THE STATE OF PLAY OF THE NATIONAL PROCESSES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

–

SURVEY REPORT 2026

Published by:
JUGEND für Europa
National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport and European Solidarity Corps
Godesberger Allee 142-148
53175 Bonn
Germany
www.jugendfuereuropa.de

On behalf of:
SNAC 'Growing Youth Work'
https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/vernetzungen-weiterbildung/growing-youth-work

Written by:
Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll
July 2026

Copy editing:
Nik Paddison

The legal entity of JUGEND für Europa, National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport and European Solidarity Corps in Germany, is IJAB – Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e. V. with registered office in Bonn, VR 3584 Amtsgericht Bonn.

The content of this publication reflects the views only of the author. The European Commission and JUGEND für Europa as well as the SNAC partners are not liable for any consequences resulting from the re-use of the publication.

Content

Executive summary 5
Introduction 8
1. Overall development and coordination 13
1.1. Developments 13
1.2. Coordination 15
2. The eight priority areas 19
2.1. Quality development 22
2.2. Promotion and recognition 23
2.3. Policy frameworks 25
2.4. Develop and expand the youth work offer 26
2.5. A common direction for the youth work community of practice 28
2.6. Innovation and emerging challenges 30
2.7. A strategic framework for youth work development 31
2.8. Beyond the youth work community of practice 32
2.9. Youth work challenges 33
3. Challenges and support 36
3.1. Challenges for the EYWA implementation 36
3.2. Support 39
3.3. Mutual learning interests 43
4. The European Youth Work Agenda and local youth work 46
5. The 4th European Youth Work Convention and its follow-up 48
5.1. Clear follow-up activities 48
5.2. Limited follow-up activities 49
5.3. No recognisable follow-up 49
6. Impact of the European Youth Work Agenda 50
6.1. Youth work core 50
6.2. Youth work environment 51
6.3. Youth work systems 51
6.4. Common denominators and success factors 52
7. Conclusions on the 2026 report 53
8. From 2022 to 2026: a comparative analysis of five survey reports 55

8.1. A retrospective 55
8.2. A note on monitoring processes 58
List of figures 60

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents and analyses the results of the 2026 survey on the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA). It represents 31 national processes across 29 countries and is based on 32 responses from 161 invited stakeholders. The 2026 survey, as a reaction to the outcomes of the 4th European Youth Work Convention, added questions on the impact of the EYWA on the Youth Work Core, Systems and Environment, as well as a question on the follow-up of the 4th European Youth Work Convention.

After five years of EYWA realisation, this report shows that it has developed from a shared European political framework to an institutionalised process dedicated to strengthening youth work. When the monitoring started in 2022, there were 17 processes. By spring of 2025 this consolidated to become 37 active processes. After the 4th European Youth Work Convention in May 2025, five further countries joined the process, bringing the total to 42 active processes in 2026.

Most national processes are coordinated by Ministries of Youth and/or National Agencies. These are known as National Contact Points and are sometimes accompanied by national working groups. This provides a stable institutional basis for the processes, with coordination being centralised. Youth work and youth worker organisations are increasingly involved in the national working groups as stakeholders.

In this year´s survey, respondents perceived the biggest progress of youth work development related to the EYWA as being at the European and the national levels. Although the regional and local levels are still being perceived as having less progress, things have improved during the past two years. For those processes, that were responding for the first time, the perceived progress was focussed on the European level, whereas many recurrent respondents were less positive in their perceptions of that progress compared to previous years. These findings suggest that the EYWA is established at European and national levels but is still not yet fully anchored at the local level.

The eight priority areas of the EYWA remain an important framework for the national processes, though they are functioning more as an inspirational framework rather than an implementation manual. Just like in previous years, the most relevant priority area is ’Quality development‘. It shows that professionalisation, development of competences, and quality assurance are the main topics across Europe. ’Promotion and recognition‘ is the second most relevant priority area, with processes using advocacy, legal reforms, and certification to increase the visibility of youth work.

Taken together, these two priority areas suggest that the European Youth Work Agenda provides access not only to ”operational” topics like quality of offers, but also increasingly to strategic topics. Over the years, ’Policy frameworks‘ and ’A strategic framework for youth work development‘ have gained importance, with national youth strategies, competence frameworks, and national working groups providing the basis for youth work development.

Four main challenges are identified across the eight priority areas. These are recognition, funding, quality, and cooperation. The insufficient social, political, and formal recognition of youth work as an independent field of action, as well as profession, reduces its social standing and professional attractiveness. Short-term and project-based funding limits the possibilities of continuity, staff stability, and the strengthening of a resilient youth work infrastructure, while weak cooperation between stakeholders sets limitations to the realisation of the EYWA.

Under these circumstances, upholding and strengthening the quality of youth work through professionalisation, standards, and a continuous development of competencies is a further challenge. The report therefore suggests linking quality development and recognition more closely to national policy frameworks or action plans. This is so that professional standards and the visibility of youth work as well as its legal and institutional anchoring can reinforce each other.

The report identifies a strong and continuing need for European level support in the sense of networking, exchange, and agenda-setting. It also recognises that the national level should be supporting the translation of European developments into national dialogue and strengthening local youth work. Not surprisingly considering their relevance within the eight priority areas, the most important aspects of mutual learning are quality development, recognition, and professionalisation.

The EYWA´s influence on local youth work is greatest when a national process is supported by action plans, institutional coordination, and an active approach towards local anchoring. However, the connection between a European process and local youth work remains one of the weakest links in the EYWA. Capacity building, practical guidance, and sustainable funding as well as tools and mechanisms enabling local youth workers to participate in national and European processes are mentioned as helpful for strengthening European and local connections.

Looking at the impact of the EYWA on the Youth Work Core, Youth Work Environment and Youth Work Systems, its strongest impact is on the Youth Work Core. Here, the EYWA provides a shared normative and conceptual point of reference for policymakers, organisations, and youth workers alike. In the Youth Work Environment, impact is more gradual, though significant. The EYWA supports networking and more regular forms of consultation and dialogue.

As for Youth Work Systems, impact is more uneven. Some national processes report that the EYWA has encouraged the integration of youth work in national strategies and quality systems have been developed. In others however, legislative processes have stopped and local realisation is difficult. It is concluded that systemic consolidation depends on national political commitment, ownership, financial resources and long-term planning, rather than on a European framework.

The report closes with an analysis of the reports from 2022 to 2026, including a note on monitoring and evaluation. They show a process of steady consolidation rather than radical transformation. This includes the number of active national processes having more than

doubled, a network of National Contact Points and repeated opportunities of exchange expanded, and 'Quality development' and 'Promotion and recognition' being the main priorities. Future impact of the EYWA will depend on anchoring the principles of the EYWA into sustainable national and local structures. This would need to be accompanied by stable funding, the recognition and expansion of education and training, legal recognition, cooperation between (cross-sectoral) stakeholders, and stronger monitoring.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the first European Youth Work Convention was held in 2010, the European landscape of youth work has shifted. It has evolved into an increasingly institutionalised field across Europe, characterised by the sheer diversity of actors, practice architecture and approaches. At the same time however, multiple and intersecting crises (e. g. climate, geopolitical conflicts, housing, mental health, …) are affecting both young people and youth work systems all over Europe. This requires both adaptive policy responses as well as strong support mechanisms.

The European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA), established in 2020, provides a European framework in which policy responses, support mechanisms, coordination to align actors´ priorities, and the consolidation of youth work can happen. The key platform for this is the European Youth Work Convention, an event held every five years since 2010. The Convention is a space where youth work actors from all over Europe discuss youth work methods, best practices, policy responses, and research in an institutionalised arena.

Looking back at the four European Youth Work Conventions, two phases can be distinguished. The first phase covers the first and second Conventions (2010, Ghent, and 2015, Brussels) up to 2020 and marks the establishment of a political youth work narrative. The core theme of each of these first two Conventions, celebrating the diversity of youth work and finding common ground, their Final Declarations and accompanying political documents, contributed to the establishment of a common European understanding of youth work, its goals, and its means. These elements were included in the Council of Europe Recommendation CM(Rec)2017/4 on youth work[1] and anchored in several European Union Council Resolutions and Conclusions.

The second phase started in 2020 with the 3rd European Youth Work Convention (broadcast from Bonn) and the EU Council Resolution on the establishment of a framework for implementing the EYWA[2]. This marked the start of what could be called the implementation phase, where the focus shifted from narrative building to strengthening and developing youth work practice at local, regional, national, and European levels. Being connected by the framework of the EYWA and its eight priority areas, the Bonn Process was set in motion in 2021, and because of this, national processes emerged throughout Europe. Through strategies, joint practices, innovating methods, and peer learning activities, the EYWA and its principles, ideas, and goals were realised.

The 4th European Youth Work Convention took place in Malta in 2025 and continued this path by developing a “Roadmap towards a European strategy for youth work policy implementation,

[1] Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work. https://rm.coe.int/1680717e78 [27 July 2026].

[2] Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2020:415:TOC [27 July 2027].

recognition and quality practice". This was set up around three pillars: the Youth Work Core, Youth Work Systems, and the Youth Work Environment.

This report discusses the realisation of the EYWA in national processes and its impact on the development of youth work in Europe. To support the realisation of the EYWA, 16 National Agencies for the EU youth programmes and SALTO Youth Resource Centres are engaged in a long-term strategic cooperation project. This Strategic National Agency Cooperation (SNAC) is entitled 'Growing Youth Work'[3] and is coordinated by JUGEND für Europa, the National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport, and European Solidarity Corps in Germany.

The main areas of work in this cooperation include providing information and facilitating communication, organising networking opportunities, providing thematic impulses, mobilising the EU youth programmes for youth work development in the context of the EYWA, and supporting individual national processes. In this context, a range of activities supporting national processes within the EYWA implementation process are carried out all over Europe. Of particular relevance is the yearly "Exchange Forum on the European Youth Work Agenda. Boosting national processes for youth work development"[4]. This Forum brings together key stakeholders who are involved in shaping national processes for youth work development.

Each Exchange Forum since 2023 has been preceded by a survey on the realisation of the EYWA across Europe, which included a focus on the national processes. The results of each survey were presented and discussed at the Exchange Forums in the respective years of 2023[5], 2024[6], and 2025[7]. While in 2023 and 2024, the survey reports were published in autumn, the 2025 survey was sent out in February and the results published in May on the eve of the 4th European

[3] The SNAC 'Growing Youth Work' was preceded by the SNAC 'Strengthening Youth Work in Europe by Supporting the Implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda!' (SNAC 'EYWA'), which ran from 2021 to 2024. The SNAC aims to elevate the importance of youth work, emphasising its critical role in the lives of young people and democratic societies. The project is contributing to putting the European Youth Work Agenda into action by offering support, encouraging coordinated and strategic efforts, and creating opportunities for youth work professionals including mobilisation of the EU youth programmes for youth work development. Thus, the cooperation develops a network to strengthen youth work across Europe together. The strategic cooperation partners of the SNAC 'Growing Youth Work' are the National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps in Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany (coordinator), Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia and Türkiye as well as SALTO Training and Cooperation and SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus. More information is available at: https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/vernetzungen-weiterbildung/growing-youth-work/about [4 August 2026].

[4] Since 2022 the Exchange Forum has happened four times hosted by Germany, Belgium, and North Macedonia. The fifth edition takes place in November 2026 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Insights into the respective events are available online: https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/vernetzungen-weiterbildung/growing-youth-work/events [4 August 2026].

[5] Hofmann-van de Poll, F. (2023), The State of Play of National Processes within the Bonn Process, Survey Report 2023, Bonn, JUGEND für Europa, available at https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fileadmin/jugendfuereuropa/growingyouthwork/publications/Bonn_Process_2023_State_of_Play_Survey_Report.pdf [29.10.2026].

[6] Hofmann-van de Poll, F. (2024), The State of Play of National Processes within the European Youth Work Agenda Implementation, Survey Report 2024, Bonn, JUGEND für Europa, available at https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fileadmin/jugendfuereuropa/growingyouthwork/publications/Bonn-Process_Survey-Report_national-processes_2024.pdf [29.10.2026].

[7] Hofmann-van de Poll, F. (2025), The State of Play of National Processes within the European Youth Work Agenda Implementation, Survey Report 2025, Bonn, JUGEND für Europa, available at https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fileadmin/jugendfuereuropa/growingyouthwork/publications/Survey_Report_National_Processes_2025.pdf [29.10.2026].

Youth Work Convention to serve as a background for discussions at the Convention. The 2026 survey report aims to provide an in-depth overview of the past years of EYWA implementation.

	Active Processes	Processes covered in the survey	Countries covered in the survey	Added items
2023	28	25	23	Stakeholders / relevance of the 8 priority areas / future activities / EYWA challenges
2024	35	24	22	National Action Plan or Strategy / relating activities to EYWA
2025	36	30	28	Local youth work / 4th EYWC
2026	42	31	29	Impact / follow-up on the 4th EYWC

Figure 1: Survey response rate and development

The 2026 survey was sent to 161 people[8] in 45 countries[9]. As in every survey round, questions were asked about stakeholders, priority areas, implemented and upcoming activities, and needs for support and mutual learning. Furthermore, questions were added this year to explore the impact of six years of the EYWA on youth work practice and about the 4th European Youth Work Convention. Of the 161 contacted persons, there were 32 respondents, covering a total of 31 national processes (marked in the figures as all-proc) from 29 countries. In one case, two persons answered the survey for one national process. Within the framework of the analysis, these answers were combined to allow comparability between national processes.

[8] The 161 people in 45 countries are in the mailing list maintained by the SNAC 'Growing Youth Work'. This includes the partner organisations involved in the SNAC 'Growing Youth Work', as well as SALTO Youth Resource Centres (South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, Euro-med region, Inclusion and Diversity, Participation and Information, Training and Cooperation, and European Solidarity Corps). There is no contact information on the European Youth Work Agenda for Denmark, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and the Holy See. The Russian Federation and Belarus, the latter participating in the 2022 survey and confirming the start of a national process, were not contacted for the 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 surveys following Russia's exclusion from the Council of Europe and the suspension of the Council of Europe's relations with Belarus as a result of the Russian Federation´s war of aggression in Ukraine.

[9] References to countries include Belgium as one country while references to the national processes split the country Belgium into three different national processes. This is because three different national processes have been set up in the three Communities: The Flemish Community of Belgium (BE-FL), the French-speaking Community of Belgium (BE-FR), and the German-speaking Community of Belgium (BE-GE).



Figure 2: The 31 national processes covered by survey respondents in 2026

With three of the national processes covering the three Communities in Belgium, Figure 2 shows the 29 countries (and subsequently 31 national processes) which the respondents of the survey covered.

Just like in the previous year, in addition to the 31 national processes that were reported by respondents in the 2026 survey round, an analytical group of 20 recurrent processes[10] was analysed. These 20 processes have been reported about in all the survey rounds since 2023 (Figure 3). In some sections, the data from this group of recurrent respondents was additionally analysed to gain more precise insights into the developmental line from 2023 to 2026. Moreover, five countries previously not taking part in the survey have answered, thus giving insight to latest developments in countries previously not visibly active in the EYWA process.

[10] In the 2024 survey, a recurrent group of respondents of 21 processes was identified. As Slovakia did not answer the survey in 2025 and 2026, the recurrent group of respondents now consists of 20 processes.



Figure 3: The 20 national processes covered by survey respondents in the surveys of 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026

The present report discusses the findings of the 2026 survey in eight sections. The first section analyses the findings on the development and coordination of the EYWA implementation process. This is followed by a second section that looks at the developments within the eight priority areas of the EYWA. The third section discusses the challenges stakeholders face when implementing the EYWA and their needs in terms of coordination and support. The linkages between the EYWA and local youth work are discussed in the fourth section.

The fifth section looks at the follow-up after the 4th European Youth Work Convention. The sixth section discusses the impact of the EYWA on the Youth Work Core, Environment and Systems in Europe and is followed by a seventh section which concludes all the findings. Finally, the eighth section analyses the main developments of six years of the EYWA based on all the previous survey reports.

