

European platform for non-professional youth work. Values, references, and common pedagogical criteria

This platform presents the elements that structure and identify our conception of education :

- The interaction of formal education, non-formal education and informal education.
- The existence of an educational quality for actions in non-formal education.
- The existence of values and common principles concerning the training actions that we wish to promote towards local, regional, national and European authorities.
- The recognition of volunteering in training and managing activities in non-formal education.

This platform requires :

- The recognition of the value of non professional youth work in the non-formal education space in Europe
- The commitment of Member States to guarantee the adequate conditions for implementation of volunteering in the non-formal education.
- The creation of a European directive on the recognition of the non professional youth work.
- The creation of a European passport for non professional youth work.
- The realization and recognition of a competency framework for non professional youth work in Europe.

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Modalities of elaboration of the Platform : History and Philosophy

Co-elaboration in a European partnership

The group of European partners, non-profit associations and governmental institutions, coordinated by the French Ceméa has defined the objectives and developed this platform of propositions and recommendations. This group was consisted of nine European partners, namely :

- Ceméa France
- Escuela Publica de Animacion y Educacion en el Tiempo Libre Infantil y Juvenil (Spain)
- Cemea Piemonte (Italy)
- NIDM – National Institute for Children (The Czech Republic)
- Jugendbildungszentrum Blossin (Germany)
- Ceméa Belgium
- Idee per l'Educazione (Italy)
- IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute (The Slovak Republic)

- Coordinadora Infantil y Juvenil de Tiempo Libre de Vallecas (Spain)

Other partners were also involved in this platform : Centre Jordan (Poland), LYC (Lithuania), Asméa (Romania), Gyrekparadiscom Alapivany (Hungry), Italian Federation of Cemea (Italy), SPDDM (The Czech Republic)

Platform is supported by European and International networks : the International Federation of Ceméa (FICEMEA) and the European network of non-formal education (EAICY), members of EUCIS-LLL.

A platform anchored in a diversity of realities

Two reasons have lead to the development of this platform. The different partners have had the opportunity to observe that:

- Currently there are different levels of recognition of non-professionals youth workers in Europe. As a matter of fact, non-professionals working with children or youth do not work under the same conditions in all European countries. They may fall into different categories.
- Non-professional youth workers cannot move and act freely within the European Union, as their competencies are not recognized everywhere.
- There is a need to strengthen the awareness of the European dimension for the non-professional youth workers.

Experiences of different partners show that **the educational dimension of the actions of non-formal education and the qualifications of non-professional youth workers are not sufficiently recognized.**

It is necessary to facilitate the mobility of non-professional youth workers in Europe in order to build a network and to improve educational practices.

Supports and actions

As the response to this situation, we elaborated a European project addressing these issues in 2007: **a platform of principles and values for training actions for non-professional youth workers** was created thanks to the involvement of four countries (Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic and France) in a “Grundtvig” program.

The years 2010 and 2011 were pivotal years for the platform:

- The group produced :
 - An appraisal of the need for recognition of non-professional youth workers working in the field of non-formal education;
 - A capitalization of our experiences and analyses reinforcing regional, national and European policies;
 - First educational and pedagogical tools.

- **This platform was tested out in our different organizations and presented to the European institutions** in Madrid, Prague and Paris (at the “Maison de l’Europe” as well as the Youth section of the European Commission’s General Department of Education and Culture)
- **A second project was launched for the creation of a common base for the youth workers’ pedagogical practice.**

In 2011, several active members started the work on a common base of their practices around the key concepts such as everyday life, project pedagogy , intercultural education, etc.

