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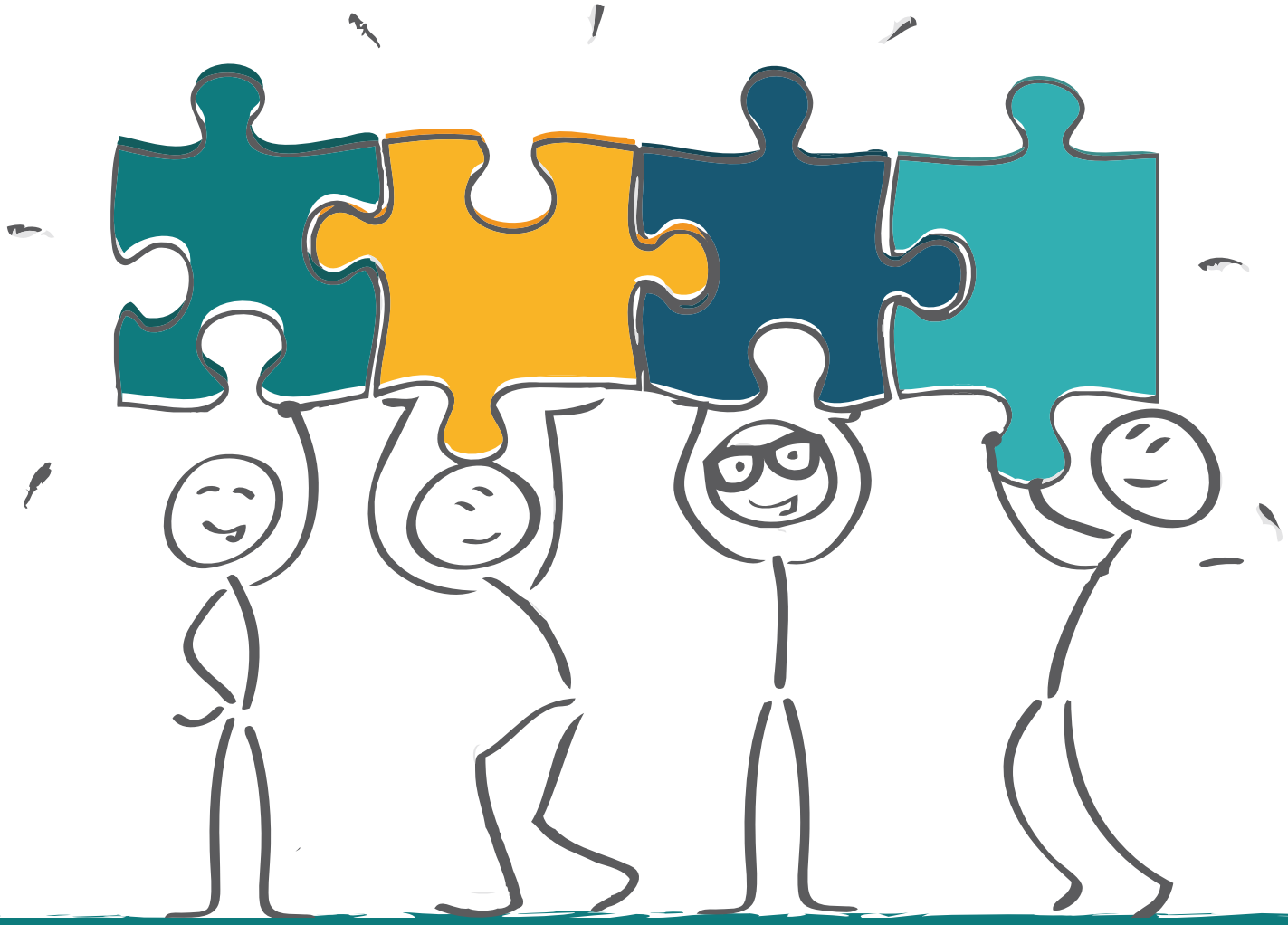

IMPROVING YOUTH WORK

Your guide to quality development

Youth

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate B - Youth, Education and Erasmus+
Unit B3 - Youth, Volunteer Solidarity and Traineeships Office

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

YOUTH WORK QUALITY SYSTEMS AND FRAMEWORKS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Handbook for implementation

Written by

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INTRODUCTION

Who is this handbook for?

You are engaged in youth work! You might be a dedicated youth worker, a young person active in a youth centre or a youth organisation, someone responsible for an organisation providing youth work or a politician responsible for youth issues. You might be sitting on the board of an NGO or work in public administration. Whoever you are, youth work is important to you and you want it to be as good as possible! You are, at the same time, aware that society as well as the needs and interests of young people is constantly changing and that youth work, if it is to keep up with these changes, has to constantly develop. If this is true – then this handbook is for you.

What you think constitutes good youth work will, however, vary depending on who you are. This means that, regardless of where the youth work you are engaged in takes place and who is doing it, whether this be an NGO or a municipal youth work department, everyone concerned must take part in the process of quality development. The target group for this handbook is therefore young people, youth workers, people managing organisations providing youth work or working in public administration and politicians.

So, dear readers, there is one thing that we can be sure of – you are diverse! You vary in age and position in society. You have different needs, experiences and expectations. You understand things differently and express yourselves in various ways. You might think that this could cause problems when you are taking part in a common process, but it will not – not if you are aware of it and are prepared to meet others with curiosity and respect. Then it is an asset!

Starting to engage in quality development together is a bit like going for a hike in an unknown forest. You will need a map, but a map is not enough. You will also need someone who can 'read nature' and help you to find the best track and avoid getting stuck in the swamp. You will definitely need some equipment and someone who knows how to use it. It is true that you have all been in forests before, but you have been in different ones. Here some of you will be familiar with some of the trees and some with others, and the terrain will be at the same time familiar and unknown. You will need each other to succeed; on this hike you are all equally important and valuable.

This handbook will give you a map, some tips on how to 'read nature', and a bit of advice on the equipment and on how to help each other on the way. It will give you guidance and help you to learn by doing. Still, having all of this, you will have to do the walking.

For some of you, depending on your experience, it might still make good sense to appoint a facilitator; someone who has had training on working with indicators and tools for quality development and at the same time could lead processes like this, helping you to keep your team together and your spirits up when you reach the hills and the going gets tough.

Even if there is a common understanding of the nature of youth work, it is also so diverse in its practice that there is no common, one-size-fits-all answer to what is good youth work and how it should be developed. Therefore this is not a guide to the one and only answer – what it offers is a common ground and a common process for continuous and systematic quality development. It offers a structured way to find your own answers to what characterises quality in your setting – helping you to go from where you are to where you want to be, and to do it at your own pace.

When we say 'you' in this handbook, this should be read as 'the participator in a process of quality development' regardless of whether 'you' are a single stakeholder, a group of stakeholders or a facilitator. Whoever 'you' are, we hope you will make good use of it. You are diverse, but you have one thing in common – you want to improve youth work.

Why write a handbook on quality development and how to use it

Aim of the handbook and how it can be used

The main aim of this handbook is to provide the youth work sector with an easily accessible and concrete model for continuous, systematic and knowledge-based quality development.

So far this has been missing and our hope is that producing a handbook will lead, not only to higher quality, but also to enhanced credibility and recognition of youth work. If you want, you can read more about the reasons for it in the section describing the background below.

We hope that having a common ground and framework for further development and being able to show progress will strengthen the youth work sector as a whole. Using a common model for quality development will also enhance the possibilities and benefits of cooperation, exchange and peer learning.

How you will want to use this handbook of course depends on who you are:

- what kind of youth work you are engaged in;
- what kind of organisation you are active in;
- how experienced you are in quality development;
- if you have appointed a facilitator or not.

It will also depend on how you perceive the youth work that you are engaged in:

- if you have a clear and common understanding of what it is and what it wants to achieve, or not;
- if you think it needs smaller or bigger improvements;
- if you already have some tools for systematic quality development, or not.

It can be used:

- as a check-list for analysing what parts or aspects of your work you need to develop;
- to develop specific parts or aspects of your work that you think need to be improved;
- for starting from the very beginning, building a more or less complete system for continuous and systematic quality development.

However, these different ways of using it do not in any way exclude each other. On the contrary, when you start to read it and discuss its different parts you will automatically analyse your present situation and discover which things you need to improve and which things you can or want to keep the way they are.

Structure of the handbook

The handbook is structured in a way that enables the different parts to be read more or less separately.

The structure is based on what is usually called a quality circle, i.e. the basic process for quality development, which is essentially a process in two initial steps:

A. Agree on what different elements characterise good youth work. (What we call setting indicators.)
B. Decide which tools you want to use to gather information to measure the degree to which reality corresponds to the indicators.

(These two steps are described in Chapter 3 'Developing indicators and tools to gather information'.)

Followed by four periodically repeated steps:

1. gather the information needed;
2. analyse the results in order to know where you stand;
3. decide what you need to change;
4. set objectives for the coming period.

(These steps are described in Chapter 4 'Working with continuous quality development'.)

This process could be applied to all different areas or dimensions of youth work e.g. participation, the work processes you use or the aims that you have already set.

An example related to the area of youth participation could then be:

For example:

A. What characterises youth participation?
B. What tools shall we use in order to find out if our operations actually live up to this?

And then:

1. gather information with the tools that you have chosen;
2. analyse the information gathered;
3. decide what you need to change in order to get a better result;
4. set objectives regarding youth participation for the coming period.

So, even if this handbook covers the whole youth work context in all its complexity, it is not automatically necessary to do all the work or to use all parts of it. Instead you can design your quality development process the way you want. You can choose to develop a quality circle that covers everything, from the facilities you use, to outcomes in terms of non-formal learning, or you can choose to develop one that only focuses on, for example, the inclusion of marginalised groups.

How you decide this will depend on your organisational setting and who is responsible for the process and can take decisions on the outcomes of your work. Working with quality development, whether it is developing a system or running it, always needs a mandate from the organisation to do so and continuous dialogue with those responsible as you go along. Practical quality development needs to be managed as an integral part of daily work and should therefore be developed in the same manner.

Here and there in the text you will see the expression 'quality system' – by this we mean a set of tools for quality development that are linked to each other in a clear and structured way. A quality system could therefore contain anything from parts of a quality circle to a complete and integrated quality circle covering the whole youth work context. The latter is an ideal situation that not many have achieved. Using this handbook will help you to start building it or adding new parts or elements to what you already have. Our ambition is to make you aware of the various aspects or dimensions of youth work that are relevant for, and can be subject to, quality development.

There is, however, one section that we strongly advise you to read and carefully discuss – the one called 'Establishing common ground – what is youth work to us?'. This is for the simple reason that if you want to develop youth work you will have to agree on what it is. Sadly quality development is quite often started without a clear and common understanding of what youth work actually is. The common result of this is that very little really changes when new systems are implemented. Section 2.4 'Establishing common ground – what is youth work to us?' will help you to avoid this risk and build a solid ground for sustainable development, whatever you might think about your present work.

The different chapters and their content

This handbook is divided into four main chapters.

In Chapter 1 'Preparing a process of quality development', you will find all the things you need to think about and do to organise a good and efficient process. If you appoint a facilitator, this person will handle most of this, but for those of you who are not so experienced in processes that include people from very different backgrounds it is still a good idea to read and think about it.

Then comes Chapter 2 'Establishing common ground for quality development', which helps you to create a common ground and starting point for your future work. This might involve starting from the very beginning with systematic quality development or just going through and evaluating, for example, the aims and work processes you already have.

In Chapter 3 'Developing indicators and tools to gather information', we come to the first and most basic step in all kinds of quality development, regardless of what part or aspect you want to develop – the formulation of indicators. Section 3.1 starts with an introduction to the indicators, what they are (Section 3.1.1) and how they relate to aims and objectives (Section 3.1.2). After this there are three sections on different areas that you can formulate indicators for. The first one (Section 3.2) is on the core principles and core features of youth work. You might think that you are already clear on these principles and features, but, since this is the foundation upon which all quality development must be based, it

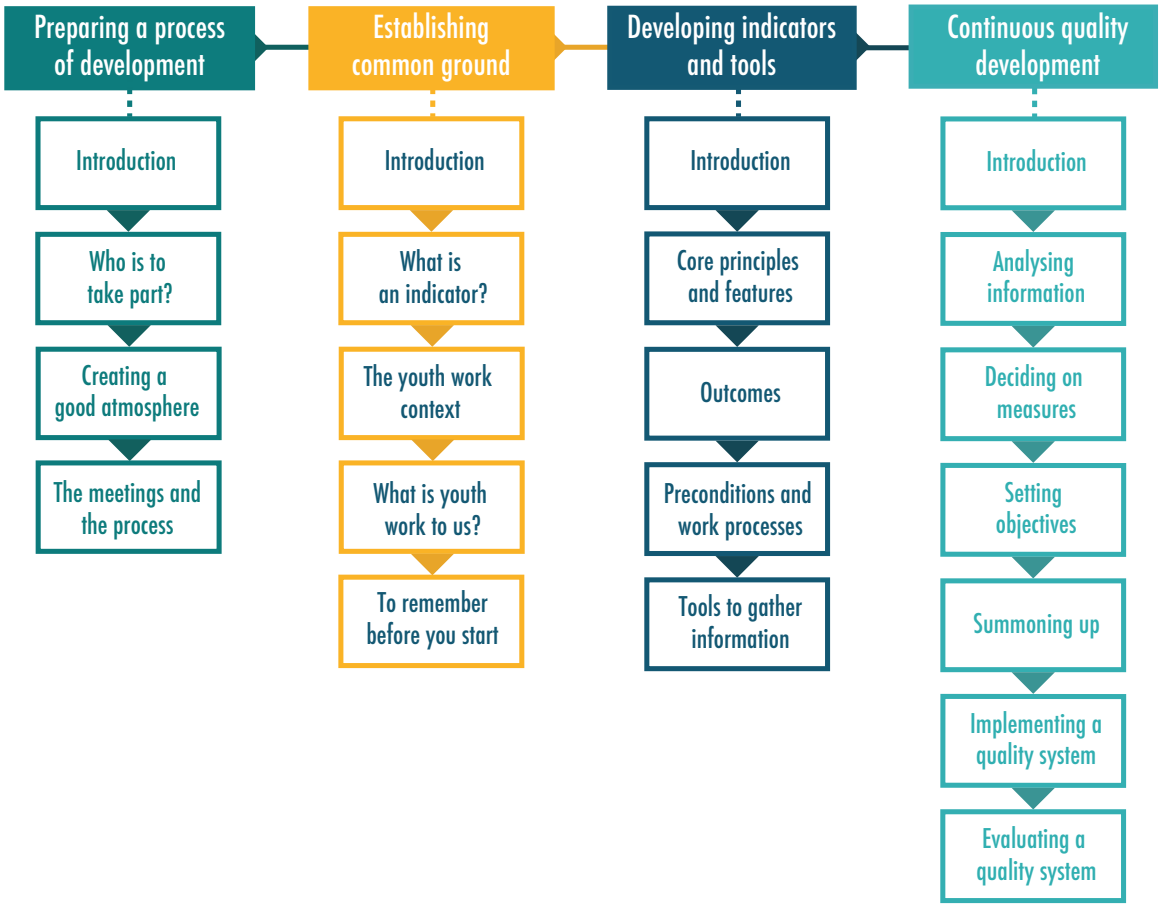
might still be a good idea to read it and see if this is actually the case. After this the handbook examines the other areas in relation to which you can formulate indicators: outcomes, preconditions and work processes (Sections 3.3 and 3.4). Running parallel to this, you get guidance on what methods to use when assessing the degree to which reality corresponds with the indicators, and in the final Section 3.5 you get advice on how to find the appropriate tools you need to do this.

In Chapter 4 'Working with continuous quality development', you are given guidance on how to use the information you have gathered for practical, hands-on, quality development. You will also be advised about how to implement the system you have created. The chapter ends with a set of indicators for quality systems – making it possible for you to evaluate the work you have done.

In the appendix you will find a glossary and different definitions and explanations which we refer to as we make our way through the process. Here you will also find many examples of tools currently used for quality development by different organisations. However, these should not be copied straight off, but should instead function as inspiration and a starting point for your own discussions.

This handbook ends with a detailed table of contents, which will help you to find the parts of it that you are most interested in.

If you convert the quality circle and the different chapters into graphics it looks something like this:



In order to facilitate your reading you will find the colours you see in this graphic in the different chapters.

As you will appreciate when you read this, quality development is a process of learning, a process that gradually, step by step, will lead to better youth work.

A handbook for reflection

In the process of developing youth work reflection is a key method. It is through common reflection that you will reach a shared understanding and move forward. One of the most common and dangerous traps in quality development is the belief that we understand things in the same way, and that we mean the same things with the words we use – we usually do not. If you ask ten people to give their definition of participation you are very likely to get ten different answers. Answers that, in turn, will lead you in ten different directions if you want to enhance youth participation as a part of making youth work better. We have tried to keep the text as simple and free of technical terms as possible. Nevertheless, there might be words or expressions that are unknown to some of you. Ask each other about them so that you have a common understanding. You can also look in the glossary, Section 5.1, or use the link to the glossary compiled by the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field; you will find both in the appendix. It is only when you reflect together that you will be able to find a common track.

In order to support common discussion and reflection you will find:

- Examples of how different things could be done
- Questions to discuss
- Exercises that you could carry out together
- Live stories that give you insights into how others have done
- Watch out! sections where we try to make you aware of the most important things to think about, the threats and pitfalls, and all the dos and don'ts in the process of quality development.

You will find these features in almost all the chapters and we recommend that you read and reflect on them.

Background

The last few years have shown an increasing political interest in youth work and its possible contributions to young people and society at large.

The reason for this can, of course, to a large extent be found in the current economic crisis and the subsequent increase in youth unemployment and marginalisation. The steadily growing expectations of youth work are that it should improve social inclusion, build civil society, enhance employability, prevent health risks, and so on. This has, in turn, led to a clear tendency towards more targeted and project-oriented youth work, in terms of both target group and the specific issues to be addressed. Unfortunately, this has not led to the provision of more resources – these have instead often been taken from universal youth work open to all groups of young people.

At the same time there has been a parallel demand for evidence that youth work actually makes these contributions and, if this is the case, to what degree and with what efficiency. Youth work is under increasing pressure to measure and show its impact on both young people and society at large.

This has in turn clarified some crucial questions:

- What is the specific contribution of youth work in relation to social inclusion, building civil society, and so on?
- What are the basic function and delimitations of youth work and when does it cease to be youth work and turn into something else?
- How should youth work function in order to make these contributions?

