

# Lobbying for youth work – what's next?!

## Position paper

by Geert Boutsen, Nele Leeten, and Claudius Siebel,  
based on the results from the titular expert meeting  
held on 3 and 4 March 2026 in Bonn (Germany)

„As a youth worker you have to lobby!“  
Quote by a participant

Youth work often seems to be a victim of unchangeable political circumstances and decisions. And as in other policy areas, it is worthwhile to represent the interests of one's own field of work and of young people as well as to influence political decisions – an activity commonly referred to as lobbying.

However, the youth work community often seems unaware of the importance of lobbying. Another frequent problem is the lack of necessary resources and expertise among youth workers.

Therefore, in recent years, several training courses on lobbying for youth work have been offered at European level as well as in individual EU Member States.

- Since 2013, now in its fourth iteration, in the German state of [Rhineland-Palatinate](#) as part of the state's youth policy
- 2019-2020: [1st European Long-Term Training Course](#) initiated and coordinated by JUGEND für Europa with Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium/Flanders, and Latvia
- 2022-2023: 2nd European Long-Term Training Course coordinated by JINT with Belgium/Flanders, Germany, France, Croatia, and Latvia
- Inspired by the two European trainings, national training courses have been offered in Flanders since 2023, along with initial pilot projects in Italy and Latvia

The topic has now gained even bigger importance in the context of European discussions on the further development and strengthening of youth work. Given the strained budgetary situation in many countries, it is now all the more relevant and important.

An expert meeting on lobbying took place in Bonn, Germany, from 3 to 4 March 2026. Former participants in the aforementioned training courses as well as other experts were invited.

The following recommendations were developed at the meeting:

## More awareness for lobbying in youth work!

- There is a need in youth work and youth policy to emphasise the importance of lobbying.
- Youth workers have to realise that they work in a social and political context and that they have to learn how to act as a professional stakeholder within this context.
- Youth workers have not only an educational role but also a political one: and they have to be aware of this!
- Youth workers have to change their attitude: become more professional!
- Lobbying for youth work focuses on improving the quality of youth work.

“Through the training course I now understand my political role as a youth worker.”

Quote by a participant

## More and better trainings on lobbying for youth work!

- There is a need for more training courses on lobbying for youth workers across Europe.
- There is a need to improve the quality of the training courses regarding content, methodological approach, and educational frame (and adapt them to societal changes).
- Lobbying for youth work should be included in the curricula of youth worker education programmes, both formal and non-formal.
- All trainings should contain a practical component and not be purely theoretical – trial and error are key!

“I take my work more professionally now.”

Quote from a participant

## Networks for lobbying! Convincing stakeholders!

- The (success of the) lobbying training courses need(s) to be better publicised within the community of practice of youth work in Europe.
- The example of the national training course in Flanders can be used as successful practice.
- There is a need to find and build allies with local, national, and European stakeholders to organise and provide training for lobbying.
- Lobbying for youth work needs strategic partners and alliances across Europe: e. g. the Youth Partnership, the Strategic National Agency Cooperations (SNACs), etc.

## More budget and resources for lobbying!

- Each youth work organisation should allocate resources and budget for lobbying.
- There is a need to emphasise the role and responsibility of umbrella organisations and national stakeholders in running training courses in their working contexts.
- Policy makers should see and accept the political role of youth workers. It is their commitment and political involvement that improves the quality of youth work and youth policy.
- The next programme generation of Erasmus+ in Europe should foresee budget or/and training opportunities for lobbying for youth workers.

“I became more interested in youth policy and more aware of my own value.”

Quote by a participant

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