Please note, this report is considered to be the last one in the framework of the SNAC Growing Youth Work. From 2027 onwards, the support of national processes will be coordinated by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, while the SNAC Growing Youth Work will continue to support the broader community of practice in turning the EYWA into meaningful practice.

1. OVERALL DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

This section examines overall trends in the implementation of the EYWA across Europe (Section 1.1) as well as the mechanisms through which these processes are coordinated and supported (Section 1.2).

1.1. DEVELOPMENTS

To measure which countries are currently active in the EYWA, the indicator is defined as a country either having participated in the EYWA Implementation Survey 2026 and/or having a National Contact Point listed on the Growing Youth Work website[11]. After the stabilisation in the number of active processes last year, the 2026 survey shows an increase of five more countries. There are now 42 active processes contributing to the realisation of the EYWA. This increase can be attributed to the impact of the 4th European Youth Work Convention and the work of the SNAC Growing Youth Work - which has been continuously reaching out to countries not yet active. Figure 4 shows how the number of national processes has steadily increased from 2022 to 2026.

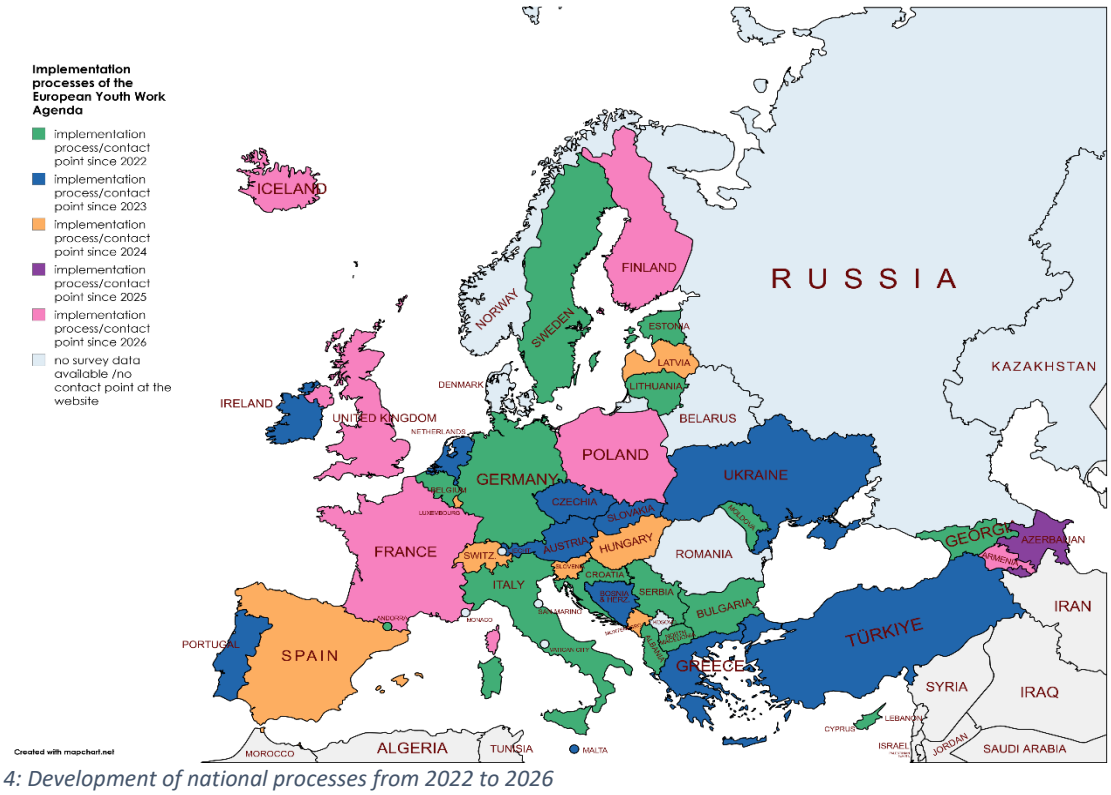


Figure 4: Development of national processes from 2022 to 2026

[11] https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/vernetzungen-weiterbildung/growing-youth-work/be-part-of-it/implementation-of-the-eywa-in-my-country [29 July 2026].

Survey respondents were asked to assess the implementation progress of the EYWA across European, national, regional and local levels (Figure 4). They were asked to use a scale from 0 (no progress) to 4 (remarkable progress).

Concerning the overall progress, perception of the EYWA has steadily increased over the years, with yearly increases, though 2026 saw a slight decrease. While the perception of European and national progress remains comparably high, regional and local progress has remained lower, though it has increased over the last two years. It seems that implementation is perceived more in policy framing at the European and national levels than in regional and local level practice.

This trend is even more evident in the countries that completed the survey for the first time in 2026. Here, progress is perceived particularly at the European level (average 2.4), whilst hardly any progress is perceived at regional level (average 1.0) and only some progress is perceived at the local and national levels (average 1.8 and 2.0).

Though there is the perception of comparatively less progress at the regional and local levels (compared to the European and national levels and compared to the previous year), chapters 2 and 3 show many examples of local anchoring. This may point towards an expectation not being met, while in reality local youth work is actually getting stronger.

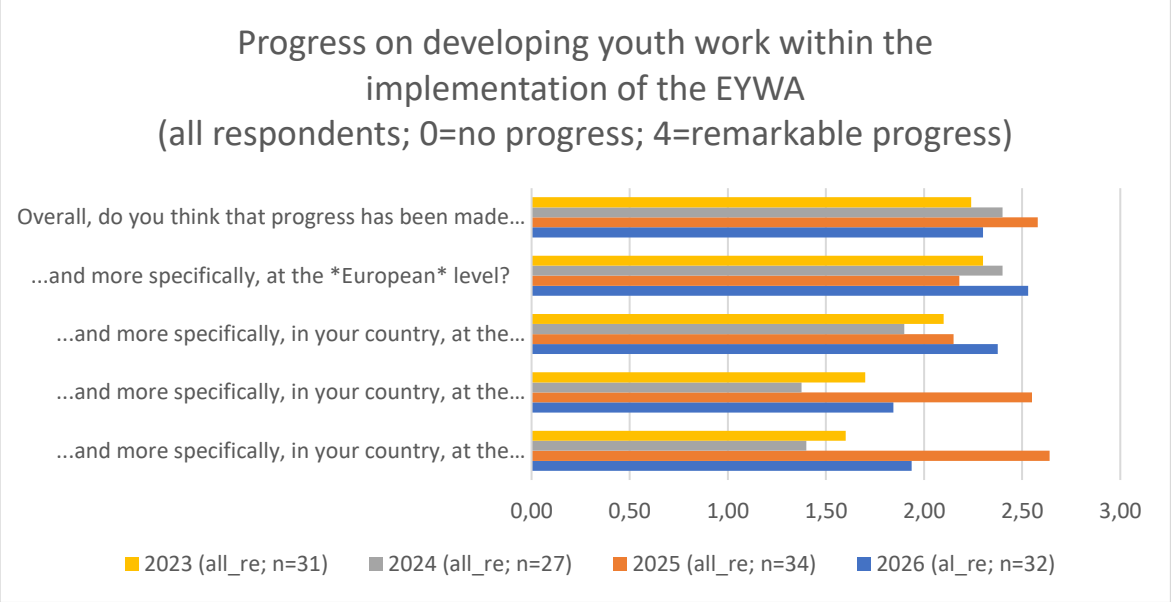


Figure 5: Progress with the development of youth work within the EYWA implementation process on a scale of 0 (no progress) to 4 (remarkable progress)

Looking at the group of recurrent respondents (see Figure 6), progress is perceived less positively for the last year and has decreased significantly compared to previous years. Whether this is an anomaly or, as informal talks over the last year suggest, due to a phase of

insecurity in direction between the 4th European Youth Work Convention (May 2025) and the publication of the Convention results in March 2026[12] remains to be seen.

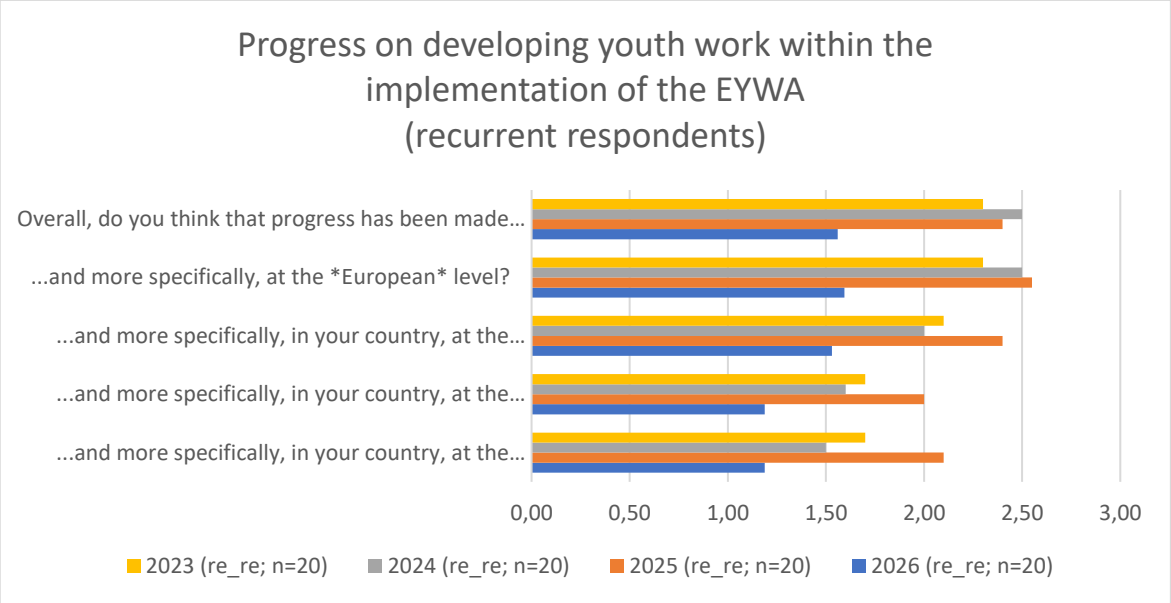


Figure 6: Progress with the development of youth work within the EYWA implementation process as perceived by recurrent respondents on a scale of 0 (no progress) to 4 (remarkable progress)

1.2. COORDINATION

The use of the term "coordination" in this report refers broadly to the various ways in which national processes for implementing the EYWA are organised. This includes, among other elements, the alignment of measures and activities, communication efforts, and support structures. In many countries, a designated National Contact Point has been established to serve as the central body responsible for coordinating EYWA implementation. According to the Growing Youth Work website, a total of 36 such contact points are currently identified[13].

Just like the previous years, most National Contact Points have an organisational background either as a national ministry for youth or as the National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps (Figure 7). Compared to previous years, more youth work organisations have gained a role as National Contact Points. The differences in data between the years can be attributed to different countries responding to the survey in 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026.

[12] For the follow-up of the 4th European Youth Work Convention in different processes, see chapter 5.

[13] These persons are in most cases, but not per se, the same as the people who answered the survey. In some cases, there are multiple contacts listed for one process. https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/vernetzungen-weiterbildung/growing-youth-work/be-part-of-it/implementation-of-the-eywa-in-my-country [29 July 2026].

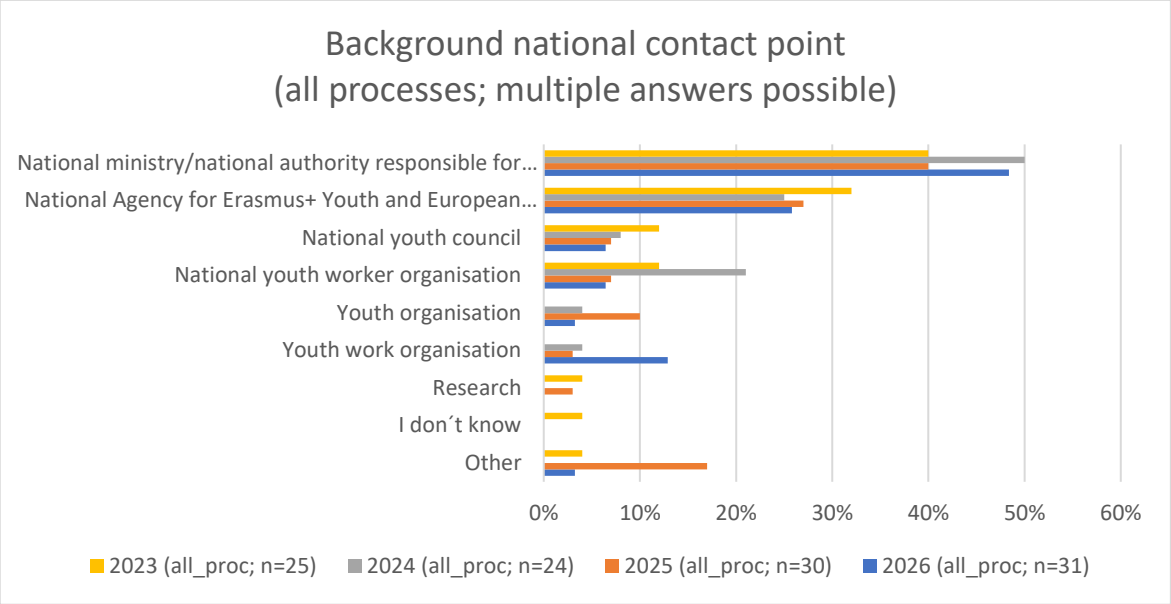


Figure 7: Organisational background of National Contact Points in 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026

A glance at figure 8 shows that across most national processes responsibility for the coordination lies with the National Contact Point, though in some cases a shared coordination, mostly between the Ministry and the National Agency, or in some cases a coordination by a national working group, is in place. The situation is similar in the answers of recurrent respondents (Figure 9), though here there is slightly more coordination from the national working groups. One of the reasons could be that among the recurrent respondents, 75 % have a national working group in place, whereas among all processes, this is only 51,6 %.