Taken together these questions lead to the most fundamental one:

- What is youth work, what is its basic function and role in relation to young people and other societal actors?

In the search for an answer to these questions there has been a lot of significant activity at local, national and European level. A lot of reports have been published, a lot of events have taken place and a lot of policies have been adopted. You will find some of the most important ones in the appendix.

This handbook is the outcome of such a common effort. In the *Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people*, 2013, it was decided that a thematic expert group be established with the task to 'examine youth work quality systems in EU Member States and explore how common indicators or frameworks may be developed.'

The Expert Group's report was completed in April 2015 and contained some very clear statements on both youth work as such, what it is and what principles must guide it, and on quality development. It stated that 'successful youth work must be based on an open offer about non-formal learning and personal development possibilities directed to all young people' and that

> working with indicators, quality tools and systems is crucial to the continuous development of youth work and has great potential to contribute to an enhanced credibility and recognition of the youth work sector as a whole. However, if it is to fulfil this function, this work must be a joint process that all stakeholders engage in, take seriously and design together in a way that enhances critical reflection and creative solutions.

This handbook is based on the Expert Group report, its statements and suggestions for solutions. It is also based on interviews held with a lot of different stakeholders engaged in youth work and quality development, two expert seminars, further assessments of some of the quality systems presented in the Expert Group report (you will find these assesments in the appendix) and desk research in the field of youth work quality development.

1. PREPARING A PROCESS OF QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Introduction – what you need to make change happen

When starting to engage in quality development one question you must ask yourself is what kinds of measures and mechanisms would lead to change.

When it comes to youth work the most common suggestion is competence development of youth workers. This is true in the sense that without competent youth workers no good youth work will be done. However, this is far from the only answer to our question, and focusing only on the competence of youth workers risks ignoring other necessary measures and mechanisms and the responsibilities of other stakeholders. It is therefore important to keep in mind that professionalisation is not just about education and training – it is just as much about having a clear role and working systematically in accordance with clear work processes. Professionalism, whether you are paid or not, is seeing yourself as a tool to achieve specific aims.

Having competent youth workers will not mean much if the organisational context in which they work does not support them or allow them to use their competences in an efficient and constructive manner. It is often said that organisations should be guided by their aims, but the degree to which this will actually happen is entirely dependent on how the feedback and reflection on the results are used.

When you are producing cars or bathtubs, the production process is very standardised. When you are working with young people, you have to adapt your work processes to suit different groups and different environments. In order to do this in a good way you have to constantly reflect on how different ways of working affect the outcomes. The different steps in a participatory process – design, delivery and evaluation – are the same but the realities in which this process takes place are constantly varying – there is no such thing as a standardised youth work process.

This explains why clear aims and indicators are so important: they are the only fixed reference points in an unknown and ever-changing reality. Without them there is no way of knowing if you are going in the right direction or not, no way of giving relevant and constructive feedback. At the same time this makes clear why you constantly have to reflect on where you are, which track to choose and how to apply your work process. With a mountain ahead of you, you have to decide whether to climb over it, or walk around it, and the answer will depend on which people you have in your group.

Successful youth work and, more so, successful development therefore have their starting point in, and depend on, the culture of the organisation. An organisation that promotes development:

- has clear aims regarding what it wants to achieve, why it exists;
- sees itself as a tool to reach the aims, not as an institution;
- has broken down the aims into clear objectives;
- has a clear division of roles and responsibilities;
- knows that there are different ways to the same destination;
- has confidence in its members' ability to choose the best way;
- keeps the aims alive through continuous feedback;
- encourages questioning and constructive criticism;
- is focused on solutions, not on obstacles;
- has high expectations of its members and demands professional behaviour;
- treats different backgrounds and experiences among its members as an asset;
- actively recognises the need for constant learning;
- puts its words into action.

This list might seem obvious, but taking it for granted can lead to unforeseen problems. The only way to know if everybody concerned agrees is to discuss it.

Discuss:

- **Does your organisation match the above criteria?**
- **How can you use continuous quality development as a means to strengthen your organisation?**

Whatever the organisational culture there will still be some people who are afraid of all kinds of changes and who want to keep things the way 'they have always been'. Do not let them rule your process. If people do not want to get on the train, it is sometimes better to leave them at the station – not only for the organisation but also for themselves. The only way to meet this fear for change is to make those concerned part of the change instead of victims of it.

1.2. Who should take part in quality development and how to get the 'team' together?

1.2.1. Who should take part in quality development, why and in what way?

How you answer this question will depend on a lot of different factors.

Among these are:

- what you want to work on, e.g. core principles or work processes;
- how your organisation is structured and governed;
- how much time different stakeholders can set aside for the process;
- who is responsible for the outcomes of your work and who can make decisions.

The main categories of stakeholders are young people, youth workers, managers, organisations that provide youth work, public administration and politicians. However, even if these different stakeholders can play different roles and take part in different steps in your process, there is a serious risk of losing both vital perspectives and credibility if one or more of them is not at all engaged in the process of quality development.

If you are part of a public administration, you will most probably want everybody concerned to take part. If you are a small youth organisation which is primarily focused on improving your own internal work, it might not be necessary to have all these people involved. On the other hand, your opportunities to get funding might increase if, for example, politicians are invited to take part in your process.

You might, however, ask yourself why we want all these people to be involved. The answer is quite simple: even if youth work has some common principles, see Section 2.4.2, it looks very different depending on where it takes place, how it is done and what form it takes. It is also the case that different young people with different living conditions have different needs and interests and that the societies they live in are organised in different ways.

This context, in turn, is shaped by, and shapes, the people we have just mentioned, their ideas and their needs. Politicians shape it by deciding what the aims should be and public administrators do so by providing funding. Providers – municipalities or NGOs – shape it through their structures and ways of organising work. Managers shape it by the way they lead. Youth workers shape it through their competence and the methods they use. Last but not least: young people shape it through their needs, interests and their engagement in youth work.

Live story:

In 2004 the national government of Luxembourg developed a tool for the documentation of local youth work. However, youth organisations felt that this tool did not adequately support quality development. So, as a response to the national tool, the City of Luxembourg in 2010, in cooperation with local youth organisations, developed a simple system called Journal de Bord. This system was easier for youth workers to use and was perceived by them to be making a better contribution to quality development for the local organisations. A couple of years later the Journal de Bord was incorporated into the national quality tool. In this way cooperation between national and local level contributed to the on-going process of improving tools for quality development.

All these different interests and perspectives provoke questions that are important to discuss if you want to improve youth work:

- are the aims clear and relevant?
- is the funding sufficient and distributed in an efficient way?
- is work organised in an efficient way?
- do the managers give youth workers appropriate support and guidance?
- do youth workers have the right competences and appropriate methods?
- does youth work reach young people and meet their needs and interests?

The competence of youth workers is, as stated above, often referred to as being central to the quality of youth work. However, competent youth workers will never be able to use their full capacity if the aims they are supposed to achieve are unclear, unrealistic or irrelevant, if the resources are insufficient, if work is disorganised or badly led, if they do not have the right methods and access to relevant support. Further, youth work will not be recognisable, and hence recognised, if not everybody who is engaged in it in all the different ways has a common understanding of what good youth work actually is. Quality development should have a holistic perspective and take all relevant perspectives and interests into account.

Taken together this means that the questions 'what is good youth work' and 'what would make it better' produce the most relevant answers, if these are formulated together by all those concerned.

Moreover, society, and thus the needs and interests of young people, is constantly changing. Who talked about youth work and social media 15 years ago? Who knows what we will be talking about 15 years from now? Youth work has to adapt to these changes if it is to be able to give adequate support to young people. Not working on quality development is in fact a sure way of falling behind. It leads to a waste of both money and human resources and to young people not getting the support they deserve. To keep up with the changes the perspectives of all stakeholders are needed!

This does not mean that it is automatically necessary for all the stakeholders to take part in all the steps in the process. A facilitator might, for example, do a lot of the preparation, and the participation of politicians might be most important in the beginning, when the aims of the project are set, and at the end, when decisions are to be taken.

Together, in different roles and positions, the stakeholders you choose will form a 'team' for quality development. It is, however, also important to ensure that these different team members can represent their category; that their ideas and opinions are not only their own personal ones but actually reflect the ideas and opinions of their peers. This is crucial to the credibility of your results and also to the implementation of them. If your process is transparent and it is possible for all the different groups of stakeholders to influence it, they will have a sense of ownership, and will support implementation instead of being suspicious of something that they feel is coming top-down or is beyond their control.

Discuss:

- **Which stakeholders are important to have in our team and how should we recruit them?**
- **Should we have a facilitator and, if so, who should it be?**

Watch out!

Working in a small team is often easier than working in a big one, but;

- as your work might affect the politically set aims for youth work and you want your work to last beyond the date of the next election, it might be wise to have different political views represented in your team.
- being the only young person in a group of adults might be both hard and rather unattractive and, moreover, young people are not a homogenous group. Organised young people and young people who are not organised, for instance, often have different needs, interest and perspectives, and gender issues will also be important in your future discussions. If you are a youth organisation, this is, of course, not relevant, but for other groups it is wise to have at least two young people in the team.
- people leave or get new assignments. If possible, try to make your team members have stand-ins who are well informed about the process.

1.2.2. How to get the 'team' together

Who can initiate a process of quality development and what is needed to get the different stakeholders on board?

How you assemble your team might, of course, vary depending on who is initiating this process and asking people to join. If you are, for example, a mayor with both power and resources at your disposal, it might be quite easy. If you are a small youth organisation without many resources and contacts, it might be much harder. But, regardless of who you are, you must understand what motives would attract the participation of different stakeholders and what would scare or prevent them from joining, their pros and cons. This might of course vary, but below you will find some common reactions that you might meet. Being aware of, and understanding, these reactions will help you to approach your future team members in the best possible manner.

Example:

Some different reactions might be:

The young person

Positive: I will have more and better youth work.

Positive: I will have influence and learn new skills.

Negative: Old people never listen. Meetings are boring.

The youth worker

Positive: I will be able to show the outcomes of my work and be better understood by others.

Positive: I will have a chance to discuss my work with the people taking decisions.

Negative: I already know what I am doing, this is just a trick to control me.

The manager

Positive: This will create common aims and a common understanding that makes it easier to lead.

Negative: I am busy enough as it is. I do not have time for this.

The provider

Positive: This will enhance my opportunities for getting appropriate funding.

Negative: It is better to spend money on the training of youth workers.

Negative: I might have to make a lot of changes that will create turbulence and complaints.

The politician

Positive: I will be able to spend public money in a more efficient way.

Positive: I will be more able to justify spending money on youth work.

Negative: This might cost a lot of money that we do not have. It is better to not sanction this process.

In most countries and municipalities there are policies that refer to the importance of young people and their rights to meaningful activities and equal possibilities. There are also a lot of documents at European level that governments have signed, and that state the importance of youth work and the need to develop it further. (You will find some of them in the appendix.) If someone is reluctant to join your team, pointing kindly to these documents and what they state about youth work might do the trick. Mentioning the risk of 'falling behind' and being out-dated might also, in some cases, function as a wake-up signal.

Discuss:

- **What other pros and cons could there be for different stakeholders?**
- **Are there any win-win situations that would attract different stakeholders?**

Watch out!

In order to get the best possible team it is sometimes best to ask categories of stakeholders, e.g. politicians, to choose their representatives, whereas other times it is better to ask specific individuals. Which way you choose must depend on your contacts with different stakeholders and your knowledge about them.

You might be very good at recruiting team members but still fail to get a full team. Somebody is for some reason missing. You then have to decide if you should go on or try again later, but even if you took the initiative, do not make this decision on your own – make it a team decision. When you discuss this, keep in mind that starting the process might create just the pressure needed to get the missing people on board.

1.3. How to create an atmosphere that promotes development

Successful quality development becomes much easier if you have the right atmosphere – but what characterises this and how is it achieved?

Various stakeholders have different backgrounds and an invitation to a 'meeting' is likely to put them in different moods because of their different experiences and expectations. But, what particular mood they are in is of vital importance for their future involvement in the process. So before starting the actual work you have to think about what atmosphere you want to create and how to do this in such a diverse 'team'.

In order to have a good process, to keep the team together and working in an efficient way, you want the team members to have attitudes that promote development. You most probably want them to be:

- curious;
- open-minded;
- humble;
- constructively critical;
- more interested in saying what they do not know than demonstrating what they do know;
- more interested in asking questions than giving answers;
- aware that no one knows better, but that you know different things;
- focused on solutions, not on who provides them.

In summary, development takes place in a culture of mutual learning and the best way to contribute to that is to ask relevant questions. In theory your team members are bound to agree on this, but in practice it is easy to forget. In order to ensure that there is a good atmosphere, the first step must therefore be to discuss these attitudes in the team – to make them visible and to make it possible for these attitudes to be commented on in future discussions.

An important part of these discussions is also to make sure that all ideas and opinions are heard and that all team members feel that their contributions are equally important and valuable. A team is not a team unless everyone has an active role to play, and young people are quite often used as hostages in discussions run by adults. The first step in avoiding this is to make the risk evident; the second step is to discuss how this can be avoided. The answer is most probably to decide to use some method for holding democratic meetings such as rounds. You will find more examples if you follow the link in the appendix (under 5.5).

On the basis of this discussion make sure the team members agree to (as an example):

- treat each other as equals;
- trust each other;
- never argue on the basis of authority, only on the basis of your case;
- always argue about opinions, never about people;
- not put words in someone else's mouth;
- not interrupt;
- not make speeches.

Also perhaps to:

- give others credit and positive feedback;
- actively ask for critical reflections on own remarks;
- use rounds when starting a new discussion.

In order to create the right spirit and to avoid disappointment it is also important to discuss the expectations that each team member has about the process, their motives for participating and the opportunities and risks they foresee. In order to have a successful process you need to create common and realistic expectations. As you will see when you read Chapter 2 'Establishing common ground for quality development', quality development takes both time and effort. It is important that your team is aware of this right from the start and that they are prepared to invest in the process.

Discuss:

- **What is a good way to introduce yourself in a team like this? Is telling each other what you are curious about and what you expect to learn during the process a good idea?**
- **What opportunities and risks do you foresee? A good idea is to make a common SWOT analysis.**

Watch out!

The memory list below will hopefully be of some help in these discussions or may inspire the team to create its own version.

As a young person, remember:

- Older people do not know better than you – they simply know different things.
- Your knowledge is relevant – if nobody asks for it, tell them anyway.

As a grown up, remember:

- Being seventeen today is different than it was seventeen years ago – your experience is out-dated.
- Your own children are fantastic – but they are not representative.

As a youth worker, remember:

- Do not speak on behalf of young people – they can speak for themselves.

As a manager, remember:

- You are not in charge.

As a provider, remember:

- You are not here to defend your organisation and/or its performance – you are here to improve it.

As a civil servant, remember:

- You are not here to defend existing regulations and routines – you are here to help improve them.

As a politician, remember:

- Politics is about vision and change – the ability to change your opinion is an asset.

As a facilitator, remember:

- Do not stand in the centre – your place is in the background.
- Do not give answers – ask questions.

As a participant, remember:

- You have a right and an obligation to fully understand what is said and what it means – keep asking until you do.

1.4. How to arrange the meetings and design the process

One thing that profoundly affects the atmosphere in your team, and thus your ability to create a good result that everybody can be proud of, is where and how the meetings are held. So how should this be handled?

Your team members are used to different environments and where you choose to hold the meetings will therefore affect their spirit and behaviour. For a young person the city hall conference room might feel very stiff and scary, whereas sitting in a sofa at the youth centre might make a politician just as uncomfortable. This has to be discussed within the team.

Live story:

In Amsterdam, the Netherlands, when developing Youthwise, the location of the meetings with the stakeholders rotated. Meetings were held in several youth centres and in the city hall. Visits to the different locations made each environment clear and enabled discussions about the locations. During these visits youth workers often gave inspiring presentations of the work done in the youth centre.

Whatever solution you choose, be aware that there is always a balance between structured efficiency and vivid creativity and that, in this case, both sides have to be taken into account. Being relaxed and focused at the same time is not always easy.

Discuss:

Where does the team want to have its meetings? One possible solution is to try and find a neutral place for the first meeting that is neither too formal nor too informal. Another one is to do what they did in the above example: let the different stakeholders invite their teammates to their respective arenas, act as hosts and give a short presentation about the place.

Equally important is the way the meetings are organised. The balance between efficiency and having an open and creative climate is affected by how formal you make the meetings, but at the same time there are many ways to create a structure or procedures that enhance creativity.

Discuss:

- **Do you need a chairperson for the meetings and what does it mean and take to hold that position? Should this position rotate among the team members or is this the role of the facilitator, if you have one?**
- **Who should take notes and what should be in them? Is this going to rotate among the team members? A facilitator cannot facilitate and take notes at the same time.**
- **How long should the meetings be and how often should you take breaks if you want to be able to concentrate?**
- **What is your expected timetable and what will you do if you cannot keep to it?**
- **How should you structure your discussion? Or should you? Should you use rounds or some other method in order to make sure everybody's voice is heard?**
- **How will you handle it if someone is absent or leaves the team?**
- **How will you ensure that everybody feels comfortable and satisfied with the process, how will you do your follow-up? Rounds after each meeting, questionnaires or some other way?**
- **Should you do any social activities together in order to strengthen the team spirit?**

There is a lot of literature on how to hold good meetings where everybody feels that their ideas and opinions are listened to and taken into account. If you feel uncertain or need some practical methods, please see the link in the appendix under 5.5 'Methods for democratic meetings'.

It will take some time to discuss all these things before starting the actual work, but less time than it takes to discuss them when problems occur, and discussion will also contribute to the feeling that the process is commonly owned.

If you are used to more formal meetings focused on administrative decision-making, do not underestimate the social aspect of this more creative form of meetings and the need to constantly ensure that everybody is on board and happy about the way things progress. In order to promote the perspective of mutual learning you could, for example, introduce Youthpass at your first meeting and make the discussions about what you have learned become a regular feature in your meetings. (Youthpass is a method for recognising non-formal learning. You will find more information at www.youthpass.eu).

In the list of questions to discuss above there is nothing about how you should make decisions. The reason for this, which also has to be discussed in the team, is that since this is a learning process you will gain new knowledge and perspectives as you go along. It is therefore important that you, at the end of the process, go back and revise what you did in the beginning in the light of these new insights. It is therefore good advice not to finalise the different parts before the whole work is done.

