

Youth Partnership

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COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH WORK IN CYPRUS



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1. Context of youth work

What are the historic origins and traditions of youth work in your country, and if it is rooted in other realms (for example, educational, social or social pedagogy), how are boundaries of youth work defined? For example, has there been any research on the tradition and developments of youth work (many have been published in the [History series](#) part of the [Youth Knowledge Books](#))?

What is the context in which youth work happens in your country today; what is on the public policy agenda in general that may affect young people and youth policy?

Currently, youth work happens in Cyprus in the non-formal sector by youth organisations or other non-governmental organisations dealing with youth. Youth Work is not a recognised validated field in Cyprus. However, youth work mainly exists in the form of volunteerism.

Based on the Cyprus report on volunteering across Europe, voluntary activities in Cyprus until the 19th century were rooted in initiatives of philanthropy, mostly by providing relief to those in need and by making altruistic expressions of kindness, love and “helping one another” especially in periods of hardship, destitution and deprivation. At that time, philanthropy and charity were acts exercised by the individual, the state and the church.

In the 20th century, the British administration gives municipalities the responsibility to provide relief to the poor and the destitute and to run relief committees in order to allocate cash allowances. Voluntary activity is furthermore initiated to collect funds for the support of school infrastructures and to establish charity associations. Also during that time, important social legislation is enacted (i.e. the Charities Law, based on the Charity Law of England and Wales, and the Clubs (Registration) Law of 1930) and other major improvements are recorded towards the establishment and development of voluntary initiatives and organisations to address various needs.

The activity of organisations expanded including, amongst others, the mental health domain, children with physical disabilities, the disabled, special education schools, family planning, prevention of crime and treatment of offenders, elderly care, general social and health services, creative leisure time etc. In 1963, the Community Welfare Council of the Nicosia district was established, with the task of acting as a co-ordinating volunteer body. In 1968, the introduction of a Grants-in-Aid Scheme for voluntary organisations operated by the Department of Social Welfare enables the expansion or the introduction of programmes run by voluntary organisations. During these years, there was an official acknowledgement that the engagement of people as volunteers can bring not only an added value to community development, but can effectively address the needs of the communities, support social welfare, represent the interests of vulnerable groups and bring change in governmental policies.

In this framework local youth clubs emerged in the 1970s, co-ordinated by the Pancyprian Youth Clubs Co-ordinating Committee, which evolved into the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation (Greek acronym KOKEN) in 2008. KOKEN is the secretariat of a national network of youth clubs in the Republic of Cyprus. Through more than 86 associations and 20 local youth groups in urban and rural areas, KOKEN reaches 8 000 young people aged 13-35 from rural areas each year. The mission of KOKEN is to offer opportunities to young Cypriots, especially to those from remote areas, to develop their skills and attitudes and to promote active participation in society at local, national and international level. KOKEN is funded by the Youth Board of Cyprus. In this way, KOKEN works for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

Another important actor in the youth field is the Cyprus Youth Council (CYC). CYC was founded in 1996 as a volunteer, non-governmental, non-profit organisation. It aims to promote dialogue and co-operation between youth in Cyprus and also connecting them with youth in Europe and globally. CYC is in continuous co-operation with the European Youth Forum. Areas of interest, always in relation to youth, include human rights and equality, employment and social issues, active citizenship and life-long learning, non-formal education and youth policies.

The CYC seeks to act as a platform of exchange and communication between all youth NGOs in Cyprus. Therefore, the CYC organises events, seminars, workshops and activities that provide the necessary space for its members to exchange good practices, interests and experience on any youth-related topic. The CYC also acts as a platform for its members for participating in European projects. The CYC is also the main stakeholder in the structured dialogue that seeks to promote the political participation of all Cypriot youth. The process also allows youth to voice their opinions and concerns on a chosen topic every six months. Moreover, the CYC voices the concerns of youth NGOs including lobbying to policy makers for a number of youth-related issues (e.g. youth unemployment, validation of non-formal education etc.).

Currently, Cyprus experiences a further expansion of programmes and activities run by volunteer-involving organisations, in more policy fields and ways of engagement. The activities of organisations cover the fields of social inclusion and welfare, environment, culture, human aid, peace building, human rights, equal opportunities, development, sports, education, community development, empowerment of the social capital, the UN Millennium Development Goals, etc. The government of Cyprus, acknowledging the importance of volunteering, has enacted the office of Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organisations. Youth volunteering emerges as an essential aspect in the lives of young people and is promoted by the public sector in schools, and by NGOs in extra-curriculum time.

