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**Author: NAPOR**



# Mapping Study

*on EU practices in recognition of competences gained through non-formal learning in youth work for the employability of young people*



## **Author**

Gisele Evrard Markovi

## **Checked by**

Vanja Kalaba  
Danijela Radic

## **Commissioned by**

NAPOR - National Association of Youth Workers

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Ministry of youth and sport, Serbia  
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*The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of NAPOR - National Association of Youth Workers*

*All correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to NAPOR,  
[office@napor.net](mailto:office@napor.net)*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

Non-formal education and informal learning in the youth field enable young people to acquire competences and contribute to their personal development, active citizenship and rapidly becoming of essential importance – their employability, all through valuing all forms of learning and developing ways for better validation of competences gained in non-formal and informal learning settings. During the past 12 years significant developments in this area have been made both at European level and within various European countries. The last *Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning* is a good example of the importance the issue of recognition of learning outcomes and their validation gained on the European agenda, but also on the actions to be undertaken at national level.

With regard to the relevance of competences developed in the youth field and for the employability of young people, the recent European Youth Forum's *Study on the impact of Non-Formal Education in youth organizations on young people's employability*<sup>1</sup> states that "there is a close match between the soft skills and competences demanded by employers and those developed to a high extent through involvement in youth organisations".

Youth work in Serbia had a dynamic development since mid 90s and reached the point where issues such as quality assurance, professionalization and recognition of learning processes and outcomes have become the priority of the agenda of both relevant state institutions and youth CSOs<sup>2</sup>. In 2013, Serbia has decided to take its initial steps towards establishing a national mechanism for recognition of competences gained by young people through non-formal learning in youth work.

The initial commitments from the relevant stakeholders, namely Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR), and representatives of youth CSOs had been made during the regional *Symposium on Youth Policy Cooperation in South East-Europe: focus on recognition of youth work & non-formal learning*, held in Tirana, Albania, on 1-3 October 2012.

## The Mapping Study

The *Mapping Study on EU practices in recognition of competences gained through non-formal learning in youth work for the employability of young people* (hereinafter the Mapping Study) will serve as a basis for further national level activities towards the development of a tool for recognition of competences gained through non-formal education/learning in the youth field. Such a tool is to be consulted with and negotiated by other relevant actors, e.g. employers, government representatives and educators.

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<sup>1</sup> Bath University/GHK Consulting (2012) *Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability*. European Youth Forum.

<sup>2</sup> In Serbia, there is a difference between *youth CSOs* and *CSOs working with youth*. Youth CSOs are CSOs delivering youth work and those we refer to in the context of this Mapping Study.

The Mapping Study aims at informing and inspiring the national recognition process in Serbia and at helping key actors involved set the most effective steps in the development process, thus leading towards legitimate recognition mechanisms acknowledged and supported by civil society, potential employers and young people themselves.

The Mapping Study is one of the first actions taken in order to develop a mechanism and tool for recognition of young people's competences gained through youth services and non-formal learning and education that is recognised by the relevant stakeholders. The Mapping Study will contribute to: 1) gaining greater legitimacy of importance of the issue when advocating among relevant stakeholders at national level; 2) getting a better overview of different existing mechanisms and policies at EU and national levels that will be referred to or accommodated for Serbia; 3) assuring the harmonisation of processes and tools developed in other contexts, which will later on contribute to greater recognition and mobility of young people's competences and employability.

The logic of intervention is to present the Mapping Study along with data resulting from the *Research on the impact of non-formal learning in youth work on young people's employability* (hereinafter the Research) carried on by NAPOR in partnership with the Serbian Ministry of youth and sport and USAID –SLDP to key actors at national level. The two documents are to be seen as complementary to one another: the Mapping Study provides examples of good practices for the development of recognition tools and processes at national and EU level, while the Research provides data on impact of non-formal learning in youth work on young people's employability in Serbia. The outcomes from these two documents present the core bases that will be used for further development of the national recognition tool and its systematic institutional recognition among employers, governmental institutions, civil society organisations and young people.

The Mapping Study includes an *executive summary* (pp. 5-8), a Chapter dedicated to the *concepts and practices with regard to non-formal education/learning, youth work, competences and their link to young people's employability* (pp. 9-21), an *analysis of relevant good practices and recognition instruments at European and national levels* (pp. 22-57), a *comparative analysis of the recognition mechanisms* (pp. 58-64), *recommendations* for the elaboration of a Serbian recognition tool (pp. 65-71), relevant *bibliography* (pp. 72-73) and *annexes*, which consist of an *overview of key policy developments* happening at European level with regard to the recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning (pp. 74-81).

## Approach and methodology

The Mapping Study is based on existing recommendations, studies, researches and documentation with regard to non-formal education/learning, youth work, recognition and young people's employability as well as analysis of existing recognition tools and mechanisms at European and national level.

Two in-depth interviews were conducted with the persons in charge or at the origin of the tools and processes from the Czech Republic (*Keys for Life*) and Luxembourg (*Engagement Portfolio*). Phone conversations took place with the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education with regard to the *Competence Portfolio* developed by the Danish National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning.

Prior encounters and cooperation had already taken place with regard to the *Youthpass*

*Certificate* developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre in the frame of the Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013, or other developments such as the Strasbourg process, initiated in 2011.

Besides interviews and meetings with relevant key persons behind or linked to the above-mentioned processes, the Mapping Study mainly consists in desk-research and analysis of other documents (recommendations, studies, researches and documentation) developed at European level.

## Main processes and tools tackled

<b>The Youthpass certificate</b>	Europe	Developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre (Germany). Youthpass is a tool for participants of projects funded by the Youth in Action Programme to describe what they have done and to show what they have learnt. <a href="http://www.youthpass.eu">www.youthpass.eu</a>
<b>Keys for Life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non Formal Education</b>	The Czech Republic	Developed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) and the National Institute of Children and Youth (NICY), the project aimed at creating a system that would support sustainable development of leisure-time and non-formal education, increase the quality and extend the range of the offer of leisure-time and non-formal education in the Czech Republic. <a href="http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot/klice-pro-zivot-2009/project-keys-for-life-2009">http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot/klice-pro-zivot-2009/project-keys-for-life-2009</a>
<b>The Engagement Portfolio</b>	Luxembourg	Developed by the Luxembourgish National Youth Service, this tool aims at providing assistance to youth organisations and youth movements in the development of an official document attesting one's engagement/commitment and competences acquired through non-formal education [activities and projects]. <a href="http://www.snj.public.lu/sites/default/files/publications/flyer_attestation%20de%20l%27engagement.pdf">http://www.snj.public.lu/sites/default/files/publications/flyer_attestation%20de%20l%27engagement.pdf</a>
<b>My Competence Portfolio</b>	Denmark	Developed by the Danish National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning, the Competence Portfolio forms part of the assessment of competences they propose in the frame of <i>competences gained from work experience, non-formal and informal learning</i> and in the process of recognition of prior learning. <a href="https://minkompetencemappe.dk/">https://minkompetencemappe.dk/</a>

## Main conclusions & recommendations

### Main conclusions

The comparative analysis presented in this mapping Study allowed developing a series of conclusions, based on common features of the tools such as approaches, structures, target groups, processes, and even challenges. The analysis particularly tackles: the approach to non-formal education/learning and youth work, the different types of cooperation with other stakeholders, whether the tools were youth-led initiatives, the approach to competences and competence frameworks, the approach to self-assessment of the competences developed, the development path of the tools, their impact and the major remaining challenges. Naturally, the analysis also underlines – since this is one of the core objectives of this Mapping Study – the space and focus on young people's employability.



## **Recommendations**

Ten recommendation areas have been developed, tackling: youth work vs. non-formal education/learning focused, cooperation with other stakeholders and the link to employability, competence framework, approach to assessment, language, ownership, conceptualisation and development process, accessibility, time, and management, monitoring and evaluation. The process behind these recommendations took into account the European context with regard to young people's employability and the [European] youth work reality, national approaches to tools supporting the recognition of competences gained in youth work/work with young people, and the comparative analysis. Moreover, the recommendations directly address the stakeholders who will be involved in the process of developing the national recognition tool in Serbia, clearly aiming at supporting young people's employability.

# 1 | EXPLORING THE FIELD OF YOUTH WORK AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES

## Introduction

Since the mid 1990s, the relevance and importance of non-formal education/learning (hereinafter NFE/L) has become a key issue on the agenda of the European institutions, with a clear political kick-off in 2000 with the first *Symposium on Non-Formal Education and Learning* of the Council of Europe and in 2001 with the European Commission's *White Paper: A new impetus for European youth*. Both contributed to paving the way towards not only recognition of [the value of] non-formal [and informal] education/learning in Europe, but also the recognition of youth work as undoubtedly contributing to the acquisition of competences<sup>3</sup> through NFE/L, providing young people with learning spaces and opportunities to get equipped with skills needed at work and in civic or private life.

The 2010 *Resolution on Youth Work* of the Council of the European Union proposed a definition of what youth work is and is about, uniting a certain understanding of the field at European level: [youth work is] *a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature both by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sports and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of 'out-of-school' education as well as specific leisure time activities, managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and is based on non-formal learning processes and on voluntary participation.*

Amongst other key documents on the recognition process at European level, we ought to highlight the two editions of the *Pathways* papers. The first *Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field*, developed in 2004 by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, explored the growing shift towards quality standards, validation and recognition. It highlighted a strong need for social and formal recognition of NFE/L and informal learning in youth work activities. It argued that NFE/L in the youth field is more than a sub-category of education and training since it contributes to the preparation of young people for the knowledge-based and the civil society. Revised in 2011, *Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal education/learning and of youth work in Europe* provides a new vision and an outline on how to sustain and foster the progress made and highlights the need to even go beyond what has been achieved so far. *Pathways 2.0* encourages the consolidation of the existing developments and proposes ten recommendations for action, with some particularly relevant in the context of this Mapping Study.

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1. Develop a common understanding and a joint strategy in the youth field and improve co-operation and communication;
  2. Visibility of the particular role of youth organisations;

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<sup>3</sup> *Competences* in this document are to be understood as an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully. Sources: *Trainers for Active Learning in Europe - TALE* (2008-2010) and *Set of competences for trainers working at European and international level* (2013) developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.

3. Assure quality and training in non-formal education/learning;
  4. Increasing knowledge about non-formal education/learning in youth work;
  5. Develop existing tools further and make them accessible and transferable;
  6. Reinforcement of political processes on the European level;
  7. Link youth to the lifelong learning strategy and vice versa;
  8. Involve stakeholders of the employment sector;
  9. Associating the social sector;
  10. Cooperate with other policy fields and with stakeholders of civil society.
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There is nowadays a much bigger awareness of the educational shift from knowledge to competences, including soft skills. In terms of educational practice, this means that education structures and institutions ought to focus on different approaches not only to competences development but also to the learning process. As an important contributor to NFE/L, youth work does have to adjust to continuously changing educational paradigms though with the main aim to favour young people's personal, social and professional development. From a recognition perspective, this partly implies that youth work/youth CSOs should make the learning that is taking place in their programmes and activities visible and understood; recognition needs to start within the organisations and with every participant. To increase confidence in and reliability of the youth field will contribute to better emphasise the positive outcomes and impact of relevant activities both on the level of individual young people as to the society as such, including the employment sector.

The adoption of policy documents such as the *Key competences for lifelong learning*<sup>4</sup> (2006), the *future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020* (2008) or the *EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering* (2009) have also put a bigger on the link between youth work, NFE/L and employability of young people. Moreover, the so-called economical crisis that has started in 2008, contributed to shed a different light on the overall recognition process and on skills gained through youth work and NFE/L.

This resulted in a series of policy documents, research, studies and developments such as the European Commission's strategy *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes* (2012) or the already-mentioned European Youth Forum's *Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability* (2012). The former encourages Member States to take immediate action to ensure that young people develop the competences needed by the labour market and to achieve their targets for growth and jobs while the latter assesses whether the competences obtained through NFE/L in youth organisations contribute to young people's employability. Furthermore, the *Symposium on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education in the youth field* (2011) states that "as recognition is a multidimensional process, it has to include stakeholders from the political and social sector as well as from the labour market."

However and when developing European or national strategies for a better recognition of youth work and NFE/L and while linking learning outcomes, e.g. soft skills, to employability of young people, it is of utmost importance to preserve the diversity of the field of youth work (i.e. contents, methods, approaches, etc.). Hence, working towards young people's employability is neither about solely defining a series of unified standards and approaches to competence development, nor about harmonising the entire field of youth work as a single undiversified system.

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3 for an overview of the main European political developments and documents.

As stated in the *Pathways 2.0*:

*With regard to recognition and certification, the concerns of many experts and stakeholders, notably youth NGOs, must be taken seriously: the risk to (over)formalise learning in youth work activities. Not everything in youth work is measurable and can or should be assessed, recognised and certified. In this respect, any hierarchisation of youth work activities must be avoided, nor can a functionalisation of learning outcomes only for purposes of the labour market, the education system or social system be accepted [...].*

In other words, when working on the elaboration of strategies towards recognition of learning outcomes enhanced by youth work and NFE/L and on young people's employability, it is important to look for synergies, complementarities and common interests, for the benefit of all, though keeping in mind the characteristics of youth work and of the type of learning happening in the field. This is what this Mapping Study intends to do: to provide examples of good practices for the development of recognition tools and processes at national and EU level, which will serve as a basis for further development of a Serbian recognition tool for young people and its systematic recognition among employers, governmental institutions, youth CSOs and young people.

## Snapshots of non-formal education/learning

The roots of the importance given to NFE/L in training and education can be found approximately 50 years ago (although much before when it comes to practice), being gradually recognised as an educational approach different, complementary and – to some extent and as seen by NFE/L providers – more effective for certain types of learning and learners. The concept started gaining a bigger visibility thanks to *The World Educational Crisis – a System Analyse* (Coombs, 1968), a book based on a report presented at the International Conference on the Global Education Crisis, held in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1967. The core of the conference was a growing concern about unsuitable curricula and an awareness of the fact that educational and economic growth were not necessarily in step, or that jobs did not emerge directly as a result of educational inputs.

Amongst many definitions and understandings of NFE/L, we can highlight the one proposed by the European Youth Forum in 2005, which sees it as “an organised process that gives young people the possibility to develop their values, skills and competencies others than the ones developed in the framework of formal education. [...] What is special about non-formal education is that individuals, participants are the actors actively involved in the education/learning process. The methods that are being used aim at giving young people the tools to further develop their skills and attitudes [...]. ‘Non-formal’ does not imply unstructured; the process [...] is shared and designed in such a way that it creates an environment in which the learner is the architect of the skills development<sup>5</sup>”.

In their note on the use of the concept of ‘informal/non-formal’ in the field of education, Gilles Brougère and Hélène Bézil do not attempt to define the terms, arguing that these *greatly vary from one author to another, even though there is a common reference framework*. They add that *to understand these terms, we need to grasp what they express* [and refer to]. Today, the debate is not anymore on whether use ‘informal’ instead of ‘non-formal’ but on whether to go

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<sup>5</sup> Policy paper on *Recognition of non-formal education: Confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society* (2005), European Youth Forum.

for 'non-formal education' instead of 'non-formal learning' or vice-versa. The decision to opt for one or the other can be political, social and/or pedagogical. For the European Commission, one of the main reasons to adopt 'learning' partly resulted from the resistance of several Member States to recognise a different educational approach that would regard education to the same level as in formal education. Others added that 'education' refers to a system, a structure, while 'learning' puts the accent on the process and the active role of the learner. Nonetheless, for a number of actors in the youth field it is rather the opposite: 'education' is at the core of what is happening, of the development of an individual through learning. If NFE/L is an educational practice with its own values and principles, then it is much more than a set of methods supporting a learning process.

There is nowadays an implicit consensus to use both terms together – non-formal education/learning – in order to be able to move on in the recognition process with as many stakeholders as possible. That does not mean, however, that the debate is forgotten. As highlighted during the conference 'Mobility Spaces, Learning Spaces - Linking Policy, Research and Practice', it is crucial to "keep talking about it because sooner or later, it will send us back to the very nature of what we do, why we do it and how we do it".

In the context of the Mapping Study we will therefore use both terms, keeping in mind the values and principles of NFE/L: transparency, confidentiality, voluntary participation, focused on the learner, participation of the learner, ownership of the process and the results of learning by participants/learners, values and democratic practices, and social transformation.

## Snapshots of youth work

Even though youth work – in its various forms – existed for an already long time, the needs and attempts to define it only appeared about two decades ago. The complexity, the diversity and the features of youth work did not ease that process but there seems to be a general consensus of what youth work implies.

As previously seen, the 2010 *Resolution on Youth Work* of the Council of the European Union proposed a definition of youth work at European level. The *1<sup>st</sup> European Youth Work convention*, which took place in Ghent, Belgium on 7-10 July 2010, welcomed the definition of the Council but added that "during the convention it was defined more briefly as the provision of 'space and opportunity for young people to shape their own futures'. No matter the level of flexibility of the approach to youth work, it is not contested that "different forms of youth work engage with different young people, use different methodologies, address different issues and operate in different contexts. Within this frame of groups, methods, issues and contexts, youth work practice adapts, unfolds and develops over time". In other words, the diversity of youth work isn't put into question anymore, and the overall aim seems to be shared among many of the different actors in the field. What might however make a difference is the educational purpose, linked to the competences developed in youth work. This is particularly relevant in the context of this Mapping Study since it aims at supporting a recognition tool [of the competences acquired] for young people's employability.

Other questions such as who assesses who or who trains who on assessment processes can also appear as relatively controversial in a time where more and more tools are being developed and where we note the emergence of several competence frameworks, of quality labels for youth work, of quality assurance systems, and of quality standards and indicators. Even though that may be more applicable to the assessment of youth work practitioners, it has

also its relevance in the context of a recognition tool for young people for it will also include an assessment process.

Youth work is defined in Serbia through the Law on Youth: *youth work represents the part of youth activities which are organized with and for young people, based on non-formal education. Activities are part of leisure time, with the aim of improving conditions for the personal and social development of young people, in line with their needs and possibilities, by voluntarily participation.* Moreover, structures such as the National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR) have also defined their understanding of youth work as a “planned educational programme, created with the aim of supporting young people in the process of becoming independent, where youth worker helps young people in their personal and social development in order to become active community members and participants in the decision making processes. The idea of youth work is to create a safe environment and opportunities for active participation of young people on a voluntary basis in the acquisition of skills and knowledge (competences). Youth work: a) is complementary to formal education; b) is implemented by youth workers; c) carries out activities using methods of non-formal education and information.”

In the frame of this Mapping Study, we will try to approach recognition and the Serbian tool to be developed as being a process as open as possible. The reality of youth work and of youth CSOs in Serbia could perhaps lead to having a tailored approach with regard to who recognises who, who assesses who and who benefits from it. This is partly due to the national process of professionalization [and recognition] of youth work, which started in 2009-2010 with the aim to define a quality assurance framework that includes, among others, the identification of qualification levels, quality standards for youth work providers and for organisations, as well as an internal and external ‘verification’ or assessment mechanisms. Nevertheless, the future recognition tool will target young people – not youth work providers – and therefore, the process will have to remain open and inclusive in order to offer the opportunity to all young people who took part in youth work projects and activities to reflect upon their learning process and competences development, and therefore gain recognition and ownership.

## Snapshots of recognition of youth work and NFE/L

The process of recognition of youth work and NFE/L is a dynamic one. It has evolved from a sometimes-confronting process between providers of education (formal and non-formal) to a much more comprehensive and cooperative attitude. Nowadays, the youth field acknowledges that it has to be open, make itself visible, understood and look for synergies with other actors. In addition to support a better knowledge and understanding of youth work and youth work providers, it also aims at making young people’s learning and learning outcomes more visible, for political, economic and social reasons. If so, recognition of NFE/L is to be seen as an important process to support young people’s competence development and ease their transferability to other contexts, including the employment sector. Nevertheless, the continuum of the recognition process isn’t an easy one for it has to consider the diversity of the field and the needs of the young people, in addition to cope with a constantly changing reality and bear the political, economical and social pressure.

Recognition is not an aim in itself; if considered as a stand-alone process, it does not make much sense. Instead, it is part of a “coherent vision on how to improve the inclusion and well-being of young people in our society [...]”. Among existing political documents and with the aim of granting youth work a better position and more political recognition in our societies, we

may once more highlight the *Council Resolution on Youth Work* of November 2010, which also stresses the importance of recognising the crucial role of youth work as a provider of NFE/L opportunities to all young people.

As underlined in *Pathways 2.0*, it is also important to make a distinction between different forms of recognition, depending on who recognises learning and for what purpose. The forms of recognition are:

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- Formal recognition: the 'validation' of learning outcomes and the 'certification' of a learning process and/or these outcomes by issuing certificates or diplomas which formally recognise the achievements of an individual;
  - Political recognition: the recognition of NFE/L in legislation and/or the inclusion of NFE/L in political strategies, and the involvement of NFE/L providers in these strategies;
  - Social recognition: social players acknowledge the value of competences acquired in NFE/L and the work done within these activities, including the value of the organisations providing this work;
  - Self-recognition: the assessment by the individual of learning outcomes and the ability to use these learning outcomes in other fields.
- 

It is important, when engaging a recognition process, to tackle the four dimensions, even though some might appear easier than others, depending on settings and national contexts. For instance, the past two decades have proven that the political recognition might develop faster, partly due to a series of political and economical needs and developments. Parallel to that, we might notice a slower path with regard to social recognition (how the society understands, credits and values the impact of youth work and NFE/L on young people) and to self-recognition (i.e. little attention given by young people to their youth work experiences and related competence developments in their 'history', as recalled through a CV).

If the reasons for recognition as presented above might summarise pretty well the very first aim of recognition of youth work and NFE/L, another objective receives an increasing attention: the employability of young people. Recent political, social and economical challenges have required putting more attention on complementary and alternative educational approaches and paths and on the related learning outcomes. Hence, in addition to issues such as participation, inclusion and citizenship, considered some of the core issues addressed in youth work, the employability of young people, the possibility to demonstrate, describe, illustrate, use, validate, transfer and to some extent, certify how and what young people learned, became another point on the European and national agendas.

As an example of the political support given to that development on the occasion of the *Dublin Declaration - recognises potential of youth work in developing sought-after skills* on June 21, 2013, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald stated that "the challenge of youth unemployment requires a broad range of responses involving the mobilisation of many players [and] has reaffirmed the specific and highly-relevant role for quality youth work in developing young people's skill-sets and supporting their job-readiness."