Building a system for quality development is a process in many steps. As you can see in the detailed table of contents, there are three sections describing different kinds of indicators. Do not let this frighten you. If you feel that the process will be too long, you can always decide to save some steps for later. Systems for quality development are rarely complete at the beginning, but are developed over a longer period of time. However, when designing your process, it is better not to decide in advance how many steps to take, and instead see how it goes and decide this when you have gained some more experience in this kind of work. If you then decide to skip some steps, or to take them later, you will also have better knowledge of what will be missing in your system.

Given these different options it is hard to say how long you will need for your process. In the end this will be determined by how often the different stakeholders can and want to meet, how long the meetings are and how much work is done between them. A process lasting less than six months is, however, likely to be too short to have a good and wellgrounded outcome.

Live story:

ERYICA, the European network for youth information centres, has developed a self-assessment tool with and for its members. In the process of developing the tool the role of the facilitator turned out to be very important. The facilitator guided the whole process and helped the members to establish a common ground in terms of principles and features, which was a very important basis for the process of developing the tool.

When designing the process you must also make clear how you, as a team, want to use this handbook – do you want to go through it, hold all the discussions and do all the exercises before starting work, or do you want to work step by step after going through each chapter? There are a lot of things to keep in mind, so the latter is probably better for most of you, but we are all different.

Discuss:

- **How do you want to read the handbook as individual team members?**
- **How do you want to make use of the handbook as a team?**
- **Should you do some homework (read a chapter, talk to colleagues, etc.) between the meetings?**
- **Are there any other sources you want to use for inspiration and knowledge?**

Watch out!

The climate in your team and relationships between the members will change as you go along and get to know each other better. This will generally have positive effects, but be aware of the risk that some members might form alliances or sub-groups and create loyalties to each other. This will immediately make others feel shut out and have negative consequences for the open atmosphere and the willingness to give and receive necessary constructive criticism. If you feel that there are such tendencies, bring this into the open and discuss why there seem to be entrenched divisions within the team.

2. ESTABLISHING COMMON GROUND FOR QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Introduction – what do we mean by 'quality'?

What do we mean when we say that something is good, that it is of high quality, and how do we judge it?

This question is essential when you are working together as a team and trying to agree on the elements that characterise good youth work.

One way to answer it is that we, in a more or less aware way, use a set of criteria. What does this look like in practice? Let us leave aside youth work and take a totally different example: the quality of a pair of jeans. What possible criteria could be applicable when you are going to buy a pair of jeans? Here are some suggestions:

- fashion;
- durability;
- fitting – tight, medium or loose;
- model, e.g. number and sort of pockets;
- brand;
- price – high price might be a negative, if you are poor, or positive, if you want to boast;
- sustainability – ecological fabric and produced under good working conditions.

Now have a look at the pictures below.

Which of these jeans are of high quality? Is one pair of higher quality than the other? The answer is, of course, that it is impossible to say. The quality is totally dependent on what you want the jeans for – leisure or hard work. This, and your basic values, will determine which criteria you use to make a decision and how you prioritise them.

Quality could therefore be defined as how functional something is in relation to what you want to achieve in a certain context.

This is, of course, relevant for quality development. The aims and the context should determine what criteria you set up for good youth work, because, as you can see, some people would improve the quality of their jeans by making them look worn out, others by repairing the worn-out parts.

To continue the example: if you are buying jeans for yourself, you evaluate these criteria more or less intuitively. If you are a parent buying jeans with a child, it is likely that all of them have to be carefully assessed and prioritised. The conflict between the different criteria you might face, for example between price and durability, will also occur when you choose criteria for youth work. It is therefore necessary not only to formulate criteria but also to decide which of them are the most important, to set your priorities.

This also explains why quality development should involve everybody concerned. Setting quality criteria for youth work intuitively within a group of youth workers, which is the way it is often done, could be compared to the situation in which you buy jeans for your children. If you do not bring them along, there is a high risk that you come home with a pair of jeans that fits neither their size, nor their perception of what jeans should look like.

Exercise:

Now try to do the same thing, as a group, i.e. formulate a set of possible criteria for something else. What are, for example, the possible criteria you would use to determine whether a youth centre facility is good or not?

2.2. What is an indicator and why do we need them?

The basis for quality development is to formulate indicators, so what is an indicator and how can they be developed?

You might say that indicators are the criteria you choose as being significant to quality. An indicator is consequently something that is a sign of or characterises good youth work. Just as we found in the case with the jeans in the previous chapter, the particular indicators that are relevant depend on the context. If the context is "open and spontaneous activities at a youth centre", you will have one set of indicators; if the context is "the board of a youth organisation", you will have another. Some of the indicators in these sets are most likely to be the same, but others will definitely vary. A clear definition of the context is a necessary starting point for formulating indicators.

The function of indicators is to be points of reference in relation to which reality can be compared, analysed and assessed. They make it possible to determine how good youth work is. When we are improving youth work, we need indicators as a common frame of reference. Otherwise we will have no common ground to start from and will be stuck in endless discussions based on personal opinions.

Live story:

In Greece and Portugal youth work is often done on a voluntary basis by youth organisations and others. In order to get support for their work from different authorities they are often asked to use evaluation tools such as questionnaires to measure the results, e.g. the experiences of the target groups. These tools offer some help in analysing their work, but they would help a lot more in the development of the organisation if they were used in a more systematic way in a quality circle based on indicators.

The basic method for developing indicators is posing questions that aim to identify the main criteria that characterise the subject matter at hand. What criteria would, for example, show that your activities are based on voluntary and active responsibility? Your answers to this define what it means to you in your context. (You will find an example of this in Section 3.2.1).

In other words this means that formulating indicators builds on thorough analysis and reflection, a striving to find the core elements of something by looking at it from different perspectives. Formulating indicators is a way to clarify the different parts or elements that together form or constitute, for example, 'voluntary and active responsibility'. This also means that there is no uniform, pre-set method for doing this, no simple step-by-step path to follow – formulating indicators requires critical reflection and analysis and is best learned through training. Hopefully the different examples in this handbook give a good illustration of how the reflective process can be carried out.

The above statements do not imply that you cannot do good youth work if you do not have indicators. They just say that you could neither show nor prove it, nor know whether the quality had improved or not.

2.3. The youth work context and its different dimensions

If indicators are to be useful, they must relate to a specific context, so how can we define the youth work context?

First of all, and perhaps self-evidently, the context is the form of youth work concerned. It might, for example, be:

- a youth centre running open drop-in activities;
- a youth project with a specific aim [1].

The more precise you can be in defining the context, the easier it will be to find the relevant indicators. It is also important to keep in mind that, for example, a youth centre might have space for both spontaneous visits and activities, and specific groups of young people working together towards a common goal, and that these different forms of activities will require, at least partially, different indicators. The same goes for activities within the board of a youth organisation and the projects run by different groups of members. It might, therefore, be necessary for you to reflect on whether an indicator should be used in relation to the total context, such as a youth centre, or only to a specific activity within it, such as a project, or indeed to both.

Keep in mind that your answers to these questions should be preliminary and that, when you feel ready, you will need to go back and check whether the indicators you have formulated apply to one or more of the forms of youth work that you might have discussed.

However, the youth work context also has other dimensions. Besides the practice, which takes place in different forms, the context also covers:

- preconditions
- work processes
- outcomes.

Preconditions are everything that is, or should be, on hand as a basis for work. Examples of preconditions are: youth work policy and objectives, ethical guidelines, and youth worker competence.

Work processes are the ways different work tasks are managed. Examples of work processes are:

- processes for setting objectives;
- processes for holding a structured dialogue with young people;
- processes for discussing and making visible non-formal learning [2].

[1] For a list of different forms of youth work, please see Section 5.2.3, 'Different forms of youth work'.

[2] For definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning, please see Section 5.2.6, 'Formal, non-formal and informal learning'.

Outcomes should be divided into two different categories:

Quantitative outputs are the directly quantifiable results generated by youth work. Examples of quantitative outputs are:

- number of participants
- gender balance
- number of activity hours
- cost per participant and activity hour.

Qualitative effects are the things that actually affect young people when they take part in youth work. Examples of qualitative effects are:

- perceived experiences/feelings, e.g. of being viewed as a valuable person;
- changed attitudes, e.g. to immigrants;
- developed transversal skills, e.g. ability to cooperate [(3)];
- developed hard skills, e.g. ability to cook;
- gained knowledge, e.g. about the EU.

The fact that something is a qualitative effect does not mean that it cannot be measured and assessed. Young people's attitudes to, for example, drugs, are often measured and analysed in order to better understand their actions. It is also well known that positive experiences, such as being viewed as a valuable person, change our way of looking at ourselves and society and our way of acting. These experiences and perceptions are possible effects of youth work and could also be measured, and, in a second stage, enhanced.

Discuss:

- **Are there other examples of important preconditions? Give some examples!**
- **Are there other examples of important work processes? Give some examples!**
- **Do you agree with the statement that qualitative effects such as the ones mentioned above can be measured? Why do you think it is important to measure them?**

The quality of youth work depends on all these factors and, if it is to be improved, all of them must be taken into consideration. This means that you might have to formulate quite a lot of different indicators before you have a complete quality system. Fortunately, some of them will come rather easily when you begin working. And, as stated earlier, the creation of a complete set of indicators must be seen and managed as a long-term process, a task to be achieved in a step-by-step process with enough time for discussion and reflection.

Keep this discussion in mind, because there are some other things you have to talk about before you formulate your first indicator.

[3] Key competences for lifelong learning (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32006H0962).

2.4. Establishing common ground – what is youth work to us?

What do we mean when we say 'youth work', and what principles should guide it if it is to be successful?

2.4.1. Definitions of youth work and youth worker

Unlike 'school' the term 'youth work' is understood differently in different parts of the youth work sector, in different countries in the European Union and in different languages. In some countries the term 'youth work' does not even exist.

However, to a large extent, this does not matter – you will define what youth work means to you by formulating what criteria are crucial, the indicators.

Live story:
In Malta youth work is developing and becoming more structured. Supported by and defined in a new policy on youth work (2015-2020) it has become acknowledged as a form of work, and youth worker an official profession. Because of this lots of bigger and smaller initiatives have been started over the last few years. However, there is still a need and a drive for further improvement and the gaining of new insights through peer learning and the exchange of good practices.

However, a common starting point and some delimitation are necessary if your discussion is not going to be too complicated. You need common ground if your work is to be successful. The common ground for developing youth work presented in this handbook is based on the definitions below and core principles formulated by the European Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States. This common ground consists of three parts:

- a definition of youth work;
- a definition of youth worker;
- the principles that must guide youth work if it is to be successful.

Youth work is defined as:

'Actions directed towards young people regarding activities where they take part voluntarily, designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning' [(4)].

It is important to note that this definition is independent of which body or organisation is funding, governing, organising or delivering the actual activity and of the setting and circumstances in which it is taking place.

So what kind of actions are we talking about? They are of course all the different forms of youth work, from youth centres

[4] *Quality Youth Work – A common framework for the further development of youth work.* Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, 2015. See Section 5.5.

to detached youth work, but they are also the formulation of youth work policy and the models that are set up for funding youth organisations. They are the actions taken to give young people the means they need to interact with society in a constructive way and to gradually gain autonomy.

Discuss:

- **What other kind of actions would you describe as youth work?**
- **Are there forms of youth work other than those mentioned above?**
- **What actions directed towards young people are not youth work in accordance with this definition?**

Youth workers are defined as:

'People working in direct contact with young people, carrying out activities designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning' [(5)].

This means that youth workers might be professionals or volunteers and be civil servants or work for NGOs.

It also means that not all youth work is necessarily done by youth workers. The design of funding systems for youth organisations is one example of youth work that is not usually carried out by youth workers. However, the quality of these funding systems is of course vital to the overall quality of youth work.

The above definitions apply to all the different forms of youth work and also draw a line between youth work and other actions directed towards young people such as sport and cultural activities. The definition of who a young person is, the age limits, varies throughout Europe.

For more information about the above definitions, please see Section 5.2.

Discuss:

- **Is the majority of youth work in your organisation and country done by paid or voluntary youth workers? What are the pros and cons of this?**
- **Is the majority of youth work in your organisation and country provided by NGOs or by municipal youth workers?**
- **Are young people who organise activities for their peers youth workers? If not, why not?**
- **Can you give examples of youth work that is not done by youth workers?**

[5] *Quality Youth Work – A common framework for the further development of youth work.* Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, 2015. See Section 5.5.

2.4.2. The core principles of youth work

The definitions of youth work and youth worker set the limits of what we might call youth work. However, and just as important, within these limits we also have to state the principles that should guide youth work if it is to enhance personal and social development, i.e. if it is to be successful.

The list below of core principles for youth work was formulated by the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States. (For more information please see the appendix under 5.5.) These principles state that youth work should:

1. be perceived as being attractive, bringing added value or joy in life;
2. respond to the needs, interests and experiences of young people as perceived by themselves;
3. be actively inclusive; reach out to and welcome all groups of young people;
4. be based on young people's voluntary and active participation, engagement and responsibility;
5. have a holistic perspective and meet young people as capable individuals and resources;
6. enhance young people's rights, personal and social development and autonomy;
7. be designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people;
8. be based on non-formal and informal learning;
9. have a visible learning perspective and design its activities in accordance with clear learning objectives that are relevant to the young people participating.

These core principles are closely connected to each other and together they form a whole that enables youth work to be successful and to reach its full potential. The cornerstone on which they stand is the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocols, stating every young person's right to equality and personal dignity. (You will find links to both these documents in the appendix under 5.5.)

You could say that fulfilling the core principles is what makes youth work become youth work! This, in turn, makes it the core target for quality development – the better youth work is at meeting the core principles, the more it will contribute to the personal and social development of young people. Fulfilling the core principles could be seen as the overall aim of youth work.

In order to establish common ground these core principles do, of course, have to be discussed. What do they mean to the different stakeholders? How do they apply to their reality? These discussions are in fact the first and most important step in making youth work better, they are the stepping stones for quality development. It is through discussing what, for example, 'participation' or 'responsibility' means in your context that you will be able to formulate your most important and basic indicators – the ones on youth work practice. Once you have these, the rest of your job on preconditions, work processes and outcomes will become much easier. This is why the next chapter, 'Developing indicators and tools to gather information', starts with indicators related to the core principles, and all the discussions you need to have about that.

Live story:

In the City of Tartu, Estonia, a process of quality development started with a discussion of the principles of youth work. Each suggested principle was discussed in a meeting with all the stakeholders. At the same time common standards were also discussed. The outcome of these meetings was the establishment of a common ground consisting of principles and standards.

Before that, there are some more things you need to talk about.

2.4.3. Core features of youth work

Besides the core principles there are some other things that are vital to good youth work – some features that must be present if you are to be able to fulfil the core principles. Some possible examples of these are:

- safety – young people must feel safe if they are to take part in youth work;
- accessibility – youth work must be accessible to all young people if it is to be able to fulfil its function;
- flexibility – youth work ought not to become so 'institutionalised' that it cannot respond to the changing needs and interests of young people;
- challenges – in order to make young people aware of unknown opportunities and widen their horizons.

In order to develop the quality of youth work it is also important to formulate indicators on these core features. We will discuss what this means and how it could be achieved in Section 3.2.2.

Discuss:

Are there any other features that you think are crucial to youth work, things that must characterise it if it is to be successful?

Watch out!

Having come this far there is one problem or difficulty you will inevitably face and that you need to be aware of – the difficulty of deciding whether something is a core feature, a precondition or an outcome.

In this handbook we have, for example, chosen to regard safety as a core feature, but it could also be seen as a precondition or an outcome. There must be a certain level of safety if young people are to attend youth work activities, which makes it a precondition. On the other hand, youth work might lead to increased safety, which makes it an outcome. Reality is never one-dimensional and it all depends on which perspective you use.

The way we have treated it is a suggestion, not a rule. What you choose will depend on your perspective. It is, however, important that you are aware of this difficulty and discuss how you should handle it in each separate case before making a decision. When you have your list of indicators, the most important thing will not be what you call them but how you prioritise them, an exercise that could end in you finding them equally important.

2.5. To remember before you start

Quality development never takes place in a vacuum, neither does youth work – so what do you need to consider before starting?

2.5.1. How to handle already existing aims and objectives

First of all there will most likely be existing aims and objectives that you will have to take into consideration.

These might not all be specific to youth work or clear or well formulated, that is, their quality might differ. Nevertheless they have to be handled so that you do not end up with two separate, and perhaps contradictory, sets of aims where one of them is connected to indicators and the other is not.

There are, of course, different ways to do this, but handling these existing aims is easier if you have gone through the process of discussing the core principles and are used to formulating indicators. If you save this step in the process till last, it might also reveal that you have covered some of these aims in your previous discussion and therefore have saved yourselves some work.

If some of the existing aims are not covered, the process of handling them is the same as the one you can read about in Section 3.2. If you want to start working with your existing aims, or if this is what you want to focus on, please go to Section 3.2 and follow the process described there.

2.5.2. How to handle quality issues that are not specific to youth work

In this handbook we deal with indicators that are specific to youth work. The success of youth work, however, will also depend on the quality of such things as working conditions and the handling of information. In order to enhance the overall quality of youth work indicators related to these more general issues might also be needed.

In order to have a well-functioning organisation you might therefore also want to formulate indicators regarding, for example:

- the gathering of external knowledge and information;
- the dissemination of external knowledge and information to youth work;
- contacts and cooperation with other actors;
- external knowledge about youth work and its activities;
- working conditions.

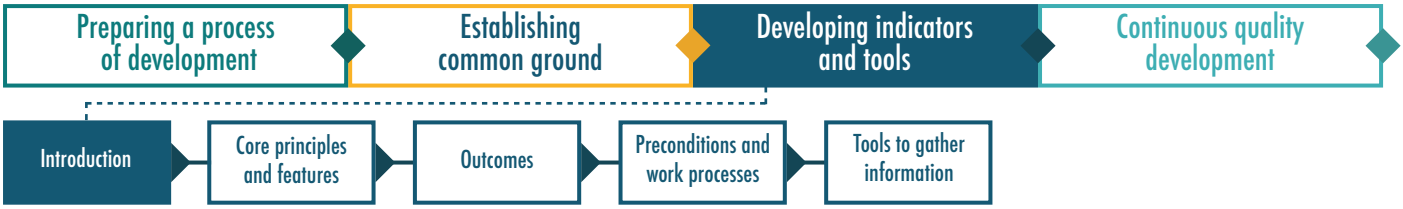
If you want to start working on these kinds of issues or if this is what you want to focus on, please go to Section 3.2 and follow the process described there, as it is fully applicable to these issues as well.

