European
Commission

Developing digital youth work

Policy recommendations and training needs

For youth workers and decision-makers

*Expert group set up under the
European Union Work Plan for
Youth for 2016-2018*

Youth

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This document has been drafted by the expert group on digitalisation and youth. It reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Picture on the cover page: Expert group on digitalisation and youth, 2016

Introduction

Set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018, the expert group on 'Risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy' provides policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples in developing digital youth work across the EU.

This publication contains the following outcomes of this expert group:

- A working definition of 'digital youth work';
- Policy recommendations on the development of digital youth work;
- Identification of training needs of youth workers relevant for digital youth work, based on existing competence frameworks for digital skills and for youth work.

The results of this expert group (https://publications.europa.eu/s/fouj) will be of interest to anyone involved in developments in youth work in the 21st century, especially youth workers, organisations, training providers, policy-makers, other practitioners, and researchers.

The policy recommendations can be used by Member States and other countries as inspiration when preparing national strategies and plans for youth work. They can also serve as inspiration for organisational development in youth work organisations.

The training needs can be used to inform training plans or programmes and develop new training including new methodology and issues. Youth workers and organisations can use them to assess individual and collective competence and identify training needs.

In addition, the full report includes examples of innovative practices in both delivering digital youth work and also upskilling youth workers' digital competences, as well as a collection of training material which is available online and which addresses the identified training needs of youth workers relevant for digital youth work.
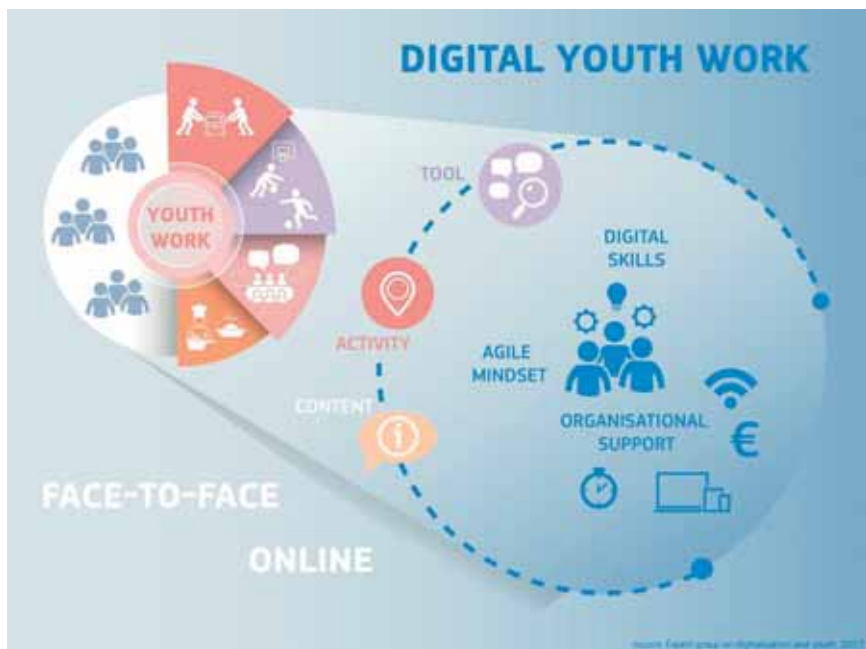
An agile mindset is crucial

Digital literacy and 21st century skills play a crucial role as part of modern-day citizenship and modern life in general, and youth work should be able to encourage this.

Youth workers need an agile mindset, being willing to try new things and learn from both success and failure, and be supported to do so.

What is digital youth work?

The expert group used the following working definition of digital youth work:[1]

- Digital youth work means **proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work**.

- Digital youth work is not a youth work method – digital youth work **can be included in any youth work setting** (open youth work, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached youth work…).

- Digital youth work has the **same goals as youth work in general**, and using digital media and technology in youth work should always support these goals.

- Digital youth work can happen **in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments** – or in a mixture of these two. Digital media and technology can be used either as a tool, an activity or a content in youth work.

- Digital youth work is underpinned by the same ethics, values and principles as youth work.

- Youth workers in this context refer to both paid and volunteer youth workers.

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[1] Based on Verke's understanding of digital youth work (Verke = Development Centre for Digital Youth Work in Finland).

