are diverse policy and legal frameworks for the development of quality youth work at the municipal level in the participating countries. However, the **policy dimension of youth work at the local level** heavily depends on the ways in which the youth policy in general is managed at the higher layers of governance (regardless of the level of autonomy of the respective local entity).

In many cases, however, **the knowledge and policy gaps** have been identified in regard to the specific **models of governance of youth work at the local level** as well as to the existing horizontal and vertical lines of responsibility in developing and supporting quality youth work at the municipal level.

The **knowledge base** also needs to be strengthened regarding **the national level policy frameworks** that define the role, institutional structure and resources of youth work at the municipal level. This especially refers to the existing models of good practice in implementing cross-sectoral cooperation and youth (work) mainstreaming.

Special attention should also be devoted to the role of **European stakeholders** that influence youth work at municipal level (European institutions, European Networks etc.) in regard to their support to quality development of youth work-related strategies and services at the local level.

Capacity-building of the local stakeholders for efficient usage of the European funding schemes with the priority of local youth work is another area to be considered.

Just as approaches to the youth policy, the **organisation of youth work** at the municipal level also shows a high degree of diversity, where in general the different national approaches are influenced by a) the (in)dependence of local policy and administration of national and regional policy and administration in general, b) the strategic involvement of municipalities and cities in the organisation and implementation of youth policy, and c) the youth work tradition.

Thus, the **main actors of youth work** are employees of municipalities, NGOs commissioned to fulfil tasks in youth work, traditional youth work organisations – often youth-led, such as scouts – but also clubs and organisations generally active in other fields, such as culture, tradition, sport, social or environment but also working with young people.

Depending on the youth work tradition and the main actors, the **groups reached by municipal youth work** are different; nevertheless, youth work is open and accessible for all young people in a certain age group and aims to foster the social and personal development of young persons while their inclusion in society, participation in health provision and prevention are also main goals. New dialogue groups for youth work are seen especially in the case of disadvantaged groups, unemployed young people but also refugees or other groups in need of support.

A **main challenge** of youth work at the local level is in many countries the lack of recognition. Here good examples for active involvement of municipalities in national recognition strategies can be found. Parallel to (and possibly interdependent with) the lack of recognition is the absence of systematised forms of monitoring, accountability and certifiable quality development.

For further research on the youth work at the municipal level, quantitative research in cooperation with municipalities' associations or organisations of regions could be interesting (and probably realistic) in order to identify the offers of youth work in single municipalities, to compare them with existing regional and or municipal statistics (population, migration, economy, education, labour market) and to explore the needs of municipalities in developing youth policy and youth work.