Exercise:

Find out what existing policy documents and aims you will have to take into consideration and see if they contain aims or objectives that you have to deal with.

Discuss:

- **What other more general aspects are important to your ability to improve youth work?**
- **Are there some of these that would benefit from indicators?**



3. DEVELOPING INDICATORS AND TOOLS TO GATHER INFORMATION

3.1. Introduction

What does it take to develop indicators, how could they be measured and how does this relate to aims and objectives?

'Indicators', just like 'participation', is a word that is often understood in different ways and associated with different experiences. To avoid confusion the above questions need to have an answer before the first indicator is formulated.

3.1.1. Indicators and their relation to methods of gathering information

Now it is time to start working on the indicators! Because of this, the handbook will, from here on, have a slightly different character and go into more detail. This, in turn, will require a more thorough reading, and it would therefore be a good idea to take your time so you get it right from the start. If you do this, you will have both a challenging and an exciting process ahead of you.

If you have not worked with indicators before, it is at this stage that you would have most use of a facilitator; someone who has had training on working with indicators and tools for quality development and who, at the same time, could lead a process such as this.

There are five main areas in relation to which you could formulate indicators:

- the core principles
- core features
- outcomes
- preconditions
- work processes.

The basic method for developing indicators is posing questions that are aimed at identifying the main criteria that characterise the subject matter at hand. What criteria would, for example, show that your activities are 'based on participation'? Your answers to this define what participation means to you in your context.

When deciding on these indicators it is necessary, at the same time, to decide what method should be used in order to assess whether, or to what degree, you have achieved them or not. Indicators whose achievement or degree of achievement cannot be assessed in any certain way will not give you any guidance as to what to improve and are hence useless.

Doing it this way will, at the same time, help you to make the indicators precise enough. The most common mistake when formulating indicators is to make them too general or abstract. If you, for example, take as an indicator for participation that 'young people feel listened to and contribute with opinions', you will not be able to use this e.g. in a questionnaire, as young people might feel listened to but still not contribute their opinions and therefore not know what to answer. The word 'and' is therefore not to be used when formulating indicators. It is also important to avoid words and expressions that are too abstract and could be interpreted in different ways. 'Democratic meetings' [(6)] is a good example of such an expression and should therefore be treated in the same way as 'participation', that is, be broken down into different indicators. Indicators have to be as concrete as possible if they are to provide a solid ground for development.

The first question to ask when you have a proposal for an indicator is therefore 'How could we see to what degree we meet this indicator?' Depending on the indicator there are different ways to gather this information:

- through the gathering of statistics;
- through questionnaires to young people;
- through structured dialogue or focus groups with young people;
- through questionnaires to youth workers;
- through structured observations and assessments by young people;
- through structured observations and assessments made by staff;
- through external observations and assessment.

Different methods will be suitable for different indicators related to the same 'theme'. Youth participation could, for example, be related to quantitative outputs and to indicators on the percentage of young people who take an active part in delivering activities. This would mean using methods to gather statistics.

Indicators on participation could also be related to the different steps in a participatory process, a process where young people take an active role in designing, delivering and evaluating youth work activities. This could, in turn, be investigated both through observations and by asking the young people who are participating. This would require methods used for observations or questionnaires for young people.

Youth participation could also be examined in relation to indicators describing how an activity should be perceived by young people, for example, they should feel that they are the ones responsible for the process. This would require methods used for structured dialogue with, or questionnaires for, young people.

The more different kinds of indicators you have, the more nuanced your picture of participation will be. This will, in turn, improve your chances of enhancing it.

[6] www.democracy.se/category/en07/en07mtd

Example:

Different methods for following up on indicators can give very different results and some of them are more reliable than others. During an evaluation of youth work in a rather big Swedish city two different questionnaires were used: one for youth workers and another for young people taking part in youth work. One question asked whether the activities were based on young people's active participation, which was an important part of the local youth work policy. 82% of the youth workers thought that this was the case. The corresponding figure, when young people were asked if they participated in delivering activities, was 53%. As young people are likely to know if they participate or not and do not have a policy to live up to, the latter figure is likely to be more credible. At least the difference between them should provoke some analysis and reflection.

Discuss:

- **Which methods would give the most reliable and useful information:**
  - **when trying to find out how young people perceive activities?**
  - **when trying to find out what steps in the participatory process young people take part in?**
  - **when finding out actual gender balance?**
- **What are the pros and cons of the different methods?**

When you have your set of indicators and have decided on what methods you want to use, you will have to find appropriate tools for these methods. We will come back to this in Section 3.5, but do not worry – there are ways of solving this fairly easily.

Watch out!

The more indicators you have, the more information you will have to gather, but there is a limit. Too many indicators will require too much work to be done gathering information and might also lead to discussions that are so detailed that you risk losing the overall perspective. Therefore, keep the wording 'main criteria' in mind.

3.1.2. Indicators and their relation to aims and objectives

Before going on, to avoid confusion, it is important that we clarify the relation between indicators and terms such as aims, targets, objectives and goals. These terms are used differently in different countries and organisations but as long as it is clear what they cover and do not cover, and they do not overlap, no one way is better than another.

In this handbook they mean the following:

Aims are what you want to achieve on a long-term and more general basis. Examples of aims for youth work are:

- young people's personal development;
- young people's active participation.

In order to make clear what an aim actually means it should be linked to one or more indicators.

Targets, Objectives or Goals are what you want to achieve over a specific time period and could be used in some way to see whether you have achieved it or not. In this handbook we use the term objectives.

This means that objectives are descriptions of the degree to which reality should correspond to the indicators at a given point in time, and are usually set on a yearly basis. Below are two examples of what this might look like in practice.

Taking the example of young people's participation in evaluation ('Youth work should be designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people') this might mean:

Aim: Youth work is evaluated together with young people.

Indicator: Young people take an active part in evaluation.
Objective: 50% of young people taking part in youth work should be taking part in the evaluation.

Indicator: Young people are well informed about the background and purpose of the evaluation.
Objective: Youth workers have informed young people about the background and purpose of the evaluation at every evaluation event.

Indicator: Young people feel listened to during the evaluation process.
Objective: 80% of young people taking part in evaluation agree with the statement 'I have been listened to during the evaluation process'.

Taking the example of active inclusiveness ('Youth work should be actively inclusive; reach out to and welcome all groups of young people') this might mean:

Aim: Youth work is actively inclusive.

Indicator: Young people know about their opportunities to take part in youth work.
Objective: 90% of the target group agree with the statement 'I have been informed about the youth work offer'.

Indicator: Youth work reaches different groups of young people.
Objective: The percentage of different groups taking part in youth work should be the same as in the surrounding society.

Indicator: All groups of young people feel equally welcome to take part in youth work activities.
Objective: Different groups of young people (age, gender, etc.) agree to an equal degree with the statement 'I have been actively welcomed to take part in youth work'.
Objective: Different groups of young people (age, gender, etc.) agree to an equal degree with the statement 'I have not been harassed (by other young people, by youth workers) while taking part in youth work.

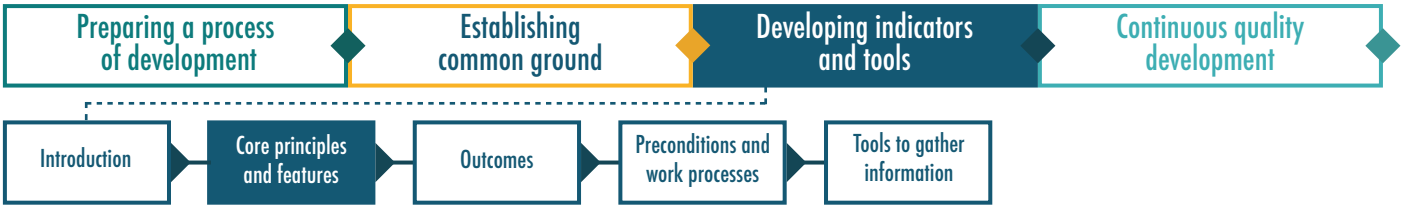
To summon up: Indicators describe criteria that are important to the quality of youth work, objectives describe the degree to which these criteria should be met. In this Chapter 3 on developing indicators and tools to gather information we will not discuss how to set objectives; this will instead be discussed in Chapter 4, 'Working with continuous quality development'.

Discuss:

- **What terms do you use in your organisation? Are they clear and do they not overlap?**
- **Do you need to develop your terminology to ensure that you have a clear process for quality development?**

Watch out!

Sometimes the terminology in youth policy documents does not fit very well with youth work and might be hard to change because of the interests of other sectors, e.g. the formal education sector. You should of course argue for a clear policy on youth work as part of a more general youth policy, but if you cannot use the terminology you want in official documents, be sure to word and structure your own material in a way that makes clear the difference between aims, indicators and objectives.



3.2. Indicators on the core principles and core features of youth work

Do you have a common understanding of youth participation and the other core principles, and thus a solid ground for developing the quality of preconditions and work processes?

Going through this section will show you if this is the case or not.

3.2.1. Indicators on the core principles of youth work

The first indicators that should be formulated are the ones related to the core principles. The way to do this, the process, is the same regardless of what core principle you work on, so we will try to explain how by giving you an example.

Example:

The example chosen relates to the core principle based on young people's voluntary and active participation, engagement and responsibility. The first thing we have to do is to take away the 'and' and split this core principle into three:

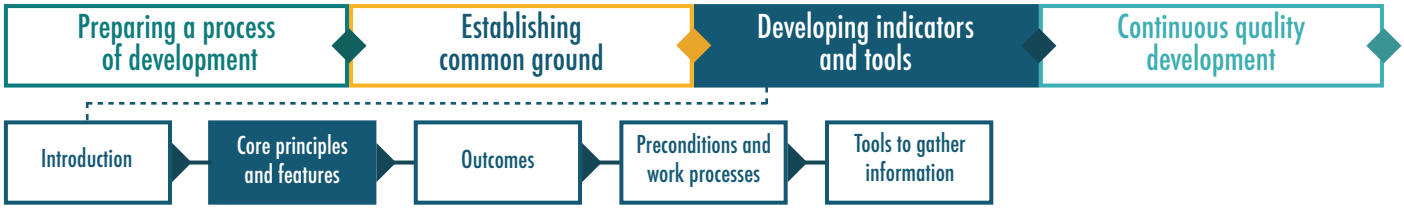
- based on voluntary and active participation;
- based on voluntary and active engagement;
- based on voluntary and active responsibility.

For our example we have chosen 'based on voluntary and active responsibility' and the task is now to find out what this means in practice.

Now it is time to start asking questions, to be curious and want to learn! You will have to ask yourself and the other team members what active responsibility means in terms of both how decisions are made and how activities are carried out. You will have to reflect on how responsibility relates both to power and to the consequences of your actions.

You will have to discuss what indicates that youth work in your context is based on young people's active responsibility:

- in terms of what young people do, which roles they take when they take part
  - in decision-making;
  - in carrying out activities;
- in terms of what young people experience;
- in terms of the number or percentage of young people taking responsibility in youth work;
- in terms of young people's mandate to take autonomous decisions.



These questions and discussions might lead to the following indicators:

- young people are board members;
- activities are led by young people;
- young people feel responsible;
- activities will not take place if they are not run by young people;
- all, or 10% of, the money allocated for youth work activities is decided upon by young people.

It may be hard to say if an indicator relates to, for example, the core principles or to the outcomes. The fact that activities are led by young people could be seen as an outcome if you believe that this is positive in itself and you have it as an aim, or it could be seen as a precondition for achieving other outcomes, such as enhanced self-confidence. The above indicators could therefore also be seen and used as indicators on outcomes.

Exercise:
Formulate indicators on participation in youth projects and decide which methods should be used in order to assess the degree to which they are achieved.

Now look at the example below and see if you have come up with similar indicators.

Example:
The indicators below were formulated by a work group within InterCity Youth [7]. These are just some examples of the indicators that the group formulated and the motives for them (these have been slightly reformulated and shortened). The group also suggested follow-up methods, which were predominantly questionnaires.

A. Indicators in relation to the different steps in a participatory process that young people should be active in if it is to be a high-quality process.

A.1: The process (activity) is based on young people's ideas,
Motive: The first step in a participatory process is to find out what the group wants to achieve. The fact that a process is based on young people's ideas will make sure that it meets their interests, and it will also strengthen their commitment and sense of ownership.

A.2: Young people take part in planning,
Motive: By taking part in planning young people will make the process their own and at the same time acquire management skills that will be useful for their future lives.

[7] www.intercityyouth.eu

A.3: Young people take part in organising,
Motive: The third step is organising; dividing tasks and deciding how decisions are to be made. Being part of planning makes it possible for young people to find roles and tasks that fit them and, at the same time, develop their capacity to cooperate and make democratic decisions.

A.4: Young people take part in preparations,
Motive: If the process is to be participatory, young people should be part of making the preparations – otherwise it will be a process run by youth workers for young people. This also goes for the other steps.

A.5: Young people take part in delivery,
Motive: By carrying out the activity the participants will be role models for other young people, showing them that young people are capable of carrying out activities/processes.

A.6: Young people take part in the evaluation,
Motive: This creates enhanced knowledge for both young people and youth workers about what is needed for a good process and will enhance the quality of future processes. It also provides a great opportunity to discuss what the participants have learned through taking part in the different steps.

B. Indicators in relation to how the process should be perceived if it is to be of high quality.

B.1: Young people feel that they can be themselves,
Motive: If you are to be able to say that someone participates, and learns from it, they must feel that they do not have to hide their true selves.

B.2: Young people feel that they are listened to,
Motive: If someone is not listened to, they will not be able to contribute to the process, and thus will not be able and will not want to participate in a common process.

B.3: Young people feel that everyone's opinions are equally important,
Motive: This contributes to democratic behaviour, which in turn is important for a well-functioning process.

B.4: Young people feel fellowship,
Motive: It is important that the process has a good climate.

B.5: Young people feel that the process/activity matches their interests,
Motive: Ensures that they do not participate just because they lack other options or because of external pressure.

B.6: Young people feel that they contribute,
Motive: This feeling is the core one if you are to be able to say that someone participates. It also makes you feel needed and creates self-confidence.

B.7: Young people feel that it is they who make the decisions,
Motive: This is essential if young people are to feel that it is their process and thus want to take responsibility for it.

B.8: Young people feel that if they are not active and do not take responsibility the process/activity will fail,
Motive: This makes sure that it is not a process run by youth workers assisted by young people, but the other way around.

Discuss:

- **What do you think about the differences between the indicators you suggested and the ones in the example?**
- **What do you think you have learned from this example?**

Depending on how you look at this, you might also want to formulate possible indicators on the outcomes of young people being responsible, not instead of the ones on the core principles, but as a complement to them. How this can be done and the difficulties that might arise are covered in Section 3.3, 'Indicators on outcomes'.

Discuss:

- **What different methods would you use to assess whether the indicators on the core principle of responsibility are achieved?**
- **What pros and cons are there for the different methods?**

This process could be carried out in relation to all the core principles. This would take some time, but it is worth it – you will have a much clearer picture to work from and you will learn a lot on the way! In the next section we will discuss indicators on specific core features of youth work. Reading this will give you some more support in how to handle this process and hopefully make you feel more comfortable with it.

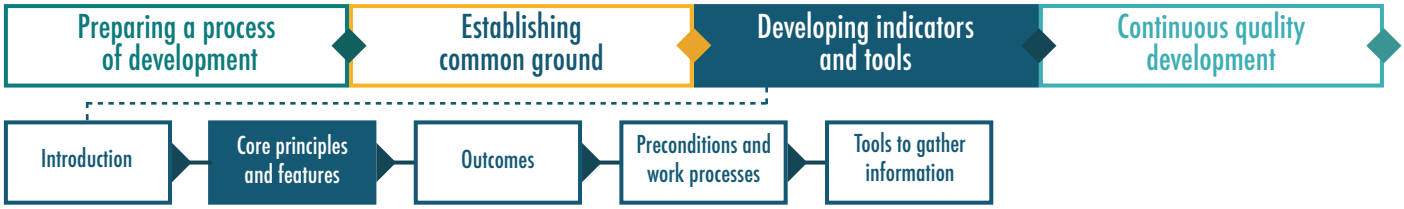
The report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States states that successful youth work that effectively meets the core principles is actively inclusive and reaches out to and welcomes all groups of young people, and cannot be built on single, isolated and narrowly targeted projects and activities. On the contrary: 'successful youth work must be based on an open offer about non-formal learning and personal development possibilities directed to all young people, a general offer to which more targeted activities may be attached as parts to which young people could be actively included on the basis of their own needs, interests and experiences.'

Discuss:

- **Are some indicators more important than others? Discuss this, starting from the definition of youth work, and make clear your priorities.**
- **Discuss what consequences the core principles have for the relationship between general and targeted youth work and for the choice of target group. Do you agree with the above statement of the Expert Group?**

Watch out!

Some of the core principles are easier than others to find indicators for and they also vary in terms of how abstract or general they are. Principle 6 for example, 'Enhance young people's rights, personal and social development and autonomy', could in a way be seen as the outcome if you realise the more concrete principle 4, 'Be based on young people's voluntary and active participation, engagement and responsibility' and principle 7 'Be designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people'. It might therefore be easier to start with these and see what you have left to do when you come to the more abstract ones. You might then find that you only want to formulate indicators in relation to some of the core principles.



3.2.2. Indicators on core features of youth work

Discuss:
What other aspects, besides the core principles, are important in order to achieve good youth work? Take a look at the suggestions in Section 2.4.3 and draw up your own list. You might for example think that it is important that youth work is characterised by flexibility and that there are various forms of youth work that young people can take part in.

When you have a list of important core features, from your discussion above, which everyone has agreed on, your task will be to formulate indicators related to each item on the list. This process will be very similar to the one you just carried out on indicators related to the core principles. Having a look at the example below might give you some further guidance. The example we have chosen is something that is often said to be crucial for good youth work: safety.

Example:
It is often stated that young people need a 'safe environment', that youth workers must make young people 'feel safe' when they take part in youth work activities. But what does this actually mean? If we are to construct indicators that give a correct and nuanced picture of this, one single indicator is not enough.

'Feeling safe' could, for example, mean:
- not being physically threatened;
- not being psychologically threatened;
- not feeling at risk of being physically or psychologically threatened.

