



**Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability**

***Expert Group Report***



**Towards a  
Framework for  
Action**

*There is a need to recognise and value non-formal learning in a creative and innovative way, raising the visibility of skills acquired outside the formal system and fostering complementarity between non-formal and formal learning, while at the same time promoting equal opportunities.*

*Rethinking Education, 20.11.2012, COM (2012) 669*

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## Foreword

In a context of record levels of youth unemployment in Europe, this report is about how non-formal learning and especially youth work can enhance the creative and innovative capacities of young people in ways that are relevant to employability. It goes beyond identifying the skills and competences involved, to present illustrative examples of practice and cross-sectoral cooperation. In arguing that investment in non-formal learning pays economic and social dividends, it is important to keep in mind that young people are more than just a potential workforce, and should not be perceived only in the context of their situation in the labour market.

Among young people are potential philosophers, artists, writers, entrepreneurs, craftsmen and women – people who will create, who will constitute, who will continue Europe’s culturally rich and unique traditions. Although support is needed in the current situation, it is also an investment in Europe’s human and cultural capital. The argument, therefore, is not about changing young people because their alleged lacking is the cause of unemployment. Instead the emphasis is on their potential contribution to improvements in social and economic conditions.

The main message is about the need to improve and widen the recognition of non-formal learning, and not just in relation to employability. A better equipped workforce is required; one that can interact effectively with young people, especially those who are disadvantaged and lack access to the jobs market. The workers need an improved curriculum, and an investment in training, to stimulate the innovative and creative capacities within young people. They need access to commonly accepted recognition tools and to improved practices that can be used in their own social and cultural contexts. At all levels, the different sectors and stakeholders need to come together to provide a supportive environment for the work, while incentives and initiatives need to galvanise the social partners for effective interaction.

This report reflects the commitment of the Expert Group, whose members come from a wide variety of backgrounds, representing a wealth of experience and expertise. The key messages and recommendations are the result of a rigorous evidence-informed process which sought to critically examine policy, whilst drawing from the latest research and examples of practice.

Dr John Bamber  
Chair of the Expert Group

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## Executive summary

The attention of policy makers at European, national, regional and local levels is now firmly focused on the fact that the total of young people not in employment, education or training, is currently around 14 million in the EU. At the European level the policy response takes the form of programmes such as Erasmus +, and funding streams such as the Youth Employment Initiative (2013). The Council and the Commission have also produced a stream of papers and pronouncements providing direction for developments in Member States, who need to act in ways that are consistent with their own traditions and socio-economic position. In general, there is a great deal of knowledge about the problem, with less about how to resolve it.

It is recognised that the situation of young people is not uniform, with wide variations in the levels of youth unemployment between Member States. Even within Member States particular social groups are more likely to suffer the consequences of unemployment than others, and there is a need to focus on the disadvantaged and those furthest from the labour market.

### The contribution of non-formal education and learning

Non-formal education and learning has an important role to play in responding to youth unemployment. This is because it supports development by helping to transform young peoples' potential, creativity, talents, initiative and social responsibility, through the acquisition of related knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It is often community-based and outside of formal institutional contexts.

Youth work can play a key role in reaching out to all young people. For those with fewer opportunities, youth work supports re-integration, through its close and informal contacts with young people, youth-friendly outreach and ability to instil trust in young people to get in touch with authorities. It provides individual support on occupational orientation and counselling, tailored to the particular challenges of different young people, in an informal environment.

The purpose of youth work is not to provide jobs but engagement in the wide variety of personal and social development activities that it offers, helps young people to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are frequently said to be needed in the labour market. These include teamwork, communication, leadership, flexibility and responsiveness. They also include creativity and innovation, which involve defining problems, coming up with ways of dealing with them, and sticking to a chosen course of action. In this way youth work contributes to closing the gap between the competences acquired by young people and the needs of the labour market.

Although its value is recognised at policy levels, non-formal learning is not widely understood, and it is often well down the list of priorities when it comes to funding. This situation needs to be redressed by a concerted effort from the social partners, and from stakeholders at all levels.

### An integrated approach

Systematic, sustained and concerted action is required to significantly enhance the creative and innovative capacities of young people in ways that are relevant to employability. The Expert Group recommends actions in the following areas:

## **1. Explaining non-formal learning to employers and educators**

It is essential to increase the recognition and validation of non-formal learning in business contexts and in the total education sector. This will help providers, young people and potential employers to appreciate the learning and development that occurs. Recognition of non-formal learning is a crucial objective of Erasmus +. It is important to understand that the wide range of competences gained are not limited to so called 'soft' skills, and to demonstrate how they contribute to innovation and creativity –

## **2. Translating non-formal learning outcomes to the world of work**

There is a need to promote the validation of learning outcomes gained in non-formal learning and youth work in a vocabulary that is understandable to educators and employers.. A link to the European Qualifications Framework is needed. It will be important to develop, provide and make the most of existing user-friendly, accessible tools (for example Youthpass, Europass) that can enhance the ability of non-formal education workers and youth workers to offer activities that promote innovation and creativity in young people, and make young people aware of the skills gained through participation in such activities.

## **3. Enhancing the ability of those working directly with young people**

Non-formal education workers play a crucial 'catalytic' role, especially with those young people who are disadvantaged and hard to reach. There is a need to enhance the capacity of these workers, especially youth workers, to promote innovation and creativity in young people. Training and continuing professional development needs to be informed by EU wide reviews of non-formal learning, practices and qualifications frameworks.

## **4. Developing a strong focus on entrepreneurship**

The Entrepreneurship Action Plan and the Communication on Rethinking Education, asks Member States to ensure that all young people have a concrete entrepreneurial experience before leaving education. With a stronger focus on entrepreneurship youth work can play a greater role in connecting young people with the local community, including social enterprise and business, thus enhancing their opportunities to find a job, or to start their own project.

## **5. Improving partnership working and cross-sector innovation**

There is a need to bring together representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors, including employer organizations, large, medium and small companies, young people and youth organizations, to raise awareness of the benefits of non-formal learning. To achieve cooperation and joint action between stakeholders and the social partners, there is a need to incentivise all stakeholders. Partners should pay particular attention to reaching disadvantaged and unskilled young adults with a specific focus on local, municipal and regional levels. This will enable a favourable operating context for the work by optimising resources and helping to provide more

coordinated provision for young people. Erasmus+ offers new possibilities for building such partnerships.

## **6. Extending the evidence base through focused research and impact analysis**

Evidence about the impact of non-formal and informal learning is developing. In January 2014 the European Commission published *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the EU*, which mapped different youth work activities and their value for young people in the EU. More studies of this quality are needed. The 2012 report *Youth Work: A Systematic 'Map' of the Research Literature* provides a model but there is a need to access research published in a range of languages.

## **7. Including non-formal education and learning in Youth Guarantee plans**

The Commission and Member States need to ensure that operational plans for structural funds include youth work services as an essential part of the link between education and the labour market. Labour market measures alone are not sufficient to reach all young people, especially the most vulnerable and those with little or no trust in the system.

### **Proposed next steps**

It is vital to use all the possible methods, and resources to introduce non-formal learning and its outcomes to public discourse, which could be encouraged by financial support, technical advice, revising training materials, networks, and databases. To secure this, the Expert Group would welcome the opportunity to work with other parties.

More specifically, the Expert Group proposes to assist the Commission to organise a cross-sectoral stakeholder seminar in 2014. The purpose of the event would be to bring together a wide range of people from the public, private and voluntary sectors, including employer organizations, large, medium and small companies, young people and youth organizations, to deliberate on the challenges and possibilities in partnership working. The organisation of the workshop at European level could be a template for comparable action at Member State and regional level, coordinated and led by the members of the expert group.

In addition, the findings of this report need to be fine-tuned and turned into short, accessible briefings for different audiences including policy-makers, researchers, practitioners and young people. The briefings would emphasise the actions that can be taken to support non-formal learning to maximise the benefits for young people.



## Towards a framework for action

### Introduction

The total of young people not in employment, education or training, is currently around 14 million in the EU. At European, national, regional and local levels the attention of policy makers is today firmly fixed on this problem. There is also a burgeoning body of international research about the scale and dimensions of the problem although less about how to resolve it. Although the full capacities of existing programmes, for example the many different European Social Fund examples of creative and innovative approaches, are not presented due to language barriers, significant lessons can be learned from a range of established and emerging practices in the non-formal sector, which includes youth work. In highlighting these lessons, this report urges stakeholders at all levels to recognise, support and invest in non-formal learning structures, systems, and practices. The report can also inform young people about the activities that are being taken, and those that should be taken, to support them.

The Expert Group's analysis of the socio-economic context, the policy environment and the relevant research literature, strongly suggests that enhancing young peoples' innovative and creative capacity through non-formal learning, requires systematic, sustained and concerted action in four areas. Attention is drawn to the crucial support role played by the non-formal education workforce, especially youth workers, who are directly engaged with young people. The four areas are:

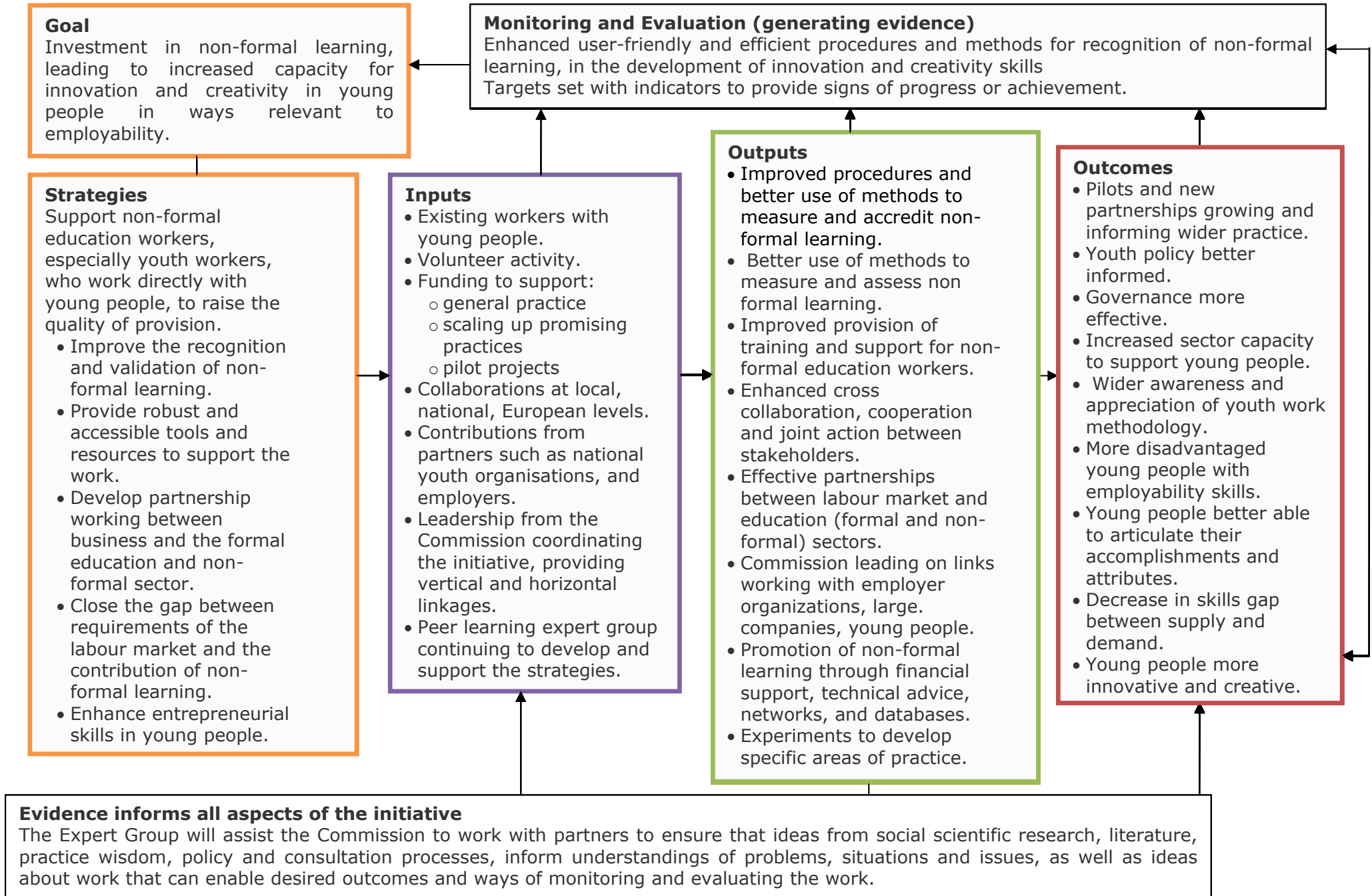
1. Supporting non-formal education workers, especially youth workers, who work directly with young people, to raise the quality of provision.
2. Providing accessible and user-friendly tools and resources to improve non-formal education and youth work.
3. Recognising and validating non-formal learning in business and in the formal and non-formal education sectors.
4. Developing effective partnerships between all stakeholders to provide a favourable operating context for the work.

Systematic, sustained and concerted action in these four areas can make a significant contribution to:

5. Closing the gap between the requirements of the labour market and the positive contribution of non-formal learning.
6. Encouraging entrepreneurial skills in young people.

Essentially what is required is action on the basis of existing policy and what is already known to be effective. To this end, this report presents an evidence-informed framework for action. Acting on its key messages and recommendations does not necessarily require more money as investment also means making better use of existing systems, resources and people. The following logic model summarises the purpose of the proposed activities and their intended outcomes. The key terms can be found in the glossary in [Appendix 1](#).





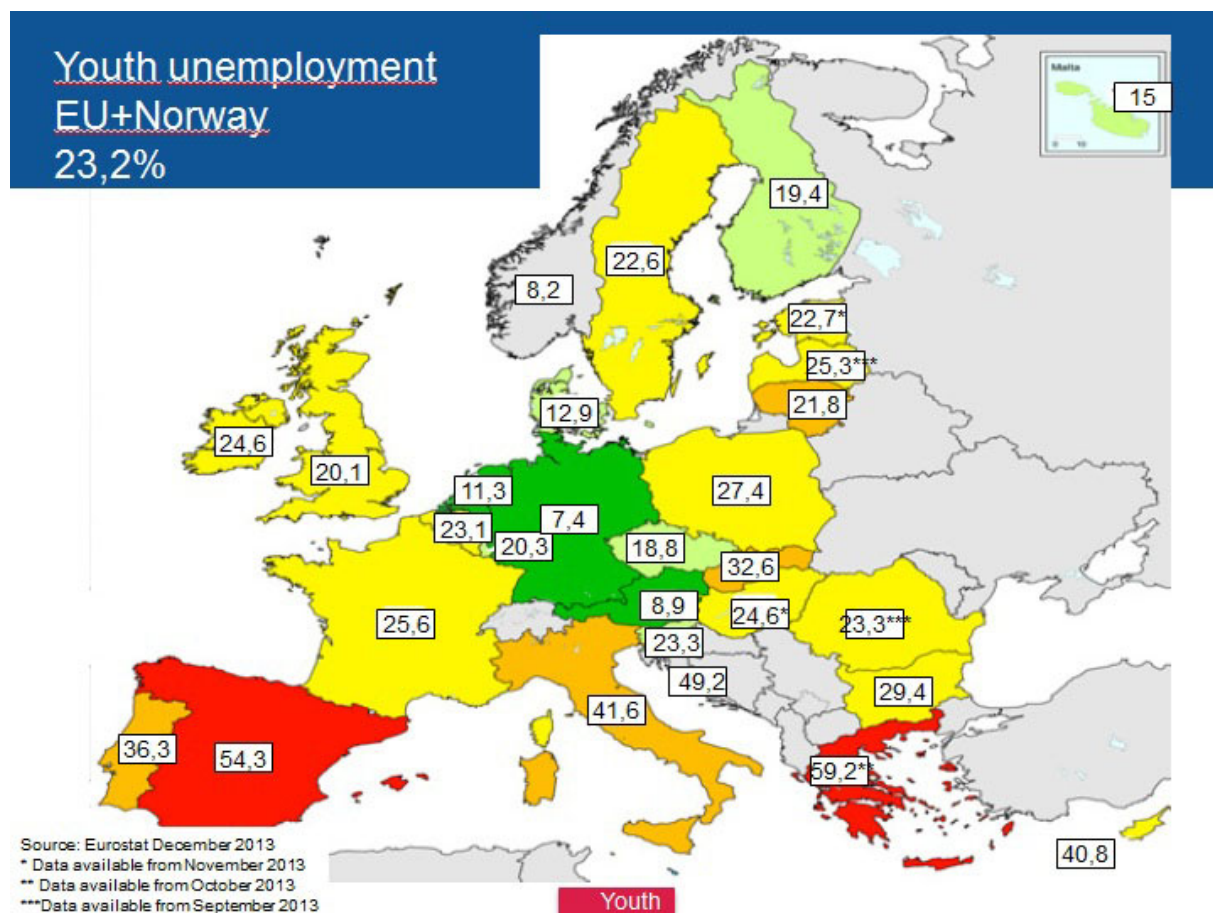
## The situation of young people

According to the latest Eurostat figures the economic crisis has hit the young more than other age groups:

- 5.5 million young people are still unemployed in the EU, a rate of 23.4 % (July 2013, EU28), compared to 22.9 % in July 2012 (EU27).
- The youth unemployment rate in the EU-27 has been around twice as high as the rate for the total population (end 2008), and has dramatically increased over the last four years.
- At the end of 2012 the youth unemployment rate was 2.6 times the total rate.

The total of young people not in employment, education or training, is currently around 14 million in the EU. The annual economic loss to society is estimated at €162 billion (Eurofound, 2013), in addition to the long term personal and social costs.

**Figure 1: Distribution of unemployed young people in Europe**



The problem of youth unemployment now includes those previously somewhat protected from its worst effects by virtue of having a degree or training.

*"Some young university graduates face difficulties moving into paid employment or find themselves in jobs where they are under-employed (and may, in turn, crowd out lower-skilled youth). Their disappointment and frustration, having been told that higher education is the path to success, is magnified by the cost of their additional years in education and the burden of student debt.*

*OECD Council - Ministerial Level [Paris, 29-30 May 2013]*

According to Eurofound, some young people within countries are at greater risk than others, and it is clear that there is a particular need to focus on the most disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market. Those with low levels of education are three times more likely to be without a job, or not in education or training, compared to those with tertiary education. Young people with an immigration background are 70% more likely to be at risk than nationals, and those suffering from some kind of disability or health issues are 40% more likely to be at risk than those in good health.

Reaching out to marginalised and disadvantaged young people is precisely where the non-formal education and learning sector has experience and expertise, and therefore a distinctive contribution to make. The general approach is to regard young people as assets rather than problems, and to work with them in responding to their interests, as well as their needs, whilst seeking to capitalise on their creative and innovative capacities. This positive attitude is important in enhancing young peoples' innovative and creative potential in ways that are relevant to employability.

## **The policy response**

In 2011, the Commission proposed the Youth Opportunities Initiative (YOI) calling upon Member States to take more action to address the high youth unemployment rates, including better use of European Social Funds and more possibilities for mobility. In 2012, a Youth Employment Package (YEP) was adopted by the Commission. The YEP included a proposal for a Council recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee aiming to ensure that all young people up to age 25 receive a quality offer of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

In February 2013 the European Council agreed to set up a Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) of €6 billion. At the European Council of 27-28 June 2013, Member States agreed to speed up and frontload the Youth Employment Initiative, with the disbursement of the €6 billion to take place during the first two years. Member States benefitting from the YEI are asked to adopt a plan to tackle youth unemployment, including the implementation of the Youth Guarantee before the end of the year. It is also recommended that they make maximum use of European Structural and Investment Funds, and in particular the European Social Fund.

At European, national and regional policy levels, there is widespread understanding of the issues facing young people and the long term detrimental psychological and financial impact on their lives. It is understood that cultural, social and economic capital is being wasted, and underused. Generally, there are a number of consistent messages:

- Well-tested, reliable pathways through education and training to secure employment no longer exist as an easy, certain passage to quality employment.
- There is a significant mismatch in the ambition of those gaining employment, from the job they get to the vision of what they wish their job role could be.