Another example of initiatives which resulted from the issue of recognition and employability (and inclusion) of young people is the stakeholders conference *Bridges to Work – creating better chances for young people on the labour market* organised by SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre in October 2010, which was one of the first European youth events tackling the issue of employability and entrepreneurship of young people. The conference aimed at exploring how to increase young people's chances on the labour market by making the link between youth (work), employment and entrepreneurship. Amongst the conclusions of the conference and

the series of the recommendations elaborated by the participants<sup>6</sup>, we can highlight:

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- The strong need for a more comprehensive approach towards the development of competences (soft skills) in schools;
  - Recognition of NFE/L and mobility projects ought to be understood and a complementary way of learning to formal education;
  - The need for more and better training programmes for youth workers and employment agencies who coach young people towards a job;
  - The need to work towards more holistic interventions adapted to the target group: a joined-up approach rather than fragmented services, especially for vulnerable groups;
  - Closer relations between the business world and young people should be established and/or strengthened through job shadowing, internships, company days, etc.;
  - The need to move towards a coordinated dialogue and closer cooperation between different stakeholders: formal education, employers, youth work and young people;
  - More effective information about funding programmes that can be used for employment or entrepreneurship should be made accessible and the results more should be disseminated more widely;
  - The need to change our behaviour and attitudes: take risks, take (social) responsibilities, be ready to be challenged and to take on different perspectives;
  - The need to continue organising and funding youth employment and entrepreneurship projects.
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## Competences and competence frameworks

### Competences

The term 'competence' nowadays appears in almost every single document tackling the issues of recognition of NFE/L and/or employability of young people. At institutional level – e.g. for the European Commission - it is almost systematically combined with the word 'skills' (skills and competences), thus differentiating both. In some other cases we may read 'competency' rather than 'competence' and both terms tend to be used interchangeably, even though their meanings can vary significantly depending on the context. For more than two decades, the youth field automatically defines 'knowledge, skills and attitudes' as being the intrinsic characteristics of a competence/y. Nonetheless, the past years have also seen the addition of attributes such as values or beliefs.

In the context of this Mapping Study<sup>7</sup>, we will use the term 'competence' for the abilities/capabilities developed by young people through youth work and NFE/L activities and for the point on framework. Hence and taking as reference the glossary of the *Set of competences for trainers working at European and international level* (2013) developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, we will comprehend 'competence' as *an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully*. Other dimensions such as inner readiness, self-confidence, motivation and well-being are also considered as important pre-requisites for a person to be able to act out his/her developed competences.

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<sup>6</sup> Adjusted from *Bridges to Work - Report* (2010), SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2563/BridgesToWorkReport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Moreover, from the Serbian perspective - which this Mapping Study addresses, only one word exists. Hence there is no need to differentiate between competence and competency.



For the purpose of this Mapping Study, we ought to also address the issue of competence in the context of the employability of young people, even though this will be further explored in the next point.

We have already highlighted Minister Frances Fitzgerald's statement and the focus on the importance of quality youth work in developing young people's skills to support their job-readiness. Numerous declarations, events, researches and studies nowadays make the link between competences developed in youth work – including soft skills – and young people's employability, such as the OECD's *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills policies* (2012), the European Youth Forum's *Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability* (2012), *Bridges to Work* (Salto Inclusion, 2010) or the publication *Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?* (Institute MOVIT, 2011).

We have also underlined the importance to link recognition of youth work and NFE/L strategies to employability of young people, with a focus on competences or 'soft skills'<sup>8</sup>. In *Unlocking Doors to Recognition* (Markovi & Nemetlu Ünal, 2011), soft skills are described as "social and communicative skills, such as personality characteristics, language abilities, personal habits, friendliness and skills in relationships with other people. In general they shape how you interact with your work. Soft skills complement hard skills and have a big effect on how you perform with your technical abilities in a given context". Hard skills are defined as "the technical skills which are used to define the occupational requirements of a job and/or other activity. These are what make up the hard facts in a CV; which degree(s) you have and on which topic(s), what type of working field you have been involved in, what is your training and learning background, and so on".

If we acknowledge that youth work provides opportunities for young people to engage voluntarily in NFE/L programmes and that youth work providers are experts in working with young people, we can also conclude that through their participation in youth work projects and activities, young people develop specific, transversal and transferable competences (skills) which enhance their employability. The 2013 *Dublin Declaration* lists those soft skills as being "learning to learn, social and civic competence, leadership, communication, teamwork, and entrepreneurship. These skills actively support young people's participation, development and progression in education, training and employment, in ways that are relevant and applicable to industry and valued and sought after by employers."

### **Competence frameworks**

A competence framework can be described as a system or model that defines – in general terms – the desired level of excellence of a performance (or way to perform and apply competences) within a given context. The way a competence framework is developed and structured may however vary depending on the target group (the 'performers') and the context. In the youth field, a competence framework is in most cases built upon a description of knowledge, skills and attitude that are considered necessary to 'perform well'. The level of

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<sup>8</sup> The use of those terms faces some resistance from part of NFE/L and youth work providers, arguing that the differentiation between 'hard' and 'soft' skills does not make much sense when considering education in a more holistic manner and when seeing competences as encompassing attitudes, knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, the term reaches a bigger consensus and as in the case of debate about non-formal 'education' vs. 'learning', 'soft skills' remain in use.

performance can also be broken down into different sublevels, even though this depends on the purpose of the competence framework and the way it will be used<sup>9</sup>.

With regard to the point of 'level of performance' it is also worth highlighting two different schools or approaches. The US tends to concentrate on competences for 'superior performers' who can act as role models and support others to emulate their competences. In the UK, competences can be used for the development of standards for occupational groups. In other words, the US approach defines what a superior performer would do while the UK one would rather focus on defining the minimum standards to be achieved<sup>10</sup>. In the context of this Mapping Study and for the recognition tool to be developed, we would rather stay closer to the UK approach, which would help focusing on a common understanding of the characteristics of the competences tackled and support developing standards and indicators against which the competence development and learning processes can be assessed.

Taking the above into account, in the frame of the Serbian recognition tool to be developed a possible competence framework could comprise a number of competence areas (to be defined) with, for each of them, a series of criteria for attitudes, skills and knowledge, complemented by related indicators that would support the assessment process.

A more elaborated approach – though perhaps better adjusted to the youth field - could be to opt for a competence framework based on a series of competence areas, broken down into a series of criteria, themselves broken down into attitude, knowledge and skills, all completed by a list of related desired behaviours. In that approach, the criteria refer to the principles or standards based on which its efficiency and potential success may be assessed. The indicators would refer to the explicit and observable elements that indicate whether criteria are successfully met. Since when referring to the competences of an individual we mainly talk about behaviour, the indicators would therefore become behavioural indicators, hence measuring only how the young people apply or use the competences they have acquired. This approach is partially based on Darla Deardorff's model on Intercultural Competence<sup>11</sup> and would therefore look at the process of a competence development starting with readiness (attitude) towards that competence, exemplified through a series of knowledge and skills-related criteria, and ending with internal and external outcomes or behaviours, formulated as indicators which would describe ways of thinking and approaching (using knowledge), ways of doing (expressing skills), and ways of feeling, expressing emotions or relating to something (expressing the attitude)<sup>12</sup>. The comparative analysis and the recommendations will further explore the approach to competence framework for the Serbian recognition tool.

## The link to employability of young people

In the context of this Mapping Study and of the purpose of the recognition tool to be developed in Serbia, employability is to be seen as *the chance [for young people] in finding and*

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<sup>9</sup> In the context of the Serbia recognition tool, this may mean to approach the structure and contents of the competence framework with relevant stakeholders, meaning for instance youth CSOs, young people and employers.

<sup>10</sup> Mills, R. (2004) *Competencies Pocketbook*. Management Pocketbooks Ltd.

<sup>11</sup> Deardorff, D.K. (2009). *Implementing Intercultural Competence Assessment*. SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence. SAGE Publications, Inc.

<sup>12</sup> Adaptation based on the draft list of criteria and indicators developed by Bergstein R., Deltuvus A., Evrard G. (2013) for the *Set of competences for trainers working at European and international level*. SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.

*maintaining different kinds of employment*<sup>13</sup>. Employability has two dimensions: its external conditions (the labour market) as well as individual characteristics (individual dimension)<sup>14</sup>.

As explained earlier, the topic of employability of young people not only became a key issue on the European agenda in the past ten years, but also gained importance and relevance at national level. In addition to educational developments such as the shift from input to learning outcomes or from knowledge to competences, other factors such as socio-economical ones have contributed to observing and considering the development of competences acquired through youth work and NFE/L from the angle of employability. Among those factors, we can highlight the possible 'mismatch' between formal education and the needs of the labour market as well as the so-called financial and economic crisis and its impact on young people's unemployment, which threatens more than ever their full participation in society and their personal and professional development. In this context, participation also means to fully take part in the social and economic life, which is hindered if proper life conditions, including access to sustainable work and education, cannot be guaranteed.

In November 2013, the youth unemployment rate in the EU (EU Area 28) went up to 23.6%<sup>15</sup>, ranking from 7.5% in Germany to 57.7% in Spain. One month before, the rate was 49.1% in Serbia<sup>16</sup>. According to Eurostat, we ought to pay attention to the factors used to calculate youth unemployment rates, which are influenced by "the rise in participation in the labour market between the ages of 15 and 24" on the one hand, and the fact that "young people in education are often also employed or unemployed and that there is therefore an overlap between the labour market and education"<sup>17</sup> on the other hand. The above statistics also include the so-called NEETs<sup>18</sup>. Even leaving aside the debate on statistics, who they do or don't include and also considering that unemployment of young people isn't a new issue as such, the 'high-speed increase' of the youth unemployment scale is extremely alarming and the "strong deterioration in the labour market situation for young people during the crisis is of acute concern"<sup>19</sup>.

The policy response to that situation has been to mostly engage Member States in developing policy measures focusing on the employability of young people, in addition to working towards a higher level of employment participation among them. Those measures – and especially national ones – target particular profiles of young people (in some cases even taking a clear

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and William, S. (2002) *Employability in a knowledge driven economy*. Working Paper Series number 26, University of Cardiff.

<sup>14</sup> Bath University/GHK Consulting (2012) *Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability*. European Youth Forum.

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat, EU labour force survey report, update of January 9, 2014. <http://ycharts.com/indicators/sources/eurostat>

<sup>16</sup> Statistical release - Labour Force Survey, October 2013. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

<sup>17</sup> Eurostat Unemployment statistics. January, 9, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Young people not in employment, education or training. To be distinguished from the newly coined NLEET term (and rate) used in the 2013 report on *Global Employment Trends for Youth* of the ILO, which stands for "neither in the labour force nor in education, employment or training", hence similar to NEET but excluding the unemployed young people, since they are still included in the labour force. The term NEETs is considered as controversial by part of the young people who see the concept behind as too heterogeneous to apply to them or refuse to be part of any 'label' used for statistical purposes. '*NEET*' is a problematic concept that defines young people by what they are not, and subsumes under a negative-perceived label as heterogeneous mix young people whose varied situation and difficulties are not conceptualised' (Yates and Paynes, 2006). As stated in the 2012 publication "NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe" of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the emergence of such term and those it includes it is also a *measure of disengagement from the labour market and perhaps from society in general*.

<sup>19</sup> Mascherini, M., Salvatore, L., Meierkord, A., and Jungblut, JM., (2012). *NEETS - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

distance to the concept of NEETS) and intervene on specific problems encountered by young people in their path towards employment. The measures taken by Member States present some similarities and mostly consist of: measures to prevent early school-leaving; measures to reintegrate early school-leavers, school-to-work transition policies, measures to foster employability; and measures to remove practical and logistical barriers to employment<sup>20</sup>. This goes in line with the approach to employability presented at the beginning of this Chapter, which implies that working on young people's employability means to also work on the conditions required to have access to employment.

At European level, we can observe an increasing number of initiatives, strategies, recommendations and resolutions tackling or encompassing the employability of young people<sup>21</sup>. The new integrated programme Erasmus+ is also good example of opportunities targeting mainly the acquisition of skills and competences through learning mobility schemes, even though it leaves aside - or puts less focus on, other priorities dear to youth work providers, such as inclusion. The EU is putting enormous efforts on making as many young people as possible 'employable', no matter if the work done in parallel to create job opportunities does not systematically follow the same path or the same speed. Indeed and while observing the situation during the so-called economic crisis, "young workers were often amongst the first to lose their jobs, as their temporary contracts were not renewed, while job prospects for young graduates entering the labour markets have diminished. In fact, young people now find themselves competing with job-seekers with more employment experience in a market with fewer jobs on offer."<sup>22</sup> However, it is worth noticing that those efforts are not only meaningful for the Member States but that they can be of real benefit for the youth field, if carefully framed and jointly developed.

In its *Position on Youth Employment in Times of Crisis* (2009), the European Youth Forum addressed the European Commission with a series of claims and pleas, stating: "the financial and economic crisis will especially hit the most vulnerable, which includes young people. The crisis threatens to exacerbate the difficulties young people face in finding stable employment, achieving autonomy and being able to fully being included in society". Among the list of the claims lie two specific ones of particular relevance for this Mapping Study:

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- *urges the EU Ministers of Employment to take into account the need for the development of skills that can foster the transition of young people from education to the labour market. It is also important to promote policies that foster entrepreneurship, by providing entrepreneurial education;*
  - *requests to promote and fully recognise the competences that young people can acquire through non-formal education and volunteering activities as well as through vocational training. It is also of key importance to recognise the value of and to promote professional guidance, that is: orientation tools and better interaction between educational providers, social partners and the professional sector.*
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With regard to the transition from education to work or towards getting a job, we can wonder how youth work enhances young people's employability. Several examples have already been given with regard to the competences, and particularly so skills, which are acquired through participation in youth work projects and activities. As underlined by Janez Škulj in the publication *Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?* "transition from education to work is

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> See Annexes and the overview of key policy developments in Europe

<sup>22</sup> Mascherini, M., Salvatore, L., Meierkord, A., and Jungblut, JM., (2012). *NEETS - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

a very important phase in the life of every young person. It represents the transition from childhood to adulthood, the personal development from economic and social dependence to independence, and is therefore of critical importance for the autonomy of the young individual". Youth work does undoubtedly play a role in young people's personal and professional development, supporting them develop competences that will help them not only in their private life, but also in a job situation or in their path towards employment.

Again, if NFE/L is a characteristic of youth work and if youth organisations provide contexts and spaces that boost learning and the development of competences - among those many of the soft skills employers would expect from someone to perform well at work - we can also conclude that youth work and NFE/L are also relevant and important tools to enhance young people's employability. The learning approach in youth work and NFE/L values and principles not only allow young people to become aware of the fact that competences can be developed in different learning situations and in different ways, but also that they represent an added value in their professional development path, through their transferability. But as stated in OECD's *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills policies* (2012), investing in competences is just the first step; successful related policies also need to ensure that available competences are used effectively.

Alongside the need for youth work providers and young people to make themselves and the learning that happen through youth work activities more visible, better understood and recognised, recent policy developments such as the *Recommendation of the Council on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* (2012), the *Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people* (2013) and the *EU Youth Report* (2012) all highlight the need to work towards systems and mechanisms that do take into account learning outcomes, skills and competences developed in youth work and through NFE/L. Certainly, working on the employability of young people will neither solve the problem of the scarcity of job opportunities, nor is a response to the current crisis. But it can help boosting the debate and strengthening the work towards a better recognition of the competences young people gain through youth work. Parallel to that, fostering entrepreneurship can also play a role in supporting young people's employability, even though not everyone is, can or should become an entrepreneur.

Thus, working towards employability of young people means undertaking a number of actions that need to be carefully planned. When developing recognition mechanisms with a particular focus on competences, we may have to start with asking ourselves:

- Recognition of what, of whom, for whom and by whom?
- Focus on so-called 'soft skills' or on overall learning processes and outcomes?
- Joint processes and cooperation between different stakeholders
- How to ensure guaranteeing the values and principles of NFE/L and of youth work?
- How to maximise the potential offered by learning outcomes?

If the above represent some of the biggest challenges of a given national recognition strategy, numerous examples of good practices and successful initiatives exist, some of them explored in the next Chapters. Nonetheless and before going further, it is worth concluding this part with what is one of the focal points of a process combining recognition of competences acquired through youth work and employability of young people: competences.

The already-mentioned European Youth Forum's *Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability* (2012) concludes that long-

lasting and frequent engagement and participation in youth organisations brings high soft-skills development. It is worth highlighting that amongst the six skills mostly demanded by employers, five are also among those developed through involvement in youth organisations: communication, team work, decision-making, organisational skills, and self-confidence. For young people who participated in NFE/L activities abroad, this includes also higher development of language, intercultural and leadership skills.

This was also underlined during the Irish EU Presidency's expert roundtable that "resulted in an important recognition and articulation of youth work's unique potential to support young people in attaining key 'soft' skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and entrepreneurship, being increasingly seen as highly-valuable and sought-after by employers."

In summarising its main findings, the European Youth Forum's Research Study also suggests "[...] on the whole employers generally consider involvement with youth organisations as a positive experience, as they have implicit theories that associate certain experiences with certain skills sets. [...] Moreover, involvement with youth organisations provides employers with information regarding an applicant's level of motivation and potential fit with the 'ethos' of their organisation. Of course, the importance employers give to experiences in youth organisations varies case by case, and it depends significantly on the relationship of this involvement to the qualifications and experience of the young person, as well as to the demands of the job opening".

In the context of Serbia, youth work had a dynamic development since mid 90s and reached the point where issues such as quality assurance, professionalization and recognition of learning processes and outcomes have become the priority of the agenda of both relevant state institutions and youth CSOs. Taking the opportunity of the recent work on quality of youth work and youth work practitioners, as well as an openness from policy makers and other stakeholders to embark in the development of a recognition strategy, Serbia has decided to take its initial steps towards establishing a national mechanism for recognition of competences gained by young people through NFE/L in youth work, which should also support the employability of young people.

## 2 | THE YOUTHPASS CERTIFICATE – A EUROPEAN TOOL FOR RECOGNITION OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

*Note: what follows mainly consists of information obtained on the Youthpass website, through the person in charge of Youthpass, through the Youthpass Guide and the Youthpass Impact Study, reproduced and/or adjusted with the kind permission of SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.*

### Institutional background

The Youthpass certificate developed by SALTO<sup>23</sup> Training and Cooperation Resource Centre (hereinafter SALTO T&C RC) is a tool for participants (aged 13-30) of projects funded by the Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013 (hereinafter YiA). YiA promoted mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encouraged the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. It also contributed to the development of quality support systems for youth activities and enhanced capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field. Each year, YiA involved around 200,000 young people and youth workers in NFE/L activities such as European Voluntary Service (EVS), youth exchanges, training and networking projects. YiA supported the "Youth on the Move" flagship initiative of the *EU 2020 Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*<sup>24</sup>, as well as the *renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field*<sup>25</sup>, which promotes a cross-sectoral approach to youth issues, for example, on young people's employability or on their active involvement in society.

Youthpass is at the same time a tool and a strategy of the EU to promote the recognition of NFE/L within youth work. 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 NFE/L and youth work. As a tool, Youthpass can be seen as combining a process and a certificate that make the learning in YiA 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.

With regard to the new generation of programmes for the period 2014-2020, Erasmus+ aims to support actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020. Erasmus+ replaces seven programmes bringing together: Lifelong Learning (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig); Youth in Action; five international cooperation programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, the programme for cooperation with industrialised countries); and the new sport Action. Erasmus+ encourages individual mobility,

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<sup>23</sup> SALTO stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities.

<sup>24</sup> See EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>25</sup> See Council resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). [http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth\\_Policy/docs/YP\\_strategies/Policy/doc1648\\_en.pdf](http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/YP_strategies/Policy/doc1648_en.pdf)

transnational partnerships and alliances to foster cooperation between organisations and institutions and to stimulate knowledge and innovation in the field of education, training and youth. The new action of sport will support grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match fixing, doping, violence and racism.

Youthpass will remain one of the important features of Erasmus+ as one of the tools for “recognition and validation of skills and qualifications<sup>26</sup>”. The common purpose of these tools is to ensure that skills and qualifications can be more easily recognised, within and across national borders, in all sub-systems of education and training as well as in the labour market. The tools should also ensure that education, training and youth policies further contribute to Europe 2020 objectives of competitiveness, employment and growth through more successful labour market integration and more mobility and to reach its education and employment headline targets. The Programme Guide of Erasmus+ also refers to Youthpass as the tool for the recognition outcomes of a youth mobility project: “every young person, volunteer or youth worker taking part in a youth mobility project is entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate [that] describes and validates the non-formal and informal learning experience acquired during the project (learning outcomes). Youthpass can also be used during the project activities as a tool to help participants to become more aware of their learning process.” Youthpass is also mentioned in the legal base of Erasmus+ and is one of the indicators for the evaluation of the Programme’s actions dedicated to young people.

## Development process

With the *Lifelong Learning strategy* presented in the year 2001, a different perspective on the course of people’s learning through life was defined. Measures according to this development started focussing no longer on systems but much more on the individuals and their personal ways through education and work. In line with this change of policy several elements were developed, such as the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, *Europass*, and the *European Qualification Framework*. Many measures relate to the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the ambition to make competences and experience gained in youth and voluntary work usable for the individual’s professional development.

The development of Youthpass began in spring 2005 under the YOUTH programme, and was launched after a pilot phase in July 2007. Supporting the importance of providing recognition for youth work in general and for individual participants in particular, the Council adopted in May 2006 a *Resolution on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field*<sup>27</sup>. Since its implementation and as highlighted in the *Result analysis of Youthpass developments between April 2005 and December 2009* (SALTO T&C RC, 2010), the YiA Programme has been recognised as making an important contribution to the acquisition of competences, especially for lowly qualified or young people with less opportunities. Therefore, it is a key instrument in providing young people with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension.

Since the very beginning of its development, Youthpass experiences have been linked to Europass, in particular regarding the latter’s non-formal learning dimension and to support its

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<sup>26</sup> Erasmus+ Programme Guide. [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> *Resolution on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field* (2006).



users to identify their competences. The responsible units of the DG EAC<sup>28</sup> mutually discussed the link between Youthpass and Europass Mobility; both were meant to be treated equally. At the same time Youthpass and its certification opportunity were going beyond the transparency character and the self-assessment parts of the Europass instruments. Following the results of the first Europass evaluation published in 2008, further co-operation with Youthpass could have resulted from the need for Europass to focus more on young people with fewer opportunities, on the importance of voluntary work and on the validation of learning outcomes gained in mobility experiences as such. Nevertheless and even though links are still points on the agenda of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, it so far did not lead to any concrete joint measure or tool.

