EAYW

European Academy on Youth Work

# EUROPEAN ACADEMY ON YOUTH WORK

First edition: Innovation, Current Trends
& Developments in Youth Work

BACKGROUND PAPER

Written by Dr. Theo Gavrielides with the assistance of Aidan Chase-McCarthy

## Glossary

**EAYW:** EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF YOUTH WORK
**HR:** HUMAN RIGHTS
**HRE:** HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION
**YW:** YOUTH WORK
**NA:** NATIONAL AGENCY
**EU:** EUROPEAN UNION
**EC:** EUROPEAN COMMISSION
**COE:** COUNCIL OF EUROPE
**NGO:** NON–GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

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## Foreword

The European Academy on Youth Work aims to support innovation in youth work and youth work policy and to promote the development of quality youth work. Youth work has always been able to develop and respond to the needs of young people. In today's rapidly changing society, also young people's needs and interests are changing faster, requiring youth work to respond to upcoming needs and demands and to invest in quality and innovative approaches.

During the EAYW's first edition, various presentations and workshops will be inviting the participants to reflect on key questions around the topics of innovation, current trends and developments in youth work: What are the current developments and trends we can observe in youth work and related fields? Why do we need innovation, and how can we understand innovation in a European context? What are the driving factors? What are the challenges, dilemmas and tensions that youth work faces in this context? Is youth work up to the challenge?

This background paper looks in particular at the contributions that will be presented during the first edition of the EAYW. It tries to answer the question of what these contributions might represent in terms of trends and innovation that we can currently observe in the field. The thought-provoking hypotheses based the inputs of the 36 contributors as well as existing literature presented in this paper aim to stimulate further reflections during the event.

The first edition of the EAYW will offer the opportunity to explore a diversity of practices, tools, studies, methods and other initiatives. Certainly, they will enable us to learn about a myriad of topics and approaches. Beyond this, however, we want to think further about what these different contributions can tell us about how youth work as a field is developing, how it responds to current needs, trends and challenges, how innovative it is, and what we – together and individually – can do in order to increase its relevance, quality and impact.

Participants are encouraged to contribute wherever possible during the event. The outcomes of the first edition of the EAYW will be taken into account in the final version of this document.

*Sonja Mitter Škulj*
*Coordinator of the EAYW*

*On behalf of the EAYW team*

eayw@movit.si
Sonja.mitter@movit.si

## Introduction to the background paper

### Impetus and structure

This background paper has been prepared in advance of the European Academy on Youth Work (EAYW) that will be held on 21-24 May 2019, Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. Its main objective is to prepare the Academy's participants so that they can actively engage with the planned programme and debates. To this end, the paper has been divided into four chapters, each reflecting a separate sub-objective.

The first chapter presents the current state-of-the art in terms of the key topic of the Academy. Focusing on innovation, current trends and developments in European youth work, the paper looks at the extant literature to present a brief account of what has already been covered. It also provides some key definitions with the purpose of facilitating a shared understanding. It is not the intention of this paper to challenge current debates and agreed definitions, and thus we steered away from such analysis.

Subsequently, the second chapter provides a descriptive account of the European Academy on Youth Work including some background information as to how it came about and what its main objectives are. Given that this is the first edition of the Academy, it is important that its participants understand the context within which the initiative was developed, but also its aspirations and ambitions.

The third chapter moves on to identify the emerging themes from our fieldwork. These themes are displayed as they were extracted from our thematic analysis of data that we collected through the 100 submitted contributions to the EAYW, with special emphasis on the 36 contributions that were selected for presentation at the Academy. They represent cross-cutting issues that were identified following coding and classification by the paper's authors.

The fourth chapter moves on with some critical reflections by combining the findings from our primary and secondary research. A working hypothesis is posited, and some critical reflections are presented. It is expected that these will spark debates at the EAYW.

### Methodology & research limitations

The paper was written using data that we collected through primary and secondary research. The secondary research was conducted through a literature review of key documents including academic literature, policy and legislative material, publications by civil society, online sources and press cuttings. The primary research was conducted through the collection of case studies that were submitted as part of a Call for contributors to the EAYW. There were 100 submissions, out of which 36 were selected. These were then followed up with an online qualitative questionnaire (see Annex and Chapter 3). We acknowledge the research limitations.

# CHAPTER
# 01

This chapter aims to provide a brief account of key developments and the current state of the art in relation to innovation in European youth work and policy. It uses information from the existing literature including academic papers, civil society publications, government and policy documents, European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE) material as well as online sources including press.

## GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START

In searching for current trends and "innovative" practices in youth work, it is easy to assume that "youth work" itself has been established as a static concept in European societies. This assumption is a fallacy, and thus it must be addressed from the outset. We must also establish the reasons for searching for current trends and innovation within the youth field.

Youth work is by definition an innovative and evolving concept. It is not static. Many have attempted to define it, but without reaching a general consensus (Gavrielides, 2018). One of the reasons behind the concept's fluidity is its inherent need for being adaptive and relevant to the current and local needs of young people. These are constantly changing not only in terms of their context, but also in their intensity, focus and geographical dimensions. This is a caveat that must be acknowledged.

Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that youth work should and must be characterised by a set of shared values and principles including an agreed understanding of its main purpose. This is reflected in a 2017 CoE statement:

> *"Despite different traditions and definitions, there is a common understanding that the primary function of youth work is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large"*
> (Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2017).

Similarly, the EU Council defines youth work within its conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people, as:

> *"A broad term covering a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people … Youth work belongs to the area of 'out-of-school' education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders"*
> (Council of the EU, in "Council conclusions on the role of youth work in the context of migration and refugee matters", 2018).

According to the CoE, in all its member states, there seems to be a consistent theme in youth work with unique fields of social and educational activities creating an alternative environment for socialisation, with a particular focus on non-formal education, voluntary participation, and inclusivity (Council of Europe, in *Youth work, a very diverse field of practice*, 2018).

