



Pre announcement: European Expert Meeting for youth workers

Rotterdam • 17th - 19th March 2010 • the Netherlands



Empowering youth work

Placing youth work in Europe as evidence based practice

Youth work on the European agenda

In November 2009 the European Council of Ministers of the European Union will adopt a new framework for future co-operation in the youth field 'Investing and Empowering'. Its main ambitions for 2010 to 2018 are to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and at the labour market, and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people. A strong role for youth work is foreseen to reach these targets. Also the Council of Europe has recently adopted its youth agenda 2020 on the future youth policy at which challenges in the youth field towards stronger participation in society are aimed for. The development of quality youth work and its recognition and multilateral youth co-operation are considered to be key methods and instruments in this strategy.

It is with reason that youth work is high on the European agenda. Youth workers play an active role – more than just pedagogical – within the context of a varied set of youth provisions and within its decision-making chains. In the European context the common ground is that youth workers work with children and young people in a non-formal (education) setting. In other aspects the diversity of youth work and the youth worker within Europe is a fact: in background, position, capacity, tasks and responsibilities. Realizing this diversity, what are the shared questions and answers for the expert meeting?



Focus of the Expert Meeting

What are the defined roles, competences and backgrounds? Where are the good practices and how do youth workers share their knowledge about the methods that have proven to work? What are the lessons learnt and how is the evidence spread? How do youth workers influence policy makers at local, national and at European level? Is youth work recognized as a broad (pedagogical) youth provision? Should it focus more on solving problems with young people (at risk) in society? How can youth workers strongly position themselves within the European countries? And how can local youth workers contribute to the European strategy ambitions?

By tackling these questions the meeting should provide knowledge, tools and assets for youth workers to further strengthen their position at local, national and European level and to identify the strong points – unique selling points – for youth work all over Europe. Sharing best or bad practices and finding common grounds about proven effectiveness of those practices will be the meeting ground. The results could be a starting point for youth workers to create a stronger European network to better use their influence and share their knowledge. The expert meeting also contributes to the debate on developing a better recognition of youth work in Europe. This will be further explored at European level during the 'EU Presidency Conference on Youth Work' from the 7th-10th of July in Gent, Belgium. With the expert meeting we want to contribute from the perspective of youth workers themselves.

For whom?

Around 50 experienced youth workers will be the expert participants. They have a good practical experience in working with children and young people directly. They also have a strong experience with (lobbying towards) policy and decision making structures. Also people with a youth work background and now working in public administrations or (applied) research in the field of youth are invited to send in their applications. All participants should be able to present in English a best or bad practice from their own experience in the field related to the topics of the expert meeting. The participants should be able to follow up on the results within their own settings.

By whom?

The expert meeting is organised by the Netherlands Youth Institute (www.nji.nl) and Foundation Jong (www.stichting-jong.nl). The programme outline is prepared in close cooperation with representatives of the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth, Project team Belgian EU Presidency Youth, JINT (National organisation for international activities for young people in Belgium), the Finnish Youth Research Network, the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) in the UK and Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene JugendArbeit (BOJA) in Austria.

Outline to the Programme

There will be a few inspiring keynote speakers, but the main part of the meeting and its results are based on the inputs of the 50 expert youth workers and the best/bad practices provided. Facilitators will lead the process during working sessions around the following topics:

Unity in Diversity

The great variety of backgrounds in youth work in Europe is our starting point. Where do we come from as a professional (education, profile, motivation and expectations) and where does our organisation come from (history, aims, target groups, context and its 'raison d'être')? What are various career backgrounds and what does this mean in the identities as a youth worker towards children and youngsters? What do youth workers share? What are the strong points and what do youth workers want to achieve? What are the assets and how can youth workers anticipate on changing needs of children and young people in a rapidly changing society?

Influencing policy makers

Very often the 'chain of influence' is as follows: society → policy → youth worker → young people. A lot of youth workers experience however tensions between their day to day reality, the expectations of young people and the high demands from decision makers and society towards their (problem solving) capacity. Youth workers see the challenges and needs of society and young people from practice based experience. This 'silent' knowledge can be made more explicit. How can youth workers be more effective in influencing decision makers at local, national and European level? Can the 'chain of influence' change?

Positioning youth work

It 'takes a village to raise a child' and youth work is part of the social and pedagogical learning and living environment of children and young people. Recognition of youth work as part of a coherent infrastructure of social and pedagogical provisions for young people is necessary to identify its competences and the skills needed and assessed. But where does youth work start and finish? What does youth work take on board and where are its limitations? In other words, when does or should a youth worker say no? What is the position and approach of youth work in relation to other provisions like schools, childcare, youth care, sport or the police? In what way does youth work need to co-operate with these provisions? What does that mean for defining a common set of competences and skills for youth workers?

Sharing practice

What works and how do we know it works? Is there evidence based youth work practice? What are the good and bad practices we can learn from? What can we learn from existing working methods, training of youth workers, influencing policy makers or successful co-operation with other actors at a local level. We want to challenge the participating experts to bring and share their best (evidence based) practices..

Youth workers act European

What is the role of youth workers with respect to the European developments in the field of youth? Positioning youth work within a transversal or cross-sectoral approach to youth policy is maybe ambitious, but not impossible. How to make this feasible, what do youth workers need and which strategies could be made operational at European, national and other levels? How can the results of this meeting contribute to the implementation of the European youth agenda's? What is needed to develop a stronger European network of youth workers?

Practicalities

When and where

The meeting starts the 17th of March 2009 in the early afternoon and finishes the 19th of March after lunch. The meeting itself is in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (one hour by train from Schiphol airport in Amsterdam).

Financial arrangements

You – or your organisation – will have to provide your own travel arrangements to and from Rotterdam. Board and lodging will be arranged and paid for by the Netherlands Youth Institute with financial support from the Youth in Action Programme in the Netherlands and Foundation JONG/ the city of Rotterdam.

How to participate?

Applications can be done by filling in an online Expression of Interest to participate in the expert meeting. This Expression of Interest should be supported by the applicants' own networks, structures or organisations or by decision makers at local, regional or national levels. On the basis of the received Expressions of Interest a selection will be made for final participation in the expert meeting.

The Netherlands Youth Institute, the Foundation JONG and our international partners will select the applicants on the basis of their Expressions of Interest in order to create a balanced participation within the variety of backgrounds, knowledge and participating countries.

Interested?

You can NOW be put on a mailing list by sending your e-mail address to internationaal@nji.nl
Please mention: *interest in European Expert meeting on youth work 2010*. We will then send you a reminder when the online registration is opened and when further information and programme are available.

Online registration starts the 14th of December 2009 at www.nji.nl/expertmeetingyouthwork

You will be notified of your participation in the second week of February 2010 at the latest.

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