



Whitepaper on Youth Work

WHITEPAPER ON YOUTH WORK

The Whitepaper identifies the key challenges that youth workers who work in an international context are facing. It also proposes recommendations and solutions for improvement in areas where youth work need support.

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Introduction

Young people are a key resource in building a social, sustainable, healthy, democratic and just society and should be one of the highest priorities in every society. The education and development of the young people doesn't only happen in a formal and institutional way, however. A large part of the education comes from non-formal education activities, and Europe and Erasmus+ has embraced this and embedded it in the priorities of many different programs.

The second European Convention on Youth Work¹ called for setting a European Agenda on Youth Work and, based on its conclusions and recommendations, the Council of Europe adopted the "Recommendations' on Youth Work" on 31st May 2017 at the 1287th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies². The document acknowledges the positive contribution of youth workers

to empower and engage young people in developing inclusive, democratic and peaceful societies, and it encourages Member States to both develop youth work policies and adopt a range of measures that will strengthen the necessary support for youth work at local, regional, national and European levels.

Youth workers organize these non-formal educational activities in form of workshops, seminars, youth exchanges, or volunteering that can last from couple of days up to a year(long term EVS/ESC). Youth workers have such an important role in society and in education of youth, and they are mentioned in the permanent priorities of the Erasmus+ program. Very little has been done, however, to improve the working conditions and the environment in which they work; an important investment that Europe must make.

¹. https://pjpeu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8529155/The+2nd+European+Youth+Work+Declaration_FINAL.pdf/cc602b1d-6efc-46d9-80ec-5ca57c35eb85

². <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/10886476/CM+REC.pdf/ba2e3081-680e-2200-f6cc-1acb89c6fd22>

Not doing so represents a missed opportunity to increase the capacity of all youth workers and therefore strengthen social cohesion and youth engagement. Not fulfilling the potential that youth work has, weakens the potential in dealing with some of the major challenges Europe is facing, such as migration, youth unemployment, social exclusion and violent extremism.

Even though the debate on and quality of youth work has been growing in the European political and youth work circles, the conditions and support systems for their work has not improved significantly. **Youth workers face many issues and critical situations while working with young people while addressing social challenges all over Europe.**

Recognizing the importance of youth work and acting according to the Convention and the Coun-

cil of Europe's recommendations, the German grass-roots youth organization "NaturKultur" developed and facilitated a process of assessment and dialogue with youth workers across Europe. The process was intended to assess their needs and detect the most common challenges they face. The outcome of this process is a document called "Whitepaper on Youthwork", that describes the areas of support needed by/for youth workers across Europe.

The process was consisted of the following steps:

1. Open dialogue about the needs of youth workers, January – November 2017
2. Training and networking seminar "Recognition of Youth work/ers", May 2018
3. Survey to assess the needs and opinions of youth workers, August 2018
4. Dissemination and Advocacy of the Whitepaper

1. Open dialogue about the needs of youth workers, January - November 2017

There are more than 31.000 organizations that organize mobilities for more than 157.000 young people per year in Erasmus+. These youth workers always put the needs of the participants first – quality learning experience, safety and security, travel, minimal costs, etc. The Erasmus+ program is addressing and improving the needs of the young people on a yearly basis.

The youth workers who organize those mobilities face many challenges: a lot of working hours for minimal pay, most of them are without an adequate insurance and many experience difficulties during projects without appropriate support. The training and guidelines on how to handle certain difficult situations are lacking. Not having appro-

prate working conditions and environments result in the youth workers quitting their job, burning out, or simply mismanaging the situations they encounter.

The NaturKultur team started approaching youth workers and talking openly about these issues. It seemed like these topics are often voiced out and kept as taboo because youth workers felt they could not change much and/or were not being heard or taken seriously when they voiced these challenges they faced. Knowing that most are affected with this situation, it was decided to get involved and facilitate a process of improving the working conditions and recognition of youth work(ers).

2. Training and networking seminar “Recognition of Youthwork/ers”, May 2017

The training and networking seminar “Recognition of youthwork/ers” was held in Bremen, Germany, in May 2018, and it brought together 42 active youth workers from 11 different countries. The aim of the event was to better understand the needs and challenges of youth workers across Europe, and to initiate the process for the creation of the “white paper”.

Led by experienced trainers, the participants discussed the situation of youth work/workers in their countries, their needs and requirements, the common points of synergy and cooperation, and the key areas of improvement. They also learned and discussed tactics for advocacy and lobbying, as well as actions they could take on local, regional and European levels, with an aim to improve “youth work”.

The key conclusions and recommendations that came out from the event were:

2.1. Definition and scope of Youth Work

Youth work is not clearly defined in many countries and it certainly remains difficult to find common ground. The role of youth work has different meanings in different countries. The participants recognized that youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, both in groups and/or individually.

Some of the common characteristics of youth work that were mentioned by all participants were that youth work is a non-formal process of personal development and it includes building capacities in young people. Despite different traditions and

definitions, there is a common understanding that the primary function of youth work is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development.

The structure and delivery of youth work has taken different forms, through municipalities and independent NGOs to religious organizations and political parties. Political recognition of youth work has taken many forms and efforts, as well, where youth work has been part of wider youth policy agendas, the strengthening of the status of youth workers and professionalization and accreditation of youth workers.

2.2. Youth work as a professional occupation

The profile of a youth worker is quite different in every European country. From professional youth workers with higher education in the area of youth work, to professionals educated in

other related areas who have chosen a career in youth work (eg social workers, pedagogues, etc.) to youth workers (mainly young people who decided to continue do youthwork) with a diverse

educational background and additional informal education in youth work.

professions, with a required qualifications and accessible education.

A similar **diversity can be found in the levels of recognition of the youth worker profession**. In some countries, youth workers are included in the list of recognized occupations, but not without being followed by professional standards or a trained educational path. In other countries this profession is defined in the Law on Youth or other strategic youth documents describing the role of youth workers, but without clear criteria regarding qualifications. However, in some countries, youth workers are included in the lists of recognized occupations, such as vocations or

A very common example of youth workers are those who have had experience using youth services. Many follow the path as volunteers in associations, youth centers or clubs, thus acquiring the necessary education for youth workers. Practitioners of youth work are not just professionals, or those with the necessary education and paid employment, but on the contrary, many of the youth work programs in an international context are run by grass-root organizations and youth workers who were in the past the young people who attended those programs.

2.3. Needs and requirements of youth workers – conclusions and recommendations

The process of open dialogue and assessment of the needs of youth workers on the training and networking seminar has led to the following conclusions and recommendations:

2.3.1 Lack of support systems - what to do in difficult/crisis situations?

The largest youth program in Europe, the Erasmus+ program³, encourages involving young people coming from diverse backgrounds, such as young people with disabilities, young refugees and many other different profiles of young people with fewer opportunities. Very often young people with hidden challenges join the projects such as those with severe depression, eating disorders and medications abuse, or that were victims of sexual abuse, harassment or death of a whole family. These young people carry heavy emotional burdens, and sometimes they open up to the youth workers with their problems, but sometimes they have serious reactions that influence other participants, or the group/project, which can cause the project heavy financial losses, more complicated situation that requires continuous care, or very often expose the youthworkers in charge to serious health issues.

