

NATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE EU IN GEORGIA

Development a System for Recognition and Validation Skills Acquired Through Youth Work in Georgia

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PROJECT DURATION: FEBRUARY 2021 – AUGUST 2022



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Introduction

The importance of youth work within national and European policy is constantly growing and new policy papers, on European as well as on national level, are continuously assigning new roles and tasks to youth work; it should improve social inclusion, build civil society, enhance employability, prevent health risks, etc.

At the same time there is a strong motivation for further improvement within the sector and there are a lot of significant efforts being done throughout Europe, on national, regional and local level, to enhance the quality and recognition of youth work. Standards and indicators, as well as methods and manuals are being developed in order to support the development of quality, making it possible for youth work to both improve and prove its impact and value in the lives of young people and for society.

The background and reason for all these efforts is a rising awareness of the fact that the present resources and support available for youth work does not meet the steadily growing expectations for both quantitative and qualitative outcomes. Even though it often takes place in the context of leisure, youth work is basically an arena for nonformal and informal learning and as such it generally gets very limited support relative to other actors in the field of education. In line with this, and often mentioned, is the need for enhanced recognition of youth work in general and subsequently the need to move from the measurement of purely quantitative outputs to making visible also the qualitative effects.

Brief Summary

The document describes the mechanisms of recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work on the examples of a number of European countries. The current situation in Georgia in terms of recognition and validation of skills acquired as a result of youth work is reviewed. The document also includes recommendations for the development of a system of recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work in Georgia.

Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in European Countries and Key Recognition Practices on the European Level

One of the general objectives of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 is to support youth work as a catalyst for the empowerment of young people. Youth work is recognized as a powerful means for equipping youth with key personal, professional and entrepreneurial competences and skills, and as a bridge into education, training or work, thus preventing exclusion.

In order to achieve these aims, EU Member States and the other countries participating in Erasmus+ have agreed – in the EU Strategy and in relevant Council Resolutions – to support the development of youth work, including policy development, the establishment of legal frameworks and sufficient allocation of resources. They have also committed to invest in the innovation and quality of youth work, support the profession of youth worker, and enhance the instruments for recognition of the competences and skills acquired through youth work.

The document explores and considers the measures established on the European level and in selected European countries for recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work.

Key Recognition Practices on the European Level

According to the definition of recognition, there is self, social, formal and political recognition of youth work and youth workers (professionals or volunteers). To understand the topic better, it is useful to distinguish between the four dimensions of recognition that define the various purposes and actors of recognition:

Self-recognition or individual recognition includes personal awareness and assessment of learning outcomes, and the ability to use these learning outcomes in other fields. It also refers to the awareness within the youth sector about the value of youth work. Self-recognition is an important basis for the other forms of recognition and for developing the quality of our work.

Social recognition means that various actors in society – for example parents, the school, employers – understand and acknowledge the value of youth work and of the competences acquired in non-formal learning settings.

Formal recognition is often associated with the validation of learning outcomes and with the certification of a learning process and/or its outcomes. Through this process, the learning achievements are mostly compared to the qualifications acquired in formal education. It could also mean acquiring other types or aspects of an official status, for example accreditation of learning programmes, licensing of youth workers, etc.

Political recognition is for instance manifested through the policies and legislations concerned with youth work or non-formal education. It could mean the extent to which the non-formal learning and its providers are included in political strategies on the various levels.

The key recognition practices on the European level in the field of Youth are Youthpass and the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers

Youthpass

Youthpass is a tool and a strategy of the European Union to promote the recognition of non-formal education/learning within youth work. The framework for the development and implementation of Youthpass is in the EU's Youth in Action Programme. The aim of this strategic approach is to raise awareness, and support a professional and public debate concerning individual, social, formal, and political dimensions for the recognition of non-formal education/ learning and youth work. Youthpass as a tool – a process and a certificate – makes the learning in the Youth in Action Programme projects conscious for the participant and the learning value visible to the outside world. It supports individual reflections, active citizenship of young people, social recognition of youth work, and the employability of young people and youth workers.

