

# Are You Involved with Youth Work?

Research among professionals and  
volunteers involved in youth work, 2023



 Funded by  
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## RESEARCH REPORT

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## **RESEARCH REPORT**

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Publisher: GYIÖT

<https://gyiot.hu>

Responsible publisher: Andrea Bálint

The publication of this document has been supported by the Erasmus+ program. The supporting European Commission is not responsible for any use of the information contained therein.

The content of this paper is an extended and expanded version of a publication originally published in Hungarian in 2023.

Print ISBN 978-615-82392-4-0

PDF ISBN 978-615-82392-5-7

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.61791/ayiwyw\\_rr\\_2026](https://doi.org/10.61791/ayiwyw_rr_2026)

Budapest

2026



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Preface .....	5
II.	Introduction .....	8
III.	Youth Work in Hungary: an Overview .....	13
IV.	About the Research .....	24
V.	Professional Values and Motivations .....	30
VI.	Needs, Challenges, Future .....	37
VII.	Professional Content and Target Group Focus ..	48
VIII.	Conclusion .....	58
	References .....	62
	Online Sources .....	65
	List of Figures .....	67
	List of Tables .....	69

## I. PREFACE

The release of this publication comes almost three years after the data collection and the publication of the results in Hungarian. One might argue that this is a short period for significant changes to occur; however, in youth policy development, this is not necessarily the case.

At the time this research report was published, the Hungarian Government had begun preparing a new National Youth Strategy in 2025. The latest policy document was valid from 2009 to 2024, but it should be noted that the direction of government policy is no longer determined by the 2009 strategy.\*

Hungary has conducted a large-scale youth survey regularly since 2000. The most recent data collection took place in 2024; however,

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\* Between 2012 and 2025, several youth policy-driven programs were implemented by the governments; however, a pluralistic framework of consultation and advisory committees was not maintained. As GYIÖT, we regularly followed these developments. Although we had been involved in preparing the action plans for the previous strategy and in establishing the new committee to monitor the last strategy, we did not receive any official invitation to consultations after 2016 (and, to our knowledge, neither did any other organisation).

even by the end of 2025, research results were still not publicly accessible. These results could have guided and informed youth work practice, which relies heavily on European funding, and could even have supported the development of policy proposals.

In 2025, the European Youth Work Convention and the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth took place. Both events are highly significant for youth-related affairs and, from our perspective, for the development and improvement of youth work across Europe. The Final Declaration of the Conference emphasises\* the need to further strengthen youth work, a demand also clearly expressed by practitioners at the Convention. We remain curious about how these developments will influence youth- and youth-work-related policy in Hungary.

A successful cooperation is maintained with the European Youth Centre Budapest of the Council of Europe through the organisation of an annual Youth Work Conference, which provides a platform for youth work practitioners to share, learn, and discuss topics related to the latest European developments in youth work, as well as the current needs of the youth work field in Hungary.

The Alliance of Youth Workers Association\*\* was officially established in 2024, with GYIÖT among its founding members. This clearly indicates that youth work development and advocacy are becoming increasingly strategically crucial to the field itself. In Hungary, GYIÖT has recognised and responded to the needs of the youth work sector to create a more stable environment for

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\* <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/10th-ministerial-conference-2025>  
(last retrieved 8.12.2025)

\*\* [www.aywa.pro](http://www.aywa.pro)

youth work. In 2025, together with youth work experts, we began preparing a Code of Ethics for youth workers and compiling a glossary and unified terminology for youth work. We have also initiated consultations with the responsible Ministry in Hungary to advocate for improved conditions and a stronger framework for youth work. As a result of these efforts, we are currently preparing a resolution with concrete recommendations on youth work and youth workers to be hopefully considered in the codification of the new National Youth Strategy.

GYIÖT remains a leading expert organisation in youth work development in Hungary. Our focus in 2025 was to support the field with long-awaited tools to clarify the role and nature of youth work (the Code of Ethics and the ongoing Glossary and Terminology), while also responding to the need for stronger connections among practitioners.

In 2026, we will publish a map-based network of youth work organisations, a community of youth centres with youth work activities, and youth workers who voluntarily sign up through an open call. The development of this network will remain a key focus of our work, alongside the possible preparation of the subsequent research on volunteer and paid youth workers in 2027.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils (hereinafter referred to as GYIÖT) is committed to improving professional activities related to youth work. GYIÖT actively initiates and supports endeavours and programs to enhance the quality of youth work in Hungary. Furthermore, it strives to take deliberate measures to increase both the visibility and the recognition of youth work.

In developing youth work at the local level, GYIÖT seeks to contribute, as a professional consultant, to the structuring of youth work and to the establishment of the necessary conditions for the effective delivery of these services, with broad involvement of relevant stakeholders. The organisation has a wide-reaching network of professional connections and decades of experience in local youth work. Nevertheless, information regarding the professionals, volunteers, and the aims, content, and working conditions of those engaged in youth work has primarily been based on its own organisational experience.

However, there was a long-standing need to base activities and programs related to professional development and the visibility of youth work on evidence, structured information, and data.

Since 2000, large-scale, representative youth research projects (Magyar Ifjúság 2000-2020) have significantly contributed to understanding the characteristics, key features, and situations of youth in Hungary. Unfortunately, no complementary research

has been conducted to assess the “state of the art” of the professionals working with this age group, or to examine the typical characteristics of professionals involved in youth work, the capacities of municipalities, and the available infrastructure.

The research titled **Foglalkozol ifjúsági munkával? (in English: Are You Involved with Youth Work?)** is Hungary’s first research project focusing on the competences and professional motivations of youth work professionals. In the initial phase of the research, data were collected through a 34-question survey in spring 2023.

The primary aim of the research is to gain deeper insights into and better understand the community of youth workers and their motivations. Key questions include: What values underpin their professional activities? What competencies do they have? What does their profession mean to them? Under what frameworks do they work—as volunteers or as paid professionals?

In this report, we have analysed the survey results. Data on youth work and youth workers are thematically analysed across the following areas: professional values and motivations; needs and future perspectives from the professionals’ perspective; and the professional content and target group of youth work. The purpose of this report is also to provide youth work practitioners, responsible decision-makers, and organisations involved in professional development or lobbying with valuable information that they can use in their work and serve as a basis for their future plans, programs, and decisions.

The research was conducted as part of the project “Ifjúsági munka

merre jársz?” (in English: *Youth Work: Where Are You Going?*), supported by the European Commission’s Erasmus+ program. The research\* was designed and implemented using a participatory, mixed-method approach, engaging youth work professionals and volunteers.\*\* A series of events and professional forums preceded the study and the development of the research tools, during which we collaboratively defined the main questions and objectives of the research with project participants and other experts. During the preparatory phase, we created a problem map with experts and professionals who had been involved in youth work for several decades. This information served as the basis for several modules of the questionnaire, including those on professional motivations and challenges. We endeavoured to ensure that the most relevant topics for both the profession and our organisation were the primary focus of the research, providing crucial insights into the individuals working in youth work.

We took a broad view of those engaged in youth work. We targeted individuals working with young people aged 15-29, primarily outside the formal education framework, or, in other words, in leisure-time spaces. This allowed us to maximise the inclusivity of the survey’s outreach so that as many people as possible could identify themselves as the target group. The conceptual framework for defining youth work was based on the Council of Europe’s 2017

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\* In our research, we analysed the community of youth workers by employing both questionnaire-based (quantitative) and interview-based (qualitative) methods to ensure more well-grounded conclusions. The focus group phase of the research took place in October 2023.

\*\* In our research, we defined volunteers as individuals who perform professional activities without receiving compensation. This group may also include individuals with formal qualifications who only occasionally engage in activities related to youth work.

Recommendation on Youth Work, which we will elaborate on later in this report.

To promote the research and enhance visibility, we launched an online campaign in collaboration with the most prominent stakeholders in the youth field. A core strategy was the creation and dissemination of diverse content tailored to highlight the competencies, motivations, and activities of youth work professionals. This included a series of 10 video interviews\* featuring various practitioners, each selected to represent different aspects of the profession. These videos, complemented by visual and textual posts, were designed to showcase the added value of youth work and foster recognition of its societal importance.

The campaign's content strategy emphasised accessible, relatable messaging encapsulated in slogans such as "Youth work is a public matter!" and "The person is the profession, the profession is the person." These materials were consistently branded for visual coherence and shared across our website, social media platforms, and partner networks to maximise outreach. Additionally, we organised a robust data-collection phase, leveraging targeted outreach via newsletters, emails, and phone calls to ensure the broadest possible engagement among stakeholders, from municipal officials to grassroots organisations. The campaign culminated in the publication of the video series on our YouTube channel and wider dissemination of the findings through collaborative networks. More detailed information on these activities can be found on GYIÖT's website\*\* and on our organisation's social media platforms.

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\* <https://www.youtube.com/@gyiot7360/videos>

\*\* <https://gyiot.hu/projektek/ifjusagi-munka-merre-jars/>

In the following chapter, we explore the defining characteristics of Hungarian youth work in greater depth, providing a comprehensive overview to ensure a more precise understanding of this research and its context.

### III. YOUTH WORK IN HUNGARY: AN OVERVIEW

Since our research project explicitly focused on the Hungarian context, we believe that gaining a comprehensive understanding of the reality of the youth work practice is essential. We hope that our study will be a unique and enriching contribution to the field of European youth work. This chapter aims to provide a brief overview and define the main characteristics of Hungarian youth work, including its foundations and core areas. On the other hand, the purpose of this chapter is not to give an in-depth analysis of all previously mentioned aspects. Instead, it aims to offer a concise summary to enhance the clarity and relevance of this research for professionals across Europe and beyond.

#### **Historical, cultural and political background**

Most literature traces the emergence of youth work in its contemporary sense to the 1990s, following Hungary's 1989 political transition.\* However, some forms of youth work in the country extend back to the early 20th century (Scouts, Pioneers' Movement).

Since the regime change in 1989-90, Hungarian youth work has experienced significant transformations, rooted in the establishment of a democratic institutional framework. At the beginning, new local governments were formed with a focus on core values and aimed to enhance local communities' autonomy

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\* In 1989, Hungary transitioned from a single-party system to a democratic state through the dismantling of the state socialist system and the establishment of a pluralistic republican framework.

and participation. These municipalities assumed responsibility for various public tasks, including the operation of community centres and civil society organisations (commonly referred to as CSOs; defined here as non-profit, non-governmental organisations), which were designed to respond (and be responsible) to local needs. The development of local youth work in the 1990s laid the groundwork for the establishment of youth offices and information centres, which have since become vital components of the support services available to young people.\*

The first local government law established that youth affairs are a task of local governments, thereby laying the legal foundation for contemporary youth policy.