We as youth workers are available 24/7 for the young people, and we are there to provide guidance, call social or health services, or in some cases, police assistance. However, the experience of youth workers shows that the program doesn't provide sufficient guidelines or support systems for dealing with crisis situations. Some examples: what does one do when a participant wants to leave the project in the middle of the night because of personal issues and just wants to walk to the next town that is 120km away? Or when a participant on a youth exchange experiences a nervous breakdown? Or when participants make problems on such a level that the hotel wants to evict the entire group?

These are just few examples that youth workers shared in this process during the training and

³. More than 157.000 young people involved in 2016, Erasmus+ annual report

networking course “Recognition of Youth Work”. Every youth organization that implemented at least 3 projects can share its own story of dealing with crisis situations. Each organization and youth worker that organizes the youth mobility projects has dealt with a situation based on an intuitive feeling of what is right and what is wrong. **Dealing**

with crisis situations and the need for the establishment of a support system for youth workers has been one of the key conclusions taken out of this process. A troubleshooting team made available 24/7, and an online help website was one of the solutions proposed by the youth workers.

2.3.2 Safety and security of the youthworkers

Youth work is stimulating, fun and engaging. Youth workers sincerely and wholeheartedly dedicate their time, day and night, and even work weekends in order to realize successful projects and make an impact on their society.

This approach might result in a burnout (also known as occupational burn-out: long term unresolved stressed caused by an occupation). There is no data available on how many youth workers experience this or the reasons behind it. The participants in this process (and in the survey conducted for the needs of this whitepaper) have shared their experiences and identified several reasons why this is happening: No regular income and financial issues, working for minimal pay, working as a youth worker next to other jobs; lack of proper training for dealing with different social groups with difficult (emotional) content; intense work next to big amounts of paperwork, extensive application and reporting procedures, long working hours, multi-tasking

with many different responsibilities from logistical and operational to strategic and long-term thinking; Difficulties for youth workers to balance their personal and professional lives; Lack of an appropriate training and/or experience for youth workers to deal with their given responsibilities; and many other reasons.

The participants agreed that “burnout” among youth workers is happening quite often, but it is just not openly spoken about. Some of the key recommendations the participants made in order to tackle this challenge were: 1) To monitor and gather data on burnouts of youth workers; 2) To understand the symptoms of a burnout: re-search the reasons causing burnout and identify which youth workers groups are more prone to burn out (gender, age, background etc.); 3) To speak openly about it, stimulate conversations and share good practices in dealing with burn-out; 4) To have a career guide; career counselors who reach out to youth organizations.

2.3.3 There needs to be insurance for youth workers;

Another important topic that came out of the training and networking seminar and the survey was the lack of insurance for youth workers. Not all youth workers are insured. According to the rules of the program, all participants are insured, but not the youth workers (trainers and organizers). Many youth workers are not full time employees in their youth organizations and they do not have insurance. When it comes to organizing

a youth project, since we are the ones responsible to care of all the youngsters, we need to make sure they are all insured. There are certain programs in the Erasmus+ where the volunteers are all insured (i.e. EVS volunteers are all insured by CIGNA insurance), but not all programs are treated fairly and equally.

One of the recommendations the participants made is that the insurance system of the EVS might be a good case practice, i.e. all youth

workers should have the same insurance the EVS volunteers have for the duration of the youth project.

2.3.4 Youth workers and youth organizations ask for a wider consultation process for the Erasmus+ priorities;

All participants felt that they were not included in the process of decision making when it came to the E+ program priorities. Feeling ownership over the process is an important element of realizing quality projects. Including youth workers in the consultation for the next year's priorities also prepares them for longer term planning and strategy. Youth workers are asked to work on specific topic/issues all over Europe even if they do not have actual experience for the topic in their local reality (for example refugees, radicalized youth etc.). This may result in unskilled youth workers working with young people on very sensitive topics. The participants concluded that if they were involved

in the consultation and decision making process for the Erasmus+ priorities, it would give them a clearer overview and information about the topic they need to prepare and work on and it would give them sense of ownership.

Furthermore, the participants would like to see: 1) Concrete timeline and agenda of the next year's priorities; 2) Information about the topic (at least after the second call for applications); 3) Training system that will provide the knowledge and experience needed to address the topics and implement them in a structured and impactful manner.

2.3.5 Youth workers need the capacity and knowledge to work with changing and new priorities;

It has been often shared that the topics being presented from the Erasmus+ program are not aligned with the knowledge and capacity that the youth workers and youth organizations have. It requires time and investment for an organization (or a youth worker) to develop competencies and knowledge to work with young people on a certain topic. When priorities change yearly, without a proper consultations process, the youth workers face difficulties in ensuring sustainability of knowledge and long term impact. They need to start working on another topic and leave the knowledge and capacity they gained with the previous priorities behind. This has proven to be a challenge for almost all participants.

One of the recommendations has been to postpone the duration of the priorities i.e. instead of having one-year priorities, to have two-year priorities (or three). This can ensure more long-term and strategic work of all youth workers and youth organizations.

Other recommendation were to set up a training system for all new priorities. When they are being introduced, Salto or experienced organizations on the topic, to conduct a series of workshops and trainings (train the trainers, train the youthworkers) that will ensure the sharing of knowledge on the topic to as many youth workers as possible.

2.3.6

Youth workers and youth organizations need support for basic organizational capacity;

Many youth workers come from grass-root organizations that are formed by young people with different backgrounds. They are usually driven from their passion and vision for a better society, and all programs encourage young people to get involved and organize activities themselves. However, they are not aware of the daily administrative and management challenges that an organization faces. Almost all participants shared that the youth organizations lack guidance and knowledge of the administrative, managerial, development and strategic aspects of their work. The accounting, financial cash-flows, project

development and management, strategic and action plans, reporting and legal work are just some of the topics the youth organizations need support for, and consulting on.

The organizational consulting component came out from the lack of this knowledge and the obvious support that youth workers and youth organizations need in that perspective. The mention of organizational grants, consulting, coaching and mentoring has been mentioned as some of the solutions might be suggested to this challenge.