Policy recommendations on the development of digital youth work

The expert group on risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy, set up by the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018:

Acknowledging that:

- New technologies emerge rapidly. Through the Internet of Everything, billions of objects and people are connected to each other. Automation, machine learning, mobile computing and artificial intelligence are no longer futuristic concepts, they are our reality (Gartner 2016). Knowing how technology is built, learning to be critical towards information, and being curious as well as critical towards new technologies is more important every day. Digital literacy and 21st century skills play a crucial role as part of modern-day citizenship and modern life in general. All young people of today will need technological skills and an agile mindset towards technology in their future work and everyday life, and youth work should be able to encourage this.

- Young people in Europe spend an increasing amount of their time consuming digital media and technology (video streaming, messaging, blogging, gaming, etc.). These can provide a place for young people to learn, to share their experiences, to exchange their views, to have fun with their friends and to actively participate in society.

- The term 'digital native' falsely suggests that young people intuitively know how to use digital technologies. But evidence shows that a substantial percentage of young people in Europe lack basic ICT skills (ECDL Foundation 2015). Another challenge is the digital divide: access to the internet and social media can become problematic in many EU countries for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds when they leave school or are not in training (Youth participation in democratic life, LSE 2013). This inevitably leads to a 'voice divide' in digital settings.

- There are a lot of youth work practitioners who lack the digital skills or attitudes to fully benefit from the opportunities created by digital technologies for delivering quality youth work (National Youth Council of Ireland 2016).

- Many youth workers see digital media only as social media. Their understanding of the possibilities of digital media and technology should be widened (National Youth Council of Ireland 2016).

Defining digital youth work as:

- Digital youth work means **proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work**. Digital youth work is not a youth work method – digital youth work **can be included in any youth work setting** (open youth work, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached youth work, etc.). Digital youth work has the **same goals as youth work in general**, and using digital media and technology in youth work should always support these goals. Digital youth work can happen **in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments** – or in a mixture of these two. Digital media and technology can be either a tool, an activity or a content in youth work.

- ▪ Digital youth work is underpinned by the same ethics, values and principles as youth work.

- ▪ Youth workers in the context of these recommendations refer to both paid and volunteer youth workers.

Recommends the following to ensure and enhance the development of digital youth work:

Common understanding of digital youth work

1. Member States should consider the working definition of digital youth work, of the expert group on digitalisation and youth, in their understanding and development of digital youth work.

2. As digital cultures and media are an intrinsic part of young people's lives, every youth worker should understand the importance of digital youth work and be able to address digital issues in their work.

3. Youth work should embrace technological developments and support young people to develop the skills, competences and courage to actively shape digital technologies and society.

Strategic development of digital youth work

4. Every Member State should have a plan for developing and resourcing digital youth work as an integral part of their youth policy. Young people and youth organisations should be consulted and engaged in the development and implementation of this plan.

5. Every Member State should provide strategic financial investment in digital youth work. Resources should be allocated to youth worker training, development of innovative digital youth work methodology, working time, infrastructure, and devices/technologies to be used with young people.

6. Digital youth work should be incorporated into youth worker training, national youth work occupational standards and youth worker competence standards.

7. Digitalisation and young people's digital cultures should be taken into account when designing youth work policy at local, national or European level.

Youth participation and youth rights

8. It should be ensured that digital youth work incorporates an inclusive approach, recognising the barriers to participation in digital engagement. Youth work should make use of technology and pedagogical practices to increase access and break down barriers for all young people to participation in society.

9. Digital youth work shall respect the safety and privacy of all young people, and equip both youth workers and young people with the necessary competences to safeguard the rights of young people online.

Knowledge and evidence

10. Development of digital youth work should be evidence based. To ensure quality in digital youth work, systems should be developed for evaluating its impact, reach and effectiveness.

11. Continuous academic research on young people's digital uses and cultures is needed to ensure youth work is meeting the needs of young people in the digital age. The research should be done both on national and on European level.

12. As digitalisation is a global phenomenon, it is imperative to facilitate knowledge exchange on digital youth work and young people's digital cultures on international level. Initiatives should be supported at local, national and European level to share knowledge and practice. Cross-sectoral knowledge exchange should be encouraged to promote innovative thinking.