### Overview of Youthpass developments April 2005 – December 2013

2005	The SALTO T&C RC starts the development of Youthpass
2006	Test phases - Youthpass for Youth Exchanges, EVS and TCs
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Official adoption of the Youthpass implementation by the YiA Programme Committee, retroactively valid from January 2007</li> <li>- Launch of the website <a href="http://www.youthpass.eu">www.youthpass.eu</a>, with Youthpass certificates for Youth Exchanges and EVS available in English</li> </ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Since the beginning of 2008, translations of website and certificates</li> <li>- Youthpass certificates for TCs are available</li> <li>- Youthpass available for centralised projects</li> </ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publishing of the Youthpass Guide</li> <li>- Youthpass certificates for Action 3.1 (Youth Exchanges and TCs), providing the certificate also to the neighbouring regions</li> <li>- Youthpass certificates for AMICUS</li> </ul>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youthpass for Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2)</li> </ul>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Key competences are integrated in the Youthpass certificates for Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1/3.1)</li> </ul>
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launch of Youthpass for Training &amp; Networking activities (seminars, partnership building and networking activities, etc.), replacing the earlier certificates for TCs</li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youthpass for Youth Democracy projects and for Structured Dialogue</li> <li>- Publication of the Youthpass Impact Study</li> <li>- Planned next stops for Youthpass beyond Youth in Action</li> </ul>

## Stakeholders involved

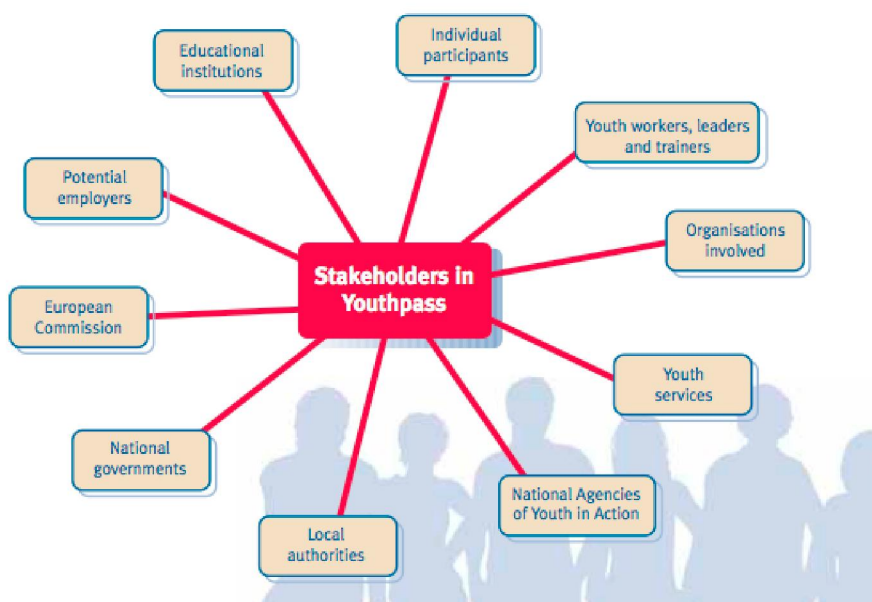
In 2005 the European Commission assigned the SALTO T&C RC based in the German National Agency (NA) for the YiA Programmes to develop Youthpass. Nevertheless, raising awareness of Youthpass and implementing it represent a relatively huge task and require the cooperation and support of a whole range of potentially interested people and organisations.

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- The European Commission DG EAC à holds the political responsibility for the implementation of Youthpass, is responsible for political support of the Youthpass development;
  - The National Agencies (NAs) of the YiA Programme à are responsible for the implementation of Youthpass in their national contexts, including information, offering training activities, support function, support the development of the Youthpass test phases and maintenance, translate the Youthpass Certificates and web site, follow-up Youthpass in the context of recognition of non-formal learning in their countries. Each NA nominated a Youthpass contact

<sup>28</sup> DG Education and Culture of the European Commission

person who acts as support and contact point supporting the implementation of Youthpass in the NAs and national context.

- Beneficiaries of the YiA Programme à provide information about Youthpass to participants, implement the Youthpass process, generate Youthpass Certificates, give feedback about the implementation to their NAs;
  - Experts from the youth field à offer support and expertise for the Youthpass development;
  - Trainers active in the YiA Programme (e.g. Youthpass trainers group) à implement Youthpass, provide educational support for the stakeholders involved in form of training courses, presentations, developing material;
  - The Youthpass Advisory Group (AG) à The implementation process is reviewed by a Youthpass AG which consists of representatives of DG EAC, the Council of Europe, the EU-CoE youth partnership, representatives of the NAs for the YiA, of other SALTO Resource Centres, the field of youth work (NGOs, trainers, experts for specific topics), the European Youth Forum, and the EAC Executive Agency. Guests are invited for specific topics. The AG meets about twice a year. The AG supports the European Commission and SALTO T&C RC in developing Youthpass, develops recommendations on specific Youthpass related questions (e.g. implementation of Youthpass in a specific Action, who signs a Youthpass Certificate, etc.);
  - SALTO T&C RC à coordinates the Youthpass development, develops new instruments and support material, supports all involved stakeholders.
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Source: Youthpass website: <https://www.youthpass.eu>

## Structure of the Youthpass Certificate

Taking the example of a Youthpass Certificate for training and networking projects though the structure remains similar for other types of projects, the Certificate is divided in three main parts.

The first part (and page) consists in a confirmation of participation. It includes the name of the individual participant, the date and town/country of birth and the basic details of the course such as title, dates, and venue. It also provides a description of what a training course is, based on the Programme Guide of YiA.

The second part (and page) includes an individual description of activities undertaken, with a summary of partner organisations, of the aims and objectives of the training course and if desired, the number of participants who took part in the project.

These two first pages of the Certificate are followed by an optional number of pages, in which the participant's learning outcomes are described using the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. After a short introduction to the Key Competences, participants can add a summary of their learning outcomes. There is also space for participants to describe any further specific competences gained during the course. All fields are optional. If there is no entry in a particular field then that field does not appear on the Certificate.

Key in the so-called 'Youthpass process', the dialogue between the participant and fellow participants (and/or a trainer) is the basis for encouraging reflection about one's learning and the Key Competences. Indeed, it is the participant who describes and illustrates the learning process and outcomes, based on the self-assessment process. If a member of the trainers' team wants to be part of this dialogue process, enough time for engaging in such a process needs to be foreseen. Space is also provided to give further references – for example, from a member of the trainers' team – at the end of the Certificate. It is the participant who signs this part of Youthpass. For a visual example of a Youthpass Certificate, please refer to <https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-93/certificate%20pba.pdf>.

## Quality assurance

As explained earlier in this Chapter, Youthpass is at the same time a tool and a strategy. It contributes to the process of recognition of NFE/L within youth work through raising awareness about and supporting the debate regarding the different dimension of recognition of NFE/L and youth work (individual, social, formal, and political), as underlined in the *Pathways 2.0*. Undoubtedly, the recognition process includes a strong work on quality of youth work, which partly means to also work on making the learning conscious for the participant and visible to the outside world. Indeed, reflecting on the learning process not only support individuals to approach it from a different perspectives and to closely relate to it but also support organisations and NFE/L and youth work providers to enhance the quality of their programmes and activities.

One of the strengths of Youthpass and what contributed to its success is certainly its flexible approach with regard to the reflection process. Participant-centred, it supports through dialogue and self-assessment reflecting and working on what the young participant has learnt, how, and how it can be described and explained. Hence, 'self-assessment' is a key feature of the Youthpass process.

### Why self-assessment?

Looking backward and when observing the developments linked to recognition of NFE/L and/in youth work, the youth field (youth trainers, mentors, youth workers and even young people themselves) tends to claim that self-assessment is – if not the only one – certainly one of the best approaches to support a reflection on a learning process, and should therefore remain the primary way to consider any work towards validation [and certification] of learning in NFE/L and youth work settings. As stated in the Youthpass Guide "assessment carried out by youth workers/trainers is seen more as a 'step back' to the traditional grading system in schools and totally against the values of non-formal education" (Markovi , 2009). Nonetheless,

self-assessment alone isn't enough to support the whole process in Youthpass. This is one of the reasons why the thinking on learning ought to happen – as much as possible – through a dialogue that would contribute to a more in-depth reflection and thus contribute to enriching it, even though this as such requires additional competences. Youthpass is neither about self-assessment only, nor does it involve an external one. Dialogue in the Youthpass process is a “mutual process of exchange in a safe environment where two (or more) perspectives meet each other and search for a common ‘truth’. [...] Although self-assessment is closer to the desired democratic and participant-centred nature of non-formal education, there are some points to take into consideration. One of the key prerequisites for adequate self-assessment is the level of a participant's development of their self-awareness competence” (Markovi , 2009).

### **Youthpass as an instrument to improve quality and recognition of youth work**

The Youthpass Impact Study (2013) highlights that organisation representatives generally appreciate the effects of Youthpass on the quality of youth work and on the fact that it contributes to the quality of projects and to making organisations better aware of new methods. Participants acknowledge that Youthpass helps communicate the importance of NFE/L and increases awareness about what the main achievements of a given projects are. Training of youth workers and trainers on Youthpass are also considered an essential element to ensure the quality of the Youthpass process. The focus groups interviewed during the research process appreciated the framework and the time allowing reflecting on and evaluating the projects' learning elements. Trainers, mentors and youth workers become more aware of what and how participants learn. The dialogue process – a new element even for some of the youth workers - increases the quality of the reflection.

## **Impact**

In 2012, the European Commission DG EAC commissioned two experts to carry out a Youthpass Impact Study<sup>29</sup>. Launched in 2013, it provides an extensive overview of the progress made since the very first steps in 2005 and offers a series of recommendations for the future of Youthpass. The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of Youthpass on the participants of the YiA Programme and describe its role in supporting non-formal learning of individuals within the youth work sector; documenting young people's and youth workers' learning processes and learning outcomes; and helping young people and youth workers to communicate obtained competences when undertaking further steps in their individual pathways, e.g. when applying for educational programmes or for a job.

### **General conclusions (extracts)**

With regard to the topics of **recognition NFE/L and quality of youth work**, it appears that approximately 80% of participants agreed that Youthpass fosters the social and individual recognition of non-formal learning, helps communicate the importance of it, and increases the usefulness of the project for participants. Youthpass widens young people's and project organisers' understanding and competence of learning and broadens the view of what they learned during the project. By influencing the ways organisations reflect on the learning

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<sup>29</sup> The two experts, Martin Taru and Paul Kloosterman, were supported by the European Commission and the Steering Group which included representatives of YiA NAs, SALTO T&C RC, the Youthpass AG, the European Training Strategy Steering Group, the European Youth Forum, other experts active in the European Youth field, and the field itself.

achieved in the projects, Youthpass contributed to the quality of youth work in youth organisations and youth projects [...].

With regard to **employability, entrepreneurship and further education**, between 50-80% of respondents think that Youthpass enhances chances of young people especially when they apply for a traineeship or internship, employment or further education. Between 70% and 80% of participants planned to use Youthpass when applying for a job. More than 40% of respondents saw the potential of using Youthpass when applying for higher education or setting up a business. [...] Young people's appreciation of Youthpass's relevance to their chances in the labour market was reported to be greatest in the period immediately after the end of the project, and then reduced over time.

When it comes to the **organisations**, it seems that their representatives tend to have higher expectations towards the value of Youthpass in enhancing young people's chances to succeed than young people themselves.

In relation to the **Youthpass process and the self-assessment**, four out of five respondents reported having received all necessary information and assistance to fill in Youthpass in a clear and understandable way. 87% of respondents said that they described skills and competences acquired during the project in the Youthpass certificate. The framework of the eight key competences was generally perceived as a useful tool to describe the projects' learning outcomes but appear at the same time as relatively abstract and complex.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 and since 2007, 306,941 Youthpass Certificates have been generated for the participants of 25,588 projects supported by YiA and organised by 12,436 organisations<sup>30</sup>. Youthpass is available in 25 languages.

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<sup>30</sup> Source: Youthpass statistics <https://www.youthpass.eu/be/youthpass/statistics/>

### 3 | NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCES GAINED IN THE YOUTH FIELD

#### Keys for Life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education

*Note: what follows mainly consists of information obtained through the project manager and through the material kindly provided, reproduced and/or adjusted with the permission of M. Tomáš Machalík on behalf of the National Institute for Children and Youth, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.*

*Keys for Life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education* was a large-scale multi-annual project of the National Institute for Children and Youth. It aimed at strengthening continuous training of persons working in this sector, thus improving the quality of leisure education and NFE opportunities for children and young people in the Czech Republic. The project had several strands of activities ranging from research about the state of play of NFE and leisure education, through delivery of training, recognition of prior learning, to development of quality standards for organisations.

#### Background

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute of Children and Youth have been implementing a four-year national project Keys for life – Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non Formal Education (hereinafter Keys for Life). The project, which started in April 2009, was based on two strategic documents: *The Concept of the State Policy in the Sphere of Children and Youth for the Term of 2007–2013*, and *The Strategy of Continuous Education for the Czech Republic*. The project was co-financed by the European Social Fund. The goal of the project was to create a system that would support sustainable development of leisure-time and NFE<sup>31</sup> and increase the quality and extend the range of the offer of leisure-time and NFE in the Czech Republic. NFE in the youth field should contribute in a great deal to making progress in building up key competences related to competitiveness in the national labour market.

There is a wide national network of school institutions for NFE<sup>32</sup> in the Czech Republic; Keys for Life was aimed at approximately 45,000 workers of leisure time centres, after-school care centres, school clubs and non-governmental organisations throughout the country. These are leisure time pedagogues, child-care workers, and volunteers working with children and young

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<sup>31</sup> The project refers to non-formal education and not to non-formal education and learning. Hence, we respected their terminology.

<sup>32</sup> 230,000 children and young people regularly attend 296 leisure-time centres, more than 228,000 children attend 4,101 after-school centres, and 38,000 children regularly participate in the activities of 476 school clubs. A majority of the total number of 1,378,563 children and young people from the age of 6 to 18 is regularly involved in the activities of 1,978 youth NGOs. As for a number of youth leaders and youth workers, there are more than 22,000 of them in the Czech school institutions for NFE.

people up to 30 years of age<sup>33</sup> in their leisure time.

This initiative also included an in-depth analysis of educational needs of the whole society and specific target groups, revision of on-going educational programmes and evaluation tools. The emphasis has been placed on an access of children and young people to equal opportunities related to the development of their key competences.

## Development process and structure

### Who was involved?

The primary precondition of accomplishing the objective of the project was interconnecting the formal and NFE through competences, creating content that would bring employers, educators, NGOs, leisure-time centres, after-school care centres, and school clubs as well as state administration and local government representatives to one table<sup>34</sup>.

Throughout the whole process, close cooperation with **young people and the youth organisations involved** in the different Key Activities (hereinafter KAs) has been ensured. This was actually the very philosophy of Keys for Life: to make of it a real joint project and therefore, to develop a sense of ownership. In the phase 1 of the work on quality, the organisers focused on several possible tools that would be useful to reach the objectives of the project. They involved several organisations (taking into consideration their size, number of units, managerial levels, etc.) and asked them to check on the proposed tools. Next step included cooperating with experts from those organisations on building a system of quality management. Similarly and once the competence profile was prepared, NGOs have been involved in developing educational programmes on recognition (during KA6) through large forums of experts from different youth organisations. Young people were directly involved in using those educational programmes. Some of the competences (soft skills) developed in the competence framework have been adopted for the National Qualifications Framework.

With regard to the **participation of employers** in the project and especially with regard to the KA06 (dedicated to recognition and to the Personal Competence Portfolio), two approaches have been considered. Firstly, the persons in charge of the project dealt with NGOs, after school facilities, leisure time centres, and potential employers. Secondly, they led a series of wider exchanges, reflections and discussions with social partners through the organisation of round tables and conferences (e.g. for KA06), with the aim to involve them in the debate on the contribution of NFE and possible ways of recognition.

Even though up to the end of the project it remained quite challenging to ensure a common understanding of children and youth work/NFE and what lies behind the term 'competences', thanks to the participation of hundreds of NGOs and thousands of youth workers during the 4 years of the project, it seems nowadays easier to follow-up on this issue.

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<sup>33</sup> Children and people up to 30 years of age represent more than a quarter of the entire Czech population.

<sup>34</sup> The following organisations were involved as partners during the implementation of the project: The Association of Workers of Children and Youth Centres in the Czech Republic, the Czech Council of Children and Youth, the Association of School Facility Educators, The Association of Lecturers for Leisure Time Pedagogues, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the Czech Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and a number of universities.

## Description of the Key Activities (extracts)

KAs aimed at achieving the implementation of system changes in the interconnectivity of the initial, follow-up, and continuous education, i.e. of formal, non-formal (including leisure-time education), and informal learning. KAs of the project included establishing a standardisation and evaluation systems within the organisations that work with children and youth, working on the recognition of the results of NFE, developing a training system of youth workers and youth leaders and enhance an access of young people to information.

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***KA 01 – Researches:*** as first step and in order to explore the situation of the youngest generation, their preferences, and the parameters of their ways of spending leisure time, the project included performing a number of researches and partial analyses. Some of these researches were also focused on those who work with children and youth, either professionally, or in their own leisure time. Because of its national scope, the focus was on topics globally characterising the situation in areas where the information was either incomplete, or out of date. Parts of the work of the research team were preliminary researches, questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and naturally data sorting and analysis. This was done in cooperation with research agencies as well as individual experts.

***KA 02 – Standardisation of Organisations Providing Non-Formal Education:*** for the development of any organisation operating in the public space, the quality of services that they render is the crucial issue. The objective was to improve the quality of the work of organisations such as leisure-time centres and school clubs, as well as NGOs working with children and youth, through supporting their management and the improvement of the competences of those responsible for the related processes.

***KA 03 – Education System - Studies of Leisure-Time Pedagogy:*** education - one of the pillars of Keys for Life project - was approached from the perspective of the three dimensions of the education system: the pedagogy, the management supporting the qualification of workers with children and youth, and the individual expertise that deepens their qualifications. This KA particularly focused on developing two qualification educational programmes differing in the number of lessons and in the educational approach (e.g. the shorter one - 96 lessons - was based on blended learning).

***KA 04 – Education System – Continuous Education:*** in the Czech Republic, over 20,000 educators work in the sphere of leisure-time education. These, together with those who work with children and youth in some of the 2,000 NGOs, were the main target group of one-day or longer trainings. Their scope was quite broad: from instructor courses via fine-art courses to courses that focused on the assessment of school educational programmes. With the support of experienced facilitators, the records became real-life documents resulting from teamwork and served for the planning of individual activities. Experts meetings provided a platform for the exchange of good practices (proven methods of work with children and youth) on the regional level.

### ***KA 05 – Education System – Function Training***

In a well-functioning organisation, experienced, continuously learning teachers and educators who work directly with children and youth are supported by skilled management staff. *Function Training*, launched within the project Keys for Life, is a three-year long process with parameters of a qualification course allowing its graduates to assume the role of a school headmaster or that of an NGO manager. This activity aimed at improving the quality of leisure-time and NFE through educating the management staff of the respective organisations.

***KA 06 – Recognising Non-Formal Education:*** successful development of the sphere of NFE inevitably assumes its recognition. In addition to defining the main parameters for future successful recognition of qualifications in the sphere of work with children and youth and that the competences fostered through NFE became more familiar to a large number of employers, Key for Life also included the development of a Personal Competence Portfolio. It provides the opportunity to have the competences acquired through NFE recorded and the possibility to use them as an appendix to the CV. The purpose of this instrument was not only to show that competences for life are acquired through NFE, but also to express these competences in a language intelligible for both sides.



*KA07 – Supporting the Youth Information System.* this KA focused on the collection of quality, relevant, verified and safe information and on their sorting and distribution. All the activities developed under this KA were aimed at supporting the existing network of Youth Information Centres (YICs) and at developing the competences of its staff and, indirectly, of the youth as such.

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## Quality and Impact

Quality was one of the transversal dimensions and objectives of the project Keys for Life. Every single activity organised tackled quality, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly: quality of the service(s) delivered by the different structures involved, quality of the educational and training programmes, quality of the information, quality of the access to information, quality of the staff and other person in charge of the different services to be provided, and quality of the management, to name a few.

Nonetheless, some KAs specifically addressed the issue of quality such as:

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- KA 02 – Standardisation of Organisations Providing Non-Formal Education à focused on the quality of the organisations tackled by the project, partly through supporting the management and the improvement of the competences of those responsible;
  - KA 05 – Education System – Function Training à aimed at improving the quality of leisure-time and NFE through educating the management staff of the respective organisations;
  - KA 06 – Recognising Non-Formal Education à the Personal Competence Portfolio and the competence framework developed as well as the numerous meetings which were organised contributed to the visibility of the work with children and youth and to a better communication with other stakeholders, such as employers;
  - KA 07 – Supporting the Youth Information System à focused on the collection of quality, relevant, verified and safe information, on their sorting and distribution. It also tackled the competence development of the staff of YICs.
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As an example of the direct outcomes of the project, we can highlight a new project 'KA2', which focuses on the implementation of a quality management system in organisations, even though the biggest challenge with regard to that process seems to define quality aspects of the education and learning.

None of the activities and educational programmes of Keys for Life have been so far subject to an external assessment process (including a quality assessment one) and the actors involved remain those mainly guaranteeing the educational outcomes (e.g. the development of competences). It is somewhat up to the users (as in the case of the Personal Competence Portfolio) to be aware of the risk of falsehood or ambiguity and to be able to explain what lies beneath the information provided. Hence, there is a huge dimension of trust in the overall process. The Personal Competence Portfolio offers the possibility to mention external references.