Youth work is also influenced by a number of moving variables including politics and, of course, youth policy. According to the Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector in Slovenia, youth policy is defined as a unified group of measures of varying policies relating to the public sector with the intent of developing and maintaining the integration of youth in economic, cultural and political spheres within the community and the necessary support systems for refining youth work practices and keeping youth organisations operating. This is conducted in tandem with independent and democratic representatives of youth work organisations and other professional groups (Siurala 2006, Zupan 2018). Even though this is specific to Slovenia, this also appears to be reflective of wider European definitions of policy. As it is described by the European Commission (2019) in their article about cooperation in youth policy, policy is based around mutual learning, based around evidence that has been collected, and monitoring of the progress being made in regard to the coordination of policy. These policies can be reflective of the challenges experienced by young people going from childhood to adulthood and should also follow local and political guidelines established by councils and various professional bodies (Siurala, 2006).

Similarly to the fluidity of youth work, youth policy is ever changing. In fact, it is a new field that is still evolving with many European governments not identifying it as a social policy field that can occupy its own space within central and local government.

Looking briefly into the history of youth policy in Europe, it was not until 2001 that the EU took its first coordinated step by publishing the White Paper 'New Impetus for European Youth', calling for a new framework of co-operation. In 2005, the 'European Youth Pact' was introduced to mainstream the youth dimension in EU policies (i.e. the European Employment Strategy, the Social Inclusion Strategy and the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme). Arguably, a big step was taken in 2009 with the publication of the "EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering'. This was then renewed covering 2010-2018. We are now in its third version covering 2019-2027 (Council of the European Union, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018 in *"The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027"*, 2018).

At a Council of Europe level, the first serious attempt for the development of a European youth policy was taken in 2008 with the '8th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth'. There, 'The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020' was adopted outlining three areas: (1) human rights and democracy (2) living together in diverse societies and (3) social inclusion of young people. Since then, various institutions, funding programmes and initiatives have been established to facilitate the development and implementation of regional, national and local youth policies that support youth work. All these developments, their diversity and multiple goals and dimensions must be acknowledged before attempting to reflect on what is currently innovative in the ever-changing field of youth work.

## INNOVATION AND CURRENT MAJOR TRENDS

If youth work is innovative in itself, then why searching for innovative practices, and what is innovation in the context of youth work?

There are no simple answers to these questions. Some have claimed that entrepreneurialism in young people is a defining factor for innovation in youth work (Crowley and Moxon, 2017). Others have argued that innovation is when we can see elements of promoting young peoples' own capacity to take control of their own lives and find ways to navigate the various social and economic challenges they experience through constant self-improvement and learning (Arnkil, 2015). This capacity is helped through the use of financial support and the development of work-based and personal competences. In terms of practice, innovation in youth work is associated with being self-identified, being able to demonstrate promising results and impact on society, addressing common restrictions for participation, and having a level of effectiveness in helping a group of young people who are often underrepresented in youth work (Crowley and Moxon, 2017).

As illustrated by the EAYW contributions and the existing literature, Europe is not homogenous in its cultures, composition, needs or its young peoples' realities. This is also reflected in the diversity of its young people and the support that they need to succeed in life. As noted in the literature, we also have different histories relating to work done with youth, which has led to a wide variety in current practices (Taru, Coussée and Williamson, 2014: 125). This varied history in youth work has contributed to the different innovations that have happened across Europe, as not only are the social and political contexts where innovations are or have occurred around Europe different but what is defined as being an "innovation" also differs. Of course, what might be innovative in a South London estate might be out of the question for a Lithuanian rural city. We also have a tendency to always think that the grass is always greener, and try to incorporate ideas, practices or innovations in youth work that have come from other European countries, but in reality these ideas might be too foreign and thus may be incompatible with the society they are being applied to.

Nevertheless, innovation can stimulate our thinking, dialogue and youth practice. The innovative examples submitted to the EAYW are drawn from practice (and not theory). They are case studies that can be used as prompts for debates during the EAYW, but also within our own organisations and teams.

Innovative examples are also the flip-side of current trends. They are innovative precisely because they respond to what young people's local and current realities are. Therefore, taking the first brave step towards a reflection on current trends in youth work in Europe, the existing literature tends to agree that at a European level we can safely identify the following cross cutting themes:

- Professionalisation and standardisation
- The blurring of sectorial lines
- Transparency and accountability.

### Professionalisation and standardisation of youth work

The professionalisation of youth work across Europe is a trend that has been occurring in particular ways. One notable example is through the introduction of "occupational standards" for youth work (e.g. Estonia) (Schl*ümmer, 2014: 8)*. Professionalisation is also slowly becoming synonymous to legitimisation and credibility. For example, this can be seen in Montenegro, where Forum MNE alongside the Centre of Vocational Education (a branch of the Ministry of Education) officially recognised the profession of Youth Activist, which was expected to help contribute to improvements in services (Koprivica and Kontic, 2017).

There is a growing belief amongst European institutions and many national governments that youth work must be professionalised in order to be legitimate and safe. Subsequently, it can have an impact on important factors like funding and government support, which are often contingent upon evidence of professionalisation. In this respect, this growing trend appears to be somewhat linked to the uncertainty youth work services may experience with funding. Professionalisation and standardisation are also notions that not often compatible with innovation or indeed the history of youth work in Europe.

### The blurring of sectorial lines

The blurring of lines between civil society, the public and private sectors may be seen as a consequence of this increasing professionalisation. As youth organisations (not-for-profit ones specifically) strive more to achieve professional standards and practices, this may lead to them adopting certain practices that are more common in either the public or business sectors. This has been the result of several socio-economic changes including the growing pressure for getting more value for money and greater efficiency. Another reason has been the economic recession, which for years has been encouraging many not-for-profit organisations to collaborate and merge, as well as the commodification of membership making it a product to be bought and sold (M*änd, 2014: 12)*.

Bearing all this in mind, not-for-profit youth organisations may have to functionally do more than just work with youths, which will inevitably affect how these programmes may be delivered. However, whether or not this is necessarily better or worse is another topic that can be debated, as shown by the example of Youth Activists in Montenegro.

> IF YOUTH WORK IS INNOVATIVE ITSELF, THEN WHY SEARCHING FOR INNOVATIVE PRACTICES?

