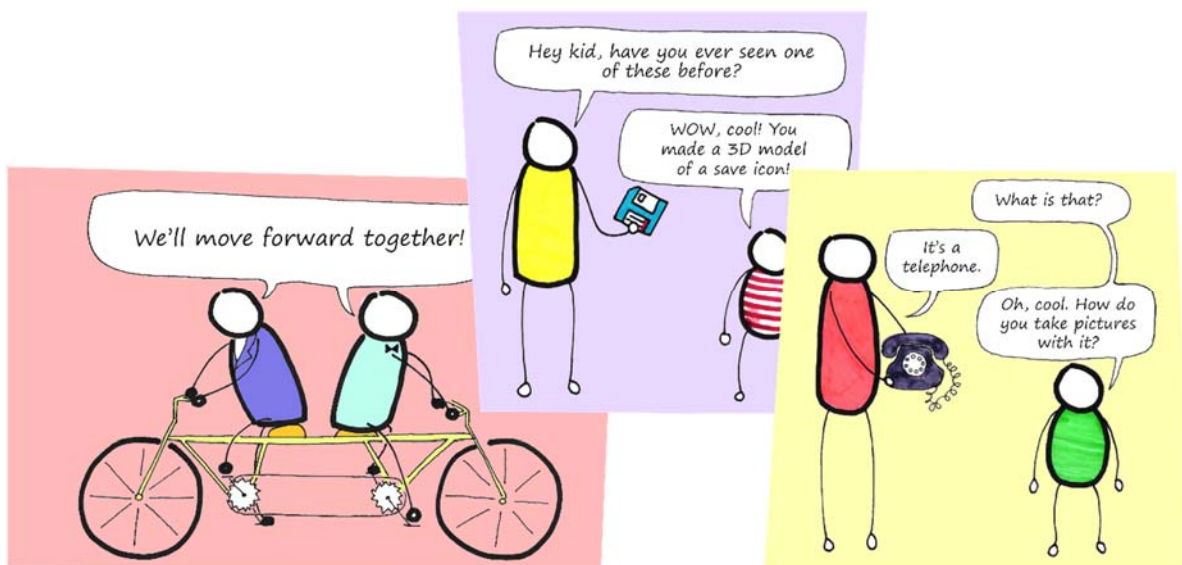


Intellectual Output 1 - Research on youth work in Croatia, Italy, Latvia and Lithuania

National Report Template (Croatia)

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Introduction

Max. 1 page

Please, describe here:

- ➔ The organization that was responsible for the research
- ➔ The information sources you have used for the identification of already existing open educational resources for youth workers
- ➔ The local/national/international stakeholders that have been involved in the conduction of the research (online survey and focus groups)

Centre of Technical Culture Rijeka (CTC Rijeka) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that for over 20 years offers programs with the task of raising citizens' digital and technical literacy. CTC Rijeka achieves its goals through working with different target groups of different social backgrounds in the four main areas of program activity: digital literacy, eco-social economy, social inclusion, and community development. Centre also has a many years-experience in the field of youth work. It employs six youth workers that have educated 615 young persons in the past year. By recognizing the needs of youths, as well as society issues as high rate of youth unemployment, CTC Rijeka's employees try to raise youths' level of knowledge and skills as to increase their employment opportunities and reach their full potential. As part of youth club RI connect, that has been carried out in the cooperation with program partners, more than 800 young persons participate in activities aimed at promoting health-care, youth employment, European opportunities, digital skills, and active community participation of youths. Centre is also a part of Eurodesk network, through which it informs young people about mobility opportunities with the objective of learning, volunteering, traineeships, or employment, as well as tries to motivate them to become active European citizens. Through the implementation of hitherto projects and activities for youth, CTC Rijeka has produced long-term and sustainable results, that are manifested in the increased youth employability and involvement in community development. Since 2005 Centre has directed its activities to the development of youth workers' knowledge and skills, in formal educational system, and then in non-formal one.

Youth Work HD project aims at improving the quality of youth workers' work on local level, through the development of skills and competencies of youth workers in Croatia, Italy, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as encouraging international cooperation through the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and opinions among stated countries, as well as others that want to get involved by using an online educational platform that will be developed in this project. The platform will provide opportunities to youth workers to develop their skills and competencies in order to realize more effective cooperation with the stakeholders, as well as adequately recognize the needs of young people. In order to develop the platform that will meet the needs of youth workers, a research was carried out to explore existing online educational resources for youth workers, an online questionnaire was conducted, and through four focus groups, main youth work subjects were investigated in more detail, on which the online platform will be based.

Through the online key-word search (e.g. youth work, youths, handbook, educational tools, cooperation, stakeholders, communication with young people, digital tools, policy impact), the search of webpages of organizations that work with young people, and the search of [Toolbox](#) on Salto youth page, online educational resources for youth work in Croatian and English languages were investigated. Besides the platform that involves resources for youth work, there wasn't any other online educational platform specifically developed for youth workers that enables interaction and the knowledge tests. Only resources for youth workers that were found were in pdf. format intended for reading.

Participants of the online research on the needs of youth workers in Croatia

Associations and organizations that work with young people on local and national level, included in the conduction of the research, were reached by using following methods: (1) CTC Rijeka's contacts database of organizations that work with the youth, and (2) the list of organizations that have in the past three years applied to the calls of Ministry of demography, family, youth, and social policy proposed for organizations in the field of youth work. Besides that, invitation for the online questionnaire was distributed via Croatian network of Eurodesk multiplier, official CTC Rijeka's facebook page, and social networks of organizations that work with young people. Below is the list of organizations involved in the research:

- (1) Primorje-Gorski Kotar county: Žmergo Association from Opatija, Association for Civil Society Development SMART, RiRock Association, Delta Association, Society "Our Children" Matulji, CTC Rijeka;
- (2) Zagreb county and City of Zagreb: Volunteer Centre Zagreb, Youth Centre Zaprešić, SOS Children's Village Croatia, Vestigium Association, National Health Association Andrija Štampar, The Centre for Education, Counselling and Personal Development CEDAR, The Centre for Counselling, Education and Humanitarian Work Circles, O.A.Z.A. Association, The Centre for Education, Counselling and Research CESI, "On the Other Way" Association, Brave Phone, Croatian Blind Union;
- (3) Other counties: Association of Physically Disabled Persons TOMS from Trogir, "A Better Tomorrow" Association from Koprivnica, IKS Association from Petrinja, Autonomous Centre ACT from Čakovec, "I Can" Association from Osijek, "Young people in the European Union" Association from Šibenik, Peace Group Oasis Beli Manastir, Regional Centre for Community and Civil Society Development DEŠA from Dubrovnik, LEADER Croatian network from Ozalj, The Association for the Blind USKA from Karlovac, Local Democracy Agency Sisak, and the representatives of Karlovac and Krapina-Zagorje counties.