The currently effective Act CLXXXIX of 2011 on Local Government makes the provision of youth services a mandatory responsibility. However, it addresses this task alongside sports duties, raising concerns about potential overlap between the two areas. Additionally, a significant issue is that neither the law, its implementing regulations, nor other legal sources provide a clear definition of what constitutes youth-related tasks, leading to an ambiguous interpretation that largely depends on context.\*\*

However, despite multiple attempts by professionals to define the specific tasks related to youth affairs (in 2000, 2006, and 2009), no comprehensive definitions have been established. This is despite

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\* Gulyás, B. (2022). A rendezetlen rendszer: a ifjúsági munka útkeresése. Kulturális Szemle. <https://www.kulturalisszemle.hu/storage/app/media/pdf/Kulturalis-Szemle-2022-1-gulyas-barnabas-a-rendezetlen-rendszer-az-ifjusagi-munka-utkeresese.pdf> (Downloaded: 25th March 2026)

\*\* <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100189.tv>

significant youth umbrella organisations, such as the National Youth Council of Hungary, prioritising this objective, which entails legally formalising the previously undefined responsibilities of government and local institutions regarding youth.\*

In addition to the 2009-2024 National Youth Strategy,\*\* over the past decade, several larger cities and county capitals have developed youth initiatives and strategies to support young people locally and promote community involvement. However, these documents have often failed to meet expectations, and their significance has diminished over time. In many cases, these strategies and concepts have not been updated, leaving them unable to provide the necessary guidance. Nevertheless, local governments continue to implement relevant local regulations, and strategies that serve as frameworks for youth activities, and various programs, services, and youth centres have been established to support the practical implementation of local youth work.\*\*\*

This context clearly illustrates that the transformation of Hungarian youth policy following the regime change has brought numerous challenges that affect young people's attitudes towards political participation. One significant challenge has persisted since 1990: youth work is not recognised as a profession, and its provision is very limited and depends on local governments' capacities. Despite the establishment of a local government system and efforts to strengthen community involvement, there has been

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\* Dóra, B. & Balás, F., &- Richárd, S. (2016): Esélyek és Esélyteremtés in 25 év jelentés az ifjúságügyről. Budapest.

\*\* [http://www.sie.hu/static/files/1/ifj%C3%BAs%C3%A1g/nis\\_091109.pdf](http://www.sie.hu/static/files/1/ifj%C3%BAs%C3%A1g/nis_091109.pdf)

\*\*\* András, D. & Barnabás, G. (2017): Helyben hogyan? A települési ifjúsági munka gyakorlati kiindulópontjai, Budapest, GYIÖT.

a noticeable increase in apathy among youth, accompanied by a growing prevalence of negative attitudes toward political and civic phenomena.\*

## **Understanding youth work in Hungary**

As previously outlined, Hungary currently lacks a comprehensive legal framework to precisely define youth work and its associated responsibilities. Consequently, as this research shows, youth work in Hungary is broadly interpreted, encompassing nearly all forms of engagement with young people. However, based on longstanding research and fieldwork by experts, several key principles can guide a more precise definition of this field. To gain a clearer understanding of the basics of Hungarian youth work, we will analyse it through the perspectives of target groups, engagement methods, objectives, and primary areas of activity.

We begin by defining youth as a target group. According to the European Union's current stance, individuals aged 15 to 35 are classified as young. In Hungary, however, since 2000, the *Hungarian Youth Survey*,\*\* conducted every four years by the Youth Research Institute with state and EU funding, examines those aged 15 to 29. This age range is widely regarded as the official standard in Hungary, although in practice, adjustments are made depending on specific local or regional contexts. The latest data collection took place in 2024, during which the age range of the sample was extended to 35.

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\* Székely, Levente: *Magyar Ifjúság 2012 – Tanulmánykötet*, Kutatópont, Budapest, 2013

\*\* <https://ifjusagkutatointezet.hu/>

According to Ádám Nagy, youth work in Hungary is built upon a “triple tradition.” This approach seeks to complement gaps in the formal, **institutionalised education system**, draws from the **social-pedagogical traditions of social work** by prioritising partnerships between professionals and the target group, and builds upon the traditions of **public education**, emphasising the community-building power of extracurricular spaces like youth camps, youth councils, youth centres, clubs, and community spaces.\*

In terms of methods and activities, youth work in Hungary generally involves the following:\*\*

- Fulfilling a service-oriented role
- Utilising non-formal methods and emphasising experiential, learning-by-doing approaches
- Prioritising informal, leisure settings
- Focusing on low-threshold, open-ended educational processes
- Operating voluntarily
- Offer “a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually.”\*\*\*

When it comes to the objectives, the task is no easier, as the specific goals and activities are also open to broad interpretation without

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\* Nagy Ádám: Az ifjúsági munka három tradíciója és magyarországi értelmezése in 25 év jelentés az ifjúságügyről (Budapest, 2016)

\*\* Ibid.

\*\*\* From the official definition of the Council of Europe <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-work>

a unified legal and professional definition. To define the general objectives, we once again borrow from Ádám Nagy's definition: '(...)it involves supporting the diversity of autonomous life-worlds and reconciling this with social integration during adolescence, both as an independent life stage and as part of the process of growing up, to ensure that the continuity of one's career path remains free of major disruptions.\*

**To simplify, youth work focuses on supporting young people in their transition to healthy adulthood, fostering their integration into society and encouraging active participation, grounded in principles of equity, equality, inclusion, and acceptance.**

Regarding responsibilities and institutional frameworks, as highlighted in this study, the landscape is highly diverse. Hungarian youth work encompasses a diverse spectrum, ranging from state institutions and civil initiatives to church movements. While the areas of implementation within the vertical structure of youth work and youth affairs are finite, they nonetheless generate an extensive and varied list. Given that the purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview that aids in interpreting and contextualising the research findings, the focus will be on the central practice in Hungary—local youth work—and its associated frameworks.

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\* Nagy Ádám: Az ifjúsági munka három tradíciója és magyarországi értelmezése in 25 év jelentés az ifjúságügyről (Budapest, 2016)

## Local youth work\*

Local youth work in Hungary mainly refers to the municipal level (equivalent to the local government level)\*\* and is used as a collective term for local measures and programs aimed at supporting young people. Local youth work seeks to foster the personal and social development of young people by helping them develop essential life skills, integrate into their communities, and participate actively in politics and the labour market. It strengthens social cohesion and empowers young people to assert their interests while upholding the values of community solidarity. These objectives are achieved through non-formal and informal methods, primarily in the realm of leisure activities, often carried out by paid and volunteer professionals with limited resources. Furthermore, the term “Local youth work” also encompasses a broader interpretation of these activities at the regional or county level. However, we should mention that regions do not have any power or responsibility, as each municipality has its local government. This form of work is particularly crucial in municipalities where local opportunities are limited, and encouraging young people to stay in their communities is vital for the sustainability of the local society.

Local youth work is a service that takes place within the framework of local government, religious, or civil society structures, or, in

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\* The following summary is based on the works of András Déri and Barnabás Gulyás, which are foundational in the field.

Déri András – Gulyás Barnabás: Települési ifjúsági munka: realitások és lehetőségek in *Fiatalok a Kárpát-medencében a 21. század elején*, Nemzetstratégiai Kutatóintézet, Budapest 2019, 64-75. oldal

Déri András – Gulyás Barnabás: *Helyben hogyan? A települési ifjúsági munka gyakorlati kiindulópontjai*, Budapest 2017

\*\* Each municipality in Hungary also has an elected local government.

exceptional cases, school-based structures.

One of the fundamental characteristics of local youth work is that it is based on local needs, which means there can be significant differences in the age of young people, the nature and themes of programs and activities, as well as the organisational or institutional frameworks associated with them.

Déri and Gulyás (2017), in a previous study, classified the practice of youth work based on its primary functions:

- **Youth work offering leisure programs**

- This type is prevalent in smaller communities, where young people are more easily engaged through leisure activities such as sports, music, and games. Youth work initiatives often benefit from events like children's days, community festivals, and programs organised by civil society organisations or the municipality, all aimed at encouraging young people to stay in their communities and participate in local social life.

- **Community-development and democratic participation-focused youth work**

- These initiatives aim to actively involve young people in local civic life. Municipal youth councils, youth forums, and roundtables not only foster community engagement but also serve as avenues for youth advocacy. The goal is for young people to develop skills and take part in community development processes, which enhance their sense of belonging and responsibility. In the long term, these initiatives may contribute to the sustainability of the municipalities.

- **Service-oriented youth work**

- Primarily found in larger towns and cities, where resources

and youth populations are greater, service-oriented programs are offered through youth centres, houses, and offices. These services include career counselling, life skills guidance, and other accessible, low-threshold resources that provide young people with the information and support they need. These services operate within a collaborative framework involving other local entities (e.g., schools, youth protection officers), creating a comprehensive support system for young people.

Additionally, it is important to highlight the role of outreach youth work and online counselling.

The purpose of outreach youth work is to engage young people directly in their everyday environments where they feel safe, making them more approachable and easier to involve in programs. This approach allows young people to receive immediate support without having to leave familiar surroundings.

Online counselling offers a convenient and discreet way for young people to seek guidance on topics such as life skills, career planning, and mental health concerns, anytime, anywhere. Internet-based platforms enable quick and flexible assistance, ensuring that young people have easy access to the support they need.

The financial landscape of local youth work in Hungary presents a varied picture, with funding and professional support varying significantly across municipalities. Although state funding exists, it is limited and often subject to political influence. As a result, it is more common for civil society organisations to rely on European Union grants, such as those provided by the Erasmus+ program, to sustain their operations.

## Youth work development

Different processes aim for quality development of youth work in Hungary, the majority of them are connected to European projects and initiatives (such as Europe Goes Local, Democracy Reloading, etc.).