- There is huge emphasis on multi-agency co-operation. This emphasis recurs in all analysis, but is very short on actual good practice – whether by institution, sector, employment services, or skill training agencies.
- The OECD PISA data is the benchmark for research regarding the ‘failure’ of formal education to deliver skilled school-leavers and graduates as employment ready.

*“Concerted action across policy domains, as suggested by the OECD Skills Strategy, is crucial and must include: more effective investment in education and training to equip all young people with relevant skills; better connecting the worlds of education and work.*

*Across OECD countries, PISA results indicate that almost one in five students do not reach a basic minimum level of skills to function in today’s societies.  
OECD Council - Ministerial Level [Paris, 29-30 May 2013]*

In this context, the OECD is positive about the value of innovative forms of learning and argues strongly for recognition to be developed for non-formal skills. The potential of non-formal learning in contributing to young peoples’ learning is recognised at an international level. The European Commission is also keen to promote the recognition and validation of knowledge and skills gained through non-formal learning. Member States are asked to have in place by 2018 arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which enable individuals to make use of that learning for their careers and further learning. According to the OECD Education and Training Policy Division (March 2010) recognising non-formal learning delivers a range of benefits including:

- Economic: by reducing the direct and opportunity costs of formal learning and allowing human capital to be used more productively.
- Educational: that can underpin lifelong learning and career development.
- Social: by improving equity and strengthening access to both further education and the labour market, for disadvantaged groups, disaffected youth and older workers.
- Psychological: by making individuals aware of their capabilities and validating their worth.

### **European-level policy co-operation**

The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth puts young people high on its agenda and embraces a number of concrete initiatives to support their creativity and employability as well as dealing with related challenges. Under the EU Youth Strategy (2010–2018), the Member States and the Commission cooperate by means of the open method of coordination. The Strategy advocates a cross-sector approach to youth issues and involves eight fields of actions: Education and Training; Employment and Entrepreneurship; Voluntary activities; Participation; Social inclusion; Health and Well-being; Creativity and Culture; Youth and the World. Its objectives are to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

There is a high volume of policy research at European level, reaching into neighbourhood Europe and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Again, the call is for closer cross-sector co-operation and improved educational attainment. There are also ever-increasing signs that non-formal competencies are understood partially, but not demonstrated effectively, in the employment system and job creation process.

Nevertheless, there is a strong youth work philosophy emerging at the European-level that exposure to new and challenging experiences, sensitively managed by high quality, trained mentors or professional youth workers, makes a key contribution for the low academic achiever and the so called NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) audience. Being NEET has severe adverse consequences for the individual, society and the economy. Spending time as NEET can lead to a wide range of social disadvantages, such as disaffection, insecure and poor future employment, youth offending, and mental and physical health problems.

Young people have to be set on a long-term, sustainable pathway with quality, stable and sustainable employment. The involvement of a range of stakeholders in the design and delivery of youth employment measures is therefore essential. Youth employment measures should be client-centred, catering for different pathways, for example from mainstream learning to tailored, supported learning. Successful policies are innovative, introducing new ways of reaching out to their target groups.

The EU Youth Strategy promotes youth work, which, along with other forms of participation in society such as volunteering, allows young people to develop self-confidence and to acquire and test specific and soft skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork or taking initiative. This adds to the employability of young people, including those who have already left school.

Youth work can also play an important role in preventing drop-out and in supporting re-integration. Some forms of youth work already deliver individual support on occupational orientation and counselling, tailored to the particular challenges of different young people. Such support should be linked to activities by employment services and other partners involved in supporting young people. An active policy response is required across sectors.

*"The changing nature of the labour market also requires – in the view of many respondents – a rethinking of the skills and experiences taught in school, better preparation of young people for the transition from school to work, more specialised training and continued career advice, increasing young people's mobility, and trying to reach marginalised young people.*

*Youth on the Move: Committee of the Regions survey [December 2012]*

## **National and regional level policy**

Understandably at national and regional level there is variance, partly due to economic political history, emergence to industrialisation, and differing training standards. There remains, though, a common call for cross-agency working, illustrated by a few realistically measured initiatives. There is a gap, however, between the awareness of common working practices, with common goals, and the actual administration and implementation processes needed to enact, to resource and to legislate for 'commonality'. For example:

*"The multiplicity of stakeholders, either from the private or public sectors (government, local authorities, NGOs, public or Para public operators, private foundations), and the sheer diversity of aims and methods amongst them (by targeted profile, age, location, project type, with or without guidance, with or without funding measures, focused on direct initiative or not, individual or group project) undermines the coherence, the clarity and the impact of (youth) policies.*

*France: Developing youth initiative culture, a key challenge for youth policies [March 2010]*



*" (There is a need to) ensure consistent monitoring of the situation of young people, making it the basis for the evidence-and-knowledge-based youth policy (and to) develop inter-institutional, cross-sectorial cooperation at local, national and international levels.*

*Lithuania: National Youth Policy Development Programme (2011–2019)  
Strategic goal, targets, objectives, evaluation criteria*

## **Understanding non-formal learning**

In general, the policy context reflects the need for a better understanding of the potential of non-formal learning, and a lack of know-how as to how to translate the broad intentions of policy into concrete actions. There is a positive attitude towards not losing, or suppressing, the potential of young people in playing a full and creative social role, as well as them contributing to economic progress, and as a rich source of human capital. However, there is a lack of clarity in Member States. According to the conclusions of the Council of Europe international review team, for example, this is the situation in Hungary:

As in many other European contexts, the integration of formal and non-formal learning in a comprehensive lifelong learning policy is still more programmatic than implemented. In fact, apart from national policy makers and youth work trainers, the concept of non-formal learning seemed to be not widely known.

*And in Croatia:*

*" Non-formal education programs are not monitored and assessed according to appropriate quality criteria, and there are no reliable data on the number of users, so it cannot be concluded with certainty in which way and how much non-formal education contributes to the establishment and development of the life-long learning system in Croatia.*

*Croatia: National Youth Program (2009 – 2013)  
Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity*

There is a need, therefore, to improve and clarify processes for the Recognition of Non-formal learning across sectors and disciplines.

There is a related lack of shared knowledge with respect to the wide range of tools and resources for non-formal learning that have been developed, mostly at local level, in the Member States. It would be extremely valuable for mutual learning, and the improvement of provision to facilitate a pooling and cross-referencing of these resources and materials. Sharing will save development time and bring cross-benefits.

*"Governments in cooperation with employers and non-formal education providers should develop and promote tools for assessment and self-evaluation of the competences acquired through non-formal education in order to guarantee the recognition of such competences in the labour market and to develop the employability and self-confidence of young people.*

*Joint Conclusions of EU Youth Conference of Lithuanian Presidency (2013)*

The need for bringing together the social partners is important for the most vulnerable.

*" Every effort should also be made to ensure as many young people with disabilities, or health problems, are in work, to minimise risks of future inactivity and social exclusion. Public Employment Services are crucial to boost and coordinate such efforts. One option is to develop partnerships and*

*agreements with employers who are offered special support for recruitment of youth at risk.*

*Youth on the Move (2010)*

The task has been embraced in some parts of Europe, as is illustrated by the following example from Scotland.

*" The Scottish Executive will ensure a better understanding of youth work and young people and the potential contribution of youth work across ministerial portfolios and departments and in delivering cross-cutting objectives. We will work with other policy makers and agencies to promote the role and methods of youth work and ensure that representatives of the youth work sector are involved in developing policies affecting young people where youth work has a potential role to play.*

*Scotland: Moving Forward*

*A strategy for improving young people's chances through youth work (2007)*

## **Closing the gap: non-formal learning and labour market requirements**

There is a significant problem when it comes to translating the outcomes of non-formal learning into an active jobs culture, and there is a challenge to close the divide in understanding between the labour market and youth sectors.

*" One of the things we learned in our research is how highly employers value 'soft skills'. But they are harder to define, distil, or express... Part of the reason is that soft skills encompass such a wide range of concepts, from personal characteristics (confidence, temperament, work ethic) to social and cognitive skills (communications, problem-solving). As a result, the term means different things to different people...For example, when we spoke with managers from a hospitality company regarding their expectations of teamwork, they told us the focus was on whether their employees possessed tolerant attitudes that are important in interacting with a wide range of guests. Asked the same question, an engineering executive singled out the extent to which the employees were able to work and think in cross-functional teams. Same concept - same words - two very different interpretations.*

*Education to Employment: Designing a System that Works  
McKinsey Centre for Government (December 2012)*

It needs to be emphasised that the range of competences gained through non-formal learning is wide and cannot be limited to 'soft skills'. Non-formal education enables young people to develop very concrete skills that can be measured, including mathematical, digital competence, budget management, knowledge of foreign languages and others. There is, however, a lack of understanding of the skills gained amongst those involved in supporting the transition from non-formal education and school to the labour market. Better communication is needed, for example through networking and contact-building. It is essential, therefore, to translate the skills acquired through non-formal learning into the requirements of the labour market and the formal education sector, using measured taxonomies, for example the [European Qualifications Framework](#).

## **Youth work outcomes and the requirements of the labour market**

Recent research (Blades et al, 2012; Souto-Otero et al, 2013; European Economic and Social Committee, 2013), also offers various interpretations of the skills needed in the labour market. The core concepts alternate between 'employability', 'soft skills',



'transversal skills', 'life skills' or even individual characteristics and traits. The skills described significantly overlap with the European Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC), which are:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression.

Team-work, adaptability and flexibility, self-confidence and intercultural skills are said to be amongst those developed to a greater extent in youth organisations compared to formal education systems (Souto-Otero et al, 2013). Similar outcomes in terms of skill and capacity development are identified in a recent map of the international youth work research literature (Dickson et al, 2012), and in an Irish study by Devlin and Gunning, who found a range of benefits from engagement in youth work including 'information, practical skills, enhanced educational or employment opportunities; and less tangible ones such as confidence, self-esteem, tolerance and sociability' (2009: 51). The skills correspond to those most frequently demanded by employers. A recent survey of 1000 individuals (employed and unemployed) and 100 employers in Ireland (Accenture, 2013), for example, resulted in the following ranking of the skills most needed.