As described in the announcement of 27/07/2017 of the Office of the Commissioner, the Commissioner in co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior and after Public Consultation has drafted a law together with the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus which consolidates, amends and abolishes the existing legislation on associations, institutions and clubs. (New law entitled “Ο περί σωματείων και Ιδρυμάτων και για άλλα συναφή θέματα Νόμος του 2015”, p. 31). The law has been submitted to the House of Representatives for adoption, and it is expected to modernise the way non-governmental organisations (including voluntary organisations) function.

Moreover, as mentioned in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (including volunteerism and youth work). In this framework, the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Human Resource Development Authority are having an ongoing dialogue with the National Youth Council as well, investigating the possibility for the establishment of occupational standards for youth workers. At the same time, the Ministry of Education and Culture is running a project which will enable the mapping of the current situation in Cyprus regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Based on the mapping, an overall National Action Plan for the creation of mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus will be developed (2018) and a pilot project will be implemented (2018-2020). The National Action Plan will build upon existing practices and needs in the Cypriot context. The pilot implementation will focus on adult education, youth and volunteering. Under the project possibilities will be provided for further recognition of youth work.

On top of these, several of the priorities of the National Youth Strategy focus on youth work and non-formal and informal learning (NFL).

2. Strategic and legislative framework of youth work

As previously noted, under the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of developing a mechanism for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Under the project, possibilities will be provided for further recognition of youth work.

Moreover, several of the objectives of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022 focus on youth work and non-formal and informal learning (NFL). These are: a. Validation of NFL should be promoted; b. NFL methods should be used in the formal educational structures; c. Enhance entrepreneurial mind-set, innovation and creativity through NFL; d. Create more educational opportunities for youth workers; e. Develop synergies to connect the entrepreneurial community with the youth sector.

In these documents youth work is not defined as such, but when it is relevant the Council of Europe's definition in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work is used. The youth workers in Cyprus used to use the term from: Chisholm, L. (2005): Bridges for Recognition Cheat Sheet: Proceedings of the SALTO Bridges for Recognition: Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven-Louvain: "the Youth workers are people who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts, typically focusing on personal and social development through one-to-one relationships and in group-based activities. Being learning facilitators may be their main task, but it is at least as likely that youth workers take a social pedagogic or directly social work based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions are combined with each other." They now use the exact term of the Council of Europe.

According to the National Youth Council's Policy Paper on Youth Work the definition they use for youth work is: Any planned programme and activity of personal and social education which is based on the values of non-formal education and is designed to improve the skills and competencies of young people, outside of the formal educational curriculum.

Before the above-mentioned strategies youth work was not known. It was considered as volunteerism with a special focus on young people. The labour market would positively assess the volunteering action of a young person but only in the private sector. The public service has never given value to volunteerism when it came to employing someone.

3. Recognition

There is no official validation system of youth work and non-formal learning, yet. As previously stated, they are under preparation. In terms of self and social recognition volunteerism in Cyprus has always played a vital role in citizens' lives. Some people practise youth work as part of their wider occupational role or as volunteers. This being the case, there is also no legal framework for the profession of youth work per se, either.

Following the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), the EU Youth Strategy: Investing and Empowering, the guidelines and initiatives of the Commonwealth and currently the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, the Ministry of Education and Culture is co-ordinating the establishment of a validation mechanism on non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus. Meanwhile, implementing a series of actions proposed by the National Youth Council under their policy paper on the Recognition of Youth Worker, the Youth Board of Cyprus,

the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Human Resource Development Authority are having an ongoing dialogue for the establishment of occupational standards for Youth Workers.

Further to the development of the National Youth Strategy mentioned previously, the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) implements various programmes for young people and youth workers. For instance, the YBC is the National Agency of the “Erasmus+:Youth” programme which promotes the acquisition of skills through mobility and it is the main tool for providing young people with the opportunity for non-formal and informal learning on a European scale. In addition, the “Youth Initiatives” project is the national funding scheme which offers young people the chance for mobility and active participation in the cultural, political and social life of Cyprus. The Youth Board operates the Youth Information Centres (YIC) as well, following the standards of the European Youth and Information Counselling Agency (ERYICA). It runs the European Youth and Student Card, Multifunctional Youth Centres providing skills development projects such as “The Steamers”, Eurodesk for providing specialised information on EU youth policies and international opportunities, Prevention and Development Centres consisting of workshop series titled “Mikri Arktos”, the Communication Help Line 1410 and the Counselling Services “Proposition”, Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme offering training and mentoring, Maker Spaces providing young people with access to high-quality and state-of-the-art equipment for developing prototypes and implementing their business ideas, Youth Guarantee outreaching campaign; it promotes and supports the institution of Municipal/Community Youth Councils with the aim of actively involving young people in issues that affect them and to take part in the decision-making process within their local community and many more.