As mentioned earlier, the profession itself is not recognised in Hungary. In this context, it is essential to underscore the pivotal role of the Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils (GYIÖT) within Hungarian youth work. GYIÖT is instrumental in advancing and standardising the field, with key objectives focused on fostering active youth participation and enhancing the recognition of youth work as a profession. Utilising non-formal learning methods and a wide range of programs, GYIÖT encourages young people's local engagement and advocates for the creation of youth-friendly municipalities. Founded in 1996, the organisation has consistently evolved by building on professional expertise and innovative solutions, thus supporting the unification and development of youth work across Hungary.\*

In conclusion, Hungarian youth work presents a heterogeneous landscape, with implementation primarily occurring at the local level, tailored to meet the specific needs of individual communities. As such, the quality and accessibility of programs and services are significantly influenced by local contexts, resulting in substantial differences in how many young people can access youth work services. Although a limited state funding resource exists, it is not transparent enough, leaving civil society organisations to sustain their operations through EU-funded grants, such as those provided

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\* <https://gyiot.hu/rolunk/>

by the Erasmus+ program. The practice of youth work varies across municipalities depending on their economic and social conditions, and not all areas have access to adequate professional support or expertise. Furthermore, the lack of a unified, national framework for youth work further contributes to the field's fragmentation.

## IV. ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The theoretical foundation of the research is centred on youth work as a professional activity. As explored in depth in the previous chapter, significant efforts have been made to define youth work in Hungary, with the work of Ádám Nagy and his colleagues (Nagy et al., 2014) standing out as particularly noteworthy. However, it should be emphasised that a legitimate and widely accepted definition of youth work has yet to be established in the country. In the absence of a broadly recognised (and legitimised) professional definition, the research preparation relied on the 2017 Recommendation on Youth Work by the Council of Europe (hereinafter: CoE). As explained earlier, the respondents in the survey were selected by convenience sampling. To ensure respondents could identify themselves as volunteers or paid youth workers, we deconstructed the CoE recommendation. This resulted in the creation of simplified statements, presented to participants as simple binary questions (yes/no).

It is worth noting that, according to researchers, rather than striving for a definitive definition, it may be more practical to examine the similarities and differences in the factors that shape the practice of the profession (Cooper, 2018).

A brief summary of the CoE recommendation is as follows:

**“Youth work is “a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and**

**volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people’s active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making”. (Council of Europe, 2017)**

## **Sample characteristics**

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Respondents were randomly selected and participated voluntarily. The data collection via an online questionnaire took place from March 20 to April 10, 2023. A total of 330 individuals completed the questionnaire, while a significant number (more than 150) did not. Responses from incomplete questionnaires were entirely excluded from the analyses and were not considered in the final conclusion.\*

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\* The reasons for incomplete or unfinished responses may include cases in which individuals began filling out the questionnaire but did not continue due to its length, possibly completing it later, or cases in which respondents did not find the questions relevant to their reality. Throughout the questionnaire, respondents encountered questions that increasingly focused on detailed aspects of professional activities. We hypothesise that, while the initial questions were straightforward and deemed relevant even from the perspective of related professions, the later questions specifically related to youth work may not have seemed straightforward or answerable to some respondents. As a result, they might have realised only later, during the completion process, that they did not belong to the study’s target group. Typically, questionnaire completion occurred around the “more challenging” questions. The exact reasons are not fully known, but some insights have been inferred from a few pieces of feedback.

We will now analyse the characteristics and responses of those who fully completed the questionnaire. Of the respondents, 72% were female, and 28% were male. The average age was 40 years, with the youngest respondent being 20 and the oldest 81 at the time of completion. On average, respondents had been involved in youth work for 11 years.

Regarding educational background, university degrees were predominant: 79% of respondents held a diploma, while 21% had completed only up to high school. The majority of qualifications were in the humanities, with notable representation in the social sciences and liberal arts disciplines. 42% of respondents held qualifications directly related to youth work, 11% were in the process of obtaining such qualifications, and another 11% planned to pursue related training.

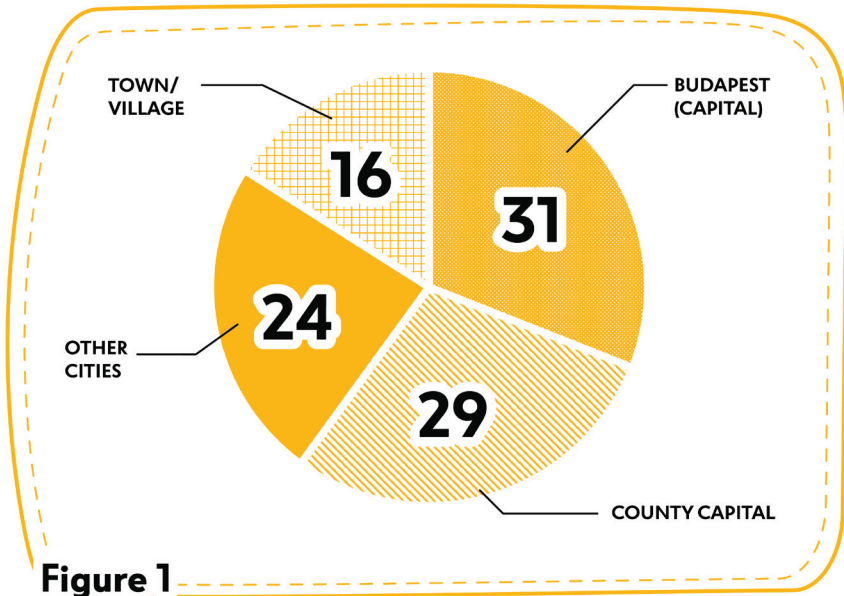
In terms of language skills, English proficiency was predominant: 87% of respondents spoke English at a basic level or higher. Of these, 56% demonstrated strong proficiency, speaking English at least conversationally. Knowledge of German was also relatively common, but only 45% of respondents reported having German language skills.

In terms of where the respondents work, it is evident that data from the capital constitute the largest proportion, while those from smaller villages have the lowest representation (see Figure 1). Regarding the employment context, there is a notable dominance of civil society organisations: 55% of respondents conduct a significant portion of their professional activities within them. Employment in state-run institutions/organisations was reported by 6%, while 25% worked in municipal governments or authorities.

Additionally, 6% were employed by nonprofit organisations, 1% by for-profit organisations, and 7% by other types of organisations or institutions.

On average, organisations/institutions involved in youth work have seven staff members dedicated to this field, though there is considerable variation, ranging from 1 to 100. The most common human resource base for youth work among the respondents is 1 to 2 individuals. Half of the respondents work in organisations/institutions where no more than three professionals are dedicated to youth work.

Type of municipality of workplace  
(N = 330; percentage distribution)



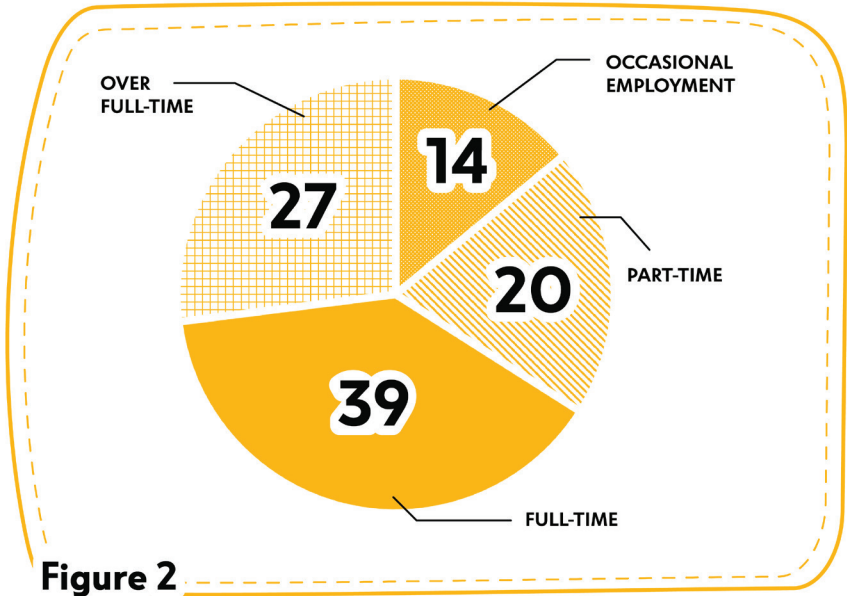
The most frequent job roles are organisational and institutional leaders, youth coordinators, advisors, assistants, administrative staff, community developers, program organisers, and coordinators. This distribution provides insight into the 'demographic' reached by the research and highlights the primary positions engaged in youth work in Hungary. The job roles reflect a bit of reality: information about professional news and matters often reaches individuals in leadership roles first. Furthermore, in smaller organisations, it is not uncommon for the leader to be the only specialist in the field.

Among the respondents, regarding professional identity, 41% identify as community organisers, 22% as youth helpers (which roughly corresponds to the Hungarian translation of youth worker), 4% as youth workers, and 18% as youth professionals. However, 15% of respondents could not relate to these titles and instead described their professional activities with other terms.

Regarding working hours, full-time employment is most common among respondents, yet a significant prevalence of work beyond standard hours is also observed in the field (see Figure 2). 66% of respondents work at least 40 hours per week in their professional roles.

Regarding perceptions of the quality of living, 27% of respondents are either not satisfied or only slightly satisfied with their economic situation. 45% are somewhat confident with their existential opportunities, while 28% provided a mixed (both positive and negative) assessment.

Distribution of working hours ("Which of the following statements best describes the duration of your professional activities according to your own assessment?"; N = 330; percentage distribution)



**Figure 2**

## V. PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

We initially analysed the professional values to construct questions about the activities in youth work, as well as statements about their motivations for entering the field of youth work as a volunteer or professional.

The professional value framework was developed based on an analysis of various policy documents, including the European Union Council's 2020 resolution on youth work,\* the Council of Europe's 2017 recommendation on youth work,\*\* and the European Charter on Local Youth Work.\*\*\* The existing literature underscores the fundamental role of professional values in shaping and advancing an individual's professional identity (cf. Hidy, 2001; Abdelal et al., 2006).

**It is crucial to recognise that for youth work in Hungary—and similarly in countries where youth work is less developed, lacks standardisation, or is not legally recognised—to become more robust and improve the quality of professional practice, fostering a shared value system among practitioners is imperative.**

This objective also serves as a strategic goal, necessitating decisions that establish common ground to achieve a unified approach to the profession and to train future professionals effectively.