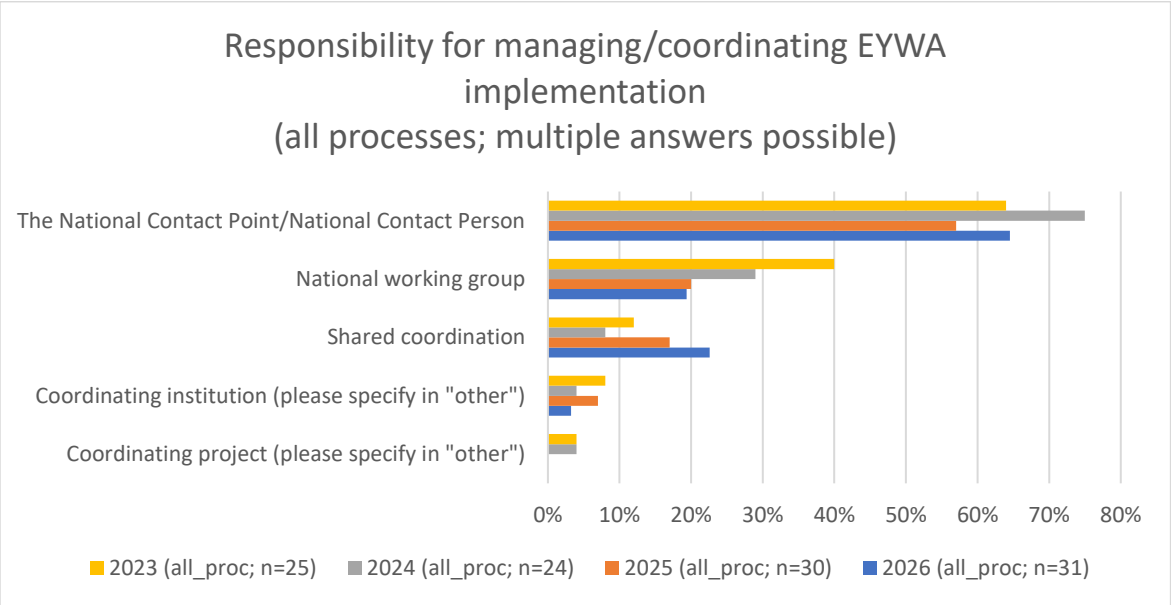


Figure 8: Actors principally responsible for managing/coordinating the EYWA implementation process (all processes)

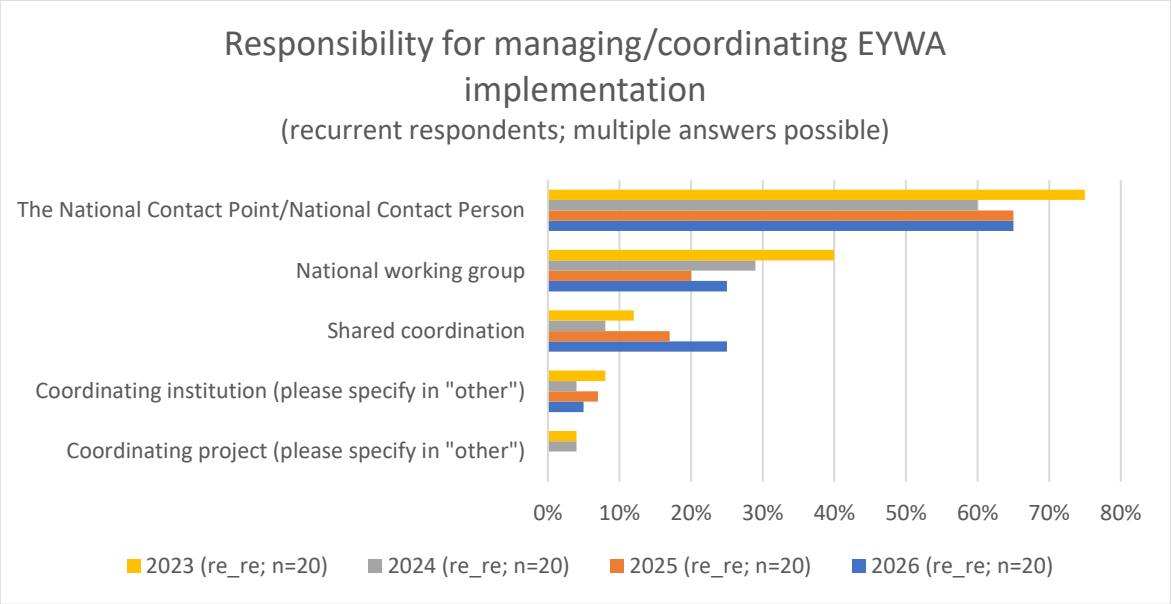


Figure 9: Actors principally responsible for managing/coordinating the EYWA implementation process (recurrent respondents)

The attested central role of both national youth ministries and National Agencies in implementing the EYWA is also reflected in the composition of the stakeholders involved (Figure 10). Most interesting is the decline of involvement by the National Agencies, whereas other stakeholders' involvement is mostly stable. The mentioned increase of youth work organisations in the 2025 survey round, has decreased in 2026. Among the recurrent responding processes, youth work organisations and youth worker organisations have been firmly established as stakeholders in the EYWA processes (Figure 11).

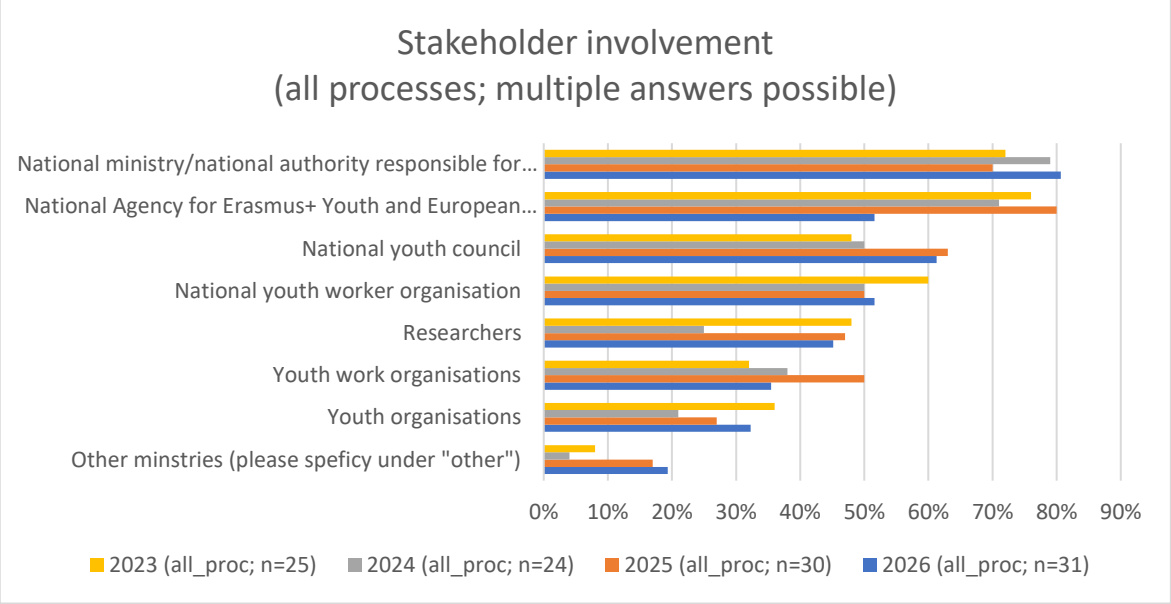


Figure 10: Stakeholder involvement in the national EYWA implementation process (all processes)

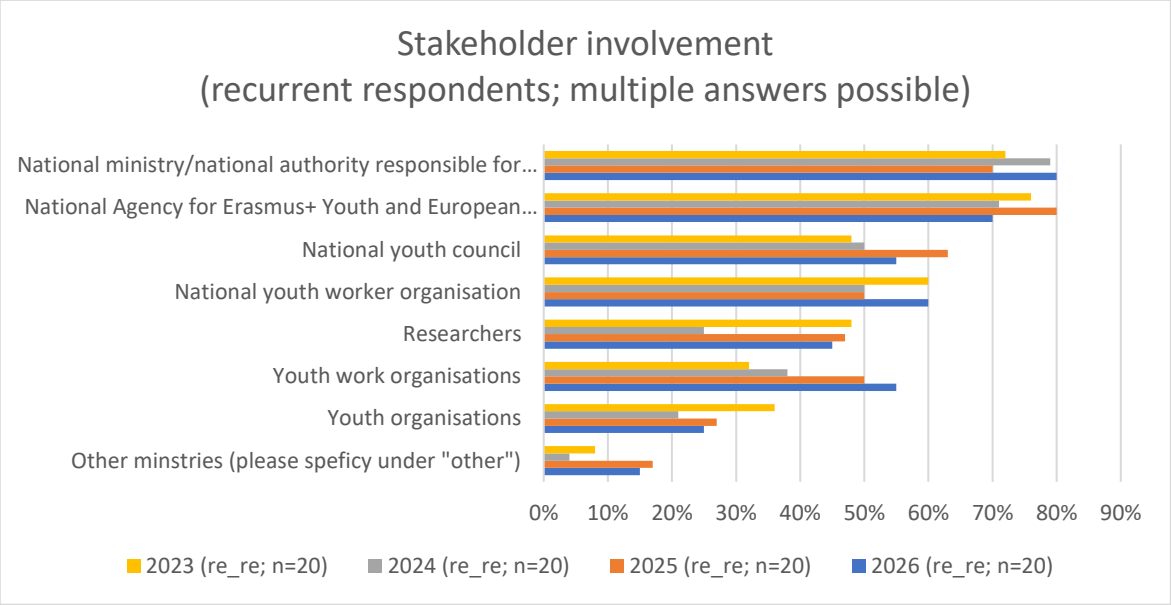


Figure 11: Stakeholder involvement in the national EYWA implementation process (recurrent respondents)

Overall, the findings show an increase in activity and the institutionalisation of national implementation processes of the EYWA. These developments point towards a strong anchoring of the EYWA in strategic policy rather than local practice, something which is confirmed by the five new processes that joined the survey in 2026. They mention the integration of activities related to the EYWA into existing national structures, though a strong engagement with the EYWA is limited.

Coordination of the EYWA implementation processes lie mainly with National Contact Points at the youth ministries and/or National Agencies, though in some cases shared forms of coordination exist. The findings point towards a central role of these institutional actors, which is mirrored in the involved stakeholders. Ministries and National Agencies are the most involved actors, the involvement of other actors is stable with small changes in for example the increase and decrease of youth work organisations.

2. THE EIGHT PRIORITY AREAS

The Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention[14] mentions eight fields of action which are commonly known as the eight priority areas of the EYWA. They are:

- develop and expand the youth work offer
- quality development
- a common direction for the youth work community of practice
- beyond the youth work community of practice
- promotion and recognition
- innovation and emerging challenges
- policy frameworks
- a strategic framework for youth work development

Each of the eight priority areas has its own description and meaning while at the same time they are all closely interlinked. This became particularly evident in the 2024 Survey Report, where this interlinkage between the eight priority areas was considered to be one of the main challenges of the EYWA, though in the 2026 analysis, this challenge was not mentioned anymore. This does not necessarily mean that the challenge is resolved. Rather, the restructuring of youth work around the Youth Work Core, Environment, and Systems, the key concepts of the 4th European Youth Work Convention and subsequent report, may have provided a different framework in which the challenge of interlinkage gets a new meaning[15]. Figure 12 shows the development of the relevance of the eight priority areas over the years.

There may also be different interpretations of what a priority area is or is not. Some answers suggest a priority area to be every area a country is, at the national level, active in. Others however view a priority area as an area that needs more focused attention or action. If an area is already covered well and action is taken in this area, it is not indicated as a priority. The prioritisation of an area is therefore not a statement of its higher relevance or importance; it merely indicates that at the moment of answering the survey, this priority area required comparatively more additional action or attention than other equally relevant or important areas.

[14] Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention. Signposts for the future. Bonn/Online, 7-10 December 2020. https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fileadmin/jugendfuereuropa/growingyouthwork/publications/3rd_EYWC_final_Declaration.pdf [31 July 2027].

[15] As to how the eight priority areas fit in the three dimensions of the Youth Work Core, Environment and System was elaborated in the Survey Report 2025. See Hofmann-van de Poll, F. (2025), The State of Play of National Processes within the European Youth Work Agenda Implementation, Survey Report 2025, Bonn, JUGEND für Europa, available at https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fileadmin/jugendfuereuropa/growingyouthwork/publications/Survey_Report_National_Processes_2025.pdf [27 July 2026].

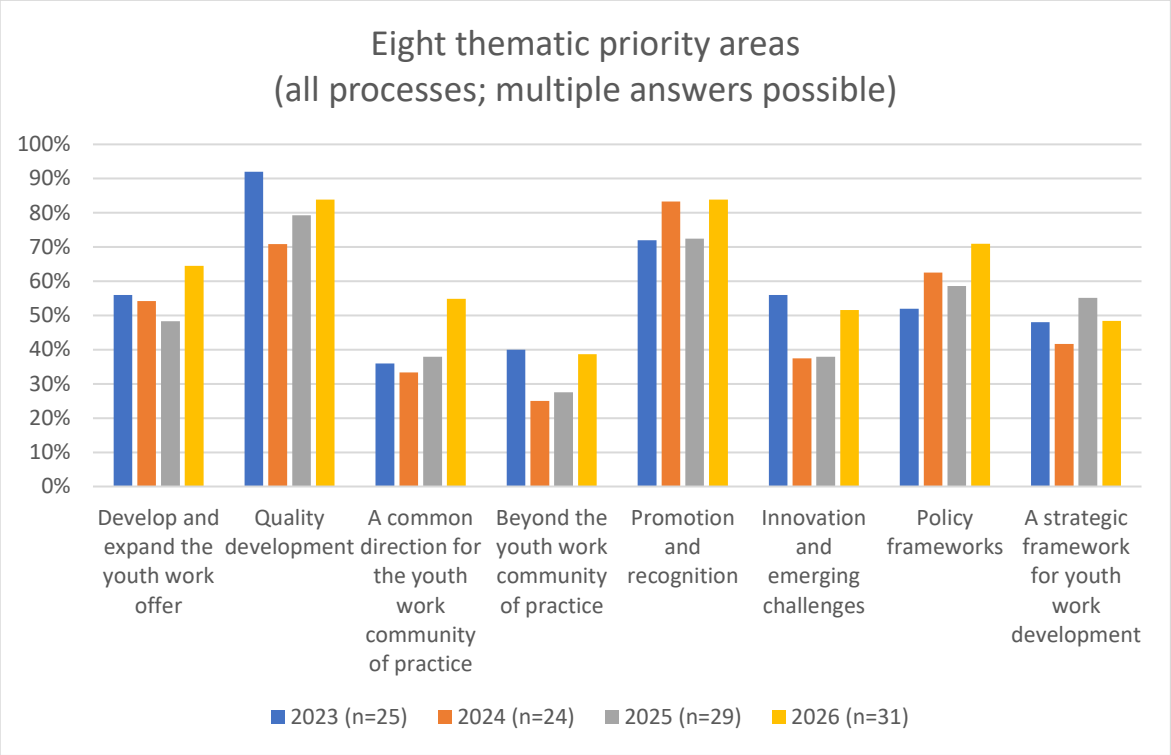


Figure 12: Answers to the questions "Which of the eight thematic priority areas do you consider particularly relevant when it comes to your work?" (2023-2026) all processes

Both the figure on all processes (Figure 12) and that on recurrent respondents (Figure 13) show 'quality development' as the most relevant priority area. While there are peaks in 2023 and 2026 for all processes, the relevance of this, stays high throughout. The second major priority area is 'promotion and recognition'. This points towards a continuous need for visibility, appreciation, and institutional anchoring. This is something which was mentioned in previous reports and is mentioned again in this year´s report in the section on challenges (see section 2.9 and section 3).

'A common direction for the youth work community of practice' and 'beyond the youth work community of practice' fluctuate over the years, however, both show a clear rise in 2026. This may be due to the effects of the 4th European Youth Work Convention. At the same time, it suggests a stronger need for coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation. The need for more cross-sectoral cooperation is also mirrored in the agendas of different stakeholders, for example the European Commission and several SNAC partnerships. Furthermore, the 2025/2026 working programme of the SNAC Growing Youth Work discussed the potential of cross-sectoral cooperation in its online Youth Work Talks series.

For all processes, 'policy frameworks' have become more important over time, especially in 2026. Comparatively, 'a strategic framework for youth work development' remains stable and substantial across all years, indicating it as a long-term orientation. Taken together, these two priority areas suggest that the EYWA provides access not only to "operational" topics like quality of offers, but also increasingly to strategic topics.

