



BE INCLUSIVE

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN YOUTH WORK

REPORT ON STATE OF ART AND NEEDS





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Intro and methodological notes

The present report looks at the situation and needs among youth workers, young people and other stakeholders in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, Poland and Spain in regard to applying inclusive policies and practices in their work. What we mean by inclusiveness, in this case, is the understanding, willingness and tools that youth organizations and other bodies working with young people have to fully engage youth from minority and marginalized/excluded groups. We are particularly interested in the specific needs of young people from ethnic minorities, migrant communities, LGBTI youth, young people who have suffered violence and young people from rural areas, but attempt to take into consideration the needs of other groups who might face barriers to fully participate in social life because of their identity and/or specific situation.

This report is part of a bigger effort of five organizations working with youth from the above-mentioned countries to support youth organizations and other bodies working with young people in becoming more inclusive. It is done to better inform further actions, including a self-assessment tool and a guide, meant to support youth organizations in identifying field for improvement and to offer specific tools, policies and good practices for them to do so. Training, piloting and dissemination efforts, along with these outputs, are all part of our shared project 'Be Inclusive', supported by the Erasmus + programme of the European Union. You can follow the development of our work on <https://www.inclusive-youth-work.eu/> and <https://www.facebook.com/inclusiveYW/>.

This report is based on the result of research efforts conducted in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, Poland and Spain in the fall and winter of 2019. The methodology of the research was similar in all partner countries and included day-long focus groups which engaged an overall of 56 participants. Among them 30 were young people, 16 were youth workers, 7 were managers of youth bodies and 2 policy-makers. 18 of the participants were coming from rural areas, while 14 were part of the minority and marginalized/excluded groups: ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTI people, people with disabilities. Additionally, 6 interviews or consultations were conducted in Bulgaria, Italy and Lithuania, involving 3 more policy makers and 3 more youth workers. The research results were summarized in country reports on the bases of which the current report is built. It seeks to highlight commonalities within the five partner countries, while also highlighting specific contextual and national situation. This is the structure followed in each sub-chapter below.



Youth work **in** the context



Summary of common findings

- Youth work continues to either not be officially recognized, or when it is, it lacks clear professionalization with attached training and practice that would prepare youth workers to address the needs of youth from minority and marginalized/excluded groups;
- Youth NGOs – rather than state, regional or local authorities – have a leading role in developing youth work and policies and tools connected to delivering youth activities; this has been strongly accelerated by the Erasmus + programme (and previous youth-oriented funding instruments) of the European Union;
- Governmental policies give little guidance to the role of youth work in engaging youth from minority and marginalized/excluded groups or when they do, exclusion factors are very narrowly defined and/or not much progress is seen.
- In many cases, the quality of youth work and its relationship to social inclusion would depend on regional authorities and/or municipalities and is – as a result – unevenly funded, developed and supported throughout national territory.



Youth work definition, management and recognition

Youth work in **Bulgaria** remains underdeveloped. The term itself (“младежка работа“), although used in strategic and political documents (e.g. in the National Strategy on Youth 2010-2020) remains widely unpopular and unrecognized in general society. The same applies for the term youth worker (“младежки работник“) – both of them are understood as employment for young people, regardless of the field, rather than a field of its own. “Youth worker” is not recognized as a profession in the national categorization system and there is no codified understanding of job description, competencies or training, which are institutionally supported. Youth work and development of young people, in general, is under the competency of Ministry of youth and sports, which is more active in the field of sports and less in the field of youth, also visible from its budget allocation. The soon-to-expire Strategy on Youth (2010-2020) calls for multi-sectors approach in the field

of youth, but this has not been fully implemented in practice.

Youth work in **Italy** is not clearly defined as in other countries in Europe and there are no policies that recognize 'youth worker' as a profession. Since there are no defined boundaries for youth work, it has to be seen as a set of expressions shaped by different traditions and frameworks and used to cover a wide range of activities. Although there is no specific recognition of the figure of a professional youth worker, the Italian panorama is characterized by a long tradition of interventions and good practices developed at grassroots level, in particular thanks to the contribution of local authorities and third sector organizations. The main representative body that provides policies in the field of youth is the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civil Service which is the support structure for the President of the Council of Ministers for the promotion and connection of Government actions aimed at ensuring the implementation of policies in favour of young people and in matters of universal civil service.

In **Lithuania**, on a national level, the Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is in charge of youth policy. They describe youth work as organised activities for young people which provide them with possibilities to gain skills and experience that is necessary for their personal and professional development. Youth work in Lithuania is based on the principles of empathy, respect, being a role model, confidentiality and justice, professionalism. Youth work activities can be organized in different settings: a youth centre, school, cultural centre, outside or elsewhere where young people feel comfortable. An analysis of the implementation of youth work in Lithuania conducted in 2015 stated that youth work in the country is quite young as it started developing after the country became independent in 1990. Because of that, the understanding of youth work, especially by older generations, is quite narrow and limited to extra-curricular activities in specialized institutions, e.g., music or sports schools. Non-formal learning activities are usually not well known, and their value is not recognized, while they are also underfunded. Youth centers and other organisations providing other non-formal learning possibilities suffer because of a lack of visitors and financial support and, as a result, focus more on surviving rather than on inclusion or quality of activities.

Youth work in **Poland** is mainly done by non-governmental organisations. There have been many attempts on the national level in the past 10 years to recognise youth work as a part of educational / developmental path of a young person. However, the latest national youth policy expired in 2012 and since then there has not been any official strategy on youth in Poland. However, the occupation of a youth worker was recognised and included in the official "Classification of occupations and specialities". The job description of a youth worker reads: *The youth worker supports, initiates and organizes leisure activities for young people at risk of addiction, crime, aggression, prostitution and parentlessness; conducts workshops and classes in community centres, clubs,*

extracurricular and informal education facilities and the streets; cooperates with schools and local communities; organises assistance and support through social services and health care facilities. Though a job description exists, there is no clear educational path nor accreditation for people to be officially recognised as youth workers. The description does not make any references to social inclusion of young people and cannot be found either in any legal instruments or in the official documents issued by the Polish National Youth Council.

The framework for work with youth in **Spain** was established a long time ago, focused on implementation at the regional level. Youth workers in Spain are not recognized as a profession and they will rather be qualified as social workers or social educators. In the first case, social workers would receive a specialisation on social inclusion, but on the other hand, many youth centers are not able to afford social workers as a permanent staff position, while theoretical part of education many times missing practice. The main challenges for youth workers are thus the lack of quality training courses directed to their needs, including in-service training for those who have been working in the field for a long time to keep up with changes in the needs of young people and offer a better and helpful service. In addition, training for young people is neglected and this does not allow them to have decision-making and participatory role in politics and decisions.