The subsequent indicators would then be:
- young people do not feel physically threatened;
- young people do not feel psychologically threatened;
- young people do not feel at risk of being physically or psychologically threatened.

Secondly, is 'absence of threat' enough of a definition of 'feeling safe' or does this also require something else? For example:
- knowing who to turn to if threatened;
- the feeling that you could actually turn to this person if threatened;
- the feeling that someone trying to threaten you would be stopped.

The subsequent indicators would then be:

- young people know who to turn to if threatened;
- young people feel that you could actually turn to this person if threatened;
- young people feel that someone trying to threaten them would be stopped.

Third, 'safe environment' – what do we mean by that?

- the place where youth work takes place, e.g. the youth centre;
- outside the facility;
- the way there and back home in the evening.

The subsequent indicators would then be:

- young people feel safe when at the youth centre;
- young people feel safe outside the youth centre;
- young people feel safe on their way to and from the youth centre.

Fourth, which young people should 'feel safe'?

- the ones who take part in youth work?
- the ones who would want to take part if they felt it was safe to come?
- boys/girls/LGBT?
- young people with disabilities?
- age?
- ethnic background?

The subsequent indicators would then be:

- all the different groups of young people feel equally safe. (This also requires an objective saying to what level young people should feel safe, for example 80%);
- no group of young people stay away from youth work activities for safety reasons.

Which, at the same time, highlights the need for background information regarding which young people take part in youth work.

You could also approach the question of safety from a more positive angle. This might lead to indicators such as:

- young people feel that they are respected as individuals;
- young people feel that youth workers care about their well-being;
- young people feel that differences in background are seen as something positive.

Discuss:

- **Are there other aspects of safety that we have missed in this example and what indicators would then be needed?**
- **What methods would be most suitable for finding out the degree to which young people feel safe and whether this varies between different groups of young people?**
- **Discuss what safety would mean in some other context that is relevant to you. What, for example, would it mean for a youth organisation when they apply for funding from a municipality?**

To conclude, the more precise these questions are, and the more aspects they cover, the more relevant the answers will be and the more nuanced the definition of what 'feeling safe' actually means.

The above example also, once again, makes evident that young people must be involved in the process – without their knowledge about what makes them feel safe and unsafe some vital indicators will surely be missing.

Watch out!

As stated earlier: try to find the main criteria. Too many indicators will only make things complicated and make it harder and more time-consuming to gather the information needed.

3.3. Indicators on outcomes

What is an outcome, at what levels can they be measured and what opportunities and problems might this provoke?

Indicators on the outcomes of youth work is something that is often discussed. Some argue that these will lead to youth work being an instrument for interests other than those of young people and that it will lose its 'soul'. Others argue that they are necessary to explain and defend the existence of youth work. Which standpoint you take, of course, depends on what you define as outcomes, (which is sometimes ignored in these discussions), and how you formulate them.

If outcomes are related to aims, you can, as in the first example in Section 3.2.1, set young people's active responsibility as an aim, formulate relevant indicators, and assess the degree to which this is achieved by, for example, providing questionnaires to young people. You could of course also set aims in relation to quantitative outputs regarding how many of the young people taking part in youth work should hold positions of responsibility, and measure outcomes in relation to that.

If you think, and can make probable, that the process of participation has sufficient positive effects in itself (see the second example in Section 3.2.1), you could define it as the desired outcome, formulate indicators and assess the degree to which your form of youth work is actually 'based on young people's active participation'.

There are also many other effects that youth work might have on young people that might be seen as outcomes if they are examined in relation to a specific youth work context. Examples of such effects are:

- perceived experiences/feelings
  - being met with positive expectations
  - feeling respected as an individual
- changed attitudes
  - towards immigrants
  - towards the police.

It is when you try to take this one step further that you will create a more difficult situation. If we continue to look at the previous example regarding young people's active responsibility and see this not as a core principle or an outcome in itself, we must start to discuss what responsibility it might lead to and for whom. How will it affect young people, other stakeholders in youth work and society at large? These questions and discussions might lead to indicators such as the following:

- young people feel more self-confident;
- young people have started to take responsibility in other contexts;
- young people have become better at finishing tasks;
- politicians have more confidence in young people's capacity.

These indicators on outcomes, however, highlight the problem of finding appropriate and effective methods to assess the degree to which reality corresponds to the indicators. There is, for example, no easy way to find out if young people are starting to take more responsibility in other contexts after taking part in youth work. It would be even harder to know whether this is an outcome of youth work or the result of something else.

This gets even more complicated, or even impossible, if you come up with indicators such as:

- young people use less drugs;
- fewer young people drop out of school;
- there is a lower crime rates among young people;
- more young people do voluntary work;
- more young people take part in elections.

All these outcomes are positive, but setting them as indicators for youth work creates a major problem. These kinds of outcomes, for example a decrease in drug abuse, are impossible to link directly to specific youth work activities – a local youth organisation might do a very good job, but if at the same time there is an increase in unemployment and a reduction in alcohol prices, there might still be an increase in drug abuse. If the indicators are combined with specific aims, this will mean that youth workers are asked to strive towards aims which they may never know whether they have achieved or not.

We know from health and resilience research that personal and social development in the long run is likely to lead to fewer negative behaviours, such as drug abuse. If youth work can live up to the core principles, and have relevant indicators to prove that it does, this will hopefully lead to a more general confidence in youth work's capacity to make real change.

As stated earlier, there is no absolute line between, for example, the core principles and outcomes and no need to try to draw one. If you believe in the value of the participatory process, you can define this process as the desired outcome.

Discuss:

- **What is your standpoint regarding the above debate on indicators on outcomes? Is it a yes or no question or does it depend on how it is done?**
- **Is living up to the indicators on the core principles a sufficient outcome of youth work or is there also a need for other indicators on specific outcomes?**

Exercise:

Suggest some desirable outcomes of youth work that are not covered by the core principles or core features that you have discussed earlier. When you have these suggestions, formulate indicators and discuss which concrete methods could be used to assess the degree to which these indicators have been achieved as a direct result of youth work.

In any case, the above discussion highlights the need for a parallel discussion to be held on what methods to use to find out whether or to what degree reality corresponds to the indicators.

However, outcomes are not only about qualitative effects, they are also about quantitative outputs. Quantitative outputs, simply counting numbers, has in fact been, and often still is, the most common way of measuring youth work and the most common basis for funding it. This has caused the youth work sector significant problems since knowing the amount of something without knowing its values and effects is information that is hard to use in a constructive way and risks putting the focus of both funders and youth workers more on quantity than on quality.

One of the prime aims of this handbook is therefore to contribute to a more aware use of quantitative outputs and a better balance between them and qualitative effects and hence to a more appropriate and efficient funding of youth work. This does not mean that we should stop counting, only that the figures must be handled with care and should be viewed in relation to qualitative effects.

Some of the previously mentioned possible outputs of youth work are:

- number of participants
- number of activity hours.

The number of participants does not, however, in itself make it possible to draw any conclusions or evaluate the work done. It is only when you view the number of participants in relation to the resources it has taken to run the activity that you can make any kind of judgement. A big youth centre with a lot of resources can of course reach more young people than a small one with fewer resources, and you should still view it in relation to quality. If the number of young people reached is the only thing that counts, the most efficient way to finance 'youth work' would probably be to sponsor fast-food restaurants with some computer games.

Some more reasonable indicators related to quantitative outputs might therefore be:

- cost per participant
- cost per activity hour
- percentage of young people in target group(s) reached.

Some people argue that youth work has a unique and immeasurable value and therefore should not be looked upon or measured in terms of economic efficiency. In a world with limited resources where there is a constant battle between

different sectors (school, social work, etc.) this is likely to sound very naive. Looking at the core principles and the indicators you can derive from them, you might also say that there is a sufficient amount of value that actually can be measured and put forward as arguments for youth work.

Another fairly common argument from people who want to defend youth work is that if it saves just one young person from getting into drugs and criminality it has already paid for itself. This is probably true but impossible to prove in the individual case. 'Number of young people saved' is therefore not a possible indicator for youth work, and, we should not forget, the prime reason for having youth work is not to prevent problems but to give all young people a chance to develop outside home and school and to find constructive pathways in life, which, of course, in turn, will lead to fewer problems.

Discuss:

- **What do you think – should youth work have indicators that relate to quantitative outputs?**
- **Will youth work be harmed by or profit from indicators on economic efficiency?**

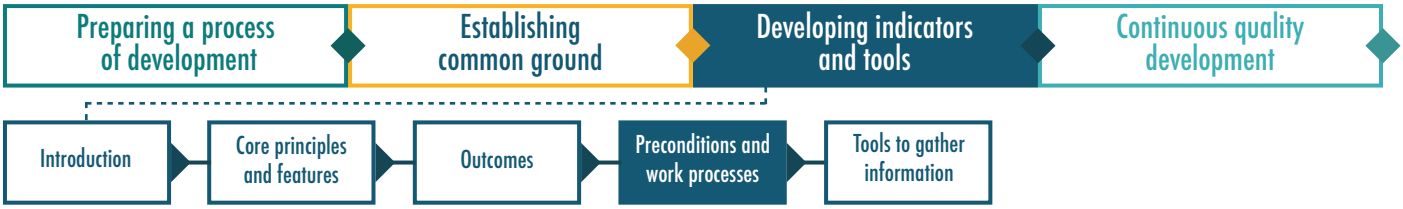
Exercise:

Make a list of important quantitative outputs that would need indicators and suggest methods that could be used in order to assess the degree to which reality corresponds to the indicators.

Another, perhaps more philosophical, aspect of this is that sometimes there is a qualitative side of quantities. Imagine that you are going out for a Sunday dinner and find two, in terms of food, totally equivalent restaurants. One of them is full of guests, while the other one is more or less empty. You might think that you will have faster service in the empty one but will you choose it?

Watch out!

The most common pitfall is to formulate indicators on outcomes such that you cannot in any realistic way assess whether you have achieved them or not, or see if the result is linked to youth work or something else.



3.4. Indicators on preconditions and work processes

Are the preconditions you have and the work processes you use of sufficient quality, and how do you formulate indicators that will help you to know if this is the case?

3.4.1. Introduction

The quality of youth work is primarily indicated in how well it meets the core principles; to what degree reality corresponds to your indicators. However, these results depend on the preconditions that you start from and the work processes you use. In order to improve youth work you will thus have to look at the quality of both preconditions and work processes, discuss what criteria are crucial to their quality and decide on indicators. Making youth work better is, to a large degree, about improving preconditions and work processes.

There is however, as you will see, a risk that the process of formulating indicators on preconditions and work processes leads to too many, at least partially, very similar indicators and problems in organising them in clearly structured way. As preconditions and work processes should be established in order to reach aims, be this in regard to participation or non-formal learning, one way to solve this is to put them in a checklist, which should then be used in relation to each core principle or core feature. If one indicator on preconditions is, for example, 'clear ethical guidelines', this could be put on a checklist and checked in relation to each aim.

3.4.2. Indicators on preconditions

Preconditions are everything that is, or should be, on hand as a basis for work. Examples of preconditions include:

- aims
- objectives
- ethical guidelines
- resources
  - budget
  - facilities
  - material
- organisation
- youth worker competence.

Example:

Taking the example of aims. Which criteria would you say are important for overall aims?

You will most probably come to the conclusion that the most important criterion is that they are clear. Your first indicator regarding preconditions will then be:

- clear aims.

But what does this mean in practice? What indicators might be needed? Some possible suggestions might be:

- the aims are understood in the same way by all relevant stakeholders, e.g. politicians, youth workers and young people;
- the importance of one aim in relation to other aims is clear to all relevant stakeholders, i.e. they are prioritised;
- the overall aims are possible to break down into concrete objectives.

As you can see, the process is the same as the one we used in relation to the core principles – it is based on questions and reflection, and just as in the case of the core principles you will have to decide on what methods you want to use to assess how reality corresponds to the indicators.

Discuss:

Are there important preconditions other than the ones in the list above for which you would want to formulate indicators?

Exercise:

Choose one important precondition, discuss it and formulate relevant indicators.

So far so good, but we need to take this reasoning one step further. The indicator 'clear aims' is obviously very general. It therefore has to be related to each single aim in order to see if they are clear. If we continue our previous example regarding young people's active responsibility and discuss what young people need in order to be able to take responsibility, this might lead to the following example:

Example:

Precondition 'objectives':

- there are clear objectives related to the indicators on young people's responsibility.

Precondition 'ethical guidelines':

- there are clear ethics related to young people's responsibility, i.e. what they could and could not be made responsible for.

Precondition 'resources':

- there are adequate resources allocated to working with young people's responsibility:
  - in terms of budget;
  - in terms of facilities;
  - in terms of material.

Precondition 'organisation':

- young people's position in the decision-making process is clear;
- young people's mandate in the decision-making process is clear.

Precondition 'competence':

- young people have access to all relevant information on economy, funding principles, etc.;
- young people have received relevant training, e.g. meeting technique and budgeting.

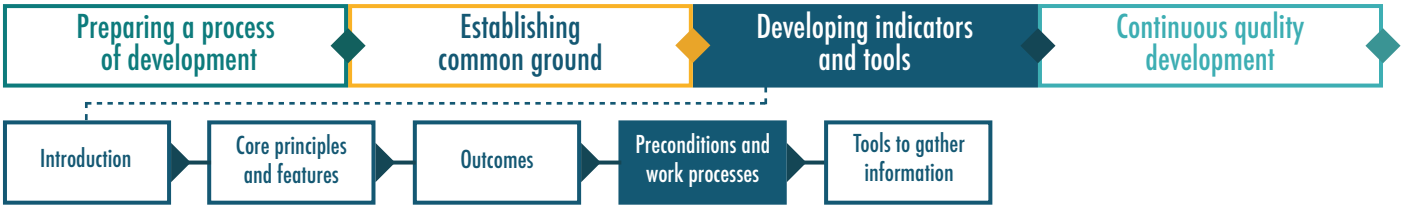
This might seem like a lot of work, but once you get started it follows the same pattern and can be done fairly quickly and it will definitely help you in ensuring that no important preconditions are missed. As pointed out in the introduction to this section, this might best be handled by drawing up a checklist to which you just add new indicators.

Exercise:

Choose another core principle for which you have set an indicator, discuss what preconditions it needs to be realised and formulate indicators.

Watch out!

Do not forget to discuss what methods you want to use to see the degree to which reality corresponds to the indicators. When it comes to preconditions, questionnaires for youth workers is an often-used method, but there might be other ways. If young people have 'received relevant training' or not might, for example, be a question that could be posed to both young people and youth workers.



3.4.3. Indicators on work processes

Just as important as the preconditions are the work processes. Youth work is quite often done in a rather spontaneous manner without clear routines and work processes, but if youth work is to develop there is a clear need for clear work processes, i.e. clear routines for how different tasks are to be carried out. Having this is in fact what makes youth work a profession and the professionalisation of youth work, whether it is paid or not, is an important part of making it better and more widely recognised.

A parallel example from an entirely different sector comes from a car manufacturer. In order to improve the quality of their products they developed a quality development system focused on making the work process as efficient as possible. This method is today world-famous and the manufacturer is one of the most successful car producers in the world.

The work process for formulating indicators on work processes is the same as you have used in regard to the core principles and the preconditions – you have to discuss, ask questions and reflect on what it is that characterises good work processes and decide on indicators and methods for follow-up.

Examples include work processes for:

- setting concrete objectives;
- documenting activities and statistics;
- reaching out to (different groups of) young people;
- welcoming newcomers;
- documenting and making visible young people's learning;
- handling different kinds of conflicts;
- contacts and cooperation with other stakeholders.

Discuss:
Are there important work processes other than the ones in the list above that you will have to take into consideration?

Example:
Which criteria and subsequent indicators would you say are important for the work process of setting objectives? Having clear objectives is an important precondition; if you have discussed this (see previous section), you might have come up with indicators regarding objectives that state that they should be for example:

- clearly linked to the overall aims
- measurable
- realistic.

Your task will then be to discuss what should characterise a process that is likely to lead to this result. Examples of such indicators might be:

- the objectives are set through dialogue between all relevant stakeholders;
- all participants in the process are well informed about the core principles;
- all participants in the process know about the indicators;
- the process is based on knowledge about previous outcomes.

Just as in the case of the preconditions you will also have to look at the work processes in relation to each specific aim.

Example:

To continue our example regarding young people's active responsibility, this might lead to the following indicators regarding processes that promote young people's active responsibility:

- there is a clear model for giving young people necessary training;
- there is a clear routine for informing young people about their rights and opportunities;
- there are clearly defined roles and positions that young people can hold;
- there are well-developed methods for working with young people's responsibility;
- there are clear work plans regarding what actions should be taken and by whom in order to achieve the specific aims that are set in relation to young people's responsibility.

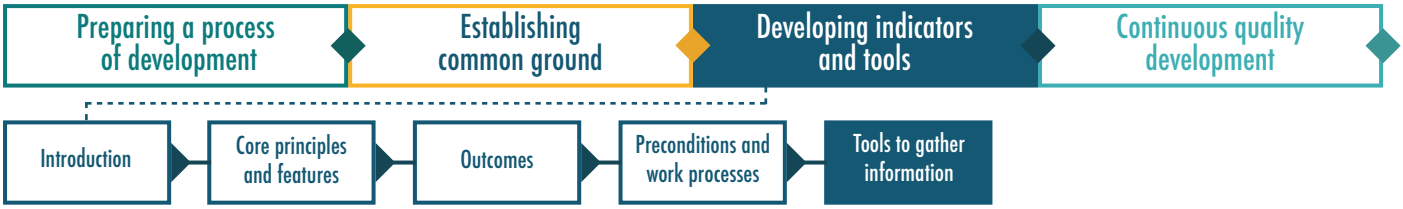
Exercise:

Choose another core principle, discuss what work processes it needs to be realised and formulate indicators.

There is work to be done, but as stated above: once you have started and done the first one, it will get much easier.

Watch out!

Just as in the case of preconditions you need to think about what methods you want to use in order to assess how reality corresponds to your indicators. Also in this case it might be a good idea to ask both young people and youth workers.



3.5. Tools to gather the information needed

In order to engage in quality development you need specific and trustworthy information about the degree to which youth work corresponds to your indicators – so what different kinds of tools do you need for this and how should they be designed?

Quality development is basically a systematic and continuous process of learning – of gathering information that is to be used to make knowledge-based, on-going, gradual improvements. In the previous sections you have developed indicators and decided what different kind of methods you want to use in order to assess how reality corresponds to them. Now it is time to take the next step, to find the tools you need to put your methods into practice.