### Transparency and accountability

The role of transparency of youth work is another emerging trend. For example, this can be seen in the reporting mechanism designed by Youth Service Sectoral Partners Group (YSSPG, U.K., 2015), as they describe their framework as being capable of creating a thread that runs through "key decision-making" and "accountability processes" in services (p. 2). Their framework involves a two-tier system that allows for "light-touch reporting" on volunteer and part-time groups, and for projects that have more funding to provide "fuller evidence" of the progress made by individual youths (YSSPG, U.K., 2015: 5).

It is apparent from the literature that the notion of providing evidence for youth work is becoming increasingly important, as it represents the trend for transparency, which can be linked to the previous points about professionalisation and the blurring lines between sectors.

On the one hand, in order to continue getting funding, evidence may be required to show that youth work programmes are working as intended. However, it also holds practitioners of youth work to account by requiring them to provide tangible evidence as to whether they are having a positive impact on the youths they are working with. Some have also argued that it helps to prove their competence and effectiveness.

Competency also appears to be a significant aspect of youth work today. However, this competency is linked more to promoting basic work and life skills. Many have argued that formal education often fails to deliver the important skills needed in employment and life. Therefore, youth work has the potential to "narrow the gap" between the competences young people gain and the demands of the working world (Reicherts, 2015). Today, as there is a demand for youth work to develop these competences, this may also make trends in professionalisation and transparency more prominent, as there is a need to show that youth work is producing results and effectively teaching these competences. For example, in the YYSPG's (2015) framework of outcomes, two of the outcomes include "enhanced personal capabilities" and "Development of thinking skills, life and work skills" (p. 4), further supporting this demand for youth work to promote these key competences in life and work. Overall, there appears to be a running theme of promoting development in young people [all countries Youth Strategies].

## CORRESPONDING CURRENT CHALLENGES

How each trend manifests in European societies may differ, but ultimately the link between all of them is that they are all responses to a number of challenges that the youth work sector faces. Innovation is not only linked to current trends but also to current challenges. These can be broadly broken down into four categories (see e.g. ABC of Youth Work, 2018):

- Political
- Economic
- Social, and
- Technological.

In regard to politics, the main challenges are the lack of genuine youth dialogue about political issues, the rise in nationalism and extremism (Gavrielides 2018b, c), and the gulf between citizens and decision makers (Gavrielides, 2016b; ABC of Youth Work, 2015). Projects like "Part of the EU" have explored how different activist youth group movements can aim to promote greater political participation for marginalised youths, while youth-led, Erasmus funded programmes, such as the Youth Empowerment and Innovation showed the need for a stronger youth voice when it comes to EU anti-radicalisation youth policy (Gavrielides, 2018c).

Economically, the main challenges are the insecure, precarious labour market, the insecurity caused by fiscal policies and global business, and the growing rich-poor divide (Gavrielides, 2016b; 2018a; ABC of Youth Work, 2015). These economic insecurities contribute to why there is a demand for youth work to teach key competences, especially in relation to the insecurity of the labour market.

The main social difficulties are the impact of migrant and refuge populations on communities, overprotection and infantilization of young people, and the growth of individualism and consumerism. Again, this is addressed in youth work initiatives built around promoting active participation.

Finally, technological challenges include how accessible vast amounts of data are online, the digital divide, and the emergence of new tools of communication and virtual connection (ABC of Youth Work, 2015).

# CHAPTER
# 02

Within the aforementioned context of a changing European youth work and youth policy, the EAYW was introduced by seven National Agencies of Erasmus+, youth field – Agenzia Nazionale Per I Giovani - Italy, EDUFI - Finland, JTBA - Lithuania, JINT - Belgium-Flanders, JUGEND für Europa - Germany, Jugend in Aktion, Interkulturelles Zentrum - Austria, MOVIT - Slovenia as well as of SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres and the Partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth ("the partnership") - to:

- support innovation in youth work and youth work policy
- promote the development of quality youth work
- contribute to creating a common ground on youth work and youth work policy.

In this respect, it works on the demands of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention to:

*"Further develop the concepts and practice of youth work, to find strategies to work on the current and emerging challenges faced by young people and to renew its practice and strategies according to the changes and trends in society and politics".*

The EAYW aspires to offer a regular platform for reflection on current European topics with relevance to the youth field, on recent or current developments and future trends. It is a place for exchange and knowledge gathering on creative, transformative and innovative youth work practices, its tools and instruments, and for dissemination and exploitation of results of studies and research as well as youth work policies. Furthermore, it links to political frameworks and developments with an impact on youth work, and it offers space for discussion and exchange on related political strategies, decisions and developments. In this way, the EAYW also encourages cooperation among actors in the youth work field to further support innovation.

Its explicit focus on new trends and innovation in youth work, and on their transformation into practice, makes the EAYW different from other initiatives. The EAYW seeks synergies and links with other platforms, in particular the European Youth Work Convention. The impact of the EAYW is to empower participants to act as trendsetters in youth work and to develop youth work further.

This year's first edition of the EAYW addresses all those developing youth work or frameworks for youth work, in particular those looking for innovation or who have new ideas and initiatives to offer. The target group of the EAYW are in particular youth workers, paid and/or volunteers, from all levels (local, regional, national, European), professionals in areas with relevance for the youth sector and representatives of youth work policies and public services, National Agencies and other staff working in youth work structures, from NGOs, science and research.

## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to outline cross cutting themes as they emerged from our fieldwork. This was carried out through the collection of contributions to the EAYW. An open Call was published and disseminated by the EAYW partnership collecting 100 proposals for contributions. Contributors were offered a payment of €1000 and travel/accommodation expenses, if selected. The selection process involved five assessors who were nominated by the partnership and had different backgrounds (youth work practice, project evaluation, research, National Agency). Each proposal was assessed by two assessors based on agreed criteria (such as the quality of the proposal, its innovative character and methodological approach). In the end, the 36 proposals with the highest number of points were selected.