- Leadership (57%)
- People management and teamwork (51%)
- Innovation and entrepreneurship (50%)
- Communication (39%)
- Adaptability and flexibility (39%)
- Change management (35%)
- Project management (19%)
- Influencing (19%)
- Decision making (17%)
- Time management (14%)

These sorts of skills are a key element for successful job performance both nationally and internationally (Shanks et al, 2013; Manpower Group, 2013). The value of these skills and those who possess them is set to increase, with leadership, teamwork and innovation and creativity becoming even more important in the next three years (Shanks et al, 2013: 9). In the longer term, The Future of Work study (Institute for the Future, 2011), identifies ten skills needed in the future labour market (Appendix 2). For example:

- Social intelligence (connecting with others)
- Novel and adaptive thinking (finding new solutions and responses to unexpected circumstances)
- Cross-cultural competences (ability to operate in diverse cultural settings)
- New-media literacy (critically assessing and developing content)

The drivers for these sorts of skills are said to be increasing longevity of human beings, the rise of smart machines and automation systems, the consequences of a computerised world, new media ecology, the super structuring of organisations, and the globally connected world. The changes in society, in economy, in technology and media lead to ever increasing demands on flexibility and ability to adapt to new circumstances.

It is inevitable therefore, that innovation, creativity and problem solving abilities will be central in a fast developing world.

Blades et al (2012) put the various descriptions, definitions and interpretations of the skills and capabilities needed in the labour market into four main categories. These are:

- Personal (for example confidence and self-esteem).
- Interpersonal (for example social and communication skills, teamwork, assertiveness).
- Self-management skills (such as reliability).
- Competences in initiative and delivery (for example, planning, problem solving, prioritising).

In Table 1 below, the four categories are used to highlight the linkages and connections between the outcomes and skills acquired in youth work, and the requirements of the labour market. According to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009), these sorts of skills and capabilities are often more highly valued than formal education qualifications.

**Table 1: Correspondence between skills in youth work and the labour market**

Overarching skill categories	Outcomes identified in the research literature	Skills identified by employers
Personal (e.g. confidence and self-esteem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>▪ Self-awareness (personal and social)</li> <li>▪ Readiness to take on new and more diverse experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adaptability and flexibility</li> </ul>
Interpersonal (e.g. social and communication skills, teamwork, assertiveness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved teamwork</li> <li>▪ Increased communication</li> <li>▪ Improved pro-social</li> <li>▪ Behaviour</li> <li>▪ More open to people from diverse backgrounds</li> <li>▪ Positive peer relationships</li> <li>▪ Enhanced leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leadership</li> <li>▪ People management and teamwork</li> <li>▪ Influencing</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> </ul>
Self-management skills (e.g. reliability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Motivation, commitment, resilience</li> <li>▪ Increased life skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Innovation and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>

<p>Competences in initiative and delivery (e.g. planning, problem solving, prioritising)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Critical thinking skills</li> <li>▪ Planning, decision-making</li> <li>▪ Developed and focused career aspirations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change management</li> <li>▪ Project management</li> <li>▪ Decision making</li> <li>▪ Time management</li> </ul>
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## Research underpinnings for innovation and creativity

Since the 1960s psychological research has shown that a variety of factors influence the capacity for creativity and innovation. Edward de Bono's theory, for example, promotes lateral thinking as a way to help people to come up with fresh ways of solving problems. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly's (1996: 28) work suggests that innovation and creativity cannot be reduced to a purely intra-individual concept or to the creation of something 'new and valuable'. Instead it should be seen as the interaction between the person and the socio-cultural surrounding. He defines creativity as any act, idea or product that changes the existing domain or that transforms an existing domain into a new one. It is important to be able to cultivate this capacity in individuals, groups, communities and organisations.

Longitudinal studies from the USA with very gifted students (IQ over 150) prove that independent of genetic disposition concerning intelligence, training in creative thinking leads to improvements in the capacity for problem solving and creativity (Runco, 1991). The studies also show that the creative potential is higher for those having a broader spectrum of intelligence rather than those having their IQ determined, linked or confined to a special skill for mathematical and/or logical thinking.

The effectiveness of non-formal education methods in fostering creativity, are considered in *Future Learning: preparing for change* (Redecker et al, 2011). The paper identifies challenges in Europe in terms of the aging society, over-population leading to migration, and economic crisis. Reacting to these challenges, it is argued, requires new approaches, skills and competences, including creative and innovative capacities. Developing these capacities requires new forms of validation and evaluation in the formal education system, involving new methods of teaching and training.

Research on the impact of non-formal education, particularly youth work, shows promising outcomes. The RAY study (Fennes et al, 2013) examines various methods of non-formal education in the EU Youth in Action Programme, and shows how these address eight key competences for lifelong learning, from the perspective of participants and the leaders of projects. Non-formal learning in Youth in Action projects is provided in various ways:

- Being involved in the organisation of the project.
- Participating in special exercises and activities during the project.
- Reflecting on the learning (in discussions).
- Listening to and giving presentations.

Participants frequently report that these types of learning experiences were new to them. The RAY study also shows that the projects have a significant impact on learning development with regard to entrepreneurship, with smaller improvements in interpersonal and social skills, and the ability to talk in a foreign language. In addition, working in teams is perceived as the most strongly developed skill, followed by intercultural competences, and the skill to negotiate joint solutions from different viewpoints. It would be highly productive to undertake a deeper examination into the

impact of development in these areas concerning the labour market chances of young people. What is already known is that special training on entrepreneurial skills has an effect on the wish to become entrepreneurs (EIM Business and Policy Research, 2012).

Although creativity and innovative capacity are implicit in entrepreneurial skills, training needs to focus more explicitly on their development. In the 2009 OECD Handbook on this topic, education is described as generating motivation, attitudes and competencies for entrepreneurship. In practice, however, young people also need assistance in setting up and establishing new firms. Mentoring is an important element in support for entrepreneurship training in higher education (Potter, 2008). In Europe the training of entrepreneurial skills is not well developed in the higher education system, and needs to be cross-sector and horizontal.

## **The contribution of youth work**

The skills and competences described in the previous section are broadly consistent with the outcomes that are most commonly associated with youth intervention activities such as relationships with others, sense of self, values, beliefs and future aspirations (Dickson et al, 2012; see Appendix 3).

The EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) advocates a cross-sector approach to youth issues and has a number of instruments to facilitate such an approach, including collection of data and examples of good policy practice, for example the promotion of good practices on inter-ministerial cooperation. Where such structures exist, these can be involved in developing national Youth Guarantees.

Youth work can play a key role in reaching out to all young people, including youth with fewer opportunities. It helps in supporting re-integration, through its close and informal contacts with young people, youth-friendly outreach and ability to instil trust in young people to get in touch with authorities. Youth work already delivers individual support on occupational orientation and counselling, tailored to the particular challenges of different young people, in an informal environment (for example, youth centres, clubs, and street work). This is in line with 'tackling different issues along the pathway to employment and paying attention to vulnerable groups that are more likely to cumulate multiple disadvantages' (Eurofound, 2012: 2). It is imperative that such support is linked to activities by employment services and other partners.

In May 2013, the Council adopted conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people. The Council recognises (2013: 5), quality youth work supports young people's participation, development and progression in a way which affirms their strengths, enhances resilience and competences and recognizes their potential to build individual, communal and social capital (2013: 5). The Irish Presidency also adopted a declaration on 21 June 2013 on the value of youth work in helping young people through the crisis, emphasizing the importance of visibility and quality of youth work and the need to develop partnerships including youth work. Whilst the policy environment is comprehensive it does not always lend itself to concrete actions on the ground. Moreover, funds tend to find their way to the usual outlets with little regard for the responsive and creative ways of engaging with young people that typify many worthy but underfunded youth projects.

## **Current tools to support non-formal learning**

Europass and especially Youthpass are designed to enable young people to present the soft skills that they have acquired in non-formal learning. The European Commission's

(2013) impact study on Youthpass shows that the young people who fill in the pass tend to increase their ability to reflect on and articulate better their own learning experiences. At the same time, the increase in self confidence in those whose skills were recognised through the Youthpass process is seen an asset in terms of employment prospects.

According to the European Youth Forum (2011: 5), the competences that youth gain through non-formal learning in youth organisations are crucial for developing entrepreneurial skills. Increasing awareness of entrepreneurship as a career option and developing a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are conducive to entrepreneurial behaviour, has been identified by the OECD and European Union (2012: 12) as an important goal. Young people need support, however, to be in a position to consider self-employment and entrepreneurship as viable options. This includes the simplification of administrative procedures, provision of information about social security systems, and better access to business incubators. It involves the integration of entrepreneurship in education (formal and non-formal) from an early stage, involving youth organisations in developing these education programmes. Crucially, and particularly for disadvantaged young people, it requires support from highly skilled and knowledgeable non-formal education workers, and especially youth workers who need to be able to:

- Engage with and communicate with young people in an open, friendly and business-like way.
- Energise and stimulate creative and innovative capacities in young people, and to have a sense of direction.
- Enable young people to think critically, to express their desires, to formulate goals, and to see through commitments.
- Have the competence to act as mentors, advisors and role models.
- Be equally at home in youth centres or outreach settings, as well as with formal education or the world of work.
- Possess the know-how to make links between informal and formal education and also to business and enterprise.

SALTO Participation is to produce in early 2014 a publication on the contribution of youth work (non-formal learning) to fostering youth entrepreneurial learning. The publication will be a compilation of different points of view (contributions from different experts and practitioners) in order to give a clear overview of the subject. It is also meant to be a practical guide with best practices, advice and educational methods to be used by youth workers.

### Illustrative practices

Knowledgeable and skilful non-formal education workers are at the heart of positive responses to youth employment issues. They cannot succeed alone, however, but require a coherent and supportive framework within which to address the challenges identified earlier in this report. The examples in Table 2 below illustrate practices that are needed to develop young peoples’ capacity for innovation and creativity through non-formal education and learning.