You might, for instance, have decided to use questionnaires to find out how young people perceive youth work; if they feel responsible and have been taking part in evaluation. Perhaps you have also decided that you want to supplement these questionnaires with focus group interviews. Most probably you have decided on some indicators on quantitative outputs and to gather relevant statistics. Now you need to decide how this should be done in practice, what questionnaires, interview manuals and tools for gathering statistics to use.

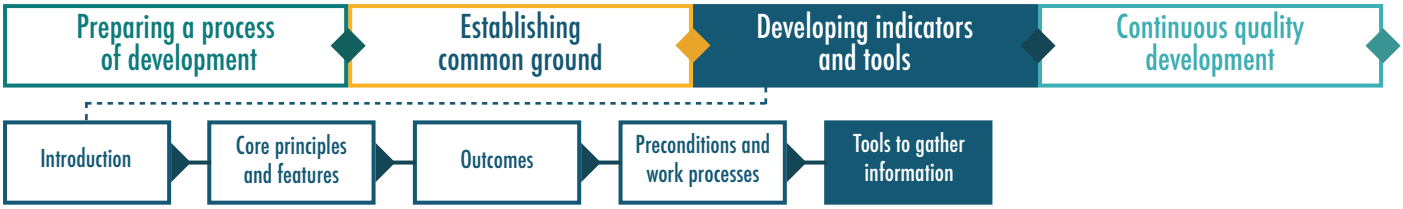
The different tools that you might need include:
(You can find a list of different tools in the appendix under 5.3, 'Examples for inspiration'; the figures in brackets refer to different sections.)

- tools for the documentation of statistics (5.3.4 and 5.3.9);
- tools for the documentation of work processes (5.3.4);
- questionnaires for young people who take part in youth work (5.3.3);
- templates for interviews and focus groups;
- tools for self-assessment and peer assessment (5.3.5 and 5.3.10).

There are basically two ways of acquiring tools to gather information: you can create your own tools or you can take existing ones and adapt them to suit your own indicators and organisational needs. Which option you should choose depends, of course, on your capacity and experience in developing such tools.

There are, however, a lot of benefits to be gained by starting by using existing tools:

- Constructing questionnaires, asking relevant questions in a proper way, is an art in itself and you will need to test the questionnaires to see if young people understand the questions in the way you intended them. Taken together this makes it a rather difficult and time-consuming process.
- Modern systems for the documentation of statistics and work processes are, for practical reasons, often web-based and it takes a lot of experience and money to develop these yourself.
- Both questionnaires and systems for documentation need support material in the form of manuals and other kinds of information if they are to function properly. These kinds of material also take knowledge and time to develop.
- Looking at existing systems might also give you new knowledge and insights into what other organisations find important and inspire you to add new aims and indicators to your own work.



Looking at other tools, finding that your aims and needs are quite similar, might also open the door to future cooperation and peer learning. If you gather knowledge regarding similar issues related to more or less similar aims, there are great gains to be made by sharing it – knowledge shared is knowledge doubled.

The only real danger in looking at existing, ready-made tools is that you might be tempted to copy them without really having had an in-depth discussion about how they correspond to your own aims and indicators. The people who are going to use these kinds of tools need to have a sense of ownership based on true understanding if the tools are to function as planned. If this is missing, the gathering of information will soon deteriorate into a mechanical exercise and no one will believe in or want to use the information gathered in any constructive way. Adapting an existing tool needs to be done carefully with a lot of discussion. You might end up very close to the original, which could be a strength in terms of future peer learning, but do not make any modifications without having a thorough discussion. Even if you are determined to construct your own tools, it is always a good idea to have a look at how others have made theirs.

Whichever route you choose, there are a lot of advantages in using web-based systems. It makes the handling of the information gathered, whether it is statistics on participants in youth work activities, answers to questionnaires or economic figures, much easier. Today, there are a lot of free or fairly cheap systems available that you can use to create your tools.

One way to gather information and knowledge is also to cooperate with research institutions or universities. This is quite common when it comes to the following-up of different time-limited projects. If you intend to start this kind of cooperation, it is important to remember that quality development needs to be done on a long-term basis, making it possible for you to see gradual changes, and that your partners therefore have to be able to make a long-term commitment. This might be difficult for universities that often are financed on the grounds of time-limited projects. A more realistic and fruitful way might therefore be to cooperate on in-depth studies in areas where you feel that the knowledge you have gathered needs to be deepened through further study.

Live story:

Several municipalities in the region of Gerona in Spain use self-assessments based on indicators to gather information about their local youth policies. The University of Gerona developed the tool and supports the municipalities in the use of it. At the start municipalities and youth workers were not used to gathering information in such a way. The university helped them to make use of assessments and the culture of assessments is now becoming more common in youth work and helping people to bring the current situation under control and to set direction and goals.

What tools you use will also affect the quality of the information gathered. The most important indicator regarding this is: would someone else using this tool come up with the same, or at least a very similar, result? Or, put another way, is the result possible to verify in a reliable way?

This is important in itself, of course, but it is also important if you are going to use the information gathered to present your outcomes to others, such as city councils or the public. Your credibility will then stand or fall by the quality of the tools you have used. If you want to show figures to illustrate the effects and value of youth work, be sure that they are reliable.

Discuss:

- **What are the pros and cons of using existing tools as a starting point for your own work?**
- **If you want to create your own questionnaires – do you have enough experience in doing this or do you first need some training?**

Exercise:

Choose one of the indicators you have formulated on a core principle or feature and try to formulate questions for young people that would give you relevant knowledge about the degree to which you have achieved it. For inspiration or comparison then go to the appendix, 'Examples for inspiration', and find information about an existing questionnaire and discuss the differences.

Watch out!

Remember that the fact that a tool is used by another organisation does not automatically guarantee that it is a good one. There are, for example, quite a lot of questionnaires with ill-formulated questions that are used to find out what kind of leisure activities young people would like to take part in. However, if your aim is that youth work should be 'designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people', these kinds of questions are irrelevant, or at least secondary, to questions about the degree to which young people are active in designing activities and so on. Make sure that the tool matches your indicators!

There is sometimes a desire to 'have our own tool/model'. When customising an existing tool this, in turn, might lead to long discussions that are focused more on semantics than actual content. However, there is no value in itself in having a unique system; on the contrary it might make it difficult to exchange knowledge and experiences with others. If this does happen, it might be wise to remind the team of the benefits of shared knowledge.

Curiosity, which is positive, might sometimes make you want to gather more information, e.g. statistics or questions in questionnaires, than you will be able to use on a regular basis. Try to avoid this, as it will just create annoyance and distrust among those who are going to fill in statistics or answer your questionnaires. If you are particularly interested in something that you will not be able to work with continuously, it is better to carry out a separate study.

Although information is mainly to be gathered in order to enhance quality, it can in some cases also be used to measure quality and monitor the degree of success. This, in turn, can also guide financing and clarify where more resources are needed. This is only natural in an activity that is financed by taxpayers' money. It only becomes a problem when monitoring from above, and not development, is the main purpose of the system, as this puts so much focus on results that delivering figures becomes more important than doing a good job and developing it outside the box. It is well known that systems which concentrate on the short-term measuring of quantitative figures lead to stagnation and even manipulation of results in order to look good or to retain funding.

However, do not let the fear of monitoring prevent you from gathering relevant information – you need it to develop youth work and there is no better way to argue for youth work than to have relevant and reliable information.

Live story – SPAM in Lappeenranta

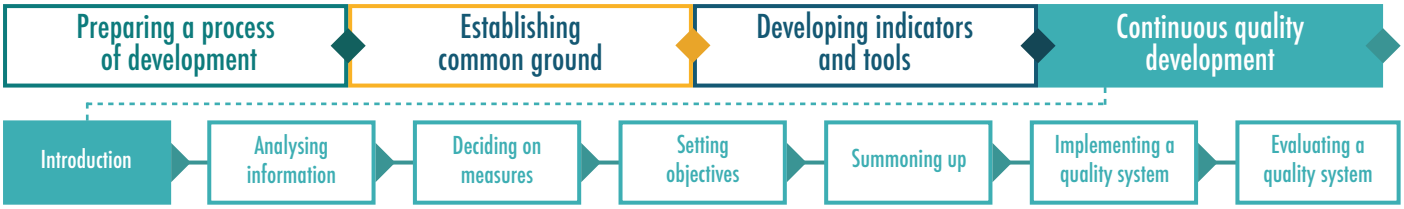
Lappeenranta (a city of about 80,000 inhabitants in the southeast of Finland) has been using the quality instrument SPAM for over 10 years. The instrument is based on peer assessment and self-assessment. Based on indicators (36) a youth worker observes activities, interviews young people and scores the indicators on a 5-point scale. The scores are then discussed the next day. Working with this system helps youth workers to become strong and confident professionals. It enables them to reflect on their work, explain their values and pinpoint the strong and weak points in their work. Several young people recently developed a new component of SPAM. In the past young people also assessed the work but they used the same instrument as the youth workers. To determine the indicators for the new instrument, a questionnaire was distributed among young youth centre visitors. The central question was: 'What is the most important aspect of youth work for you?'

A group of young people subsequently analysed the results and formulated indicators for their own assessment of youth work. It was important to start afresh rather than use the existing version as a basis, as doing so was likely to lead only to small adjustments rather than making the transition to a youth-based instrument. The indicators were changed in order to appeal to young people, using 'young people's language', which is less difficult and policy-focused.

As a result 60% are indicators that were developed by young people. Examples include: How youth leaders work; Atmosphere; Equipment and furniture; Use of social media; and Communications. The young people who participated in the development are very positive. 'We have tested the assessment and by doing this you learn a lot: reflect on youth work, analyse it, and learn to give positive feedback.'

The youth workers highly recommend the tool. It gives a good overview of youth work and shows what can be improved, and young people really appreciate it. They learn skills that are also valuable in other settings, including future jobs. In one of the youth centres, the youth workers and the young people have long-term experience with the assessments. During the first few years the youth workers carried out an assessment every six months, which taught them how to use the tool and how to train young people in using it. The results can be converted into a short-term action plan every six months. After a few years it is better to reduce the frequency to avoid formalising the instrument too much.

When assessing another youth centre, the youth workers automatically reflect on their own work. The practice of debating the scores with the youth workers and young people is very useful. It provides answers to questions such as: what is the atmosphere like? What is the interaction with the youth worker like? What do the visitors value most, and what would they change? The youth centre also uses questionnaires, questions on Facebook and meetings with parents to improve quality. In addition, there is an elected youth parliament, which helps to run the youth centre and manages its own budget.



4. WORKING WITH CONTINUOUS QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Introduction – managing change

What steps do you need to take if you are to manage change rather than be a victim of it?

The process leading to change consists of three basic steps:

- analysing the information gathered;
- deciding on the measures to be taken;
- setting objectives for the coming period.

These three steps are often taken in parallel because they affect each other, but for the sake of readability we will divide them into separate sections and start with the analysis.

Even though all the stakeholders should be actively involved, the process of analysing and deciding on measures and objectives is often done in a step-by-step manner, starting with youth workers within their organisations. When they have done a first preliminary analysis and have some ideas about measures and objectives, young people from the target group are invited to reflect on this and add their perspectives. After this, depending on the kind of organisation, the analysis and the subsequent suggestions concerning measures and objectives are discussed at different organisational levels. Having representatives from different groups of stakeholders taking part in these discussions will ensure that no important perspectives and viewpoints get lost on the way. If the final discussion takes place at a political level, for example in a city council, it is essential that the members of the council have been involved in the previous discussions on core principles, aims and indicators. Without the pre-understanding created by these discussions there is great danger of misunderstandings or negative reactions arising because of varying views on what youth work is actually about.

This step-by-step process must, like any other work process, have been made clear in advance so that everybody involved will know what to do and what to expect:

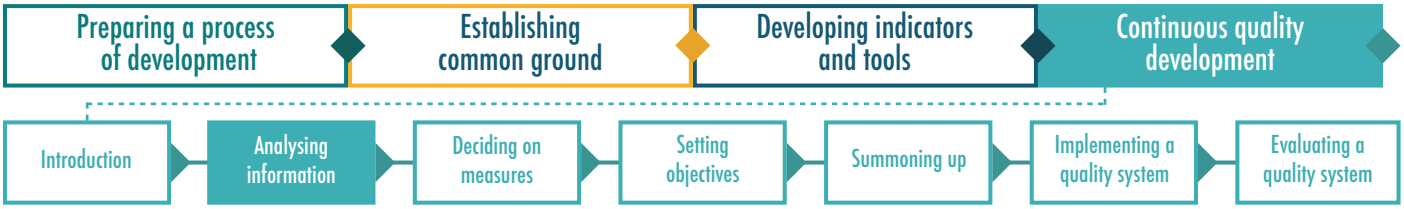
- Who is taking part in the various discussions?
- What is the timetable?
- Who will make the final decisions?

Discuss:

- **Which people in your organisation should take part in these discussions?**
- **How do you want to organise the process?**

Watch out!

Not knowing that the suggested measures and objectives will be decided on at a political level might, for example, give young people the false impression that they are the ones who make the decisions and will therefore create disappointment when the truth is revealed to them.



4.2. Analysing the information gathered

What is needed to turn the information you have gathered into knowledge that you can use for further development?

At this point in your process you will have used your different tools and gathered information on how reality corresponds to your indicators. This will not, however, automatically lead to better youth work. Figures do not mean anything in themselves, and the same goes for answers to questionnaires and interviews. In order to serve as a means for development, this information has to be analysed and assessed in relation to the context from which it is gathered. It is on the basis of this analysis that you can decide what measures are most likely to give a positive result. Thorough analysis is what turns information into knowledge.

The first step in practical quality development is therefore to analyse all relevant information:

- To what degree does reality meet the indicators?
- How can we understand the outcomes?
- What factors have been decisive for the outcome?

The two most basic questions in your analysis would then be 'Why did we get these results?' and 'What would have led to a better result?' – such as a higher degree of participation or more participants. The answer to these questions will lead to the next step in the process, formulating what measures should be taken in order to improve quality.

As in the case of formulating indicators this analysis should be done in cooperation with all the stakeholders involved. Not only because they will all be affected by the result but also because the quality of the analysis depends on their different perspectives being taken into account. Youth workers who are trying to understand why young people have answered a questionnaire in a certain way and what conclusions to draw will, for example, need to talk to young people.

Example

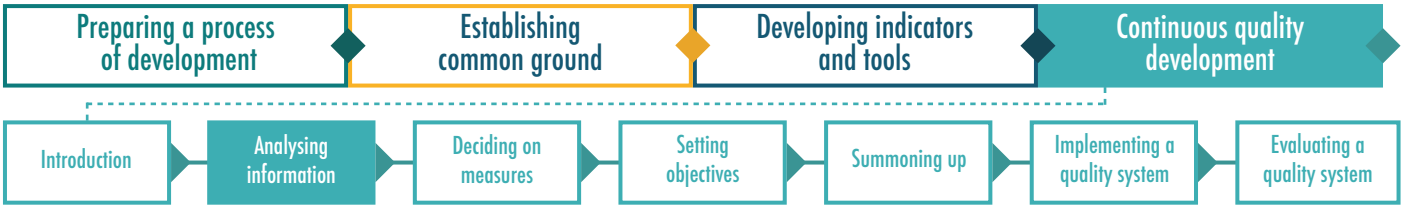
You work in a youth centre and have an objective that states that at least 40% of your visitors should be girls, but when you look at your results the actual figure is only 20%. The different steps and questions in your analysis might then be:

You look at your statistics in order to see if the percentage of girls varies between different weekdays.

- You might then see that you have 40% girls coming on Tuesdays and Fridays, but almost none on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

You then ask yourself the question what is the difference between these days in terms of:

- activities (form, content, etc.);
- youth workers (sex, competences, absent, present, etc.);
- visitors (absent, present, etc.);
- the world outside (what is taking place).



You realise that you have to talk to young people in order to answer these questions, and then find out that:

- the activities are attractive only to boys;
- the girls have a training session with their football team on Mondays;
- there are no female youth workers present on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

On the basis of this information you ask yourselves, for example:

- Why do girls not come when there are no female youth workers?

And conclude that this might be because:

- there is a need to have female role models;
- the male youth workers do not have the right approach to female visitors;
- your activities and the roles youth workers take in them are so gender-stereotype that girls come only on certain days.

Based on how you answer these questions you will come up with different suggestions as to which measures to take to achieve your objective.

In order to do this analysis in a structured way you will need manuals about, for example, how to understand different figures and what kinds of questions are relevant to ask in relation to them. Examples of such tools are:

- tools for assembling and presenting results;
- instructions on how to read statistics;
- sets of questions to ask about different kinds of information;
- systems for comparing results over time or between different actors;
- models for systematic benchmarking.

Developing these tools is not as difficult or time-consuming as it may sound – it will be quite obvious what you need and how it should be done when you have your tools for gathering information. If you have chosen to use existing tools for gathering information, these often include this kind of additional tools.

Whatever tools for analysis you have, or do not have, continuous analysis and reflection are crucial to quality development. The habit of continuous analysis and reflection is important not only in relation to specific aims and objectives but also in itself, as it generates and develops the curious and eager-to-learn mentality that is necessary if you are to work with young people and their personal and social development. It also keeps you aware and up to date about the world around you and how it is changing, and thus prevents you from working in a more or less mechanical way, just repeating the behaviours and activities that you are used to.

Always keep in mind that your analysis and the conclusions you draw from it depend on your position and perspective. In order to make a thorough analysis you must therefore always try to leave your own comfort zone and put yourself in the position of others. This is even more important if you have authority over others, for example if you are a youth worker in

charge of a youth centre. A classic example of what might happen if you do not involve the relevant stakeholders in your analysis is when youth centre staff analyse the fact that they attract many more boys than girls and draw the conclusion that they should start having a 'girls evening' on Mondays. When the girls concerned analyse this, they, in turn, draw the conclusion that all other evenings are for boys and stop coming. Having them taking part in the first analysis might instead have led to a discussion about the atmosphere at the youth centre and other types of activities.

So, set aside time for analysis and reflection on a regular basis! Do it even if the time has to be taken from activities with young people – it is an investment you will not regret.

Watch out!