Using Youthpass can add value to the youth projects where it is used, in several ways:

- Through the Youthpass process, reflection on learning becomes more structured and the educational value of the project is strengthened. It makes the learning of the

participants more conscious. Being more aware of their competences, it gets easier for the participants to make use of them in the future. Thus, Youthpass supports the future pathways of the young people.

- By putting emphasis on the learning processes and outcomes in youth work, using Youthpass helps to increase the so-called Learning to Learn competence. It raises the participants' awareness of learning in a diversity of contexts and helps them to reflect on their learning wishes and needs.
- The description of competences developed by participating in the youth projects also helps to increase the visibility of the value of youth work

The key competences address by Youthpass are:

- Multilingual competence
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence
- Digital competence
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
- Literacy competence.

European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers

The European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers is an initiative of the Council of Europe. It provides youth leaders and youth workers, volunteers and/or professionals, with a tool which can help them identify, assess and describe their competencies based on European quality standards. In using this portfolio, youth leaders and youth workers will not only contribute to the recognition of their experience and skills, but also the efforts to increase the recognition of youth work and non-formal education and learning.

Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in Ireland

Participants in youth activities supported by Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes can gain recognition of their acquired skills and competences via a Youthpass certificate. Youthpass is an online self-assessment tool, where participants list the skills and competences they acquired throughout the learning period.

A Youthpass certificate is a confirmation of participation, by the organizers of a specific Erasmus+: Youth in Action or European Solidarity Corps activity. It does not give any rights to the recipient and it is not a formal accreditation of competences. Accrediting a Youthpass certificate, towards a qualification, would be unusual in Ireland. It is the individual educational institutes' choice to accredit a Youthpass certificate and if so, how to do so.

Skills Summary

Skills Summary is a free, online tool that measures the skills young people gain through participating in youth work or other forms of non-formal education, such as volunteering. Skills Summary supports the dialog between a young person and a youth worker or mentor. It can be used as a self-assessment and self-reflection tool for young people and as a measurement tool for organizations. While it is available to anyone working on, or interested in, their personal/professional skill development, it is particularly tailored to young people aged 16-25. The tool aims to build young people's confidence, so that they can better communicate the value of these essential skills to future employers.

Skills Summary was created by the National Youth Council of Ireland, Accenture and SpunOut.ie. It is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and recognized as a measurement tool in the Youth Employability Initiative.

There are 12 core competencies measured by Skills Summary:

- Communication Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Teamwork
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Organization Skills
- Adaptability
- Leadership
- Entrepreneurship
- Drive and Resilience
- Ethics and Integrity
- IT Skills.

Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in Estonia

The Youth Sector Development Plan 2021-2035 defines youth work (including hobby education for young people) to have an important role in the development of young people with providing versatile knowledge, skills and attitudes. Hence, the recognition of competences gained through diverse variety of youth work activities available to young people in Estonia, is of utmost important.

In earlier years, young people have been able to assess and document their experiences with the support of a specific tool on the national portal of youth information called Teeviit. It included the possibility to add the learning experience (formal education, student/pupil exchanges, trainings, seminars and conferences, voluntary activities, youth camps, youth exchanges, and hobby activities) and working experience (jobs, practice, working camps, belonging to organizations, tutoring) and analyze the outcomes by yourself. As a result of the process, it was possible to combine it into a CV and forward it to potential employers by e-mail.

Alternatively, to that, there have been some other initiatives offering the possibility to reflect the voluntary experiences and the obtained competences. For example, Tankla volunteer pass (Tankla

vabatahtliku pass) on regional level in Estonia and YouthPass enabling to issue a certificate of participation in youth work activities of the European youth programmes.