The current situation of Youth Work

A thoughtful scenario of local/national Youth Work

Please, based on the results on the online survey and the focus groups, describe here:

- ➔ The national legal framework and major stakeholders
- ➔ The demographic and professional representation of youth workers in your country

- The most represented sectors where youth workers operate in your Country
- A general training needs analysis focused on the four thematic areas covered by the project

The national legal framework of youth work

Youth worker is a person that works with young people (in Croatia people aged 15 to 30) in non-formal context, through the implementation of educational programs and activities for young people in different fields (e.g. culture and art, sport, leisure time, environment and sustainable development, volunteering, active citizenship), with the goal of developing the full potential of young people in terms of personal and emotional development, autonomy, and active participation in society and decision-making. Youth work implies voluntarily-based participation of young people in activities that are complement to the formal educational process.

In the field of youth work in Croatia, relevant stakeholders are primarily represented by **youth workers that are employed in associations and organizations in the civic sector**, that through the implementation of programs and projects, work with young people on daily basis, and in that way affect their development and acquisition of specific skills and knowledge. Other relevant stakeholders, that these organizations cooperate with, include **Croatian employment service**, which has conducted a research on the standard of the youth worker profession in order to standardize this profession; different **educational institutions**, such as schools or faculties; and ministries, out of which **Ministry for demography, family, youth, and social policy** is the crucial one, as it finances programs and projects intended for the youth work, as well as puts forward National youth program.

In Croatia, the profession “youth worker” isn’t recognized in formal-legal sense, although there are many organizations and individuals that work with young people, which represent a hindrance for the successful conduction of youth work. With the standardization of the youth worker profession, where fundamental tasks and competencies required for performing youth work would be defined, a base for the development of the area of youth work will be set.

As a part of the project “Further development of the standard of the profession”, Croatian employment service has conducted a **Poll on the standard of the youth worker profession**. The data on organizations that employ youth workers, the features and key tasks of the youth worker vocation, and the required skills, competencies, and knowledge for performing youth work have been collected. It was determined that most of the organizations work with young people with behavior disorders (mostly aged 15 to 18), and that work in the local community context. Frequent job responsibilities stated by the employers include managing the project cycle, organizing and conducting various workshops, programs and educations for the youth, implementing individual and group youth counselling, creating, organizing, and conducting activities, tracking and evaluating the work, and administrative work. Competencies and skills that employers consider to be the most important in the field of youth work are: communication and organization skills, data analysis and data processing,

implementation of individual and group counselling, human resources management, computer work and basic knowledge of pedagogy and didactics.

The project Youth Work HD aims at developing online educational platform that will provide opportunities to youth workers to acquire above stated competencies and skills. Based on the long experience in youth work, the partner consortium intended to set a common ground of activity for youth workers, regardless of the type of the field of work that youth worker operate in. "General" competencies that are recognized to be useful for more professional performance of youth work are: (1) cooperation with relevant stakeholders, (2) policy impact/influence, (3) reaching out to young people, and (4) usage/exploitation of digital tools. In that way, youth work will be enhanced on local and national level, as well as standardized on European and international level, in order to define "youth worker" profession.

Key program that governs the field of youth work in Croatia is **National youth program for the period from 2014 to 2017**, which objective *is to improve the activities of state government and public institutions, that in the scope of their domain and jurisdiction, contribute to meeting the needs of youth and raising the quality of youth's life, with the objective of their optimal social integration*. Specific goals for the group aged from 15 to 30 are defined in the national program, for seven areas of activity: (1) education, professional training and specialization in the context of lifelong learning; (2) employment and entrepreneurship; (3) social protection and inclusion; (4) health and health-care; (5) active participation in society; (6) culture and youth; (7) youth in European and global context, and that include 40 measures and 118 implementation tasks. Also, recommendations for local and regional self-governments are defined, with the goal of developing local, and regional youth programs, ensuring the room for implementing activities for the youth, and co-financing of youth projects and programs. The project Youth Work HD will contribute to the realization of national program's goals in that it will instruct the youth workers how to better cooperate with the stakeholders in the field of youth work, how to create youth policies, and how to reach young people.

Although youth work in Croatia is not formally recognized and is underrepresented in the academic community (there aren't any scientific articles and researches in that field), and the non-existent strategic approach to the support for the development of youth work in public sector, there are many organizations that through their activities contribute to the growth of youth work.

Croatian Youth Network (CYN)¹ has developed the program **Youth Work**, aimed at encouraging the development of youth policies, youth work, and the empowerment of young people and youth organizations, through educational programs. The main objective of the program is, through the advancement of activities for youth, positively influence their social and personal development, motivate young people to actively participate in society and decision-making, provide opportunities to fully develop their potentials as individuals, as well as society members, and to contribute to quality social integration. The scope of the program's activity is directed to the creation of strategic framework of youth work and favorable social conditions for its development, as well as

¹ The network of youth organizations that encourages young people to actively and responsibly participate in society, and contributes to the development of quality youth policies and civic society.

to the ensuring of an adequate support (material, infrastructural) for youth organizations, by relevant institutions and government bodies on local and national levels. The Youth Work program's objectives developed by Croatian Youth Network correspond to the objectives of the project Youth Work HD.

Forum for the freedom of education has been carrying out an education for youth work intended for teachers for the past few years. The program is called **Integral civic education**, that includes lectures, workshops, and practical work with the teachers in the fields of democracy and human rights, critical reading and thinking, health-care, sexuality and the prevention of addictions, non-violent conflict resolution, European citizenship, and European youth programs.

The center for social teaching PRONI the past few years has been organizing two-year course for the ones who want to become youth project and group managers, and actively, professionally, and organized help young people in their local communities.

As the response to the problem of underrepresented youth workers' education in the formal system, **University of Rijeka** and **Institute for Social Research** signed the agreement on developing the pilot-project for lifelong learning "Youth in contemporary society" in 2016. The objective of the project is a professional training of the youth work experts, which is directed to the creation of the first study program for training the youth work experts in Croatia. In the non-formal sector, youth work has a long tradition of youth work in the field of work of numerous youth organizations, and through the engagement of social workers and similar professionals.