- **A request for a grant in order to broaden, strengthen and politicize the platform**

The European partners requested a grant from the European Commission. Its aim is to broaden, strengthen and politicize the platform for non-professional youth workers and reach the following operational goals:

- **Propose to the Commission to create a European directive on the recognition of non-professional youth workers** working in the field of non-formal education and socio-educational youth work in particular.
- Create a “**European passport for non-professional youth workers**”.
- **Write a “European Memo for non-professional youth workers in Europe”, which would define the key competencies needed for non-professional youth work in Europe.**

Through such actions we want to achieve **institutional recognition of non-professional youth workers in Europe.**

We want non-professional youth workers to be able to move and act freely within the European Union and we want their mobility to be recognized.

<p>A platform at the heart of regional, national and European policies concerning the Education and Lifelong Learning Program</p>
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Our platform finds its place in regional, national and European policies.

It responds to some goals of the **Strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training 2008**. It is also connected to the conclusions drawn by the Council on the **Role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy 2010**, to the decision of the European Council regarding the **Renewed framework for European cooperation in the field of youth work 2010-2018** and continues some of the strong axes of the regional, national and European policies elaborated by group of partners in the area of education for adults :

- **Make Lifelong Learning and mobility a reality:** our platform wishes a better recognition of non-formal education and by this also the recognition of non-professional youth workers, in order to facilitate their circulation and training in Europe.
- **Promote equity, social cohesion and citizenship:** our platform promotes voluntary involvement, participation, and citizenship. It addresses a large audience of young people and adults, men and women, and is accessible to all no matter their age or status (e.g., people excluded from work).
- **Encourage increased participation of adults in education and training:** our platform aims at helping all non-professional youth workers gain access to training, no matter their age.
- **Encourage mobility in non-formal learning contexts, such as socio-educational youth work:** our platform supports this approach since it promotes mobility of youth workers.
- **Strengthen the role of socio-educational youth work activities as well as their support and recognition** of their social contribution. The debate should focus on training, the recognition of competencies, and the youth workers' and youth organization leaders' mobility.
- **Promote the competencies and skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts:** our platform is at the heart of the matter, since it aims at recognition and validation of non-formal educational experiences.

Common framework of principles and positioning

General principles and strategic place concerning non-formal education, its educational specificities and youth work in non-formal education

1. **Our platform is located within the framework of three definitions: formal education, non-formal education and informal education** - all of them contributing to **global education**. These three dimensions have overlapping **common spaces and interactions**.
2. **Non-formal education is a right.** Equal access to this right must be guaranteed to preserve everyone's unrestrained choice and to encourage personal involvement.
3. Non-formal education, in our vision, aims at allowing access to, and also contributing to : **autonomy and socialization, involvement in social life, personal emancipation. It is strongly opposed to any type of exclusion** and must not worsen unequal access to leisure and culture but facilitate their access for all.
4. It aims at **reinforcing the principle of respect towards everyone, youth workers and participants**.

5. Non-formal education must be recognized as a **constitutive element of everyone's education, as space for civic commitment.**
6. **Institutions and public authorities** must support non-formal education. It should not be put on the market.
7. Non-formal education has its **own values and educational specificities. It is a vector for social and societal transformations.**
8. Non-formal education pertains to **everyone, no matter his or her age**, and not exclusively to a specific or disadvantaged group of people. It is not a supplement of second importance.
9. **The status of youth work in non-formal education and the value and the professional dignity of non-professional youth workers must be completely recognized. The actors in the field of non-formal education can appear under different statuses but all of them must be given credit for their competencies** as educational and social actors, project initiators, educational technicians and educationalists working in different fields.
10. Training should enable youth workers to **create spaces in which they can get fully involved and to create networks enhancing participation in active citizenship.**
11. **Both statutes of youth workers : voluntary and professional, are complementary in non-formal education in youth work.**
12. **The youth workers' qualification, no matter their status, appears as an indispensable element** for the educational quality of actions for the public.

Educational quality

The educational quality of various actions and trainings in non-formal education is the result of the permanent implementation of the following points:

1. Identification of objectives for actions or training :

The non-formal education is a part of a planned, explicit and concrete project.