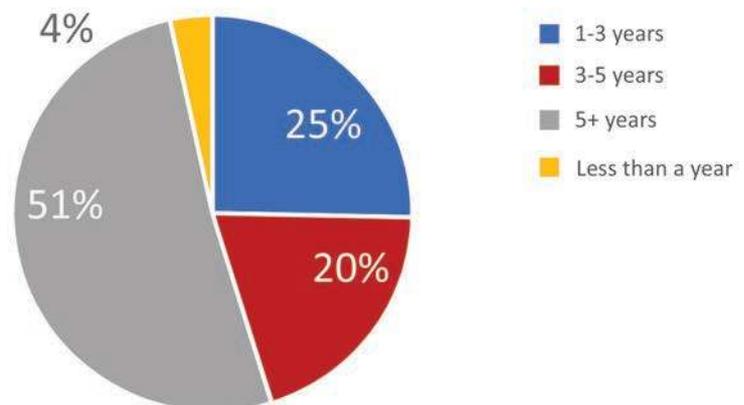
3. Survey to assess and reconfirm the needs and opinions of youth workers, August 2018

As active participation is one of the key principles of youth work, we wanted to include as many youth workers as possible in the confirmation of these conclusions, the importance, and the urgency of these issues. Therefore, we developed a survey for youth workers, to an-

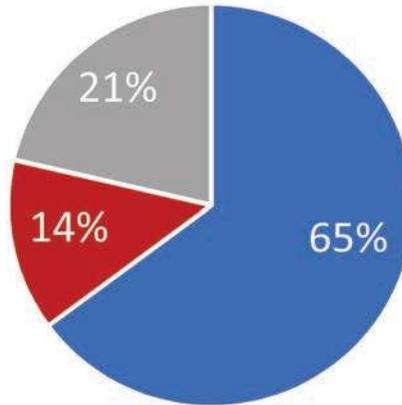
swer and share their opinions and practice with us.

The survey was open from August 1 to August 21, and it was answered by 146 youth workers from 34 different program and partner countries.

How long have you been a youth worker?

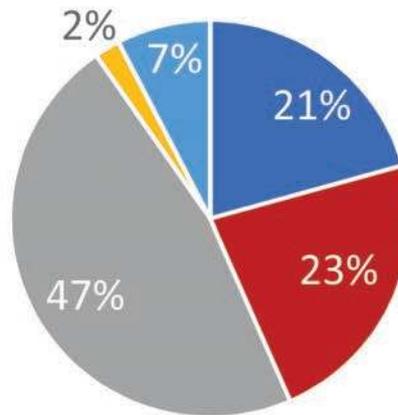


What is your focus of action?



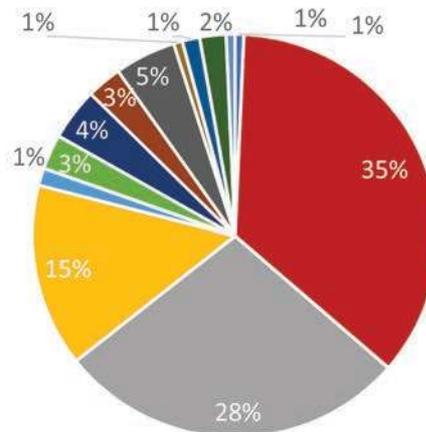
- Both
- International youth work
- Local/national youth work

How long have you been involved in the Erasmus+ program?



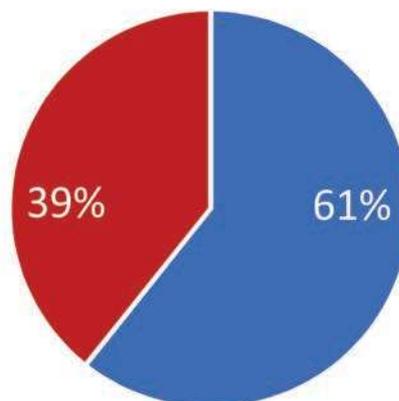
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5+ years
- I haven't been involved in Erasmus+ program
- Less than 1 year

What kind of projects do you do (have you done) in the Erasmus+ program?



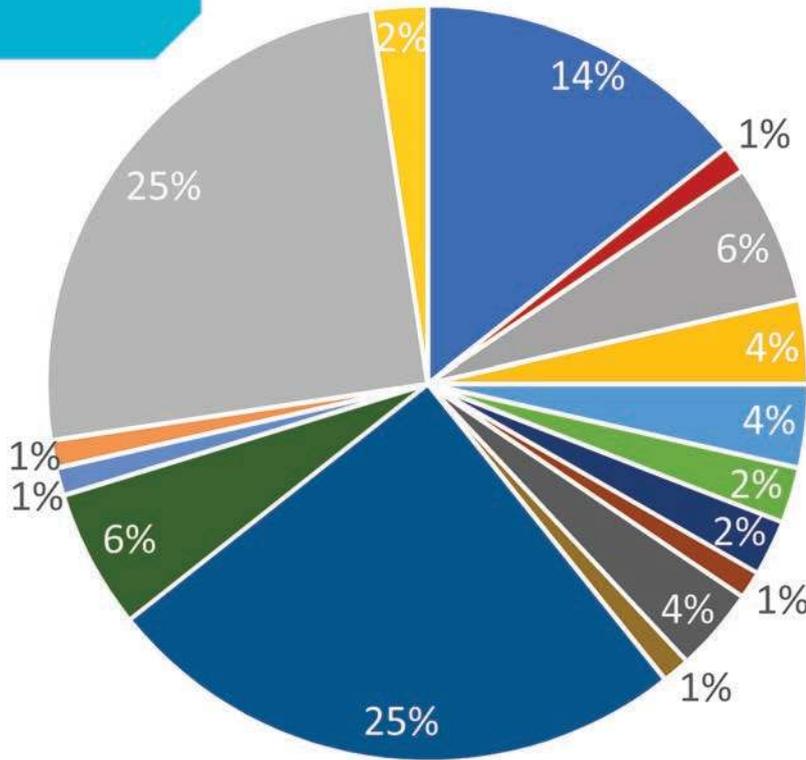
- Jean-Monet
- KA1
- KA1
- KA2
- KA2
- KA3
- KA3
- Sport
- KA1
- KA1
- KA2
- KA2
- KA3
- Sport
- KA1
- KA2
- KA3

Are you full time employed?



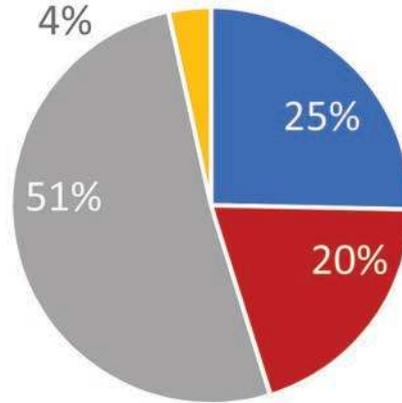
- No
- Yes

I am...



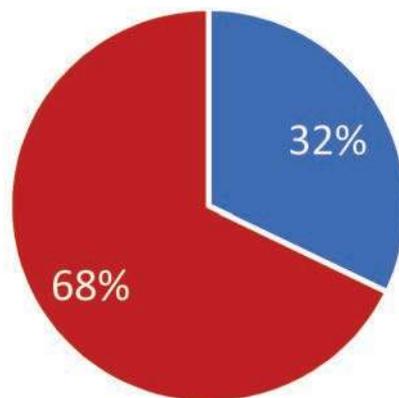
- Free-lancer
- Part time Project based Volunteer
- Project based Volunteer
- Other
- Part time Project based Volunteer Free-lancer
- Project based Volunteer Free-lancer
- Part time
- Part time Volunteer
- Volunteer
- Part time Free-lancer
- Part time Volunteer Other
- Volunteer Free-lancer
- Part time Project based Volunteer
- Project based Volunteer
- Part time Project based Volunteer Free-lancer
- Project based Free-lancer

How long have you been a youth worker?