Based on the stated facts, it is obvious that the quality of youth work in Croatia has to be enhanced. This can be achieved with the recognition of the formal status of the youth work profession, ensuring the opportunities for systematic and qualitative youth work education and training, all that is comprised in the Youth Work HD project's objectives.

Prior to the development of the online educational platform, we have conducted a research to determine the needs of youth workers.

The results of an online research on the needs of youth workers in Croatia

According to the research, the average age of a youth worker in Croatia is 33, with the greater involvement of female youth workers (80%), as opposed to male ones (20%). According to the former researches, considering that the formal education and training of the youth workers in Croatia is not regulated, youth work is most frequently performed by persons of different academic backgrounds, usually of social-humanistic (e.g. Croatian studies, The faculty of humanities and social sciences, Law school, Faculty of social work and Faculty of political sciences). Coinciding with the results of the former researches, CTC Rijeka's research has shown greater representation of youth workers with the university degree (50%), followed by workers with high-school education (17%) and college education (16%). The least represented groups are workers with postgraduate education (5%), current attendants of professional training (2%) and students (2%). In the field of the participants' vocational backgrounds, a wide spectrum of professions was shown. The common ones are social and humanistic professions (psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, culturology, sociology, languages, law, journalism, political science, social work), that are followed by other areas, such as technical science, economy, biomedicine, maritime science and art.

Although there aren't any recent official data on the youth work and youth workers, the results of our research show that the youth work is most represented in schools (25%) and community centers (24%). Moreover, it includes outdoor work (8%), work in cultural centers (7%), libraries (4%), sport clubs (4%), hospitals (2%), museums (1%), and prisons (1%). In the "other" category (24%), participants stated non-governmental non-profit organizations and associations, youth communities, youth centers, and social institutions.

The fields of work in which youth workers operate include culture and heritage (17%), music and arts (9%), health-care (9%), ICT and digital (8%), environment (7%), sport (3%), and religion (1%). In the "other" category, participants of the research stated social care, prevention of non-violence, human rights, sustainability and rural development, promotion of volunteering, democratic values and youth mobility, social work, humanitarian work, psycho-social counselling, family upbringing, violence among peers, non-formal and extracurricular education. The outcome of the research has resulted in a large number of responses in the "other" category, which conclusions might be problematic in a sense that some of the fields from "other" could be classified under already offered categories. For example, according to the national development strategy of health 2012-2020, health-care includes psycho-social counselling and the prevention of non-violence. Also, youth workers can be active in humanitarian and volunteering work in different fields of work that were supposed to be identified.

In the research, the participants were supposed to sort the aspects of youth work according to their relevance. It is shown that the most relevant aspect is reaching out to young people (95 participants), followed by cooperation with relevant stakeholders (49 participants), policy impact/influence (34 participants), and usage/exploitation of digital tools (19 participants).

In order to increase the quality of youth work, participants of the research had to self-evaluate their competencies in the four areas of the Youth Work HD project's focus of research (with the estimation from 1.00 to 5.00, where 1.00 designates incompetent youth worker, and 5.00 an expert youth worker). The aim of the self-evaluation of the participants was to estimate the needs of youth worker for developing specific competencies. In the areas of cooperation with relevant stakeholders and policy impact/influence, medium level of competence was estimated (estimation range from 3.00 to 4.00). In the areas of reaching out to young people and usage/exploitation of digital tools, medium to high level of competence was estimated (estimation range from 3.00 to 5.00).

Cooperation with relevant stakeholder

Please, based on the results on the online survey and the focus groups, describe here:

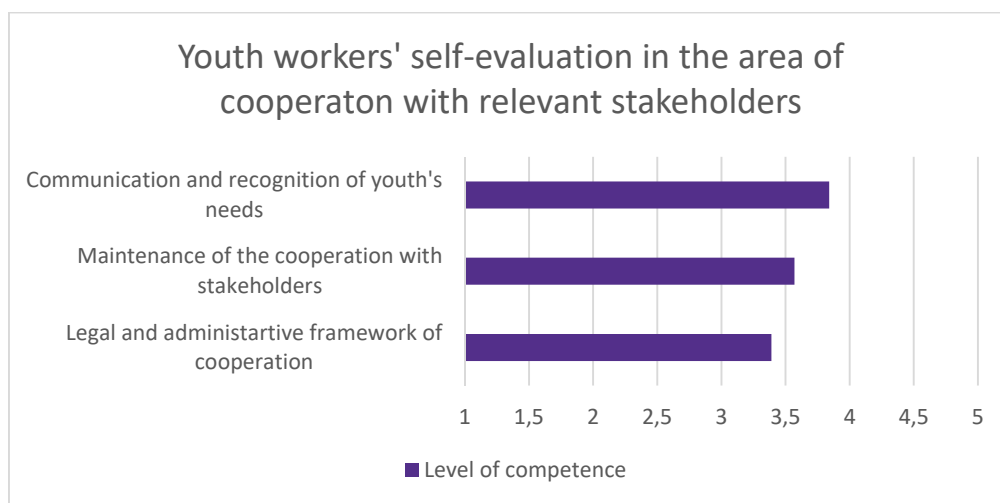
- ➔ The most important competencies to be developed for the up-skilling of youth workers in this specific area
- ➔ A brief description, with links and useful reference, of the open educational resources that you have identified at EU and national level
- ➔ The learning methods identified during the focus group

- ➔ The composition and the characteristics of the participants at the focus group, by filling the table below

In the area of **cooperation with relevant stakeholders**, a set of three categories of competence was underlined:

- (1) **communication and recognition of youth's needs**, which includes public speaking, persuasive communication, and effective presentation of the youths' needs and goals
- (2) **maintenance of the cooperation with stakeholders**, which includes building and maintaining collaborative relationship, through negotiation and adaptability, and taking advantage of multi stakeholders cooperation and funding opportunities
- (3) **legal and administrative framework of cooperation**, related to the strategic analysis of stakeholders' priorities and expectations, including the legal and administrative framework, as well as their relevance to the youths and community development.

With the online research, self-evaluation of youth workers on their skills and competencies in the area of the cooperation with relevant stakeholders was established. Participants have given a rather poor estimation of their competencies linked to the legal and administrative framework of cooperation.