For the purposes of this background paper, we designed a structured online questionnaire (Annex I), which was emailed to the 36 selected contributions. The questions were of qualitative nature. The answers were inputted as a CSV file into a qualitative research software package (NVivo), and analysed by adopting the content analysis method. We acknowledge the limitations of our small-scale fieldwork including any preconceptions that the paper's authors may have. We aimed to minimise research limitations by combining our methodology and by acknowledging that the research that this paper has used is still undergoing. In particular, during the Academy, all participants in the event will become live research participants, while the workshops and plenaries will form part of the data. It is worth noting that this paper was not prepared by the Academy's organisers but by external researchers with very limited access to information that may have hampered the research process.

# CHAPTER
# 03

*Emerging themes
from the fieldwork*

| | |
|---|---|
| Call for cases studies published | 26.9.2018 |
| Call for cases studies closed | 30.11.2018 |
| Places published | www.eayw.si |
| Key countries contacted | Germany, UK, Lithuania, Western Balkans, Slovenia, Finland, Italy |
| Countries reached (estimated) | 54 |
| People reached (estimated) | 47527[1] |
| Disseminated methods used | Partners' websites[2], Facebook, direct contact, Twitter, Newsletters, invitation via post |
| Case studies submitted | 100 |
| Case studies selected | 36 |

*Table 1: fieldwork methodology*

From a quick look at the contributions, it becomes obvious that they vary significantly in their nature, scale and aims. Nevertheless, if we use our aforementioned four current European challenges (political, economic, social and technological) as thematic groupings, then commonalities and patterns start to emerge. The many ways these projects claimed to be innovative are also varied.



THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONALIZATION OF YOUTH WORK APPEARS TO BE DRIVEN TO A CERTAIN EXTENT BY THE NEED FOR FUNDING.

1   Number of people reached does not include data from Italy.

2   Maybe just to mention, besides the project partners, a number of European networks and structures were asked to disseminate information about the call, including all National Agencies for Erasmus+, youth field, European Youth Forum, Eurodesk, ERYICA etc.

## RESPONDING TO CURRENT CHALLENGES IN EUROPE

### Political challenges

In terms of political challenges, the main issues in the dataset involved nationalism and radicalism. In fact, some of the contributions addressed these issues directly. One contributor said that "anti-European and anti-democratic movements" were increasing in size. Someone else noted that there is a growing tide of "individualism, social apathy and alienation", as well as a "growing xenophobia and nationalism".

The actual activities being done to address these political concerns have varied significantly. Certain schemes aimed to innovate against these nationalistic and radical notions and promote pro-European values. Others challenged nationalism by slightly less direct means (e.g. through engagement with and support of immigrant and refugee communities and by promoting greater participation in society). Interestingly, there seemed to be less initiatives aimed directly at promoting political participation amongst younger people, or the lack of dialogue around specific issues. Furthermore, some have done research projects to expose the levels of discrimination against communities that may be targets of discrimination. Others attempted to reach out to groups of younger people, who may be more susceptible and thus targeted by xenophobic or nationalistic organisations. This has included non-formal educational methods like a training course and performance built around promoting empathy and discussing inequality, as well as more formal educational methods like a summer school designed to develop training paths for youth workers to address issues like radicalisation.

The main emphasis here is education as a tool that many of these contributions used to overcome these political challenges associated with xenophobia and nationalism. Alternatively, some contributors worked with refugees and migrants to include them more in society, one example being a programme that engaged directly with these populations by having them participate in skateboarding-based activities and lessons. In this respect, this initiative aimed to overcome these political challenges by giving them a venue to express their creativity and by promoting inclusion against this tide of nationalism.

### Economic challenges

The contributions that we identified under this category appear to mainly focus on addressing the issues of funding and the general impact economic challenges are having on younger people. One contributor clearly stated that their work was impacted by limited funding while others provided examples of needing to prove value for money through scientific evidence. This challenge corresponds to our identified European trend of professionalisation, as there was a significant theme of gaining official recognition in many of the responses, as well as that of developing competence in youth work. Quotes like this show that this need for professionalisation appears to be driven to a certain extent by the need for funding. Initiatives are being aimed at gaining this recognition (several respondents stating that they would do this through improving the quality of youth work services), in order to effectively give them access to better funding not just for the youth work schemes themselves but also for the youths they support. To be more "professional",

this leads to the development of more formal systems and ways of measuring quality (which in turn results in greater transparency, another notable trend in youth work), and this can be seen in specific contributions that will be made to the EAYW.

Furthermore, some projects aimed to combat national and European economic challenges by giving young people training, financial and networking support. There have been schemes devoted to completing all of these tasks at once (e.g. the "City Incubator" project). Aside from targeting young people to teach them key skills, other contributions acknowledged the need for funding and thus designed their projects around achieving this aim. As stated by a contributor, there is a need for a "solid and scientific" basis for youth work, and the same contributor that said this proposed a module built upon the research they did about "Research-Policy-Practice-Linkage". This need for evidence of youth work also appears to be a running theme amongst contributors, as there have been other contributions designed around further building this theoretical base. Therefore, there appears to be a drive in European youth work to develop a stronger conceptual understanding of youth work, and a particular motivation for this seems to be related to funding. This is also linked to the growing need for professionalisation, as supported by the evidence, to the point that one of the contributions proposes a competence model specifically for youth workers and their practices.