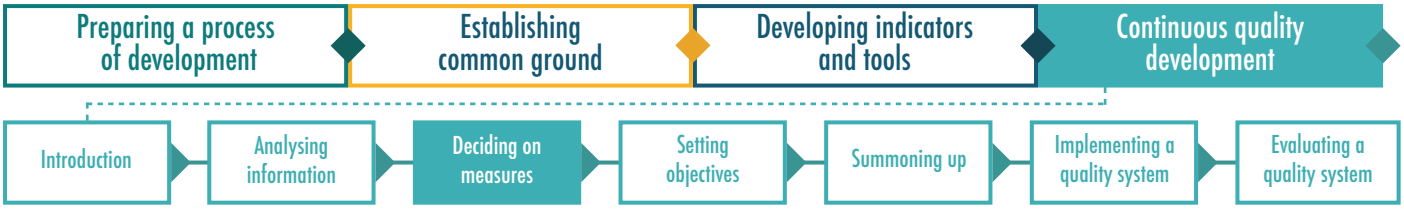
When trying to analyse your results you might come to the conclusion that you are missing some information that is necessary in order to understand how the results have been arrived at. This, in turn, might lead to the development of new indicators or to the gathering of this information through contacts with researchers.

When you start to analyse the information gathered keep in mind that there is probably a lot of other external information that you can use to broaden your perspectives. Keeping yourself up to date with recent research is, for instance, important if you want to make your analysis as accurate and reliable as possible.

Just as in many other situations in life those who take the initiative gain a major advantage. Do not wait until someone else asks for your analysis of a new situation: 'What are you going to do about the increase in unemployment/drug abuse/health problems?' If you are the first to identify the problem and provide your own analysis of how youth work could best address it, you will avoid being in a position in which you are indirectly accused and your views will be listened to much more.

When you analyse, try not to think about how you should explain the outcome to others. This risks putting you in a defensive mental position instead of a self-critical one and will limit your opportunities to develop. Save the explanations until your analysis is complete.

There is a significant difference between reflection and speculation. Reflection is based on reliable information and facts; speculation is based on loose assumptions and guesswork. The more time you spend on reflection, the less time will be spent on speculation.



4.3. Deciding on which measures to take

Changes take place as a result of concrete measures – so what is needed to find and decide upon the appropriate measures?

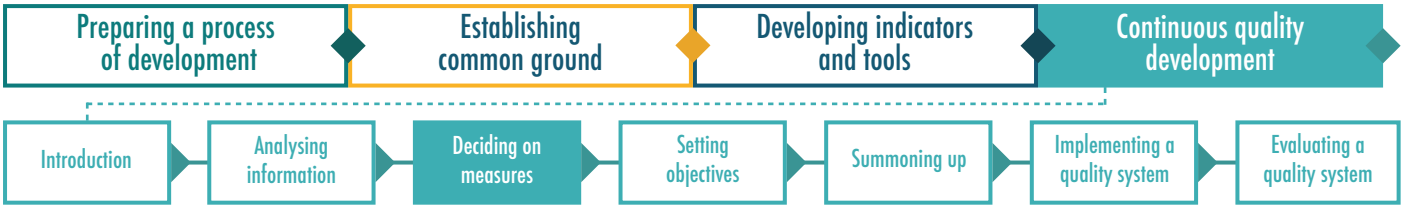
If the discussion about what measures to take is to be trustworthy in the eyes of all stakeholders, all areas where change can be made need to be open to discussion. These areas include:

- policy – aims and objectives
- organisation
- resources
- competence
- methods
- work processes.

Changes could also, of course, be suggested and made in areas where you have not yet developed indicators. These discussions might for example make you want to:

- rewrite policy;
- develop a new model for funding youth organisations;
- send someone on a training course;
- find or develop a method for working with LGBT youth;
- initiate a local youth council;
- clarify and write down your routines regarding information and public relations.

Whatever decisions the discussions lead to, it will take time and resources to carry them out. It is therefore important that there is an organisational readiness to take active care of and carry out the suggested measures. If, for example, there is no money set aside for competence development, there is a risk that there will be no such suggestions even if there is an obvious need. Quality development is also a work process that requires resources and routines, if it is to be carried out in an efficient way. This is not a cost, it is a necessary investment.



Discuss:

- **Is your organisation ready for change?**
- **If not – what do you need to do in order to prepare for and facilitate change?**

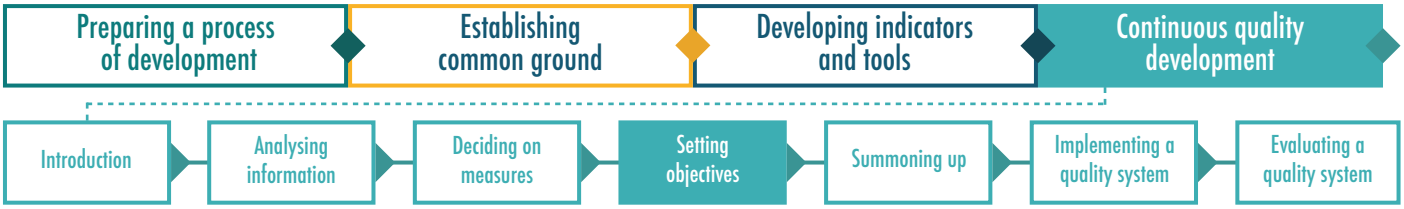
When deciding on what measures to take, do not forget that these should be:

- scheduled – it should be clear when they are to be carried out;
- accountable – it should be clear who is responsible for carrying them out.

The final step in this process is formulating the measures you have decided on in terms of objectives for the coming period, see next section.

Watch out!

Be careful not to make too many changes at the same time. These changes are, of course, made to improve overall quality, but if you make too many different changes it becomes hard to see what effect each specific change has had. Some of them might have improved work while others, unfortunately, might have had the opposite effect. Making changes also takes time and energy and too many changes risk taking away focus from your day-to-day youth work, which will have negative consequences for quality however good your changes might have been.



4.4. Setting objectives

For which areas could you set objectives? How do you make them both realistic and measurable?

When you have carried out your analysis and decided on which measures to take, the next step is to start discussing what concrete objectives you want to set for the coming period. Objectives can be set for indicators on:

- preconditions
- work processes.

This means formulating the measures you have decided on in Section 4.3 as objectives. For example:

- we shall re-write our policy document in order to make it clearer;
- we shall send two youth workers on a training course on how to work with the European Voluntary Service;
- we shall develop a clear information policy.

Objectives can also be set for indicators on:

- the core principles
- core features
- outcomes.

It is recommended that you keep objectives on preconditions and work processes separate from the others. As these kind of objectives are often more concrete and tangible than the ones regarding, for example, outcomes, it is also easier to set them even if you have not yet formulated indicators. Structuring your setting of objectives this way will help you to avoid confusion and to have a clear overview of what you want to achieve during the coming period.

Objectives related to the core principles are the most important ones – it is by achieving these that you provide good youth work and will be able to show its value. These objectives might look a bit different from each other depending on how you formulate your indicators and what tools you use to gather information. However, it is essential that they are clear and that it is easy to see whether, or to what degree, you have achieved them. You will find an example of objectives set in relation to overall and long-term aims below.

Example:

This example is from the Swedish network of municipalities KEKS [8] but the actual figures are fictional. The indexes presented are based on questionnaires for young people visiting youth centres and taking part in different kinds of group activities. The index on safety is based on twelve different indicators ('I feel safe', etc.) that the respondents can agree with to different extents (from 'completely' to 'not at all'). The index on participation is based on eight indicators relating to the steps in the process in which they have taken part ('I have been taking part in planning') and nine indicators relating to how they have perceived their participation ('I have contributed ideas'). These indicators are very similar to the ones in the second example in Section 3.2.1.

8 www.keks.se

Overall aim: Young people should feel safe
Long-term objective: The index on safety should be 90%
2015 objective: 85% (based on 2014 outcome: 80%)
2015 outcome: 87%
2016 objective: 90%

Overall aim: Young people should take an active part in designing, delivering and evaluating youth work
Long-term objective: The index on participation should be 75%
2015 objective: 70% (based on 2014 outcome: 60%)
2015 outcome: 65%
2016 objective: 70%

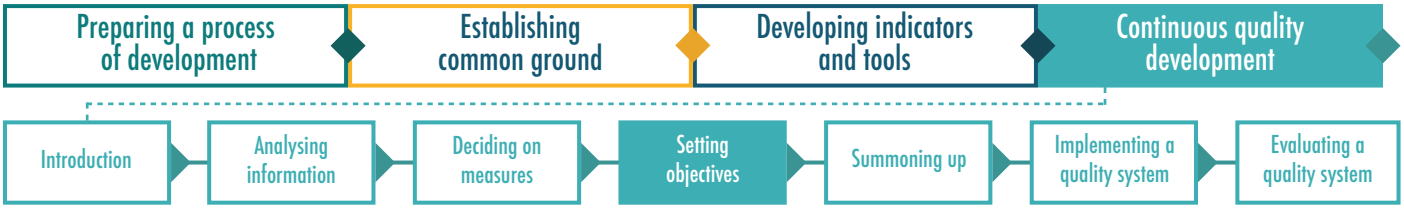
Overall aim: There should be an equal gender balance
Long-term objective: Maximum 10% deviation from equal gender balance.
2015 objective: 15% (based on 2014 outcome: 70% boys, 30% girls – deviation 20%)
2015 outcome: 15%
2016 objective: 10%

Exercise:
Go to Section 3.1.2 and have a look at the relationship between aims, indicators and objectives. On the basis of this and the example you just have read, choose an aim and some related indicators that you have previously worked on and discuss what possible objectives might look like.

When setting objectives keep in mind that they should be:

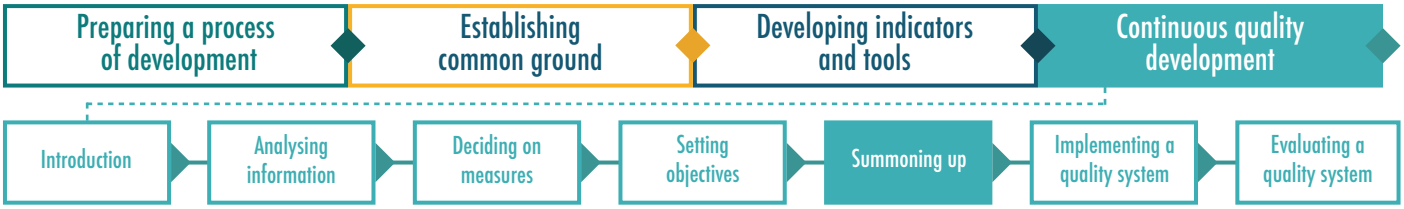
- scheduled – it should be clear when they are to be achieved;
- measurable – you should be able to see whether and the degree to which they have been achieved;
- realistic – you should be able to achieve them within the set time frame;
- accountable – it should be clear who is responsible for achieving them.

In order to achieve the objectives you might need to draw up some kind of work or action plan where you describe what work processes and methods you will use in relation to each objective, when different actions are to be taken, what resources you need, and so on. The more detailed and specific this plan is, the more likely you will be to succeed.



Watch out!

Even if you think that there are many things that need to be improved, and you have high ambitions, it is important not to set too many objectives for the same time period. Too many different objectives will most likely lead to a loss of focus and some of them will be forgotten along the way. This in turn will create disappointment and loss of organisational credibility. It is always better to have a few objectives that you actually achieve than many objectives that you fail to achieve or only partially achieve.



4.5. Summoning up – the quality circle

Do you have a quality circle?

Having come this far the different parts in a quality circle can be exemplified as follows:

Context: A local youth centre run by the municipality.

Aim related to core principle: 'Youth work should be delivered by young people.'

Indicator: Young people are active in delivering youth work activities.

Objective: 50% of the visitors to the youth centre should be engaged in delivering activities.

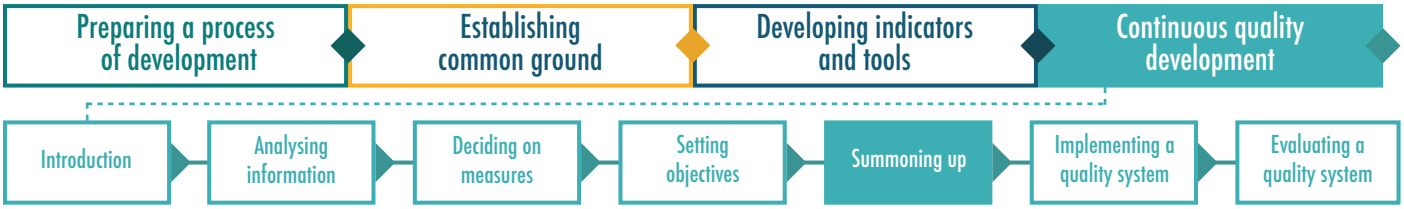
Tool 1: Clearly structured sheet for documenting statistics on how many young people visit the youth centre and how many take active part in delivering activities.

Tool 2: Questionnaire for young people on how they perceive their opportunities to take active part in delivering activities.

Tool 3: Structured peer assessment among youth workers regarding who is actually delivering the activities, youth workers or young people, and the reasons for this.

Tool 4: A manual for analysis with clearly structured questions to be asked in relation to the information gathered.

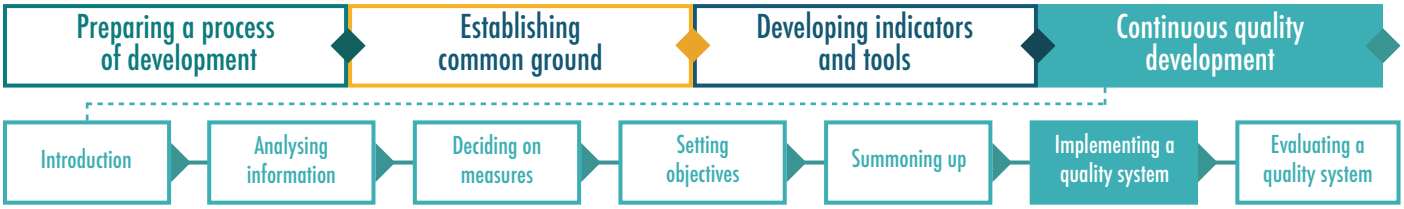
Having overall aims and indicators, tools for gathering information and a structured process for analysis, and deciding on measures and objectives, means that you have all that is needed for systematic and knowledge-based quality development. You have what is usually called a quality circle.



Congratulations! Working in an organisation committed to continuous development is one of the most satisfying things you can do!

Watch out!

Do not forget to congratulate each other and perhaps celebrate a little.



4.6. Implementing a system for quality development

How do you act in order to ensure successful implementation, and why is it a never-ending story?

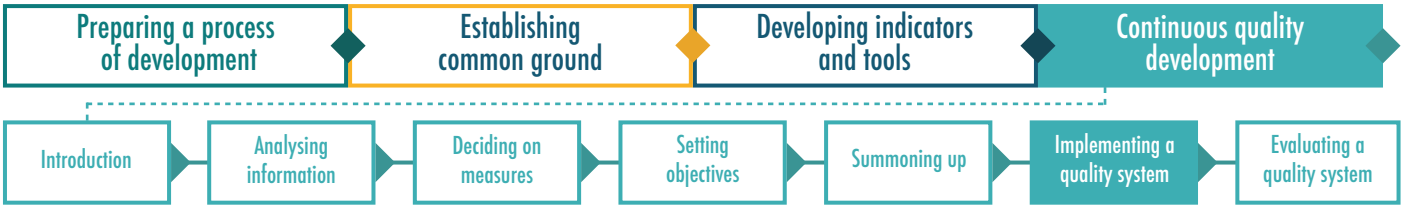
How easy or hard it will be to implement your system, whether it is a full quality circle or not, will first of all depend on how you have handled the process of developing it and on the culture of your organisation. If your organisation has a positive attitude towards change, it will of course be relatively easy. If not, you will have to work harder on creating the atmosphere and culture necessary. However, do not think of this as something separate that has to be done before the implementation. One of the best ways to change the culture of an organisation to a more open and constructive one is to implement a system for quality development, using the same approach based on analysis and reflection that you used when formulating indicators. As stated earlier, quality development has its backbone in clear aims, structured routines, and concrete tools, but the heart and soul of it is critical reflection and having a mind set on solutions. In essence this means that when you implement your system it cannot be presented as a fixed and ready-made product. It must instead be presented as, and actually be, a 'work in progress', open to changes and further development.

The best way to do this is to implement your system through a test phase with clear routines for feedback on all aspects of it, from the choice of indicators to the tools for gathering information. This way you will send a clear signal that you want to involve people in the design of the system and take their ideas and opinions into consideration. Before starting a test phase there are, however, a couple of necessary preparations to be carried out if the testing is to function as planned.

- First of all you must make sure everybody concerned understands why you should use the system and the different tools and routines, the motives and benefits. Understanding the purpose is a necessary precondition if it is to function as planned. No system for documentation will, for example, function if the people who are supposed to use it do not understand why they should document different things and how the information is to be used.
- Secondly, you must make the whole process clear, from the gathering of information to the suggestions for measures to be taken and the setting of new objectives. Explain what different roles the different stakeholders have and how the suggested measures will be handled.
- Finally, you must explain how the different tools are to be used, give training in using them and offer relevant user support.

Without these preparations the feedback from the test phase will be given from the wrong perspective and risks being irrelevant. Lack of understanding is also likely to lead to suspicion about your motives for gathering information and make the testers search for weaknesses and problems without wanting to find solutions. You have had a handbook for your process; they will of course need your guidance if the test phase is to work out well and end in a well-implemented system.

During and after the test phase there must be discussions among all the stakeholders concerned. How much resistance and how many suggestions for changes these discussions will contain depends on how you, as a team and as individual team members, have handled the development of the system in relation to the categories you represent. If everybody



involved has had continuous discussions with their respective peers, they have most probably created a sense of understanding and ownership. In this case the reactions you will get during the test phase will not be based on fear and suspicion but on a desire to contribute. If anybody involved has not had this kind of dialogue, the discussions during and after the test phase will be harder to handle and will require more time and patience.

As the use of a quality circle will lead to the gradual development of almost all aspects of youth work, from policy to concrete activities, it is also likely to generate new forms of youth work, new systems for funding it, new partners to cooperate with, and so on. This, in combination with changes in society, will, in turn, require adjustments to different elements in the system. You might, for example, need new indicators or modernised tools for gathering information. Which need to be implemented. Which will lead to further development. Once you have a quality circle, implementation becomes an on-going process!

Watch out!

Having a quality circle might, if you are not careful, lead to the feeling of running in circles! The biggest risk of this occurs if analysis and re ection become mechanical and are carried out more as a duty than out of a desire to learn new things and develop further. It is when you feel that this is becoming a risk that peer assessment is most valuable. Having someone who shares your experiences looking at you from the outside, asking questions and re ecting on things you might have become blind to, will then be the necessary wake- up-call that you need to keep your discussions alive and worthwhile.