\* [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2020.415.01.0001.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2020.415.01.0001.01.ENG)

\*\* <https://rm.coe.int/1680717e78>

\*\*\* [https://europegoeslocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/20250212-egl-charter-ENG\\_online.pdf](https://europegoeslocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/20250212-egl-charter-ENG_online.pdf)

There is a significant need to investigate professional career paths within the field of youth work. Analysing practitioners' careers presents an opportunity to establish foundational standards. This approach not only allows for the identification of similarities but also provides insights into how individuals become youth workers. Although there are some examples in Hungary, such as László Tóbiás's series of career interviews with youth work professionals published in the *Párbeszéd*\* (in English: Dialogue) journal, these are less suited for comparative analysis due to the diverse roles and professional activities of the subjects involved.\*\*

We were also interested in understanding the factors that influence respondents' choice of youth work as a profession. In designing the questionnaire, we integrated insights from GYIÖT's extensive professional experience and community feedback. We created straightforward statements from which respondents could select up to three. These statements included those related to respondents' previous experiences in youth work, references to young people as a resource, and decision-making situations connected to random or changing factors in their professional journey.

Among those who chose youth work as a profession, commitment to the youth field emerged as the most defining factor. Additionally, early experiences in community activities strongly influenced the respondents (see Figure 3). Furthermore, the creativity and flexibility associated with the professional activity ("I was interested in a professional activity that is both creative and provides flexible

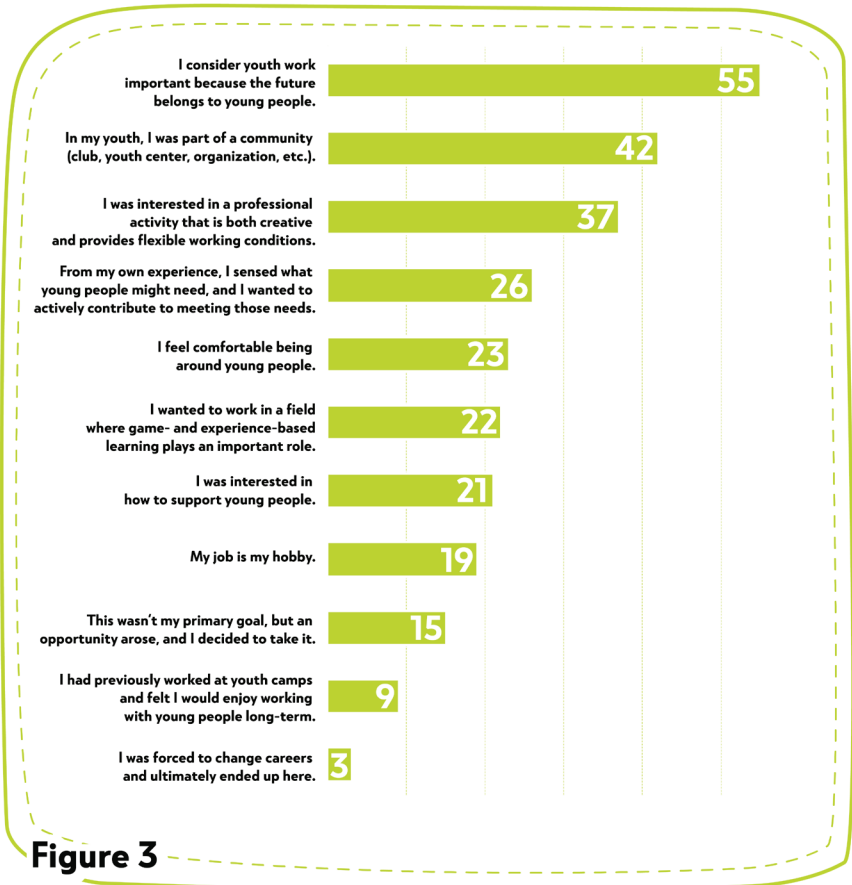
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\* It's a Hungarian scientific journal mainly focusing on applied social sciences and social work.

\*\* The interviews are available in the Archives of the *Párbeszéd* social work journal. <https://ojs.lib.unideb.hu/parbeszed/issue/archive>

working conditions.”) also contributed to the attractiveness of youth work for many individuals. A quarter of the respondents were motivated to enter the field by their own experiences related to the needs of their age group, while a fifth transitioned from a hobby to a profession. For 15% of the respondents, youth work was not a consciously planned choice but rather an opportunity that arose as they became acquainted with the profession.

**Reasons for choosing the profession** (“Which factors played the most significant role in your decision to pursue your current professional activity? Please select up to three of the following!”; N = 330; percentage distribution)



**Figure 3**

In analysing the factors influencing employment in the field, no significant correlations were found with educational background, age, or the type of municipality where the workplace is located. However, gender proved relevant in several aspects. For male respondents, factors such as commitment to youth work, early experiences with community activities, and viewing work as a vocation were more frequently reported. In contrast, female respondents were more likely to cite factors such as receptiveness to creativity, seeing opportunities, experiences in camp settings, and the necessity of career changes.

The impact of status perception can be measured through personal experiences: those motivated by perceived needs within the youth sector generally rated their current standard of living lower than those for whom this factor was not significant. Commitment to supporting the youth population as a career choice also showed differences based on organisational size. Respondents for whom this was a key factor in choosing their field were typically employed in institutions or organisations with larger staff dedicated to youth work, compared to those for whom this motivation was less prominent.

When considering the number of years spent in youth work, certain motivational factors show notable correlations (see Table 1). Those for whom personal experiences in youth communities are a key motivational factor tend to have spent more years in the field compared to those for whom this was not a significant factor. Kiialkoski (2018),\* uses qualitative data to illustrate the importance of personal experiences as well. Conversely, among those who cite

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\* Kiialkoski, T. (2018). Diversity of Practice Architectures in Europe: An Analytical Report based on Mapping Educational Paths of Youth Workers. Council of Europe.

this aspect as influential in their career choice, those with less experience in youth work are more likely than those for whom it was not a relevant factor. This is similarly observed regarding the lack of career planning and among those forced to change careers. Both factors indicate that these motivational influences are particularly characteristic of individuals with shorter tenure in the field.

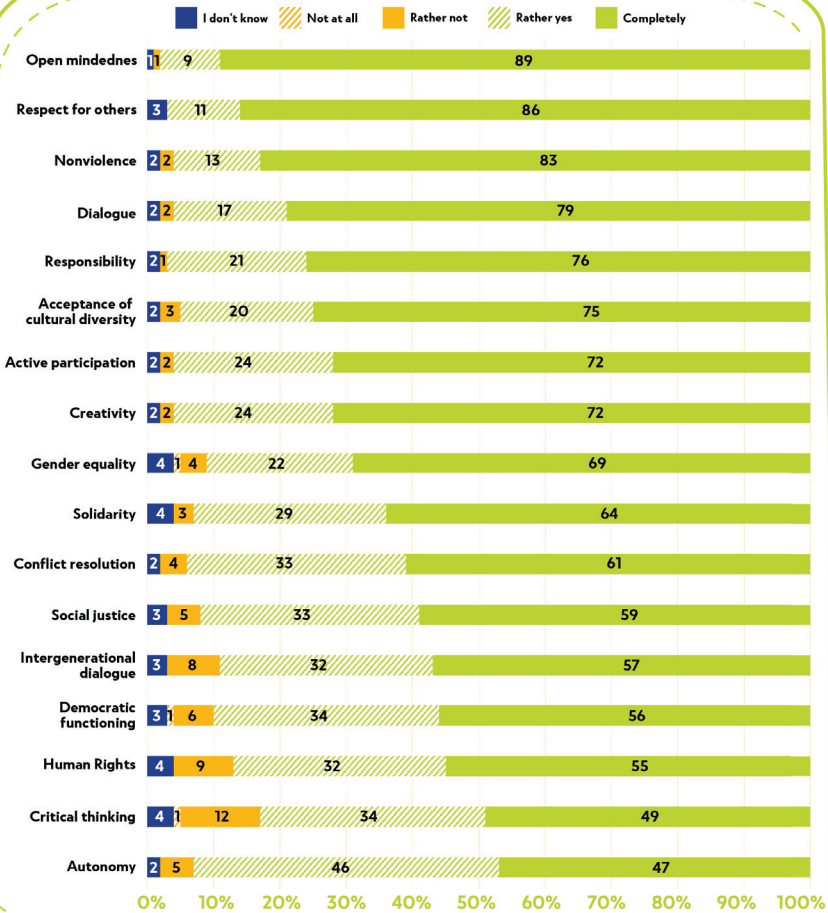
**Table 1:** Reasons for career choice in relation to time spent in the profession (N = 330; Means; \*p ≤ 0.05, \*\*p ≤ 0.001)

	Did not indicate	Indicated
<b>"As a young person, I was part of some community (club, community space, organisation, etc.)"</b> **	7,1 years	13,4 years
<b>"I feel comfortable around young people"</b> **	11,5 years	8,8 years
<b>"It was not my primary goal, but an opportunity arose and I took it"</b> **	11,5 years	7,0 years
<b>"I was compelled to change careers, and eventually ended up here"</b> **	11,1 years	4,0 years

In terms of mindset and values, the respondents exhibit a clear commitment to deliberate, inclusive action. The value system associated with their professional activities reveals a strong dedication among those surveyed (see Figure 4).

**Open-mindedness emerges as the most prevalent value in this context. In contrast, respect for others, non-violence, dialogue about youth-related topics, and taking responsibility also play significant roles in the professional activities of those who work with young people. Conversely, critical thinking and human rights appear to be regarded as less crucial by a larger proportion of respondents.**

The role of values in professional activities ("To what extent do the following play a role in your professional activities related to youth work?"; N = 330; percentage distribution)



**Figure 4**

Among the examined socio-demographic aspects,\* differences in

\* The variables analysed are: gender, age, years spent in youth work, highest educational attainment, type of settlement where the workplace is located, organisational background of the workplace, self-assessed quality of life, and organisation size.

perceptions of professional values are observed by gender. Although it is evident that the respondents generally regard the specified values as highly significant, specific values are emphasised more by women than by men. These values include creativity, solidarity, conflict resolution, human rights, diversity, non-violence, gender equality, and intergenerational dialogue. Beyond this, significant associations with socio-demographic factors are generally not measurable, although other variables influence some values.