## Social challenges

The contributions that were grouped under this category mainly involved migrant communities, and the level of participation young people and marginalised social groups have in society. In certain contributions, a theme of "active participation" was recognised, where it is not just about including young people in society but in aiding them to actively engage in it and share some responsibility, as one contributor outlined. This also includes bridging gaps of accessibility and finding ways to reach out to potential participants. The concept of learning mobility has also appeared in multiple contributors' answers, as a means of not only empowering younger people as one contributor claimed, but also as a growing trend that has been recognised by others. Given the already discussed potential of learning mobility as a means of learning key competences and promoting cultural integration, the fact that more contributors are acknowledging it shows that this is possibly a growing response to the social challenges of youth work in Europe.
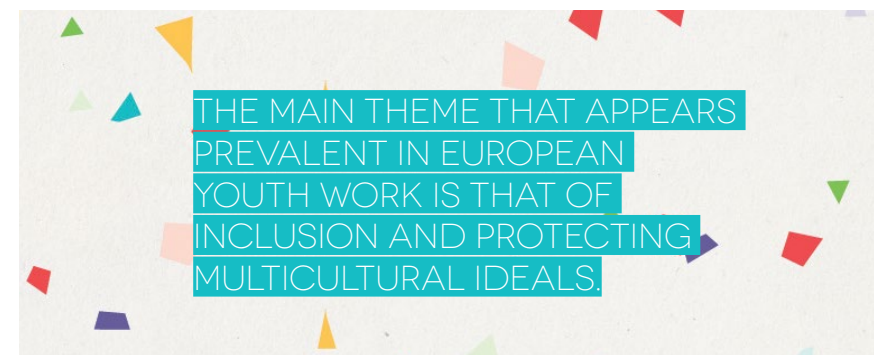
Perhaps the most notable theme amongst the responses was the overcoming of marginalisation and promoting participation. This can be seen in certain contributions, like the one involving a youth shelter in Finland, that assists young people in vulnerable situations. However, others have aimed to gather more information on these social issues and finding ways to further inclusion, as noted by one contribution which focused on conducting a research project for LGBTIQ+ young people and their experiences of discrimination and violence. Furthermore, a few contributions focused on developing practices of learning mobility, one example being an online "virtual exchange" that supports young people who are part of a learning mobility scheme to overcome "intercultural barriers" and improve learning. This reflects the idea that certain trends towards learning mobility may be growing as indicated by some of the participants in the EAYW and the potential they have in resolving social issues of inclusion. In short,

the main theme that appears prevalent in European youth work is that of inclusion and protecting multicultural ideals.

## Technological challenges

These challenges constituted the most noticeable theme across the contributions. This has been in relation to the growing digitalisation of nearly everything, and how young people navigate and use these new digital channels. One respondent said that "visual stimulation, visual memory and online spaces" have become a significant aspect of daily life, meaning that the methods used in youth work have to adapt and consider these factors. This not only includes using digital mediums to access and appeal to target audiences as most respondents have indicated, but also teaching people themselves how to use them. On the other hand, it has been acknowledged by a few respondents that as younger people are more familiar with navigating the web and finding what they want, the real challenge comes down to getting their attention and stand out amongst everything else online. This emphasis on online forums and digital activities will become more apparent, but many of the contributions seem to either be related to or directly based in a digital medium.

Whilst there was less of a focus in the activities themselves directly addressing the technological trends happening in society, many of the contributions have a digital element to them, whether it be an online service or a form on digital learning. An example of the former case is the "Appraiser", which is designed to help trainers in youth work as a tool for evaluating themselves and aiding in their professional development (which also further supports the European trend in promoting competence in youth work). An example of the latter case is the puzzle game that involves interacting with marginalised or vulnerable groups to solve it. Aside from being a response the socio-political issues of discrimination towards ethnic minorities, it also aims to educate young people from being influenced by far-Right ideologies portrayed online, addressing the technological issue of younger people being overwhelmed with information online – especially information that promotes hostile and xenophobic attitudes. In this respect, the responses in European youth work to technological changes appear to involve implementing more digital technology in their programmes, whilst also addressing these other social, political and economic issues.

THE MAIN THEME THAT APPEARS PREVALENT IN EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK IS THAT OF INCLUSION AND PROTECTING MULTICULTURAL IDEALS.

# EMERGING TRENDS IN EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AND YOUTH POLICY

The most common trend that was identified amongst the contributions is that of competence. As illustrated in Chart 1, the largest area is occupied by "Competence", followed by "Nationalism and Radicalisation" and "Active participation".

*Chart 1 (Question: Do you think that the issue that you identified forms part of a wider European (past, current or future) trend?*



As previously discussed, there has been a growing need for competence in terms of the life and work skills that are taught to young people, and this is reflected in contributions like the "City Incubator" project, where this initiative, in the contributor's own words, "develops competences that increase employment and life opportunities" through providing resources needed in developing the ideas youths have for projects and for helping them gain experience. However, other contributions are not just about developing these competences in young people, but also developing competences in the trainers and youth workers themselves, as shown by the aforementioned "Appraiser" programme. One of the contributions proposed creating a "Code of Practice (CoP)" to further develop quality in youth work, and to promote recognition and "attitude development". The competences that some of the contributions being made to the EAYW are competences in terms of the skills and training youth workers have. This ties into the growing trend of "Professionalisation" in youth work, although interestingly there were only two instances of direct overlap between these two areas.

As shown in Chart 2, the most common types of projects appeared to be research-based, or ones that included an element of research to them (which have been coded as "Research Project"). This is followed by "Non-formal education" and "Digital activities". However, this is possibly a consequence of this category being inclusive of any project or aspect of a project that involves research, which can have a relatively broad definition

of what constitutes as being "research". Regardless, this is still a significant finding, as it shows that a significant portion of the contributions involve research, which does not appear to have been discussed in the literature. Although, this could be further proof that professionalisation and transparency have become more significant in youth work, as this more "scientific" and "evidence-based" approach to it, may be manifesting in a growing number of projects either based around or including an element of research. On the other hand, the number of projects that involve non-formal education shows that the former is still a tendency towards this method in youth work across Europe, and the number of ones involving digital activities further supports the notion of technology becoming an important part of youth work and society in general.