**Table 2: Illustrative practices leading to enhanced capacities for innovation and creativity**

Challenge	Practices
Supporting the work of non-formal education	The development and better use of existing non-formal education tools and methods can strengthen the potential of young people to enter the labour market. Currently the <a href="#">Youth in Action (2007-2013)</a>

workers, and youth workers	<p>programme provides opportunities for youth workers to use a wide palette of effective non-formal educational and learning methods. The programme will be superseded by Erasmus + in 2014.</p> <p><a href="#">Les Scouts and the Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen</a> Have developed a bespoke recognition tool to ensure the world of work, parents and the general public recognise and value the skills acquired by the 25,000 scout volunteers in Belgium. The aim is to raise awareness among scout leaders and local and federal managers about the skills acquired during their volunteer experiences. They will be able to understand them and use them to their advantage when looking for a job or in any other project during their adult lives</p>
Providing robust tools and resources	<p>The <a href="#">Route Map</a> for National Quality Standards Initiatives for Youth Work and Youth Activities (Route Map) is an interactive online resource which makes available an array of web-based information which is international in scope. The resources have been selected based on their quality and capacity to inform and support youth work and youth activities, with all materials assessed based on a set of inclusion criteria.</p> <p>The <a href="#">SALTO Toolbox for Training</a> provides hundreds of useful tools for learning about youth work and training activities. It is an online catalogue providing free resources that can be adapted to particular objectives, in a specific context and for a certain target group. The Toolbox aims to be a learning community for trainers and youth workers in order to share, debate and increase the quality of educational methods in their daily work.</p>
Enhancing recognition and validation	<p>The <a href="#">Youth Competence Centres of Antwerp</a> work at the interface between free time, leisure, and work and competence development. The main activities include training and guidance, training for youth work volunteers, outreach work, support for youth clubs and youth work initiatives. These activities focus on young people living in large cities, between 6 and 30 years old, many of whom are low-skilled and with migrant backgrounds. To support young peoples' learning, these centres are staffed by youth workers and others who deal with the recognition of acquired competencies (RAC - counselors). Together with the youth worker and the young person, they design the RAC guidance and create a development plan. The RAC counselor helps the young person and youth worker to identify competences, give feedback, and to determine further actions to get most out of the youth work activities.</p> <p><a href="#">ASDAN Awards Network</a> is coordinated by <a href="#">UK Youth</a> to bring together organisations involved in offering national awards for non-formal education. The network aims to promote the value of all accredited outcomes and offer young people much-needed help in gaining their first recognised award or qualification. Members need to demonstrate that their awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ are available widely across England</li> <li>▪ are not mainstream academic or vocational qualifications</li> <li>▪ are based on a clear, consistent curriculum</li> <li>▪ have an established track record</li> <li>▪ include clear means of assessing achievements of young people</li> <li>▪ have a clear quality assurance system</li> </ul>
Establishing effective partnerships	<p><a href="#">MYGENERATION</a> (2008-2011) brought together 12 European cities to try to understand the challenges faced by young people, as well as their aspirations. It focused on outreach activities to</p>



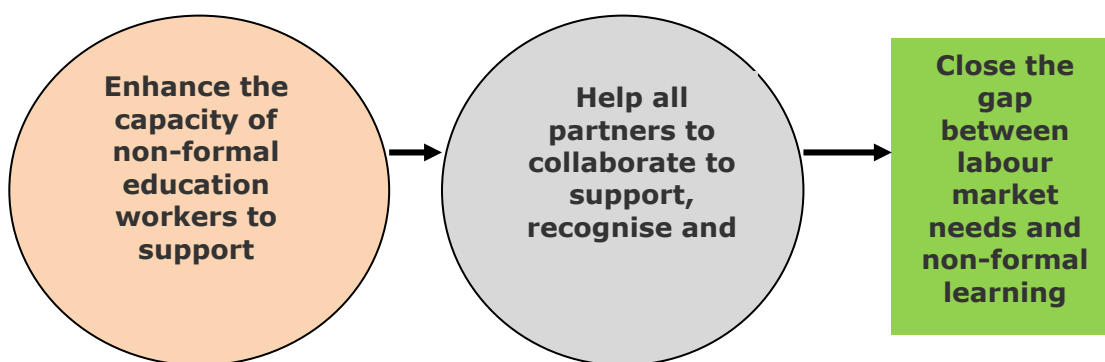
	<p>disadvantaged youth, education to employment transitions, and how to coordinate actions between major stakeholders in an urban context. The learning from the project has been captured in four user-friendly tools.</p>
	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility Golden Award winner 2013 <b>ENTRUM</b> is a unique initiative and opportunity for youth, where entrepreneurs themselves fulfil the duties of role-models, coaches and mentors. More than 200 public organisations and private enterprises, as well as 100 mentors from Estonia contribute voluntarily to ENTRUM. Partners are involved in promoting the idea and the programme delivering sessions, coaching and mentoring participants and helping with additional tasks.</p>
<p>Closing the skills gap</p>	<p><b>Nefiks</b> is a project that has been promoting the values of volunteering and non-formal education in Slovenia for over 10 years. It has been doing so by motivating young people to account for their learning and persuading employers to consider non-formal education as a reference when getting a job. Nefiks expands the possibility of young peoples' employment and social inclusion, especially for those 'left behind', with activities such as workshops, stakeholder meetings, system of peer advising and public promotion. Nefiks has significantly raised the meaning of recognition of non-formally acquired skills, and that is why many institutions strongly support it. Nefiks comes in two shapes, electronic portfolio and a booklet.</p>
<p>Entrepreneurial skills</p>	<p><b>Wave Change</b> supports high potential social actors, social entrepreneurs and change makers aged 18-25 to act on their vision for change for Ireland through an intensive 10 month support and investment programme.</p> <p><b>Foroige Network For Teaching Entrepreneurship</b> is delivered to young people from 12-18 years of age through schools and youth centres throughout Ireland. The programme runs from September to May. Each year, teachers and youth workers attend an intensive training programme 'NFTE University', which equips them with the necessary skills and resources to successfully deliver the programme directly to young people. All aspects of setting up and running a business are covered at NFTE University and trainees are known as Certified Entrepreneurship Trainers (CET's) after graduation.</p> <p><b>NESst</b> provides financial capital, training and mentoring, and access to markets for a high-impact portfolio of social enterprises in emerging markets. Nesst combines the tools and strategies of business leadership, entrepreneurship and investment with the mission and values of the social sector to enable social entrepreneurs to better plan, improve management capacity, grow, and increase their social impact.</p> <p><b>YouthBank</b> is a way of involving young people in grant-making within their local community. It is an all-island of Ireland initiative of over 20 grant-making committees run by young people. The funding distributed by these decision-making committees supports projects designed and run by young people that address issues and concerns relevant to them and their community.</p> <p>YouthBank is not just about giving out grants, it is a personal development programme, which aims to build young people's self-esteem and confidence and provide them with an opportunity to learn new skills in leadership, team-work, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, negotiation, report-writing, presentation skills, event management, interview skills and more.</p>



## Key messages

To enable non-formal education and learning, and especially youth work, to realise its potential contribution to youth employment issues, action is required on the basis of existing policy and what is already known to be effective. To this end, this report presents an evidence-informed framework for action (see Figure 2 below). Acting on its key messages and recommendations does not necessarily require more money as investment also means making better use of existing systems, resources and people.

**Figure 2: Elements of a framework for enhancing innovation and creativity**



## Enhancing the role of key workers

The example of the *Youth Centres of Antwerp*, shows that developing young peoples' innovative and creative capacities through non-formal education, often involves sustained and complex support from a key worker such as a mentor, a coach, or a trainer. This support person can act as a **catalyst** for young people in a number of ways:

- Helping young people to become aware that they are acquiring competences in informal or non-formal settings.
- Assisting young people during their learning process (guidance during the creation of learning plans, reflecting on and assessing learning).
- Helping young people to communicate the competences that they have gained, for example to employers in the labour market.

To be most effective, this type of support needs to be:

- Consistent, regular, well planned and provided by competent and trained people.
- Tailored to the particular circumstances of the young people for example involving projects for prisoners, for minority groups, or for young people with disabilities or special needs.

There is a particular role for catalysts in improving the educational and labour market position of socially vulnerable young people. The competence of the workers is crucial to success, which is why the example of *Les Scouts and the Scouts en Gidsen Flander* is useful in showing how to raise awareness of the skills involved.

## Bringing quality tools and methods into play

The development and better use of existing non-formal education tools and methods by key workers can strengthen the potential of young people to enter the labour market. As indicated in Table 3 below, there are broadly three groups of methods, each of which aim to develop different types of competencies in terms of attitudes, skills and knowledge. It is important to continue to develop and make available high quality tools. The *Route Map* and the *SALTO Toolbox* point the way in terms of content and accessibility.

**Table3: Developing different types of competence**

Focus	Content	Method
Attitudes	Involves changing old or unproductive ways of thinking, by creating inspiring atmospheres to motivate young people, helping them to open up and change their point of view, to anticipate what it would be like to 'step into' an employee's shoes, or to begin to think in a more entrepreneurial way.	Simulations, role-plays, games, and workshops.
Skills	Involves practicing different behaviours, for example with respect to communication styles, which is useful in a job-interview, or developing Information Technology competences, which is helpful, for example, for job-seeking on the internet.	Training, workshops and complete services
Knowledge	Involves providing information, advice and instruction, such as how to write a CV.	Workshops, round-tables and seminars, leaflets and brochures.

Another way forward could be through greater use of 'serious games,' also known as immersive learning simulations, game-based learning, or gaming simulations. According to a recent report from the McKinsey Centre for Government (Mourshed et al, 2013): 'Serious games enable users to apply their knowledge and skills in complex, real-world scenarios. The serious-games industry is still nascent, although it has been growing rapidly worldwide; sales reached €1.5 billion in 2010, and are projected to increase by almost seven times by 2015.' There is potential for developing tools that help to raise awareness of skills and competences achieved through non-formal and informal learning.