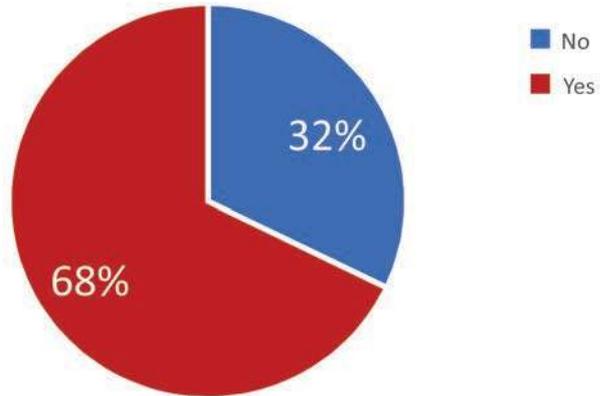
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5+ years
- Less than a year

Have you experienced a very difficult and hard to solve situation on a youth project?

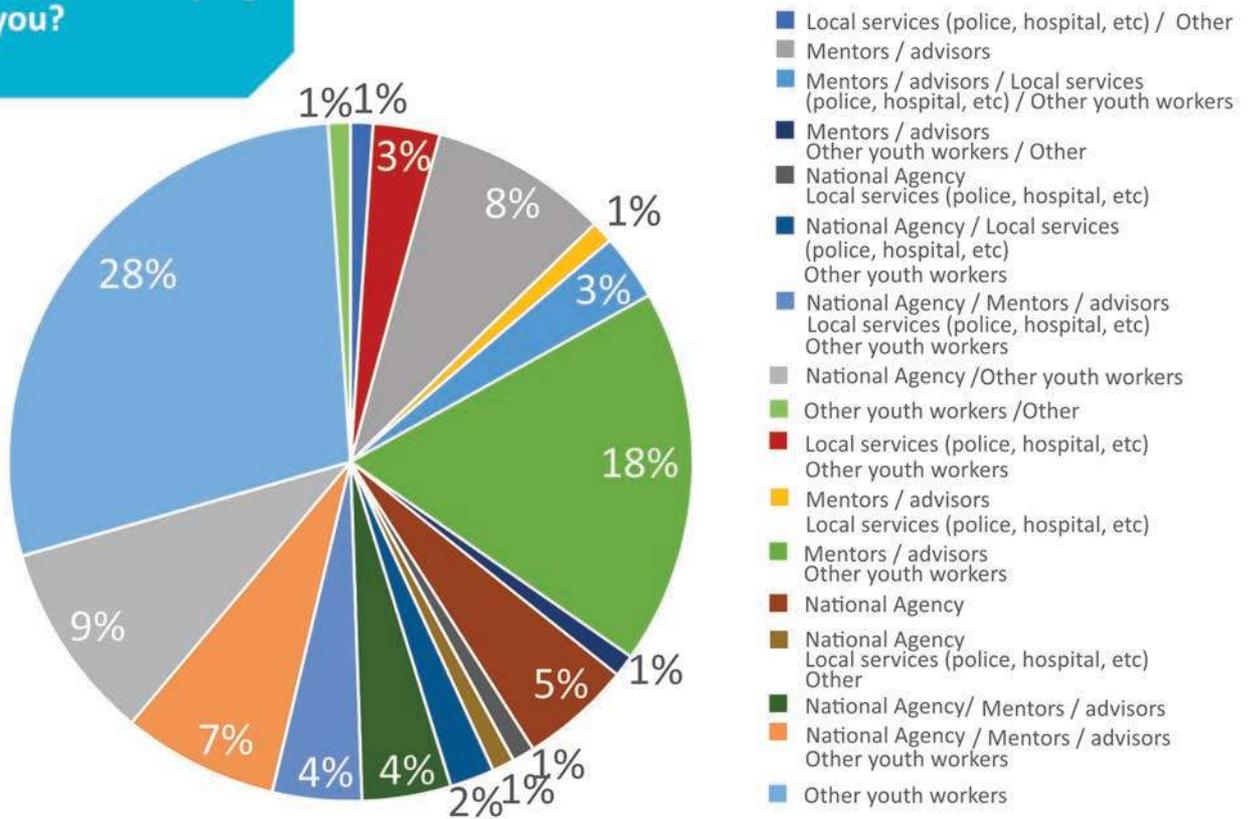


- No
- Yes

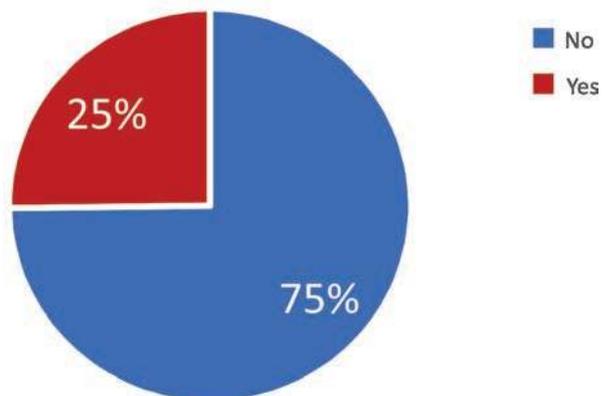
Did you have someone helping you in this situation?



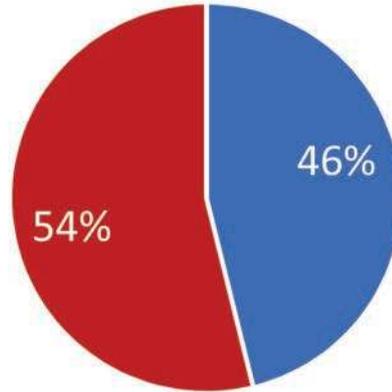
Who was helping you?



Do you have any resource or material (guidelines, instructions) on how to deal with situations like this?

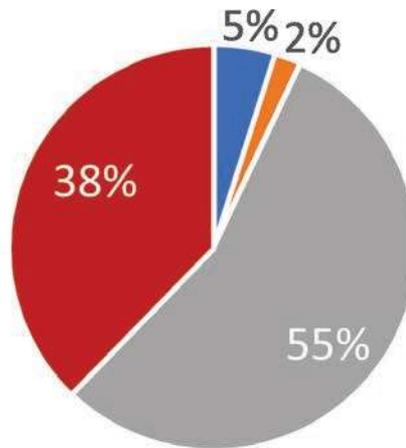


Are you aware that there are such materials?



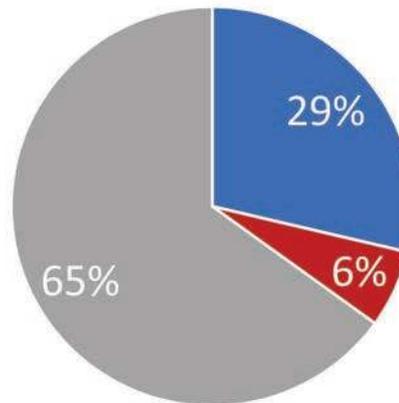
- No
- Yes

Would you like to have such information available online and on one website?