Respondents who place greater value on active participation tend to be older on average compared to those who regard it as less important. Regarding the type of settlement where the workplace is located, significant associations are observed: critical thinking is more significant for employees in urban organisations/institutions, whereas intergenerational dialogue is more prominent among those working in smaller settlements. The number of staff dealing with young people at the workplace is crucial for two values: democratic functioning and gender equality, which are emphasised more in smaller organisations.

The significance of autonomy (independence, self-reliance) is less pronounced among employees of state and municipal governments, while it is more significant in civil society and other organisations. This is unsurprising given the characteristics and cultures of the two organisational types. The importance of social justice is inversely proportional to perceived social status: the higher the respondent's reported quality of life, the less emphasis they place on social justice in their professional activities. The role of educational attainment is significant: the importance of critical thinking and non-violence is more likely to increase with higher levels of education.

## VI. NEEDS, CHALLENGES, FUTURE

In our research, we also examined the experiences and perceptions of youth work volunteers and professionals regarding the realities and future perceptions of their profession. Our goal was not only to identify their needs and challenges but also to understand their perspectives on potential development opportunities for the field.

In designing the survey, we incorporated key considerations drawn from European practices in youth work, explicitly focusing on initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of professional activities and supporting the visibility and recognition of the field. These objectives are closely aligned with the aims of the European Youth Work Convention, held every five years since 2010. During the first Convention, participants aimed to define and establish the scope of youth work as a professional activity. In 2015, the emphasis shifted to developing a “common denominator” for the field while enhancing the quality of professional practice. At the 2020 Convention, the closing declaration included recommendations and proposals to advance professional practice, secure greater recognition for youth work, and ensure broader access to high-quality youth work services.\*

We posed questions not only about the everyday needs and challenges perceived by youth workers, but also about the profession’s visibility, recognition, and the areas essential to quality

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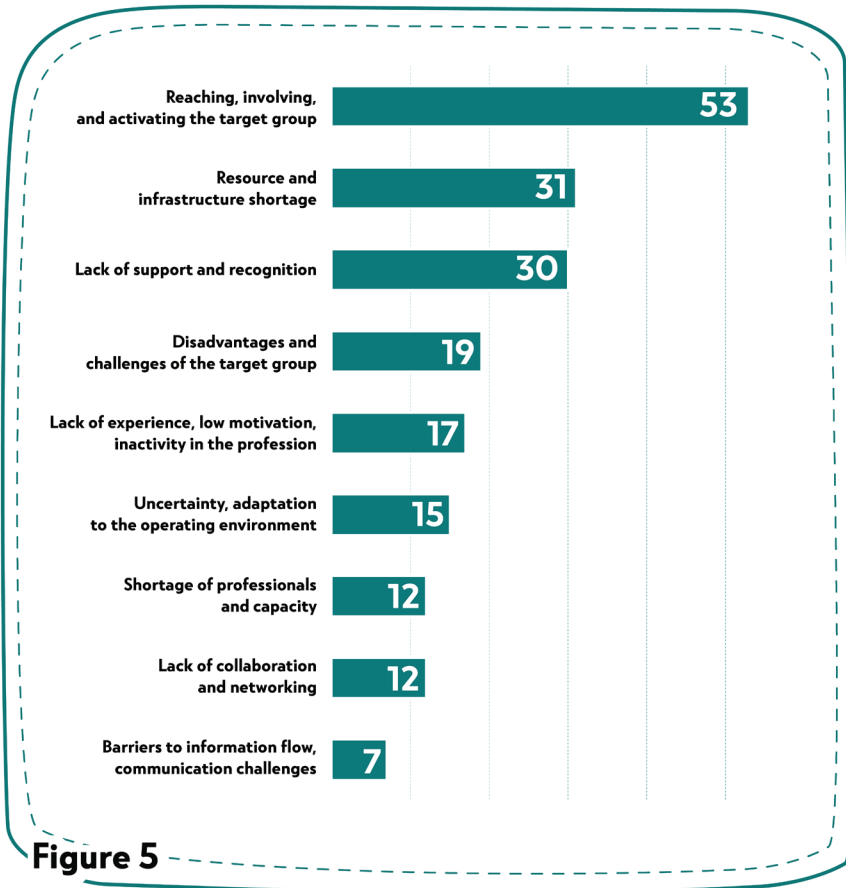
\* [https://www.eywc2020.eu/files/downloads/doctrine/webforumveranstaltungen/websitebundle-media-file-54/3rdeywc\\_finaldeclaration.pdf](https://www.eywc2020.eu/files/downloads/doctrine/webforumveranstaltungen/websitebundle-media-file-54/3rdeywc_finaldeclaration.pdf)  
(Downloaded: 25th March 2026)

development from the perspective of the professional community. Over half of the respondents consider reaching, involving, and activating the target group as the most pressing daily difficulty (see Figure 5). Further research is clearly needed to explore the factors influencing target group engagement, assessing not only professional competencies but also working conditions and organisational resources. While reflecting on this, we imagine that the lack of a framework—especially concerning who qualifies as a young person in Hungary—affects youth workers’ experiences with outreach and engagement.

Additionally, resource constraints, which limit infrastructure, and the lack of a supportive legitimising environment stand out as significant challenges in the respondents’ everyday practice.

**The limitations in human resources within the profession were also frequently noted, with issues such as lack of experience, low motivation, shortage of qualified professionals, and related workloads cited as routine challenges.**

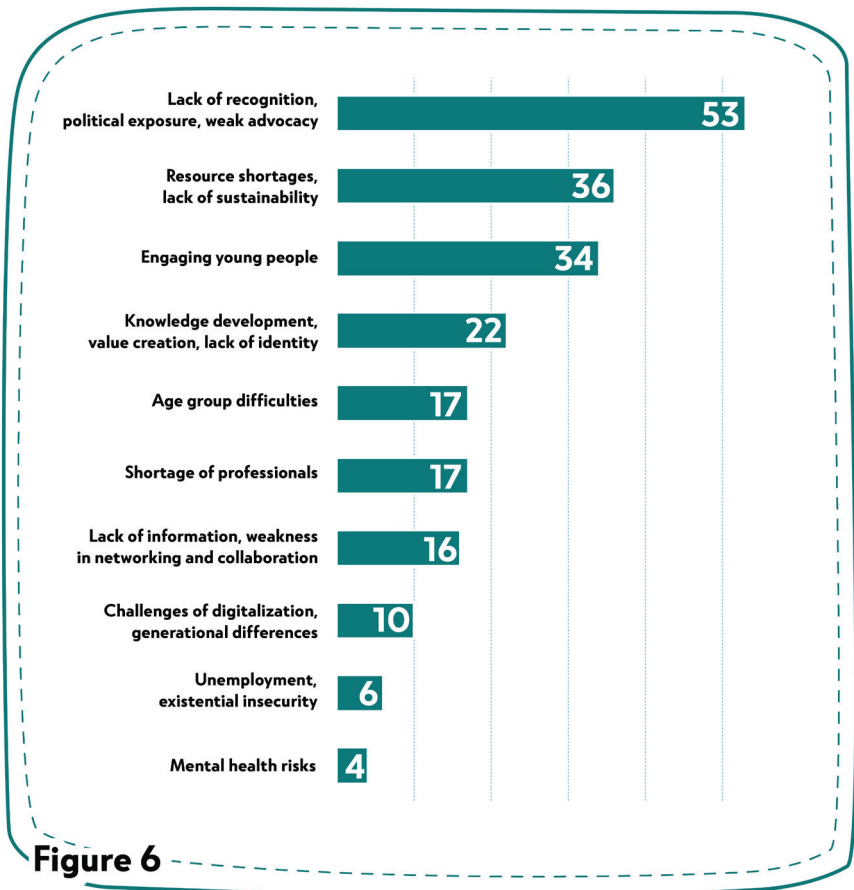
**Daily Challenges in the Profession** (“What challenges do you face daily in youth work-related activities?” Open-ended question allowing up to three responses; responses were coded based on at least one mention; N = 330; percentage distribution).



Beyond challenges in the micro environment (daily professional activities and collegial level), we found that youth workers themselves perceive the professional field as lacking recognition, political exposure, and weak advocacy as the most significant challenges for most respondents (see Figure 6). Additionally, resource shortages and the resulting instability in sustainability

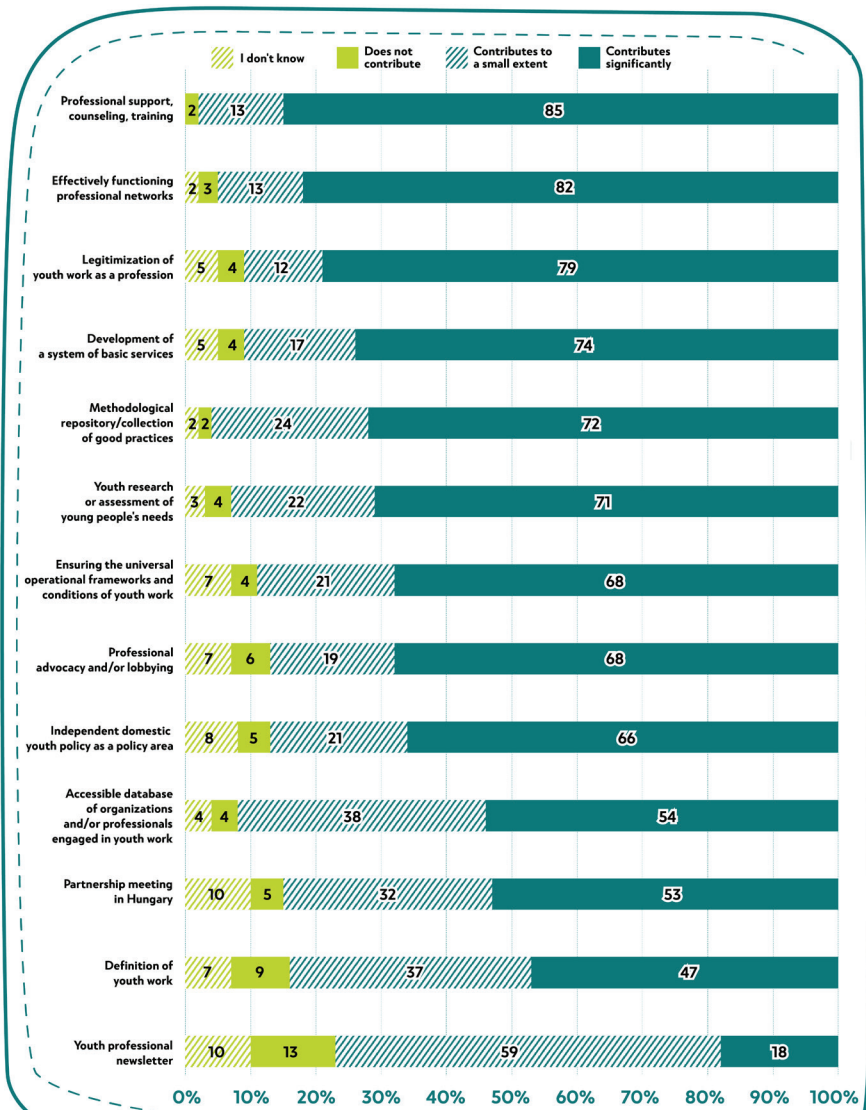
are prominent issues in the hierarchy of challenges. Those working with the target group also perceive reaching and engaging youth on a macro level (considering the youth work profession as a whole) as a substantial challenge. Although less prominent, concerns related to mental health risks, existential insecurity, and unemployment are also noted.