4. Funding youth work

If you are able to include numbers, what is the national or local budgetary allocation for youth work in your country? If there are specific national programmes supporting youth work, what is their main aim and budget (please indicate proportionality)? In other words, how is funding for youth work organised in your country? What are the funding opportunities, who are the main funders and what are the guiding principles in allocating that funding?

How important are international funding sources for youth work activities in your countries (Erasmus +, European Youth Foundation, UN System or other sources?)

The main national funding programme for youth work in Cyprus is the “Youth Initiatives Project” of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The Youth Initiatives Project refers to grant activities established by young people and organised youth organisations. The programme supports youth incentives for mobility and active participation in the cultural, sporting, political and social life of Cyprus. It supports activities in the areas of volunteerism, active citizenship, entrepreneurship, health and environment.

The categories of beneficiaries are the following:

- youth organisations
- municipal and community youth councils
- Cyprus Youth Council
- young people aged 14-35
- informal youth groups
- cultural bodies
- Departments of Youth Societies /Associations
- bodies dealing with young people with fewer opportunities and bodies that develop related specialised programmes

- youth centres/clubs
- Young Overseas Cypriots (NEPOMAK)

The public funding allocated to the whole Youth Initiative Project for 2017 is €943 804 as published in the Cyprus Government Gazette announcement for Youth Board Budget.

Another important source of funding is the Erasmus + programme since it offers mobility opportunities for people from different fields to other participating countries for education, training and volunteering purposes and also youth exchanges. It promotes the establishment of partnerships between institutions/educational organisations/training/youth and other relevant organisations from participating countries that encourage innovation development and exchange of best practices, and lastly it encourages actions that enhance the development of European policies in relation to the programme's fields of interest.

5. Structures, actors and levels in youth work provision

5.1. State structures/public authorities deciding on or providing youth work

Which government levels are involved in planning, supporting and delivering youth work? If there are separate agencies, please mention them here. Please include numbers of people or entities where data is available.

The main governmental body responsible for youth affairs is the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC). The YBC is a legal entity of public law and was established by virtue of Law 33(1)/94. It has its own structure and staff (30 employees) and an Administrative Board (seven members) and its budget is covered by state subsidy. The YBC has a Youth Advisory Body which consists of 44 youth NGOs. Co-operating organisations are the Cyprus National Youth Council (CYC) and the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation.

The YBC has mainly consultative responsibilities towards the government and it is also undertaking the implementation of programmes related to youth (Erasmus +:Youth, Youth Information Centres (YIC), European Youth Card, Eurodesk, municipality and community youth councils, youth initiatives, counselling services, youth wiki. It also makes suggestions through the Minister of Education and Culture to the Council of Ministers, for the development of a comprehensive and targeted youth policy.

5.2. National or local youth councils

The Cyprus Youth Council employs three persons (paid personnel). It was founded in 1996 and became a full active member of the European Youth Forum in 1997. It currently hosts 61 member organisations, political and non-political NGYOs from both communities of Cyprus, all religious minorities, and foreign students living in Cyprus. The CYC was formed to promote co-operation between youth organisations in Cyprus and youth organisations in Europe and the world. It is described as a voluntary, non-profit association open to youth organisations in Cyprus, guided in its actions by the principles described in the UN Charter and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Municipal/community youth councils: The institution in Cyprus emerged in 2001, with the support of the local authorities and the YBC. Its aim is to actively involve local youth organisations and young people in the decision-making process of their local community. There are about 50 youth councils who are supported financially by the YBC, the local authorities and private grants. None of the councils have paid personnel but the local authorities provide human resources support through their own personnel.

5.3. Youth and youth work NGOs

Further to the CYC, there is also the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation, which is the secretariat of the national network of Youth Clubs in the Republic of Cyprus. The Institution of the Youth Clubs was established in 1969 and developed during the 1970s. Youth clubs are community organisations with voluntary establishment aimed at the progress and well-being of the youth of their local community. At present, a total of 86 clubs operate and organise activities, events and seminars. By 1 January 2008, the youth clubs became administratively independent. During 2008, the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation (KOKEN) was established. KOKEN operates as a private non-profit organisation and is now the highest-rank co-ordinating body of the youth clubs. It has legal responsibility over its clubs' members and is the competent agent for determining how each club is supported. It is also responsible for the establishment of new clubs or for the termination of those already in effect.