Youth work and social inclusion

In **Bulgaria**, the Strategy on Youth (2010-2020) pays special attention to social inclusion of young people from disadvantaged groups, but stresses more on social and labour integration of institutionalized youth, as well as to access of youth from rural areas to youth work. The measures in these aspects are however insufficient and have not brought systematic change at the end of the strategy period.

The main challenges related to social inclusion of young people in **Lithuania** are youth unemployment and integration in the labour market, non-formal education and youth entrepreneurship. Socially excluded young people usually come from socially vulnerable families; from families whose parental rights were limited; from orphanages; youth living in remote/rural areas; children of migrant workers and immigrants; children of ethnic minorities; young people with any physical or mental disabilities; unemployed young people. There is no specific strategy on social inclusion of youth as a special group. However, the Action Plan for Increasing Social Inclusion for 2014 - 2020 mentions youth among other target groups. Also, the National Program for the Development of Youth Policy for 2011 – 2019 has many measures of inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).



In the **Polish** official government policies, inclusion is understood in a very narrow way: there are, for example, policies that try to tackle poverty, while others, especially related to different minority groups do not exist and in some cases are discouraged by the officials. This is especially visible in cases of migrants, refugees and LGBTIQ people. The government officials and the leading political party (PIS – Law and Justice) uses hate speech and propaganda against these groups of people.

In the Region of Murcia (**Spain**), there is a high percentage of migrant population (due to the high availability of jobs in agriculture), along with relatively conservative culture and tradition. On the other hand, there is a big number of NGOs that work on the topic of inclusion and with groups of risk of social exclusion – migrants, refugees, Roma communities. While there are not so many governmental structures focused on working with specific youth groups, there is a well-developed structure is responsible for youth employment and also a wide network of youth information offices, that can support young people in such aspects as job finding, inclusion of Roma young people, creating of association.



Decentralization and political situation

The Strategy on Youth in **Bulgaria** emphasizes the role of local authorities and especially municipalities in the support and development of young people, which is why the quality of youth work also varies from municipality to municipality. While some have invested resources and energy to support the field, others are neglecting it altogether. It also leaves the field largely influenced by the political landscape in the different localities.

In **Italy**, the sector of youth work is not regulated, nor formally defined at the national level. The regulation of the sector, as for youth policies in general, is delegated to regional and local authorities. As a result, in some regions, such as Campania Region, in Regional Law “December 29, 2017 n. 38”, youth workers (or socio-educational animators, in the most widely accepted translation into Italian) are formally identified.

In 2016, the National Audit Office of **Lithuania** prepared an official report on youth policy and its implementation. According to the report, there is a lack of integrity between the national youth policy and the national development strategy and some municipalities fail to create preconditions for the proper implementation of youth work at the local level.

Polish NGOs have experienced a lot of backlash and problems due to the shrinking space for civil society under pressure by the current government. LGBTIQ organisations were publicly shamed (and sometimes attacked) and together with other organisations

that work for the inclusion of migrants and refugees were practically excluded from public funding. NGOs that work either with LGBTIQ or migrant / refugee issues were not allowed to enter schools and run workshops in any public institutions. In fact, no official recommendation was issued for schools to take such actions, however, the atmosphere of hate towards those groups was spread all over, mainly by government officials. The lack of debate on inclusion policies is clearly visible and does not happen either on the governmental level or the NGO level.

The responsibility for support to youth and those who work with youth in **Spain** is given to autonomous regions and further to local authorities. However, there is a lack of equality in the opportunities and support offered to youth across the country. Some regions made big steps forward in making frameworks for youth works (by adapting strategies, programmes, funding, even laws for youth) while other regions lack some or many of these structures. As a result, it is nearly impossible to make an overview of national-level youth work. At the same time, in the recent year Spain is witnessing a wider spread of extreme right-wing narratives. This is especially concerning as political movements using racist rhetoric are seeing high involvement of young people, who become nationalist.



Developments and practices

Four municipalities in **Bulgaria** with the cooperation of Ministry of Education and Science and the Council of Europe and funding from the EEA Grants, have created and maintain youth centers with quality assurance on youth work, which have committed to cater to the needs of minority and marginalized/excluded groups, particularly Roma. In addition, the participation of different youth NGOs in Erasmus+ projects, particularly such on strategic partnerships, has opened the youth sphere in Bulgaria for the topic of inclusion. The CHARM initiative has also played a factor in opening the conversation about inclusive youth work. Some developments are in place, however, they are still not integrated under an overall policy in the field.

One of the most popular training opportunities promoted in **Italy** is offered under the Civil Service Programme. Civil Service was created as an alternative to mandatory national military service. Nowadays, it is a possibility given to young people from 18 to 29 years old to dedicate a year of their lives toward a solidarity commitment. Owing to voluntary civil service, youngsters are guaranteed a strong educational and training path - as it is an important and often only opportunity for personal growth - and education toward active citizenship. One of the features that tackle with the aim of this project is that migrant citizens can participate in public notices for the selection of civil service volunteers. Other types of internship opportunities exist on the regional level. For example, in Sardinia, the public agency Sardegna Ricerche supports the Regional Government's policies for

research, innovation and technology development. It collaborates with universities in organising training placements, postgraduate specialisation and master courses; and with the Region of Sardinia in implementing programmes enabling young Sardinian graduates to gain advanced training and placements with organisations outside the Region and then to return to Sardinia, to work with the local enterprises, research centres, universities and public agencies. Specialised training seminars and technical-scientific updates for enterprises are also provided.

As in other countries, in **Lithuania**, a huge impact was done by international organisations and the European Commission for the development of youth work in Lithuania, who paid attention to youth policies and provided financial support for the development of quality youth work. Thus, the concept of open youth work is highly promoted as a way to ensure the social inclusion of all groups of young people. The number of organizations and institutions with various similar names (e.g. youth center, youth club, open youth center, mobile youth center, etc.) offer various activities for young people. Following the subsidiarity principle, the priority to organize open youth work is given to non-governmental organizations and religious communities. Local authorities are active where such organizations do not want to take responsibility for such activities or do not have the capacity to do so. One of the key institutional forms of open work is open youth center / space. They function in a particular social environment and aim that young people living in the area had a place to spend free time there: meet and socialize with their friends, play games, listen to music, or just be together. Such institutional bodies do not demand regular visits of young people or any other kind of obligations, except compliance with regulations that are mandatory for all visitors. They also provide different activities based on the needs of young people (e.g., computer, DJ, breakdancing classes, etc.). Youth centers/spaces are run by youth workers who need to be ready to speak with youngsters about their problems, consult and suggest where they could find specific assistance. They also assist young people in framing their ideas, encourage and help to implement them, support in the reflection of their achievements, keep in touch and cooperate with the institutions at the local area, keep in touch with the families of young people.