In addition to the recognition of the quality of the project by key stakeholders in the field of education and training and in the policy field, several KAs had not only a clear and concrete impact on political and educational levels, but also contributed to the development of a series of tools and programmes, such as:

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- The inclusion of some of some of the competence profiles in the National Qualifications Framework;

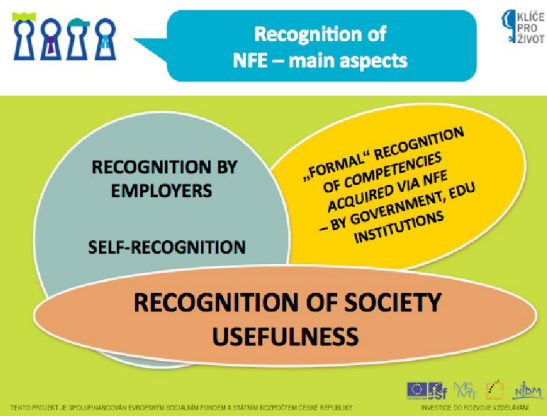
- The development of the online tool OLINA for quality management of organisations, for representatives of associations or for structures who want to test the quality of their management;
  - The 'Function Training' to prepare future managers or headmasters in implementing changes in their organisation (e.g. readjusting the HR policy, altering the orientation on clients, or selecting a long-term trend in the realisation of educational activities);
  - A proposal to amend the Act on Educators which so far makes a difference between educators performing complex direct pedagogical activities, and those performing only partial pedagogical activities as a part of leisure-time education;
  - The accreditation by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the education programmes developed within the system of further education of pedagogical workers;
  - The training of 600 workers with children and youth in six areas: Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs; Media Education and 'Medialisation'; Multicultural Education; Healthy Climate in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education; Participation and Awareness, Active Citizenship Education; and Volunteering Education;
  - The creation of a network of regional coordinators;
  - The signature of a Memorandum on Supporting the Results of Non-Formal Education in Work with Children and Youth in 2011;
  - A set of educational programmes for the staff working with youth in the Youth Information Centres as well as in clubs and interest groups, which also contributed to defining a new quality standard of YICs certification.
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In terms of statistical data, Keys for Life had a duration of 1430 days, involved over 1,000 organisations (of which circa 28 % are Leisure Time and Youth Community Centres, circa 34 % are school care and child care centres, and 38 % NGOs), organised 650 events with a specific target group, involved about 12,000 participants and a total number of 504 project staff members, with 311 contractors.

The project outputs were: 27 publications, 6 researches, partial polls and surveys, 381 educational programmes, the educational module of leisure-time and informal education, an animated game *Informator* supporting the information system for youth, the Personal Competence Portfolio, Olina (the online platform for quality management of organisations providing leisure-time and non-formal education), the Regional Mix of Information for Youth – REMIX, the verified information database "I-katalogy", the project website [www.kliceprozivot.cz](http://www.kliceprozivot.cz), and the section of non-formal education on the website [www.rvp.cz](http://www.rvp.cz). The projects also developed a number of PR materials.

## Recognition of Non-Formal Education and the Personal Competence Portfolio

The issue of NFE in the field of work with children and youth, related to broader employment issues through competence development, was quite new in the Czech Republic in 2009 and, as such, quite unexplored. Keys for Life approached recognition of NFE from three different perspectives: recognition of society usefulness; recognition by employers and self-recognition; 'formal' recognition of competences acquired through NFE by the state administration and educational institutions.



Source: presentation of the work on NFE, Keys for Life

In addition to the various activities undertaken under KA06, the project implied cooperating with two other major projects/processes: the *National Register of Vocational Qualifications* and the *National Qualifications Framework*, which certainly contributed to improve employers understanding of the competences of children and youth acquired through NFE. It also allowed better defining the factors and parameters to take into consideration for a future successful recognition of qualifications in the field of work with children and youth. As stated above, KA06 also resulted in the development of a *Personal Competence Portfolio* (hereinafter PCP) which, based on a competence framework, led to having some of its related competences [profiles] included in the National Qualifications Framework. Upon its completion, KA06 offered a set of minimum competence profiles for selected positions in NGOs as a baseline for particular qualifications, as well as educational programmes that NFE providers (organisations) developed based on these competence profiles and that may in future become the minimum common requirement in order to recognise qualification among themselves.

### The competence framework

Keys for Life defines competences as [...] *integrated, transferable and multifunctional areas of knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, attitudes and values that represent the potential to act effectively in a given context and that can be mobilised as a whole, for the effective conduct of the individual.* The competence framework is divided into three main types of competences: key competences, professional competences, and soft skills.

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- **Key competences:** knowledge, abilities and skills, which make it possible in a given moment and situation to hold a large number of positions and functions and that allow dealing with a series of mostly unpredictable problems. A prerequisite for the acquisition of key competences is the confidence in the autonomy and the responsibility of the participants for their own learning.
  - **Professional competences:** what a person can do after education and training and how it can be used in practice. The expertise and professional skills the person can select in the PCP are based on the 'minimum competence profiles' for the selected position in the field of work with children and youth.
  - **Soft skills:** skills based on certain general human capabilities (e.g., accuracy, timeliness, clarity, persuasiveness, practicality, effective communication, etc.), which develop into competence. In the PCP, soft skills are divided into three areas (based on the Europass): social skills, organisational skills, and other types of skills and knowledge.
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<b>Competencies</b>	<b>Soft - effective communication, orientation in informations, teamwork</b>		<b>General</b>	
	<b>Specialist</b>	<b>Specialist general (transferable, cross-sectional) - computer literacy, car driving</b>		
		<b>Specialist specific</b>	<b>Skills - bookkeeping, risk analysis</b>	
			<b>Knowledge - tax laws, directive of labour protection</b>	

### *The minimum competence profiles*

Keys for Life identified 24 professional profiles that are recurrent in organisations working with children and young people, linked to different areas such as management of organisations and administration, pedagogy and psychology, environmental education, and health protection. A set of minimum standards was described for each professional profile, including information about: the typical work-related tasks, the desired professional skills, and the desired professional knowledge. These profiles were developed in close cooperation with representatives of organisations working with children and youth, and were improved based on the feedback received from those who tested and used them as basis for the design of programmes. The test phase was organised as follows: the National Institute of Children and Youth tested the professional standards by publishing a call for tenders (aimed at organisations working with children and youth) to design and deliver a training programme for each of the profiles. The organisations that won the tender were required to use the profiles as basis to design (or re-design) a training programme for people active in their structures (though it was also open to others), to deliver the training and to provide feedback to the Institute about the professional profile. In terms of methodology, the training delivery required to use participants' self-assessment at the beginning of the training as well as upon its completion (examples of tools for self-assessment have been provided). Participants' awareness of their skills and competences and how the training contributed to it were seen as crucial elements of the training methodology.

### **The Personal Competence Portfolio**

Several years of experience and expertise were necessary for the preparation of the PCP, providing the opportunity of having the competences acquired through NFE recorded with the option of their future presentation as an appendix to the CV<sup>35</sup>. The idea to prepare such a tool was elaborated in the course of Keys for Life by the National Institute of Children and Youth in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The purpose of this instrument is not only to show that competences for life are acquired in the area of NFE, but also to express them in a language intelligible for both sides. The PCP emerged from the experience and knowledge of those working with children and youth and was developed on the basis of the minimum competence profiles for positions in non-governmental/non-profit organisations working with children and youth. It is connected to the Europass, to the outputs of the projects dealing with the national system of professions, and to the National Qualification Framework.

<sup>35</sup> *Personal Competence Portfolio* - appendix of the CV: [www.okp.nidm.cz](http://www.okp.nidm.cz) (in Czech language)

The PCP provides a picture of the acquired competences (e.g. soft skills, knowledge, and educational experiences) that are usable for and transferable to different life situations as well as with regard to the constantly changing labour market. It also represents one of the elements to strengthen the path towards recognition of NFE. Nonetheless, the PCP is not intended only for the labour market; it is primarily meant as a support tool for self-awareness and self-evaluation. Indeed, the PCP can help identifying the skills and competences acquired by a person without necessarily being aware of that learning and development process, thus not being able to put them forward and present them to employers, for instance. Such awareness process, combined with the PCP as a tool, naturally requires the active participation of the user/applicant on the recognition of competences (self-recognition). It helps to increase the confidence of individuals and offers the possibility to improve the perception, image and opinion of oneself.

The PCP can be used to support developing a customised 'picture' of oneself; for one's readiness to change something in life, at work, or at school; for a personal presentation aimed at employers or educators; or as an unofficial but nonetheless important supplement to the Europass CV or personal biography.

<u>Personal portfolio of competencies – Why get involved?</u>			
<u>Employers</u>	<u>Educators</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Individuals</u>
- tool for recruitment, including a portal	- credibility of colleges, high schools	- credibility of organization	- assert on labour market
- corporate social responsibility	- acceptance of work with children and youth	- partnership with employer, college..	- benefits for admission to college
» credibility of the employer	» recognition of practice through credits	- strengthening of education system	- recognition of practice
	- advantage for active students	- visibility, recognition of school facilities for leisure-time education and NGOs by other subjects	- self-confidence

Source: presentation of the Personal Competence Portfolio, Keys for Life, Tomáš Machalik on behalf of the National Institute for Children and Youth

As explained earlier, developing the PCP implies a high degree of self-responsibility and the very first requirement for working with the tool is the ability to recognise not only the acquired competences, but also to clearly articulate them. A step-by-step approach to the PCP has been developed as to support users in understanding every part of it as well as the meaning and intentions that lie beneath the different sections and competences.

### ***Background information for users***

The information provided prior using (filling in) the PCP are divided in several categories: information about the project behind and the actors involved, about the aim and objectives, about the approach to competence and the competence framework, and technical information.

All this is detailed in guidelines that can be downloaded in .PDF format. The webpage also offers downloading a sample of a filled PCP in .DOC, .ODT and .PDF formats. The PCP can be filled in on-line (through a personal account) or can be downloaded (without registration) to be filled in later on, in .DOC or .ODT formats. If online and after completing the form, the user can download and save the PCP on the computer, using an export function, in PDF (for the final version) or XML (if the user wishes to continue working on the PCP).

Among other recommendations on how to approach the work on the PCP, the guidelines underline:

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- Reflecting on the personal path and professional growth in an open manner, recording anything that the person remembers as something important (“remember, write, compare with the CV”);
  - Using the proposed minimum competence profiles for positions in non-governmental/non-profit organisations in the area of work with children and youth as a pattern for the descriptions of the knowledge and skills;
  - Paying attention to the recording of soft skills;
  - Gradually and transparently compiling and recording the competences in accordance with the degree of relevance and importance of the information provided, especially when it comes to the NFE practices and experiences;
  - Being aware of the degree of responsibility when assessing one’s strengths, skills and competences and to remain honest (nothing artificial).
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### ***Structure of the PCP***

***Personal information.*** à name and surname, current contact address, and date of birth.

***Part 1 - the competences (knowledge and skills)*** à the PCP is divided into specific professional competencies, general competences, soft skills and additional abilities, knowledge and skills. Professional competences refer to what a person can do after education and training; to the specific expertise s/he possess or masters and to how this can be used in practice. It is recommended to staff working with children and youth to refer to the expertise and professional skills listed in the minimum competence profiles, or to add more (as offered by the ‘others’ part in the Europass). The part 1 includes:<sup>36</sup>

<b>Expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education of children, youth and adults</li> <li>- Human resources management</li> <li>- Others</li> </ul>
<b>Professional skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic management</li> <li>- Marketing, PR</li> <li>- Fundraising</li> <li>- Project management</li> <li>- Quality management</li> <li>- Risk management</li> <li>- Assets’ management and maintenance</li> <li>- Economic and financial management and controlling (incl. tax system, economic law)</li> <li>- Others</li> </ul>
<b>General skills</b>	<p>a. Transferable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Computer and ICT literacy</li> <li>- Car-related ability<sup>37</sup></li> <li>- Numerical competence</li> <li>- Economic awareness</li> <li>- Legal awareness</li> <li>- Language competence in the mother tongue</li> <li>- Language competence in English</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> Each sub-competence and ability offers the possibility to add additional lines for description.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. the ability to drive a passenger or the knowledge of the traffic regulations in the Czech Republic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language competence in another foreign language</li> <li>- Others</li> </ul> <p>b. Technical knowledge and skills</p> <p>c. Computer knowledge and skills</p> <p>d. Artistic skills and competences</p>
<b>Soft skills</b>	<p>a. Social skills and competences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective communication and presentations</li> <li>- Cooperation</li> <li>- Satisfaction of customer-oriented needs</li> <li>- Lifelong learning</li> <li>- Proactivity</li> <li>- Stress management</li> <li>- Influence others</li> <li>- Others</li> </ul> <p>b. Organisational skills and competences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creativity</li> <li>- Flexibility</li> <li>- Performance</li> <li>- Autonomy</li> <li>- Problem-solving</li> <li>- Planning and organisation of work</li> <li>- Search for information<sup>38</sup></li> <li>- Leadership</li> </ul> <p>Others</p>
<b>Additional abilities, knowledge and skills</b>	Any other information with regard to other abilities, knowledge and skills

**Part 2. The Practice in the field of non-formal education** → this part requires the user to sort - from the most recent to the oldest - information about NFE/L related experiences/competences, with a description of the work experience, the duration of the activity/project/experience, and the name of the organiser (organisation/structure).

**Part 3. Education in the field of non-formal education** → in this part, it is recommended to sort the information by order of relevance/importance. Part 3 proposes three categories of educational experiences:

- a) Accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, by other accredited training structures, etc.);
- b) Educational activities organised by any educational organisation; and
- c) Informal learning activities.

For each of those categories, the user is required to provide information about the type of activity or title of the course, the dates and the provider (for a or b) or the source (for c).

**Part 4. References** → contact details of persons that can be reached in order to verify/confirm the information provided could be indicated in that part of the PCP. There is no system of external assessment.

## Remaining challenges?

The interview of M. Tomáš Machalík, project manager of Keys for Life, concluded on the possible remaining challenges, especially with regard to the recognition of NFE and to the

<sup>38</sup> Includes to search, find, identify, and select valid or important information needed in a given situation.

further development of the PCP. It appears that one of the biggest challenges might be to involve human resources agencies, for their approach to [formal] education and experiences as well as the format of their work remain relatively 'traditional', thus allowing a narrower space for a joint work on the recognition of NFE and NFE-related competences. Another big challenge might be the implementation of the National Qualification Framework, which should gradually move from 'education levels achieved' to 'competences acquired'. Nonetheless, the actors involved in the project Keys for Life are convinced that the PCP will become the main tool for the recognition of competences acquired through NFE or of NFE itself, either by the learner or more widely by the labour market and the social environment. This is also part of the already-mentioned new project 'K2', which tackles the planning of the personal development of participants in NFE projects and activities.

## The 'Engagement Portfolio'

*Note: what follows mainly consists of information obtained through the person who was involved in the development of the project and through the material provided, reproduced and/or adjusted with the kind permission of M. Claude Bodeving on behalf of the Ministry of Family and Integration, National Youth Service, Luxembourg.*

The **Engagement Portfolio** is a tool aiming at providing assistance to youth organisations and youth movements in the development of an official document attesting one's engagement/commitment and competences acquired through non-formal education [activities and projects]. It encompasses two main elements: the 'Portfolio', a personal folder that allows the young person to keep track of the volunteer work experiences, and the 'Attestation' which is an official recognition mechanism of the competences acquired during a young person's engagement as volunteer or in youth work activities, designed from the experience made in 2006 and 2007 with the project *certification of skills acquired in the framework of non-formal education*.

## Background

### From non-formal education...

Since a long time, education has been one of the key topics in field of youth work in Luxembourg. As underlined by the National Youth Service, *non-formal education and informal learning as well as training activities in the youth field are complementary to the education system, have an approach based on participation, are learner-centred and, being carried out on a voluntary basis, are closely linked to the needs, aspirations and interests of young people.*<sup>39</sup>

In Luxembourg, activities for children and young people proposed by day-care facilities, youth services, and youth organisations share similar educational objectives and can be defined as NFE/L. Although the characteristics of some of those activities that take place in the frame of youth work are not always identifiable at first, several help promoting social competences or transmitting values and social norms. For instance, youth organisations enable young people to better understand democratic processes and to engage in society, or youth centres have more and more a preventive and counselling role. All these structures offer a context that

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<sup>39</sup> Extract from *L'éducation non formelle dans le domaine de l'enfance et de la jeunesse* (2012). Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg.



favours experiences, experiments and discoveries, while promoting the overall development of young people. Thanks to the objectives, work principles, educational approaches and methods and the related activities, the organisations working with/for children and youth have a wide range of innovative educational offers. Thus, NFE/L becomes a characteristic feature of the work of those structures, given that they are considered as educational spaces where the learning is planned and participative. The NFE/L characteristics the SNJ refers to are: learning by doing; process-oriented learning; cooperative learning; open; learner-centred; participative; and volunteer.

### ... to the Engagement Portfolio

The Engagement Portfolio aims at providing support to youth organisations and youth movements in the development of an official document attesting one's engagement/commitment and the competences acquired through NFE/L. It is based on two major instruments: the 'Portfolio' and the 'Attestation'. With regard to the young beneficiaries, the Attestation, complemented by the Portfolio:

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- Values the engagement/commitment of young people;
  - Describes the tasks performed and the acquired competences;
  - Provides an attestation (certificate) which is an asset to young people's socio-professional integration;
  - Encourages a positive approach to education and to personal development.
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The target group(s) varies depending on the type of activities that are being referred to:

<p><i>Young people who, in the context of their engagement, performed managerial tasks within the organisation or in a given project.</i>  à if so, the Attestation intends to underline the engagement of that young person who assumed a leading role, which can be seen from different perspectives and may vary depending on the type of organisation. Schematically, the related tasks can be grouped into 3 categories: animation, administration, partnerships and public relations.</p>	<p><i>Young people who have developed and implemented training activities for a youth organisation.</i>  à if so, the Attestation aims at underlining the engagement and the perseverance of the person who supervised the training of managers/youth leaders, youth facilitators and multipliers.</p>	<p><i>Young people who.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>have actively participated to the facilitation of youth groups;</i></li> <li>- <i>have been involved in a voluntary service project<sup>40</sup>;</i></li> <li>- <i>have been in charge of a youth project, implemented in an autonomous manner and not by the youth organisation itself</i></li> </ul>
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The Engagement Portfolio, and in particular the Attestation, may be issued to young people who:

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- Are between 18 and (under) 30 years old;
  - Have attended training courses that had at least a duration of 150 hours, in the youth, the socio-cultural, or sports fields, or that were part of the training foreseen for a voluntary service;
  - Have been engaged/involved for a duration of 400 hours in: a youth organisation, a service-based organisation for young people, a youth service or in the framework of a youth project;
- 

<sup>40</sup> As foreseen by the law on youth voluntary service of 31 October 2007.

- 
- Have completed a continuous and full-time voluntary service for a period of minimum three months.
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Some of the challenges linked to the requirements to obtain the Attestation and the Portfolio will be further explored in the section 'remaining challenges'.

## Development process and structure

The third sector in Luxembourg has been generally well represented in the design of the reform of professional training, particularly through the social partners. Nevertheless, some third sector [youth] organisations have also developed their own initiative for the validation of competences and experiences gained through voluntary activities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth: this marked the starting point of the development of the Engagement Portfolio.

### A youth-led initiative

The development process of the Engagement Portfolio and particularly of the Attestation started in 2004 upon the request of the Luxembourg Federation of Scouts (FNEL). They contacted the National Youth Service with the request to have an 'official' certification for young people engaged in their organisation, to enhance their engagement/commitment and to be able to have a certificate that could represent an added value when looking for a job. The National Youth Service took the request onboard and initiated the development of a system of validation for the competences developed by young people through their participation in voluntary work. At first, a steering group composed of representatives of the National Youth Service and the FNEL monitored the overall process.

In 2005, a guidance leaflet has been published outlining the pilot Attestation procedure, based on a similar document produced by the Swiss scout movement.

In its pilot phase (2006-2007), the project was mostly developed for and led by member organisations of the Consultative Commission for the Training of Activity Leaders. Indeed, during that period, the Attestation could only be awarded to young people who were active in a member organisation of that Commission. The overall process actually began with a consultation phase with employers. The initial proposal was then amended in line with their feedback and a pilot Attestation (or certificate) was launched. The pilot phase was run by an Attestation Commission that was in charge of reviewing all applications submitted and undertook the general management of the pilot project. In addition, a steering group was put together with representatives of the project, of companies/enterprises and of ADEM (the employment development agency). This steering group had the responsibility to monitor the quality of the project.

The external evaluation that accompanied the overall process resulted in adjustments to the initial project. The initiative, the Portfolio and the Attestation, were generally very positively perceived and welcomed by organisations. The 'reason to be' of the Attestation being the recognition of competences acquired through NFE/L, it was seen by most of the organisations as a 'system rooted in practice'. A number of ideas were put forward with regard to the accuracy of the criteria, the need to simplify the procedure and the promotion of the tool itself. The updated tool was the result of an analysis of these proposals and the willingness to make it open and therefore, to adapt it to other organisations on top of those involved in the

pilot phase. As such, the goals remained identical as those formulated in the initial general framework.

Once the pilot phase was completed and evaluated, and all the necessary amendments to the process were made, the Attestation became open to a wider sphere of participant organisations and young people themselves.

For the young people, engaging in organisations or projects requires organising activities, working in teams or to taking responsibilities, which allow social learning and acquiring 'lifelong' competences: *Education, non-formal and informal learning can enable young people to acquire knowledge, skills and additional competences and contribute to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thereby improving their employment opportunities.*

For the organisations, the tool can be seen as an instrument that, on the one hand, enhances the awareness of the values of NFE/L and on the other hand, supports and rewards the work with young volunteers. Moreover, efforts to make visible and disseminate the competences acquired also aim at increasing the visibility of the important work done by youth organisations. The richness of NFE/L for young people is to do business in all its diversity: youth organisations, youth movements, voluntary service, and many others.

### **The Attestation**

The Attestation is made up of three principal elements: personal details, information about the organisation the young person is/was involved in and a description of their voluntary activities. There are three different attestations/certificates that can be obtained, depending on the role and responsibilities the young person has held: leadership, training or project management. With the exception of a project developed and implemented by a group of young people (without the full involvement and responsibility of an organisation) and voluntary service projects, spaces concerned by the engagement can be a youth organisation, an organisation for youth or a youth service<sup>41</sup>.

The Attestation will be elaborated upon a young person's request, given that the minimum requirements are respected. Even if not used in the immediate future, it is recommended to write the Attestation when the young person plans to permanently leave the youth organisation or when certain responsibilities reach an end. Indeed, to write such an Attestation becomes more and more difficult with time. The organisation of the young person is not the one elaborating the Attestation but they have to send the request to the National Youth Service. It is of utmost importance that the choice of what to highlight in the Attestation is made in consultation with the young person.