5.4. Other relevant actors

The Ministry of Education and Culture acts as the liaison between the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Council of Ministers in every subject that needs approval by the government.

6. Forms and examples of youth work in your country

Youth workers are situated mainly in the non-governmental sector as volunteers and work with young people in a range of situations including youth clubs, local youth councils, centres, organisations and associations. Some people might also be considered to be practising youth work as part of their wider occupational role, but have usually been employed to undertake another speciality. There are also informal groups of youth workers.

Sometimes youth workers do outreach work that can take place where young people freely congregate (schools, concerts, parks, clubs, centres and so on). Youth work can also take place in hospitals, prisons and other institutions like asylum shelters. Online youth work happens through participation platforms, online chats, social media and other informative portals.

The public service deploys a workforce which is responsible for studying and designing policies and services to meet the needs of young people and promote their development, as in the case of the Youth Board of Cyprus. These personnel are not always youth workers. However, broadly speaking, many undertake youth-work-like roles.

The youth clubs in Cyprus target young people with fewer opportunities as they are mainly located in rural areas. There are clubs run by young people with disabilities for young people with disabilities, like the Youth Club for People with Hearing Disorders. Youth clubs are supported and co-ordinated by the Youth Clubs Organisation.

There are also various non-governmental organisations working with disadvantaged people in general but not specifically only with young people. They are co-ordinated by the Pancyprian Volunteerism Co-ordinative Council, which assists the promotion of the work of the voluntary sector in the country.

Three successful youth work practices in Cyprus:

1. Structured Dialogue (SD): Through the process of Structured Dialogue, which is run by the National Working Group for SD (chaired by the Cyprus Youth Council), we managed to involve youth from all

over Cyprus, in order to express their opinion on issues such as youth work. The latest outcomes of the SD are:

- a) The development of a Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (run by the Youth Board of Cyprus), which supplements the state's Youth Entrepreneurship Funding Scheme by providing specialised information, training and mentoring to young people who want to establish their own business or self-employment activity.
- b) The Cyprus Youth Council has recently adopted a policy paper for the youth worker. Youth organisations sent their suggestions on youth work, which were later discussed and voted on during the General Assembly. Moreover, CYC, in co-operation with the MoEC, created an informative poster for the role of the youth worker, which was disseminated to all the schools in Cyprus.

2. Youth clubs: Young people working with young people (for young people) in the communities of Cyprus (rural and urban areas) developing educational projects, seminars, events, campaigns and sports activities; keeping young people occupied with healthy and meaningful activities and leading them to become active citizens.

3. Youth Information Centres: Since 2002, the Youth Board of Cyprus runs a youth information centre in every city plus one in the mountainous area of Troodos. The YICs provide young people with tailor-made information in various subjects of their concern and also specialised counselling services. The YICs realise many activities, workshops, seminars and innovative practices for youngsters or young people – free to access and attend – such as CV clinics, summer camps, or career academies.

Digital/online youth work practices:

1. Opin e-participation platform: the Youth Board of Cyprus participates in a Europe-wide programme, the EUth. EUth is an innovative three-year research project funded by the European Commission. The aim of the project is to get more young people involved in political decision making and increase youth trust in political institutions. How is that achieved? Eleven project partners from eight different countries have developed an open and easy-to-use online participation platform along with different mobile tools and apps for smartphones and tablets. This way, young people can get involved whenever and wherever they wish with minimum effort. The Youth Board of Cyprus is using, whilst testing as well, the platform for the purposes of the National Youth Strategy (NYS).

Vouliwatch Cyprus: Through an Erasmus + KA2 project, partners from Greece, France and Cyprus (including the Cyprus Youth Council) managed to create an online platform that gives young people in Cyprus the opportunity for participation and greater transparency and accountability in politics. Young people (16-30 years old) have been encouraged through Open Parliament Cyprus (OPC), a web platform that bridges the increasingly widening gap between citizens and their representatives, to participate in political life by asking questions to their national or European MPs. OPC has created a transparent and safe online space for young people to monitor their representatives and have a clear view of what is going on during the plenary sessions of the Parliament (mainly with the use of live streaming).