Brussels, 21 June 2017

References:

European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:42015Y1215%2801%29

European Commission (2013), Youth participation in democratic life, LSE, http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/policy/youth_strategy/documents/youth-participation-study_en.pdf

ECDL Foundation (2015), The Fallacy of the 'Digital Native': Why Young People Need to Develop their Digital Skills, http://ecdl.org/media/thefallacyofthe'digitalnative'positionpaper1_1.pdf

National Youth Council of Ireland (2016), Using ICT, digital and social media in youth work. A review of research findings from Austria, Denmark, Finland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/International%20report%20final.pdf

Gartner (2016), Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies, http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3412017

European Commission, Study on the impact of internet and social media on youth participation and youth work, Consortium led by Open Evidence (preliminary results, to be published in 2018)

Competences for digital youth work

When looking at the planning, development and implementation of digital youth work activities and projects, it is important to not only focus on the skills related to using digital media but look more broadly at the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to ensure an engaging and meaningful digital youth work experience. An agile mindset is crucial for youth workers to perform their work in our dynamic society.

We identified three dimensions impacting the success of digital youth work:

1. digitalisation of society,
2. organisational digital development and
3. youth work competences.[2]

Competences for digital youth work for…

… Planning, designing and implementing digital youth work

TRAINING NEEDS AND COMPETENCE AREAS

YOUTH WORK COMPETENCES

DIGITAL COMPETENCES (INDIVIDUAL)   03

POLICY RECOMMEN-DATIONS

ORGANISATIONAL DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT   02

DIGITALISATION OF SOCIETY   01

Source: Expert group on digitalisation and youth, 2017

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[2] This notion draws on the concept of 'medienpädagogische Kompetenz' (Blömeke 2000, Knaus et al. 2017). This concept identifies relevant competences educators need to support children and young people to build up their media literacy/media competence. For digital youth work this requires an educator to be aware of the societal changes that are enabled by digitalisation and their effect on growing up, as well as being media literate. It implies the ability to contribute to organisational digital development governed by professional standards and guidelines, which should be enabled by an appropriate organisational culture. In addition to digital competence (as in DigComp) youth workers need to be able to plan, design and implement digital youth work.

Through our process we identified 34 training needs across seven, distinct but linked areas, based on these three dimensions.

Existing competence frameworks (like, for example, DigComp – the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens) need to be extended/elaborated as they often do not take into account the importance of designing and planning youth work activities, the organisational aspects and the broader aspects of digitalisation of society.

Relevant training needs of youth workers

Having considered existing competence frameworks for digital skills and for youth work the following competences have been identified to ensure youth workers have the skills and knowledge required to deliver digital youth work, being aware of the continually changing digital environment and the need to adapt content accordingly.

These training needs bring together the existing frameworks, connecting digital and youth work competences to develop practice throughout the cycle of youth work; understanding the context, planning, designing, implementation and evaluation alongside young people. In addition to the competence areas related to using digital media (like, for example, in DigComp – the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens), the expert group took on board pedagogical competences based on a competence framework for teachers developed within the framework of the MENTEP (MENtoring Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy) project.

These training needs can be used to inform training plans or programmes and develop new training including new methodology and issues. Youth workers and organisations can use them to assess individual and collective competence and identify training needs.

1. Digitalisation of society
1.1 To understand how digitalisation is shaping the societies, including its impact on youth work and on young people
1.2 To be able to take young people's digital cultures into account in youth work practices
1.3 To be able to encourage young people to shape the process of digitalisation themselves

2. Planning, designing and evaluating digital youth work

2.1 To develop an agile mindset towards digital youth work

2.2 To know how to support existing youth work goals with digital media and technology

2.3 To be able to plan digital youth work according to the needs and hopes of young people: their interests, preferences, aspirations, hobbies, styles and online habits

2.4 To know how to involve young people in all stages - design, development, implementation and evaluation - of digital youth work (for example peer activities, giving responsible roles to young people, volunteering), and to recognise the barriers to participation in these stages of digital youth work and how to overcome them

2.5 To be able to develop, implement, reflect and redesign engaging activities supported by/with/about digital media and technology

2.6 To be able to assess the risks involved in digital youth work activities and to mitigate them by applying appropriate measures

2.7 To be able to design individual and collaborative activities using digital media and technology

2.8 To be aware of digital devices and applications available and to be able to choose them for youth work

2.9 To be able to use assistive technology to support young people with disabilities to access youth work; to recognise barriers to participation that may be presented in the use of digital technology

2.10 To be able to use digital technologies to increase social inclusion and participation in society

3. Information and data literacy

3.1 To be able to challenge young people to think critically about digital content and services

3.2 To understand the digital literacy level of each young person (and to adjust digital youth work activities to it)

3.3 To know what information can be stored from a legal perspective (protection of young people's privacy, personal data, etc.)