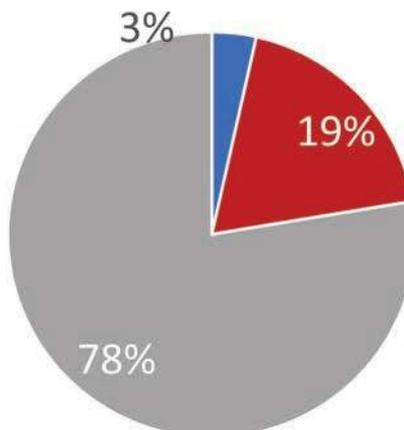
- I am not sure
- No, I don't see how this can help
- Yes, I strongly agree
- Yes, I think this will be helpful for many youth workers

Would you like to have 24/7 troubleshooting team (support team) available for youth workers that would give advice in very difficult situations?



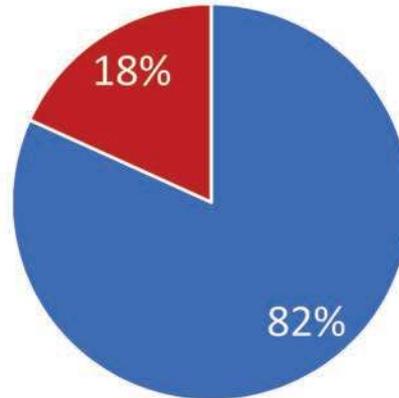
- Maybe
- No
- Yes

Do you have health insurance?



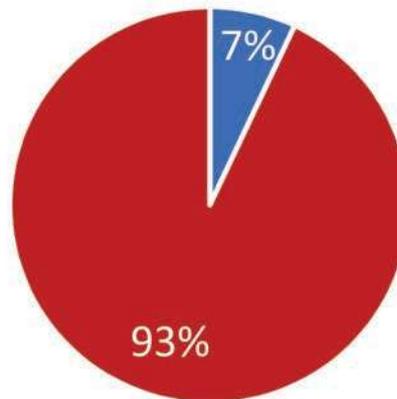
- I do not want to answer
- No
- Yes

Do you have insurance at work space?



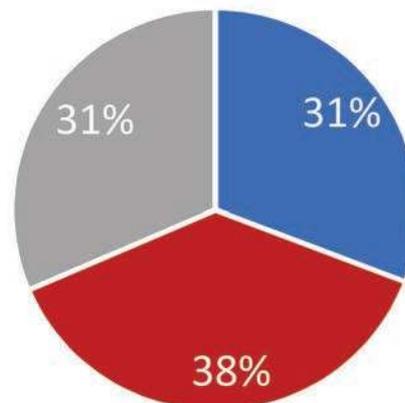
No
Yes

Would you like to have insurance as a youth worker?



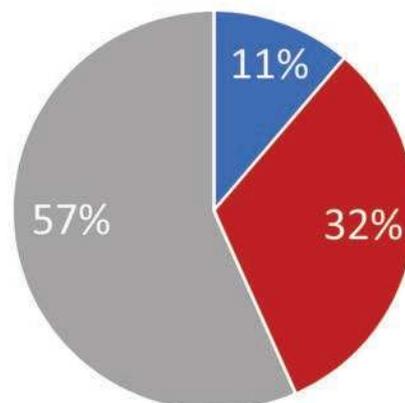
No
Yes

Are there grants for organizational capacity in your country available for organizations? (grants for office, equipment, salaries)



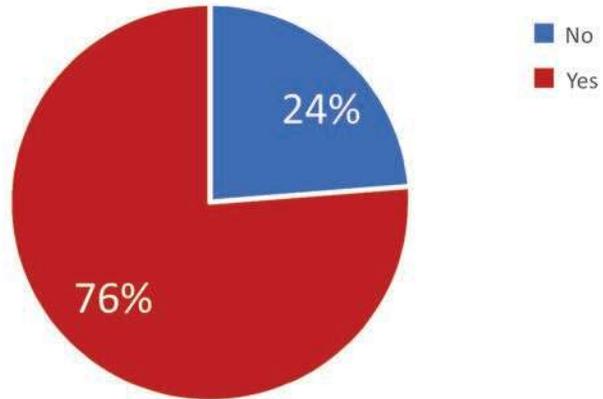
I don't know
No
Yes

Does your organization have basic needs that you need to have covered by a grant?

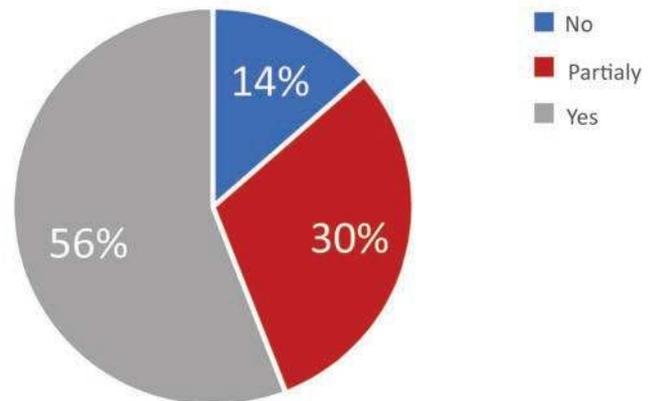


I am not part of any organization (I am a freelancer)
No
Yes

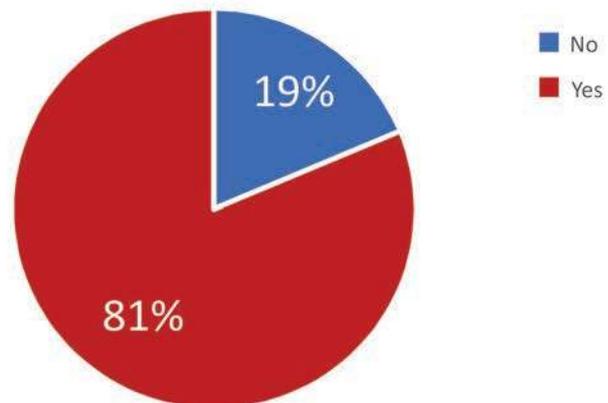
Do you need consultation/ advisory for your organization on these topics?



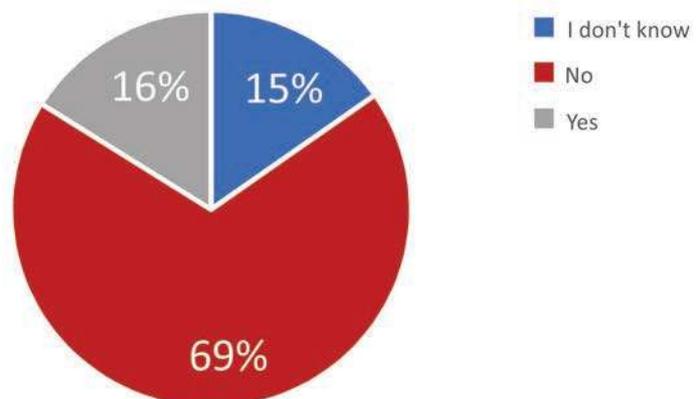
Are you aware of the yearly priorities of the Erasmus+ program for 2018?



