

EUROPEAN ACADEMY ON YOUTH WORK - WORKSHOP REPORT

Dealing with Refugees: The Role of Youth Work and Youth Workers' Competencies

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TOPIC DISCUSSED

The workshop introduced some main reflections and recommendations from the long-term project "**Dealing with Refugees: From Challenges to Opportunities**", which was started in 2017 in Jordan by the Finnish, Norwegian, French and Italian National Agencies for Erasmus +: Youth in Action and the SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre in cooperation with Jordanian NGOs and local authorities.

The workshop addressed the changing level of the interventions of youth work during the last crisis related to refugees and asylum seekers and analysed the different and specific "social and political" role that youth workers were/are assuming.

METHODOLOGY

Brief general introduction of the workshop (where the idea came from: Dealing with Refugees Project and support work done in the frame of other EU projects about the role of youth work and asylum seekers)

Group presentation and experience/interests in working with refugees and asylum seekers

Focus on the two terms: **refugees and asylum seekers**. What do we understand by these two terms? This is important because these two terms define two possible sets of intervention of youth work (legal framework and social context).

Definition of **the role of youth work** in relation to migrants and asylum seekers (can we reach a final agreement).

Analysis of the **challenges** that youth workers organised in these four areas (taken from the Dealing with Refugees Conference Report) are facing:

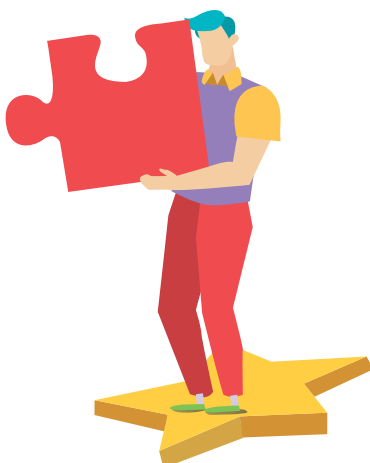
1. Youth workers' role and well-being
2. Outreach and sustainable engagement of migrants and asylum seekers
3. The influence of the on-going narrative and the political/national legal system
4. Networking and sustainability of youth work

Participants worked on these four areas in subgroups and identified **specific challenges**.

Presentation of **main recommendations** from the Dealing with Refugees project and debate about **their transferability to the participants' daily youth work practices**

Conclusions about the role of international projects dealing with the empowerment of young migrants and asylums seekers, how a remarkable tool could be used and how this could be an upscaling opportunity for projects.

Central Zoom Out questions



KEY ISSUES RAISED SUCH AS CHALLENGES

The group discussion about the challenges and limitations of youth work involving projects with refugees and asylum seekers was very interesting.

Many identified challenges were related to the issue of “fragility”: **fragility of the target group**, but also **fragility of the role of youth workers**. The status of asylum seekers or refugees is very fragile and depending on national policy, the social inclusion system as well as the UNDP’s international replacement programme (without taking in account people’s desire to get back home, if and when possible). It is therefore very difficult to involve this target group in lasting activities and, sometimes, to motivate people to participate and be involved in specific development projects.

There is no full **recognition** of the status of youth workers in working with refugees and asylum seekers: in some countries, it is not clear which tasks youth workers should cover or which responsibilities they should have. Youth workers tend to react immediately in emergency situations as they have the competencies and capacity to provide answers in a short time, but these have not always been recognised. The consequences of working with a fragile target group and of not always being recognised in an adequate way are a higher level of **burn-out** as well as difficulties faced by youth workers in maintaining a **border between private and working time** (a border to define where the work stops). The fragility is often linked to the insecure **political and legislative framework related to refugees and asylum seekers** and to the transitory nature of individual projects.

INNOVATIVE RESPONSE(S) TO THOSE CHALLENGES

The following responses to the challenges were identified:

- Develop better competencies as youth workers for implementing projects that are countering the current narrative about asylum seekers and refugees;
- Get back to basic outreach youth work in the communities and focus on specific short-term projects for young refugees;
- Invest more in preparation for working with post-trauma youth (not as a therapist, but being able to identify and try to link with the needed professionals);
- Promote supervision inside the teams in order to prevent burn-out.

KEY TRENDS IDENTIFIED (COMMONALITIES BETWEEN COMMENTS/ PARTICIPANTS)

Youth work was an effective tool for answering the refugee crisis, but it has not been transformed into active policy and stayed at the level of emergency action. What is the role of youth work in this field of work, is an important question, and there is the need to differentiate between the role of youth workers and the role of social workers.

MANY IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES ARE RELATED TO THE ISSUE OF “FRAGILITY”: FRAGILITY OF THE TARGET GROUP (ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES), BUT ALSO FRAGILITY OF THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORKERS.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

In general, the workshop was positively evaluated, there was good discussion and sharing of ideas.

“Inspiring and open-minded about the political dimension of youth work in this field of intervention.”

LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES OR INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROJECT AVAILABLE ONLINE



STEP-by-STEP together: Support, Tips, Examples and Possibilities for youth work with young refugees (Youth Partnership):

https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/FINAL+step+by+step+together_reduced_size.pdf/8103c431-afc3-f978-9117-20776950bedf

Final Report, Conference “Dealing with Refugees”, 2017: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x7awKnN_MeV12k168v2HCuu3kAQjvGbH/view?fbclid=IwAR0iiduk814l-Gl-uuc3PyhkijSnK0pX82og9YyVwsYo295ZBLX3laCV2ANs

At European level, the social inclusion of all young people, including those from a migrant background, is a key aim of the [EU Youth Strategy \(2010-2018\)](#). National governments have worked together to agree on a framework to better implement this strategy, the [EU Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018](#).

When discussing issues related to asylum seekers and migrants in the European context, we should refer to two very important frameworks:

- The EU Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is a set of EU laws, completed in 2005, that are intended to ensure that all EU member states protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. The CEAS sets out minimum standards and procedures for processing and deciding asylum applications, and for the treatment of both asylum seekers and those who are recognised as refugees. In any case, the implementation of CEAS varies throughout the European Union: the 28 states are implementing this process in different ways following their national realities and legal frameworks¹.
- The Dublin Regulation (Regulation No. 604/2013; sometimes the Dublin III Regulation; previously the Dublin II Regulation and Dublin Convention) is a [European Union \(EU\) law](#) that determines the [EU Member State](#) responsible for examining an application by [asylum seekers](#) seeking [international protection](#) under the [Geneva Convention](#) and the EU Qualification Directive, within the [European Union](#). It is the cornerstone of the Dublin System, which consists of the Dublin Regulation and the [EURODAC](#) Regulation, which establishes a Europe-wide fingerprinting database for unauthorised entrants to the EU. The Dublin Regulation aims to "determine rapidly the Member State responsible [for an asylum claim]" and provides for the transfer of an asylum seeker to that Member State. Usually, the responsible Member State will be the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU.

In July 2017, the [European Court of Justice](#) upheld the Dublin Regulation declaring it still stands despite the high influx of 2015, giving EU member states the right to [deport](#) migrants to the first country of entry to the EU.



¹ For further reading: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/who-we-are/programs/international-migration-initiative>



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