*Chart 2 (Question: Describe what you your project did to respond to the issue that you identified, for how long, who the beneficiaries are, their ages and main characteristics):*
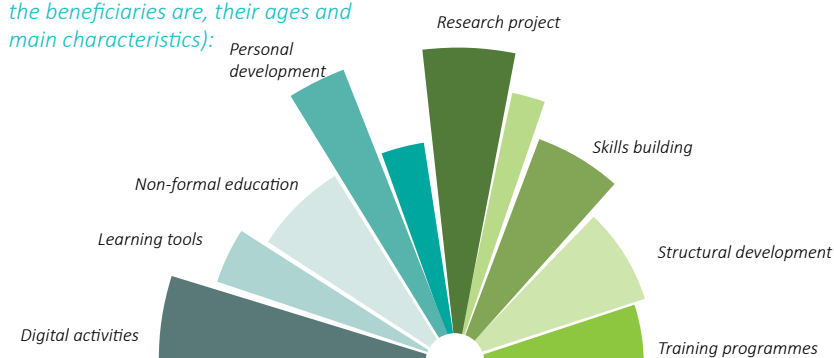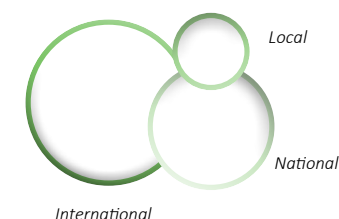


*Chart 3 (Question: Describe the issue that you your project deals with, its location and geographical dimension (local, national, European), and why you believe this issue needs addressing):*



A vast majority of the contributions had an international dimension (see Chart 3). What this indicates is that many of the contributions are targeted at a European audience on the whole and that the issues they are aiming to address are not merely of national interest. This also means that there may be a greater drive to focus on issues that apply across Europe, as opposed to ones that are more relevant to specific local areas. Again, this is something that does not appear to have been addressed in the literature which has been discussed so far, even though this distinction between scales may have an impact on what is interpreted as being "relevant" in the world of youth work.

## EXPECTATIONS FROM THE EAYW

As is illustrated in Chart 4, the main expectations the contributors have for entering the EAYW appear to be "To discuss", as well as "To network" and "To gain knowledge". Whilst the reasoning of "To discuss" seems vague, it is still an important distinction from gaining knowledge as there appears to be an overwhelming desire for discourse: not just in relation each contributors' individual projects, but also about the general state of youth work in Europe. For example, one contributor said they expected to "Share innovative approaches developed through STEAM in Youth Work", and another said they expected "To find out good practices of youth work and its common grounds".

When asked what the main reason was for attending the EAYW, the most common response was to "Present and share ideas", followed by to "Gain knowledge", "Networking" and unusually "Discussion", which indicates that whilst there is a predominant expectation to discuss, it is not the primary reason for the contributors attending the EAYW, as presenting and sharing ideas appears to be. However, we did not specifically research the expectations of the (other) participants going to the EAYW using this framework, making this an area of research that still needs to be explored.

*Chart 4 (Question: What are your expectations from the European Academy of Youth Work?):*

To gain inspiration

To gain knowledge

To network

To discuss
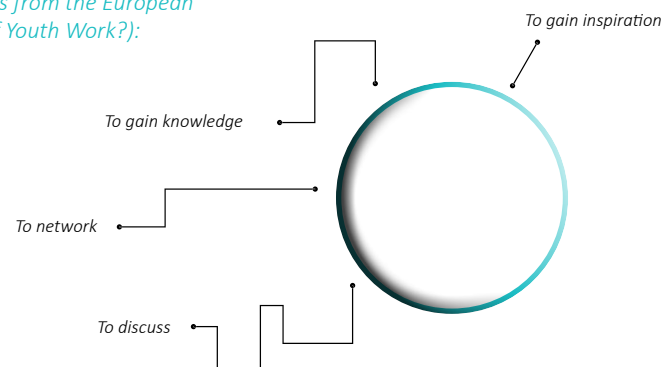
Generally speaking, the 36 case studies selected for the EAYW have been largely representative of all 100 contributions that had been sent in overall, as the distribution of themes, topics, geographical coverage and motivations in the whole contributions pool are very similar to those in the selected studies.

That being said, there are certain topics that have not emerged significantly in the chosen studies that were relatively prevalent in the contributions as a whole. Namely, there were certain studies that aimed to cover issues on a global scale, which could be worth discussing in the future to expand the scope of participation and discussion at EAYW beyond Europe itself. Also, countries like Germany or Slovenia featured prominently in both the selected and the remaining contributions, which is another area that could be discussed in relation to whether or not youth work projects are developing more in these countries or whether there are other reasons for this (e.g. liked to the dissemination of the Call for contributions).

Furthermore, some topics were covered by the remaining contributions, but not the selected ones. These included globalisation, the use of the public space, sustainable development and music. However, the contributions that focused on these issues were in the minority, but they still provide an avenue of potential exploration.

There were also certain countries that have not been represented in the selected contributions but were in the remaining ones. These are: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway and Russia. In the future, these are countries that could be better represented in the selection pool of contributors. Most of these countries were represented by one contribution, which naturally makes the chances of that country being represented lower. That being said, why some countries may have had more than one contribution whilst others like Russia or Greece will have had the one could be for a myriad of factors, including different socio-political environments in certain countries that perhaps enable more innovations and developments in youth work to take place than others. This is an area that may require more study.

THE RESPONSES IN EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES APPEAR TO INVOLVE IMPLEMENTING MORE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THEIR PROGRAMMES.

# CHAPTER
# 04

## WORKING HYPOTHESIS

Looking at the evidence from our primary and secondary research, our working hypothesis is that the EAYW will be characterised by extensive discussions based on what the contributors themselves have come to expect from the partnership's various statements and Calls. However, it should still be considered that the participants' interests and expectations have not been analysed, which will be a key part in topics of discussion and networking that will happen at the EAYW. It is possible that most of this dialogue will relate to youth work as a whole, not just for the young people, but also in relation to the workers themselves. However, other notable words in our data analysis included "learning" and "European", indicating that learning methods and Europe itself will also be a central point of discussion. A key expectation is that of networking not only for learning purposes, but also for collaboration and business development.
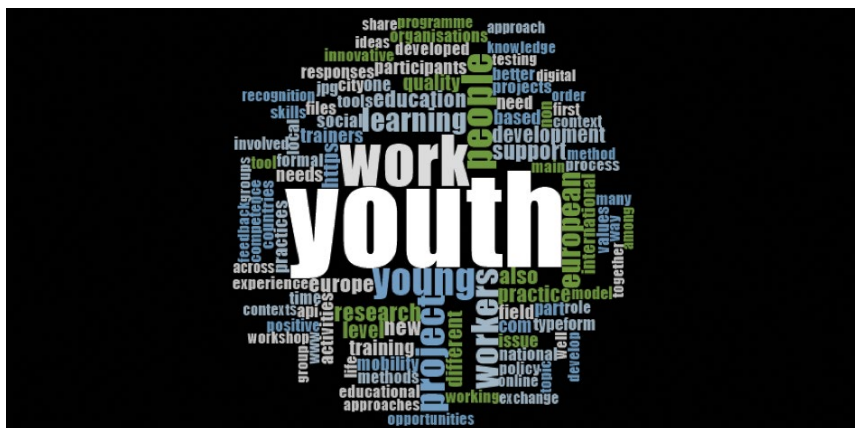
*Chart 4: Word cloud hypothesis*