The different phases of the production of an Attestation are as follows:

- a) Interview with the person who requests the Attestation in order to know the purpose of it. During this interview it is necessary to provide information about the Attestation and the Portfolio; clarify whether the 'supplementary sheets'<sup>42</sup> are to be submitted with the application

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<sup>41</sup> As defined by the Youth Act of July 4, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> There are two types of supplementary sheets, to be submitted together with the application form for the Attestation and to be completed in the context of the Portfolio: 'Project' sheet which is a description of the project with the dates and responsibilities, and the 'Attended Training' sheet that indicates the dates, contents and the name of the organisations of attended training courses.

(for the young people having developed and implemented a project autonomously, these supplements are compulsory).

- b) Consultation with the young person on the tasks and competences to highlight, and writing the application form (and if relevant, the supplementary sheets);
  - c) Sending the application form completed to the National youth Service;
  - d) Verification and finalisation of the Attestation by the National Youth Service, based on the documents received;
  - e) Sending the Attestation to the organisation for signature (by the responsible/person in charge if the organisation);
  - f) Sending the signed Attestation back to the National Youth Service;
  - g) Signature of the Attestation by the Minister in charge;
  - h) Sending the Attestation to the young person with a copy to the organisation.
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For the young people who have been involved in an autonomous manner and not under the responsibility of an organisation and on top of the supplementary sheets to be completed, the National Youth Service will contact them in order to verify the accuracy of the date and of the information provided. The Attestation encompasses information such as:

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- Name, surname, duration (dates) of the engagement, name of the organisation;
  - Type of engagement/responsibilities/activities;
  - Tasks undertaken: 4 to 6 tasks, preferably in at least 3 different categories: management and animation-facilitation; administrative tasks; team work; organisational tasks; craft; partnership and public relations; and evaluation. The link between the function/role (type of engagement) and the types of tasks must be highlighted (examples are provided in the guidelines);
  - General information about the training courses the young person has attended as well as information about the provider/organiser;
  - Information (general description) of the acquired competences based on a series of already-defined key competences<sup>43</sup>;
  - The signature of the responsible person in the organisation
  - Information about the organisation.
- 

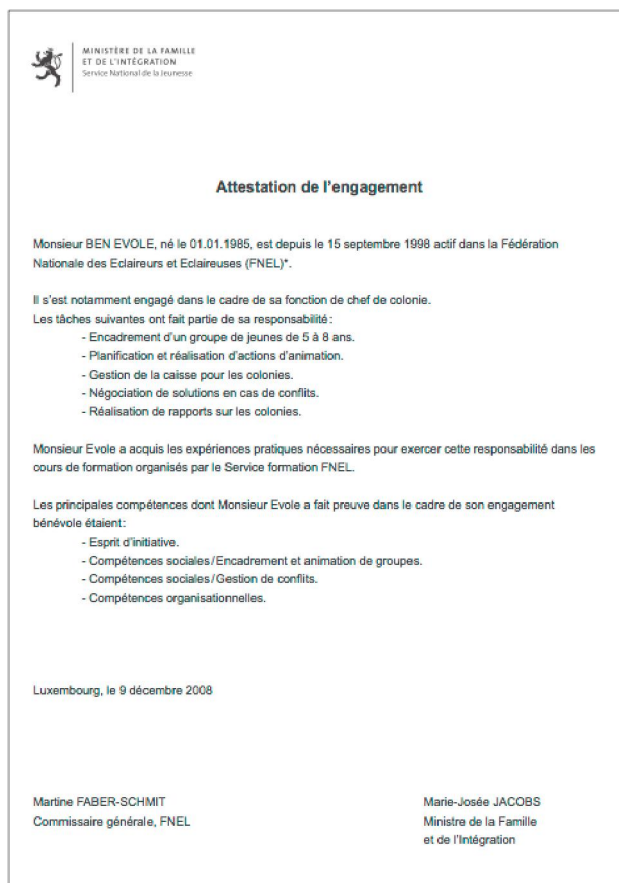
### ***A point on the dialogue***

The Attestation is based on a dialogue with the young person. It is crucial that young people not only understand the contents of the Attestation (they are the ones who will have to, for instance in a job interview, provide additional information about their tasks and experiences or further describe their competences), but also that they are actively involved from the very beginning of the process. In that context, the Attestation becomes a self-assessment instrument enriched thanks to the feedback received during the dialogue. Reflecting on one's acquired competences turns the Attestation into a learning/educational process: what have I learned? What have I done? What can I do? The dialogue should support valorising the engagement/commitment of the young person and focus on the competences acquired. Nonetheless and although the dialogue must aim at valorising the young person, it does not mean to avoid a critical analysis: the young person is encouraged to self-reflect and to develop and use the outcomes of this reflection. Taking into account the overall development and the personal experience of the young person, we are here in the very heart of NFE/L.

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<sup>43</sup> See section 'a competence-based Portfolio'

Some methodological hints are proposed: it must be based on valorising the young person; on the need and on the direct experience of the young person; it should give the young person the opportunity to reflect upon the competences gained; and it must be transparent and based on the initial impetus and interest of the young person. With regard to that last point, the Attestation becomes an opportunity for personal development and a support to define a personal learning plan. If that approach is chosen, the Attestation is not to be seen as a summative evaluation but as a formative one.



Example of the first page of the Attestation.

Source: The Engagement Portfolio (2009). Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg

## A competence-based Portfolio

The Attestation comes together with a Portfolio, which consists of a personal folder to collect certificates of participation in ongoing training courses, in large-scale activities and in projects, to allow the young person to give account of the expertise and competences acquired and keep track of the achievements. As it is an expandable folder, the Portfolio can be a real support for lifelong learning. Working on the Portfolio might require additional support for the young person.

The folder is divided into 5 parts:

<b>1. CV of engagement and self-assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Attestation</li> <li>- A section reserved for the CV of engagement</li> <li>- Fact sheet to perform a self-assessment of the competences</li> </ul>
<b>2. Training certificates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section to collect/list certificates of participation in training courses</li> </ul>

<b>3. Participation certificates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supplementary sheet<sup>44</sup> "attended training courses" (will be dealt with by the national Youth Service if the additional forms have been completed and submitted).</li> <li>- Section to collect/list other certificates received in the context of NFE (e.g. Youthpass), certificates of participation in activities or projects, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Documentation.</b>	<p>This part is used to collect, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The supplementary 'project' sheet (will be dealt with by the national Youth Service on the condition that this additional forms has been completed and submitted)</li> <li>- A general description of projects or documentation of a specific one (e.g. pictures, press articles, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>5. Miscellaneous</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part available for additional information.</li> </ul>

The Engagement Portfolio is not limited to only enhance the concrete engagement of the young person (the tasks), but also revisits the important observation that this engagement provides young people with the opportunity to develop (and respectively demonstrate) knowledge, qualifications and competences.

Based on a dialogue process, the Attestation offers choosing among six competence areas or 'core competences' that are considered the most significant. These six core competences are mostly based on the Europass CV even though, because of the very nature of the volunteer engagement and the importance of the concept of autonomy of the young person, the concept of 'spirit of initiative/entrepreneurship' has been added. In order to provide as clear and pragmatic guidance as possible, the term 'social competences' has been specified in such a way that the Attestation will indicate, for example, 'social competences/ teamwork'.

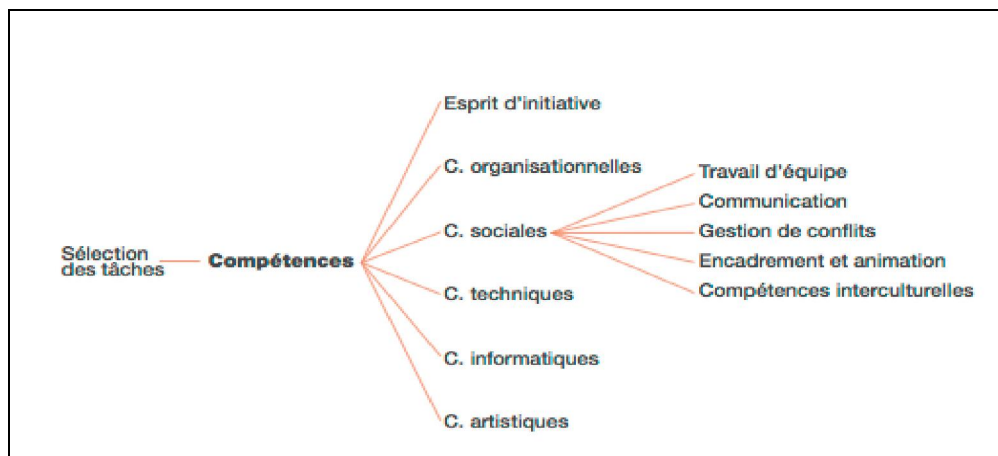
The core competences or competence areas are:

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- Spirit of initiative/entrepreneurship;
  - Social competences [+ specification];
  - Organisational competences;
  - ICT/computer competences;
  - Artistic competences.
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The possibilities to specify the type of social competences tackled (social competences + the specification) are: teamwork, communication, conflict management, management and group facilitation, and intercultural competence.

Generally, the reference to a given core competence results from the description of the related-tasks (and not vice-versa). Hence, core competences only serve as a means for classification. The chosen ones should only reflect the engagement and the tasks of the young person and be limited to the competences demonstrated (described). There is no obligation to go for the six core competences. In fact, to ensure the reliability and readability of the Attestation, it is recommended to only refer to a maximum of five core competences.

The overall process can be visualised as follows: performed tasks → description of the competences → link with the core competences or competence areas and, where relevant → specification of the social competences.



Source: The Engagement Portfolio (2009). Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg.

The brochure of the Engagement Portfolio provides detailed explanations about what lies behind each competence area / core competences.

### *The role of the youth organisations in the development of the Portfolio*

An enlarged Steering Group composed of the members of an existing Consultative Commission for the Training of Activity Leaders, proposed the list of competences and their description. That Commission brings together the organisations developing and implementing training for volunteers-animators/facilitators (e.g. Scouts, Red Cross, and other youth organisations). Its functions are:

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- a. To coordinate training for assistants/support facilitators and leaders;
  - b. To give its opinion on all matters related to the above-mentioned training courses;
  - c. To give its opinion to the Minister on applications for accreditations of the above-mentioned training courses;
  - d. To develop educational materials for assistants/support facilitators and leaders;
  - e. To examine the equivalences between the training courses organised by various organisations.
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This enlarged Steering Group discussed and amended the list of competences and their related descriptions. They also requested the development of the description of the tasks (the different types of tasks and what they refer to) in order to provide heads of organisations with a support regarding their formulation. The list of competences is mostly based on the European texts and in particular on *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. The amendments that have been requested by youth organisations aimed at respecting and guaranteeing the specificity of the types of engagements in the youth and socio-cultural fields (in the context of Luxembourg). Consequently, in the first phase of the development of the Attestation, an 'Attestation Commission' was created with representatives of youth organisations to assess the applications for the Attestation with regard to their format and purpose, give its opinion on all applications to the Minister of Family and Integration, ensure a common approach to the process, and bring together the persons in charge in the organisations concerned.

## Quality and Impact

In Luxembourg, quality assurance in NFE/L is applied mostly in youth work and progressively applied in the structures for children.

It is based on five pillars:

1. Training and ongoing/lifelong training of the staff: defined general minimum standards are applied to the training of the staff. Regular participation in those training sessions is compulsory.
2. Concepts of the organisations/structures: their pedagogical work is based on concepts developed under a National Reference Framework.
3. Self-assessment: organisations/structures assess their own pedagogical practice and develop their offers continuously.
4. Monitoring: the pedagogical work of the organisations/structures is subject to the critical eyes of external experts who regularly evaluate, among other things, proposals for improvement.
5. Scientific accompaniment: to complement the measures of quality assurance, science institutes perform an additional assessment of all the quality assurance process as well as analyses of the specific elements of the work with children and young people<sup>45</sup>.

**External evaluation** → In this context and with regard to the Engagement Portfolio, an external evaluation was conducted in 2007 during the pilot phase of the project. The evaluation was empirical and included two types of analyses. The first one was closed by a mid-term evaluation report on June 30, 2007, which included a number of proposals. Those have been examined and discussed during the second observation phase with officials of the organisations involved, in order to test their feasibility in light of opening the procedure of the Attestation to a larger number of organisations or of services addressing young people. The external evaluation also shed light on a series of necessary changes and improvements, such as a series of amendments to the list of competences and tasks, the accuracy of the criteria, the need to simplify the procedure and the promotion of the tool itself.

**The use of the Engagement Portfolio by youth organisations** → As already explained, the Portfolio and the Attestation were definitely perceived as very positive by youth organisations, thanks to the fact that the overall development was 'rooted in practice'. For all of them, it was important to have access to an 'official attestation'. Nevertheless, the main problem was – and still is, that very few organisations use the Engagement Portfolio. Moreover, it was foreseen that youth centres (working with young people with less opportunities or at risk) would use the tool to support young people in their professional [re]integration path and to valorise their engagement as volunteers-animators; those youth centres have very seldom recourse to the tool. One of the main problems is the rather rigorous conditions and requirements to benefit from the Attestation, which are very often too demanding for the young people the youth centres address (e.g. 400 hours of engagement). One of the reasons behind that firmness is that those criteria are rooted in legal texts and can't be easily changed. The tool is sometimes used by the Scouts – at the origin of the project – by school committees, or by youth leaders groups but mostly in the frame of the 'orientation voluntary service' (hereinafter OVS). OVS is a programme addressing particularly the 'NEETs' and aims at supporting them stabilise their social and personal situation in order to be able to make informed decisions with regard to their future (education, work, etc). In 2013, 250 young people took part in an OVS project and

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<sup>45</sup> Extract from *L'éducation non formelle dans le domaine de l'enfance et de la jeunesse* (2012). Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg.



they all received their Engagement Portfolio. Generally, the clear and simple format of the Attestation was very much appreciated.

**Visibility** → The Attestation is presented in the context of different fairs (e.g. students fairs), in youth organisations' events open to a wider public or during training courses for trainers and youth leaders. The Engagement Portfolio is also available online through different websites (National Youth Service [www.snj.lu](http://www.snj.lu), 'Agence du Bénévolat', etc.) and youth organisations write from time to time an article presenting the tool in their publications. Nonetheless, the Engagement Portfolio is still not very well known in the youth field and particularly in youth organisations.

**Recognition** → The Attestation is formally recognised: the tool is integrated in the 'Youth Law' (loi sur la jeunesse). Several Articles directly refer to it as the recognition tool and provide information about the overall process, roles and responsibilities. Such recognition measures of the Attestation have been proposed by Luxembourg in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. The Attestation can also be used in the process of a 'validation of prior learning' by the Ministry of Education. The Engagement Portfolio is generally welcomed by young people (as demonstrated during training for facilitators) and tutors involved in voluntary service projects appreciate the approach of the dialogue with the young people.

The tool also represented an important step for the promotion of the concept of NFE and an important outcome is to be found in the pilot phase of the project: participating organisations exchanged on the issues of competences and NFE, which resulted in a much better understanding of the term and the concept of NFE itself. This common terminology facilitates educational and conceptual discussions. NFE has become an important concept in Luxembourg (who has the project of a law on quality assurance in the field of NFE with children and young people), used in youth work with and in other types of out-of-schools activities. A national reference framework on NFE has been introduced in 2013.

**Once the Attestation has been delivered?** → The management of the Engagement Portfolio is the responsibility of the National Youth Service and particularly of the unit in charge of the voluntary service. Nonetheless, the National Youth Service does not perform, at the moment, a follow-up of the use and relevance/impact of the Attestations that have been delivered.

## Cooperation with employers

Based on the interviews conducted, contacting employers, involving and stimulating them to share their point of view wasn't an easy task (which led to establishing a smaller group of employers at the beginning). Still, during the pilot phase, some 'big employers' (directors of banks or of big companies) have been consulted as to give their opinion of the potential usefulness and relevance of the Engagement Portfolio and the Union of Luxembourg enterprises gave its green light to officially support the tool.

One of the outcomes of the contacts with employers during the pilot phase was that employers were generally in favour of a clear definition of competences (the 'core competences') and of what they referred to. Apparently, there is a general common understanding with regard to the importance of social competences but that specific point has not been further discussed with employers. The consultation process also led to the

development of a specific brochure to better explain the tool, its context, its structure and its use. The Union of Luxembourg enterprises (Uel) officially supports the Engagement Portfolio<sup>46</sup>.

## Remaining challenges?

The biggest challenge was and remains linked to public relations: the tool is not known enough, neither by youth organisations, nor by employers. There is a strong need to better inform the latter about the Engagement Portfolio and generally, to better advertise it. Also, the general criteria remain too high (150h of training, 400h of engagement, etc.) and might need to be revised.

Finally, it might also be necessary to conduct a new external evaluation of the project to better adjust it afterwards, still with the objective to improve it and to better promote it: *for it is a continuous evolving process, it would be useful to keep on accompanying the project, paying a particular attention to how it will fit in a daily-life context and, if needed, to make the necessary changes and adjustments in order to makesomething optimal out of it*<sup>47</sup>.

## Competence Portfolio of the Danish National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning

*Note: what follows mainly consists of information reproduced and/or adjusted based on the publication "National actions for promoting recognition of prior learning", the website dedicated to the Portfolio <https://minkompetencemappe.dk/> and through the Danish National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning.*

'**My Competence Portfolio**' developed by the Danish National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning, forms part of the assessment of competences proposed in the frame of *competences gained from work experience, non-formal and informal learning* and in the process of recognition of prior learning. The Knowledge Centre operates under the authority and funding of the Danish Ministry of Education.

## Background

### The National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning

The aim of the National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning is to collect, produce and disseminate information and documentation of existing knowledge on validation of prior learning (hereinafter VPL). The Knowledge Centre also develops methods for VPL at national level in cooperation with national authorities and relevant partners within the educational system and in industry, organisations and third sector. The focus of the Knowledge Centre is primarily within the adult educational sector up to diploma level, but also covers the implementation of VPL within medium-cycle higher education and short-cycle education programmes. It provides an updated basis of knowledge for the way VPL is carried out in

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<sup>46</sup> The principle private sector actors in the training and lifelong learning sector in Luxembourg are the Chamber of Commerce, the Representation group for artisans, the Representation group for workers, the CEPL - Representation group for all private sector employees in Luxembourg, and the IFBL - Institute for training in the banking sector.

<sup>47</sup> Extract of the external evaluation in 2007.

Denmark (incl. long range of developmental projects) to different target groups like: educationalists, practitioners within the sector, politicians and private companies. The aim is to use the Knowledge Centre as a forum for networking, provide inspiration for all interested parties in the field of VPL, and offer services such as consultancy, lectures, seminars, conferences, newsletters, reports and publications. In short, the key activities of the Knowledge Centre are to gather and systematise experiences with validation of prior learning (VPL); develop methods, models and criteria for VPL; develop courses and education within the field of VPL; disseminate national and international knowledge in the field through conferences, seminars, newsletters and websites; disseminate and inform through reports, articles and publications; and cooperate with relevant networks. The partners of the Knowledge Centre are the Engineering College of Aarhus, the University College Lillebaelt, and the VIA University College.

### **Barriers, challenges and possibilities**

The aim of the Knowledge Centre is to establish a constructive collaboration between the policy level, national governmental institutes, research bodies and Knowledge Centres, to strengthen the educational systems related competences, and use and develop of validation of prior learning as an integrated part of their work. It has at the same time the challenge and the possibility to develop a coherent structure for validation of prior learning between the private sector, the educational sector and the Third Sector that will underline the full meaning of lifelong education.

In 2010, the Danish Ministry of Education has carried out an examination of the law which regulates the recognition of prior learning (hereinafter RPL) with regard to: adult vocational training, basic adult education, short cycle higher education programmes, diploma programmes, and general adult education/ higher preparatory exams. RPL is still a broadly founded political project supported by relevant stakeholders and the social partners and is seen as a very important instrument contributing to promote adults participation in adult and continuing training and to improve adults possibilities on labour market. For the educational institutions, the new law meant a number of new challenges; both for those with experience with the assessment of prior learning as well as for those for whom the field is entirely new. In its presentation of the Danish approach to the recognition of prior learning in 2012, Ms Kirsten Aagaard, Head of the Centre, summarised the barriers and challenges as follows:

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economy (economical situation);</li> <li>- Institutional anchoring;</li> <li>- Attitudes of the teachers;</li> <li>- Competence development of the professionals;</li> <li>- Cross sectoral cooperation / stakeholder cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To get from system level to user level.</li> <li>- To built up a national coherent structure.</li> <li>- To develop the system in a sustainable way.</li> <li>- To inform and improve knowledge about the possibility of obtaining RPL.</li> <li>- Educational changes in the light of RPL.</li> <li>- Strengthen the collaboration between the sectors: Education, labour market and the third sector.</li> <li>- A challenge to integrate all the elements of the process: Information, clarification, documentation, assessment and formal recognition.</li> <li>- Quality assurance.</li> </ul>

The institutions had to develop a practice that would ensure a great degree of transparency and quality in the process involving the clarification, documentation, assessment and recognition of prior learning. This raised demands not only in relation to the instruments, methods and procedures involved, but also with regard to the competences of the persons who are to carry out the assessments. Hence, the development of a National Action Plan (2010-2011) under the Ministry of Education was launched, tackling 4 initiatives crossing all relevant educational areas.

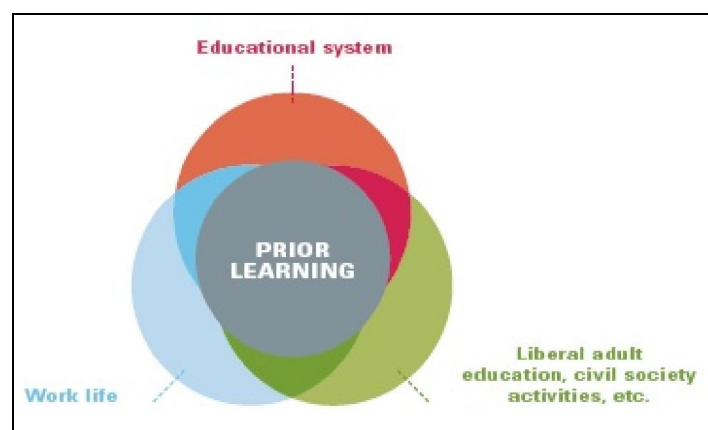
The general themes were:

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1. Mapping out the players guidance and counselling before RPL;
  2. Examine the possibilities of RPL in the educational system to get a broader perspective (e.g. from an occupational and a job-related one);
  3. Quality assurance with a special focus on developing a code of conduct for RPL;
  4. A local guidance and information campaign - in order to support a broader implementation of RPL in all educational areas.
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In spring 2011 a committee began to put more detail into the action plan. Further initiatives were then put forward for the period 2012-2014.