Cooperation with relevant stakeholders was evaluated as the second most important aspect of youth work. But, **participants of the focus group on cooperation with stakeholders** think that all four areas of research affect one another and that they are interrelated. For example, the cooperation with the stakeholders is crucial for the active participation of young people in activities, in order to contribute to the local community development. Also, they consider that for the effective youth work, it is inevitable to develop a formal system of stakeholders' cooperation. For example, youth organizations and associations, with the improvement of the communication, could have far better cooperation with public institutions, schools, and faculties, in order to achieve common goals. Participants emphasized that the cooperation with young people is also very important, because they, although represent a target group, have a potential of being actively involved in creating youth policies, e.g. developing the local youth program. A communication gap between policy makers and young people, uninformed youth on the

opportunities offered to them, the closeness of local self-government and inertness of the educational sector and institutions in participating in local community- there aren't any professional values and higher common cause for the well fare of the community and the development of youth, were all stated to be the problematic points of youth work and the result of the current ineffective cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

In order to improve the cooperation with relevant stakeholders, participants were asked to state the **skills, competencies and knowledge** that are crucial for the successful cooperation. Participants cited **communication and organization skills** as the most important. They think that it is pertinent to adequately communicate ideas and goals, as to usefully invest their resources in the common cause and while doing that, leave personal interests aside. Youth workers have to be motivated and persistent in their work, open to cooperate, possess organization skills, rich experience, authoritative attitude, and a leader mentality, as to induce public institution and educational sector to actively participate in community and youth work. Youth workers should also act on the principles of cooperation, and open and clear communication. In addition, the following skills and abilities were cited as important: managerial skills, tolerance, openness for cooperation and constructive discussion on different youth issues, willingness to communicate, and logical and critical thinking.

The participants of the focus group have online learning experience. They were asked to distinguish advantageous characteristics of an online platform, linked to the subject of cooperation with relevant stakeholders. According to them, the platform should include practical examples and webinars, i.e. recorded lectures on the youth work. They highlighted interactivity as one of the most important features of the platform, and stated possibilities for achieving that – communication between lecturers and the users of the platform, mentoring, the possibility of giving feedback. Other preferences are: tests and assignments (questions and answers for check, small exercise blocks); availability and transparency of information; interesting lecturer and interest of the user for the content of the platform; videos; e-books. Participants remarked that the online educational platform is a useful tool for learning (e.g. problem solving with the online search of information), but just as an addition to "live" education that is necessary for youth workers' training. Moreover, participants emphasized the need for developing an online platform that will represent a database of all the stakeholders in the field of youth work, as well as all the relevant information about the youth opportunities offered to them, in order to improve the cooperation between relevant stakeholders and a target group, i.e. young people.

Open educational resources in the area of cooperation with relevant stakeholders:

- Handbook *„How to start up local sources of support“*, for NGO sector on how to develop cooperation and support on local level – from financial support to other resources for creating better community
- *“Uncomfortable position of youth in the labor market“*, handbook for fighting against discrimination of young people in the labor market, that instructs youth workers on how to fight against discrimination, facilitate young people for labor market and achieve successful cooperation with relevant stakeholders and employers

- „*Let the local voices be heard!*“, handbook for the development of dialogue between young people and stakeholders, which represents good introduction for starting structured dialogue in local community in Croatia and useful source of information for the purpose of increasing competencies of leading structured dialogues between relevant stakeholders- companies, public government and organizations working in youth field
- „*EU asks – structured dialogue with young people*“, info for youth organizations on how to successfully guide structured dialogue in Croatia and achieve effective cooperation with other stakeholders.

	Type of participant	Gender	Age	Main field of work	Type of organisation	Age-range of youths (only for YWs)
1	Expert in communication	Female	28	Science and education	Foundation	17-30
2	Public officer	Male	40	Technical culture	Youth center	7-15
3	Start-upper	Male	25	ICT and digital	Start-up	17-30
4	Start-upper	Female	26	Music and art	Start-up	17-25
5	Public officer	Female	43	Civic sector	Local self-government	21-25

Policy impact/influence

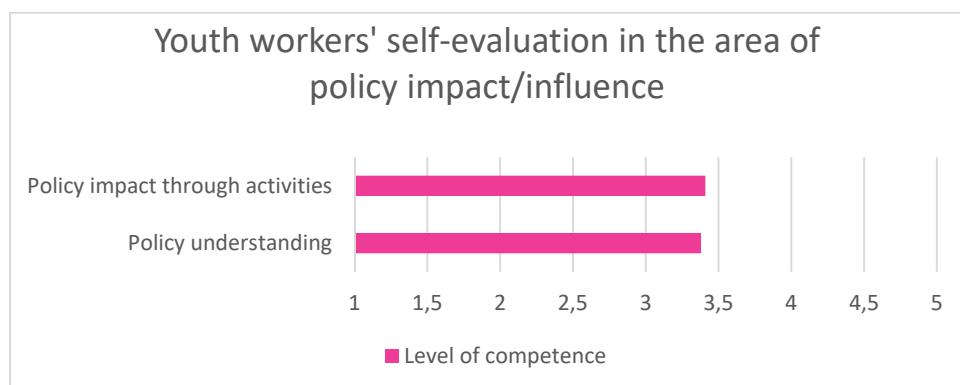
Please, based on the results on the online survey and the focus groups, describe here:

- ➔ The most important competencies to be developed for the up-skilling of youth workers in this specific area
- ➔ A brief description, with links and useful reference, of the open educational resources that you have identified at EU and national level
- ➔ The learning methods identified during the focus group
- ➔ The composition and the characteristics of the participants at the focus group, by filling the table below

In the area of **policy impact/influence in the field of youth work**, two types of competencies were recognized:

- (1) **policy impact through activities**, which includes strategic planning of activities for policy influence, monitoring and evaluation,
- (2) **policy understanding**, which includes analytical and critical understanding of policy documentation, statistics and socioeconomic trends.

While self-evaluating their competencies in the area of policy impact/influence, participants of the online research estimated medium level of competencies: average estimate of 3,38 for policy understanding, and 3,41 for policy impact through activities.



Youth workers in Croatia evaluated the area of policy impact/influence as the third important of the four investigated areas, while it was placed on the last position in the research where 505 respondents participated. Participants of the focus group expressed their opinion that the area of policy impact is more important that it is shown by the results of the online research. They also detected the cause of the unawareness of importance of policy impact in the insufficient knowledge of the concept of youth policies and everything it comprises.