This hypothesis is further supported by the themes and trends that have emerged in the contributions. To tie the various themes into what has been revealed by the above word cloud, the discussions will most likely be centred around:

- ✓ discussing better methods for promoting key competences in both youth workers and young people
- ✓ how to re-affirm and encourage pro-European values in the face of nationalism and radicalisation (especially with events like Brexit and the recent Christchurch shooting), and
- ✓ developing methods that help members of marginalised groups to actively participate in wider society through financial support and the promotion of said competences.

Furthermore, the EAYW has the potential to be a crucial site of networking and exchanges of ideas between many different organisations, as both of these factors appear to be a priority for many contributors who are looking to address issues of an international scale.

## CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Reflecting critically on our finding so far, there can be no doubt that we are living in opportune times for developing better and stronger partnerships and joint initiatives for youth work and youth policy. As the contributions illustrate, public authorities at the local, national and EU levels are forced to become more accountable and multi-agency, cross-sector partnerships are encouraged between them and civil society. This reality opens new avenues for innovation of youth work.

A more cynical approach would say that Europe is challenged by a number of new and real threats that put the development and implementation of youth policy and youth work at the bottom of the priority list. Questions of financial hardship, nationalism, hate crime, immigration and social integration are being raised in Europe. As noted in the Youth Report 2015 "New challenges have emerged since the design of the EU Youth Strategy in 2009. The emerging issues most frequently reported are: radicalisation, integration of migrants and digitalisation" (European Commission, 2015: 8). These European realities are shifting the priorities of member states, putting youth policy at the bottom of national agendas. Europe needs the hopes and ideals of young people more than ever. This cannot be a mere statement of intent and theory, but one of genuine and proactive action. Cross-sectoral youth policy should not be statements and inspirational documents on behalf of young people but evidence-based proposals by young people.
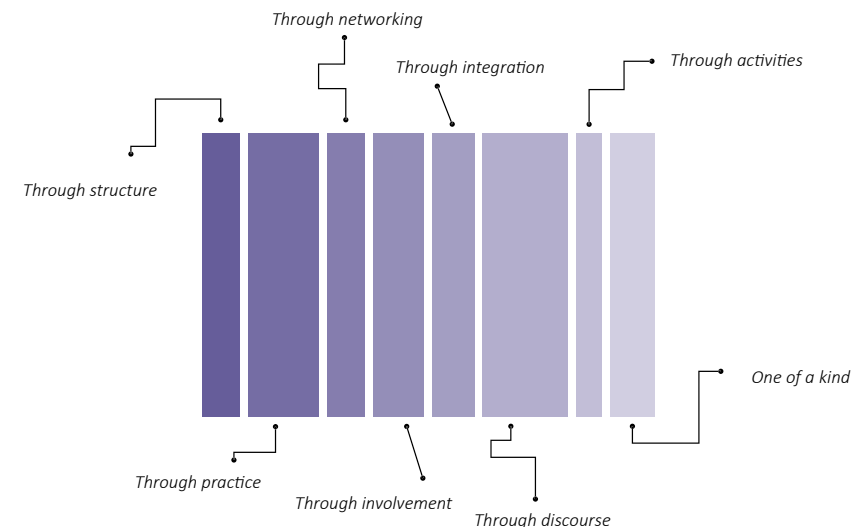
Even if we are optimists enough to say that it is still too early for these current European realities to have an impact on the well-established, multiyear programmes on youth work policy, we cannot deny the shift in attitudes and mentalities post the world economic crisis. This made Europeans feel their future in a deadlock with despair replacing hope (Gavrielides, 2016). Habermas (2012) poignantly observes that we are living in the crisis of a "post democratic" era, which is characterized by a more capitalist and market-oriented functioning of democracy. In Europe, this crisis has led to a financial calamity and leads to despair. Often, the dominant public perception creates chronic pressure

on elected governments, the parliamentary, educational and justice institutions to react. Subsequently, the rest of the world's populations may be considered as living their lives without any prospect of survival considering the deprivation of essential commodities and basic amenities afflicting these populations. In this absolute despair, fear is created and, through this fear, control of the powerless including young people. In a society where there is no hope youth policy might be seen as a luxury. Survival comes first and in the serving of our basic instincts the vulnerable come last (Gavrielides, 2016).

The data also point out the need to compete and to professionalise. This often leads youth work to divert energy into research, evaluation and often "ticking boxes" for funders. There is also evidence to suggest that this diversion not only impacts on the quality of youth work, but also who gets to access it. For example, it is easier to deliver youth work programmes to easily accessible youth versus individuals with complex needs or who are hard to reach. Interestingly, following a recent evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy, it was concluded that "stakeholders have called for a more focused cooperation framework which would have a clearer emphasis on selected initiatives" (Eid et al, 2016: 22). The evaluation report also pointed out that "the organisation of … cross-sectorial cooperation at national level was a challenging and time- consuming process" (Eid et al, 2016: 94). Particular concerns have been raised in relation to the production of youth policy and youth work that includes marginalised youth as its designers, monitors and beneficiaries. The evidence so far points out that the new youth work initiatives tend to benefit easily accessible youth. For example, the same evaluation report pointed out that "that attention given to the needs of specific youth groups at risk and younger age groups has been insufficient". The evaluation continues to point out that "Young people with fewer opportunities' and 'children' are mentioned only twice in the 2009 Council Resolution on renewing the EU cooperation in the youth field, with no objective set in relation to those at-risk groups" (Eid et al, 2016: 95).

