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RECOMMENDATIONS

regarding practical support from local authorities
to youth work services for young people at risk

**Designed by the expert group
consisting of youth work coordinators, responsible municipal and state-level officials
within Erasmus+ project
“Competences – Quality – Quantity in Work with Young People at Risk”**



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INTRODUCTION

From February 2019 to February 2020 Core Youth Service (Ireland), JES (Belgium) and Education, Culture and Sports Department of Riga City Council (Latvia) implemented Erasmus+ Strategic partnership for youth project "Competences – Quality – Quantity in Work with Young People at Risk".

The project brought together youth workers who used outreach and streetwork methods in their daily work, as well as youth work coordinators, civil servants from municipal and state levels, as well as politicians. Together they explored challenges that young people at risk face in their communities, existing support measures and good practice examples, as well as burdens faced by youth service providers who work with young people at risk.

The partners agree that local authorities need to take a more proactive role in planning, organisation and funding of youth work with young people at risk.

In order to support municipalities in development of their individual roadmaps towards more effective and inclusive youth work (specifically focusing on young people at risk), the partnership has prepared a set of recommendations that can be adopted and implemented in any municipality around Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy

- A debate needs to be opened on municipality's current youth work strategy in the local area to ensure that needs of those most at risk, disengaged young people are properly addressed.
- Specific youth strategies for young people at risk should be elaborated and put into action.
The strategy should be research-based, rely on youth workers' input and current international / local best practice.
- Municipalities should dedicate their resources to explore best practice across Europe and incorporate it into local planning and interventions.
- All groups of young people must be granted access to influencing decision making and policy making on the local level.
- Cross-institutional cooperation should be institutionalized and mainstreamed across all sectors that work with young people.
It is not only sports and culture, but also, at the minimum, education and labour market. Integrated approach is a need.

Personnel

- A dedicated outreach youth work-responsible should be appointed in the municipality.
- Specifically youth-work trained youth workers that have demonstrated history of best practice should be employed to ensure quality work with young people at risk.

Infrastructure

- Revitalisation of local spaces for local good should be enhanced.
- Current municipality's infrastructure and staff should be utilised for work with most marginalised young people.
- Dedicated youth spaces for young people in local council's areas managed by local authority should be created.
Lack of hang-out, green spaces can be now witnessed in many European cities to intensive construction.
- Sporting infrastructure managed by the municipality should be made more easily accessible for all groups of young people.

Activities

- Targeted outreach and streetwork activities designed to engage the most disengaged young people in the area should be consistently implemented.
- Local authorities should take responsibility for implementation of local initiatives.
- The provision of youth work service can't be limited in time.
Sometimes service providers face funders'-imposed limitations on the maximum duration of programmes. This is especially inappropriate when addressing young people at risk, because each of them has different background and requires a tailor-made support that most probably will be time consuming.

Funding

- Funding should be ringfenced specifically for needs of young people at risk that is not conditional on economic situation.
- Funding should be conditional on inputs rather than on outputs.
Youth work interventions can be subjective and it can be difficult to quantify soft skills according to interventions of youth workers towards young people.

Approach

- It is necessary to protect outreach and streetwork methodology, clarify the boundaries of what can and can't be done.
Local authorities, state institutions, funders, police – they all have expectations towards youth service providers. However, sometimes these expectations are not realistic and can't be achieved with youth work methods. Therefore it is important to clarify the approach youth work uses and its limitations to all stakeholders.
- Performance of police should be changed to ensure as little criminalization of young people as possible.
Police sometimes is too quick to criminalise young people. Experience of youth justice programmes in Ireland show that restorative justice can resolve offending behaviour before it gets habitualised.

- Privacy of youth should be maintained.
Outreach youth work is a trust-based method. Therefore, it is crucial that privacy of youth is maintained. Information can't be shared without the approval of the youngster himself/herself. Outreach youth workers are obliged to handle information with the utmost discretion and confidentiality. Few exceptions when information can and must be shared are: when the physical and mental health of youngsters is at great risk, when youth workers are faced with a moral dilemma, when there is a potential harm to youth worker himself/herself or his/her organisation, when youngster is a part of a judicial inquiry.