The following **problematic points** were underlined by participants: the possibility of policy impact greatly depends on the system and local and regional self-government; the feeling of inability of youth workers to affect the changes in the system and policy creation; insufficient knowledge about available strategies, documents and laws (in the area of youth work); vague understanding of the concept of youth policies; youth workers don't possess crucial knowledge about the public policies and the process of political decision-making and the possibilities to influence them; failure to put policies into practice (there aren't measurable indicators of the implementation); inadequate identification of public needs of policy makers. Focus group suggested some solutions to these issues. For example, it is necessary to achieve real results within legal frameworks and clearly define organizations for youth as the primary actors in the field of youth policies. In addition to this, within the strategic framework of national level, it is necessary to work on the development, tracking and evaluation of programs and public policies on the local level, in order to improve cooperation and effective achievement of common goals which is attainable by creating a network organization that will connect associations and organizations that work with youth.

Set of **skills and competencies** of youth workers that participants of the focus group consider necessary for successful youth policy impact are: knowledge of advocacy and lobbying, ability of tracking the implementation of public policies; participation skills and engagement; ability of recognizing and determining the needs of youth; ability of articulation/presentation of the goals directed to meeting the youth's needs; ability of problem solving and critical thinking; advocacy abilities (communication and presentation skills); technical skills; transparency; the knowledge of institutional framework; the possibility of participating in decision-making; promotion of values and activities in public policies influence; possession of required tools for acquiring

experiences; motivation; emotional and social intelligence; theoretical and practical knowledge (experience), regardless of the field of work; awareness about the importance of public policies in non-formal sector.

Participants of the focus group have experience in the context of online learning, and they stated the following features of the platform as crucial: interactivity, mentoring, smaller learning blocks/modules; flexibility of the system/tool; the possibility of group work and cooperation with other users of the online platform; tests and feedback.

In the focus group, participants expressed the opinion that blended learning has many advantages to the merely usage of online tools, and that an online educational platform is the useful tool for additional learning for experienced youth workers, but not for so-called beginners.

Open educational sources in the area of policy impact/influence recognized in the research are:

- *„Let the local voices be heard!“*, handbook for the development of dialogue between young people and stakeholders, which includes instructions on the examination of policy documents and lobbying on local, national and (pan)European level
- *„EU asks – structured dialogue with young people“*, a guidebook on control of the policy documents, lobbying and influence on the youth policies changes
- Videos *European training academy* – videos on decision-making on European level, legal procedures and lobbying on local, national, and (pan)European level
- *“Steps towards successful youth policies in local community“*, handbook for the successful implementation of local youth policies aimed for youth organizations, institutional framework and networking of organizations.

	Type of participant	Gender	Age	Main field of work	Type of organisation	Age-range of youths (only for YWs)
1	Youth policy maker/expert in policy influence	Female	51	Education	City department of Education	12-25
2	Expert youth worker/expert in policy influence	Female	35	Active citizenship	Youth Association	17-20
3	Expert in policy influence	Male	41	Civic sector and active citizenship	Association for the development of civic society	17-30

4	Youth policy maker/expert in policy influence	Male	33	Social entrepreneurship and youth policy	Unit of regional self-government	12-30
5	Youth worker	Male	43	Youth work	Community center	12-16 26-30

Reaching out to young people

Please, based on the results on the online survey and the focus groups, describe here:

- The most important competencies to be developed for the up-skilling of youth workers in this specific area
- A brief description, with links and useful reference, of the open educational resources that you have identified at EU and national level
- The learning methods identified during the focus group
- The composition and the characteristics of the participants at the focus group, by filling the table below

In the area of **reaching out to young people**, three sets of competencies were recognized:

- (1) **analysis of the youth's needs** that includes carrying out needs' analysis for the elaboration of individual mentoring and coaching plans
- (2) **communication and social skills** that include effective public relation and communication through social media, emotional intelligence and social sensitivity
- (3) **project management and organization skills** - project management, logistic and organizational skills, problem solving and creativity.



In the area of reaching out to young people, high level of competence was estimated in the project management and organization skills section (4,03). Medium level of

competencies was assessed in sections of communication and social skills (3,78) and carrying out the analysis of the youth's needs (3,40).

Reaching out to young people is recognized as the most important aspect of youth work in our research. Participants of the focus group consider that in this area of youth work, youth workers identify with their profession at the most, and hence, ascribe the greatest value of this aspect. They think the reaching out to young people comprises a great deal of youth work, but nonetheless, they don't consider other three areas to be less important.

Detected **issues and needs** in the area of reaching out to young people, participants pointed out to the differences between youth workers and young people in terms of age, attitudes, and beliefs. Teenagers and high-school students are emphasized as the most unreachable group of young people (in the wide age range of 15 to 30). Noticed problematic issues are also insufficient knowledge of tools of informing and methods for motivating young people to active engage in society, as well as an inadequate usage of communication tools. Participants of the focus group think that personal contact is unquestionably the most effective method for motivating young people, and that internet announcements don't always produce the best results because of an excessive amount of available information.

Participants of the focus group about reaching out to young people, described the "perfect youth worker". He or she should have the following set of **skills and competencies**: knowledge of pedagogy and psychology, communication and organization skills; creativity and innovation abilities; problem-solving ability – removal of unpredictable distractors in working with young people; emotional intelligence; ability of tracking reactions of target group; knowledge of project management; individual mentoring- working with talented and creative individuals; but also with specific marginalized groups (implementation of individual projects with individuals where they can express creatively); abilities to develop and maintain youth work infrastructure, as to motivate youth workers and achieve successful results in their work; flexibility and adaptability; the knowledge of specific tools, methods, and techniques in teaching and work with specific groups (e.g. role-play, learning through playing games, using examples of good practices); emotional intelligence and social skills; tolerance and acceptance of differences; responsibility and patience in work; the knowledge and usage of new technologies; ability to recognize the needs and interests of young people; the knowledge of the tools of informing wider group of users, but also how to lead individual communication with specific groups (meet the specific groups' needs); ability of using custom vocabulary specifically adapted to different target groups.

Participants of the focus group also cited several **approaches and methods** for acquiring above stated skills and competencies. First, non-formal education and experience-based learning and learning via practical work (workshops, seminars, face-to-face educations, teambuilding meetings), and then active participation in local community and volunteer work (socially useful learning). At the end, they stated mentor-based learning, i.e. via working with the experiences and competent person (direct learning) and digital tools (online platforms for learning, online books and articles, video courses, webinars, and podcasts).