Looking at the diversity of the EAYW case studies, the presenters and the participants of the EAYW, we only confirm that our strength is in our differences. It is what makes Europe a unique place to live where local youth work takes meaning from the shared values but also the shared challenges that we all face as Europeans. Unfortunately, despite the academic rigour that we employed while analysing the data, we are unable to generate a straightforward answer as to what constitutes an innovative idea in youth work. As stated from the outset, youth work is innovative in itself. Furthermore, based on the responses that we have been discussing here, it is apparent there are many innovations happening in the field of youth work in Europe (particularly in regards to the practice being done and the discourse being encouraged. See Chart 5).
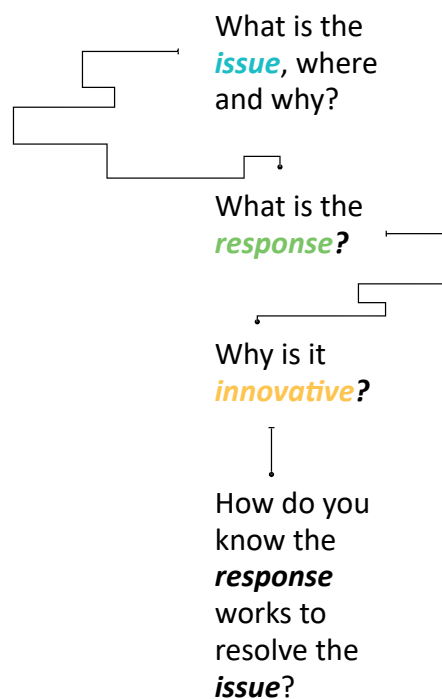
*Through networking*
*Through integration*
*Through activities*
*Through structure*
*One of a kind*
*Through practice*
*Through involvement*
*Through discourse*

As noted, innovation should be read in conjunction with current trends and challenges. They are all different sides of the same coin. As a concept, innovation is meant to inspire and provide general guidance for local adaptations. Approaching it as rule of thumb and with an expectation to perform surgeries of foreign transplants should not be the premises of the EAYW. It is expected that the Academy will be a gathering of many different youth work organisations and individuals, all of whom will be bringing their own innovations. Having examined the contributions, there will almost certainly be useful dialogues taking place in regard to the direction youth work will be taking in Europe, both in terms of new approaches to doing it and in terms of how it can continue to address trends that are prevalent not only in the field itself but also amongst young people as a whole. This conference has the potential to mark a significant new change in youth work across Europe.

## Annex I: Questionnaire

You have been selected to present your work at the European Academy of Youth Work. In order to prepare the programme and pre-event report, we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. We are aiming for data consistency and clarity, and thus it is important that you follow the editorial guidelines which can be summarised in the below figure. Please give full answers responding to all points under each question[3]. Please do not exceed the word limit.

What is the *issue*, where and why?

What is the *response*?

Why is it *innovative*?

How do you know the *response* works to resolve the *issue*?

### I. PROGRAMME PREPARATION

Please provide an abstract of 150 words for your session. This will be published alongside the formal Academy programme, and shared with the delegates to enable them to choose their workshops. Please keep your abstracts focused following the above structure. Please also indicate, how you are going to involve the participants in your session.

### II. PRE-EVENT REPORT PREPARATION

*General information*

▶ 1. Author's details: name, affiliations, country of residence and contact details.

▶ 2. What is the main reason for your participation in the European Academy? (15 words)

▶ 3. How did you hear about the European Academy of Youth Work?

▶ 4. What are your expectations from the European Academy of Youth Work (15 words)

*The issue*

▶ 5. Describe the issue that you/ your project deals with, its location and geographical dimension (local, national, European), and why you believe this issue needs addressing (150 words).

▶ 6. Do you think that the issue that you identified forms part of a wider European (past, current or future) trend? Explain your answer (100 words).

*The response: innovation & transferability*

▶ 7. Describe what you/ your project did to respond to the issue that you identified, for how long, who the beneficiaries are, their ages and main characteristics (150 words).

▶ 8. Explain why you think your project is innovative (100 words).

▶ 9. How do you know that your project works (100 words)?

▶ 10. Can you identify any underlying principles from your project that are transferable to other contexts of youth work in Europe? (100 words)?

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3  Authors are expected to proof read their work to a publishable standard. The Editor might carry out further edits, but this will be of minor and stylistic nature.

## *About the background paper and authors*

This background paper has been prepared by Professor Dr. Theo Gavrielides, Founder & Director of The IARS International Institute and Restorative Justice for All (RJ4All), with the assistance of Aidan Chase-McCarthy, Research Assistant at RJ4All. Dr. Gavrielides serves as the Main Rapporteur for the European Academy on Youth Work, 21-24 May 2019, Kranjska Gora, Slovenia[4].

### Prof. Dr. Theo Gavrielides

Dr. Gavrielides is an international expert in human rights, youth policy and restorative justice. He is the Founder and Director of the IARS International Institute and Restorative Justice for All (RJ4All).

He is an Adjunct Professor at the School of Criminology of Simon Fraser University (Canada) as well as a Visiting Professor in Youth Policy at Buckinghamshire New University (UK). Professor Gavrielides is the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare, the Youth Voice Journal and the Internet Journal of Restorative Justice. He has published extensively in the areas of youth justice, crime, antisocial behaviour, victims, human rights, equality and justice.

He is an advisor to the European Commission, and the coordinator of over 50 EU funded projects on violent radicalisation, migration, restorative justice, youth and human rights. He has acted as an advisor to a number of international bodies, governments and NGOs including the Chilean, Uruguayan and British Ministries of Justice, the Mayor of London, the Council of Europe and the British Council in the Middle East. Previously, he was the Human Rights Advisor of the UK's Ministry of Justice and has also worked as a Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Human Rights of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

### Aidan Chase-McCarthy

Aidan Chase-McCarthy is a Research Assistant to Dr. Gavrielides at Restorative Justice For All (RJ4All). He has recently finished his masters in Social Research and Psychosocial Studies at the University of Birkbeck. He also completed his undergraduate degree in Sociology at the University of Bath. He is currently working on various projects at RJ4All, including Culture and Arts for Unity (CA4U), the Power, Race and Restorative Justice project, and a video series about hate crime and hate speech.

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# EAYW

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