## Developments of the recognition of prior learning

The Danish Parliament Act no. 556 of June 2007 defines prior learning as *the overall knowledge, skills and competences irrespective of where and how they have been developed and acquired*. Competence development for VPL practitioners is part of the VPL agenda and a number of different initiatives have been undertaken, especially with regard to the new law (e.g. in the third sector, a national umbrella organisation provides courses for local facilitators). In spring 2011 a VPL-committee of core stakeholders (social partners, organisations and the educational institutions) was established in the Ministry of Education to unfold the actual action plan about VPL in Denmark. Highlighting and recognising an individual's prior learning as a part of their overall skills development is a way to build upon the lessons learned through work, liberal adult education, leisure activities, and in the educational system. It also helps building a bridge between the various learning environments.



Source: National actions for promoting recognition of prior learning (2007).  
Ministry of Education, Denmark. <http://pub.uvm.dk/2008/priorlearning/hel.html>

Denmark has a long tradition of individual competence evaluation. In the past, this has resulted in a focus on individual skills identification for: vocational training (1997), basic adult education (2001), vocational education and training programmes (2003). Starting in 2004, an increased focus was placed on recognising prior learning, and in August 2007 the educational fields covered by the legislation were expanded to include following ones: vocational training, single course subject in general adult education and general upper secondary education, basic adult education, vocational education and training programmes, and diploma degrees. The new regulations also mean that adults have the right to ask an educational institution to assess their prior learning in order to obtain recognition of their competences in the adult and continuing education system.

In spring 2008, the Ministry of Education in co-operation with the social partners created a prior learning information and networking campaign, with the aim to inform about the new regulations for development and RPL in the adult and continuing education system, and to promote the opportunities they opened. The law that regulates the RPL was revised in 2010.

Assessment of prior learning gives the individual the opportunity to qualify for educational programmes, tailor educational programmes or receive credit for certain classes, obtain a 'skills certificate' if the skills are the same as those obtained by completing part of an educational programme, and obtain a 'programme certificate' if the skills are the same as those obtained by completing an entire educational programme. The Danish concept for RPL is based on the following principles:

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- The individual citizen is able to request an assessment of the prior learning, based on the framework and regulations applicable within the individual areas of education;
  - The individual also has a responsibility for contributing to the documentation of the prior learning;
  - A user fee may be charged for a competence assessment, except for the low skilled;
  - A competence assessment should always be based on the objectives and admission requirements of the education programme in question;
  - The individual's competences should be recognised, irrespective of where and how they were acquired, but without compromising the quality/standard of the education and training programmes;
  - The methods used must ensure a reliable assessment, inspiring confidence in the outcome;
  - The result of the assessment should be documented by issuing a certificate;
  - Appeals are possible.
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With new opportunities available to it, the Ministry of Education launched a number of initiatives that seek to *improve the knowledge of prior learning assessment*, and to promote its use. In short, the initiatives include: a partnership agreement with the social partners regarding recognition of prior learning, an information and networking campaign focusing on prior learning, *an online competence portfolio that can be used to document skills when seeking prior learning assessments*, a handbook of prior learning to be used by the adult and continuing education institutions, the establishment of a National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning and of a counselling web portal, as well as visibility and information events.

## Partnership with labour and employer organisations

In June 2007, the Ministry of Education entered into an agreement with the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, the Federation of Danish Employers, the Confederation of Danish Professionals and The Danish Association of Managers and Executives, regarding RPL. The goal of the partnership is to promote recognition of life skills – prior learning – in order to encourage greater use of adult and continuing education programmes geared towards the labour market. The Ministry of Education and the labour market organisations agreed to co-operate in the following areas:

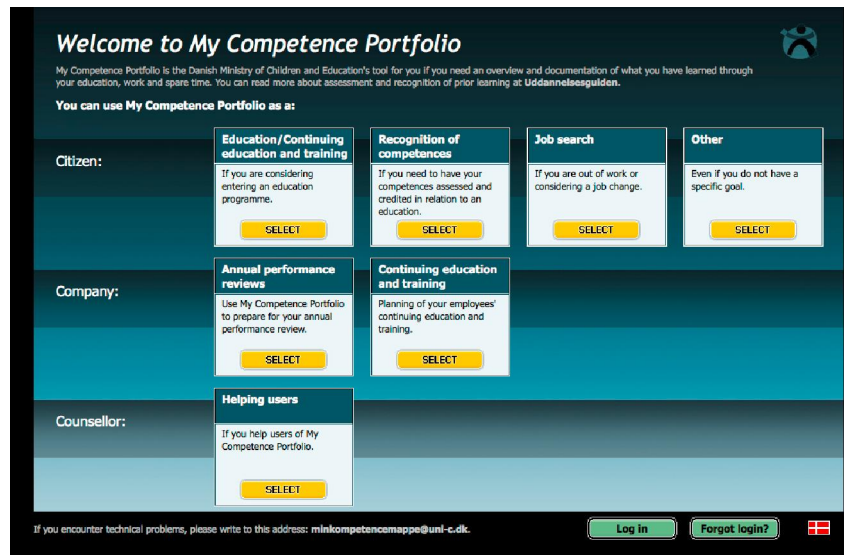
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- Development of skills portfolios to be used as documentation for knowledge, skills, and work experience
  - Development of industry-specific practical guidelines for completion of individual competency evaluations as a way to ensure the quality of prior learning assessments
  - Making companies, members, employees, employer organisations, and the general public more aware of individual skills evaluations.
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## Description of 'My Competence Portfolio'

As seen above, 'My Competence Portfolio' (hereinafter the Portfolio) was developed in the frame of the implementation of the new legislation with regard to RPL. The Portfolio is a tool that helps all individuals describe and document prior learning, meaning the sum of all the things that the person knows about and knows how to do, i.e. not only diplomas and certificates but also what they have learned at work and in their spare time. It is available in Danish and in English.

Individuals requesting a prior learning assessment are required to provide documentation of their competences (through a specific form), such as: certificates from completed programmes or classes, employment contract, employer statement, a list of offices held within a trade organisation or other group, certificates from Folk High School stays, as well as statements from teachers and headmasters and statements from leaders of civil society groups, including sports coaches. This is also available for the assessment of foreign qualifications.

In addition to that formal recognition process, the possibility for anyone to document and maintain an overview of the things they have learned and the skills they possess, particularly if they are involved in an adult or continuing education programme and to request an individual competency evaluation from the educational institution, was made possible through the Portfolio. It is important to highlight that this tool is to be seen mainly from the perspective of education (VET, formal, adult and continuing education and training), even though the Portfolio offers the possibility to describe competences acquired through NFE/L and informal learning.



Source: Homepage 'My Competence Portfolio' [www.minkompetencemappe.dk](http://www.minkompetencemappe.dk)

## Who can use it?

### *Individuals (citizens)*

Any individual can use the Portfolio to keep track of and document all the competences acquired outside the ordinary education system – both during your working life and spare time, to have them assessed and recognised. Such competences include organisational work, voluntary work, participating in development projects, positions of trust, etc. The Portfolio can be used by those who are *considering entering an education programme*, who wish to *have their competences recognised* (in need of a competences assessment), those *who are looking for a job or considering a job change*, or for *any other purpose*.

For educational programmes → with regard to education, the Portfolio can: support gaining access to an education and training programme, support planning a special continuing education and training programme, shorten the education to be pursued, and support obtaining proof of having passed some or parts of an education programme. There are different possibilities for different education programmes. The Portfolio may be part of the material that is handed to the educational institution, which can advise about how the Portfolio can be part of their assessment of the prior learning.

For job seekers → no matter whether the user has already a job, would like to opt for a new one or is unemployed, the Portfolio can help shed light on questions such as 'which competences do I have in relation to the job for which I am applying?' and 'how do I present my competences in my job application?' Hence, it can help gaining a systematic overview of all the competences, no matter where the user has acquired them. Some examples are provided in the instructions:

- The job experience: where have the users worked before? What did they do? They can describe any relevant job experience in relation to jobs for which they would like to apply. They can also describe or attach pictures of products, etc., which they have made in connection with their work.
- The competences acquired during spare time: such experiences may include 'workmanship' in connection with repairing a house, car, etc., in any other type of spare-time related

competences, e.g. experiences gained from working as a coach in a local sports club<sup>48</sup>. Such experiences and competences can be included and used in job applications.

- The education and continuing education and training: users can make an overview of all the education programmes and courses that they have passed since leaving primary and lower secondary school.
- Profession-related competences: what can users do? What do they know about? From which jobs and areas did the users gain their experiences?

### *Counsellors*

Counsellors, such as student counsellors at an educational institution, or simply persons who wish to help users of the Portfolio in other connections, can also use it. Even though the Portfolio's technical functions can be used by anybody with ordinary IT-experience, some people may find it difficult to consider their job experience(s) and describe their competences. Many users will therefore find it useful to have a 'sparring partner' (*quoting*) to, for instance: get an overview of their job experience (users may need help to get an overview of their job experience(s) and grouping them into job functions and work related tasks) or to describe their own competences (users have experience from many different job tasks, but may find it difficult to "translate" them into competences). To give the users the best possible guidance, counsellors/advisers are required to create their own Portfolio.

### *Employees – employers (companies)*

Companies are also granted access to the Portfolio, either to conduct annual performance reviews, or to support employees' skills development through the planning of their continuing education and training.

In the case of annual performance reviews, the Portfolio can also support employees in preparing for the process. Questions related to performance reviews might be: what work tasks and areas is the employee familiar with from past job experience and in his/her present job? In which education programmes and courses has the employee participated? Which professional competences does the employee have? Other competences? Etc.

When a company is planning its employees' continuing training and education, the Portfolio can be a useful tool; by asking their employees to fill in their own Portfolio, the company can gain a useful overview of the employees' wishes with regard to their job and education: what jobs are the employees familiar with from their present and past jobs? In which education programmes and courses have the employees participated? Which competences do employees have? Asking employees to describe and document their prior learning experiences can become a useful basis for the company's planning of continuing education and training activities and the employees' career development.

The procedure for companies to use the tool is as follows:

Step 1	The company must open an account as a company user: a designated person from the company, e.g. a person from the HR-department, enters information about himself/herself and the company s/he represents. After this s/he receives an e-mail with a password.
Step 2	The company creates a list of employees to be invited to make a prior learning assessment: the company user enters the names and e-mail addresses of the employees in question.

<sup>48</sup> In this context, competences refer to those acquired through both NFE/L and informal learning, even though not labeled as such.



Step 3	The company user sends an e-mail to the employees in question, with a link, a user-id and password for the Portfolio. In the e-mail the company can explain the background for the prior learning assessment to the employee.
Step 4	The employees can give the company a 'reader access' to the information, using the password and user-id received from the company. Only employees have access to the Portfolio. Hence and when completed it, it is totally up to them to give the company user access to reading the information provided in the Portfolio.
Step 5	The company can make different overviews using the Portfolio to which employees have given 'reading rights'.

### Structure of the Portfolio<sup>49</sup>

Once the type of user (e.g. citizen) and the purpose for using the Portfolio (e.g. recognition of competences) are defined, users are requested to create their profile (user name and password) before starting with their profile.

**Part 1 – about me** → The first part consists in general information about the user: name, address and phone number, gender, date of birth, type of driving licence (if any), any other information that could be relevant for the competences assessment process, and what are the 'plans for the future' (description of plans and wishes for the future with regard to job and education and training). Users can also upload their picture (keeping in mind that the whole Portfolio can be turned into a presentation document).

**Part 2 – educational background** → This part consists in an overview of the education (formal and continuing education). With regard to the *formal education*, users are required to provide information about the grade after primary and secondary school, the types of educational programme(s) followed after 'lower secondary school'<sup>50</sup>, including the name of the programme(s) and of the provider(s), the educational programme(s) being followed currently and the programme(s) that have been partly completed after primary and lower secondary school (the explanation provided is that even if not completed, part of the programme might be relevant for the competence assessment process). Certificates can be attached. With regard to *continuing education*, the information requested concern other education and training programme(s) and course(s) (title, provider, duration and year) fully or partially followed as well as the type of certificates users have been awarded (can be attached as well).

**Part 3 – Job experience** → This section concerns all information related to users' job experience(s), including contact details of employer(s), business sector/area of work or if self-employed, duration of the employment(s), a description of the typical work tasks and examples of 'products' or problem-solving situations at work (can be attached).

**Part 4. Experience from spare time** → This section is divided into three parts: adult education, voluntary work/clubs, and spare time activities. It provides users with the possibility to link to another tool that can help them uncover the competences obtained through a 'competence profile' (each time adjusted depending on the type of experience that is being referred to).

The part on *adult education* includes information about the type of class(es) or course(s) attended (subject and contents), the provider(s) and the dates. For the part on *voluntary work/clubs*, the information includes the name and purpose of the organisation or charity, the period of the involvement and a description of the gained experiences and activities. Several

<sup>49</sup> In each section, there is the possibility to get written or oral information about what the section is about and to view examples/samples.

<sup>50</sup> Note: based on the Danish educational model

entries are possible. The part on *spare time activities* only requires a general description of the activities and the duration (from-to). Additional information can always be attached.

**Part 5. My competences** → This section is divided between general competences, subject-related competences and language skills. General competences are understood as “competences typically demanded in any job”.

The *general competences* are themselves divided into several ‘competence areas’ broken down into a series of or ‘sub-competences’ or ‘abilities’. For each of them, users can rate their level of experience or insight: no experience, limited experience, some experience and a lot of experience. They can also provide information about how they gained that experience, giving examples of job functions or leisure activities where they have used the competence in question. The competence areas are:

<b>Collaboration and planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning own work/solving tasks on my own</li> <li>- Working in self-governing groups/teams</li> <li>- Working with others</li> <li>- Quality assurance of own work/own task solution</li> <li>- Providing service/being in contact with clients</li> <li>- Participating in the planning of other employees' work/activities</li> <li>- Participating in quality assurance of other employees' work</li> <li>- Instructing/ teaching others to execute a task</li> <li>- Negotiating</li> </ul>
<b>Learning and development competences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Becoming familiar with new areas</li> <li>- Searching for information</li> <li>- Coming up with solutions for improvements in the solution of a task</li> <li>- Taking part in new ways to solve tasks</li> </ul>
<b>Communication/presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking minutes, preparing instructions or reports that can be understood by co-workers</li> <li>- Writing short texts (letters, messages, etc.)</li> <li>- Writing texts directed at large groups of people</li> <li>- Making oral presentations</li> <li>- Using IT-tools to communicate/make presentations</li> </ul>
<b>Working with numbers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reading and understanding calculations/measurements</li> <li>- Making calculations and measurements</li> <li>- Presenting calculations and measurements to other people</li> </ul>
<b>IT-competences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Word processing</li> <li>- Financial management</li> <li>- Image processing</li> <li>- Databases</li> <li>- Internet/e-mail</li> <li>- Presentation programmes such as PowerPoint</li> <li>- Spreadsheets</li> </ul>
<b>Other competences</b>	Any other competence than those mentioned in the table

The *subject-related competences* could be knowledge about a subject that users have worked with, e.g. certain technologies, sales, marketing, etc. It could also be knowledge gained during spare time, voluntary work, and adult education, such as knowledge about IT, cooking or first aid. That part includes information about occupational knowledge and occupational skills areas, the level of experience (from limited experience to some experience and a lot of experience) and some descriptive information (how /from where users did gain the experience).

The part on *language skills* offers the possibility to indicate the level of knowledge with regard to understanding, speaking, reading and writing. The levels are: 0 = No knowledge, A = limited knowledge - basic level, B = some knowledge - medium level and C = fluent - advanced level. Users can also provide information about how they gained that knowledge. Sixteen languages are proposed but users can indicate additional ones.

***Part 6. Compose presentation of your Competence Portfolio*** → In this section, users can compose a presentation of the information they have entered into their Portfolio. They decide which information they want to show in the presentation by clicking in the fields next to the list (of all categories previously proposed and /or completed).

***Part 7. Send presentation*** → Users are required to provide an e-mail address to which the presentation can be sent. There is the possibility to add an introduction/information text. Data can also be saved online and the presentation can of course be downloaded.

## 4 | COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RECOGNITION MECHANISMS

This chapter explores several areas for comparison, defined based on the information and the outcomes of the analysis of the tools previously described: the Youthpass Certificate (European level), the Personal Competence Portfolio (the Czech Republic), the Engagement Portfolio (Luxembourg) and My Competence Portfolio (Denmark). Where relevant, examples of some other tools might also be provided.

### Youth work and NFE/L

The first interesting aspects to highlight are the approach to and understanding of the diversity of who forms part of the 'youth' and 'education' fields of work. With the exception of the Danish Portfolio, all the tools tackle NFE/L within youth work and the approaches to the nature and providers of youth work are generally very analogous.

Youthpass' approach to youth work is very close to the definition of the *Resolution on Youth Work* of the Council of the European Union. The main characteristics are that youth work is about working with and for young people in 'out-of-school' contexts, including leisure-time and sport activities, that it is based on NFE/L and on a set of values and principles, and that it aims at young people's development. Such definition is therefore relatively large and inclusive in order to reflect the diversity of youth work and of youth work - NFE/L practitioners.

In the frame of the project Keys for Life, NFE/L providers would encompass all leisure-time providers for children and youth, meaning leisure-time centres, after school centres, school clubs and NGOs, all reflected in the 24 professional profiles the project identified.

Even if more restrictive at the beginning, the Luxembourgish Engagement Portfolio is addressed to young people who are or were involved in activities of NFE/L providers, meaning youth and volunteering organisations, youth services, youth centres and day-care facilities (the main element that might narrow the list down is the age range the Portfolio addresses: 18-30).

The Danish portfolio addresses young adults and adults and has a clear educational purpose. Not being a youth-based initiative, it nevertheless provides the space to record experiences gained in any type of 'spare-time' and 'volunteering' activities, with no limitations in terms of providers.

Hence, we may conclude that the decisive element is perhaps not so much what lies behind youth work and who are the youth work practitioners (the approaches being relatively similar and extremely large and diverse), but the fact that all providers work along NFE/L values and principles – clearly defined and explained, besides in the case of the Danish Portfolio. Since for most of the tools youth work is based on NFE/L, the link is relatively obvious.

## Cooperation with other stakeholders

Absolutely all the tools involved cooperating with stakeholders, but not necessarily with the same ones; these differences might be due to socio-political factors as well as to economic ones. At first, the development of Youthpass included consultations with policy makers (European Commission, National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme, etc.), Europass (European Commission and Cedefop), representatives of youth organisations (e.g. through the European Youth Forum), and trainers. It later on turned into a tool developed in close cooperation with a larger number of stakeholders (see Chapter on Youthpass), to become a tool that not only responds as much as possible to the needs of the beneficiaries of the YiA programme, but also alongside the process of recognition of NFE/L and youth work. Youthpass never included direct cooperation with social partners (e.g. trade unions) and employers.

Keys for Life – including the development of the Personal Competence Portfolio – was developed in cooperation with a relatively large group of stakeholders: social partners, employers, educators, NGOs, leisure-time centres, after-school care centres, school clubs, state administration and local government representatives. Not all cooperated or were engaged to the same extent. Their roles varied depending on the type of activities to be developed and on the management and monitoring of the project itself. Some stakeholders seem to have been involved more at a consultative level (e.g. employers and social partners) while others were at the very roots of the project and directly involved in a series of concrete activities (e.g. the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports or NGOs).

The Engagement Portfolio was initiated by the Luxembourg Federation of Scouts (FNEL) and was primarily led by steering group composed of representatives of the National Youth Service and the FNEL. Its pilot phase was mostly monitored by the Consultative Commission for the Training of Activity Leaders (with representatives of the national Youth Service and organisations active in the youth field), and by the 'Attestation Commission'. Representatives of companies/enterprises and of ADEM (the employment development agency) joined the process, especially with regard to the quality aspects of the project. The overall process began with a consultation phase with employers.

Although initiated earlier, major changes with regard to the recognition of prior learning in Denmark started in 2009-2010 and were led by a validation of prior learning committee composed of core stakeholders such as social partners, organisations and education institutions. The lack of cooperation with stakeholders was actually considered as one of the barriers to the process of RPL and a challenge to overcome, reason why the Danish Ministry of Education tried to open the process as much as possible. Nonetheless, for the products that resulted from the process – especially the Competence Portfolio, have mainly education and training purposes as well as employability ones, it seems from the information available that stakeholders such as education institutions, employers and social partners had a perhaps bigger role to play in defining and implementing the changes.

The conclusions of those different types of cooperation highlight a big willingness to open it as much as possible, which is very much in line with not only the issue of employability on European and national agendas but also with the process of recognition on NFE/L and youth work. The degree of participation and involvement of the stakeholders undoubtedly vary but this is very much related to the nature and the purpose of the tools developed, as well as whom they address.

## Youth-led initiatives?

From the four tools explored in the frame of this Mapping Study, only one was totally youth-led: the Engagement Portfolio (Luxembourg). The whole process started upon the request of the Luxembourg Federation of Scouts (FNEL) to have an 'official' certification for young people engaged in their organisation, to enhance their engagement/commitment and to be able to have a certificate that could represent an added value when looking for a job. This did not prevent the National Youth Service to engage in the process from the very beginning, but the initiative came from the youth field.

In Czech Republic, the National Institute of Children and Youth – at the helm of the project Keys for Life - depends on the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Youthpass was initiated by SALTO T&C RC, mandated by the European Commission. The Danish Portfolio is fully embedded in the process of recognition of prior learning and of the changes initiated by the Ministry of Education.

## Competence frameworks

Each tool is based on a specific competence framework, with generally very similar approaches and in some cases, similar sources of inspiration. The competence framework of Youthpass is completely in line with the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Naturally, the approach to the competences proposed is adjusted to the purpose and to the users of Youthpass, but the competences that serve as references for the learning and reflection processes are the key competences. Even though all eight key competences are dealt with, those that are seen as 'easier to approach' by Youthpass users are those embedding soft skills (e.g. social and civic).

The approach to competences in the Personal Competence Portfolio of Keys for Life is based on the outcomes of the DeSeCo project<sup>51</sup>. The competence framework is divided into three main types of competences: key competences, professional competences, and soft skills. The competence framework was developed and tailored for the purpose of the Portfolio and for its potential users. Indeed, it emerged from the experience and knowledge of those working with children and youth and was developed on the basis of the minimum competence profiles for positions in non-governmental/non-profit organisations working with children and youth. The soft skills represent the higher number of competences of the framework (16), even though that doesn't decrease the importance of the other competences areas. The competence framework is connected to the Europass and to the outputs of the projects dealing with the national system of professions and the National Qualification Framework.