Participants have had online learning experiences with using online learning platforms. They stated the following features that online educational platform for youth workers should include: videos, competition element that can be voluntarily chosen and time flexibility of the platform in a sense that there is a possibility of choosing the time of usage (it's should not contain predetermined time frame of usage); visually appealing; accessibility and transparency of information available on the platform; chat and forum sections (for the purpose of communicating with other users of the platform); feedback and smaller blocks for learning; possibility of acquiring certificates and confirmations about competencies and skills; focused and adjusted content designed for specific target groups' users (the structure of the platform should be organized by different levels that could be voluntarily chosen for usage).

Open educational resources in the area of reaching out to young people include:

- *"Manual for NGOs - learn IT tools"*, a part of dissemination strategy, targeted promotion and communication with young people; contains information about volunteering, active citizenship and impact on motivation of young people
- *"The Picture of a Future Global Citizen - The views towards educating young people as global citizens in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Spain"*, publication on key results of the research conducted in Lithuania, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Spain, that had investigated required knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of youth required for living and acting in a globalized world. Publication is aimed at acquiring competencies of global citizenship, active participation and leadership
- *"Uncomfortable position of youth in the labor market"*, handbook for fighting against discrimination of young people in the labor market, that instructs youth workers on how to fight against discrimination, facilitate young people for labor market and motivate them to actively participate in society
- Handbook *"Theory and practice of youth work - Croatian context"*, a theoretical introduction to the youth work in Croatia, that includes principles and methods of youth work, as well as Croatian perspective on youth work
- *"Volunteer management"*, a handbook for the creation of volunteer programs, supervision of volunteers and the promotion of active citizenship through volunteering
- *"T-Kit on Training Essentials"*, that attempts to define essential educational, logistical, ethical, and experiential elements of training.

- ➔ The composition and the characteristics of the participants at the focus group, by filling the table below

	Type of participant	Gender	Age	Main field of work	Type of organisation	Age-range of youths (only for YWs)
1	Expert youth worker	Female	29	Culture and art	Youth association	17-30
2	Expert youth worker	Female	31	Culture and art	Youth association	12-30

3	Expert youth worker	Female	51	Social care	Public administration	17-30
4	Youth worker	Female	28	Culture and art	Community center	17-30
5	Expert in communication/ expert youth worker	Female	32	ICT, culture, art, and sport	Youth association	21-30
6	Young person	Female	26			

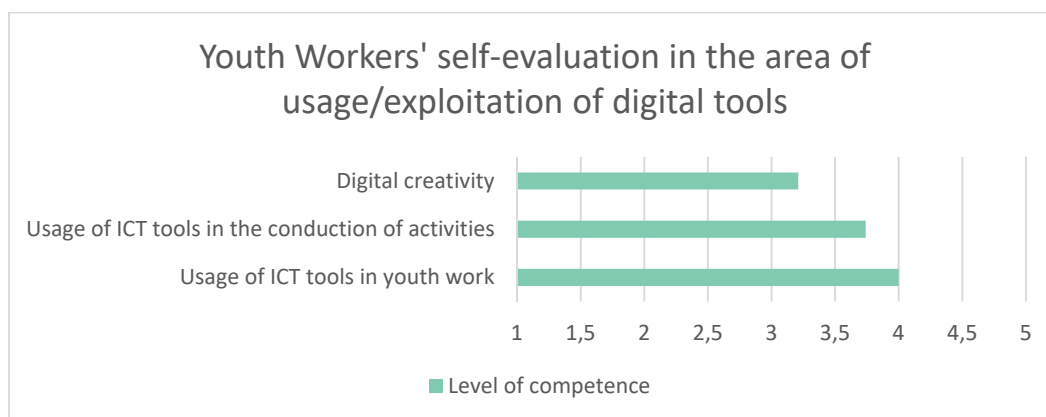
Usage/exploitation of digital tools

Please, based on the results on the online survey and the focus groups, describe here:

- ➔ The most important competencies to be developed for the up-skilling of youth workers in this specific area
- ➔ A brief description, with links and useful reference, of the open educational resources that you have identified at EU and national level
- ➔ The learning methods identified during the focus group
- ➔ The composition and the characteristics of the participants at the focus group, by filling the table below

In the area of **usage/exploitation of digital tools** in youth work three sets of competencies were recognized:

- (1) **digital creativity** - open digital content production and digital creativeness
- (2) **usage of ICT tools in the conduction of activities** that includes effective use of ICT tools for the training and working activities with the youths
- (3) **usage of ICT tools in youth work** refers to the exploitation of digital and online collaboration tools for own personal work.



Youth workers estimated their competencies in the area of usage/exploitation of digital tools in the following way: they are least competent in digital creativeness (3,21), then

in the usage of ICT tools in the conduction of activities for youth (3,74), and high level of competence they gave to the usage of ICT tools in work for personal purposes (4,00).

The usage/exploitation of digital tools has shown to be the least important aspect of youth work, according to the youth workers in Croatia that have participated in the research. They think that other three areas are more important for youth work, but recognize the inevitability of knowledge of using different digital tools, in order to act successfully in other areas.

Participants of this focus group **use online tools** for the purposes of communication with young people and target group, direct work with the youth, creating information for promoting and visibility of the activities; internal communication with other colleagues and associates and for the organization purposes; for collecting the data and making analyses; for investigating the needs of target group and informing them; creating activities for youth and other target groups, e.g. cooperative and competitive games, that could represent award or a motivational role. The only negative thing detected in the area of usage of digital tools was insufficient knowledge of all the possibilities that certain tool has, which could result in inadequate exploitation of available possibilities.

Type of online tools that participants find useful are: social networks and communication tools (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, e-mail and mailing lists), cooperative tools (Trello, SharePoint, WhatsApp groups), free applications for creating digital contents (for making infographics such as Pictochart or Infogr.am, graphic design tools such as Canva, presentation tools such as Prezi, etc.).

Skills and competencies of youth workers in the area of ICT tools that are stated at the focus group are next: technical and informatics knowledge and the knowledge of using new technologies, journalism and marketing knowledge, digital creativity and innovation, ability of estimation and selection of relevant information; ability to produce digital content; adaptability to the fast development of technology and dynamics in the usage of new technologies, as well as building and enhancing the old technology; ability to adapt work materials to specific target groups.

During the focus group it was determined that for the usage of most tools, there are instructions for their usage, but there is also required good will to learn them. But, creating the digital content and possessing the knowledge of the digital tool differentiate. Digital creativeness is much more complex and it cannot be learned by reading instructions. This focus group has defined following **learning methods**: non-formal learning, mentor-based learning, learning by using online tools, such as videos, blogspots, and e-literature.