In recent years, more emphasis is targeted at better integration of non-formal and formal education. For example, a national portal NOPIK for dissemination of good practices has been set up. Better integration of different learning paths is also one of the priorities in the draft of the Education Sector Development Plan 2021-2035 (adoption in progress). Depending on a school and teachers, also co-operation practices developed at local level, there are practices where competences gained in youth work are recognized in formal education. For example, if a young person participates regularly in some kind of sports hobby activity, s/he will be able to have this accepted as alternative to physical education lessons in school. NOPIK also features some initiatives that have been developed in close co-operation between general education institution and youth work organization in order to enrich the subjects in formal curricula with more diverse and flexible ways of learning in youth work, f.ex realizing self-initiated projects in local hobby school as part of the curricula.

On the national level, there is the recognition system of prior learning and working experience (VÕTA), which helps in validating the prior experiences for formal education, no matter how you studied. VÕTA can also be used in the applying process of a professional qualifications certificate (also for youth worker certificates). This is something young people aged 18-26 can use as this is targeted to adult education mainly.

The Youth Sector Development Plan 2021-2035 defines youth work (including hobby education for young people) to have an important role in the development of young people with versatile knowledge, skills and attitudes, incl.

- empowering the youth and creating prerequisites for efficient gaining of independence,
- acquiring work experience, becoming more aware of changes on the labour market,
- empowering young people as the carriers and spokespeople for values.

The national youth strategy declares that youth work allows the young people to enjoy their youth, get to know themselves and others and thereby learn to better navigate the surrounding world. Youth work supports the development of future skills, general competencies and special skills, strengthens social networks and social capital and has a positive effect on behavior, including the development into an entrepreneurial citizen who shows initiative.

Following this, the recognition of competencies gained through diverse variety of youth work activities available to young people in Estonia, is of utmost important. As the national youth strategy highlights, the talents, interests and creativity of young people must be consistently encouraged, considering the knowledge, skills and experience acquired in non-formal studies within their formal studies as well as the labor market.

Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in Lithuania

Lithuanian Non-formal Education Association develops and coordinates motivation and recognition systems for achievements and uses the global Digital Open Badges standards to capture, measure, and recognize achievements. It cooperates with the Department of Youth Affairs in order to develop tailor-made systems for assessing and recognizing non-formal education achievements including youth work.

Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in Italy

The **Youthpass** is the main tool for the recognition of competences developed in youth work projects in Italy. The National Youth Agency (NYA) provides a specific activity of information, promotion and technical assistance on the use of Youthpass among young people who have participated in projects funded by Erasmus+. In 2018, for example, the NYA signed a specific two-year protocol with the Piemonte Region to promote Youthpass through meetings, seminars and awareness campaigns. The Youthpass is also promoted as a useful tool for the recognition of University Training Credits (UTCs). However, there are still no common national regulations or guidelines for Universities, since the recognition of UTCs depends on the individual Degree Courses to which students present their Youthpass.

Specific tools for self-assessment and transparency of competences have been developed and tested in projects funded by Erasmus+ and coordinated by Italian organizations, on the basis of data drawn from Erasmus+ results. Specific attention is given in these tools to the employment impact that can result from the transparency of skills developed in youth work projects. Some examples of tools developed in projects led by an Italian organization are the following:

- I've-I have Experienced: tool for the recognition of competences developed in workcamps and voluntary service projects; it includes an App that automatically produces the Certificates of Competences Recognition.
- Easy Soft-Skills: it has developed a self-assessment test of skills that young people develop during an international volunteering experience.
- Voyce - Volunteering Youth: routes and tools for Competence Emersion: a self-assessment test to enhance the learning acquired by young volunteers with particular attention to their employability.
- OPELO - Optimization of validation process of EVS learning outcomes project developed a Portfolio of employability skills for volunteers of the European Voluntary Service.

Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in Slovenia

The same framework applying to non-formal and informal learning also applies to youth work. There is no specific analysis done on the competences that individuals can obtain on trainings, but there are examples of good practice for recording knowledge and skills gained through youth work, such as:

- System of recording non-formally acquired knowledge (Sistem za beleženje neformalnopridobljenega znanja) by the Nefiks Institute;
- Learning badges (Učne značke) – utilization of open digital badges to value and recognize learning during non-formal learning activities;

- My experiences (Moje izkušnje) – a tool for validation and recognition of working experience, gained by student work.