In Luxembourg, the Engagement Portfolio includes six competence areas or 'core competences' considered to be the most significant and that are mostly based on the Europass CV. Nevertheless, the concept of 'spirit of initiative/entrepreneurship' and 'social competences' have been added in order to remain faithful to the very nature of the volunteer engagement, the importance of the concept of autonomy of the young person, and the field of engagement.

The Danish Portfolio is based on a competence framework very much tailored to the field of education & training and employment. The framework is divided into 6 competence areas, considered as "competences typically demanded in any job".

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<sup>51</sup> OECD – *Project DeSeCo, Definition and Selection of Competencies: Strategic Paper* (2002)

We can therefore notice that both Youthpass and the Engagement Portfolio are based on European initiatives, being the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning or those proposed in Europass, although Luxembourg has adjusted its list according to the purpose of its tool and to its potential users. This is also partly the case of the Personal Competence Portfolio of Keys for Life, which also relates to the national reality and the process of NQF.

## Approach to assessment

All the tools are based on a self-assessment of the competences developed, though two of them also include a dialogue process (Youthpass and the Engagement Portfolio) and one is meant to go through an additional assessment for recognition of prior learning purpose (the Danish Competence Portfolio).

Youthpass is “neither about self-assessment only, nor does it involve an external one”, but both Youthpass and the Engagement Portfolio insist very much on the dimension of self-assessment or self-reflection as the very primary step of the overall process, to be supported by a *dialogue* with the young person – if desired though highly recommended. Both tools provide guidance (and in the frame of Youthpass, training) on how to approach and perform the dialogue, on the dimensions of feedback (how to ask for it, how to give it, how to receive it) and on the additional value it has for the self-assessment.

The Personal Competence Portfolio of Keys for Life is also based on self-assessment, Considering the information received, it seems that a high level of autonomy is given to the user to perform the assessment process, though not excluding external support (dialogue).

The Danish Portfolio is also based on self-assessment but also includes a specific feature for ‘counsellors’ to support the process. Moreover and since the tool is meant to support recognition of prior learning, the outcomes will undergo an external assessment process by, for instance, the education structure concerned.

In the case of Youthpass, the Engagement Portfolio and the Personal Competence Portfolio, the reason for giving so much space to self-assessment is very much in line with the approach to assessment in youth work, that considers “assessment carried out by youth workers/trainers as a ‘step back’ to the traditional grading system in schools and totally against the values of non-formal education” (Markovi , 2009). In line with principles such as the autonomy of the young person, the importance given to learning as a process (and to learning to learn as one of its features), to the fact that the soft skills and competences acquired in youth work and through NFE/L aren’t yet measurable as others can be, self-assessment seems to remain the most logical approach for young people to work on the competences developed through their youth work experiences.

Nonetheless, we can also notice that self-assessment appears to be even more resourceful if done with guidance and dialogue, and that it does not exclude, in some cases, external assessment, even though once again this vary depending on the purpose of the tool and on the use that will be made of it, or if we talk about identification of learning outcomes or of their validation.

## Link to employability

Every single tool has employability of young people as one of its objectives. Youthpass, for instance, supports among other things the employability of young people and youth workers. Although the tool hasn't been developed in cooperation with social partners and employers, the Youthpass Impact Study (2013) very well highlight the degree of importance and relevance of the tool for employability purposes. This is also one of the reasons for its success: the added value young people see for their path towards employment, even though youth organisations were perhaps more resistant at the very beginning, especially those engaged for already a long time in the process of recognition of youth work and NFE/L, fearing an instrumentalisation of the tool as well as of the process behind.

Keys for Life approached recognition of NFE/L from three different perspectives: recognition of society usefulness, recognition by employers and self-recognition, and 'formal' recognition of competences acquired through NFE/L by the state administration and educational institutions. As already said, it "provides a picture of the acquired competences [...] usable for and transferable to different life situations as well as with regard to the constantly changing labour market [...]". Hence, the PCP and the related competence framework very well reflect the possibility to use the tool for employability purpose.

The reason for the Luxembourg Federation of Scouts to address the National Youth Service with the request to develop an 'official' certification for young people engaged in their organisation was not only to enhance their engagement/commitment, but also to have a certificate that could represent an added value when looking for a job. Employers were among the very first ones to be consulted for the development of the Portfolio.

The Danish Portfolio helps individuals describe and document prior learning, in view of recognition of not only their diplomas and certificates but also what they have learned at work and in their spare time. Among others, it addresses those who are looking for a job or are considering a job change. It offers a specific feature for companies to use the tool either to conduct annual performance reviews, or to support employees' skills development through the planning of their continuing education and training.

It seems worth to highlight that even though all the tools partly aim at employability of young people, this is not their primary or only objective. Each of them succeeded to remain committed to the nature of the field they address though avoiding developing their tool around the solely job requirements, although this is much more predominant in the Danish Portfolio. At the same time, we can also notice that, for instance in the case of Youthpass, the tool is more and more seen as a document that should be tailored/adjusted to allow adding it to job applications, or that the dialogue should also support enhancing the oral description of the competences acquired, for example in a job interview.

## Development process

All the tools went through a relatively similar path (though we possess less information about the Danish Portfolio). Generally, the process started upon a decision (European Commission, Ministry of Education, etc) or upon the request coming from the field of youth work. A steering group/commission/committee was created, leading the first steps of the overall process, which led to a pilot phase of approximately one year that – in several cases, included a test phase (Youthpass, Personal Competence Portfolio, and Engagement Portfolio). Upon either



external/mid-term evaluation, the tools were revised and adjusted. New features and developments were proposed and examined by the steering/management group in charge, and implemented if relevant.

Based on the information provided, it seems that only Youthpass went through an external Impact Study. This wasn't the case for the Engagement Portfolio (only an external evaluation at the end of the pilot phase), and isn't yet the case for the Personal Competence Portfolio, for the project Keys for Life only ended recently. The Danish Ministry of Education constantly monitors the development of the Competence Portfolio, through the National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning.

Overall, the processes had a duration going from three to seven years. Youthpass, the Engagement Portfolio and the Personal Competence Portfolio were tools developed over a period going from two to four years (Youthpass keeps on developing).

## Impact

Comparing the impact of the tools is a complex process for they neither have all the same purpose, nor address the same users or are led by the same type of structures.

Thanks to the Youthpass Impact Study we have very clear information about the impact the tool and the process had not only on recognition of youth work and NFE/L, but also on the competences gained, including with regard to employability. Keys for Life hasn't performed an impact study yet – it is too early – neither did Luxembourg, although the interviews helped highlighting the impact and the remaining challenges of the projects.

Youthpass seems to have had a relatively huge impact on the recognition NFE/L and quality of youth work, with 80% of the participants agreeing with the fact that it helps communicate the importance of NFE/L and increases the usefulness of the project for participants. It also contributed to widening young people's and project organisers' understanding and competence of learning and broadening their views of what they learned during the project. Between 50-80% of respondents think that Youthpass enhances chances of young people especially when they apply for a traineeship or internship, employment or further education and between 70% and 80% of participants planned to use Youthpass when applying for a job. More than 40% of respondents saw the potential of using Youthpass when applying for higher education or setting up a business.

Even though it did not go through a full external evaluation yet, Keys for Life has had numerous direct impacts, in several areas of work and thanks to several initiatives, tools and products developed. Among those listed in the part dedicated to the project, we can highlight the inclusion of some of the competence profiles in the National Qualifications Framework; the accreditation by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the education programmes developed within the system of further education of pedagogical workers; and the signature of a Memorandum on Supporting the Results of Non-Formal Education in Work with Children and Youth in 2011.

As there hasn't been any impact study or external evaluation of the Engagement Portfolio, it is difficult to underline its impact but thanks to the information provided, we can nevertheless highlight that the Portfolio is generally welcome by youth organisations, particularly thanks to the fact that the overall development was 'rooted in practice'. The Attestation itself is now

part of the Youth Law and is therefore formally recognised, even though this has also negative consequences (see 'challenges'). The Ministry of Education can use the Attestation in the process of validation of prior learning. A very important outcome is also the fact that the overall process and the tool itself resulted in a much better understanding of the concept of NFE/L, which facilitates educational and conceptual discussions (a national reference framework on NFE has been introduced in 2013). The tool is supported by the Union of Luxembourg enterprises (Uel).

## Challenges

The Youthpass Impact Study highlights a series of challenges and points to be taken into consideration for its further development. For instance, there is a perceived need to increase the awareness and acceptance of international youth work and of Youthpass among institutions and organisations from the formal education sector, as well as in the labour market. Moreover and even though the framework of the eight key competences was generally seen as a useful tool, it appears at the same time as relatively abstract and complex; more guidance would be needed. One of the most common requests resulting from the Impact Study is also the need to have a tool that can evolve in time, where young people can add their experiences and competences, a tool that does not have a limit in terms of time or number of activities. Last but not least, the tool should also be fully supported by [national] training strategies.

With regard to Keys for Life and the Personal Competence Portfolio, one of the biggest challenges might be to involve HR agencies, for their approach to [formal] education and experiences as well as the format of their work remain relatively 'traditional'. Another one might be the implementation of the National Qualification Framework, which should gradually move from 'education levels achieved' to 'competences acquired'.

The Engagement Portfolio represents at the same time the tool that is perhaps the closest to youth work practice, and the one that is the less known in the youth field in Luxembourg. Though successfully developed, easy to use, supported and guided, formally recognised and supported by a number of stakeholders, it seems to remain an ad-hoc tool that hasn't totally reached its full potential. The evaluation of the pilot phase shed light on a series of necessary changes and improvements, such as amendments to the list of competences and tasks, the accuracy of the criteria, the need to simplify the procedure and the promotion of the tool itself. Most of them have been implemented but the rather rigorous requirements to benefit from the Attestation possibly remain too demanding (especially for some specific target groups). One of the reasons that may hinder adjusting them is that those criteria are rooted in legal texts that can't be easily changed. Moreover, the tool is still not very well known neither by youth organisations, nor by employers, and is therefore seldom used<sup>52</sup> with the exception of the young people involved in 'orientation voluntary service' (it is automatically included in the overall process).

Based on the above, we can highlight two types of challenges that share similar characteristics: the need for better information, knowledge and recognition of the tools by different stakeholders (e.g. youth organisation, employers, education institutions), and the need for an easier access as well as for more guidance and support.

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<sup>52</sup> We have no data to support that information.

## 5 | RECOMMENDATIONS

### Youth work vs. NFE/L focused

As we have could see in the previous Chapters, most of the tools that have been explored in the context of this Mapping Study deal with NFE/L as an educational practice and with NFE/L providers. At the same time, they tackle activities happening in youth work or in work with children and youth. The reason for this perhaps interchangeable entry point is that, as highlighted in the comparative analysis, most of the structures that have initiated and supported the development of those tools see NFE/L as one of the key approaches and principles of youth work, even though that does neither mean that on a wider level, all youth work is systematically based in NFE/L, not that youth work is the only NFE/L provider.

With regard to the Serbian reality and given the fact that the Serbian Youth Law defines youth work as being based in NFE/L - which seems to also be the approach of a large number of organisations ready to engage in the process of the development of a recognition tool - the entry point might be close to those previously seen. Nonetheless, we cannot avoid highlighting that this also means to 'limit' the tool – at least at the beginning, to young people who have been involved in youth work organisations. In addition to that, it is relevant to underline that the chosen focus or entry point is also to be considered with regard to the state institutions and representatives of the labour market engaged in the process and fully supporting it.

Since the Serbian recognition tool will also aim at supporting young people's employability, we can also wonder whether employers and social partners will actually pay attention to the differentiation made between youth work based on NFE/L and any structure working with young people, or will rather be interested in a pure visibility of young person's competences developed out-of-school. Some employers might actually see such an engagement of a young person as an added value and something that can differentiate a candidate amongst many other CVs that very often look similar (at first, at least) when applying for junior positions. If so, the reflection on those to be engaged at the very beginning of the process should be transparent, but should not jeopardise or overtake the final aim of the process and the cooperation with stakeholders from the employment sector.

### Cooperation with other stakeholders and the link to employability

Key to most of the processes presented in this Mapping Study, the cooperation with as many stakeholders as possible has been at the very start of the development of the tools explored. The exception might be the case of Youthpass, which is partly due to the nature of the tool and the fact that it is linked to a specific programme. But even though, the link to employability and the impact of the tool in other areas [of work] have been highlighted. Cooperation with other stakeholders, and mainly with social partners and employers, should be seen from three different perspectives: the development of the tool as such, the employability of young people, and the recognition of youth work and NFE/L. With regard to the latter, since youth work in Serbia ought to be based on NFE/L, working on recognising the competences acquired *through* youth work also means to work on recognition *of* youth work and of the values and

principles behind it. This is perhaps one of the main challenges with regard to an extended cooperation.

Indeed, besides the point on language (see further below), there seems to be an agreement between youth work providers, young people and employers that soft skills, among other competences, needed to perform well in a job (for the function itself, for the tasks to be performed, for teamwork and communication, etc.) are part of those enhanced to a great extent through youth work and NFE/L. This partly means that the cooperation with regard to competences might perhaps be less challenging than initially thought, as demonstrated in the European Youth Forum's Study<sup>53</sup>.

Nonetheless, working on the recognition of the competences acquired also means to work on the recognition of the providers; in this case youth work organisations. It implies ensuring putting the emphasis on the nature of youth work, on the values and principles behind, on its objectives and intentions (e.g. social transformation, personal and professional development, etc.). Hence, cooperation with other stakeholders and in particular with employers should not only focus on competences and pay less attention to those behind the scope of activities through which those competence development processes are enhanced, supported and guided. This is usually a more complex process for this is not systematically at the core of employers' interests (not to the same extent than the focus on competences), but can generally result in a better mutual understanding of each other realities if properly planned and approached. Thus, this also means, naturally, to be ready to better understand and acknowledge employers' reality.

Related to the previous point, cooperation with other stakeholders and the development of a tool specifically focusing on young people's employability shouldn't avoid remaining *faithful and truthful to the very nature of youth work and to its primary objectives*. This might mean that the recognition tool could be seen as a two-step process: 1. identification through (self) reflection of *all* competences gained in youth work and 2) an optional validation of those relevant for employment; we will come back to that approach under the point 'language'. The purpose of the tool and the nature of youth work are certainly not antagonist, on the contrary, but this is to be kept in mind.

Last but not least, cooperation with other stakeholders also means to pay particular attention to young people themselves and to the self-recognition process. No ideal cooperation with employers can replace the need for young people to be aware of the competences they develop, how, where, why, how they can be described and explained to others parties, and transferred to other contexts and situations. To summarise:

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- Cooperation with all stakeholders concerned should be sought for at the very beginning of the process, in order to ensure the ownership of the tool from all the sectors (and not just as something coming from 'one or two other sectors', e.g. civil society or government);
  - Cooperation with stakeholders should not only aim at recognition of competences acquired through youth work but also on recognition of youth work and NFE/L as such (even though that might not be the primary focus);
  - Self-recognition of the competences acquired is an important dimension of the cooperation process;

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<sup>53</sup> The *Study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability* highlights that amongst the six skills mostly demanded by employers, five are also among those developed through involvement in youth organisations: communication, team work, decision-making, organisational skills, and self-confidence.

- The type of recognition (of what and by whom) the tool focuses on should be very clear (and agreed upon) to all stakeholders;
  - Cooperation with all stakeholders ought to be open, transparent, respectful and honest;
  - Interests of all parties should be taken into consideration, with a special attention to those of the young people for they are the heart of the tool-to-be;
  - Principles and values of youth work should not be undermined; instead, a thorough and planned dialogue should aim at enhancing mutual understanding of the contexts of youth work and of the employment sector;
  - Employers and social partners should play an important role in co-developing the competence framework the tool will be based on, with a special focus on soft skills (but not only).
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## Competence framework

Each of the tools explored are based on a competence framework, and all these frameworks share similar characteristics: a set of key/core competences or competence areas, broken down into a series of sub-competences or abilities. Soft skills (e.g. social and civic skills) play a major role in the majority of those frameworks, for they very much reflect the nature of the competences acquired through youth work and NFE/L. Besides the higher focus on soft skills, the approach and format of those competences frameworks aren't that different than most of the approaches companies have. This is also reflected in the competence framework of the Danish Portfolio, clearly aiming at higher education and employability (and developed in close cooperation with employers).

Hence, there is no reason to think that the Serbian recognition tool should not follow the same path. What should form part of the competence framework will of course very much depend on the cooperation with other stakeholders, including young people, and on the results of the Research accompanying the process, which already presents a draft list of competences.

There isn't any 'miracle receipt': the process of developing the competence framework and its elements will *have to* be based on several consultations, on a testing phase and on adjustments. The most logical recommendation we could make in relation to that is therefore to take the necessary time for it in order to ensure ownership (especially of young people since they are those the tool will address), accuracy of the chosen competences with regard to the purpose of the tool (support young people's employability), engagement, motivation, support, and sustainability. Rushing into finalising a competence framework could generate the risk for it to be too fragile and not accurate enough with regards to the needs and expectations of those the tool targets.

## Approach to assessment

The four tools that have served as examples for this Mapping Study are all based on self-assessment, even though two of them clearly recommend a dialogue with the young person, and one leads to an external assessment for it is part of recognition of prior learning by education institutions. The reasons to opt for self-assessment have been listed in several occasions: the field considers that external assessment would very much look like a step back towards traditional grading system in schools and therefore, totally against the values of NFE/L. Those values give a high importance to, for instance, the autonomy of the young person, to learning as a process, and to the fact that reflecting on one's own competences is also a step forward to being able to not only be aware of them, but also *describe* and *explain*

them when, for instance, applying for a job or during a job interview. Experiences such as those shared during the conference “Bridges to Work” have indeed demonstrated that employers regret the fact that young people do not put forward their youth work experiences, either because they are not enough aware of their relevance or of the competences gained, or because they cannot describe them properly. Moreover, overcoming that obstacle would also support employers gain a better understanding of youth work and of youth work reality.

Self-assessment should therefore remain the very first step when approaching the phases of the Serbian recognition tool, which does not mean that it has to stop there. The importance of the support provided to young person has also been clearly demonstrated (e.g. in Youthpass, Engagement Portfolio, or even in the Council of Europe’s European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers, which includes a feedback process). If opting for a tool that includes dialogue – which is what is recommended here – this also means to provide youth work practitioners with adequate training and support mechanisms. Hence, the strategy behind the tool should encompass training youth workers in dealing with self-assessment and feedback, in the frame of competences development and identification of skills acquired through youth work experiences.

Nevertheless, the question of a possible external assessment process is not to be ignored. It will depend on several factors, such as whether we talk about a tool that will allow *identifying/recognising the competences gained*, or a tool that will go further into their *validation* (e.g. formal recognition and if so, by whom). With regard to the latter, external assessment might be a plus, not only for formal recognition by state institutions (including education ones), but also by employers. This might also be the case if the strategy around the tool implies, for instance, having a ‘pool of counsellors’ supporting the process, as an extra support for youth work providers who cannot, for various reasons, perform that task yet. In that case, external assessment could also be seen as an added value to the overall process the young person would go through.

Still, we have to be very much aware that no matter the option taken, we are still talking here about assessment of the learning process more than the learning outcomes as such. The challenge and difficulty to assess soft skills is not anymore even part of the debate, for it is largely acknowledged. This means that even though external assessment could be considered, it would be very much based on self-assessment, dialogue, feedback and examples of experiences where the learning can be described and explained. Moreover, the offer to engage in such process should be inviting for users, be ‘youth friendly’. As already stated in the background of the research carried out parallel to this Mapping Study, the aim is to create a tool that should empower young people, and not create an additional (bureaucratic) obstacle to employment. Any external assessment should never be forced: in all cases, it should remain optional and the decision whether to undergo an external assessment should be left to the young person, in order to also respect and apply the principles of NFE/L.

## Language

This point links to several others, such as cooperation, accessibility, and even ownership. It is important that throughout the whole process, all those engaged in it know what we are talking about. As stated above, this means, for instance, to have a quite clear understanding of each other realities, of the different fields of work (e.g. youth work and NFE/L, employment sector), of the needs, of the understanding of skills and competences, etc. But it also means to have a tool that can be understood by everyone. This point particularly relates to the competence

framework and to how those competences – and their descriptions – are formulated. What might be very clear for youth organisations and for young people might not be ‘corporate enough’ for employers, which would require spending more time on explaining each competence and therefore, represent an additional obstacle in the implementation, use, and recognition of the tool, no matter the ‘good will’ behind.

As stated in the point on cooperation with other stakeholders, this underlines again the important to make sure that the competence framework is developed in cooperation with young people, youth organisations and employers. It may also mean that when working on the tool, young people and those supporting them in that process could have the choice between a ‘two-entry’ way of working: one where competences are first presented in a user-friendly language (youth work related terminology) to then be ‘translated’ into a more corporate language (e.g. as in the tool ‘Empower Yourself’ initially developed by the Scouts et Guides de France), or one where the competences and abilities are already formulated in a more corporate language. Perhaps the first entry-point is enough, if the tool allows formatting/designing a final ‘presentation’ which would ensure not only a format but also a language that can be understood by all, but especially by employers.

## Ownership

Ownership of the process and of its outcomes, meaning not only the tool but also other dimensions linked to cooperation or to recognition of youth work and NFE/L, must be ensured. For instance and with regard to the tool itself, if nobody - and especially the young people - feel that this tool is theirs, that they have invested time, energy and resources in it, that they want to make it last, be useful, see it evolve, grow and develop, the project will be a disappointment. No matter its formal recognition, no matter the financial and human investment; the tool will neither be used to a great extent nor be as useful as expected if there is no sense of ownership.

This can be supported through different mechanisms, but the cooperation with and engagement of all those concerned remain key (through engagement in the whole process, consultations, testing, training, etc.). Parallel to that, it is also important not to underestimate the fact – once again – that the tool needs to respond to the needs of those it targets and later on involves. The tool can be perfect and officially supported but if those who are supposed to use it (young people) and recognise/support it (e.g. youth organisations and employers) do not see it as a clear added value and as something in which they have a role to play, it will never reach its objectives. Finally, ownership also means to allow space for trust, respect, and for each and everyone to influence. To make people feel that “I am part of the process and I have a say, a role to play” is the best way to enhance ownership. As ‘naive’ or simple as it may sound, it is not always easy to ensure, especially when the initiative is supported by an already extremely motivated groups of individuals/organisations/institutions, but not representing yet all those who will have to support (and valorise) the outcomes at the very end. Motivation and spirit of entrepreneurship (the idea) can be very contagious, but this requires all of the above, if not more.