The features that the online platform should include in order to youth workers effectively learn how to use digital tools are: direct contact with the instructor (chat, forum), simplicity and visibility of the content, possibility of sharing the content and online materials, independent selection of the difficulty levels of learning materials, flexible time frame for learning and usage of the content, the possibility of estimation and evaluation of learning progress, "how to" videos, interactivity, pop quizzes, smaller learning blocks, the possibility of acquiring certificates, and good practices.

Online educational resources in the area of usage/exploitation of digital tools:

- *"Manual for NGOs - learn IT tools"*, that provides acquiring competencies of basic IT skills of youth workers, that were not present at the training (during which the handbook was written), such as creating web pages, videos, photographs, web design and multimedia installation; instructions for more simple and secure communication and lowering the costs of usage of ICT tools in youth work
- Online platform *"Codeacademy"*, for learning coding web sites, SQL, different programs for metric analysis
- Free educational resources of the project *Generation 0101*, developed during seven different ICT modules, including handbooks for trainers and youth workers, with the aim of raising competencies in programming, and digital and media literacy for young people.

	Type of participant	Gender	Age	Main field of work	Type of organisation	Age-range of youths (only for YWs)
1	Expert youth worker	Male	26	ICT and digital	Youth association	21-25
2	Expert youth worker	Female	29	Human rights, mental health	Association for non-violence and human rights	17-25
3	Expert in web marketing	Female	36	ICT and digital	Marketing and online communication enterprise	12-25
4	Youth worker	Male	30	Student standard	The University	17-25
5	Expert youth worker	Female	25	Social care	Center for the education of children and youth	8-16

The Youth Work HD eLearning platform

Challenges and opportunities for a blended training course for Youth Workers

Please, follow-up on the main issues discussed in occasion of the four national focus groups and provide an overview of the main challenges and opportunities for the piloting of the Youth Work HD course in your country. In particular:

- ➔ Argument on the favorite learning methodologies of youth workers and their actual experience with eLearning platforms
- ➔ List and justify the presence of the most mentioned features that the Youth Work HD platform should include in order to meet the needs and the expectations of the target group

Focus group participants stated that the work awaiting partner consortium is quite complex. They said that making an online platform that can deliver all the functions and preferences desired by the youth workers covered by the survey will be difficult.

Over 250 preferences	Between 200 and 250	Under 200 preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •it is interactive •it is integrated with work you do with youths •it is fun and easy to use •it allows Collaboration with other participants •it is in my mother tongue •it provides certificates •it includes good practices and references for additional information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •it includes right answers and/or feedback to wrong ones •it includes quizzes/tests •it is very Visual •it is structured into small learning blocks •it includes Team tasks •it provides evaluation of tasks •it includes webinars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •it provides the opportunity to meet/cooperate with stakeholders •it supports Peer learning •it is graphically appealing •it includes Project based learning •it includes online mentors •it introduces me to an international learning environments •it includes multiple media and of high-quality •it is in English •it is based on a badging system

They find that covering the entire set of competencies recognized by the partner consortium as necessary to increase quality of youth workers work is a very complex, daunting task. Their suggestion to the consortium is to focus on a particular set. For example, those that are recognized as being of the utmost importance for working with youths, or one in which youth workers scored lowest during self-evaluation.

On the other hand, focus groups welcomed the initiative to create an online platform intended to foster learning, especially the functionality of augmenting cooperation and resource sharing that it can offer to youth workers. Also, they suggested that the consortium should consider using blended courses, because they promote direct contact with target groups and lead to necessary first-hand experience.

Concerning the characteristics of the platform, focus groups were unanimous in finding its interactivity as its most striking feature. Also, they found its ease of use and visuals appealing. Smaller learning blocks and less complex assignments applicable in working with youth were highlighted as highly desirable and useful.

Different focus groups came to the same conclusion – they expressed the need for a feedback feature, where youth workers can communicate and exchange information not only with their mentors, but also with each other.

When talking about the Croatian context, it was found that it is not necessary to localise the platform, since youth workers are apt in use of English.

All of the participants were experienced in online learning, and presented pros and cons that they came upon while using online learning platforms. Its greatest advantage lies in the fact that a person can decide when and how to dedicate his or her time for education. On the other hand, those same arguments can lead to early abandonment of online course. As one of the main reasons for abandoning an online course focus group members pointed to the boring, repetitive simplicity of beginner level courses. They suggested that those lectures can be skippable, so that more advanced users can immediately start learning at more advanced, appropriate level. Provided knowledge

should be concrete and applicable, paired with examples of good practice, and an online platform such as Youth Work HD should provide those features.

They suggested that the platform should include a database of all who actively participate in youth work. Also, such a database should provide relevant opportunities, possibilities and activities for youths, all for increasing the level of improving cooperation and relations among key participants and youths.

Analytical review of European OERs for Youth Workers

- Number of OERs selected*
- Nature of the OERs selected (PDF Handbook, Web page, Video, etc.)*
- Languages (Mother tongue + English, only mother tongue, only English, etc.)*
- Topics covered (Policy Impact and ICT, only ICT, all of them, two of them, etc.)*
- Nr. Of "recommended" OERs (recommended/not recommended)*

For the purpose of determining available open educational resources (OERs) for youth work, we searched existing databases and selected 13 OERs, out of which 11 are handbooks in the PDF format, one web page with videos and one online platform. OERs selected are available in the following languages: Croatian (9 OERs), English (6), Greek (1), Italian (2), Latvian (1), Lithuanian (2), French (1), German (1), Polish (1), Czech (1), Portuguese (1), Hungarian (1), Italian (1), and Estonian (1). Topic that are covered in these documents are linked to all four areas of youth work discussed: usage/exploitation of digital tools, cooperation with relevant stakeholders, reaching out to young people, and policy impact/influence.

With detail analysis of OERs' content, we have established a list of materials that are recommended for education of youth workers and those that are not.