These tools are being developed in different contexts (international learning mobility, increasing employability, etc.) and different channels (youth work, volunteer, student work, full-time employment). Most of them were created with the active assistance of the Office for Youth Office. Youthpass and Europass are also widely used by young people and youth workers to record their skills and knowledge.

The skills recognition tools developed by projects funded by Erasmus+ mainly focus on three areas: employability, active citizenship, and personal development. It is the development of this kind of skills, therefore, the most expected effect of youth work projects that offer young people experiences of youth mobility, volunteering, and active participation in youth-led projects (in leisure time, community services, social innovation, art and culture, start-up of new enterprises, etc.).

The skills expected and solicited by the experience of the Universal Civil Service are also focused both on the area of civic skills as well as on employability. The guide to the preparation of the final certificate on the skills acquired during the civil service includes:

- management skills of the specific volunteering project carried out;
- social and civic competences referred to in the EU Council Recommendation of 22/5/2018 (active participation in civic and social life, respect for the common values of Europe, ability to contribute to the public interest, respect for human rights, support for social and cultural diversity, gender equality, sustainable lifestyles, culture of peace, respect for privacy, environmental responsibility).

State of Play of Recognition and Validation of Skills Acquired through Youth Work in Georgia

The Vocational Education and training (VET) law and framework documents for the recognition of informal education have created a legal basis for the implementation of Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning (VNIFL) in Georgia. Procedures and rules for VNIFL were renewed in 2019 to align with the EU Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012) and to allow the recognition of non-formal and informal learning for VET qualifications at all National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels.

The VNIFL process includes four stages, corresponding to those of the 2012 European recommendation, namely identification, documentation, assessment and certification. For the purposes of VNIFL, the VET educational standards are used. The assessment process should meet the requirements for the assessment of learning outcomes of the relevant VET standard or module.

Following the VNIFL process, the candidate may be awarded the VET qualification or part of it. VNIFL may be conducted by the VET institution or legal entity authorized to deliver the state recognized vocational training/retraining programs and only within its authorized programs.

To obtain the right to offer validation, which is granted by National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), applicants must meet the rules and conditions established by the government.

In order to conduct the VNIFL process, the institution must establish a commission of at least 3 members: the representative of the relevant professional field (an employers' representative), a VET

teacher in the relevant field and a representative of the institution. This commission decides on the admission to and organization of the assessment, the establishment of the examination commission and its personal composition, validation of the results of the assessment (learning outcomes), and recognition (award of a qualification or part of one).

In **general education**, extra-mural study is allowed, and it is possible to obtain the document certifying completion of general education, based only on the assessment of achieved learning outcomes.

As for youth work **there is no national system of recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work in Georgia.**

Recommendations on Development of System for Recognition and Validation of skills acquired through the youth work in Georgia

The development of systems for recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work is envisioned in “The Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030”. It is an important topic in the current debate on the legal recognition of youth work.

It is recommended development of digital tools for recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work, which can be used as a self-assessment and self-reflection tool for young people and as a measurement tool for organizations. The tool will build young people’s confidence, so that they can better communicate the value of these essential skills to future employers and other interested persons and organizations.

Following steps have to be taken:

- Develop the stakeholders map with their needs and expectations
- Negotiate and agree the recognition and validation policy with main stakeholders
- Establish cross sectoral steering committee on recognition and validation of skills gained through Youth work
- Create working group for development the Recognition and Validation Mechanisms
- Develop digital tools for recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work
- Develop Guidelines
- Develop training materials for all involved bodies
- Capacity building of all involved bodies
- Revision and amendment of legislative framework if needed

References

Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030

EU 's Youth Strategy for 2019-2027

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<https://ege.ge/en/page/static/873/araformaluri-ganatilebis-aghiareba>