7. Quality standards

There are no competence frameworks or quality standards guiding youth workers and youth work activities in Cyprus. There is nothing guiding the quality aspects of youth work besides that some organisations arrange or participate in Erasmus + trainings. In this framework Youth Pass is the only tool that assesses the competences of youth workers. There are several transnational co-operation activities (i.e. training courses, seminars, study visits, job shadowing/observation periods abroad in an organisation active in the youth field, contact-making events etc.) offered by the national agencies in the framework of the Erasmus + Programme. All participants who take part in the activities that are

implemented within the framework of the Erasmus + are entitled to a Youthpass Certificate. Moreover, the Cyprus Youth Council Pool of Trainers is organising trainings for trainers twice a year. The trainers are coming from the European Youth Forum Pool of Trainers.

8. Knowledge and data on youth work

There is no research or a system of continuous documentation and study of youth work in Cyprus. There are also no data on how many young people benefit from youth work in Cyprus on an annual basis. We could estimate that there are around 25 paid youth workers in NGOs and the Youth Board of Cyprus but there are no data on how many volunteers there are.

There is only one piece of research on youth volunteering in Cyprus, which was conducted by the Youth Board of Cyprus in the framework of the National Youth Strategy. It was titled “The current situation of young people in Cyprus” and it was assigned to KPMG on behalf of the Youth Board of Cyprus (publication date: November 2015). Based on this research, most of the young people between 14 and 35 years old who answered the questionnaire (55%) have not been involved in voluntary activities in the last year. From those who have been involved in voluntary activities, the majority were involved in voluntary activities on a local level.

9. European and International dimension of youth work in the country

Following EU Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), the Ministry of Education and Culture is co-ordinating the establishment of a validation mechanism on non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus. At the same time and under Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Human Resource Development Authority are having an ongoing dialogue with the National Youth Council as well, investigating the possibility for the establishment of occupational standards for Youth Workers.

The Erasmus + Programme offers several mobility opportunities to young people and youth workers for enhancing their skills and acquiring new ones, networking and expanding on an international level, co-working, developing new methods and tools in the youth work field, strengthening the links between the sectors of education, training and youth with the world of work, the development of youth entrepreneurship etc. (i.e. training courses, seminars, study visits, job shadowing/observation periods abroad in an organisation active in the youth field, contact-making events, exchanges, voluntary service, strategic partnerships, capacity building).

Furthermore, the UN, the Commonwealth and the Council of Europe offer some opportunities to youth workers for trainings, joint meetings, participation in decision making, learning and sharing experiences.

10. Current debates and open questions/policies on youth work

What are the open questions, debates and priorities around youth work development in your country?

Is there any cross-sectoral co-operation with other fields? What is the role and what are the strengths of youth work in that co-operation?

As mentioned already, under the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of developing a mechanism for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Under the project, possibilities will be provided for further recognition of youth work. The working group for this project consists of relevant actors in the field such as the Youth Board of Cyprus, the National Youth Council, the Commissioner for Volunteerism and the Human Resource Development Authority.

Moreover, several of the objectives of the National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2017-2022 focus on youth work and non-formal and informal learning (NFL). These are: a. Validation of NFL; b. NFL methods should be used in the formal educational structures; c. Enhance entrepreneurial mind-set, innovation and creativity through NFL; d. Create more educational opportunities for youth workers; e. Develop synergies to connect the entrepreneurial community with the youth sector. For the implementation of the National Youth Strategy, two action plans will be developed covering a period of three years each (2017-2019 and 2020-2022). The action plans will consist of the specific actions, as well as the budget, and will provide a detailed outline of the NYS implementation mechanism, in order for the targets and priorities that have been set to be achieved within six years. The action plans will also indicate the necessary indexes that will measure the impact of the strategy.

The NYS is the first co-ordinated attempt to bring together all the policies, actions and programmes relating to the youth in a single document. The NYS should be the starting point of a co-ordinated co-operation among all involved parties, in all the fields of action for young people. In order to draft, implement and monitor the action plans it is necessary to maintain constant consultation and co-operation among all involved parties, with the assistance of the Cross-sectoral Working Group on Youth (all governmental departments that deal with youth issues take part), under the co-ordination of the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC). To ensure an effective co-ordination among the members of the Cross-sectoral Working Group and the young people, the YBC will call regular meetings of the Monitoring Advisory Committee, which will facilitate the meetings and the dialogue among governmental institutions and young people. The National Youth Council participates at this Advisory Committee, having hence a strong role in the development, implementation and follow-up on policies that concern youth workers and young people in general.