In **Poland**, there is hope for better dialogue and greater support for inclusion practices as the new edition of the EEA Norway Grants available to all NGOs is tackling discrimination and social exclusion as one of its priorities. As youth organisations and organisations working with young people are one of the biggest beneficiaries of this programme one can expect better coordination in the field and quality projects dealing with the issue of inclusion. So far, youth work that promotes inclusion is mainly done through Erasmus+ projects.



Understanding of **inclusive** youth work



Summary of common findings

- There is a shared understanding that youth work is strictly linked to social inclusion and youth organizations and other bodies should put efforts to support young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups;
- Young people and youth workers have a clear idea of what are the characteristics that youth work should have to be inclusive (among these safe space, quality training, accessible and various activities), but admit they don't always exist in practice;
- here is clear willingness to improve youth work into a direction of a higher level of inclusiveness, but structural problems are identified on the way (supporting policies, funding, training, concrete tools).



Youth work for **everyone**

In **Bulgaria**, in general terms, actors in the field show progressive understanding on what for them means inclusive youth work, especially in comparison to previous inquiries. However, it also needs to be noted that the composition of the group, which included more people from minority than majority, predisposes positive attitudes towards the inclusion of young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups in youth work. Nevertheless, there is a firm and general agreement that young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups must be well engaged in youth work, however, there are different views as to how this should happen and how many efforts youth organizations should put in this direction. Participants have a clear understanding of the importance of youth work in engaging and supporting young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups. They see youth work in general as a tool to build commitment and civic engagement among young people; to support their development including in supporting basic competencies as socialization, literacy and education; to enhance structures, teams and build competencies of working together; to provide opportunities for making friends and having fun. They tend to associate marginalized/excluded youth with discrimination, rejection, insecurity, unequal opportunities and need of (additional) support. Youth work, according to them, has a role to play in addressing these issues, however, it cannot and

should not be expecting to solve it all. Participants have agreed that young people from rural areas, young people from ethnic minorities (especially Roma), disabled young people and LGBTI young people are among the groups that face additional barriers in accessing youth work and might need special considerations in terms of the overall way in which organizations work. Migrant young people have not been brought up by the group, which reflects both their small number in Bulgaria, but also their invisibility.

Similarly, in **Italy**, actors understand the value of inclusion within associations that work in the field of youth work. There is an agreement that equal opportunities should be guaranteed to everybody (without distinguishing between gender, political opinions, social and economic conditions, race and religion), both to participate to the activities organized, and to be included as members part of the staff of an organization. Participants consider "Inclusion in youth work" as one of the main values that a non-governmental organization should promote, stimulating the active participation of disadvantaged groups. When talking about disadvantaged groups/individuals at risk of social exclusion, especially in the youth work field, most of the participants referred with their examples to people with diverse cultural backgrounds, such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. This reflects the societal perception in Italy, regarding the difficulties in the management of the migration flows. It was admitted, however, that in many fields of youth work it is not possible (or at least very difficult) to include people with disabilities due to lack of means to secure a safe and healthy environment, lack of efficient infrastructures faced by many youth organization at the local level and the lack of specific skills and knowledge on the side of the professionals.

In **Lithuania**, the participants of the research confirmed that youth work in the country follows the universal principles of the field: the essence of youth work lays in the awareness of the needs of a young person and their facilitation, guidance and support to deal with the issues that they face, support in pursuing their dreams and goals. The participants of the research highlighted that young people have a lot of possibilities and strengths which can be used for good a purpose with the support and empowerment from a youth worker. They agreed that it takes a lot of time and requires proper skills but such a service is crucially important for youngsters, especially the ones who fall to any category of fewer opportunities. They need support, need to feel welcomed and included. An experienced youth worker who can create a safe space is crucial for ensuring the quality of youth work. In addition to this part, attractive activities as a key factor to engage youth was mentioned by the participants of the focus group. While discussing the actual situation of inclusion of different youth groups, young people from rural areas could not even identify any youngsters with fewer opportunities whom they have ever seen attending activities in youth organisations. This can be explained either with insufficient logistics when it comes to youth work bodies in rural areas (e.g., limited transportation) or with the fact that youth organisations are not ready to accept, deal and create a safe space for diverse groups of young people. Young people with different social backgrounds and with disabilities were named as the least included groups of all participants of the research.

In **Poland**, the expression 'inclusive youth work' is not very present in the work of the NGOs / youth organisations. Participants mainly associate it with educational work that aims at addressing existing stereotypes and prejudices among young people. There was a common agreement among the people in the focus groups that in our reality when we talk about excluded groups of young people we mainly mean LGBTIQ people (lack of organisations dealing specifically with LGBTIQ issues, lack of places to meet, general hostility towards LGBTIQ people), Roma people (lack of Roma organisations, harmful stereotypes about Roma people), Ukrainian people (biggest national minority nowadays in Poland: stereotypes and prejudices) and young people marginalised because of socio-economic or geographical issues (young people living the countryside, experiencing poverty). When describing excluded youth, the participants tackled the following areas: discrimination, mental health issues, general public attitudes, support and help, survival strategies.

In **Spain**, participants have shown a quite deep understanding of what does inclusive youth work mean. The understanding coincides with what has been found in other countries.



Characteristics of inclusive youth work

In **Bulgaria**, participants all agree that youth organizations should have the *values of equity and diversity* well embedded in their core and some even expressed the idea that not following thoroughly these principles means an organization is not doing youth work, but something else. In more general terms, there was clear agreement on this, however, when it comes to practical implementation, opinions vary. In the discussion, the following positions have been expressed in relation to the different characteristics: *Safe space* remains a crucial and important characteristic of youth work, all participants agreed. There were different views on the role of youth work to provide *personal and professional development* of young people, particularly in relation to volunteering. One participant raised the issue of practices of some youth organizations to use volunteering to generate income, paying less attention to the development of the volunteers themselves. According to that participants noted, one should not volunteer for life and should at some point be paid for the work they do, especially when they have volunteered for years. This is particularly sensitive when it comes to young people from marginalized communities (especially Roma), who also face poverty to a bigger extend as majority youth. In relation to *access to social rights*, participants agreed youth work can contribute to that, but once again highlighted that there should be realistic expectations as to what youth work is capable of doing, considering its infrastructure and resources. More specifically, if other fields (education, employment, social services, healthcare) do not work properly and/

or are unfriendly to young people, youth work alone cannot fill this gap. It is one of the reasons why some participants placed this characteristic lower in the ranking.