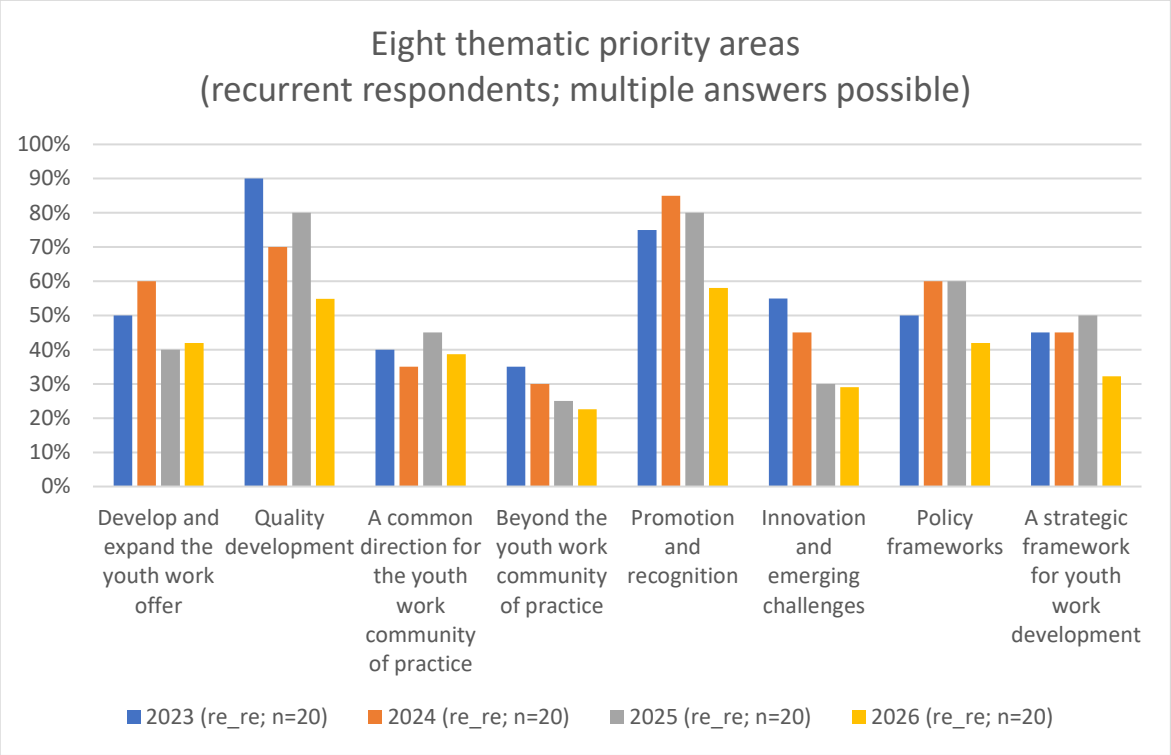


Figure 13: Answers to the questions "Which of the eight thematic priority areas do you consider particularly relevant when it comes to your work?" (2023-2026) recurrent respondents

For the recurrent respondents, the tendencies of all the processes can be formulated even more precisely. The ranking of priority areas remains the same, though the assessments seem to be more concentrated on several points. 'Quality development' and 'promotion and recognition' remain the most relevant priority areas. The particularly high scores for 'quality development' in the early years suggests that this priority area is of stable and long-term importance within the group of recurrent respondents.

Figure 13 shows no radical shifts among the answers of recurrent respondents, it instead shows a consolidation of these answers. Some priority areas remain at a medium priority level ('develop and expand the youth work offer', 'a common direction for the youth work community of practice', and 'policy frameworks'), while others remain at a low-priority level ('innovation and emerging challenges' and 'beyond the youth work community of practice'). This may suggest that among recurrent respondents, there is a stronger focus on structural development with a professional perspective. It seems that for this group of respondents, youth work should primarily develop through quality, visibility, and institutional linkage. Though this direction is visible among the responses of all the processes, it is less distinct in the broader context.

Each sub-section below presents a priority area and the measures that have been taken or are being planned in that area. They are listed in order according to their relevance in the national processes (see Figure 12), rather than how they are listed in the EYWA.

2.1. QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

The priority area 'quality development' refers to a series of requirements to improve the quality of youth work. It is about having better outreach and information on existing structures and mechanisms as well as having a holistic approach to improving youth work through, for example, quality assurance systems.



Figure 14: Countries considering 'quality development' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[16]

Many activities have been referenced as supporting 'quality development', though some of them repeat the findings of previous surveys. Three examples are highlighted here:

Serbia. 'Quality development' in 2025 was strongly connected to improving support structures, tools, and pathways for quality assurance. The youth worker organisation NAPOR revised its training curriculum for youth workers, further improved parts of its quality assurance manual, and continued work on the education and certification of youth workers through the NAPOR curriculum. This resulted in 18 new youth workers being certified in 2025.

Malta. They are currently working with youth organisations to develop policy documents related to its quality assurance self-assessment tool.

[16] For Belgium, all three Communities marked 'quality development' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026.

Croatia. The implementation of the non-formal "Youth Studies programme" will continue in 2026. This is a cooperation between the National Agency and Croatian Youth Network. It has the aim of strengthening the competences of young people and future youth workers through a structured and practice-oriented approach.

Regarding the processes that joined the survey for the first time, there also seems to be a focus on quality development. In **Armenia,** they are developing legally binding standards for youth worker training, qualifications, and the operation of youth work centres. In **France,** they have restructured their national qualification system around competences and professional pathways. In the **United Kingdom (England)**[17], modular qualifications, training, and professional registration are planned. And **Iceland** is moving towards recognised youth work education at university level.

2.2. PROMOTION AND RECOGNITION

The priority area 'promotion and recognition' is about making youth work more visible and better understood as an independent field of work. The aim is not only to create awareness of youth work, but also to recognise youth work formally, politically, and at societal level and to develop a common narrative through common language and terminology. Please note, this connects strongly with the priority area 'a common direction for the youth work community of practice'.

[17] Answers for the United Kingdom were given by a government official. As open answers focus on the situation in England, references in the text based on open questions will refer to "United Kingdom (England)"



Figure 15: Countries considering 'promotion and recognition' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[18]

In **Albania**, recognition and promotion is a visible but not yet complete development. The promotion and recognition of youth work have improved through public youth policies, activities of the National Youth Agency, civil society initiatives, youth campaigns, training programmes, and youth participation structures. In **Croatia**, efforts to promote and recognise youth work are closely linked to the work of the Croatian Youth Network and the National Association of Youth Workers. The identification of five strategic priority areas provides a basis for future advocacy efforts aimed at increasing the visibility and recognition of youth work.

Two countries, **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Cyprus**, are using conferences and campaigns to promote youth work, which is combined with advocacy work. In **Montenegro**, recognition is being strengthened through new laws and standards.

In **France**, recognition and visibility are being strengthened through qualification reforms, which aim to improve the clarity of career pathways, promote the versatility of professionals, and better align training with the needs of the sector. In addition, France established a partnership with Belgium to mutually recognise youth work qualifications. Other countries, **Greece** and **Malta**, are focusing on the formal recognition of youth work as a profession. Strategies towards formal recognition focus on lobbying, policy dialogue, and embedding youth work within national frameworks, they are also linking recognition to certification: "we are

[18] For Belgium, the Flemish Community and the French-speaking Community marked 'promotion and recognition' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026, whereas the German-speaking Community did not.

expanding the after-school youth work programme through which young people receive accredited certification." (**Malta**).

2.3. POLICY FRAMEWORKS

In the priority area 'policy frameworks', it is argued that youth work should be an explicit and integrated part of youth policy at all levels. There is a need for specific youth work strategies to support participatory youth policymaking and implementation. There is also a need for standards for research-based and rights-based approaches in policymaking and implementation. Most measures in this priority area focus on the development, implementation, and monitoring of national youth strategies.

The following countries mention that national youth strategies, both those that have existed for a long-time and those that are newly established, provide the framework for youth work development, ensuring access to youth work services: **Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Flemish Community in Belgium, Estonia, North Macedonia** and **Poland**. In two of these countries, **Estonia** and **North Macedonia**, specific laws on youth work have been developed.

Participation plays an important role as a policy framework. In **Austria**, "Principles for Child and Youth Participation" frame youth work policy, whereas **Poland** and **Estonia** point out that participation is part of the national youth strategy.

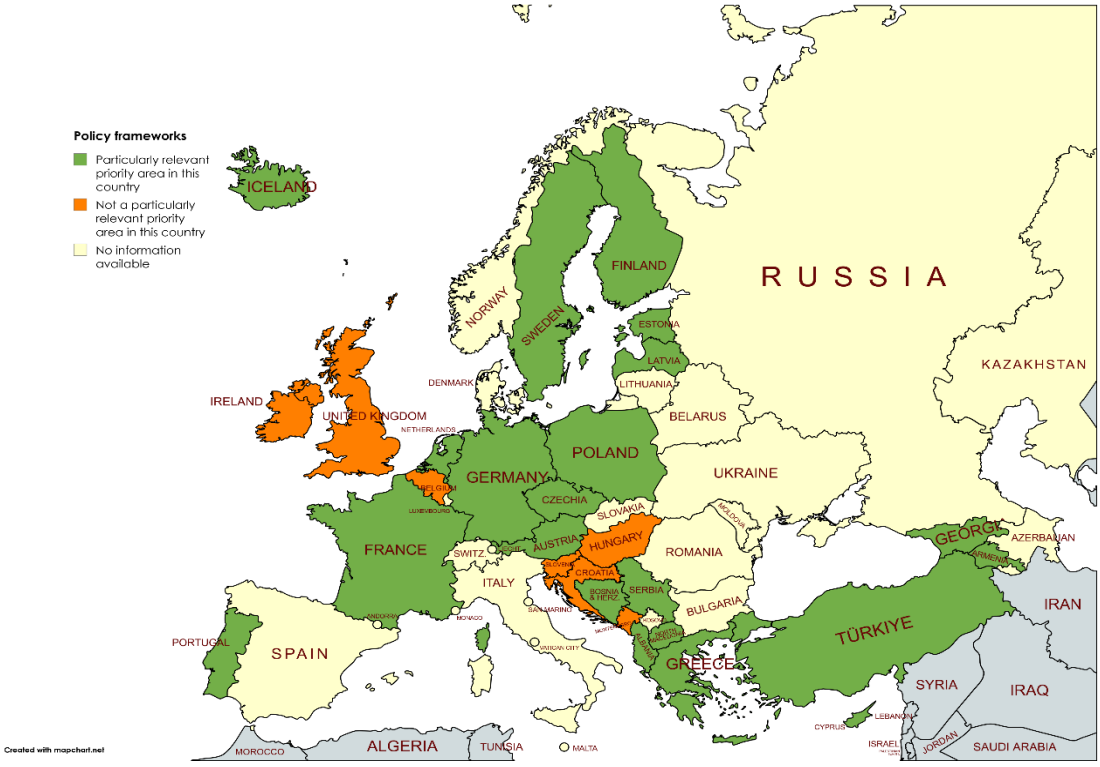


Figure 16: Countries considering 'policy frameworks' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[19]

Portugal actively strengthens its youth work framework through European integration and qualification structures. This strengthens alignment between national youth policy, European strategies, and wider education and learning agendas, contributing to a shared strategic framework for the development of youth work. **Serbia** takes a slightly different approach, modernising the policy frameworks through data, statistics, and qualification systems. The EU4SORS project[20] contributes to the coordinated collection and exchange of information on young people and youth policy, including youth work, at all levels.

2.4. DEVELOP AND EXPAND THE YOUTH WORK OFFER

A core objective of youth work is to create opportunities for young people. Thus, a further priority area is to 'develop and expand the youth work offer'. This area focuses on measures to establish quality youth work offers mainly at the local level and for all young people in their diversity. This includes the use of quality standards, the mobilisation of European funding programmes for the development of youth work, and accessible and sustainable funding.

[19] For Belgium, the Flemish Community marked 'policy frameworks' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026, whereas the German-speaking Community and the French-speaking Community did not.

[20] https://eu4sors.euzatebe.rs/en/ [13. October 2026]



Figure 17: Countries considering 'develop and expand the youth work offer' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[21]

The development of youth work offers is strongly related to policy frameworks. Several respondents, **Albania, Armenia, United Kingdom (England),** point out that without national policy frameworks like a national youth strategy or a law on youth policy, youth work could not be developed in the way that it is now. Such laws ensure access to youth work services, though in many cases youth work services remain unequally divided between bigger cities and rural areas. Similarly, European programmes and support platforms like Erasmus+ and Europe Goes Local are used for capacity building. In **Croatia,** at the level of the National Agency, several activities are being implemented which aim at building capacities of different (including newcomer) non-governmental organisations and municipalities for successful implementation of Erasmus+ Youth projects in the field of youth.

Several countries mention specific programmes that are expanding the youth work offer. In **Croatia**, youth work provision continued to expand mainly through practice-based support to local providers, especially in rural areas and in work with NEET young people. The **Cyprus** Youth Clubs Organisation, organised the Youth Clubs Academy 2025. The programme consisted of a series of activities, including two days of educational sessions, workshops, and discussions. In **Germany**, the expansion of youth work at the local level is linked to quality development and greater European integration. In a new three-year implementation process (2026-2028), the aim is to strengthen youth work at a local level, to improve its quality, and to foster closer

[21] For Belgium, the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community marked 'develop and expand the youth work offer' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026, whereas the French-speaking Community did not.

European networking. By aiming to mobilise local youth support organisations and local authorities, the intention is for more inclusive local services to be created.

A new development is the expansion of youth work offers through exchange programmes, webinars, and seminars. **Georgia** uses the Youth Work Delegates programme and the Youth Leaders Capacity Building programme to expand training provision. In **Hungary**, a Youth Work Summer University aims to strengthen cooperation between university students, professionals in formal education, and practitioners in the youth sector. This is to expand their knowledge, build professional networks, and engage in discussions on key topics. In **Ireland** they want to open the sector for European exchange programmes and events. To achieve this, they are engaging with European-focused webinars. The aim of these webinars is to inform and inspire the Irish youth work sector to engage more actively with existing European frameworks.

2.5. A COMMON DIRECTION FOR THE YOUTH WORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

For the community of practice to move in a common direction, through the priority area 'a common direction for the youth work community of practice', the EYWA proposes to create concrete opportunities for the community of practice to meet and exchange information. This concerns all levels and varies from stronger cooperation between individual groups in the community of practice, to information provision, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In this priority area, various measures are being taken in different countries to promote collaboration, communication, and alignment within the youth work sector.



Figure 18: Countries considering 'a common direction for the youth work community of practice' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[22]

A common direction is often provided by policy frameworks at the national or European level. For example, in **Albania** a more common direction is gradually emerging through the shared use of national youth policy frameworks, European references such as the EYWA, and the involvement of Albanian actors in European youth work exchanges. In **Armenia**, new laws are expected soon that will be a "guideline and common standard for the community of youth workers".

Austria is developing a common direction through an Exchange Forum for all political levels. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, a new stakeholder group has been set up called 'Working Group Youth Work in Europe' to strengthen the interlinkage between national and European developments.

Another way to establish a common direction is through education and training. In April 2026, **Latvia** started their first professional development programme in cooperation with the University of Latvia. In **Armenia** there are discussions about new developments for training and supervision, and for supporting the establishment of a national youth worker association.

[22] For Belgium, The Flemish Community marked 'a common direction for the youth work community of practice' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026, whereas the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community did not.

2.6. INNOVATION AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

The lives of young people are continuously being shaped by several crises which also have an impact on youth work. The challenges that come with these crises are the focus of the priority area 'innovation and emerging challenges'. Mental health, climate change, digitalised life-worlds, and shrinking civil spaces are just some of these challenges. Through innovations in youth work, e. g. smart youth work, green youth work, etc., and the development of resilient youth work structures, attempts are being made to meet these challenges.

Respondents recognised the challenges for young people as a challenge for youth work and a need for innovation. Apart from this connection, many countries have started projects to answer these challenges.

In **Cyprus**, innovation and new challenges are addressed through new formats and transnational learning spaces, such as a 'Youth@Work PoT Training' and TCA/NET activities (activities implemented by the National Agencies). In **Ireland**, innovation is explicitly linked to peer supervision. Peer supervision represents a practical and resource-efficient approach, aligning with the EYWA's focus on innovation and strengthening systems without requiring significant new infrastructure.

In **Latvia**, innovation is being demonstrated through a pilot project in schools. Together with the National Agency and four municipalities, the pilot project on youth workers in schools will start in 2026. Similarly, the **Netherlands** has decided to stimulate innovation and future-readiness in Dutch youth work by linking international experiences to local practices. Finally, in a slightly different approach, the **Flemish Community in Belgium** is addressing innovations in youth work as a research topic, launching a case study research project on 'innovative practices in youth work'.