2. Social, educational and cultural anchoring of the action or the training :

It is important to discuss and incorporate the expectations and the needs of all actors, taking into account the context (educational and social), when applying training approaches and tools.

3. Long-term commitment :

A project in non-formal education is not a dot in a timeline: on the contrary, it is part of everyday life and calls for "stability" in time, thus creating the possibility of being more involved in the education.

4. Transferring experience and educational action :

The actions of non-formal education must have an impact on reality. They are part of a process in cultural, social and personal development.

5. Participation and involvement of the public, taking into account its needs :

Non-formal education encourages everyone to be actively involved in his or her own education and personal life, in order to elicit social transformation.

6. Documentation :

Different types of resources must be readily available for the participants of the actions or the trainings.

7. Interdisciplinary dimension, transversal and global nature of the activity :

It is necessary to learn how to build and elaborate connections between knowledge and learning. (Think globally, act locally)

8. Using active education :

It is a type of pedagogy which encourages group work, the participation of all, project pedagogy and self-education.

9. Uniting theory and practice in the action of non-formal education :

Organizing and dispatching the contents between theoretical contributions and reflections and activity practices, and at the same time integrating practice analyses and interaction between reflection and experience.

10. Cultural diversity in action and training :

Non-formal education is open to all. It encourages and recognizes differences and fight against discriminations to promote intercultural exchange.

11. Implementation of equality between men and women according to the modes and forms defined by the training team :

Education to gender and sensitization to the deconstruction of sexual stereotypes will be taken into account in actions or trainings.

12. Non-formal education as a space for permanent education to environmental sustainability :

Environmental sustainability will be taken into account in all actions in order to experiment and to implement collective and individual responsibility.

13. Implementation of an assessment process :

Assessing is not judging; it allows for a re-organization of knowledge and learning process and it provides experience that leads to re-elaboration of new projects by all actors.

14. International dimension of non-formal education :

Various youth work actions and trainings with the strong accent on non-formal education play an important role in building strong social and cultural Europe.

15. Everyone has the right to have access to education, culture and vacation :

Everyone can embark on a journey to discover themselves and the others.

16. Education by and for all :

It is important to contribute to education as a whole.

17. Recognition of the work of non-professional youth workers :

The work of youth workers, as well as their work at the international level should be valued and validated.

Common principles for the training actions of youth workers in non-formal education

These common principles are the conditions for the implementation of actions of training as well as the criteria for the qualitative assessment of these actions.

1. Conditions and modes of a training organization

- **Use of pedagogical tools and materials :**

They must be made available to trainers and participants.

- **Creation of a training “file” (grid, goals, report) :**

Each training must be accompanied by a file containing the training objectives, contents, planned work schedule in form of a grid. A report dealing with objectives should be worked out.

- **Information and resources readily available :**

All trainings must provide participants and trainers with documentation of different types : magazines, articles, subject files, websites, videos, etc.. to be consulted in place.

- **Specific training places and spaces for training**

Trainings must take place in specific places and spaces, allowing group work and individual research.

- **Identified training team**

All trainings must be prepared, supervised and run by a team of several trainers. They ensure the continuity of the training and the consistency of its leading.

- **Identification of the responsibilities of the person in charge of the training**

In the training team, an appointed person takes responsibility of managing training.

- **Identification of the responsibilities entailed by tutoring**

Each trainer can assume the role and responsibility of the trainees tutor.

- **Combination of multidisciplinary competencies within the team**

The training team should cover all the multidisciplinary skills related to the purpose of training.

- **Formalization of the preparation by the team**

All training must be prepared by the team of trainers. As part of the purpose of training, the team defines its goals and the means to achieve them.

- **Information readily available to the trainees**

Trainees must receive informations before, during and after training.

- **Duration and pace of the training**

Training duration should allow achieving the objectives and dealing with the scheduled contents. Its duration may also depend on a regulatory framework. The pace of work should take into account the objectives and training group.