All the people involved in the research in **Italy** agreed on the fact that the essential characteristic that an organization must have is to demonstrate consistency between inclusion policies promoted and real practice, which means to put into practice what the association preaches. According to the participants' perceptions, it is not uncommon to see organizations living the paradox of trying to raise awareness on the importance of inclusion in the society of specific groups and being at the same time deficient, on the practice side, in terms of inclusion of the same categories. Like in Bulgaria, however, there was no full consensus in all issues. There were conflicting opinions in regards to gender equality in the NGOs field. The main point of the discussion concerned a hypothetical mandatory number (quotas) of women to be employed in a youth organization, to be applied in order to guarantee the gender balance (in line with the same regulation adopted in Italy in 2011, applicable to the boards of directors and statutory auditors of listed companies, and then extended to companies with public control). Some of the participants stated that the application of this rule in the youth work could compromise the more important principle of meritocracy in the selection phase, being forced to prefer someone according to gender even if among the candidates the person selected would not be the best option in relation to the needs of the organization. Some other participants replied that these kinds of measures are essential to overcome the "status quo" in which women are too often confined to positions which exclude responsibility in the workplace.

In **Lithuania**, the characteristics of youth organizations were more focused on policy and resources. The participants of the research noted that the professionalism of a youth worker is the key to ensure the quality of youth work. Therefore, quality trainings and other learning opportunities for youth workers need to be ensured. These are the most effective ways for youth workers to get motivation and new ideas. The participants of the research also agreed that organisations should have stable and clear policies supported by national laws. Usually, young people do not care or check the policies of an organisation, but it is necessary for an organisation to have the main principles and the strategy of their work. In reality, only a few organisations have this. Finally, the participants of the research also mentioned that the national policies, e.g., policies related to the provision of long term social services, related to youth work are outdated and do not represent the current needs of youngsters or youth work. In addition, the laws are hardly understandable for people who have no skills in reading the legal language. Youth workers admit, that they would not even know where to look for this kind of information which makes hard to keep up with legal requirements and adapt organisations' policies to them.

In **Poland**, the following characteristics / principles of inclusive youth work were identified by the participants of the focus group:

- **Creating spaces for young people from excluded groups (equity of service):** the

lack of physical spaces for young people to meet is sometimes one of the biggest obstacles to practice real inclusion; therefore, inclusive youth work should have a closer look at the available spaces and assess if they are open for young people from marginalised groups / communities. Sometimes such places do exist, but they are located in the places that are not available for young people either due to the physical barriers (e.g. for young people with disabilities) or other barriers – e.g. they are associated with institutions or organisations that provide help to children and young people in specific life situations (e.g. suffering from violence) – young people do not want to be associated with such institutions. Space is often about trust, which must be developed among young people. Such spaces should be visible welcoming young people from minority backgrounds, e.g. such young people should be involved in designing and decorating the space.

- **Working with the community and marginalised people / communities (networking and partnership):** in order for the inclusive youth work to be effective, it needs to address specific needs marginalised / excluded young people have; therefore, close work with the community and especially with marginalised youth groups is needed to be able to recognise such needs and adapt existing youth work practices to them or create new ones.
- **Mixing people:** inclusive youth work should make sure people from different backgrounds are mixed without favouring one group over the other.
- **Reaching out (being proactive):** inclusive youth work should be reaching out to young people from marginalised / excluded groups, rather than waiting for them to come and participate in youth work activities. This would include close cooperation with different stakeholders, such as social services or schools. When it comes to young people who are marginalised because of geographical reasons, youth work needs to come to them, e.g. organising activities in meeting places in the countryside.
- **Active participation:** Inclusive youth work should be based on the active participation of all young people. This, most of all, includes young people (especially from marginalised groups) to be involved in decision making processes.
- **Variety of activities / opportunities:** young people do not often see the offer of youth organisations or other NGOs that work with young people 'attractive' therefore, the organisations should make sure that a wide range of activities are proposed / offered so that all young people who are interested to take part in the will always find something that is of their interest;
- **Good communication inside and outside:** inclusive youth work should be well communicated to the wider public; people need to know that we do that! Such communication should also happen within the organisation so other employees do understand what is done and for what reason.
- **A better understanding of inclusive youth work:** people in the organisation need to know that inclusive youth work is not only working with marginalised youth groups but also preventing such phenomena as racism, homophobia, xenophobia,

discrimination, sexism or ableism. Such activities should be also targeting a wider community, not only young people who do participate in the activities run by the organisation.

- **Inclusive youth work must be well resourced:** in order to run a variety of activities that also include and support young people from marginalised communities / groups, youth work must be financed from different sources, and this financing must be a contributing factor to the sustainability of inclusive youth work; but resources also include well prepared and educated staff or support system made available for young people from marginalised groups / communities.

Similarly, in **Spain**, the most important elements of the inclusive youth work that were named by participants are equity, openness, competences of the youth workers, values of the organisations, following those values by the organisation itself, diversity, better chances for groups of young people who are in the situation or risk of exclusion. Among these, one of the elements that was mentioned the most and that was named as one of the main pillars of inclusive youth work – **equity of opportunities and equity of treatment**. Participants discussed the difference between equity and equality and about a personalised approach to each young person according to their background, possibilities and life circumstances. Another important element mentioned several times was **equal access to information and information structures**. Participants report that while formally youth bodies are open to every young person, when it comes to practice, there are barriers such as language, cultural gaps, working hours (usually they are open in the morning when young people are studying or working), where this information is placed and in which languages. Another important characteristic highlighted in Spain is the **common approach and understanding of the inclusive youth work by different stakeholders** - youth NGOs, policy makers, researchers, educational institutions, families and young people. If policy makers and structures responsible for the implementation of the youth policy in the region do not have a clear understanding of what inclusion is and how to approach and work with different groups of young people, because they do not understand the specificity of each group and do not have the knowledge of how to work with them. This becomes a problem at the moment of creation of common strategies and approaches to inclusive youth work. As in other countries, participants discussed the creation of **safe space** where young people feel free to express themselves, to learn how to communicate and live together, learn about the importance of diversity, how to establish intercultural dialogue, also the capacity of such spaces to work in inclusive way, that also includes prepared youth workers, who know how to manage diversity in a best possible way, by creating a valuable learning experience for young people.