## Recognising learning and achievement

It is important to capture young peoples' learning and development, and the resultant achievements. There is a continuum of recognition and validation, with relatively informal and immediate feedback on the one hand and highly developed paper-based procedures and systems leading to certification and awards at the other. The former can be found in the methods referred to above, which are embedded in day-to-day practice. All points along the way are vital, and it is possible to see progress from beginning to end, although the path is often not sequential and linear. The beginning is particularly important in non-formal settings for work with disadvantaged and disaffected youth, where small steps can lead over time to bigger ones. The *ASDAN/UK Youth Awards Network* shows what is possible when different organisations come together to make use

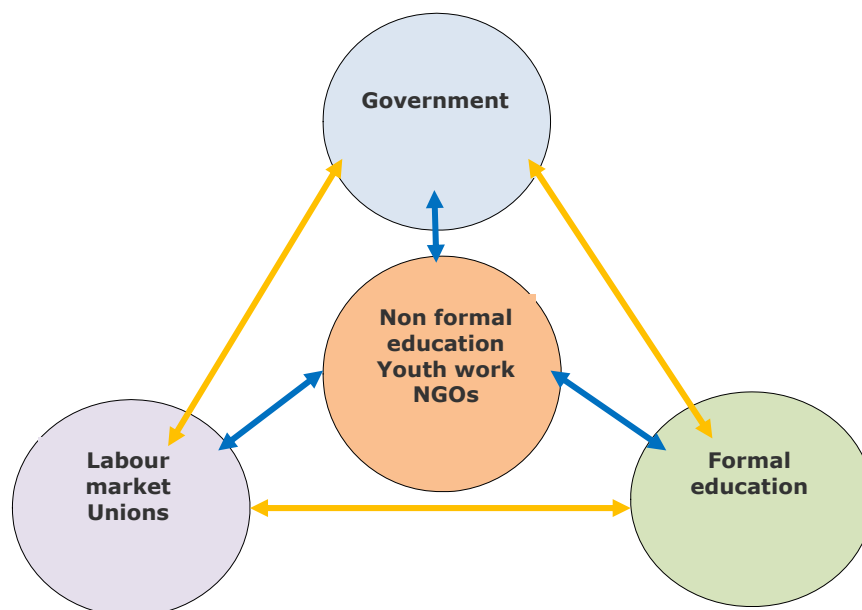
of an overarching recognition and validation system rather each than setting up their own.

Attention might also usefully be given to the Dictionary of Skills and Competences (DISCO) which contains around 10.000 skills and competence terms and exists in seven languages, and is currently being developed by ESCO (2013). This will build on and link with relevant international classifications and standards, such as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and will complement existing national and sectorial occupational and educational classifications and enable exchange of information between them.

### Promoting partnership activity

It is by no means a simple task to create a constructive dialogue between the non-formal education sector, the formal education sector, and the world of business and employers. Each domain has its own aims and purposes, different imperatives, priorities and perspectives, all of which make a meeting of minds and agreement difficult to achieve. But in the interests of young people, it is necessary to create effective partnerships between the sectors. The *My Generation* example shows the opportunities and possibilities of such partnerships. In favourable conditions, the exchange can create insights and understanding on both sides. As Figure 3 shows, when it works best, it is a reciprocal learning process.

**Figure 3: Developing partnership between sectors**



A useful starting point could be to exchange information about the different worlds, and to try to develop mutual understanding and some shared concepts. Government at European, National, regional and local levels can take a lead in creating the conditions and the incentives for developing these partnerships.

### Bridging labour market needs and non-formal learning

It is frequently reported by young jobseekers that the employment and business worlds need different skills and competences than those learnt at school. Equally, businessmen,

employers and HR specialists report that they need different and more developed skills than those offered by young people. Research shows that non-formal education, and youth work, can respond to this challenge by coaching and preparing young people for job-seeking or starting entrepreneurship. From the business side, it is important that needs are expressed clearly regarding what is required from young people and the education system. The roles of the stakeholders and the relationships between them, in addressing this mismatch needs to be identified in terms of who is responsible and for what. The recognition of non-formal learning in formal education is crucial as part of a process of modernising formal education, and capitalising on the synergy between non-formal and formal learning.

The *Nefiks* example shows what is possible in bridging this gap by working with young people on the one side and employers on the other. The mediating mechanism is a booklet in which young people can keep a record of their activities, achievements and accomplishments, which can form the basis of a CV which is helpful in applying for jobs. As *Nefiks* also shows, NGOs and civil sector organizations can take a lead in enabling the different sides to meet, exchange experiences, and develop joint programmes. The Commission is in a strong position to support this process of bringing the relevant parties together.

### **Promoting entrepreneurial skills**

As the illustrative practice examples show, developing entrepreneurial skills in young people can be a multi-faceted and sophisticated response to the problem of youth people unemployment. At one level, for example in the case of *Foroige NFTE*, it is about working with young people in school and in non-formal settings to raise awareness of the world of business. It is achieved by training teachers and youth works to deliver an internationally recognised youth entrepreneurship education and development programme. On another level, as the example of *NESst* shows, it is about enabling young people to draw from business techniques to create a social purpose enterprise in a financially sustainable way. A further option, as shown by *WaveChange*, is to work with young people to find practical solutions to social issues and problems. There is a need for:

- Strong cooperation between the sectors with the involvement of experts from all of them.
- Development based on the needs of the community, so that the focus is not just on the young people.
- Understanding and awareness of the socio-economic environment.

## Recommendations

There is no quick fix to the many social and economic issues caused by the current financial downturn, and no one solution given the different traditions and situations in Member States and beyond. Two principles should guide development. First, young people should be seen as active participants in the resolution of the economic and social crisis. Their voice is clear in the findings of the first, second and third cycles of the European Union's structured dialogue process (covering youth employment, youth participation, and social inclusion). Second, thinking at all levels needs to be for the long term, and commitments need to be sustainable.

This report from the Expert Group proposes the adoption of an overarching, comprehensive, evidence-informed and user-friendly framework to enhance young peoples' capacities for creativity and innovation in ways that are relevant to employability. The following recommendations give form and content to the framework. Illustrative practices are included to demonstrate that what is being proposed is realistic and affordable. Suitably modified for context and circumstances all are capable of being enacted at European, National, regional, municipal and local levels as appropriate.

### 1. Explaining non-formal learning to employers and educators

Recognition of non-formal learning should be a key policy objective and a priority area for attention under Erasmus +. The recognition of non-formal learning should be addressed by Member States according to the *Recommendation on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning* by 2018. The youth chapter of Erasmus+ offers opportunities to develop the innovative and creative capacity of young people. Specifically, non-formal education and youth work can contribute under *Key Action 2 Co-operation for Innovation and Good Practices* by:

- Developing non-formal learning courses/modules that can be applied in or offered to formal and other forms of structured learning looking for creativity training, as well as developing work and volunteer placements.
- Offering non-formal learning as a set of experiences to support individuals gaining competences that can be measured to standards that are transferable.

It is important to understand and demonstrate that the competences gained are wide and from all different areas, and not limited to so called 'soft' skills. The SALTO-YOUTH Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, 2012 summary on the *Recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning within the field of youth*, quotes the continuing need for:

- A much stronger focus on entrepreneurial and IT skills.
- Improvement of the recognition of competences, especially those gained outside of the formal education and training system. Member States should ensure that validation procedures connect to the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework, and by doing so help to overcome gaps in terminology used and expressions of competencies, using the EU-Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.

In implementing the *Recommendation on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning* by 2018, Member States should have in place appropriate learning activities in the youth sector.

➤ Illustrative practice: [ASDAN Awards Network](#) coordinated by UK Youth

## 2. Translating non-formal learning outcomes to the world of work

It is essential to further develop and promote effective ways of validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes gained in non-formal education and youth work. The proposal under *Key Action 2: Co-operation for Innovation and Good Practices*, to foster the use of good practice analysis templates in relation to employability, and to support strategic partnerships, is to be welcomed.

It will be important to further develop, provide, endorse and make the most of existing user-friendly, accessible tools that can enhance the ability of non-formal education workers and youth workers to promote innovation and creativity in young people.

- The Commission should urge Member States to use the best practices and achievement under Youthpass, and national instruments such as Nefiks (Slovenia), Stardiplats (Estonia), C-stick (Belgium), and others, and improve Europass (as a tool) and Eures (as a system and counselling) to recognise non-formal learning skills in a more effective way. This should facilitate recognition among employers and educators and allow young people to be aware of their learning (see Table 1).
- Terminology in the youth field should be connected to terminology used in recruitment practices, and aligned to the European Qualifications Framework.

➤ Illustrative practice: [Nefiks](#) (Slovenia); [C-stick](#) (Belgium)

## 3. Enhance the capacity of those working directly with young people

There is a need to enhance the ability of those working directly with young people, especially youth workers, to promote innovation and creativity in young people. The curriculum of this training needs to be informed by EU wide reviews of non-formal learning, practices and qualifications frameworks.

Member States can support development by:

- Including creativity and innovative capacity building of young people in training programmes for youth workers.
- Ensuring quality training, including sufficient resources, recognition and quality assurance systems for youth work (accepting that in some countries there is no system in place).
- Demonstrating clearly the value of non-formal education and learning in professional qualifications for youth workers, as well as post qualifying training, training for volunteers, and workforce development.
- Better and efficient use of available EU funds and programmes.

The Commission can support development by:

- Encouraging the development of learning communities in, and between, Member States to share ideas and practice.
- Working with the Expert Group on Quality in Youth Work to map and measure the extent to which Continuing Professional Development supports and emphasises the quality of delivery and provision in Member States.
- Member States should consider a new non-formal learning module as part of the announced 'Youth Employment Initiative and package', which provides support for activity at local level This can use the good practices and achievements of the current Youth in Action programme (Action 1.2. Youth Initiatives). This practice has quality methods to increase youth employability and entrepreneurial skills.

📌 Illustrative practice: [SALTO Toolbox for Training](#); [Route Map \(Ireland\)](#); [Les Scouts and the Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen](#)

#### **4. Develop a focus on entrepreneurship**

Youth work connects young people with the local community, including social enterprise and business, thus enhancing their opportunities to find a job, or to start their own project.

To enhance this aspect of youth work and its contribution to young peoples' innovation and creative potential, there are several solutions.

Member States should:



- Strengthen the links and pathways between formal education and youth work that enable young people to gain life wide competences and entrepreneurial skills through non-formal learning.
- Develop concrete tools (self-assessment guidelines, diary of skills; non-formal credits acquired) to enable young people to present and prove their entrepreneurial and creative competences developed through social activities such as social work, hobbies and voluntary activities. This would help young people, for example when having a job interview, while assisting teachers and youth workers to assess the effectiveness of entrepreneurial programmes in education. Currently a European project funded by DG Enterprise called ASTEE, is working on developing such a tool on a European level.
- Widely disseminate the tools to business organisations, and from business organisations to their members, so that employers are aware and can better recognise the value of the skills acquired.