Figure 19: Countries considering 'innovation and emerging challenges' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[23]

2.7. A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENT

Strongly related to the previous areas is the priority area 'a strategic framework for youth work development'. This area encourages the community of practice to reflect on how it can contribute towards the development of youth work itself. This can include setting up national working groups to coordinate joint undertakings or providing (better) conditions for youth work development at the local level.

In **Albania**, this priority area is very clearly addressed with the development of a new national project to promote the development of a more strategic national framework for youth work. **Croatia** also developed a strategic framework based on five newly identified priorities. The identification of these five strategic priority areas provides a basis for future advocacy efforts aimed at increasing the visibility and recognition of youth work. These include definition, ethics, standards, training, and recognition.

In **Germany**, the strategic framework is geared towards local implementation and engagement with Europe. The new national contact point aims to mobilise around 60 local authorities and youth support organisations with a local focus by 2028. The three priority areas are 'Europeanisation of local youth work', 'Quality development', and 'Creation of inclusive and diversity-oriented local provision'.

[23] For Belgium, the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community marked 'innovation and emerging challenges' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026, whereas the French-speaking Community did not.

Other countries, for example **Greece** and **Ireland**, describe national frameworks as a development strategy or apply a workforce strategy approach. By embedding peer supervision within a national workforce strategy, the ambitions of the EYWA can translate into concrete, actionable measures.

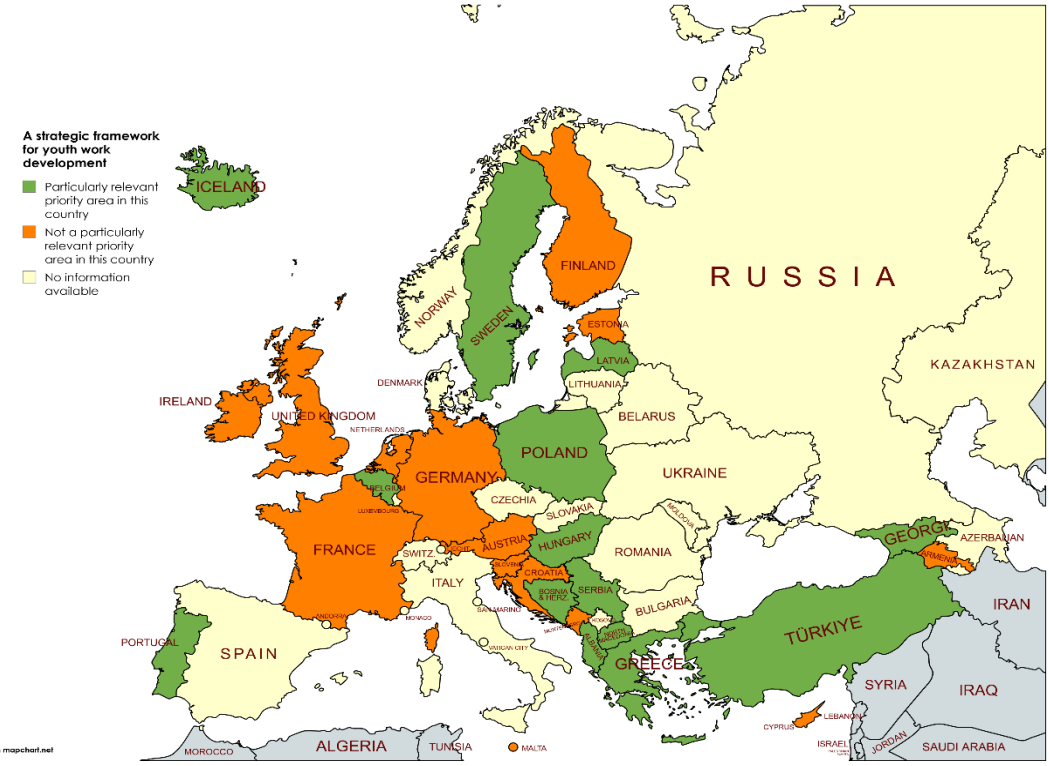


Figure 20: Countries considering 'a strategic framework for youth work development' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[24]

2.8. BEYOND THE YOUTH WORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Although youth work will continue to develop as an independent field of work, it does not exist in isolation but is part of a very diverse lifeworld of young people. It is therefore vital that youth work cooperates with other sectors that are important for young people. Within the framework of the priority area 'beyond the youth work community of practice', cross-sectoral and horizontal cooperation is being strengthened at all levels. However, only a few national processes reported any action in this priority area.

[24] For Belgium, the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community marked 'a strategic framework for youth work development' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2025, whereas the French-speaking Community did not.



Figure 21: Countries considering 'beyond the youth work community of practice' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work[25]

To reach beyond the community of practice, **Croatia** and **Czechia** explicitly extend the perspective to include education, research, and public policy. This strengthens cross-sectoral cooperation, particularly between youth work, public institutions, and the education sector. Similarly, **Finland** reaches for cross-sectoral cooperation between youth services and well-being services to better support young people in vulnerable situations. Whereas the **Flemish Community of Belgium** points out the need for cooperation between youth work and specialised well-being and prevention networks.

A different perspective is taken in **Iceland**, where youth work is linked with democratic engagement and municipal policy. In the winter of 2026, within the context of the Strategic National Agency Cooperation "Democracy Reloading", Iceland announced that it was hosting a training course for youth workers and municipality workers. They also developed some contributions to policy work and other areas for the youth field.

2.9. YOUTH WORK CHALLENGES

The development of youth work is confronted with similar challenges all over Europe. The 2023 report identified them as a lack of political interest, a lack of recognition, a lack of resources,

[25] For Belgium, The Flemish Community marked 'beyond the youth work community of practice' as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026, whereas the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community did not.

and a lack of cooperation. In 2026, the main challenges are grouped around recognition, financial resources, quality, and coordination.

A lack of recognition

A lack of recognition, particularly social, political, and formal recognition of youth work as an independent field of action, remains a crucial challenge to youth work practice. In **Albania, Greece** and **Portugal**, this lack of recognition is enhanced through the lack of a clear definition of youth work or having a clear distinction from other fields of action, particularly social work. Other countries, **Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland, Türkiye**, point out a lack of formal recognition or legal anchoring of youth work as a profession.

In **Armenia** and **Malta**, there is limited social recognition as well as a lack of professional youth worker training and studies. As a result, respondents report a concern that perceived limited career prospects and a comparatively low attractiveness of youth work as a profession enhances a lack of social recognition. **Germany, France, Ireland,** and the **United Kingdom (England)** emphasise a lack of visibility compared to formal education and argue that the role of youth workers (paid and voluntary) should be recognised both formally and by society in general.

A lack of resources

A second recurring challenge is the lack of long-term, reliable, and structural financial resources. This lack adds to fragmentation and insecurity in the field as many youth work offers depend on short-term calls and tenders, external funding, and temporary funding programmes. This limits sustainable planning, the continuity of youth work offers, and stable employment offers. As several respondents point out, this particularly concerns the local level. The negative alliance between a lack of long-term, reliable and structural resources and the lack of establishing and strengthening resilient youth work infrastructure is highlighted in **Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal,** and **Serbia**.

Whereas **Montenegro** and **France** mention financial shortages in the whole youth sector as an additional aggravating factor. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium,** it was emphasised that beside budget shortfalls in the youth field, budget cuts in related fields like education or culture, increase the pressure on youth work, as youth work is expected to ‘close the gaps’. In the **United Kingdom (England)** such financial shortages lead to a loss of many jobs, followed by a lack of job security and limited career prospects.

Quality

As the priority area of ‘quality development’ is one of the most relevant areas for development according to the respondents, it is no surprise that it also contains major challenges. These are mainly related to the further development (as well as the securing) of the quality of youth work

regarding professionalisation, standards, and a continuous development of competencies. There is a need for the development of competency frameworks and continuous training as stated by **Czechia, Finland,** and **Portugal**. Whereas at the same time youth worker competencies are not, or are not adequately, recognised in national qualification frameworks in countries such as **Croatia, Latvia,** and **Poland**. **Sweden** and the **United Kingdom (England)** emphasise a need for systematic, knowledge-based training and research to develop youth work more strongly along evidence.

Cooperation

A fourth challenge revolves along the need for stronger cooperation, coordination, and the political integration of youth work across sectors and levels. There is a perception in countries such as **Albania, Greece, Poland,** and **Portugal** that there are fragmentised responsibilities and weak connections between local practice, ministries, and civil society, which limit building a coherent youth work ecosystem both at the horizontal and the vertical levels. In contrast, cross-sectoral cooperation with policy fields like education, social policy, health, culture, digital transformation, and local development is seen as a prerequisite for sustainable structures and stronger coordination between youth organisations and governmental and civil society actors in the **Netherlands** and **Ireland**.

Furthermore, the **French** and **German speaking Communities of Belgium** emphasise that cooperation and participation are complicated by time and complexity. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Slovenia**, structural factors like the exodus of many young people or the difficulty of reaching more passive and disadvantaged groups have an additional impact on the development of cooperative and inclusive youth (work) structures.

3. CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT

Processes like that of the EYWA, which bring together actors from diverse institutional and professional backgrounds as well as across different levels, inevitably are confronted with a range of challenges. Different needs require distinct forms of support to help potential resolutions for EYWA implementation challenges. This chapter examines the main obstacles to the implementation of the EYWA, discussing the types of support deemed necessary, and identifies possible ideas for mutual learning processes.

3.1. CHALLENGES FOR THE EYWA IMPLEMENTATION

The survey included two questions on challenges. The question on the challenges regarding youth work in general[26] is discussed in section 2.9., while this section takes a more process-related stance and analyses the challenges regarding the implementation of the EYWA[27]. Some elements overlap, particularly in the fields of recognition, coordination, and resources. Many of the challenges explored here are not new but have accompanied the implementation of the EYWA over the years.

At the local level, challenges for EYWA implementation focus on unequal access, the difficulty of reaching rural areas and small municipalities, and adaptation to local realities. At the national level, the dominating challenges are the issues of recognition, coordination, funding, and political prioritising. Finally, challenges referring to the European level focus on the broad nature of the EYWA, common language and semantic understanding, and the difficulty of translating a European framework into national and local contexts.

The challenge of recognition, definition, and professionalisation

At the European level youth work is recognised as an independent field of action, whereas in many local contexts, youth work is still described as an emerging field lacking a clear professional identity. A central challenge is the diverse understanding of youth work. In many instances it is simply seen as being youth activities, volunteering, project-based initiatives or even generally as 'work with young people', while its educational, participatory, and developmental roles are not visible enough. This shows that the semantic consensus at the European level[28] is not always fitting with local practice.

[26] Question: "What challenges can you see as regards to developing youth work in general?"

[27] Question: "What are the main challenges you are facing in terms of implementing the EYWA?"

[28] "Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental, and/or political nature by, with, and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making." Council of Europe Recommendation on youth work CM/REC2017(4). https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/-/recommendation-on-youth-work [29.10.2026].

Closely related is the limited formal recognition of youth work and youth workers. There is a need for clear competence frameworks, training pathways, and professional standards as well as mechanisms to recognise skills and competences acquired in youth work and non-formal education. The challenge of recognition, definition, and professionalisation is not only related to definitory content, but also to a lack of institutional and professional anchoring of the youth work field.

The challenge of governance, coordination, and responsibilities

Another challenge concerns the coordination between youth work stakeholders and the governmental actors (at different levels) involved. According to the respondents, cooperation regarding the implementation process is often fragmented with an unstable national youth work community of practice or a lack of shared strategic direction. In some cases, the situation is further aggravated by complex or divided responsibilities, for example where competences are distributed across federal, national, and local levels or between multiple stakeholders. Consequently, the harmonisation of national policies with European standards is described by some respondents as complex and sometimes uneven.

The challenge of local implementation and regional differences

Several respondents highlighted the difficulties of the local implementation of youth work offers in general and the EYWA in particular. According to them, youth work opportunities are more commonly found in larger towns and cities or in areas where active civil society organisations are present. Smaller municipalities, rural areas and disadvantaged communities often have less access to high-quality youth work provision. This is enhanced by the fact that some local stakeholders are unaware of the EYWA or perceive it as too far away from their day-to-day concerns. In this context, the framework of the eight priority areas appears to be too broad or difficult to link with local realities. The challenge is thus to adapt the EYWA in such a way that it is not only understood at the local level but also perceived as practically relevant and applicable.

The challenge of personnel and financial resources

A very prominent theme within the responses is the issue of resources allocated to EYWA implementation. Respondents repeatedly mention a lack of continuous funding, limited financial resources, budget cuts, and project-based funding as a challenge. This makes it difficult to ensure continuous, long-term planning, professional development and stable youth work offers. Though this is a general challenge for youth work, it poses a specific challenge for the implementation of the EYWA as there is no specific funding for it. At the same time, personnel resources provide another challenge, with respondents referring to a shortage of qualified youth workers, a general lack of human resources and high staff turnover. In some cases, administrative overheads are a burden as well.

The challenge of political priority and institutional support

Many respondents feel that youth work and the EYWA are not given sufficient political priority in their countries. They are concerned these things are not on the list of top priorities and are either not sufficiently recognised or viewed as an add-on to other fields of action. This is linked to a perceived lack of institutional support. Without a political commitment to and ownership of the EYWA process, many initiatives remain both fragmented and project based.

Some respondents also pointed out a lack of structured dialogue between stakeholders and governmental agencies, resulting in a perceived failure of the public authorities to adequately consider the work of youth workers, who are also not included in decision-making processes. It is perceived that in many countries, particularly the countries which only recently joined the EYWA process, a reliable institutional framework for the implementation of the EYWA is missing.

Additionally, respondents pointed out the difficulty of anchoring European level frameworks into national implementation and local practice. One respondent referred to a 'gap between European-level developments and national-level uptake' and the EYWA being 'too detached' or 'too European' from local youth work practice. Therefore, there is an ongoing challenge in communicating and translating European objectives in such a way that they link to national and local practice.

Accessibility and knowledge

A continuous discussion on the challenges, is the perception of the EYWA as a framework that is 'too broad' and 'too technical'. It is felt that information and resources on the EYWA are not easy to find because they are mainly accessible through European initiatives. It is also felt that they are hard to understand because of an 'overuse of English', thus making accessibility more difficult for those people who are not already involved in a European context. This raises questions about who is the primary target audience of both the EYWA and the European Youth Work Conventions: policymakers, youth workers, or both. This perceived uncertainty regarding audience and language makes it more difficult to disseminate and communicate about the EYWA. However, accessibility and comprehension are seen as key conditions for successful implementation.

A further aspect here is the inability of many to access knowledge, data, and information resources. More data and systematic procedures at the national level may make progress more visible (and manageable). Implementation of the EYWA should thus not only be supported politically and institutionally, but also through quality knowledge building and dissemination.

Societal challenges

A final challenge mentioned is a coordinated approach towards and reaction to emerging challenges[29] within the framework of the EYWA. These include youth emigration, unemployment, digital risks, disinformation, mental health concerns, social exclusion, and low trust in institutions. Respondents do not consider these challenges as peripheral issues but as part of the real expectations placed on youth work and the EYWA. To address these challenges, and this is the actual challenge for the implementation of the EYWA, there is a need for greater capacity, better data, innovation, and more systematic support for youth workers and youth organisations. Youth work faces a tension where it is expected to address an increasing number of social problems and at the same time the conditions for doing so become more inadequate.

3.2. SUPPORT

The challenges regarding the implementation of the EYWA show a continuous need for support. An analysis of the questions in the survey shows that there is a strong need for more substantive exchange as well as capacity-building, and stronger advocacy. Depending on the support needed from the national or European levels, the relative importance of the needs for support change slightly. This is reflected in the answers from all the processes and recurrent respondents.

Figure 22 shows the changes in the needs from European support[30]. Over the years, the need for mutual learning and thematic events remains consistently high, along with a need for advocacy. Information and knowledge-building continue to matter – the main expectation is for the European level to create spaces for mutual learning and a shared agenda-setting through thematic events.