- **Institutional constraints must be taken into account**

The team of trainers and the training should include regulatory requirements and institutional constraints.

- **Importance of a budget**

Training should include the costs of various kinds : educational costs, organizational costs, fees for management, etc..

- **Knowing personal motivations before the training**

Training should take into account the expectations, needs and motivations of people.

- **Between theory and practice**

All training must allow people to make connections between theoretical work, inputs, research and their translation into the action.

- **Importance of the selection before the training**

A selection device may exist where access to training includes pre-requisite.

- **Importance of motivation**

The commitment of each person and his/her expression of motivation for the training are essential for training to achieve its objectives.

- **Personal experience should always be recognized and credited**

Everyone's personal experience should be as a support for the transformation of the individual.

- **Everyone is actor of his or her own training and his or her own life**

Anyone participating in training should be able to contribute to it, to be an actor of his own training.

- **Active participation of each participant**

Training organization should enable to each participant to take initiative, responsibility, to make proposals, to contribute to the leading of work time.

- **Importance of information and documentation**

Documentation related to the training is essential. It should allow participants to complete their theoretical, pedagogical and technical knowledge.

2. Specific nature of the training:

- Objectives:

- Involvement into the construction of active citizenship through sensitization to societal issues (intercultural questions, equity for men and women, environmental sustainability)
- Preparation to work as a youth worker/youth leader
- Sensitization to stakes in non-formal education
- Information and sensitization about the meaning of voluntary commitment.
- Help the trainees with their educational engagement and their voluntary or professional project
- Train the trainees to develop critical thinking
- Sensitize participants to their ability to transform society through education

- Contents:

- Good knowledge of the public
- Good knowledge of the partners organizing the actions
- Preparation to the duties entailed by youth work
- Definition of targeted competencies
- Sensitization to the meaning and the role of non-formal education

- Methodologies:

- Using group work
- Suggesting activities promoting personal expression
- Active participation throughout the training, including everyday life
- Associating trainees with training project
- Taking into account new technologies
- Encouraging interpersonal relations
- Using pedagogical approaches and concrete tools
- Active participation to the elaboration and updated documentation
- Giving value to each participant's personal experience
- Create motivation of the trainees during and after the training

- Evaluation processes:

- Create conditions for self-evaluation

- The training process must be object of the evaluation and should be based on observable elements
- The evaluation and validation criteria should be presented at the beginning of training

- Youth work training in non-formal education:

Our conception of training and of the qualification of trainers is related to our definition of non-formal education:

- Training is a tool at the service of educational and social intervention
- Training must contribute to the educational and social transformations supported by non-formal education.
- Training should include the whole idea of education and not be developed in a technical meaning.

We wish to insist on the importance of a specific training for the trainers which is part of our educational conception:

- It guarantees the quality of the training for youth workers and work with children and youth in various organizational forms such as camps etc.;
- It contributes to increasing the educational quality of actions in non-formal education;
- It must be recognized by institutions respecting the following criteria:

Prerequisites and requirements for the trainers:

- They must have a practical experience in the field of youth work;
- They must have a personal project, educational intentions, and educational values to get involved in youth work in non-formal education.

Content of the training – the training should provide the participant with competencies such as:

- Defining and implementing conditions and modes for training organization;
- Defining the training objectives;
- Defining and organizing the contents of a training;
- Methodologies and approaches to help the participants get involved;
- Elaborating and implementing an assessment process.

Key concepts for pedagogical practices

We believe that they represent the constitutive elements of the educational quality of our actions in training and youth work in the field of non-formal education.

1. Project pedagogy
2. Everyday life
3. Specific needs of the child and the youth

4. Active education and participation
5. European and international dimension
6. Cultural diversity
7. Evaluation and self-evaluation
8. Deconstruction of stereotypes
9. Responsibility and sustainability
10. Information, documentation and resources
11. Learning

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