**Challenges in Youth Work** (“What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing youth work in our country?” Open-ended question with three response options: mentioned at least once; N = 330; percentage distribution)



Respondents highly value several factors for the quality development of youth work (see Figure 7). The most impactful among these are professional support, the establishment of a structured educational & training framework, professional legitimacy, and effective professional networking. Conversely, the initiation of a youth work-focused professional newsletter is perceived as the least relevant factor in this context. While the question regarding defining the profession remains more divisive, it also emerges as significant within quality improvement in youth work: eight out of ten respondents felt that fulfilling this criterion was at least somewhat important.

**Elements for Quality Improvement in Youth Work** ("To what extent do you believe the following factors contribute to enhancing the quality of youth work?"; N = 330; percentage distribution)



**Figure 7**

The findings regarding the profession's visibility and societal recognition offer little reason for optimism. While 49% of respondents believe that their immediate environment is aware of their professional activities (with “no” responses at 29% and “I don't know” at 22%), only 24% express similarly positive views about broader societal recognition (“no” responses stand at 65%, “I don't know” at 11%). The duration of involvement in youth work significantly influences respondents' perceptions of societal recognition, with longer-tenured individuals exhibiting greater pessimism.

This group likely has a broader range of professional experience, including initiatives aimed at enhancing the profession's recognition and development, such as efforts to establish youth policy legislation in the late 2000s, the limited success of which may have eroded trust in similar efforts.

Among those who view the profession as recognised, the average tenure is 9 years. In contrast, those who express pessimism have an average of 11.8 years in the field (the overall sample average is 10.9 years). Additional research into the question of recognition is recommended, as its various levels—as outlined, for example, in Council of Europe-European Commission publications\* on youth cooperation—suggest that recognition can be evaluated differently depending on the context.

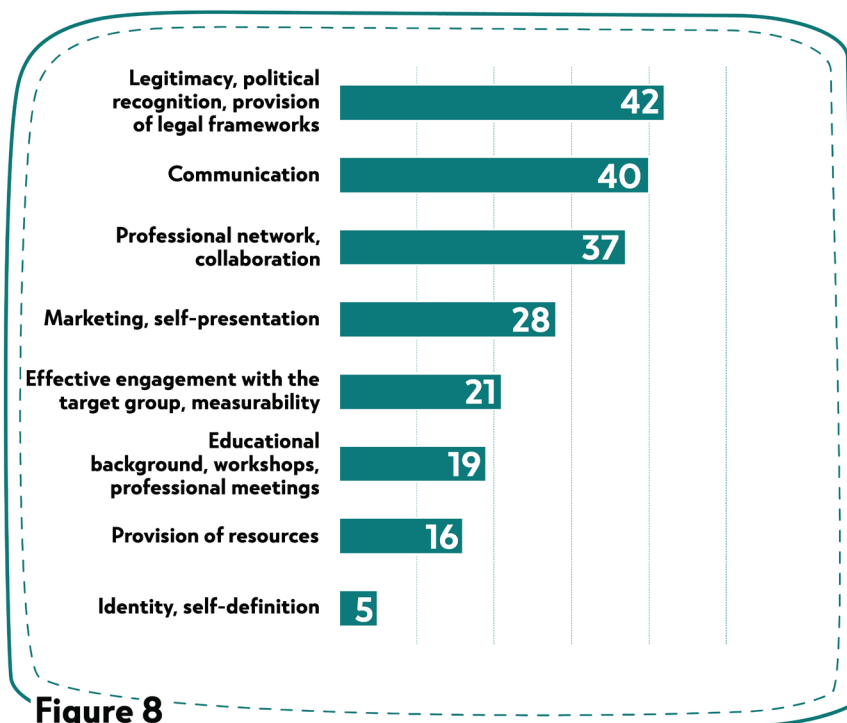
**In terms of enhancing visibility, respondents identify several key factors as most significant: legitimacy, recognition as a profession, effective communication, the importance of collaboration, and efficient professional self-representation (see Figure 8).**

\* <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/about-recognition>

For approximately one in twenty respondents, identification with youth work is deemed significant for promoting visibility, while securing funding is considered a crucial issue by about one in six respondents.

Interestingly, from the perspective of professional identity, visibility and recognition are categorised as external factors (cf. Ellis & Hogard, 2020). This classification emphasises the existence of the profession and its general scope to society, while simultaneously aiding practitioners in shaping their professional self-image.

**Factors Supporting the Visibility of Youth Work** (Question: "In your opinion, what would most enhance the visibility of youth work?" Open-ended question with three response options: mentioned at least once; N = 330; percentage distribution)



Similar conclusions were reached regarding social recognition: the visibility of youth work, the structuring of task funding related to basic services in youth work, and effective advocacy were among the most frequently mentioned suggestions by respondents for fostering positive change (see Figure 9).

**Factors Supporting the Social Recognition of Youth Work** ("In your opinion, which of the following can most contribute to the social recognition of youth work? Please select up to three options from the list below!"; N = 330; percentage distribution)



\* The respondents did not select the item "expansion of training for professionals."

**The overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) believe that there are not enough practitioners engaged in youth work in the country.**

Given that precise data on the number of individuals working in youth work in Hungary is unavailable, one of the survey questions specifically addressed the potential number of youth workers. On average, respondents estimate approximately 6,600 individuals are working in youth work across Hungary. When contextualising this within their professional circle, respondents estimate an average of 80 active youth workers in their specific workplace or district. Notably, there is significant variation in these estimates: 39% of respondents anticipate that no more than 10 youth workers are active in their area of professional practice.

The size of the municipality where the workplace is located clearly influences the responses to this question. Unsurprisingly, those operating in the capital city estimate the largest average number of youth workers, while those working in rural areas provide the smallest estimates (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Estimated Number of Youth Workers Based on Workplace Municipality Type ("What do you think is the number of individuals engaged in youth work (including yourself) in the municipality (district) where you conduct a significant portion of your professional activities?"; N = 327; averages;  $p \leq 0.001$ )

<b>Budapest (Capital)</b>	<b>139,6 persons</b>
<b>County capital</b>	<b>85,8 persons</b>
<b>Other cities</b>	<b>48,0 persons</b>
<b>Town / Village</b>	<b>5,7 persons</b>

The respondents identified several key channels for effective communication among professionals in youth work. The primary sources of information regarding youth work-related news are Facebook (85%), websites (78%), and email (74%). Nearly half of the respondents (47%) obtain information from newsletters, while other social media platforms beyond Facebook are less frequently recognised as news sources, with Instagram cited by 27%, TikTok by 10%, and X (Twitter) by 2%.

## VII. PROFESSIONAL CONTENT AND TARGET GROUP FOCUS

In our research, we also aimed to explore an additional area related to the professional activities of volunteers and professionals working in youth work. In other words, we wanted to uncover the essence of youth work among those engaged in professional activities.

While youth work can be approached from various theoretical perspectives (cf. Cooper, 2018), it remains crucial to accurately describe its professional content. In related fields (e.g., social pedagogy, social work), the target demographic—similar to youth work—primarily consists of young people.

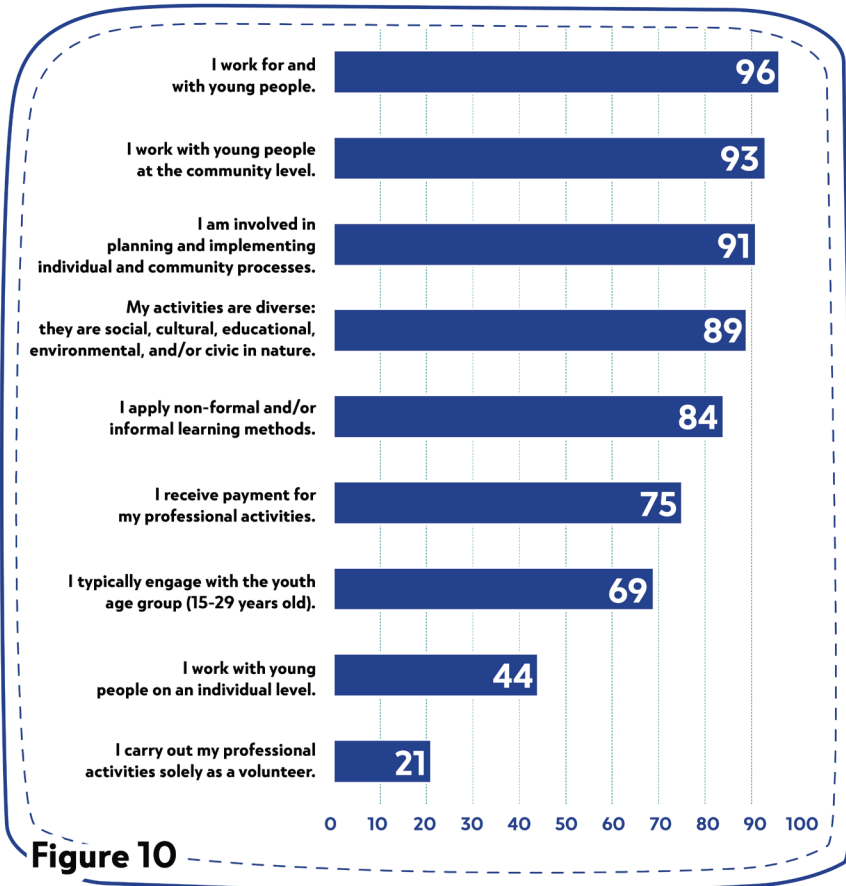
**Thus, it is essential to understand how youth work differs from other professional activities that also target youth.**

Unfortunately, we cannot provide a definitive answer to this matter within the scope of our research, but we recommend that this task be placed at the forefront of professional discourse.