[29] Though the EYWA mentions the priority area as Innovation and emerging challenges, both survey participants as well as participants of the Exchange Fora have repeatedly pointed out that challenges like mental health, digital risks and disinformation, and social exclusion are not emerging, but have been existing for quite some time. They are to be considered as pressing, rather than emerging.

[30] The question of support was first asked in the 2022 Survey, which only asked the question regarding European support: "Which kind of support at European level would help your national process?", offering the answers "information", "exchange formats" [mutual learning], "practical support", "thematic events", "knowledge-building and publications" and "other".

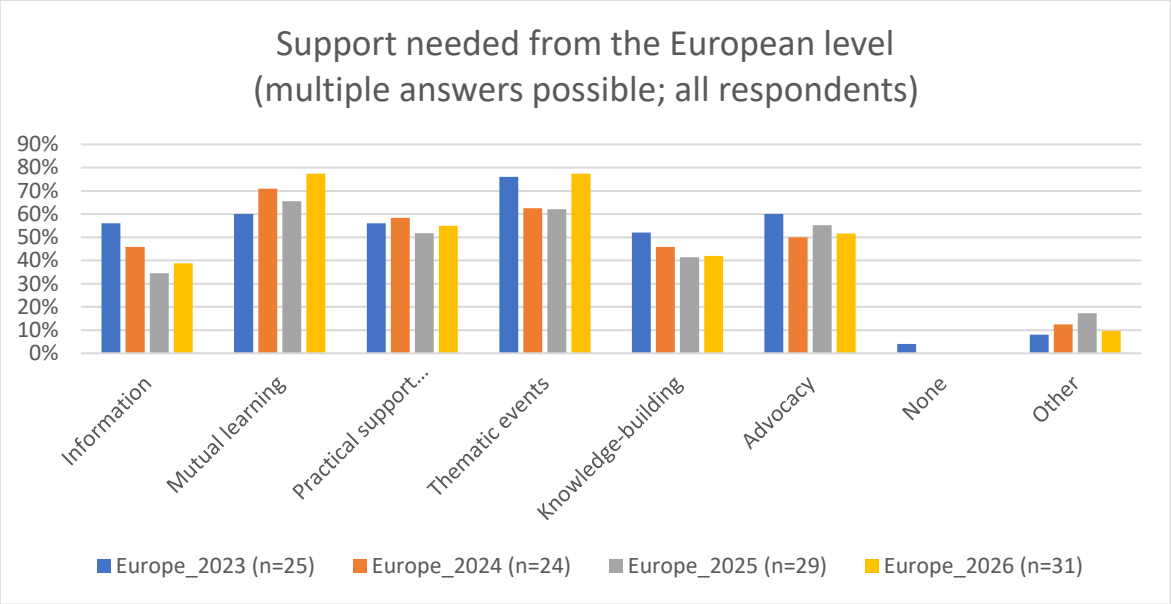


Figure 22: % of respondents who needed a certain kind of support from the European level from 2022 to 2026

At the national level (Figure 23), there is a strong need for support for thematic events and advocacy, though mutual learning has become more prominent over the years, particularly in this year's survey. The national level is expected to not only coordinate, but also to translate European policy and developments into concrete resources and exchange formats.

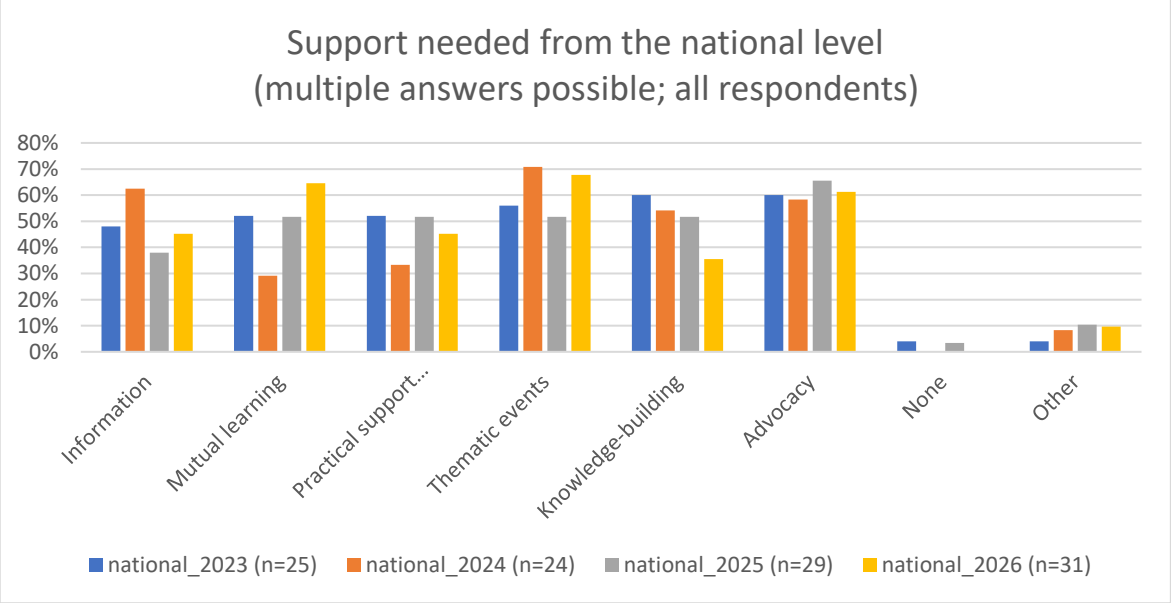


Figure 23: % of respondents who needed a certain kind of support from the national level from 2023 to 2026

A look at the processes of the recurrent respondents for the European level (Figure 24) shows that mutual learning and thematic events are the main needs. Advocacy remains important,

though not as much as other categories. Compared to the analysis of all respondents, there is a stronger and more consistent focus over the years from the pool of recurrent respondents. Regarding the national level (Figure 25), there are not many differences, recurrent respondents expect the national level to support with thematic events, knowledge-building and advocacy, whereas information and mutual learning are relevant but less so compared to the other categories.

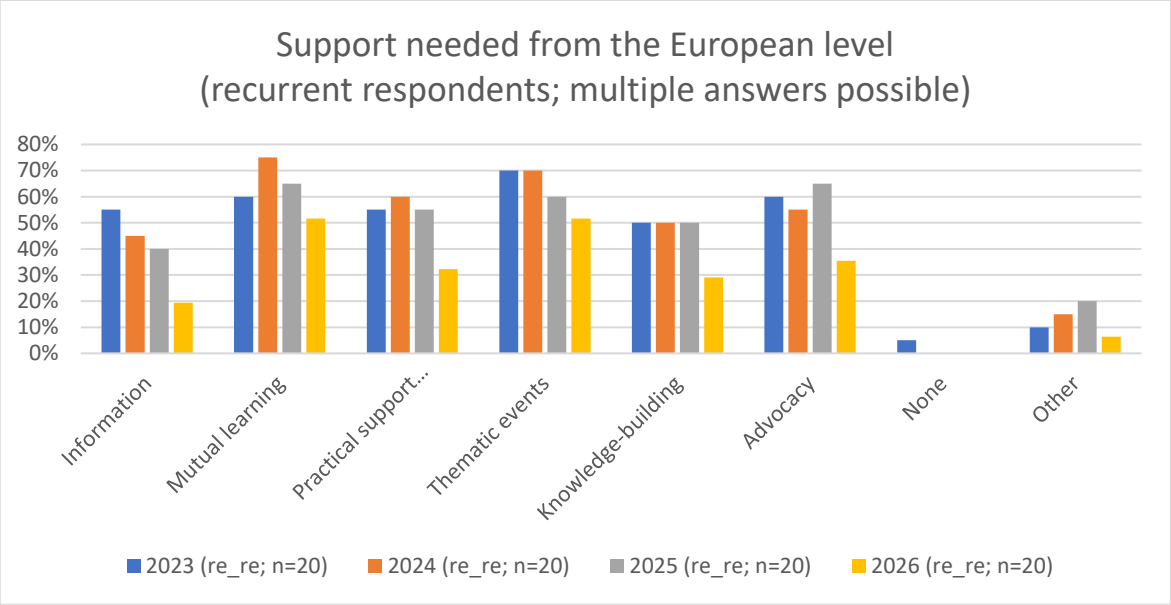


Figure 24: % of the respondents from the group of recurrent respondents who needed support from the European level from 2023 to 2026

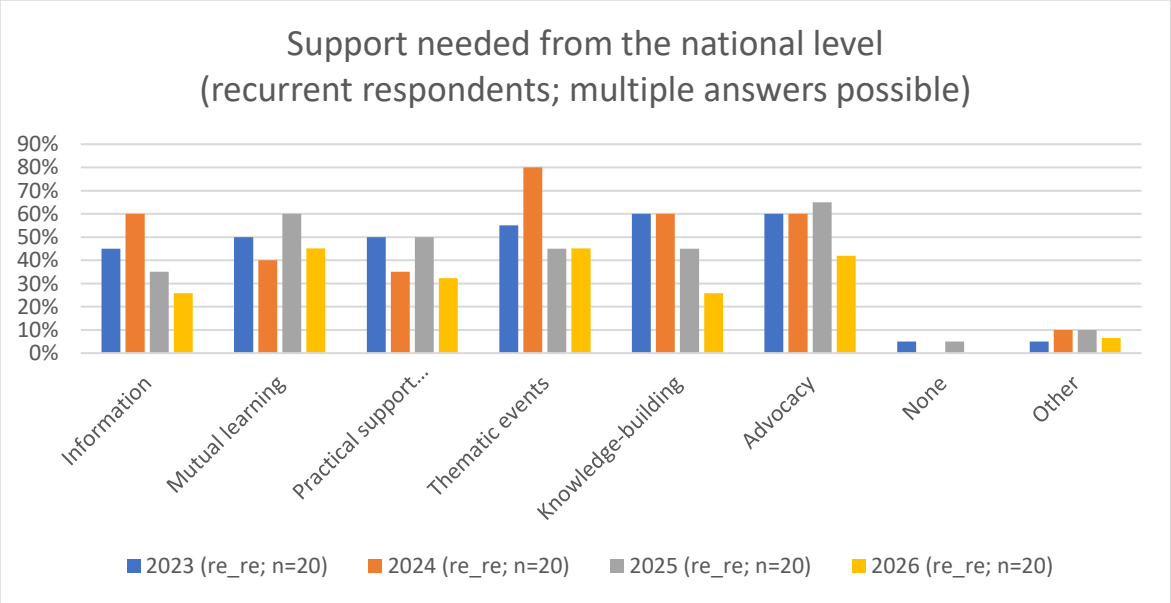


Figure 25: % of the respondents from the group of recurrent respondents who needed support from the national level from 2023 to 2026

Comparing the needed support from national and European levels across respondents, there is a clear continuous need for thematic events, mutual learning, and advocacy. For the national level, respondents put slightly more emphasis on practical support and information, whereas from the European level, support for networking, exchange and mutual learning are highlighted.

Respondents were also asked for concrete ideas regarding their support needs. Their answers can be summarised into five different areas, namely; financial and structural support, recognition, communication and information, mutual learning and exchange, and advocacy.

Financial and structural support is a pressing need in **Albania** where they want to establish a sustainable development process for youth work. Key priorities of such a process would include a dedicated funding mechanism for youth work, national coordination, mapping, research, capacity building, local pilot initiatives, training for youth workers, the development of quality standards, advocacy activities, and peer learning between local authorities. Of particular importance, and this also relates to the mentioned challenges, is the transition from project-based activities to a more stable, multi-year funding structure, something both **North Macedonia** and **Albania** highlighted. Related specifically to the implementation process of the EYWA, **Austria** suggests a budget for National Contact Points.

Regarding recognition, in **Cyprus, Greece,** and **Portugal** there is a need for European and national support to develop national quality frameworks for youth work. This includes guidelines, templates, and practical examples to strengthen competence frameworks, quality standards, and accreditation pathways for youth workers. There is also the need for common standards for the youth work profession, strengthening of youth work career pathways, and the recognition of youth work as a complementing field to formal education. For **Armenia** this also includes the need for aligning national and European processes.

When it comes to communication, information, and practical resources, new processes highlight the need for clear national communication about the EYWA and stronger coordination and practical tools to help local youth work stakeholders to link European frameworks to local practice. Examples of how this could be done include national dialogue processes, examples of implementation, training opportunities, and resources that translate strategic objectives into concrete actions for local authorities and organisations – these were highlighted by both **Finland** and **Iceland**.

For **Ireland**, materials to promote and explain the EYWA as well as the 4th European Youth Work Convention Report and Roadmap are needed. From the **Netherlands** there was a proposal for the development of storytelling tools and materials to help youth workers on the ground to demonstrate the value of youth work to different target groups.

To enhance mutual learning and exchange, particularly at the municipal level, study visits supported by Erasmus+ Youth funding are highlighted as best practice examples in **Cyprus, Czechia,** and the **Netherlands**. Such peer learning and exchange between countries, particularly between countries with less developed and more developed youth work systems,

is considered to be particularly valuable. Apart from the already mentioned study visits, mentoring schemes and structured exchange programmes for youth workers could support such processes – as suggested by **Greece**.

In Croatia, they feel it would be helpful if there was a more structured approach at the European level which would support the achievement of objectives and priorities set at the national level. This would rely on existing practice and resources, for example, the exchange of good practice and improved networking opportunities for National Contact Points and/or youth work organisations from the participating countries. Additional support for advocacy should also be provided at the national level.

Finally, when it comes to advocacy and visibility, the **French-speaking Community of Belgium** sees a need for a comprehensive reflection on the process and how it can be supported, starting from local realities and moving up to higher levels. **Croatia** and **Montenegro** highlighted that additional support for advocacy should also be provided at the national level. Existing European instruments should be utilised to provide guidance and visibility through the national authorities, thereby supporting the implementation of the EYWA.

Greece points out the need for structured dialogue between civil society organisations and public authorities. This could be achieved through European facilitation or support for national dialogue processes, there could also be more formal spaces for participation, and greater accountability from national public authorities. Furthermore, more targeted training for youth workers and organisations in the areas of advocacy, political influence, and strategic development would be important.

3.3. MUTUAL LEARNING INTERESTS

Cross-border inspiration and mutual learning have long been central objectives of youth work and European funding programmes. At the same time, they remain a key area in which support is required (see chapter 3.2.). It is a common assumption that when youth workers can share knowledge, good practices, and innovative approaches, the quality of their work and its impact on young people improves. Moreover, such exchanges between countries and regions can often generate new perspectives, solutions, and methodologies, thus strengthening youth work as an independent field of action. Figure 26 shows that over the years, the main interests in mutual learning are with the priority areas most relevant to the respondents, namely ‘quality development’ and ‘promotion and recognition’. For 2026, there also is an increased interest in mutual learning and cross-border inspiration regarding ‘innovation and emerging challenges’.