This recommendation would be coherent with requirements set by the Entrepreneurship Action Plan and by the Communication on Rethinking education, which asks Member States that all young people have a concrete entrepreneurial experience before leaving education.

➤ Illustrative practice: [NESst \(International\)](#); [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship \(International\)](#)

## **5. Improve partnership working and cross-sector innovation**

To achieve cooperation and joint action between stakeholders and the social partners, (for example between private sector employers, unions, and formal educators and youth workers) there is a need to galvanise all stakeholders. Particular attention should be given to how to reach disadvantaged and unskilled young adults with a specific focus on local and regional levels.

Member States can support development by:

- Making best use of the Chambers of Commerce and lead organisations in industry, who are essential sources of information and should be seen as important messengers and partners for the outcomes of the expert group.
- Focusing on Human Resource Departments that have extensive experience of using tools with a competence focus, for example in assessment centres.
- Enabling SMEs with underdeveloped HR resources, to take into account the skills and competences acquired by NFL.
- Encouraging the Corporate Social Responsibility of SMEs by providing SMEs with coaching and support on how to involve young people in their enterprises.
- Including young people, and especially youth representative organisations, at all levels in matters such as programme design, quality assurance, monitoring and feedback, evaluations and review, as well as awareness raising about non-formal and especially voluntary activities and opportunities.
- Ensuring that current experiences and competences developed by National Agencies under the Youth in Action program will be fully exploited and used under the Erasmus + program.
- Promoting opportunities for peer-learning between the youth sector, the labour market, and formal education.
- Making full use of operational plans for structural funds (especially the ESF and the ERDF) and the Youth Employment Initiative, to create synergies between non-formal education, employment and formal education.

The European Commission can support development by:

- Utilising existing reporting mechanisms to evaluate further the effectiveness of cooperation across sectors, when dealing with recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning
- Establishing a more robust joint policy planning mechanism and integrate youth sector solutions into other policy areas, such as education, entrepreneurship, regional development, social inclusion, culture and others.
- Taking the lead in a European context to bring together representatives of the public sector, employer organizations, large, medium and small companies, young people and youth organizations, to further promote, raise awareness of the benefits and build upon the results of non-formal learning.

The Council can promote development by:

- Promoting alliances and overcome barriers between sectors, building partnerships including non-formal learning methods and presenting its value to different sectors, and the labour market.

📌 Illustrative practice: [MYGENERATION](#) (Belgium); [ENTRUM](#) (Estonia)

## **6. Further extend the evidence base through focused research and impact analysis**

Although evidence about the impact of non-formal and informal learning on employability is increasing, more is needed especially in youth work. The 2012 report *Youth Work: A Systematic 'Map' of the Research Literature*, provides a model but was restricted to English language publications. In January 2014 the European Commission presented *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the EU*, which mapped different youth work activities and their value for young people in the EU.

- In addition, further review of the research literature, drawing together the evidence about the effects of non-formal learning from the various Member States on employability would be useful, especially regarding the relation between skills and competences acquired through NFL and employability.
- There is a need for an overview of the promotion of creativity and innovation of young people in all the EU Member States and to evaluate the implementation of innovative capacity building in Member States.
- There is also a need in Member States to undertake focused experiments with respect to specific areas of practice. For example, testing activities and training that support the transition from non-formal education to work, and transition from school to work, as well as to adulthood.

## 7. Include non-formal education and learning in Youth Guarantee plans

Member States should keep in mind while developing Youth Guarantee schemes that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through engagement in youth work correspond to those frequently said to be needed in the labour market. These include teamwork, communication, leadership, flexibility and responsiveness, building self-confidence and trust to authority especially among most vulnerable young people.

The Commission and Member States need to ensure that operational plans for structural funds include youth work services as an essential part of the link between education and the labour market. Labour market measures alone are not sufficient to reach all young people, especially the most vulnerable and those with little or no trust in the system. Formal education also has a significant number of young people dropping out. Youth work can be an important bridge between these two systems, in supporting young people in the transition from education to the world of work.

To optimize the youth work contribution, when implementing the Youth Guarantee, Member States need to:

- Ensure full access to information by strengthening cooperation between employment services, career guidance providers, education and training institutions and youth support services.
- Promote mutual learning at national, regional and local level between all parties involved in combating youth unemployment.
- Provide effective outreach strategies, including outreach youth work methods and personalized guidance and individual action planning.
- Enhance support for non-formal education workers, especially youth workers, who work directly with young people, to raise the quality of provision of services. These workers play a crucial 'catalytic' role advising, mentoring and guiding young people to relevant services, especially with disadvantaged and hard to reach young people.
- Provide accessible and user-friendly tools and resources to improve non-formal education and youth work. This is important to ensure that good practice is universally shared.
- Recognise and validate non-formal learning in business and in the formal and non-formal education sectors. This will help providers, young people and potential employers to appreciate the learning and development that occurs on the pathway to employment.
- Include youth organizations in partnership arrangements at national and local levels. This will optimise resources and help to provide more coordinated provision for young people.
- Make full use of the opportunities for volunteering experience in the youth sector. This will provide young people with opportunities to exercise leadership skills that are valued in the labour market.

## Conclusion and next steps

As noted by Dhéret (2013): 'It remains to be seen what real results recent and forthcoming developments, such as the possible introduction of bilateral contracts between Member States and the European Commission, will produce'. It is timely, therefore, to remind decision-makers of the value of non-formal learning, which if supported properly could play a vital role, for example in supplementing the Youth Guarantee's offer of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The considerations and recommendations in this report from the Expert Group bear directly on the need to establish strong partnerships, particularly between the youth sector and business organisations. They also favour early intervention in the labour market supply chain. What is needed in this situation is a rethink of policy to build on those aspects that positively support low cost, realistic solutions. In short, there is a need to:

*" Recognise and value non-formal learning in a creative and innovative way, raising the visibility of skills acquired outside the formal system and fostering complementarity between non-formal and formal learning, while at the same time promoting equal opportunities.*

*Rethinking Education, 20.11.2012 COM (2012) 669*

The Expert Group regards this final report and the presentation of its findings, as the first deliverable in an on-going programme of work, which would involve:

1. Assisting the Commission to organise a stakeholder seminar with workshops bringing together business, formal education and non-formal sectors, to deliberate on the challenges and possibilities in partnership working. The organisation of the workshop at European level could be a template for comparable action at Member State level, coordinated and led by the members of the expert group, with respect to their own country, to create a cascade effect of training about this subject. The event could be held in June 2014.
2. The findings of this report need to be fine-tuned and turned into short, accessible briefings for different audiences including policy-makers, researchers, practitioners and young people. The briefings would emphasise the actions that can be taken to support innovative and creative potential as well as non-formal learning to maximise the benefits for young people, and increase their employability.
3. The briefing for young people could take the form of a short video using [RSA Animate](#) as a possible model.
4. Further thinking is needed about how the findings of this report could be included in recommendations and papers prepared on the EU-level, for example in Council documents and staff working documents, and in forthcoming presidency considerations.

It is vital to use all the possible methods, and resources to introduce non-formal learning and its outcomes to public discourse, which could be encouraged by financial support, technical advice, revising training materials, networks, and databases. And especially make the case for promoting the creative and innovative capacity of young people and highlighting competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, which are relevant for employability.

The Expert Group would welcome the opportunity to work with other parties. For example, the DG Employment and the DG Enterprise, amongst other related

stakeholders, could usefully be involved in the process of dissemination through various channels.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Glossary of key terms

Key Terms	Source
<p><b>Formal education</b>            Formal education is a purposive learning that takes place in a distinct and institutionalised environment specifically designed for teaching/training and learning, which is staffed by educators who are specifically qualified for the sector, level and subject concerned and which usually serves a specified category of learners (defined by age, level and specialism). Formal education/learning is organised and formalised by national curricula and its requirements. Passing formal education is always accompanied by the opportunity to move on to the next level and the corresponding degree, diploma or certificate. Institutions of formal education mostly include kindergartens, secondary schools, vocational schools, and universities. Much formal learning provision is compulsory.</p>	<p>SALTO-YOUTH and Jugend fur Europa (2012) European Training Strategy: Set of competences for trainers – glossary.</p>
<p><b>Non-formal education</b>            For the purposes of this study, and following the European Youth Forum Policy Paper “Youth organisations as non-formal educators: recognising our role”, <b>non-formal education</b> is understood as an organised educational process which takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and the individual is usually aware that (s)he is learning – unlike in informal learning. Often, non-formal education in youth organisations is articulated through learning in groups, interactive, participatory and experiential methodologies. The European Youth Forum tends to relate non-formal education to activities that happen within youth organisations...(2011: 14)</p>	<p>Souto-Otero, M., Ulicna, D., Schaepekens, L. and Bognar, V. (2011) <i>Study on the impact of Non-Formal Education in youth organisations on young people’s employability</i>. Commissioned by the European Youth Forum. Authored by Bath University/GHK Consulting.</p>
<p><b>Non-formal learning and education</b>, understood as learning outside institutional contexts (out-of-school) is the key activity, but also the key competence of youth work. Non-formal learning/education in youth work is often structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support and it is intentional. It typically does not lead to certification, but in an increasing number of cases, certificates are delivered, leading to a better recognition of the individual learning outcome.</p> <p>Non-formal learning is a targeted learning process that supports the development of a person, his/her transformation potential, creativity, talents, initiative and social responsibility and the acquirement of related knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It is understood as learning outside institutional contexts (out-of-school). Non-formal learning in youth work is often structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support, and it is intentional (voluntary). Non-formal learning is supported by a series of educational values and principles.</p>	<p>Council of Europe – European Union (2011) <i>Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe</i>.</p> <p>SALTO-YOUTH and Jugend fur Europa (2012) European Training Strategy: Set of competences for trainers – glossary.</p>