The majority of respondents engage with young people in group settings, typically through community processes and programs. However, this does not exclude the possibility of individual support. A significant proportion of respondents receive compensation for their professional activities, during which they use informal and non-formal learning methods (see Figure 10). Additionally, 21% of respondents engage in such activities on a voluntary basis. The diversity of organisational profiles is underscored by the fact

that only 69% of respondents work in organisations, institutions, or communities where reaching and engaging young people is a primary objective.

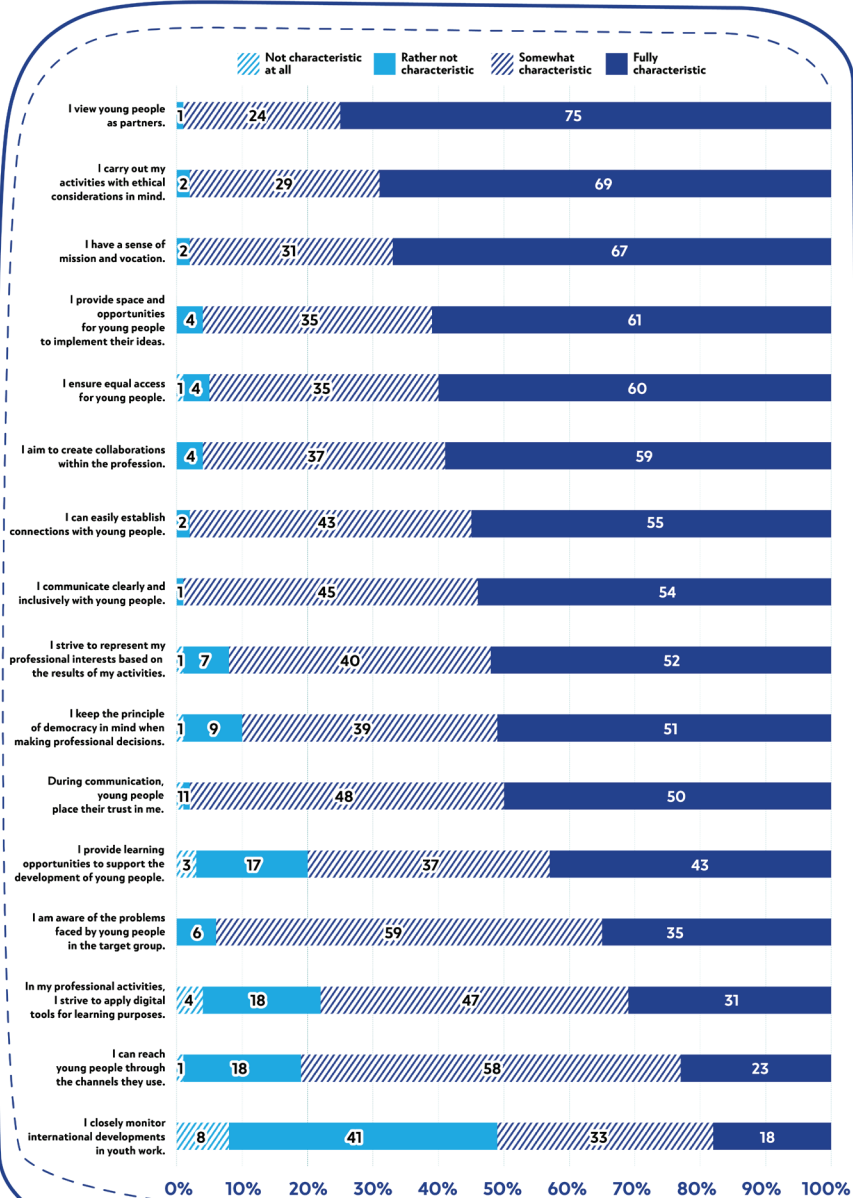
**Characteristics of Professional Activity** ("Which of the following statements are true regarding your professional activity?"; N = 330; percentage distribution)



The professional activity of the respondents is clearly defined by their partnership with young people, adherence to ethical frameworks, and a sense of mission and vocation (see Figure 11). Interestingly, despite the importance of moral guidelines, this professional activity lacks its own ethical code. Based on the responses, the majority of participants have inclusive practices, build relationships easily with young people, strive to ensure equal access, and place a strong emphasis on creating a trusting and safe environment.

In terms of providing learning opportunities, it's important to highlight that respondents associated with state or local government institutions place less emphasis on this aspect than those from civil society or other organisational backgrounds. However, it can also be stated that the use of informal/non-formal learning tools and methods is independent of the type of organisation where the respondents work.

## Approaches Employed in Professional Activities ("How characteristic are the following statements of your professional activities?"; N = 330; percentage distribution)



**Figure 11**

Regarding the professional content of youth work, the majority of respondents (56%) view supporting young people in addressing age-group-specific difficulties as the primary goal of youth work (see Figure 12). As a secondary, empowering active citizenship education comes, while providing activities that promote the productive use of leisure time ranks as the third priority in terms of the goals of youth work. The goals have been explicitly phrased to reflect the different traditions of youth work.

When examining socio-demographic variables,\* no correlations emerge regarding the definition of professional activities in this sense. However, two significant relationships can be identified: one concerning the provision of leisure activities and the other regarding the promotion of active citizenship. Youth work in smaller communities is more likely to focus on leisure-related content than in larger cities or the capital. Respondents from civil society organisations tend to prioritise the importance of active citizenship education within the context of youth work, whereas professionals with a governmental or state background generally consider this activity to be less important.

**Consequently, it is not surprising that staff from state or municipal institutions view the provision of learning opportunities and the significance of active citizenship education as less prominent in their professional assessments. In contrast, organisations with civil society or other backgrounds attribute greater importance to the existence of these two professional content factors.**

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\* The examined variables include: gender, age, number of years spent in youth work, highest level of education, type of municipality where the workplace is located, organisational background of the workplace, perception of living standards, and size of the organisation.

Further investigation is needed to determine the extent to which the objectives and priorities of EU youth programs influence civil society organisations, particularly given the Erasmus+ Youth program’s key priority\* of promoting active participation within the sector.

Assessment of the Primary Objective of Youth Work (“Please rank the following statements! In my professional activities, the primary objective of youth work for me is...”; N = 330, percentage distribution)

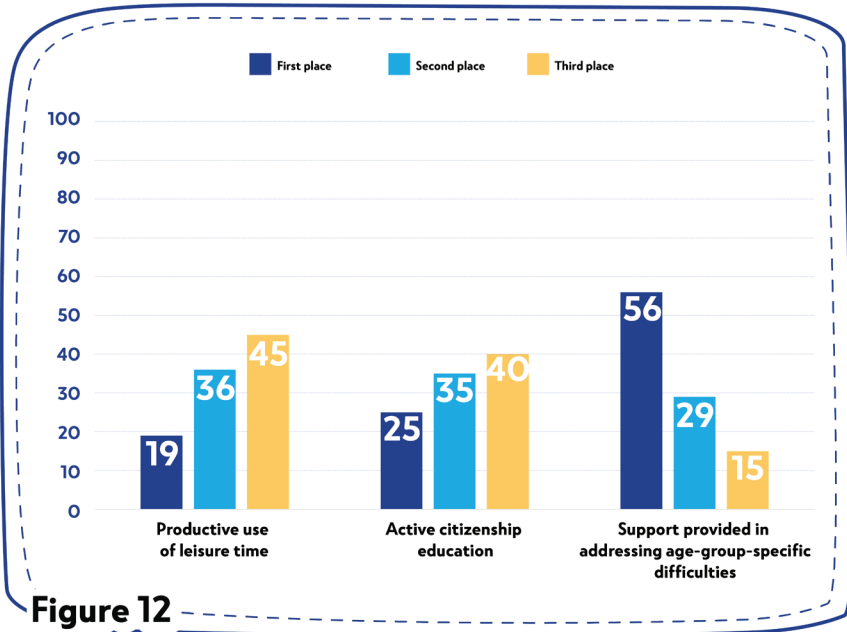


Figure 12

The respondents’ understanding of age-group challenges is notably high, with 94% reporting strong awareness. However, a different picture emerges regarding online presence and communication. 22% of respondents say using digital tools for learning is not typical or only somewhat typical, while 19% find it challenging

\* <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

to reach young people through their own channels. The activity related to monitoring international professional developments is even less consistent: only 51% of respondents actively follow these trends. Among those who do engage to some degree, the likelihood of knowing a foreign language is higher (average foreign language knowledge: 1.06) compared to those who do not closely monitor developments in the international professional arena (average foreign language knowledge: 0.93).