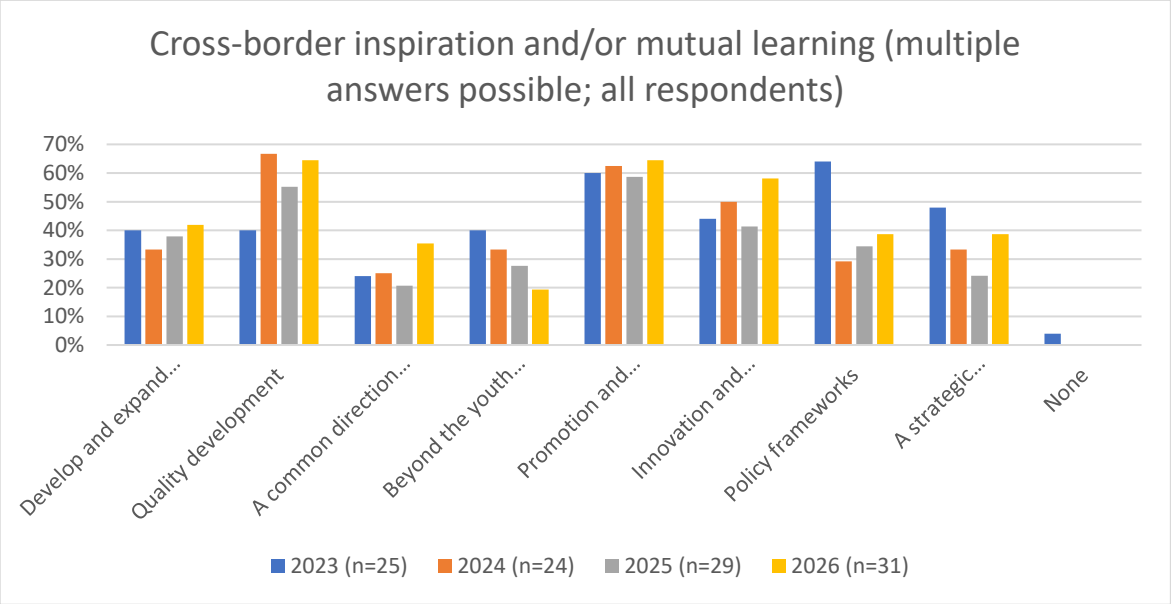


Figure 26: % of respondents who would like to see mutual learning projects in the respective priority areas

Concrete suggestions for mutual learning are made in three areas. First, regarding recognition and quality development, there is an interest in learning from European models of youth work recognition and quality standards. This includes competence frameworks for youth workers, quality assurance tools, training pathways, and recognition mechanisms; these are highlighted by **Albania, Greece, Hungary,** and **Portugal**. Additionally, **Serbia** suggests mutual learning related to supervision systems for youth workers, professionalisation, quality assurance, and recognition pathways.

When it comes to networking and the establishment of national community of practice structures, there is high curiosity to discuss how other countries are working on a common direction for the youth work community of practice, particularly from **Albania** and the **Netherlands.** In **Albania,** they are also interested in how such national communities can be built. And in **Ireland,** they are looking at how stronger cross-sectoral discussions and collaboration can be fostered by National Contact Points.

Related to this is the question of local implementation, particularly the connection of local youth work provision with national and European frameworks, something voiced by **Albania**, **Finland,** and **North Macedonia**. For **Finland** and **Portugal**, this includes the exchange about governance models (vertically and horizontally embedded) and national coordination structures as well as ways to translate the EYWA into concrete local practice.

The need for mutual learning and cross-border exchange on innovation and emerging challenges, as mirrored in figure 26, is underpinned with concrete suggestions from **Albania, Portugal,** and the **Netherlands**. These include the question of how youth work can respond to emerging challenges, such as digital transformation, disinformation, youth mental health, social polarisation, climate change, youth emigration, and the inclusion of vulnerable young people. The **Flemish Community of Belgium** points out the need to discuss how the youth work

sector can remain agile as the engagement of young people is changing, particularly against the strong tradition of youth work in youth volunteering.

4. THE EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AGENDA AND LOCAL YOUTH WORK

As the day-to-day empowerment of young people happens in local settings and through local youth work practice, youth work essentially is rooted at the local level. Political frameworks, financial support as well as education and training structures may have regional, national, and European anchoring, but in the end the majority of youth work practice is local.

As the link between the EYWA implementation process and local youth work has become more visible over the years, the 2025 survey (repeated in 2026) introduced a specific question on local youth work: "To what extent did the existence of a national process on the EYWA have an impact on strengthening local youth work?". The answers for 2026 show that the EYWA has the greatest impact where there are already national processes, clear action plans, and institutional coordination. The least impact in processes happens where the awareness of the EYWA and its implementation process is limited or has not been established in a structured form.

Three countries specifically mentioned a strong impact of the EYWA on local youth work. In **Germany**, a process with eight municipalities and local partnerships was established in 2025. This included the establishment of action plans with a focus on quality development and international youth work. An accompanying matching event to support partner-finding among local actors as well as a mapping exercise to identify youth work actors in the municipalities were implemented. Policy recommendations were also introduced with the intention to use the gathered knowledge and experiences for structural advancements. The response from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** points out that the existence of a national EYWA-related process has had an important impact on strengthening local youth work, primarily by providing a common framework and language for development.

For example, local organisations have used EYWA principles to advocate for the recognition and funding of youth work at municipal and entity levels, including campaigns for the recognition of youth centres in Republika Srpska. The respondent from **Cyprus** emphasised the local level needing and requesting support from the national level. This resulted in a national process that included the local level, specifically the coordinating body of the youth clubs as one of the major stakeholders in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the actions. This gives recognition to the local level, and it also gives them space to further develop and grow by following the events and activities implemented at the European level.

Most processes responding to this question attested a medium level of impact, though only a few explained their assessment. In **Albania**, the existence of a national process linked to the EYWA has had a moderate but important impact on strengthening local youth work. The impact has not yet been fully systemic because Albania still does not have a fully formalised national EYWA process or a specific national strategy dedicated to youth work development. However,

the EYWA has helped create a clearer framework, language, and direction for connecting national youth policy with local youth work practice.

For **Croatia**, the existence of a national process related to the EYWA has contributed to strengthening local youth work, particularly by guiding the identification of priorities and shaping capacity-building activities. Specific priorities, for example increasing the local youth work offer, were considered when developing different capacity-building activities for potential and existing beneficiaries. This included a focus on promotion and the increasing of visibility of youth work practice and participation.

A more limited impact is mentioned in Belgium. The **French-speaking Community of Belgium** points out that, though relatively limited, it has helped strengthen certain coordination dynamics between institutions and sector stakeholders. A concrete example is the creation of an informal International Working Group bringing together the youth sector's advisory bodies and the administration of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles to coordinate exchanges, prepare advisory opinions, and facilitate the circulation of information on European and international youth policy issues. This group has improved the circulation of information, strengthened coordination between different institutional levels, and supported a more coherent understanding of European issues at the local level.

The **Flemish Community of Belgium** emphasises that the impact is fairly limited with a number of local governments and mainly bigger cities being aware of the EYWA. However, similar with the **French-speaking Community of Belgium**, the establishment in 2025 of a new sectoral stakeholder platform “Working Group Youth Work in Europe”, which includes a number of local stakeholders, has improved the circulation of information and leads to a more coherent understanding of European issues. **Armenia** answered that although there has been no structural national process on the EYWA in the past, there is a strong will and determination to have one. They are seeking to do this with the guidance and examples from peers across Europe.

5. THE 4TH EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK CONVENTION AND ITS FOLLOW-UP

In May 2025, almost five years after the EYWA was established, the 4th European Youth Work Convention was held in Malta. The 2025 survey report was published shortly before the Convention, thus providing an opportunity to include the lessons learnt from the implementation of the EYWA into the further process of strengthening youth work in Europe through the Convention and its subsequent Roadmap. In the 2026 survey, a question was therefore added regarding what follow-up happened after the Convention. The answers can be divided into countries with clear activities, countries with limited follow-up or a follow-up in an early stage, and countries with no follow-up.

5.1. CLEAR FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

In countries with clear follow-up activities, four different kinds can be identified. First, there is strategic anchoring with countries using the Convention as an impulse for the development of strategy, action plans, and national frameworks. This includes **Albania, Cyprus, Czechia,** and **Portugal**. For **Czechia**, the 4th European Youth Work Convention served as one of the inspirational resources for shaping their first Action Plan and its priorities in implementing the EYWA as identified in their National Youth Strategy 2025-2030.

In other countries, there is a stronger focus on building platforms and working groups to strengthen the community of practice, this is particularly in **Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, France, Ireland,** the **Netherlands,** and the **Flemish** and **French-speaking Communities of Belgium**. In **Armenia**, for example, youth work became a major topic during their Annual Youth Forum held in September 2025. The Forum provided a platform to present the Convention results and collect valuable input towards the development of youth and youth work oriented by-laws.

Bosnia and Herzegovina established a dialogue platform of representative youth bodies after the Convention, it acts as a coordination mechanism with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, with the aim of networking and defining joint priorities to improve the position of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the **French-speaking Community of Belgium**, a working group was set up between sectoral youth commissions to address international youth work questions; while in the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, a similar working group was established in early 2025. This was the platform where their participation in the Convention was prepared and also the platform where the outcomes of the Convention were discussed.

Further developments regarding quality, recognition, and professionalisation have been taken in **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Latvia, Malta,** and **Portugal**. An example is in **Albania**, where there is the intention of the Albanian Youth Workers Foundation to design a national youth work development initiative aligned with the EYWA and its implementation process and to include the priorities discussed in the 4th Convention. This initiative aims to

address quality development, recognition, innovation, policy frameworks, and the creation of a more coherent youth work community of practice.

Finally, many countries discussed the results of the Convention at numerous conferences and workshops. These include **Armenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Ireland,** the **Netherlands,** and **North Macedonia**.

5.2. LIMITED FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Countries such as **Austria, Iceland, Finland,** and **Slovenia** had a more limited follow-up and reported on reflection and internal evaluation rather than concrete measures. Others have taken first political and communicational steps but have not yet engaged in the implementation of Convention results, for example the **French-speaking Community of Belgium, Germany,** and **Serbia**. For **Germany**, it is mentioned that there was an online discussion after the Convention, organised by the National Contact Point and involving the German delegation as well as other stakeholders.

Similarly, there were personal exchanges between members of the delegation from **Austria**. However, as the Convention report was published only in 2026, both countries mention that the momentum was lost again. The **French-speaking Community of Belgium** wrote an internal memo on the eight priority areas of the EYWA as well as an official letter to the Minister of Youth.

5.3. NO RECOGNISABLE FOLLOW-UP

In **Montenegro** and **Slovenia**, it was pointed out that the Convention report was only published in the first half of 2026, so no follow-up was initiated before this. Similar circumstances are reported from **Austria, Finland,** and **Poland**, though in these countries other limiting factors, such as organisational changes, are mentioned as well.

6. IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AGENDA

At the Exchange Forum 2025, the wish to analyse the impact of the EYWA process was raised. Therefore, the 2026 survey included four questions on the impact of the EYWA on strengthening and developing youth work. Three questions asked about the impact of the EYWA on the Youth Work Core, Youth Work Environment, and Youth Work Systems[31], and the fourth question asked about the success factors related to the EYWA's impact.

6.1. YOUTH WORK CORE

Regarding the impact on the Youth Work Core, it is closely related to identity, recognition, quality, and the professionalisation of youth work. Many contributions do not primarily describe new structures, but rather a sharpening of the understanding of what youth work is, what it stands for, and why it should be recognised as a distinct field of action. Respondents emphasise that the EYWA has created a common language, greater visibility, and increased legitimacy for youth work.

For example, respondents mention that the EYWA has contributed to a clearer understanding and better articulation of youth work, particularly amongst key stakeholders in politics and practice. Visibility and advocacy have been strengthened through national conferences and campaigns, whilst standards and institutional recognition have also been further developed. Furthermore, the EYWA has in some cases supported a clearer and more coherent national vision of youth work, establishing youth work as an educational, social, and participatory practice. Something that has influenced national strategy development towards conceptual clarity and alignment with European standards.

In the context of the Youth Work Core, a recurring topic regarding the impact is professionalisation. The EYWA is seen as having strengthened training, non-formal learning methods, digital youth work, safe and inclusive practice, and participatory tools. Several respondents also report a growing focus on research, monitoring, and evidence. This is particularly evident in **Serbia**, where the EYWA has promoted the development of the first European methodology for measuring the impact of youth work at both the individual and social levels. As a result, the youth work sector is better placed to understand and demonstrate its impact and to communicate this to policymakers and the public.

A final aspect of the Youth Work Core is the ethical dimension. Several respondents emphasise that the EYWA has strengthened various principles of youth work, such as inclusion, participation, human rights, youth-centred practice, and digital safety. Overall, the respondents point out that the EYWA functions primarily as a normative and conceptual

[31] 4th European Youth Work Convention Concept Note. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/266254265/4th%20European%20Youth%20Work%20Convention%20Concept%20Note.pdf/d0622c9e-7185-4259-a3bb-29ed9d1f7221?t=1733846110065 [27 March 2025].

framework. As such, it helps youth work achieve greater coherence, a more professional language, an evidence-based approach, and public recognition.

6.2. YOUTH WORK ENVIRONMENT

Regarding the Youth Work Environment, respondents see the impact of the EYWA primarily as a catalyst for understanding youth work not as a single measure, but as an overarching ecosystem. Many respondents emphasise that the EYWA has promoted a broad understanding of youth work. It is an ecosystem comprising of young people, youth workers, organisations, local authorities, public institutions, civil society, and European institutions. The ecosystem has strong interlinkages with related sectors like education, though in some countries schools are part of the ecosystem as youth work is offered as a supplementary support structure in schools.

The impact of the EYWA on the Youth Work Environment can be described as gradual but relevant. The EYWA has helped foster a view of youth work that is more accessible, inclusive, and more closely linked to participation and decision-making. Examples cited include youth participation, local youth structures, youth consultations, political education, volunteering, non-formal education, and empowerment. At the same time, the EYWA has broadened the focus on the need to expand youth work provision beyond the capital and larger cities, so that smaller municipalities, rural areas, and disadvantaged groups are also reached.

Another key impact concerns the professional development of youth workers and youth work(er) organisations. The EYWA has raised awareness of capacity-building, training, peer learning, and quality development. Respondents mention that there is now a greater attention to the skills, ethical principles, inclusion, outreach, evaluation, and quality standards of youth work. At the same time, it is emphasised that, though cooperation and communication structures have been strengthened, in many places they do not yet function on a permanent and systematic basis. Cooperation often still takes place on a project basis and has not yet been translated into stable national coordination mechanisms.

Regarding the impact on standards and regulations, respondents mention it is more development-oriented than finalised. They refer to a growing focus on clarifying the role of a youth worker, on competence frameworks, training pathways, supervision, recognition of experience, and better working conditions. Regarding event and process formats, they describe a shift in practice from isolated activities towards more regular formats, such as consultations, training cycles, youth forums, and structured dialogue. Nevertheless, the need for long-term, sustainable local youth work services remains clear.

6.3. YOUTH WORK SYSTEMS

When it comes to the impact on Youth Work Systems, the focus shifts to governance, funding, legal frameworks, and the institutional conditions for youth work. Respondents describe the EYWA as a European reference framework that highlights youth work not only as a field of activity, but as a sector requiring governance, political support, funding, legal recognition,

coordination, and long-term planning. The EYWA has highlighted the need for a more structured and coordinated approach in youth work, backed up by national youth strategies. This is especially the case in countries where youth work is not yet sufficiently (and explicitly) anchored in legal and policy frameworks. The EYWA thus reinforces the existing argument that youth work requires stable and strategic mechanisms backed up by long-term funding, rather than an approach towards single measures.

The systemic impact is particularly visible in those countries where the EYWA has shifted youth work from the border of general youth policy into a more structured framework of policy, governance, and recognition. This is mirrored in several responses which point out that youth work is integrated more strongly in national youth strategies. This sees it become a strategic priority area with measures relating to professionalisation, quality assurance, continuity of youth work provision, recognition, research, and international connectivity.

At the same time, the impact of the EYWA, in some cases, has received a backlash as legislative processes have been stalled, local implementation is inconsistent, and there is a lack of long-term funding.

6.4. COMMON DENOMINATORS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

Comparing the impact on the three fields of Youth Work Core, Environment, and Systems as well as the answers to the success factors of the EYWA, there are some common denominators that can be identified.

First, the EYWA has the biggest impact where it brings discussion, visibility, and legitimacy. It helps position youth work as an independent field of action, rather than merely as a leisure activity or a series of projects. This applies both to the understanding of youth work itself and to its recognition in politics, public administration, civil society, and with the general public.

Second, the answers point out that the impact of the EYWA is particularly clear where it is linked to cooperation, capacity-building, national adaptation, and implementation. Thus, it is most successful when European initiatives and frameworks are translated into local and national processes: into strategies, networks, standards, training, research, and coordinated governance. At the same time, it remains clear in many countries that implementation is still frequently project-based and that stable structures, long-term funding, and binding legal frameworks have only been partially achieved.