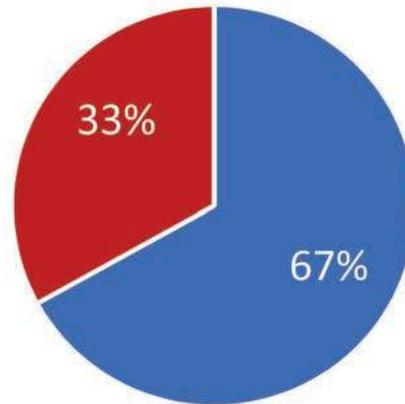
Do you know the permanent priorities of Erasmus+ program?



Have you (or your organization) been consulted for the yearly priorities in Erasmus+ program?

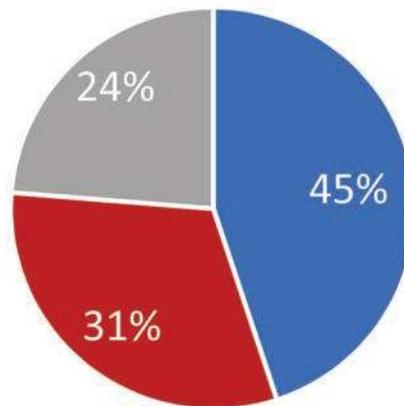


Are you aware if there is consultation process with the organizations/ youth workers for the yearly priorities in Erasmus+ program



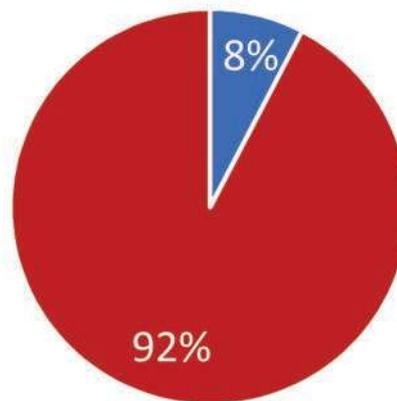
■ No
■ Yes

Would you prefer the priorities to change on:



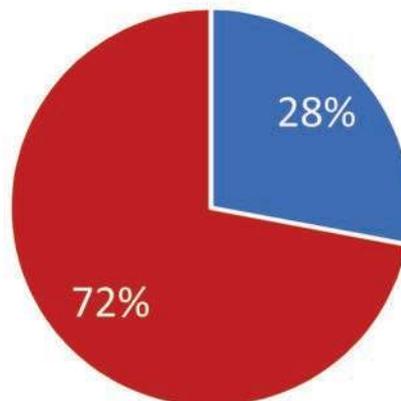
■ Every 2 years
■ Every 3 years
■ Every year

Do you think there should be consultation process with the NGOs about the yearly priorities?



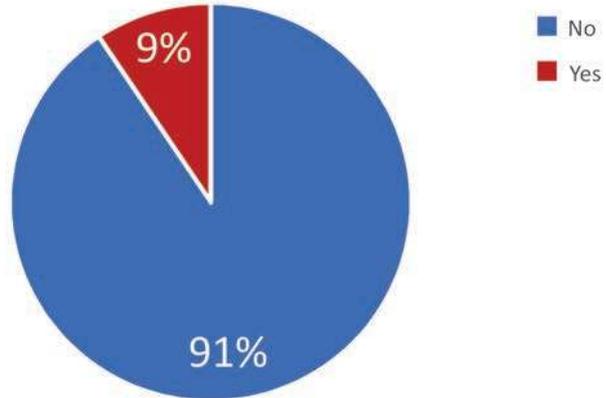
■ No
■ Yes

Have you experienced burn - out during your work?

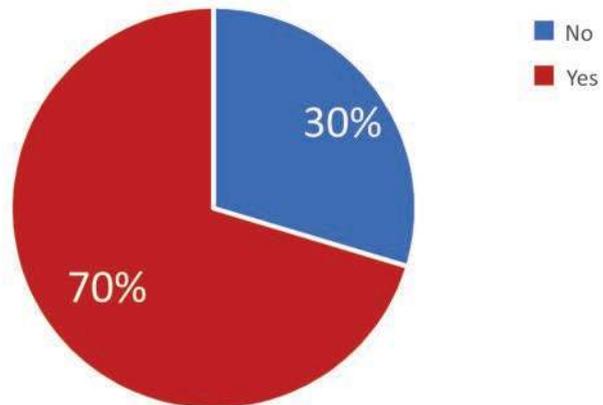


■ No
■ Yes

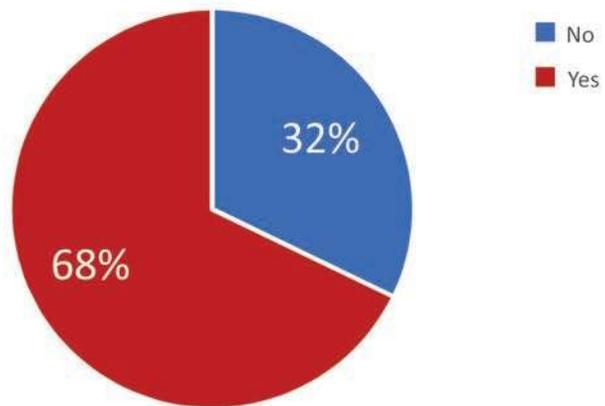
Was there any professional help / support?



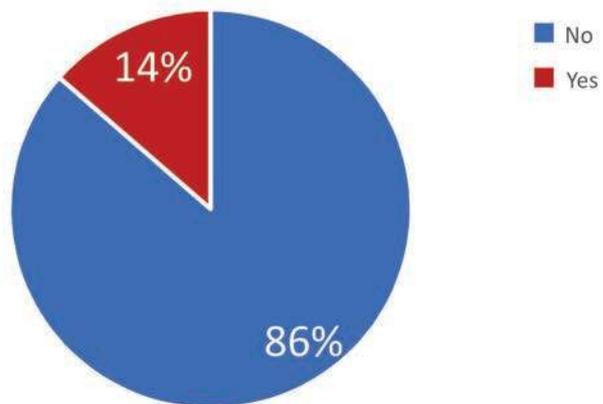
Do you know any colleague that has experienced burn - out?



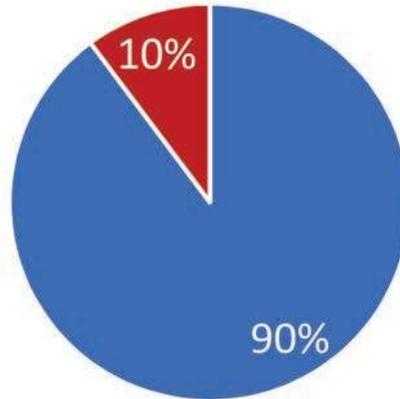
Do you know someone who quitte youth work because of burn - out and lack of working conditions?



Do you know where to find information for people who have experienced burn - out?

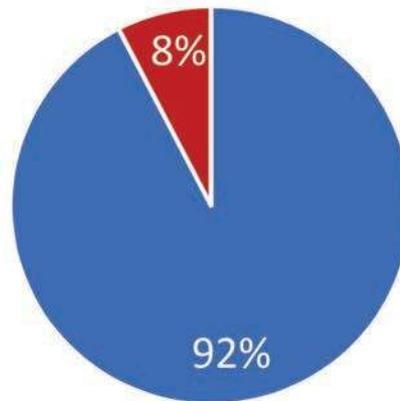


Are you trained to work with refugees?