Willingness and motivation to become more inclusive

In **Bulgaria**, research participants have shown a general positive attitude towards youth work turning more inclusive, while some stressed that we cannot rely on this is a natural process and should actively work to support it and push it forward. There seems to be a motivation for such a process, but it becomes more nuanced when details on how are being discussed. There are different opinions as to the question of how pro-active a youth organization should be in its attempts to engage young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups. The prevailing view among the research participants is that a youth organization should insure free space and be open for engaging any types of a young person, as long as they have the desire, motivation and/or the attitude to get engaged. However, this seems to undermine the structural barriers that being in a situation of marginalization and exclusion can put in front of a young person, including lack of motivation to engage. Finally, participants also discussed how pro-active a youth organization should be in putting forward inclusive positions and taking political stands. The fear here is that if an organization becomes recognized as too pro-minority (e.g. pro-LGBTI) it could be attacked by political actors or be boycotted by parents.

In **Italy**, it was also established there is a clear motivation among stakeholders to make youth work more inclusive. This motivation is influenced by the willingness of actors to create a better society with less intolerance and prejudices, allowing everybody to have the same opportunities of participation. On the other hand, it cannot ignore that this motivation too often remains at the theoretical level, without being translated into practice at a desirable level, by the people involved in the management of youth organizations.

In **Lithuania**, no resistance of the participants was registered in relation to the inclusion of any group of young people in youth work activities. The main barriers for a better inclusion mentioned by the participants were legal requirements and insufficient funding programmes that do not allow to implement the principles of inclusion in full extent. Nevertheless, all participants expressed an interest and need to create a more inclusive environment in their organisations.

Clear motivation to becoming more inclusive, with remarks on already mentioned barriers, is also found among the research participants in **Poland** and **Spain**.





Culture of inclusiveness in youth work

Summary of common findings

- Youth workers and other practitioners are committed to building inclusive environments and engaging minority and marginalized/excluded youth, but admit that there is much more work to be done in practice;
- There are still young people from certain groups who are not reached or engaged enough in youth work and there is a need for a better assessment as to why is that and what can be done to address it;
- There is a shared need for training in the staff of youth organization as to how to better build and manage diverse and inclusive environment.



State of diversity within youth organizations

In **Bulgaria**, participants agreed that youth organizations are less and less openly hostile and would be more careful with taking negative positions towards minority and marginalized/excluded groups. For example, reviewing cases from the past, many participants thought that such cases of open racism, xenophobia and homophobia would be much less frequent nowadays. According to them, the level of sensitivity towards minority and marginalized/excluded groups and at least in theory youth organizations would commit to enhancing equality within their midst. The research shows that there are organizations which pay more attention to the question of diversity and make it a mission to ensure it in their work. This is particularly true for LGBTI and Roma organizations (representatives of both were present in the focus groups). Specific Roma-related, LGBTI or disability organizations for such young people exist and they are usually well equipped to cater to the needs of their major target groups in terms of acceptance, safe space, accessibility, etc. However, these are not universally accessible (e.g. LGBTI groups and organizations are only available in Sofia; Roma youth groups and organizations are concentrated in some places in the countryside but don't offer universal coverage and access, etc.). Furthermore, it would be wrong to assume that the interests and needs of young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups are fully shaped and somewhat limited to their minority/marginal identity. Furthermore, participants agree mixing young people from different social groups is among the most important characteristics of youth work.

Mainstream youth organizations are thus those who need to equip themselves and welcome young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups and cater to their needs.

In **Italy**, youth associations, if compared to other realities in our context, could be considered very committed in the involvement in the society of people with different backgrounds and people belonging to categories at risk of social exclusion. Cultural diversity is seen as a positive value: they increase the cultural synergy of an association and have positive effects on team building. Although the work done in this sense by the NGO's is undoubtedly relevant, according to the participants, deep analysis and self-assessment should be done by the actors involved in the youth field. Sometimes, for professionals working in a field where some principles of tolerance and equity are taken for granted in their daily work, it does not come natural to periodically evaluate the level of Inclusiveness of their entity.

In **Lithuania**, the research found that diversity in youth organisations is still poor. Most of the organisations do not create necessary conditions for people with fewer opportunities. Most of the activities are dedicated to motivated youngsters. Also, discrimination and bullying because of religion or ethnic backgrounds are vivid. But as in Bulgaria, the participants shared their observation that if compared the nowadays situation with the one a few years ago, things are moving in the right direction and the space and atmosphere of the activities for youth are becoming more friendly. The reason for it is that on certain levels the topics of tolerance, sexual orientation and others became more important. Youth workers also started paying more attention to the issues of tolerance, got better skills in dealing with conflicts and discrimination. Despite this, youth workers admitted that there is still a lot to do. One of the best included group of young people with fewer opportunities named by the participants of the research was youngsters with different financial backgrounds. As activities in youth centers or other organisations rarely require your financial contribution, it does not make any difference there if you have money or not. And if open-mindedness is valued in an organization and activities are dedicated to nurturing tolerance, then the behavioural differences become more as an interesting source of diversity rather than a reason to bully or discriminate.

In **Poland**, research participants were rather critical at the current state of diversity within the organization. They have highlighted two important aspects of the culture of inclusiveness in their organisations: First of all, they realised that there is a common belief in the organisation about how open and tolerant they are. Some people highlighted that in their organisations some people openly talk about their sexual orientation (LGBTIQ) and in fact, they never experienced any sort of bad treatment; what is more, they felt appreciated and supported by other young people and the organisation itself. However, the reality has also shown the opposite: very few activities that promote diversity and inclusion, lack of strategical thinking about inclusion in youth work; lack of young people from marginalised / excluded groups taking part in their activities; lack of gender

equality and the principle of gender equality not being discussed in the organisation, not questioning the existing decision making structures and how they keep the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The second point, participants drew attention to, is that sometimes people in power positions in the organisations (such as board members) do believe that the organisation is open for all. However, such belief is not shared by other people who work in the organisation or sometimes we do not even know if people who we work with share this belief or these principles. Those two points influence the culture of inclusiveness in the organisation: if the principles related to inclusion are not shared, or we do not know if they are shared, it is difficult to think about common agenda for youth work in the organisation.

In **Spain**, youth actors agree that more should be done towards inclusive youth work, but also that there is a lack of competences for it, both in the side of youth workers, as well as youth organisations. Inside a youth organisation, there are usually no special inclusion policies or practice. Like in Bulgaria, such policies might be seen in organisations which are specialised on the group of young people that are at risk of exclusion or with minorities. A clear paradox is observed: there is a high level of understanding of what is inclusive youth work among youth organisation, but many times incapacity to apply this understanding into practice.