Finally, respondents point out the impact of the EYWA on the normative core of youth work. The EYWA reminds the youth work sector to strive continuously to be more inclusive, participatory, professional, ethically grounded, and evidence based. The EYWA thus appears less as an individual programme with immediately measurable effects and more as a European framework for guidance. As such, it initiates, accelerates, and/or legitimises national developments, though the degree it does that depends on the country and the existing starting point.

7. CONCLUSIONS ON THE 2026 REPORT

Looking at the 2026 survey and the present report, a number of conclusions and recommendations can be drawn.

On overall development:

1. The EYWA implementation has become more institutionalised across Europe.
2. The number of active national processes has increased from 36 in 2025 to 42 in 2026.
3. Progress is still perceived much more strongly at European and national levels than at regional and local levels. So future work should focus more on translating policy into practice locally, while continuing with existing European and national measures.
4. National Contact Points, Youth ministries and National Agencies remain the main coordination hubs, which suggests that coordination is stable and centralised.
5. There is a continuous need to strengthen regional and local implementation structures, not only strategic frameworks, so that progress becomes visible beyond national policy arenas.

On the priority areas:

6. 'Quality development' remains the most relevant priority area, showing that professional standards, training, and quality assurance are still the sector's core concerns.
7. 'Promotion and recognition' is consistently the second most relevant priority, indicating an ongoing need to make youth work more visible and better understood as well as equipped with adequate framing conditions.
8. 'Policy frameworks' and 'strategic frameworks' are becoming more important, which suggests that the EYWA is increasingly used as a governance and planning tool rather than just an operational one.
9. Respondents link quality, recognition, and policy frameworks more tightly in national implementation plans so that visibility, standards, and legal anchoring reinforce each other.

On challenges and support:

10. The report identifies recognition, funding, quality, and cooperation as the main challenges for youth work and EYWA implementation.
11. A major structural weakness is the dependence on short-term or project-based funding, which undermines continuity, quality, and staff stability.

12. Support needs are strongest around thematic events, mutual learning, advocacy, and practical information, with European-level support expected to provide space for exchange and agenda-setting.
13. The report shows that many countries still struggle to connect European frameworks with local youth work realities, especially in rural areas and small municipalities.

On impact and outreach:

14. Local expansion is often tied to training, pilots, exchange programmes, and cooperation with municipalities. This points to the importance of establishing and maintaining an EYWA implementation infrastructure.
15. By developing tailored local translation tools, municipal partnerships, and accessible guidance materials, it is suggested that the EYWA can reach local youth work practice better.
16. The EYWAs strongest impact appears to be normative and conceptual: it improves the visibility, legitimacy, professional language, and shared understanding of youth work. It also strengthens Youth Work Systems when European ideas are translated into national strategies, standards, trainings, and governance arrangements as well as Youth Work Environment through strategic networking.

8. FROM 2022 TO 2026: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FIVE SURVEY REPORTS

Over the past years, the development and realisation of the EYWA, in now over 40 processes throughout Europe, has been accompanied by yearly reports on the state of these processes. This last chapter takes a comparative look at the five annual survey reports[32]. It analyses the broader tendencies and developments in the EYWA ecosystems since the 3rd European Youth Work Convention (2020) and the establishment of the EYWA itself. It concludes with a note on the monitoring process.

8.1. A RETROSPECTIVE

The reports show that over the years, the EYWA has evolved from a political framework with a shared vocabulary into a fairly institutionalised implementation process across Europe. At the same time, the EYWA has established itself as a normative and conceptual framework for national and local actors. Its realisation is based on strengthening practice, cooperation and legal frameworks as well as local outreach under the eight priority areas: quality development; promotion and recognition; policy frameworks; a strategic framework for youth work development; develop and expand the youth work offer; a common direction for the youth work community of practice; innovation and emerging challenges; and beyond the youth work community of practice.

The priority areas were formulated in such a way as to be broad and are very much interlinked with each other. Though this broad scope helps in seeing the relevance of the EYWA in different European and national contexts, the annual surveys and analyses also show that the broad scope creates ambiguity as it complicates the categorisation of activities by the respondents.

Over the years the number of national processes has doubled from a small group of 17 active processes in 2022, to 42 processes in 2026. The SNAC Growing Youth Work has played a continuous role in outreach and network-building by identifying National Contact Points and engaging national actors in different formats. The building and maintenance of such a network of cooperation and exchange can be considered as one of the main achievements of the realisation of the EYWA and provides a framework on which national processes can build.

This is mirrored in the perceived progress of the realisation of the EYWA over the years. Consistently, respondents perceived most progress at the European and national levels. Progress at the regional and local level is perceived as having less progress, though it has been improving over time. The reports identify a recurring pattern in this regard, with the EYWA being anchored mostly in strategic policy frameworks concerning visibility, recognition and

[32] Apart from the four published survey reports of 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 (see https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fileadmin/jugendfuereuropa/growingyouthwork/publications/) this analysis also considered the 2022 unpublished analysis of national developments. See Hofmann-van de Poll, F. and Kovačić, M. (2022), One year into the Bonn Process – A preliminary analysis of national-level developments, Youth Partnership, Strasbourg, unpublished paper.

governance rather than in sustainable local structures. With the recurrent respondents, i. e. the 20 processes which replied to the surveys yearly from 2023 onwards, there is some indication that local progress is growing, thus suggesting that sustained national processes can foster local change.

Looking at the eight priority areas in more detail, the reports show slight shifts in their relevance. While 'quality development' and 'promotion and recognition' are consistently mentioned as top priorities, 'policy frameworks' and 'a strategic framework for youth work development' have gained greater relevance over the years. It points towards a shift, where over the years the normative framework of the EYWA was embedded in the systemic development of youth work. Despite their rhetorical importance, other areas, like 'beyond the youth work community of practice' and 'innovation and emerging practices', are less of a priority in several national processes, hinting towards differing national starting points as well as systemic challenges in the realisation of the EYWA.

In practice, across the reports the eight priority areas of the EYWA function less as an implementation manual and more as an inspirational framework and tool of reflection. This is shown in the translation of the ideas of the EYWA into (mostly) national strategies, quality frameworks, training programmes, mapping studies and campaigns. A successful impact of the EYWA is most visible where the agenda is directly linked to capacity-building, peer learning, the adaptation of national measures, and the mobilisation of European funding instruments like Erasmus+ Youth and the European Youth Foundation.

Among the concrete outcomes that have been documented through the reports, there is an increased visibility and a more coherent narrative for youth work in national contexts, including national conferences, campaigns, and advocacy. Moreover, there is a growth in professionalisation efforts, including training courses being set up, competence frameworks developed, and monitoring and research initiatives set in motion. In some countries, there are tendencies towards the integration of youth work in national strategies, thus raising youth work from a more marginal practice towards an area justifying a coordinated policy. However, the reports also show that many activities are project-based and short-term which limits sustainable impact due to insecurity about long-term funding and because of having a high turnover of people working in youth work.

The last two surveys asked about the impact of the EYWA not only along the eight priority areas, but also in the three vertical dimensions as named at the 4th European Youth Work Convention: Youth Work Core (e. g. identity, professionalisation, standards), Youth Work Environment (e. g. ecosystems, access, participation, local structures), and Youth Work Systems (e. g. governance, funding, legal recognition). Over the years, the findings have been consistent and show the strongest impact at the normative level, for example improved shared language, the visibility of youth work, and its legitimacy. Impact is also seen at the procedural level, encouraging training, monitoring, and quality initiatives, and in the environmental dimension, with an increase of European and national networks and campaigns.

Systemic impact, such as stable long-term funding, legal anchoring, or systematic local youth work developments, is more uneven among the processes. The 4th European Youth Work

Convention and its Roadmap have been framed as opportunities to consolidate a European strategy for implementation, recognition, and quality practice along the three vertical dimensions. However, the reports also point out challenges with EYWA realisation and youth work developments. Repeating challenges are the lack of political, social, and formal recognition as well as political will, short-term and project-based funding, staff shortages and precarious contracts, difficulties in translating European frameworks into local reality, and the absence of national monitoring systems.

In response to these developments and challenges, there is a consistent need for support and mutual learning. Respondents discuss targeted support from the European level in the form of thematic events, mutual learning formats, practical guidance materials as well as advocacy for helping national processes to gain political will and funding. Looking at the national level, priority support focusses on the need for information, the facilitation of partnerships, guidance on national action plans, and support to translate European level frameworks into local developments.

Besides the already mentioned SNAC Growing Youth Work, which is fostering coordination, cooperation, and mutual learning between processes, other (European) organisations that have been mentioned as providing support to youth work are the SALTO resource centres, other SNACs like Europe Goes Local and the European Academy on Youth Work, and the Youth Partnership.

Looking back at five years of EYWA realisation and the subsequent reports, the longitudinal survey shows a steady consolidation rather than a radical change. Over the years, more processes engaged in the EYWA increasing the visibility of national coordination through ministries or National Agencies and the national working groups, whereas the relevance of the top priority areas (quality development and promotion and recognition) remained stable. At the same time, the need for European and national support through mutual learning, information, and advocacy increased. The analysis of recurrent respondents, i. e. the 20 processes which replied to the surveys yearly from 2023 onwards, show that in processes continuously engaging in the EYWA, there seems to be a correlation with the perceived progress at the regional and local levels.

The reports show that the EYWA is primarily a successful normative and legitimising framework. In its effort to strengthen youth work throughout Europe, the EYWA has been an important tool to raise the visibility of youth work, to provide a common language based on previous political documents, to promote the development of quality and training initiatives, and to motivate the embedding of youth work into several national youth strategies. However, the EYWA shows limitations when it comes to systemic consolidation through stable funding, legal recognition, and the anchoring of the EYWA into local practice. This is not because the framework is lacking, but because political will, financial and personnel resources, and long-term planning in both the realisation of the EYWA and youth work practice remain diverse across the different processes.

8.2. A NOTE ON MONITORING PROCESSES

Throughout the last five years, yearly surveys and Exchange Fora have accompanied the realisation of the EYWA, fostering the process with evidence and knowledge as process-tracking instruments. According to the respondents, the survey and the accompanying monitoring processes – both reports and Exchange fora – are key parts of the success along with the credibility of the EYWA.

By systematically collecting experiences, priorities, and challenges from the national processes year by year, the survey transformed the independent national developments into shared European evidence and a base for European youth work policy. Through the longitudinal process of monitoring, progress has been made visible and shows new practices and emerging needs. This allows the stakeholders of the processes at local, regional, national, and European levels to discuss new strategies and practices for the strengthening of youth work across Europe.

Recurrent respondents have pointed out how the yearly survey has helped national actors to reflect on the progress they made in national processes, while at the same time it provided the opportunity, through the Exchange Fora, to stay connected with the European youth work community of practice. For the recurrent respondents, the value of the survey lies in the recurring opportunity for the processes' self-assessment, strategic reflection, and comparison. At the same time, the findings indicate that participation in the survey provides insights into the national processes but does not generate robust national data or a systematic impact measurement.

The reports show that the survey and the presentation and discussion of its findings at the yearly Exchange Fora not only document activities, but also contribute to strengthening the dialogue, fostering mutual learning, and building a common language of youth work and the EYWA. Thus, over the years, the longitudinal study has contributed to the creation of an institutional memory of what happens and supports advocacy for recognition and resources. According to the respondents, the survey provides a particular overview of the EYWA that is currently not offered through other mechanisms, thus making it a valuable tool for evidence-based youth work policy development.

However, despite the existing monitoring mechanisms, the findings still call for a more robust monitoring mechanism for both the European processes as well as the national ones. The findings of the 2026 survey in particular show concerns for how an annual monitoring mechanism will be upheld when the SNAC Growing Youth Work is no longer responsible for coordination of the national processes after 2026.

The need for robust monitoring and evaluation systems at the European level and for local youth work practice were also mentioned at the 4th European Youth Work Convention, where it was discussed as part of the Youth Work Core dimension. Together with the findings of the survey, it shows monitoring and evaluation as an essential but insufficiently developed part of the youth work framework and practice.

For the EYWA as a youth work framework, the findings of the surveys and the report of the 4th European Youth Work Convention associate a monitoring at European level with the need for common standards, indicators, and follow-up mechanisms. While acknowledging the diversity of national processes, monitoring at this level is understood as a mechanism of tracking the implementation of the EYWA across countries. There is a need for stronger European monitoring tools, designed around benchmarks, longitudinal research, and comparable data. In the 2026 survey, for example, **Portugal** pointed out that European cooperation would benefit from continuous longitudinal studies and shared systems of evidence, whereas **Serbia** simply states that comparable indicators are needed.

For the local level, i. e. youth work practice, there is no need for a single European monitoring mechanism. However, findings discuss the need for European-developed tools of evaluation that can be applied to all youth work settings. Such evaluation tools should focus on quality, accessibility, participation, and organisational development as well as the concrete effects of youth work on the young people and the communities they live in. In the report on the 4th European Youth Work Convention, several examples of such evaluation tools are mentioned, for example MLADIM, developed by the Youth Network MaMa in **Slovenia**.

This is a digital tool for recording and monitoring the quality of youth work that was developed in cooperation with the University of Ljubljana. The Council of Europe's Youth Work Portfolio is discussed as a standard to support recognition, quality, and development, based on self-assessment, data, and standards. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, the organisation De Ambrassade has developed an impact framework which shows why youth work is effective and provides a quality check for policymakers.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Survey response rate and development 10

Figure 2: The 31 national processes covered by survey respondents in 2026..... 11

Figure 3: The 20 national processes covered by survey respondents in the surveys of 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026. 12

Figure 4: Development of national processes from 2022 to 2026..... 13

Figure 5: Progress with the development of youth work within the EYWA implementation process on a scale of 0 (no progress) to 4 (remarkable progress) 14

Figure 6: Progress with the development of youth work within the EYWA implementation process as perceived by recurrent respondents on a scale of 0 (no progress) to 4 (remarkable progress)..... 15

Figure 7: Organisational background of National Contact Points in 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026 16

Figure 8: Actors principally responsible for managing/coordinating the EYWA implementation process (all processes)..... 16

Figure 9: Actors principally responsible for managing/coordinating the EYWA implementation process (recurrent respondents)..... 17

Figure 10: Stakeholder involvement in the national EYWA implementation process (all processes)..... 17

Figure 11: Stakeholder involvement in the national EYWA implementation process (recurrent respondents)..... 18

Figure 12: Answers to the questions “Which of the eight thematic priority areas do you consider particularly relevant when it comes to your work?" (2023-2026) all processes..... 20

Figure 13: Answers to the questions “Which of the eight thematic priority areas do you consider particularly relevant when it comes to your work?" (2023-2026) recurrent respondents..... 21

Figure 14: Countries considering ‘quality development’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work..... 22

Figure 15: Countries considering ‘promotion and recognition’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work 24

Figure 16: Countries considering ‘policy frameworks’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work..... 26

Figure 17: Countries considering ‘develop and expand the youth work offer’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work 27

Figure 18: Countries considering ‘a common direction for the youth work community of practice’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work 29

Figure 19: Countries considering ‘innovation and emerging challenges’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work 31

Figure 20: Countries considering ‘a strategic framework for youth work development’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work 32

Figure 21: Countries considering ‘beyond the youth work community of practice’ as a particularly relevant thematic priority area in 2026 when it comes to youth work 33

Figure 22: % of respondents who needed a certain kind of support from the European level in 2022-2026 40

Figure 23: % of respondents who needed a certain kind of support from the national level in 2023-2026 40

Figure 24: % of the respondents from the group of recurrent respondents who needed support from the European level in 2023-2026 41

Figure 25: % of the respondents from the group of recurrent respondents who needed support from the national level in 2023-2026 41

Figure 26: % of respondents who would like to see mutual learning projects in the respective priority areas 44