Recommended OERs:

- (1) handbook *„How to start up local sources of support“*, for NGO sector on how to develop cooperation and support on local level – from financial support to other resources for creating better community;
- (2) handbook for fighting against discrimination of young people in the labor market *“Uncomfortable position of youth in the labor market“*;
- (3) handbook for the development of dialogue between young people and stakeholders *„Let the local voices be heard!“*;
- (4) *„EU asks – structured dialogue with young people“*; info for youth organizations on how to successfully guide structured dialogue in Croatia and achieve effective cooperation with other stakeholders;

- (5) *"Steps towards successful youth policies in local community"*, handbook for the successful implementation of local youth policies aimed for youth organizations, institutional framework and networking of organizations;
- (6) *"The Picture of a Future Global Citizen - The views towards educating young people as global citizens in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Spain"*, publication on key results of the research conducted in Lithuania, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Spain, that had investigated required knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of youth required for living and acting in a globalized world. Publication is aimed at acquiring competencies of global citizenship, active participation and leadership;
- (7) *"Volunteer management"*, a handbook for the creation of volunteer programs and supervision of volunteers;
- (8) *"Manual for NGOs - learn IT tools"*, that provides acquiring competencies of basic IT skills of youth workers, that were not present at the training (during which the handbook was written), such as creating web pages, videos, photographs, web design and multimedia installation; instructions for more simple and secure communication and lowering the costs of usage of ICT tools in youth work;
- (9) *"T-Kit on Training Essentials"*, that attempts to define essential educational, logistical, ethical, and experiential elements of training;
- (10) *"Free educational resources of the project Generation 0101"*, developed during seven different ICT modules, including handbooks for trainers and youth workers, with the aim of raising competencies in programming, and digital and media literacy for young people.

Not recommended:

- (1) handbook *"Theory and practice of youth work - Croatian context"*, a theoretical introduction to the youth work in Croatia, that includes principles and methods of youth work, as well as Croatian perspective on youth work;
- (2) online platform *"Codeacademy"*, for learning coding web sites, SQL, different programs for metric analysis;
- (3) videos *European training academy* – videos on decision-making on European level, legal procedures and lobbying on local, national, and (pan)European level.

CONCLUSIONS

Brief summary of the report:

- General overview of how the youth work framework looks like in your country (on the basis of what you presented in Vilnius' meeting);

YOUTH WORKER

is a person that works with young people...
(in Croatia people aged 15 to 30)

- 
in non-formal context
- 
through the implementation of educational programs and activities for young people
- 
in different fields (e.g. culture and art, sport, leisure time, environment and sustainable development, volunteering, active citizenship)
- 
with the goal of developing the full potential of young people in terms of personal and emotional development, autonomy, and active participation in society and decision-making.
- 
Youth work implies voluntarily-based participation of young people in activities that are complement to the formal educational process.



In the field of youth work in Croatia, relevant stakeholders are primarily represented by **youth workers that are employed in associations and organizations in the civic sector**, that through the implementation of programs and projects, work with young people on daily basis, and in that way affect their development and acquisition of specific skills and knowledge. Other relevant stakeholders, that these organizations cooperate with, include **Croatian employment service**, which has conducted a research on the standard of the youth worker profession in order to standardize this profession; different **educational institutions**, such as schools or faculties; and ministries, out of which **Ministry for demography, family, youth, and social policy** is the crucial one, as it finances programs and projects intended for the youth work, as well as puts forward National youth program.

In Croatia, the profession "youth worker" isn't recognized in formal-legal sense, although there are many organizations and individuals that work with young people,

which represent a hindrance for the successful conduction of youth work. With the standardization of the youth worker profession, where fundamental tasks and competencies required for performing youth work would be defined, a base for the development of the area of youth work will be set.

Although youth work in Croatia is not formally recognized and is underrepresented in the academic community (there aren't any scientific articles and researches in that field), and the non-existent strategic approach to the support for the development of youth work in public sector, there are many organizations that through their activities contribute to the growth of youth work. Educational materials, as well as workshops carried out by NGOs exist, but there aren't any in an online form.

As the response to the problem of underrepresented youth workers' education in the formal system, **University of Rijeka** and **Institute for Social Research** signed the agreement on developing the pilot-project for lifelong learning "Youth in contemporary society" in 2016.

Based on the stated facts, it is obvious that the quality of youth work in Croatia has to be enhanced. This can be achieved with the recognition of the formal status of the youth work profession, ensuring the opportunities for systematic and qualitative youth work education and training, all that is comprised in the Youth Work HD project's objectives.

□ *Main conclusions on how the training should look like (based on preferences expressed online and on focus groups):*

We have conducted a research among youth workers, in order to determine how the training/education of youth workers should look like. With an aim of enhancing the quality of their work, youth workers stated that the most relevant aspect is reaching out to young people (95 participants), followed by cooperation with relevant stakeholders (49 participants), policy impact/influence (34 participants), and usage/exploitation of digital tools (19 participants). Thus, the training of youth workers, and educational resources, should primarily adjust and focus on the areas of **reaching out to young people** and **cooperation with relevant stakeholders**, at least in Croatian context.

Participants of the focus group cited several **approaches and methods** for acquiring skills and competencies for working with youth. First, **non-formal education** and experience-based learning and learning via practical work (workshops, seminars, face-to-face educations, teambuilding meetings), and then **active participation** in local community and volunteer work (socially useful learning). At the end, they stated **mentor-based learning**, i.e. via working with the experiences and competent person (direct learning) and **digital tools** (online platforms for learning, online books and articles, video courses, webinars, and podcasts).

Participants of focus groups agreed on the viewpoint that an online platform is useful additional tool for learning, but just as a **supplement to the so-called "live" education**, that is necessary for youth workers' training. They also expressed the opinion that **blended learning** has many advantages to the merely usage of online

tools, and that an online educational platform is the useful tool for **additional learning** for experienced youth workers, but not for the beginners.

Online questionnaire respondents and participants of focus groups expressed a unified agreement on **the characteristics of online platform** for quality education of youth workers. It should contain the following features: interactivity, visual attractiveness, intuitive usage, availability and transparency of information and platform content, online mentoring, quizzes/tests (shorter tasks blocks), review of good practices and links to additional contents and information, the possibility of receiving certificates with acquired competencies and skills, the possibility of working in groups and cooperating with other platform users, fact feedback, chat and forums for communication with the lecturers and other users, e-books, videos and webinars, i.e. recorded lectures on youth work, the possibility of sharing content and online materials, temporal flexibility in platform usage, focus and adaptability of platform content for different levels of knowledge of users, independent users' choice of learning level and materials.

Moreover, participants emphasized the need for developing an online platform that will represent a **database of all the stakeholders** in the field of youth work, as well as all the relevant information about the **youth opportunities** offered to them, in order to improve the cooperation between relevant stakeholders and a target group, i.e. young people.