 **Challenges**

When it comes to the experience of young people with mainstream youth organizations in **Bulgaria**, many participants shared negative experiences they have themselves faced or they have witnessed. Two main situations were outlined: 1) General negative attitude towards some groups, which translates to a hostile environment to these groups in the organization: this is specifically the case with LGBTI and Roma groups; 2) General positive attitude towards some groups, which however not always translates to engaging them in full in the organizations' work: this is especially the case of young people with disabilities. Some concrete recent practices of exclusion were also shared by participants:

- Negative perceptions and distrust towards Roma youth volunteering groups;
- Youth workers' homophobia expressed in social networks, even if not openly in her daily activities with young people some of which are openly LGBTI;
- Attempts to reduce the visibility of the LGBTI community and its symbols in university environment on behalf of a Students Council.

Within these actions and experiences, negative and harmful stereotypes and attitudes could still be seen – they are not due to the organizational capacity to handle diversity, but of the lack of willingness to do so. Presuming that all youth organizations already have

a positive attitude to becoming more inclusive and the willingness to do so, would in some cases be misleading.

Both in Bulgaria and **Italy**, youth work actors pay attention to the specific case of young people with disabilities. According to participants, there are societal expectations for a sense of empathy, sometimes translating to patronizing attitudes and behaviours. Nevertheless, when it comes to the actual involvement of young people with disabilities in youth work, there is still a lot to be desired. In some cases, youth organizations cannot afford to make their environment and activities accessible, as there is a general problem with youth work being under-funded and poorly supported. In other cases, however, there is a lack of awareness of how activities can be more accessible, which would not necessarily cost more money. Furthermore, there is also low awareness as to what other support – apart from nearly being accessible – young people with disabilities might need to have the courage and motivation to engage in youth work. In Italy, like in other countries, one of the most relevant underlying causes of deficiency is the lack of effective tools or strategies which could be used.

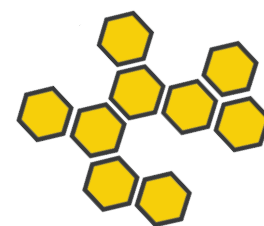
In **Lithuania**, actors in youth work point out that the extent of discrimination and exclusion of specific groups depends a lot on a specific context, for example, geographical area, etc. Here is the summary of the reflections of the research participants on the inclusion of specific groups of young people:

- **Young people with ethnic or religious backgrounds:** some specific towns in Lithuania have a huge ethnic diversity (e.g., the Polish community in Vilnius area), so youth representing those ethnic groups are usually discriminated and not included in youth activities. In bigger cities, the population of foreign students has highly increased during recent years. However, the activities of different youth work bodies are still not open to this group of young people, so they usually are left behind. The situation is similar to religious minorities: if one Muslim family lives in a small town, most probably they will not be included in the community life and will not participate actively in any activities. Same applies for youth inclusion in youth organisations.
- **Young people on the margins (e.g., young offenders, homeless, drug addicts, etc.):** these groups are barely involved in youth work activities. Reaching out these groups is challenging even for social workers who provide basic social services to them.
- **NEETs:** the overall situation of the inclusion of NEETs is better because of the national and European priorities and funds given to this specific group of young people. Within the national youth guarantee initiatives, some young people who are considered as prepared by their supervisors can be given the possibility to volunteer in a specific organization. However, such a possibility is limited. This limitation can be also confirmed by the fact that no participant of the current research could state that their organisations engage NEETs in their activities.
- **Young people with disabilities:** the situation is similar to what was found out in Bulgaria and Italy.

In **Poland**, participants in the research also highlighted major challenges youth organization face to insure diversity within their organizations. In most organisations, the principle of gender equality is practically not kept in mind on any level of organisational culture. They also admit that the activities organised by the organisations very often do not take into account the specific needs of young people from marginalised groups (lack of transport, accessibility issues). In relation to power, people from marginalised excluded groups very rarely sit in the boards of the organisations or other managerial structure. Some groups are neglected, such as Roma young people, as there is no readiness or abilities to work with this groups of young people; the reasons for this are existing stereotypes and the belief that this group needs some sort of “special treatment”, which the organisations are not able to provide.

The research efforts in **Spain** further completes the picture, as it outlines the challenges and deficiency youth workers face in ensuring a diverse and accepting environment:

- No special training on how to work with different groups (how to relate to different cultures, how to work with sensitive topics);
- Problems with reaching some groups (more ‘closed’ groups, like Roma young people);
- Prejudices and fears on behalf of parents;
- Territory separation of the different groups of young people;
- Absence of open spaces for young people in the “neutral zone” (city centre for example);
- Physical barriers in the spaces where Youth Organisations are;
- No diversity and lack of representatives of different cultures and groups among staff and volunteers of organisations.



Systems of inclusiveness in youth work



Summary of common findings

- Youth organizations usually have no specific policy measures in place that specifically deal with inclusion and diversity; some practices are in place, but they are sometimes difficult to formulate and are as a rule not formalized;
- Most of the good practices that youth organizations have to tackle inclusion and diversity are more often ad hoc projects and initiatives rather than transversal and embedded in the policy of the organization;
- Policies and practices of inclusion are deeply connected to other organizational systems and thus require shared efforts and willingness to be put in place;
- There is a clear need for more support, guidance and systematic tools to assist organizations in applying inclusion policy and practices in their work.



Policies and practices in place

In **Bulgaria**, research participants struggled to define inclusion policies and practices both in their own organization and in terms of the organizations that they know. The conversation around policies was to a bigger extent based on what should be there rather than what is there and works. This is informative and shows that there is relatively poor understanding of the concept of policies for inclusion. Both in Bulgaria and **Poland**, whenever asked about inclusion policies and practices, many participants refer to specific projects and initiatives they have engaged with or heard about. Such projects are, however, usually limited in time, focused in terms of activities, target groups and duration and do not always remain sustainable or transversal to the organization. Furthermore, in many cases, they are focused on one target group (e.g. only Roma youth), rather than looking on minority and exclusion as a broader concept with similar roots, mechanisms and consequences.

For example, in **Italy**, while participants were in general critical for the lack of coordination and comprehensive actions for inclusion in the field of youth work, they did highlight

example projects:

- Project “SMARRITI.NET”, Palermo, (Sicily) Italy;

Through information technologies, a teacher group promotes on-line tutoring to help pupils at risk of failure in the main school subjects (Italian, Maths, and English). Funded by the European Social Fund, the project is based on e-learning methodology.

- Project “Operations restore hope”, Nuoro, (Sardinia) Italy;

Promoting the school success of pupils at risk of dropout through the instruments of cooperative learning and peer education is the aim of the project. Three steps are outlined: 1. teacher training; 2. lessons on mathematics starting from daily life experiences; 3. laboratories on problem solving using topics from the social activities developed in the pupils' spare time.