Respondents generally describe their knowledge related to the target group as strong. While 81% consider themselves well-prepared, one in five respondents (19%) assesses their knowledge as somewhat inadequate. Those who rate their knowledge as stronger tend to have more experience in youth work compared to their colleagues who report gaps in this area (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** Assessment of Preparedness Based on Time Spent in the Profession ("How prepared do you consider yourself regarding professional activities related to the youth age group (15-29 years)?"; N = 330; averages;  $p \leq 0.001$ )

<b>Completely inadequate knowledge</b>	<b>9,0 years</b>
<b>Rather inadequate knowledge</b>	<b>8,2 years</b>
<b>Rather prepared</b>	<b>10,0 years</b>
<b>Completely prepared</b>	<b>12,9 years</b>
<b>Full sample</b>	<b>10,9 years</b>

A measurable correlation can also be observed regarding the type of municipality where respondents work (see Table 4). Those working in large cities rate their preparedness more positively than those working in rural towns and villages.\*

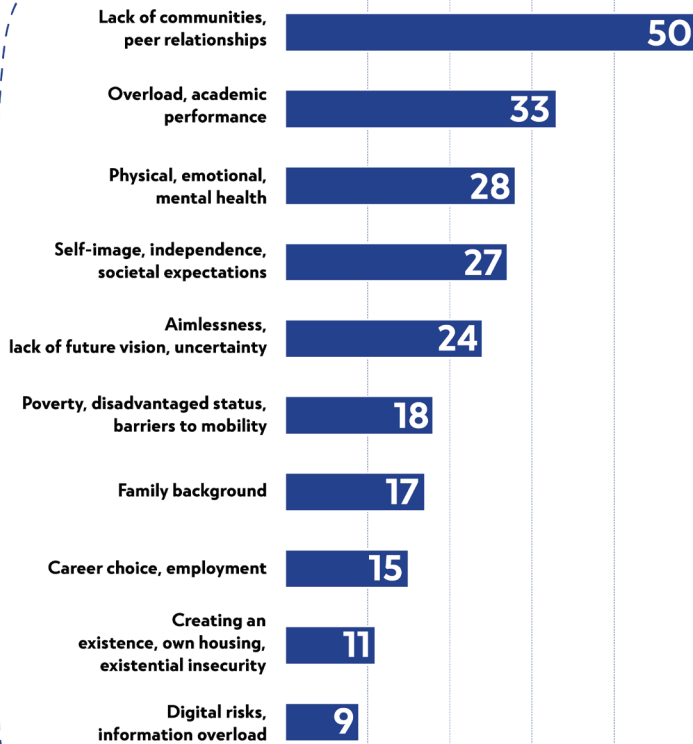
**Table 4:** Self-Assessment of Preparedness Based on Workplace Type of Municipality

("How prepared do you consider yourself regarding your professional activities related to the youth age group (15-29 years)?"; 1 = "completely inadequate knowledge," 4 = "completely prepared"; N = 330; averages; p ≤ 0.001)

<b>Budapest (Capital)</b>	<b>3,0</b>
<b>County capital</b>	<b>3,0</b>
<b>Other cities</b>	<b>2,9</b>
<b>Town/Village</b>	<b>2,8</b>

\* There is no measurable correlation between preparedness and the advocacy for training related to the social recognition of the profession. While a measurable relationship exists between preparedness and sociodemographic characteristics, no such influence is observed in the responses regarding the advocacy for training of professionals (there is no correlation with the following variables: gender, age, years spent in youth work, type of municipality of the workplace, educational background).

**Assessment of the Most Significant Problems Faced by Youth**  
("What are the most significant problems faced by the youth you work with?"; Open question with three response options: mentioned at least once; N = 330; percentage distribution)



**Figure 13**

**Analysing the generational challenges encountered by the youth the respondents have engaged with, it can be stated that the lack of community and a sense of isolation are the most pronounced issues (see Figure 13).**

Challenges related to school obligations, such as workload and school expectations, emerge as significant difficulties. Health risks and mental health concerns also stand out as notable challenges based on the reports of the respondents. It is important to note that poverty and financial vulnerability were reported by 1 in 5 respondents. Expectations placed on this generation and the formation of identity are also viewed by professionals as crucial challenges in the lives of today's youth.

In analysing the detection of generational problems, uncertainty and hopelessness emerge in participants' responses (see Figure 13).

**It is essential to note that respondents expressed a sense of uncertainty and a lack of predictability regarding the challenges of their professional activities; similar sentiments were emphasised in relation to the profession itself (e.g., lack of resources, uncertainty, lack of recognition).**

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Youth work, as a profession in Hungary, has only a few decades of history, so it is not surprising that the research findings indicate a lack of consensus among professionals in several areas. Significant differences appear in the content of professional activities, the motivations of those engaged in the field, and the values they consider important, as well as in their perceptions of what they see as the greatest challenges in their work, based on their time in the profession, gender, and size of the community. Development and progress in youth work are essential, and the results of this research can serve as a reference or starting point. The data and conclusions presented should be viewed more as a snapshot rather than a definitive or unchangeable state of the art. Its purpose is to outline the directions that should guide future professional developments and programs, which are important and necessary for both those working in the field and the responsible decision-makers.

The development of youth work and its greater social recognition requires the active engagement, dialogue, and cooperation of professionals across numerous areas. To strengthen youth work in our country and improve the quality of professional activities, it is essential to establish a community of values among those practising the profession. For the majority of respondents, adherence to ethical frameworks is of extraordinary importance; however, the profession lacks a code of ethics that would allow for a unified understanding and assessment of these moral standards.

The representation and daily work of professionals in the field are significantly constrained by the scarcity of available resources.

This is particularly true for financial resources, which lead to infrastructural deficiencies and shortages in human resources. In the latter case, the lack of experience, motivation, and professionals, along with the resulting workload, hinders the establishment, maintenance, and effective operation of professional-interest and value communities.

The issue of securing resources extends beyond the scope and competencies of those engaged in the profession. Decision-makers—whether at the local, national, or European level—play a significant role in ensuring that the necessary conditions for youth work are established, enabling young people to access quality, equal, and consistent services regardless of their backgrounds.

As previously referenced in this publication, based on the 2017 Council of Europe recommendation, “youth work is essentially a socio-political activity aimed at promoting the active participation of young people in the life of their community and in decision-making through cooperation with young people and their social environment.” Therefore, supporting young people’s concerns, fostering their social integration, and developing youth work that aligns with the needs and requirements of the age group—while actively involving the target group—are in the community’s and local society’s interest. In other words, youth work is a public concern!

A significant finding of the research is that more than half of the respondents work for civil society organisations, suggesting that there is still considerable untapped potential for greater commitment and responsibility on the part of municipal and state actors. This is not just at the local and national levels, but also at

the European level, as the European Youth Strategy for the period 2019 to 2027 also sets out numerous objectives for this field.

The institutional/organisational background is crucial in defining the primary goals of professional activities with young people. As seen above, activities with NGO or other backgrounds place greater emphasis on active citizenship education and support in addressing the difficulties faced by the age group. In contrast, in municipal and state-maintained organisations/institutions, the focus is more on ensuring the productive use of leisure time as part of their objectives.

Among the difficulties experienced by professionals in the youth sector - both at the individual level of professionals and at the level of the youth profession as a whole - uncertainty and lack of predictability have been identified. The main reasons cited for these include the lack of resources and infrastructure, the shortage of professionals, the absence of training and professional networks, (interest) representation, and, most notably, the lack of recognition and support. From this, we can conclude that the political and social recognition of youth work is one of the most significant issues for the profession today. Although this issue is realised mainly at the decision-maker level, the meaningful contribution of those active in the profession is indispensable. Those working in the profession are the ones who can make their activities and results visible, recognisable, and understandable to others - including decision-makers.

As much as our research titled “**Are You Involved with Youth Work?**” presented results and correlations, it raises just as many further questions worth exploring and understanding in depth,

either based on scientific research methods or by encouraging and facilitating ongoing dialogue among stakeholders in a broader sense. The issue of the perception and recognition of youth work is complex in itself, as are its objectives, content, and methods. Likewise, the career paths, training, and professional development of professionals, and the topic of youth work as a career offering perspective, should also be on the agenda of professional dialogue. Although we collected data on participants' professional qualifications, we need further clarification on the basis for considering some professional training to be close to or related to youth work, and on which training professionals working in the field associate with their professional activities. Similarly, exploring the relationship between other education sectors and youth work participants, as well as the quality of their relationship and cooperation, would also be worth further investigation.

Although the list of tasks seems endless, both in terms of individual/organisational professional activities and the development and improvement of working conditions in the field, it's crucial from both the profession's and the involved decision-makers' perspectives to identify those cardinal issues that, by being addressed, thought through, and discussed, can have a positive effect on many other aspects of the area. Based on the research findings, these include increasing the profession's visibility, establishing task funding for the basic services of youth work, and developing a professional network and representation of interests.

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- <https://www.youtube.com/@gyiot7360> (Downloaded: 18th August 2023)
- <https://ojs.lib.unideb.hu/parbeszed/issue/archive> (Downloaded: 25th March 2026)
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- <https://www.youtube.com/@gyiot7360/videos> (Downloaded: 12th January 2025)

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Type of municipality of workplace (N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 2: Distribution of working hours (“Which of the following statements best describes the duration of your professional activities according to your own assessment?”; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 3: Reasons for choosing the profession (“Which factors played the most significant role in your decision to pursue your current professional activity? Please select up to three of the following!”; (N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 4: The role of values in professional activities (“To what extent do the following play a role in your professional activities related to youth work?”; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 5: Daily Challenges in the Profession (“What challenges do you face daily in youth work-related activities?” Open-ended question allowing up to three responses; responses were coded based on at least one mention; N = 330; percentage distribution).

Figure 6: Challenges in Youth Work (“What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing youth work in our country?” Open-ended question with three response options: mentioned at least once; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 7: Elements for Quality Improvement in Youth Work (“To what extent do you believe the following factors contribute to enhancing the quality of youth work?”; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 8: Factors Supporting the Visibility of Youth Work (Question: “In your opinion, what would most enhance the visibility of youth work?” Open-ended question with three response options: mentioned at least once; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 9: Factors Supporting the Social Recognition of Youth Work (“In your opinion, which of the following can most contribute to the social recognition of youth work? Please select up to three options from the list below!”; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 10: Characteristics of Professional Activity (“Which of the following statements are true regarding your professional activity?”; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 11: Approaches Employed in Professional Activities (“How characteristic are the following statements of your professional activities?”; N = 330; percentage distribution)

Figure 12: Assessment of the Primary Objective of Youth Work (“Please rank the following statements! In my professional activities, the primary objective of youth work for me is...”; N = 330, percentage distribution)

Figure 13: Assessment of the Most Significant Problems Faced by Youth (“What are the most significant problems faced by the youth you work with?”; Open question with three response options: mentioned at least once; N = 330; percentage distribution)

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Reasons for career choice in relation to time spent in the profession (N = 330; Means; \*p ≤ 0.05, \*\*p ≤ 0.001)

Table 2: Estimated Number of Youth Workers Based on Workplace Municipality Type (“What do you think is the number of individuals engaged in youth work (including yourself) in the municipality (district) where you conduct a significant portion of your professional activities?”; N = 327; averages; p ≤ 0.001)

Table 3: Assessment of Preparedness Based on Time Spent in the Profession (“How prepared do you consider yourself regarding professional activities related to the youth age group (15-29 years)?”; N = 330; averages; p ≤ 0.001)

Table 4: Self-Assessment of Preparedness Based on Workplace Type of Municipality (“How prepared do you consider yourself regarding your professional activities related to the youth age group (15-29 years)?”; 1 = “completely inadequate knowledge,” 4 = “completely prepared”; N = 330; averages; p ≤ 0.001)



# RESEARCH<sup>2023</sup>

## **Are You Involved with Youth Work?**

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