## Conceptualisation and development process

It seems relatively ambitious to develop recommendations with regard to the process for it will very much depend on the Serbian reality, on those involved in the path of the development of

the tool, on the available support (human and financial resources but also recognition), and on the time-frame. Nonetheless, based on the analysis of the tools presented in this Mapping Study but also on related experiences at European level, we can identify key phases that should be taken into consideration (some phases will develop in parallel and therefore, this is not to be seen as a time line but rather as phases and elements to keep in mind):

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- Mapping the national context;
  - Identifying the needs and expectations of those the tool concerns (e.g. youth organisations, Ministry of Youth and Sport, young people, employers, social partners, etc.) and those it primarily addresses (young people);
  - Identifying and agreeing on who will be in charge of steering the process (at least the first phases);
  - Identifying the main phases of the pilot one (time line, roles and functions, purpose, expected outcomes, etc);
  - Identifying the needed consultations process prior the development of the competence framework and the approach/structure of the tool (requirements, etc);
  - Run the consultations;
  - Ensure proper and continuous communication and dissemination of information with regard to the process, aim and objectives to all those concerned;
  - Developing the competence framework, in close cooperation with young people, youth work organisations and employers;
  - Developing the draft structure of the tool (including its format, e.g. online or not) and the different phases working on/with it may include;
  - Agreeing on the type of assessment to opt for;
  - Testing and evaluating the tool as well as the overall pilot phase;
  - Adjusting the tool and preparing the next steps (including training and support to youth workers, external pool of counsellors, etc. if not included in the pilot phase);
  - Launching the revised tool and the related support mechanisms; etc.
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Again, this is neither an exhaustive list nor a linear one. Those are just indications based on similar processes at national and European level, which need to be tailored taking into account all the elements listed at the beginning of this point.

## Accessibility

The success of the tool will not only depend on how far it responds to needs, on how much the process has been cooperative and inclusive, and on how great it looks, but also on how easy it is to approach, use and work with. Thus, there are several dimensions to take into account, such as:

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- What will be the minimum requirements to get access to the tool (for instance, the case of the Luxembourgish Engagement Portfolio highlighted that the basic requirements are very possibly too demanding);
  - What will be the format of the tool (a Portfolio, an Attestation, paper or online or both, etc.);
  - What it will include in terms of phases (e.g. application, self-assessment, dialogue, external assessment, etc.) and in terms of formalities (signatures, etc);
  - What will be the available support to young people, especially those facing more difficulties in working with the tool?
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No need to say that ‘the easier, the better’. That doesn’t mean that the tool should be made available to anyone without any frame, requirements, support and follow-up, but it should not be seen as presenting too many obstacles, thus discouraging any young person who would not feel equipped to go through the whole process. The online and/or electronic dimensions should also be carefully explored, for this might have a big impact on not only how to approach the tool (the structure, the format and working with it) but also on the level of accessibility (and perhaps even of transferability).

## Time

All the tools that have been presented on this Mapping Study were developed over several years (from two to five). This does not even take into consideration the larger process and all its phases. As for the competence framework, it is important to give it the time it requires. The very first drafts (of the competence framework and of the tool itself) can be developed relatively rapidly (circa. in a year), but the testing phase, the evaluation, further consultations, the adjustments and the finalisation might take much more time. Again, it is difficult here to make a thorough estimation, but those who will be at the helm of the process should be aware of the time it can take.

## Management, monitoring and evaluation

This point does not intend to speculate on who should be in charge of the management, the monitoring and the evaluation of the process and of the tool for this is to be decided among the stakeholders and those supporting the initiative. It rather aims at emphasising the importance of those dimensions.

In the case of the evaluation, it is relatively understandable to state that any evaluation of the process and of the outcomes – including the pilot phase – should also include an external evaluation, for a matter of objectivity and therefore, of usefulness. The management of the overall process and of the implementation of the tool might also be relatively easily to define, at least when it comes to the pilot phase, since adjustments with regard to the management should also be based on the result of the evaluation(s).

Monitoring the process after the pilot phase, the evaluation and the possible adjustments to be made might nevertheless be more challenging. Too many brilliant initiatives, such as the Engagement Portfolio in Luxembourg or even the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers of the Council of Europe, did not reach the expected objectives partly because of a lack of planned and reliable monitoring (for a number of reasons). This is very clear in the case of the Engagement Portfolio: in spite of resulting from a process which took into account almost all the necessary requirements, it remains not very well known in the young field and is hardly used, besides in the case of programmes where it is fully part of the process. There is no easy-to-access track of how many Portfolios have been distributed, and part of the staff of the National Youth Service is not aware of its existence. This does not mean that everybody needs to know about everything, but making such a tool visible, used, useful and sustainable requires an adequate and continuous monitoring (on top of a proper communication and dissemination strategy). Hence, we can only recommend planning the management and monitoring from the very beginning. Again, the overall approach to those might change and evolve, but we should not underestimate the importance both have in making the tool as long-term success.

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## OVERVIEW OF KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF RECOGNITION IN EUROPE

What follows is the results of several compilation processes in order to highlight the numerous developments happening at European level with regard to the recognition of youth work and non formal learning / education.

Besides the participation of the author to several steering groups and expert meetings on the issue of recognition, competences and young people's mobility, the main sources of information are:

- SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre's overview of European-level developments related to recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning in the field of youth: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/recognition/>
- The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy of the EU-CoE youth partnership: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/youthpolicy.html> and its part dedicated to recognition: [http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/Youth\\_work\\_non-formal\\_learning/Recognition.html](http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/Youth_work_non-formal_learning/Recognition.html)

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### Overview of policy-related documents and events

The political agendas of the European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of youth are based on a series of documents that have been developed throughout the past 12 years and that served as a basis for policy developments and related initiatives and educational programmes. Nonetheless, this overview will start with processes initiated from 2006 onward. As much as possible, what follows is presented on a chronological order.

#### ┌ Key competences for lifelong learning (2006)

The [Key competences for lifelong learning](#) highlight the role of the key competences in the *shape of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to each context* and states that they are *fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society. They provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation. Because they should be acquired by everyone, this recommendation proposes a reference tool for European Union (EU) countries to ensure that these key competences are fully integrated into their strategies and infrastructures, particularly in the context of lifelong learning.* Based on "[Key competences for a changing world](#)", the joint progress report of the Council and the Commission, and the independent study "[Key competences in Europe](#)", the [key competences framework](#) is being further developed mainly in regards to its implementation. A [Commission Staff Working Document](#) was published in

2012 in connection with the *Rethinking Skills* strategy that illustrates assessment practices of key competences and suggests further ways to ensure coherent assessment.

#### ┆ **The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020 (2008)**

The [Resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe](#), adopted in 2008, sets priorities for the Council of Europe youth policy and action for the following years, and describes the approaches, methods and instruments to achieve these. Among other priorities, the following is mentioned: social inclusion of young people, with special emphasis on ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life, particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning; and supporting young people's transition from education to the labour market. Working with multipliers and supporting the development of quality youth work and its recognition are emphasised as necessary approaches.

#### ┆ **EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering (2009)**

Within the [EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering \(2010-2018\)](#) the EU Member States set themselves and for the Commission the following objectives and activities, among others:

- Complementary to formal education, non-formal education for young people should be supported to contribute to Lifelong Learning in Europe, by developing its quality, recognising its outcomes, and integrating it better with formal education;
- Support youth volunteering, by developing more voluntary opportunities for young people, making it easier to volunteer by removing obstacles, raising awareness on the value of volunteering, recognising volunteering as an important form of non-formal education and reinforcing cross-border mobility of young volunteers;
- Youth work should be supported, recognised for its economic and social contribution, and professionalised.

#### ┆ **European Inventory on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning 2010 (2010)**

Since 2004, the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning offers, in regular intervals, an overview of the instruments and methods for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the European Member States and beyond. Until recently, the policies focused predominantly on the areas of general and vocational training. Since 2007, the third sector is being increasingly taken into account. [The current version of 2010](#) includes 34 country reports, 10 case studies and 4 thematic reports (validation for specific target groups). The youth sector has received particular attention through the [case study of Youthpass](#) that has been included in the inventory.

#### ┆ **EU Agenda 2020, Youth on the Move (2010)**

Within the [Communication from the Commission, COM \(2010\) 477](#) and here in particular within the [Youth on the Move](#) flagship initiative of the [EU Agenda 2020](#), the European Commission aims [...] *to expand career and life-enhancing learning opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities and/or at risk of social exclusion. In particular, these young people should benefit from the expansion of opportunities for non-formal and informal learning and from strengthened provisions for the recognition and validation of such learning within national qualifications frameworks. This can help to open the doors to further learning on their part.* The Council Recommendation from June 28, 2011: [“Youth on the move – promoting the learning mobility of young people”](#) encourages the Member States to use the full potential of the existing EU and Bologna instruments to facilitate mobility, including Europass and Youthpass.

### ┆ Resolution of the Council on youth work (2010)

[The resolution](#) sets forward a broad definition of youth work, and among other suggestions, declares that competences developed through youth work need to be sufficiently valued and effectively recognised. It invites the Commission to enhance the quality of youth work, the capacity and competence development of youth workers and youth leaders and the recognition of non-formal learning in youth work. It also invites to develop and support the development of user-friendly European tools for independent assessment and self-assessment, as well as instruments for the documentation of competences of youth workers and youth leaders, which would help to recognise and evaluate the quality of youth work in Europe.

### ┆ The European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action programme (2010-2013)

The [European Training Strategy](#) (ETS) of Youth in Action builds a frame for the more effective realisation of training activities in Youth in Action. In comparison to the previous training strategy, it includes new fields of action (e.g. Strengthening actions aimed at recognition of youth work) and regards Youthpass as a tool to be developed for meeting the needs for recognition of youth worker and trainer competences. Among the first steps, development of competence profiles for youth workers and trainers has been undertaken (to be finalised in 2014).

### ┆ Youthpass as a strategy

The strategy of validation and recognition of non-formal learning within Youth in Action is embedded in Youthpass developments. The aim of this strategic approach is to raise awareness and support a professional public debate concerning the individual, social, formal, and political dimensions of recognition of non-formal learning and youth work. The implementation of the tool and the strategy is described as a [case study](#) in the last edition of the European Inventory.

### ┆ Youth in Action evaluation (2011)

In April 2011, the results of the [interim evaluation of Youth in Action programme](#) were published. The evaluators came to very positive conclusions on a number of aspects regarding the relevance, complementarity and added value of YiA, its effectiveness and its efficiency. Among the recommendations for the future developments, suggestions were made to increase the focus on employability and to further promote Youthpass.

### ┆ Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe (2011)

The document [Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe](#) is a working paper of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, produced in collaboration with SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre and the European Youth Forum. The previous paper, which had been released in 2004, served as a basis for important developments concerning the recognition of learning experiences within the youth sector in the past years (Youthpass, Portfolio, Bridges for recognition, European Principles for Validation, etc.). The paper encourages the consolidation of the existing developments and proposes, in this context, ten recommendations for action:

1. Develop a common understanding and a joint strategy in the youth field and improve co-operation and communication
2. Visibility of the particular role of youth organisations
3. Assure quality and training in non-formal education/learning
4. Increasing knowledge about non-formal education/learning in youth work

5. Develop existing tools further and make them accessible and transferable
6. Reinforcement of political processes on the European level
7. Link youth to the lifelong learning strategy and vice versa
8. Involve stakeholders of the employment sector
9. Associating the social sector
10. Cooperate with other policy fields and with stakeholders of civil society

The Pathways 2.0 paper has inspired a European process, steered by the Expert Group on Recognition, to enhance further developments around recognition (e.g. the [symposium on recognition](#)).

#### ┆ European symposium for the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning – Getting there... (2011)

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, in cooperation with SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre and the German National Agency for Youth in Action, carried out a symposium for recognition of youth work and non-formal learning. The symposium brought together key actors on the European level and fostered a discussion on the recommendations for action of the *Pathways Paper 2.0*. As a result of the symposium, a [Statement and a draft Plan of Action](#) were agreed upon and published on behalf of the participants. The Statement describes 7 main challenges for recognition in Europe and provides recommendations for developments on different levels to deal with the challenges. The document includes an even more concrete Plan of Action as an annex to the statement. Since the Symposium, the Plan of Action has been revised and updated by the *expert group on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning*, which meets twice a year and is in charge to follow-up recognition's related developments and monitor the implementation of the various actions and initiatives proposed in the Plan of Action. The process initiated by the Symposium is called *the Strasbourg Process*, even though that name is not endorsed at political level by the European Commission.

#### ┆ Recommendation of the Council on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012)

On November 26, 2012, the Council of the EU adopted a [Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#), based on the European Commission's [proposal](#). The adopted Recommendation invites Member States to establish a national system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by 2018. The system would provide the opportunity for citizens to have their skills, knowledge and competences validated, and to obtain a full or a partial qualification on the basis of these validated learning outcomes. The system should be connected to the [National Qualifications Frameworks](#) and create synergies between the existing European frameworks for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. One of the guiding principles outlined in the recommendation proposes that *the use of Union transparency tools, such as Europass and Youthpass, should be promoted*.

#### ┆ The EU Youth Report (2012)

The [EU Youth Report](#), adopted in November 2012 as a Joint Council–Commission Report, calls for youth employment, social inclusion, health and the well-being of young people to be top priorities in the next 3-year work cycle of the EU Youth Strategy (2013-2015). The report includes a summary of how the EU Youth Strategy has been implemented at national and EU level since 2010, and an analysis of the situation faced by young people. The report concludes that the EU Youth Strategy has served as a lasting and flexible framework for a whole range of actions, including employment & entrepreneurship, education & training, and social inclusion, and developing multi-faceted solutions in support of young people.

### ┆ Rethinking Education (2012)

The European Commission launched a strategy called [Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes](#), to encourage Member States to take immediate action to ensure that young people develop the skills and competences needed by the labour market and to achieve their targets for growth and jobs. The emphasis of the strategy is on the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by students (learning outcomes) through the learning process, rather than on completing a specific stage or on time spent in school. The [European Economic and Social Committee's opinion](#) on such strategy states on point 3.8 that the EESC regrets that the Commission *has failed to seize the opportunity offered by this communication to recognise the role that non-formal education can play as a supplement to formal education and draws attention to the call made by participants at the Strasbourg Symposium for a common long- and medium-term process to be established to recognise non-formal education in Europe*, hence being the first EU official-related structure to make a reference to the so-called *Strasbourg Process*.

### ┆ Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (2013)

The Youth Working Party of the European Commission has prepared a set of [conclusions](#) with a view to their adoption at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 16-17 May 2013. Several priorities have been identified to ensure and enhance quality youth work for the development, well-being, and social inclusion of young people.

### ┆ Recommendation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly 'Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge' (2013)

The [recommendation](#) adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly was based on a [report](#) of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on the urgent need to rethink education taking into account nowadays needs and challenges. The report asks Member States to adopt a comprehensive approach to education and take action to set the right policy frameworks, create new learning opportunities and enhance the existing ones, ensuring inclusion and getting more young people engaged in their own learning and development. The report calls for specific measures to be taken at European level, in particular to improve access to education for young people from disadvantaged groups, as well as to encourage non-formal education and ensure greater recognition of competences acquired through non-formal learning, building on the proposals put forward by the *Strasbourg Process*.

### ┆ Erasmus+ (2014-2020)

The [programme Erasmus+](#) (2014-2020) brings together seven existing EU programmes in the fields of Education, Training and Youth; it will for the first time provide support for Sport. As an integrated programme, Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for cooperation across the Education, Training and Youth sectors and is easier to access than its predecessors, with simplified funding rules. Erasmus+ aims at boosting skills and employability, and modernising Education, Training and Youth work. The seven year programme has a budget of €14.7 billion and provides opportunities to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. In addition to providing grants for individuals, Erasmus+ will support transnational partnerships among Education, Training and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps in Europe. Erasmus+ also supports national efforts to modernise Education, Training and Youth systems.



## Overview of researches and studies

### ┆ Study on Mobility Developments in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth exchanges (2012)

The Study on Mobility Developments in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth Exchanges ([full report](#) and [executive summary](#)) focuses on learning mobility in mobility schemes outside the European action programmes (LLP and Youth in Action), both outbound and inbound mobility, mainly with the countries participating in the above mentioned programmes. The study also describes recognition practices in these mobility programmes, as well as in what regards it is understood as a pedagogical tool.

### ┆ Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability (2012)

Through desk research, consultation with youth organisations, a survey with young people, and focus groups with employers from across Europe, [this research](#) ordered by the European Youth Forum assesses whether the competences and skills obtained through non-formal education in youth organisations contribute to the employability of young people. It concludes that long-lasting and frequent engagement and participation in youth organisations brings high soft-skills development. Amongst the six skills mostly demanded by employers, five are also among those developed through involvement in youth organisations: such as communication, team work, decision-making, organisational skills, and self-confidence. For young people who participated in non-formal education activities abroad, this includes also higher development of language, intercultural and leadership skills.

### ┆ Mapping of competences needed by youth workers to support young people in international learning mobility projects (2012)

Commissioned by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth in the frame of the European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action Programme, this [paper](#) provides the reader with information about potential national and European studies and researches with relevance for the European Training Strategy. It follows previous efforts of the Steering Group to identify, to analyse and to map studies and other relevant information on competences in international youth work. This mapping exercise pursues to improve synergies with the area of research in the youth field. Ultimately, the project is aimed at supporting the development of a list of competences needed for working at international level and for supporting young people in international learning mobility projects (currently in the process of being developed, alongside a competence framework for trainers active in international youth work).

### ┆ Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action (RAY) (2012-2013)

[Research-based analysis and monitoring of Youth in Action Programme](#) (YiA) aims at producing reliable and valid documentation and understanding of processes and outcomes of the programme and of the activities supported through the programme. In 2012 a transnational analysis of the RAY results from 2011 was published: [full report](#) and [executive summary](#). In 2013, the reports of two surveys have been published with a special focus on special issues related to YiA such as: the impact of participation on learning, learning mobility within YiA, and the development of [key] competences: [A study on the effects of participation in a Youth in Action project on the level of competences](#) and [Learning in Youth in Action](#).

### ┆ Youthpass Impact Study (2013)

The European Commission has implemented a survey to investigate and highlight the impact made with Youthpass as a tool, process and strategy. The survey particularly examined the

impact on participants' learning process, on the description and documentation of competences gained, on the link to employability and on the role of youth work and non-formal learning. The [study](#), released in summer 2013, explores the impact on different levels through both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

#### Í Reinforcing links Experiences of cooperation between the formal and non-formal sector in training youth workers (2013)

Published by the SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, this [brochure](#) is a result of a small practice mapping exercise, which was carried out in the framework of European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013). This compilation of experiences is not about mapping or assessing training offers available for youth workers but serves to motivate the training providers in different educational sectors to cooperate in order to better equip youth workers with the competences needed to work with and for youth. With these ten examples of cooperation, the authors hope to inspire new projects undertaken between different sectors, in their environments and realities.

#### Í Study on the value of youth work in the EU (to be released early 2014)

The European Commission's study on the value of youth work in the EU will among other issues consider non-formal learning in youth work. It aims to improve our understanding of socio-economic relevance and the visibility of the youth work sector in the EU. The study should identify how youth work contributes to achieving EU objectives in the fields of economic or social development (e.g. Social Agenda, Europe 2020 Strategy) and will provide evidence and selected case studies of national, regional and local realities of youth work in the 27 EU Member States.

## Overview of other developments

#### Í European and National Qualifications Frameworks

The core of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) concerns eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do – the learning outcomes, including those acquired from the non-formal and informal contexts. Levels of national qualifications will be placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8). This linking will enable learners and employers to compare the levels of qualifications awarded at home and in other countries. In the [EQF portal](#), relevant documents including national reports can be downloaded, as well as NQF levels of different countries compared. In autumn 2012, a stakeholder consultation on EQF has been carried out to investigate the effectiveness and added value of the initiative. In 2013, the work of the EQF Advisory Group has mostly focused on the development of a *Proposal for a structure of national reports on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* and on a *Proposal for a roadmap for arrangements on validation of non-formal and informal learning*.

#### Í European Skills, Competences and Occupations taxonomy (ESCO)

The European Commission started to develop a [European Skills, Competences and Occupations taxonomy](#) (ESCO), which describes the most relevant competences and qualifications needed for several thousand occupations. A partial classification is already in use in the European job mobility portal EURES, which exists in 22 languages. A crucial input will come from the Dictionary of Skills and Competences (DISCO) that contains around 10.000 skills and competence terms and exists in seven languages. [ESCO](#) intends to build on and link with relevant international classifications and standards, such as the International Standard

Classification of Occupations (ISCO), will complement existing national and sectorial occupational and educational classifications and enable exchange of information between them. A link to the EQF/NQF is also foreseen.

### Í **The European Skills Passport**

The [European Skills Passport](#), designed by the European Commission in partnership with CEDEFOP and launched in December 2012, is an electronic portfolio which allows giving a comprehensive picture of the skills and qualifications that can complete a Europass CV. Built upon the experiences of the Europass Mobility, the European Skills Passport claims at recognition of skills and competences that have been acquired outside of formal education settings on local/national level. The tool is also developed in line with the European Qualification Framework.

### Í **Quality assurance of non-formal learning in youth organisations**

The European Youth Forum has been developing a framework for quality assurance of non-formal education. To review performance and results within youth work, 11 quality indicators have been set up that should be reflected on within each organisation during a first internal step, followed by an external (peer review) step. On 19th April 2011, the [Network on Quality Assurance in Non-Formal Education](#) was officially launched during a European Youth Forum's conference on the subject. The network aims to increase the quality of non-formal education in Europe and increase the recognition of this quality by supporting the members in assuring the quality of their educational work, while increasing the understanding of it by other actors in society. The network works on three strands: expertise, capacity building and policy. Through continued, structured discussions between NFE providers and institutions, the European Youth Forum aims to have reached its main goal of agreeing on a Quality Assurance Charter for Non-Formal Education by 2015. A [Manual](#) to support the framework for quality assurance of non-formal education has been developed and published in 2013.

### Í **Revision of the Council of Europe's European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers**

The [European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers](#) provides youth leaders and youth workers in Europe, volunteers or professionals, with a tool that can help them identify, assess and describe their competences based on European quality standards. Following the first meeting of the Steering Group established for the purpose of its revision, the work has started in November 2013 and is expected to be finalised in winter 2014, after the testing and feedback phase foreseen in summer 2014.