- Project “Don Dilani Centre”, Gioiosa Ionica (Calabria), Italy;

The project is aimed at defining continuity between school time and leisure time, useful for improving school results of pupils with a lack of home-support. Team workers of teachers and youth workers define together the educational goals of each pupil.

- Project “Try it again, Sam”, Turin, (Piemonte) Italy;

This project tests various cooperation structures among schools, regional associations and local organizations on the issue of drop-out recovery and school/training failure prevention of 14 to 20 year-old youths for a number of years. Therefore, it is a project targeting the promotion of an intra-institutional network aiming to ease school integration of adolescents with temporary integration and learning difficulties. Activities favouring the integration of foreign minors and adolescents - identified as the new subjects “at risk” of social separation, are being devised by a synergic collaboration of social services and leisure time workers.

Like in Bulgaria and other countries, the participants in **Lithuania** reported they don't have systematic inclusion processes in their organisations. Long term strategies, clear vision of organisations as well as tools for better inclusion of disadvantaged groups of young people usually do not exist. Nevertheless, some practices were shared to include youth with fewer opportunities. Here are some examples:

- **Selection processes:** while choosing participants for international youth exchange abroad, youth workers tend to choose people who cannot afford a trip abroad by themselves.
- **Ensuring emotional safety and well-being:** some organisations do activities dedicated to specific topics which are related to equality, inclusion and good treatment. One participant of the research provided an example of their organisation: for one month, they organised different activities related to emotional well-being. They helped the youngsters to understand different issues related to the emotional expression of their

peers, become aware of their personal emotional well-being and strengthen their empathy with their peers.

- **Addressing specific issues:** an international youth exchange organised on a specific topic by a youth organization involving local youth and addressing the topic of LGBT was provided as another example by the participants of the research. The benefit of such an activity was helping young people understand the issues related to LGBT in a local community, becoming more empathetic and more open for people who are a part of LGBT community, breaking stereotypes and changing own perspectives, as well as supporting to create a more LGBT-friendly environment in their local area.
- **Applying specific methods:** living library and similar methodologies or events were named by the participants of the research as very useful to raise awareness of the diversity in local communities and wider society.

As in the rest of the countries, actors in youth work from **Spain** report that their organizations don't have comprehensive strategies that tackle the inclusion of minority and marginalized/excluded youth. They, however, add to the list of projects and practices in different spheres. In the field of Gender equality, there are educational opportunities for young Roma women, special classes organised for girls who dropped out of school due to motherhood or due to other reasons. By the initiative of the young feminists' group of Lorca, peer support for victims of the gender-based violence offers support to girls who faced violence in order to help them to come back to social life and be able to build up non-violent relationships in the future. In the field of anti-Racism and discrimination projects like "STAR", "Lorca libre de racismo" aimed at education of young people about invisible racism and discrimination and ability to live together in the diverse society free from racism and discrimination. The projects were focused on schools as a way to reach young people from different communities. The Youth Center M13 in a district where mostly migrants live, which in order to involve young people from that community provide language classes, after school support and provide a space for self-expression and development, through involving young people into international projects and providing opportunities to take part in other projects of the organisations that are based there.



The way forward

In all five countries, research participants worked on elaborating policy principles, measures, and concrete tools, which should be followed and/or introduced in designing a comprehensive inclusive policy for a youth organization or body. As many of them are repetitive, we provide a shared list:

Mission statements. Mission statements should be the first point of reference when we talk about inclusion, according to the participants in focus groups. Most of the organisations

involved in the research were not able to find any references in their mission statements that would promote inclusion.

Internal policies. Some of the organisations present in the meeting have so called code of conducts, in which principles of equality and non-discrimination are present (anti-discrimination policy, anti-bullying policy). Where these exist, they should be better enhanced; and where such don't exist, they need to be cooperatively elaborated and enhanced.

Group contracts. It is a usual practice for young people who take part in youth work activities agreed to a group contract that was developed with the active participation of young people themselves. Such contracts call upon the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Contracts should be periodically reviewed when new young people join the activities. It is a point of discussion how they are reinforced when young people breach the principles agreed in the document.

Internal audits. One of the organisations in Poland used several times internal equality / anti-discrimination audit, such initiative is also recorded in Spain. Such a tool can be very helpful to assess the situation of the organization in regards to equality and diversity and based on that be able to take specific measures.

Financial rules. While youth work is in general considered free for young people, they do need to sometimes make financial investment for their full participation (e.g. participation fees in activities, self-funding of travel or similar) or make payments in advance and be reimbursed later (e.g. pre-pay for a flight ticket to take part in a youth exchange and receive reimbursement, sometimes months later). Some organizations have recognized how these factors could prevent young people at risk of or already living in poverty.

Language requirements. In some youth organizations, command of English is taken for granted as more and more young people their English language competencies. However, requirements for command in English can be exclusive for some young people who didn't have the opportunity to learn a foreign language. This is particularly true for young people for who even the local language (e.g. Bulgarian or Spanish) is a second language, e.g. some people from ethnic or migrant communities. In such cases language support (be it professional or improvised) can prevent exclusion.

Diversity in a team. Some organizations are more successful in engaging young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups than others, due to personal networks of their team members and trust built with certain groups and communities. This is particularly the case when diversity within the team itself is observed. However, fears of falling in the trap of tokenism are raised, i.e. seek diversity for the only sake of "optics" and "image", rather than for the sake of empowerment and fair representation.

Focused outreach. Participants agree that in many cases who participate in the activity of an organization is determined by what information channels we use to promote them. For example, many youth organizations do recruitment and information efforts in schools but tend to target some schools more profoundly than others (usually the so-called “elite” schools). This way we risk reaching out to marginalized/excluded groups who either study in less “prestige” schools or might not be in school altogether. The same applies to online channels and social media – there are groups and communities to which we sometimes make fewer efforts to get our message to. A mapping of what dissemination and information channels reach what groups of young people is needed to make sure we don’t only reach some young people while neglecting others.

Partnerships/corporations. Youth organizations, according to the research participants, should be very clear about their competencies to reach and engage young people from other minority and marginalized/excluded groups (e.g. through the mapping of information channels mentioned above). Whenever they find they are not well connected to reach out to some target groups, they could invest in partners that can. Some obvious partners, in this case, are the profiled groups and organizations, mentioned in the previous point. Apart from improved reach out among specific groups, these partnerships can be much more beneficial for shared learning, communities of practice and/or advocacy efforts.

Funding opportunities. In some cases, youth organizations decide to focus on engaging young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups, because of available funding opportunity that either requires such work or prioritises it (e.g. EEA Grants). While ethically questionable, such motivation might actually lead to positive developments, if there is a willingness in the organization to do so. However, donors rarely require specific organizational policies, code of conducts or other procedures that would evidence the inclusive way of working of an organization, seeking funding.