<p><b>Informal learning</b> Is defined as the learning that results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure that is not structured and usually does not lead to certification<sup>16</sup>. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner.</p> <p>Youth work activities provide many informal learning opportunities, as young people learn while simply being active, being a volunteer or just being with their peers. They learn informally in daily life and leisure time just as they learn informally in school, at work and in family life, just learning by doing; it is typically not structured and not intentional and does not lead to certification. It provides specific learning opportunities, in particular of social, cultural and personal nature, often called 'soft' skills.</p>	<p><a href="http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/informal_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/informal_en.htm</a></p> <p>Council of Europe – European Union (2011) <i>Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe.</i></p>
<p><b>Youth work</b> 'Youth work' is a broad term covering a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services 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 Youth work is organised in different ways (by youth led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities). It is delivered in different forms and settings (e.g. open-access, group-based, programme-based, outreach and detached) and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level.</p> <p>Some elements of youth work can be considered to be <b>formal education/learning and training</b>. In specific cases the youth sector / youth work acts as a substitute, alternative education and training provider (e.g. in second chance schools and similar projects, in special Vocational Education and Training projects) for school drop-outs, early school leavers, disaffected young people or other young people at risk. The learning process is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support and it is intentional; the participants get certificates and/or diplomas.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/presdata/en/educ/117874.pdf">http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/presdata/en/educ/117874.pdf</a></p> <p>Council of Europe – European Union (2011) <i>Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe.</i></p>
<p><b>Young people</b> Age brackets: 15-28 (in some cases 13-30)</p>	<p><a href="http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/overview_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/overview_en.htm</a></p>
<p><b>Entrepreneurship (includes social)</b> Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, sense of initiative, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The entrepreneurship competence includes therefore transversal skills and attitudes as well as more specialised knowledge and business skills. In a broad sense, entrepreneurship should be considered as a mindset that supports everyone in day-to-day life at home and in society, and provides a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity. Entrepreneurship is</p>	<p><a href="http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/education-training-entrepreneurship/">http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/education-training-entrepreneurship/</a></p>



<p>a key competence for lifelong learning, as defined in the 2006 European Framework for Key Competences.</p>	
<p><b>Skills</b> The term 'soft skills' can refer to motivation or disposition, and often relates to a combination of personal attributes and abilities that enhance employability. The European Youth Forum has defined 'soft skills and competences' as 'others than the ones developed in the framework of formal education' and that 'include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility.'</p>	<p>European Youth Forum (2005) Policy paper on Recognition of non-formal education: confirming the real competences of young people in the knowledge society. COMEM 0716-05. (p.2).</p>
<p><b>Competence</b> Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.</p> <p>In the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy. Individual attitudes can be understood as competences based on an individual way of being and behaving, and which encompass unconscious patterns of actions and values.</p> <p>Competences consist of an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully. Self-confidence, motivation and well-being are important pre-requisites for a person to be able to act out his/her developed competences.</p>	<p><a href="http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/vocational_training/c11104_en.htm">http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/vocational_training/c11104_en.htm</a></p> <p>Official Journal of the European Communities, 2008, C 111, p. 1-7.</p> <p>SALTO-YOUTH and Jugend fur Europa (2012) European Training Strategy: Set of competences for trainers – glossary.</p>
<p><b>Social competence</b> Refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation.</p>	<p><a href="http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm">http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm</a></p>

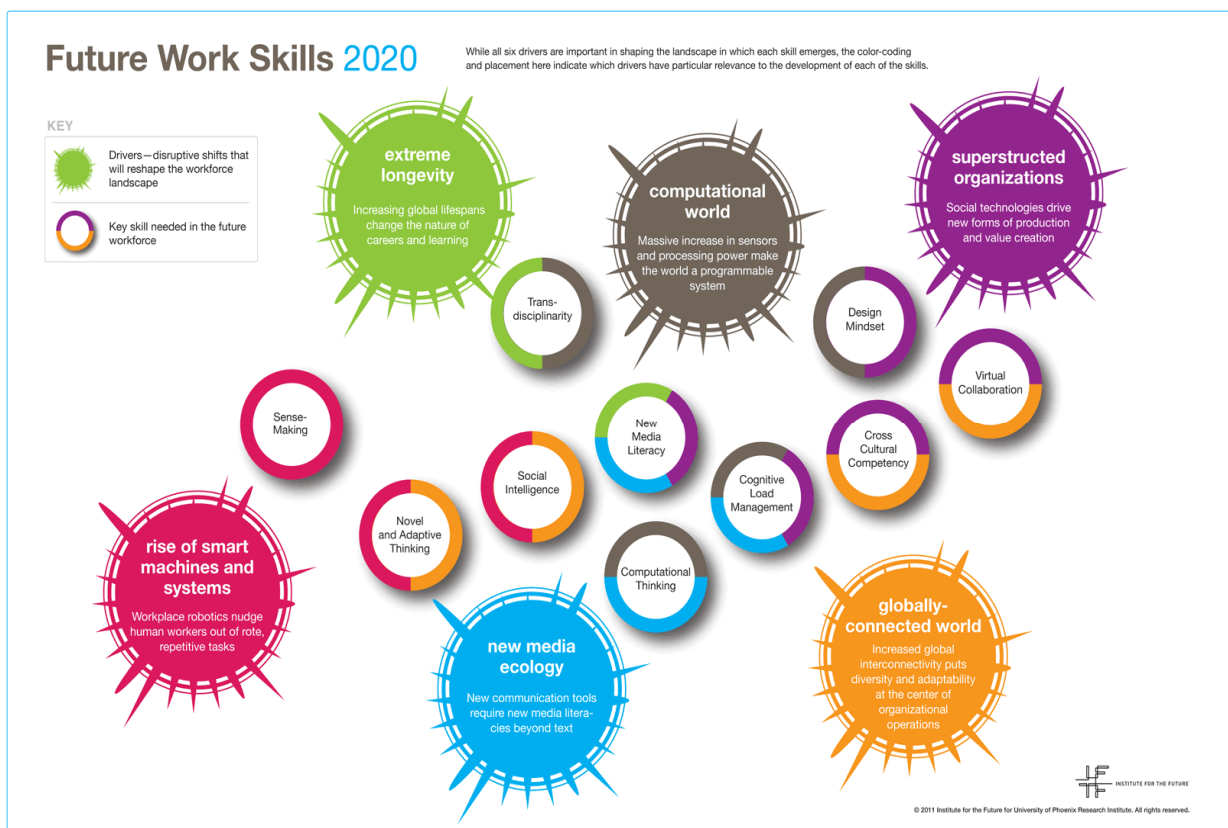
<p><b>Employability</b>  Employability is understood here as the relative chance of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment. Employability depends on fulfilling the requirements of a specific job and also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers. Employability, thus, has two dimensions: its external conditions (the labour market) as well as individual characteristics (individual dimension). (2011: 19).</p>	<p>Souto-Otero, M., Ulicna, D., Schaepkens, L. and Bognar, V. (2011) <i>Study on the impact of Non-Formal Education in youth organisations on young people's employability</i>. Commissioned by the European Youth Forum. Authored by Bath University/GHK Consulting.</p>
<p><b>Innovation and Creativity</b>  Innovation and creativity is relative to the people and the social, geographical and cultural context in which it occurs. The core elements are analysis, problem definition, strategies for solutions, and sustained commitment to choices made. It is not a purely intra-individual concept, or the creation of something 'new and valuable', although it can be this. Instead it should be seen as the interaction between the person and the socio-cultural surrounding. Creativity is any act, idea or product that changes the existing domain or that transforms an existing domain into a new one. It is important to be able to cultivate this capacity in individuals, groups, communities and organisations.</p>	<p>Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1996: 28)</p>



## Appendix 2: Skills for the future labour market

The Future of Work study (Institute for the Future, 2011), for example, identified 10 skills needed in the future labour market. 10 skills are:

- Sense making (interpreting the underlying meaning of expressions)
- Social intelligence (connecting with others)
- Novel and adaptive thinking (finding new solutions and responses to unexpected circumstances)
- Cross-cultural competences (ability to operate in diverse cultural settings)
- Computational thinking (translating data in abstract concepts)
- New-media literacy (critically assessing and developing content)
- Transdisciplinarity (understanding concepts from different disciplines)
- Design mindset (representing and developing tasks and work processes)
- Cognitive load management (discriminating and filtering information)
- Virtual collaboration (working in virtual teams).



### Appendix 3: Outcomes and indicators in youth work

Outcome Areas	Indicators	Number of Studies
Health and well-being	Reduced alcohol/substance misuse; diversion from crime; prevention of risky behaviours; making healthy choices	36
Relationship with others	Positive peer relationships; positive relationships with adults; pro-social skills; leadership skills; decision-making skills; empowerment	66
Sense of self	Personal development; self-esteem; confidence; self-efficacy; identity; character	64
Formal education and training	Academic achievement; strengthened bonds to school	27
Community and Society	Civic engagement; strengthened bonds to community; partnership working; new social interests	36
Values and beliefs Future aspirations; values; positive diversity attitudes	Values and beliefs; future aspirations; values; positive diversity attitudes	30

: Dickson et al (2012) *Youth Work: A Systematic 'Map' of the Research Literature*

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## Appendix 4: Methodology of the working group

Since its first meeting in December 2012, the group has met on a further 8 occasions so far.

The group chose to work in an evidence-informed way. To this end, the Commission and the Expert Group have gathered 155 documents on SINAPSE and the group members have brought to bear their in-depth knowledge of a wide range of other reports, discussion papers, and practice.

The first two meetings were about deciding on a chairperson, establishing the precise remit of the group, and working out its purpose. Once this was done, three sub-groups were formed to look at policy issues (coordinator: Gordon Blakely), research (coordinators: Rita Bergstein and Manfred Zentner), and practice (Coordinator: Edgar Schlummer) respectively.

Templates were developed to help sub-groups find and record relevant information, for example a research report, or statistical information, of policy documents, or illustrative examples of practice. Each sub-group used the meetings, and the time in between, to develop ideas, to gather the information, and to produce initial text for the report.

The fifth and sixth meetings allowed the whole group to examine drafts of the report. The drafts and the final report were written by the Chairperson (John Bamber). The report was submitted to the Council of Minister's Youth Working Party on 22 January 2014.

The Commission provided the secretariat for the Expert group (Lucie Lekesova, Florencia van Houdt – DG Education and Culture), informing members about meetings and arrangements for travel (Joëlle Wilfart – DG Education and Culture). The Commission also provided minutes, and prepared an agenda for meetings. In addition, the Commission provided valuable knowledge and expertise about wider policy developments, Commission procedures and the working of the European institutions.

## Appendix 5: Expert group on peer learning list of representatives

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