4. Communication

4.1 To know how young people communicate in digital environments and to adjust digital youth work activities to that

4.2 To be able to help young people to make informed choices about the appropriate digital tools with which to interact, collaborate and share with different target groups

4.3 To be able to help young people be aware of cultural and generational diversity in digital environments

4.4 To be able to support young people become active citizens in digital society

4.5 To know how to react to hate speech, cyber bullying and other unwanted behaviour online, and to encourage young people to do so

4.6 To be able to reflect on the youth worker's own digital identity in a youth work setting

5. Digital creativity

5.1 To be able to encourage young people to create and edit digital content and to express themselves through digital means

5.2 To be able to give young people opportunities to explore coding or get acquainted with maker culture

5.3 To understand how copyright and licences apply to data, information and digital content

5.4 To be aware of the available tools for digital creativity (including free and open source tools)

6. Safety

6.1 To be able to encourage young people to make informed decisions about how they want to portray themselves and engage online, who they want to share their content with and how to control this by using privacy settings

6.2 To be able to help young people to understand terms and conditions of digital services and ownership of their data

6.3 To be able to help young people deal with problems they have encountered in digital settings, for example cyber bullying, grooming, sexting and exposure to content they find upsetting or shocking. To be able to refer young people on to appropriate support services if necessary

6.4 To be able to help young people minimise the environmental impact of digital technologies and their use

6.5 To be able to establish appropriate professional boundaries in their online relationships with young people

7. Reflection and evaluation

7.1 To understand where the youth worker's own digital competence needs to be improved or updated

7.2 To be able to use evaluative techniques to reflect on the effectiveness of undertaking digital youth work and to improve practice

7.3 To know how to share experience and learn from other youth workers

Where to find training material?

The full report contains training material which is available online and which addresses the identified training needs of youth workers relevant for digital youth work. The purpose of this collection is to offer concrete and readily available examples of training material addressed to youth workers. In the report, the identified material, which is not an exhaustive list, is listed separately for each field.

More training material can be found at:

Better Internet for Kids – Resource Gallery

Over the years, Safer Internet Centres have developed various educational resources aimed at helping teachers, parents and carers, and children and young people, to discover the online word safely. Now you can access all of these resources in just one place via this resource gallery.

https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/resources/gallery

European Schoolnet – Resources

From its start in 1997, European Schoolnet has been involved and actively supported the open educational resources (OER) movement in Europe. European Schoolnet is one of the main players in Europe and beyond in learning resource exchange; in collaboration with its network of schools and teachers, European Schoolnet has also contributed to the development, testing and validation of new resources.

http://www.eun.org/teaching/resources

Partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field – Training

http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/training

SALTO Toolbox for Training & Youth Work

Created to help you find and share useful training Tools, the Toolbox is an online catalogue you can browse through freely or even contribute to!

https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/

Teacher Academy

Professional development opportunities for teachers through online and on-site courses

https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/teacher_academy.htm

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[3] Roman alphabethical order of the countries' geographical names in the original language(s).

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Expert group report

European Commission (2018), Developing digital youth work – Policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples for youth workers and decision-makers. Expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018, https://publications.europa.eu/s/fouj

Relevant European Union policy documents

Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1390996863108&uri=CELEX:32009G1219%2801%29

European Union Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215(01)&from=EN

Council conclusions on smart youth work (20 November 2017) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017XG1207(01)

EU Youth Report 2015, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(01)&from=EN

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Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (17 March 2015), http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

Communication from the Commission – European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children [COM(2012) 196 final http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2012:0196:FIN]

Communication from the Commission – A Digital Agenda for Europe [COM(2010) 245 final, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52010DC0245]; https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/

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