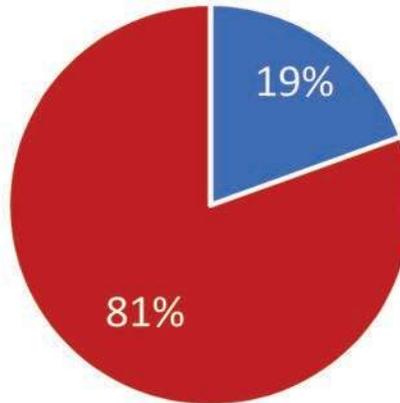
■ No
■ Yes

Are you trained to work with radicalized youth?



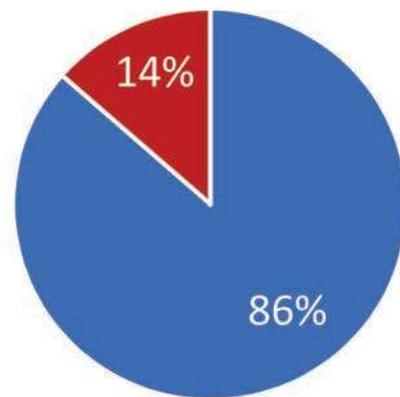
■ No
■ Yes

Do you need training in order to be able to work with these groups?



■ No
■ Yes

Was there offer in your country to learn how to work with these groups prior to becoming yearly priorities in Erasmus+?



■ No
■ Yes

3. Key findings of the survey

3.1. Many youth workers face crisis situations and do not know how to deal with them

The Erasmus+ program encourages youth workers to include many young people with fewer opportunities in the projects and to design activities to integrate them into society, but also a lot of young people take part who have been sexually or physically abused, have different kind of disorders or depression. Working with young people with fewer opportunities has its own specific set of challenges. The health of participants (mental and physical), aggressive behavior, fights, intoxication and drug abuse are to name just a few challenges.

“We had a participant spraying the whole group with a fire extinguisher, making the building a mess and prompting the hotel to ask us to leave. We didn’t know what to do in the middle of the night” – said one youth worker from Croatia. “I had a participant leaving the project in the middle of the night without any explanation, wanting to walk home. The police, hospital or family could not help. We didn’t know what to do” – shared another youth worker from Germany.

Sadly, these are not rare situations. 68% of the youth workers in the survey answered that they have encountered very difficult situations on youth projects. As this is not something that people learn in school or read books about, the guidelines are very limited, in some cases non-existent, and many questions remain unanswered when dealing with critical and crisis situation.

Example – from whom can the youth workers ask for advice on a Friday night when a participant on a youth exchange has a nervous breakdown and

the police, medics or family cannot provide care in this situation? Or when participants make so many problems in the hotel to that management wants to evict the whole group?

The stress and the challenge of addressing such situations is high and it influences the wellbeing of the youth workers, as well. Many of them (72%) experienced burn-out, but also there are other forms that we are aware of but need further research for such as anxiety, guilt or quitting the job (70% know a colleague who quit because of burnout and/or lack of working conditions).

According to the research that involved 146 youth workers from 34 countries, there is evident need for a support system that is going to be available 24/7 to support the implementation of the projects that will contribute to the wellbeing of the youth workers.

The expected results are very concrete:

1. Better addressing of crisis situations to address the safety and security of the young people, youth workers and national agencies.
2. More job satisfaction from the youth workers, less youth workers quitting their jobs (brain drain).
3. Better and safer working environment for both youngsters and youth workers.

Additionally, we found that 75% of youth workers don’t have any materials on how to address these situations or don’t know (46%) that there

are any materials on how to address critical and very difficult situations on youth projects.

93% of the youth workers answered that they would like to have that information made available to them online and on one website. We also learned that the most relevant resource in diffi-

cult situations is the youth worker community itself. When they call someone they know, to help them with advice. When asked who helped them in those difficult situations, most of the youth workers (more than 50%) answered that other more experienced youth workers have helped them.

There are four recommendations that can address the problem on short-medium-long term:

1. To create guidelines on how to handle crisis and critical situations when working on a youth project; (short term)
2. Open source web platform where youth workers can share experiences and harvest learning. The website can have forums and support groups, and it should protect the privacy of the individuals involved, but provide insight in past experiences and solutions applied. (short term)
3. Crisis management trainings and workshops to become part of the curriculum and program of training courses for trainers and youth workers (ToT, BiTriMulti, NA meetings and coordination points with beneficiaries). (medium term)
4. Troubleshooting team – a 24/7 troubleshooting team that will be available for the beneficiaries. Not composed of legal experts or psychologists, but of experienced youth workers that can advise/council on what to do – which services to contact (police/hospital), what they are allowed/not allowed to do as organizers, to help the youth workers to calm down. Some NAs have already established this kind of troubleshooting teams as part of EVS program, so it's a starting point of taking the good case practice and implementing it on European level for all youth mobilities. (Long term)

3.2. Safety and security of youth workers is lacking

As mentioned before, many countries in Europe don't have defined youth work as a profession, and as a result, there is no supporting infrastructure to address safety and security at work. Although youth work might seem like a relatively risk-free profession, there are many challenges that affect the wellbeing of the youth workers.

Some of those challenges include work overload and emotional intensity. A youth worker from Luxembourg shared, "Youth work is 24/7 job, 365 days a year. This is so because you cannot simply say 'no' to a youngster that needs you."

Many times, youth workers work with young people with fewer opportunities and heart-breaking stories relating to drug abuse, sexual harassment or rape, refugees who lost their families, chronic depression, eating disorders and many others. Having to listen to the youngsters and being there to help and address their needs means that a lot of the youth workers have to carry the emotional burden of the youngsters.

The questions related to safety and security:

- A surprisingly large number of the youth workers are without any health insurance (18%);
- 60% of the youth workers in the survey answered that they don't have insurance at work space;
- 93% of youth workers would like to have an insurance at the workplace;
- 72% of the people who answered the survey have experienced occupational burnout;
- To 91% of those who have experienced burn-out during youth work, no one has helped through the process of recovery;
- 70% answered that they know other colleagues who have experienced burn-out, and quitted because of that and the lack of working conditions;
- Nearly 87% said that they don't know where to find the relevant information for people who experienced burn-out;

Recommendations

Keeping in mind that safety and security are important topics which need additional research and decisions should not be rushed, we are suggesting several mid and long term suggestions:

1. To establish a mandatory insurance for the youth workers as part of the rules of Erasmus+ program the same way as there is for the young people (participants) in the program; (Medium-long term)
2. An on-line service (web) that will address the wellbeing of the youth workers, especially awareness, prevention and recovery of burn-out. A place where the community of youth workers can share case practices, advices, materials; (Medium-term)
3. Trainings and workshops where the wellbeing of the youth workers will be addressed as part of the curriculum and a program of training courses for trainers and youth workers (ToT, BiTriMulti, NA meetings and coordination points with beneficiaries). (medium term);

3.3. Inclusion of youth workers in the consultation process for the program priorities

Each year in December, the EC is launching the new Erasmus+ program guide with the priorities for the following year. The purpose of the yearly priorities of the Erasmus+ program is to address the issues that Europe is facing and to motivate the youth workers and organizations to create projects and activities that are going to provide awareness and education and address those issues.