Resources for inclusion. The organisations need to be supported by the local authorities in order to make sure the system of inclusiveness is coherent and well resourced. It needs to be clear that in some cases organizations need to invest efforts or money to make their operations more inclusive. Local and national authorities should be more active in providing funding for such types of organizational development.

Safe and accessible spaces for the activities. Youth organizations should strive to provide accessible spaces in all the meanings of the term - adapted to young people with physical disabilities, accessibility from the point of view of transportation, distance, but also in terms of emotional safety, freedom to express oneself, freedom of bullying and harassment, etc.





Summary of common findings

- There is a shared understanding that quality training for youth workers and staff at youth organizations is one of the most important need to make youth organizations and other bodies more inclusive;
- Actors distinguish between the need to train and prepare youth workers to create and facilitate inclusive environment and practices on one side, and to train young people themselves as part of youth work.

As with the systems below, we provide a comprehensive list of all suggested training needs across the five target countries, broken down by targets groups to be trained.

Youth workers

- ability to recognise and work with the needs of young people coming from minorities and / or marginalised / excluded groups;
- ability to turn the values of inclusive youth work into practice (communicating values);
- ability to build and maintain relationships with young people based on trust;
- ability to communicate about youth work as inclusive practice;
- ability to deal with cases of bullying;
- ability to create safe spaces for young people;
- understanding of basic concepts of inclusion/exclusion, discrimination, minority/majority, bullying and harassment, power relations;
- examples and know-how of policies and practices that can be adapted and embedded in the organization;
- specific skills, competencies and knowledge on how to deal with specific categories of young people (e.g. migrants or people with disabilities) which would positively affect both the expertise of the professionals and the level of inclusion of the youth organizations;
- provision of guidelines, tips, suggestions or best practices to make work environments more accessible, safe and comfortable for young people with disabilities;
- transversal youth work competencies like control, patience, assertively, raising the level of motivation to participate, especially in bigger groups of young people, active listening, observation, empathy, being able to organize activities which are

attractive and relevant to both general groups of youth and the ones with fewer opportunities.

- ability to hold group reflection practices with colleagues after activities so that to understand the importance and become aware and able to react, accept and use feedback, also in regard to inclusivity.
- understanding the local context and its specific aspects, e.g. be aware of the ethnic, cultural and religious composition of their community.
- competencies to work with families and parents with different backgrounds and life situations;
- competencies to design inclusive learning and activity programs - what should be taken into consideration, how to choose activities, how to develop a programme, based on needs;
- basics of intercultural learning.

Young people

Young people should receive an on-arrival, entry training, which would allow them to get acquainted with the way the organization functions in general but would also allow them to internalize the values of diversity and inclusion. Such trainings should be made on regular basis, according to participants and at some point, can become peer-run.

They should acquire:

- basic understanding of inequality, exclusion and minority-majority relationships, as well as of phenomena like discrimination and bullying.
- roots and consequences of bullying and of feeling unwelcome or altogether excluded from a group.
- rules and practices for an overall culture of acceptance and non-violence, but clear mechanisms for reaction in case exclusionary practices or behaviour is experienced or witnessed should be made aware for young people.

Staff of youth organizations (beyond youth workers)

- understanding of the practical implications of inclusive youth work;
- ability to see and practice inclusion as the overarching principle of the work of the organisation;
- ability to support other people in inclusive youth work practice;
- ability to translate values of the organisation into daily work practice;
- ability to work in a hostile environment (attacks from the outside);
- practical tools which could lead the process to outline an actual picture of the level of inclusion of the organization, based on detailed parameters;
- practical tools to plan, introduce and enhance policies and practices for inclusion in the organization, as well as tools for monitoring;
- managing human and financial resources, from the point of view of inclusion.



There are no comprehensive national strategies on the inclusion of young people neither at the national policy level nor at the organisational level. The existing policies do not reflect the real needs of youth and the changing society. A strong advocacy work done by youth work providers and their associations is important in order to ensure that the regulations and funding programmes do not limit the possibilities of the most disadvantaged groups of young people.

Youth work seems to be making steps towards becoming more inclusive and recognizing the need to engage young people from minority and marginalized/excluded groups. However, there seems to be a lack of tradition, practice and in some cases understanding of the need and mechanics to do so. In other words, there is a common understanding that youth organizations cannot and should not be exclusionary in their values and their practice but should be equipped to translate this in their everyday work.

At times, there is tension between how organizations perceive themselves and how they operate in practice. There is a common perception (or maybe a myth) of own organisation as very open and inclusive. However, the real practice cannot be considered as such. The organisations, as a rule, do not really invest in inclusion work and do not communicate well the need and openness to run activities that are open for everyone.

There are some practices of inclusive youth work applied by different youth work bodies. However, they are still very fragmented and lack a systematic approach to equality and inclusion. Furthermore, in some cases, there is still a lack of motivation to embed the aspects of inclusion in the roots of an organization, for example, organizational policies and strategies. This gap can be fulfilled by providing efficient tools, training, guidance and support to youth workers on how to deal with the issues of inclusion in a systematic way.

While training (of staff and young people) is essential on the way of becoming more inclusive, it will not be sufficient to enhance the inclusiveness of youth organizations. They will be however critical in building motivation and willingness for the organization to undergo a profound process of rethinking its policies and practices, systematise them, introduce new ones and put efforts for enhancing, evaluating and improving them. At the same time, particular attention should be referred to interventions and strategies supporting youth from minority and marginalized/excluded groups in getting more and better involved, promoting links between public administration, business sector, schools, training centres and third sector organizations.

A willingness among youth organizations to be more inclusive in youth work is registered. However, the political and social context where it is done can be very hostile. In some countries, organisations are attacked by politicians and by other organisations for “promoting homosexuality” or “gender ideology” and therefore are labelled as “the enemies” or “the lefties”. This very much influences the work atmosphere, in which people are sometimes discouraged to take effective steps towards inclusive youth work. The staff needs to learn how to deal with such attacks and communicate clearly the principles and values the organisations are based on and try to promote.



Globalcitizen.lt

Global Citizens' Academy (Lithuania)

<https://www.pasauliopilietis.lt/>

<https://www.facebook.com/pasaulio.pilietis/>



Pro European Network (Bulgaria)

<https://www.proeuropean.net/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/penetwork/>



Association for Children and Young People SZANSA (Poland)

<https://szansa.glogow.pl/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SzansaGlogow/>



Cazalla Intercultural (Spain)

<http://cazalla-intercultural.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/cazalla.intercultural/>



TDM 2000 (Italy)

<https://www.tdm2000.org/>

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