The survey showed that 68% of respondents are not aware that there is consultation process for the program priorities. The youth workers feel that the process is designed "top to bottom" and the beneficiaries have little to say or do in order to influence the process. Youth workers feel that they are the ones that should be consulted because they are the ones who

implement the program in practice and know the situation on the ground level.

Other challenge, youth workers face when it comes to the priorities, is the lack of consistency on the topics. For every organization that is serious in doing youth work, it is well known that it takes time to develop capacity to address certain issues, even slightly to change the focus. It takes 3-6 months for one organization (NGO, youth center etc) to come out with quality program, to train or further develop their trainers/ youth workers, to develop activities, to create meaningful networks with institutions (such as startup accelerators and universities) that will strengthen the implementation of the project and provide quality experience for young people or youth workers. For example: in the few years prior to 2015, addressing the unemployment of young people was an important priority. Many organizations started designing and organizing activities, youth exchanges and training courses, to work on this topic coherently. Thus they developed capacities, knowledge and expertise

to work on the topic. Changing the priorities on a yearly basis is too little time for doing quality and sustainable work.

The preparation and the capacity of youth workers to work on new topics is also limited. When the crisis with the refugees started, for example, the priorities of the Erasmus+ program also changed. Addressing the integration of refugees, tolerance and intercultural understanding reasonably became the new priorities. The organizations started applying project with those topics, implementing activities, fostering the change and addressing the challenges. However, **very few organizations had training or competencies to actually work with refugees and deal with the emotions and trauma they have/bring.**

More than 90% of the youth workers in the survey said that they are not trained to work with refugees, although it has been nearly 2 years that the integration of refugees was part of the priorities of KA1.

Recommendations and solutions:

1. Extend the one year priorities to two year priorities (or even three); Only 22% of the youth workers believe that the priorities should change each year, while the rest of them (78%) believe that they should change at least every two to three years.
2. Bottom-up approach when setting the priorities with inclusion of the youth workers. The consultation process can include events and conferences each year where different beneficiaries from all the countries meet and discuss the “burning issues” of each society. Since they are the ones working on the implementation and are “in the field” they can provide better insights and understanding of the burning issues. (94% of the youth workers think that the European Commission should more closely consult the organizations before setting the priorities)
3. Training and capacity building when working on new priorities. Example, when introducing a topic such as radicalized youth or refugees, the national agencies and SALTO should organize trainings and workshops and provide materials and resources for the youth workers to work on the new topic. (81% of the youth workers said that they need training to be able to work with these groups).

3.4. Sustainability and growth

Many youth workers and youth organizations are grass-roots and formed by young people with different backgrounds (academic, cultural, social etc.). Youth workers are usually driven by their passion and vision for a better society, so they continue to provide opportunities for other young people. Grass-roots NGOs are being largely and openly recognized for doing youth work, while young people themselves are being encouraged to organize activities, do workshops themselves and become more active in society, become Europeers. This approach has created many organizations of young people who actively organize different kinds of activities. They are not aware of the daily administrative and management challenges that an organization faces, however.

76% of youth workers answered that their organizations lack guidance and knowledge on the administrative, management, development and strategic aspects of their work. Operational functions such as accounting, financial cash-flows, project development, management, reporting, legal, strategic and action plans, are some of the subjects in which youth workers and youth organizations need real support.

There are the good case practices of NGOs who have capacity for organizational development, or who have members or leaders with organizational management backgrounds and therefore developed great organizations in their own countries that are self sustainable, professional, and do great youthwork (examples can be found in Germany, UK, Lithuania, Macedonia, Georgia, Greece, Italy etc). The discussions went in many directions: to learn from those organizations, to encourage the capacity building and sharing of good case practices and to create trainings for long term sustainability of the organizations.

Having this in mind the recommendations are:

1. To create organizational capacity grants as part of the Erasmus+ program. They should be mid-terms grants that are going to satisfy the basic needs of the NGOs such as rent for office, insurance or salary for one person. The grants funding should not exceed 2 years. This grant will provide the opportunity for the NGO to “stand on their own feet” and create enough time and capacity to figure out their own long term strategy. 91% of the youth workers think that grants to cover the basic needs of the organizations should be included in the Erasmus+ program.
2. To create support team for organizational management, operational functions, sustainability and growth of the NGOs. Experienced professionals and youth workers who have experience in managing organizations and developing social enterprises should help organizations develop and create their own long term strategic plans and sustainability. This will not only bring consistency to the NGO sector, but it will also stop the brain drain from the youth sector and provide better quality results. 76% of the youth workers said that their organizations need this kind of support.
3. Design on-line curriculum with webinars on different topics and subjects that youth workers lack knowledge of. The subjects of the webinars will reflect the lack of knowledge of the youth workers and the needs of youth organizations. The webinars need to be easy accessible, easy to understand and always available on-line.

4. Dissemination and Advocacy of the Whitepaper

This whitepaper is available in electronic and hard-copy version from 03. September, 2018. The electronic version can be found at: <http://naturkultur.eu/whitepaper/>

The hard-copy edition has been printed and sent to the following public officials and offices:

German National agency „Jugend für Europa“

Hans-Georg Wicke

President

Manfred von Hebel

Head of strategy and Projects

Katja Adam-Weustenfeld

Program responsible

Italian National agency

Giacomo D'Arrigo

Silvia Strada

Giovanna Perfetto

Serena Angioli

French national agency

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Director

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Head of Erasmus+

Austrian National agency

Martina Fürpass

Director

Gerhard Moßhammer

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SALTO Centre for Training und Cooperation

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Udo Teichmann

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European Commission

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Head of sector in charge of youth activities within Erasmus+

Corinna Liersch

Youth policy Officer

Fabienne Metayer

Sector lead for the youth policy team

European Youth Forum

Youth Department, Directorate of Democratic Participation

In the period to come, we are going to have the following activities for creating awareness, consultation, advocacy and lobbying:

- Advocating and applying for funds for a more systematic research on a larger sample done in cooperation with professional researchers
- Presenting the findings on international strategic and coordination meetings with youth workers, policy officials, trainers, national agencies and other relevant stakeholders
- Trainings and networking events for youth workers, youth organizations and trainers
- Initiating working groups that will create new and further develop the possible solutions
- Advocating and support to policy makers for policy reform

Organizations participating in “Recognition of youthwork/ers”

Ocean Znanja
Croatia

HYP
Greece

Componibile62
Italy

Preili izglitotai
Latvia

Anatta Foundation
Holland

Dare to take your chance
Romania

Ayuntamiento De San Justo Desvern
Spain

Youth Work Association
Turkey

VCS
Macedonia

Támaszpont MOPKA
Hungary

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