Do not ever think you are done! You are not! Running a system for quality development in an ever-changing reality requires continuous follow-up and development. However, do not worry, when the time comes you will have developed and will be ready!

Live story: The logbook – its birth and upbringing

The logbook was born from the insight that learning requires continuous reflection based on relevant and reliable input. Since the founding of KEKS in 2005 the organisation has based its quality development on the analysis of various questionnaires for young people and on statistics regarding costs and number of visitors and activity hours. These questionnaires indicated the degree to which young people felt safe, took part in delivering activities, and so on. The statistics showed the cost per participant and activity hour and how this related to the degree of safety and participation.

Over the first few years KEKS members learned a lot through this analysis, by comparing the results of different years and different youth centres, and exchanging experiences and methods relating to how to tackle different situations. KEKS felt, however, that there was a need for further development:

- the results of KEKS youth centre questionnaire were only compiled and analysed once a year [9] – KEKS felt a need to carry out more continuous analysis of everyday youth work;
- following the analysis of the questionnaire it was often quite hard to remember what the situation had looked like some months before – KEKS needed to keep track of what was actually done, which young people took part and how they interacted;
- the gathering of statistics was sometimes and in some places forgotten or done in a less reliable way – KEKS needed it to be done in a more structured and systematic way;
- a lot of knowledge and many experiences were lost when people did not remember how activities had been carried out or left youth work – KEKS needed a collective memory to consult the next time an activity was to be carried out.

The idea was then born to create a web-based system for the documentation of statistics and activities, called the logbook. The first version, implemented in 2009, was developed by KEKS in cooperation with a researcher and in constant dialogue with five youth centres that tested the system.

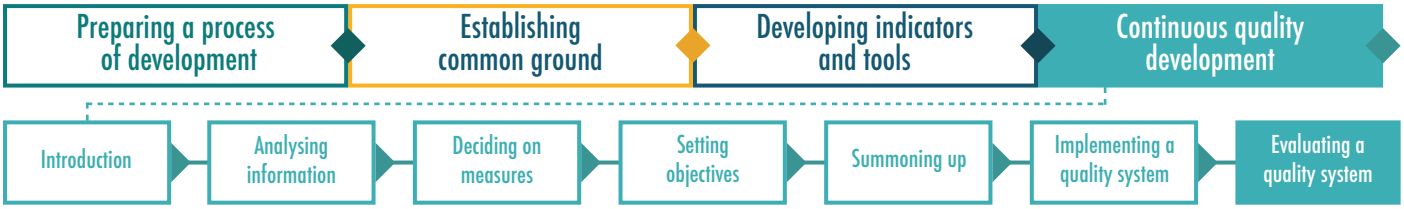
At this point it was already clear that the logbook would create a lot of discussion and development which, in turn, would affect the logbook itself and what should be documented in it. Therefore, every member municipality in KEKS has a youth worker in a reference network, responsible for providing local support.

Taken together this has led to a continuous development of the logbook. Today it has over 250 work groups using it and over 164,000 entries have been made and saved in the database, which makes it a great source for research on youth work. Through an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership [10] KEKS have developed the tenth, multi-lingual version that can be used regardless of country, kind of organisation and form of youth work. Please see the tutorial at: www.intercityyouth.eu.

For more information about the logbook, please see the appendix under 5.3.4.

[9] KEKS also has a questionnaire for young people active in groups and projects that is filled in and analysed continuously.

[10] The other partners were the City of Dublin, the Association of Estonian Youth Centres and the Hunedoara region in Romania.



4.7. Evaluating a quality system

How good is your quality system, and are there things that you still need to improve?

So, how did it go? Are you satisfied with your work so far? It might be that you are not quite ready yet or have not fully implemented your system, but never mind, the list of indicators for quality circles below may still be worth looking at. It might even give you some inspiration to develop your system further.

- Its purpose is clear and well known to all the relevant stakeholders;
- It covers the whole youth work context concerned;
  - It contains indicators related to all the core principles;
  - It contains indicators related to core features;
  - It contains indicators related to outcomes;
  - It contains indicators related to preconditions;
  - It contains indicators related to work processes;
- It is adapted to suit the specific context in which it is used;
- It is designed in cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders;
- It is implemented in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders;
- It has tools to gather the necessary information;
- It combines different sorts of tools in order to reflect different perspectives;
- It gathers information that is objectively verifiable;
- It simplifies and enhances analysis and reflection;
- There is a clear process for analysis, decisions about the measures to be taken and the setting of new objectives;
- It is used on a regular basis;
- It has easily accessible manuals to support its use;
- It is easy and not too time-consuming to use;
- It is integrated into daily work and activities;
- It is continuously evaluated and further developed.

Discuss:

- **To what degree does your system correspond to the above indicators?**
- **What is still left to do?**
- **When are you going to do it and who should be responsible?**

5. APPENDIX

5.1. Glossary

Aims: What you want to achieve on a long-term and more general basis.

Formal learning: Please see Section 5.2.7.

Informal learning: Please see Section 5.2.7.

Method: A specific way of doing something in clearly defined steps.

Non-formal learning: Please see Section 5.2.7.

Quality: The degree to which something fulfils its function.

Quality assessment: Actions taken in order to compare actual quality with indicators or standards relating to what is good quality.
(Assess = to judge the amount, value, quality, or importance of something.)

Quality assurance: Actions taken in order to make certain that you have the level of quality that you have decided on.
(To assure = To make certain.)

Quality circle: A set of interlinked tools for gathering, analysing and using knowledge to improve work which is used periodically (for instance on a yearly basis).

Quality development: Actions taken in order to improve quality.
(To develop = To cause something to grow or change into a more advanced, larger, or stronger form.)

Quality indicator: A statement on what characterises (is a sign of, shows) quality.

Quality system: A set of tools for quality development that are linked to each other in a clear and structured way.

Targets, Objectives or Goals: Is what you want to achieve during a specific time period formulated in a way that makes it possible to see whether you have achieved it or not.

Tool: A concrete means for doing something that different people could use and obtain the same, or at least very similar, results.

5.2. Definitions and explanations

5.2.1. The definitions of youth work and youth worker by the Expert Group – a background

It is often stated that youth work is very diverse and that this is both its richness and its problem. Richness because it makes it possible for youth work to, at its best, adapt to the local needs and conditions of young people. Problem because it can weaken or obscure youth work's identity in relation to both young people and other actors in the youth policy area, such as schools and the social sector.

However, something as rich and diverse as youth work cannot be defined by its concrete actions or the settings in which it takes place, but only by its overall aims and by the principles that must guide it if it is to be successful.

The Expert Group report and this handbook are, therefore, based on the Council Conclusions of 2010 and 2013 (see list of reference documents in Section 5.4) that provide two basic and essential statements on youth work. These statements constitute a common point of reference and clear delimitations for youth work. These are:

- Youth work offers developmental spaces and opportunities for all young people and 'is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation'.
- Youth work focuses on the personal and social development of young people.

These statements are the basis for the definition of youth work and youth worker used in this handbook:

'Actions directed towards young people regarding activities where they take part voluntarily, designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning.'

'People working in direct contact with young people, carrying out activities designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning.'

The wording 'actions directed towards young people' in the working definition of youth work also indicates that not all actions taken by young people themselves are necessarily youth work. Young people organising activities for their peers is youth work, but young people in a youth organisation running courses on how to use the Internet for people aged 65+ is not youth work. The latter is, of course, a good activity for older people. At the same time young people would surely develop new skills while doing it. Designing funding or support systems for youth organisations carrying out these kinds of activities is youth work ('actions directed towards young people'), but the carrying out of the activity in itself is not youth work.

5.2.2. Different forms of youth work

Youth work takes place in many different forms and settings. In order to clarify the different forms to which different indicators could be applied, we have listed the most common ones below:

- youth centres
- youth projects
- outreach/detached youth work
- informal youth groups
- youth camps/colonies
- youth information
- youth organisations
- youth movements.

These are the most common forms of youth work and, as different terms are used in different countries or local conditions, there are other forms of youth work that are included in the definition of youth work used in this handbook.

5.2.3. Relation to other definitions of youth work

It is important to make clear the borders between youth work and other activities directed towards young people, such as sport and cultural activities. Since these types of activities are often used as tools within youth work, the borders might seem blurred. However, as stated in the report *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union:* 'The difference is in the hierarchy of objectives and the openness of the activities. Sport activities that are based purely on improving performance and reaching excellence in a given sport would most likely not be considered to be youth work by representatives of the sector.' (You will find a link to the report in the appendix under 5.5.)

This means that an activity is primarily defined by its overall aim or purpose. The term 'leisure activities' for example refers to the provision of leisure activities that are fun and attractive but do not have as their aim the personal and social development of young people. Informal learning might of course take place in such a setting, as it could anywhere else, but that is not why it is run, and thus it is not youth work.

Offering young people 'a space', for example a room with some tables and chairs, where they could spend their time after school, but without any ambition or support for non-formal learning and personal development, is also not youth work.

This distinction is also relevant when drawing the line between youth work and social work. Youth work often has aims regarding prevention and social inclusion. These are also the objectives of social work, but as long as young people take part voluntarily and the aim is personal and social development, it is still youth work. If the same work is done but the young people are obliged to participate it is social work.

5.2.4. Who is a young person?

The age limits defining who is a young person varies throughout Europe. The age of the target group might, of course, affect how you prioritise different indicators. Otherwise it is not really relevant for your work with quality development if you are considered young until the age of 25, 30 or even 35 in your country.

5.2.5. Formal, non-formal and informal learning

The definitions below are based on the ones in the *Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* (2012/C 398/01).

- **Formal learning** means learning which takes place within the systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.
- **Non-formal learning** means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present.
- **Informal learning** means the learning which results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

Non-formal learning can be planned and take place within, for example, a youth exchange on the theme of 'save the endangered turtles' and lead to enhanced:

- knowledge, e.g. about turtles and their living conditions;
- skills, e.g. ability to swim;
- skills, e.g. ability to cooperate;
- attitudes, e.g. tolerance, engagement.

Informal learning is formed by culture and the challenges we face in life. It is, most often, through informal learning that you know how to:

- dress on different occasions;
- play board games;
- behave when you meet strangers.

From the point of view of the individual the skills and knowledge gained through non-formal and informal learning are, of course, equally important. As non-formal learning takes place as the result of a planned activity, youth workers must work directly and consciously on it. Informal learning, on the other hand, takes place spontaneously and is shaped and nourished by the context and culture in which the individual lives. This, in turn, underlines the importance of youth work creating a secure, open, inclusive and creative environment where young people can meet and develop together. Youth work's focus on young people's desire to develop and learn new things is of course a vital part of creating such a culture.

5.3. Examples for inspiration

5.3.1. Why these examples? – the research background

This handbook is based on the report of the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, its statements and suggested solutions. The research done for this handbook built on the Expert Group report and used the following instruments to gather more information that could be used in the process of developing the handbook:

- a digital questionnaire
- interviews with experts
- assessments of eight quality tools
- desk research.

The main stakeholders contacted were representatives from:

- the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States
- youth policy makers at local and national level
- Erasmus+ National Agencies
- SALTO Youth Resource Centres
- Eurodesk Information Centres
- InterCity Youth board members
- participants in the Second European Youth Work Convention, 2015.

The digital questionnaire was sent out to 110 contacts in all 28 EU Member States, 35 of which answered. The main themes in the questionnaire were:

- experience in quality development;
- the use of tools or systems for quality development.

Outcomes were:

- 79% use some kind of tool or tools for quality development;
- the main users are youth workers and managers of youth organisations.

27 interviews were held with different stakeholders engaged in youth work and quality development.

The main topics discussed during the interviews were:

- the kinds of tools or systems for quality development that they used and how these had been developed, implemented and run;
- their thoughts and ideas concerning principles for youth work, indicators, methods and learning circles;
- dos and don’ts in the development, implementation and running of a tool or system for quality development.

Eight different tools were then selected as examples based on criteria that were set at the start of the research. These criteria stipulated that the examples should be of high quality and cover:

- tools for gathering and managing information;
- various kinds of tools;
- tools from a diversity of countries,
- tools related to different forms of youth work.

Tools that matched these criteria were found only in some EU Member States. Therefore the instruments that have been assessed are not from all over Europe.

Desk research on documents provided by the stakeholders was done throughout the phase of information-gathering.

Main outcomes of the information-gathering phase:

- Tools for gathering information regarding youth work exist in all the 28 Member States. However, the use of these tools is only a part of a structured process of quality development and is found only in a few of the countries. It was therefore hard to find tools that could serve as examples for inspiration in this handbook.
- The initiative for developing quality tools or systems almost always comes from national or local public bodies. Sometimes the fact that there is a national system that focuses on quality assurance has led to more focus on quality development at the local level. In some countries locally developed tools are now being used at a national level.
- The interviews also revealed the wide variety of youth work practices and contexts.
- The information-gathering phase added one tool (transformative evaluation) to the instruments already presented by the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States.

Seminars

Two seminars were held with experts from all over the EU. The aim of the first seminar (4 and 5 April 2016) was to gather information and strengthen the applicability of the handbook. The aim of the second seminar (26 and 27 September 2016) was to receive feedback for further development of the handbook and to collect suggestions for its dissemination and implementation. The valuable input of many experts and stakeholders in youth work from EU Member States helped to develop a handbook that hopefully will support all stakeholders in Europe to improve the quality of their youth work.

5.3.2. Assessment criteria

The examples have been assessed in relation to some very general and basic criteria. As all criteria are not relevant to all tools, the fact that a tool does not meet a criterion does not automatically mean that it is not a good one. Since they have different purposes, the tools have not been compared to each other. This list is by no means exhaustive; it is there to give a picture of what different tools might look like and to function as inspiration.

The criteria marked 'Yes' in the template below are met by all the assessed tools and are therefore not reported in each individual case.

Template for assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have youth workers been taking part in development?	Yes
Have young people been taking part in development?	
Have people experienced in systems for quality development been taking part?	Yes
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	
Is there a manual for handling it?	
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	
Is there an easy accessible support function?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	
Relation to work process	
Is it used on a regular basis?	Yes
Is it integrated into daily work?	
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	

Below, in Sections 5.3.3 to 5.3.12, you will find the different tools assessed.

5.3.3. Questionnaire to young people on how they perceive youth centres

The tool consists of a web-based questionnaire for all young people visiting youth centres, with questions directly linked to indicators on inclusiveness, safety, participation, influence and the attractiveness of activities, and has questions in five areas:

- background, e.g. age and gender;
- safety;
- premises, equipment, opening hours and activities;
- treatment by youth workers;
- participation and influence.

It is accompanied by:

- a user manual for youth workers;
- information material to young people;
- a booklet for young people in which the questions are further explained;
- a template for structured presentation of results;
- a manual for the analysis of results.

All answers are compiled in a searchable database.

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- assess how well youth centres and departments achieve central indicators in order for them to be able to set objectives in relation to indicators and decide on measures for quality development;
- function as a basis for structured reflection and peer learning between youth workers from different youth centres.

The process includes the following:

- young people answering the questionnaire once a year;
- the results being compiled by KEKS and presented per youth centre and municipality;
- youth workers using the results as a basis for reflection and the setting of annual objectives;
- KEKS supporting the analysis and quality development.

Implementation:

The questions were formulated by youth workers in relation to indicators that they themselves had formulated. In a second step the questions were tested by, and discussed with, young people visiting different youth centres. Finally, researchers checked them. The first version was implemented in 2002, and it has since been revised three times after feedback from youth workers and the young people they are working with. New youth workers are continuously informed about how to use it.

Strengths of the tool:

- It is easy to use at all levels, no paper work for staff.
- It focuses on the most important aspects of youth work.
- It offers a common ground for analysis, reflection and exchange of good practices.
- It provides structured input for analysis and reflection.
- It creates reliable and comparable statistics relating to the target group and how young people in different youth centres and municipalities perceive their participation in youth work.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- Some young people with language difficulties need support to understand the questions.
- The questionnaire is only answered once a year and therefore does not cover changes that might have occurred during the year.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	Yes
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	Yes
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	Yes
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	Yes
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	Yes
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	No
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	Yes
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	-
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	Yes
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	Yes

Tool administrated by: KEKS, Sweden
Website: www.keks.se

5.3.4. The logbook – tool for continuous documentation of youth work in youth centres, youth projects and informal groups

The tool consists of a web-based system for the documentation of:

- number of visitors and gender balance;
- opening and activity hours;
- hours and participants in spontaneous activities, planned open activities and group activities;
- type of activities carried out, e.g. cultural activities and sports;
- degree of young people's participation;
- description and analysis of activities, i.e. a diary with space for analysis.

It also contains sections for planning and follow-up of different forms of activities.
All information is compiled in a searchable database, including a function for extracting reports. There is an extensive user manual.

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- gather information on how youth work reaches its target group, diversity of activities, degree of youth participation, the use of different work processes, and so on;
- initiate and support continuous and structured reflection among youth workers on information that relates to com mon indicators on, mainly, target group and youth participation;
- function as a basis for continuous evaluation, self-assessment and peer assessment.

The process includes the following:

- documentation, which takes about 15 minutes, done by youth workers after each work shift or activity;
- regular extraction of reports as a basis for analysis.

The statistics are also combined with results from different questionnaires in the annual compilation of results that is a part of KEKS's common system for quality development.

Implementation:
The system was developed by KEKS in cooperation with a researcher and a web developer, and the first version was implemented in 2009. This was done on the basis of a test phase in five different youth centres that gave feedback on the system, the manual, and the training module. In order to support implementation and further development of the logbook, every member municipality in KEKS has a youth worker who is responsible for implementation, support and further development. These youth workers also form a reference network that has regular meetings to exchange experiences on how to support their colleagues and organisations in the use of the logbook. This implementation method has led to a continuous development of the logbook, and the version currently in use is the ninth one.

Strengths of the tool:

- It is easy to use at all levels.
- It focuses on the most important aspects of work and provides a common ground for analysis, reflection and the exchange of good practices.
- It enhances and supports continuous analysis and reflection.
- It creates reliable and comparable statistics.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- Youth workers need education and training to use it.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	No
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	Yes
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	Yes
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	Yes
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	Yes
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	Yes
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	Yes
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	-
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	Yes
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	Yes

Tool administrated by: KEKS, Sweden
Website: www.keks.se

5.3.5. SPAM – tool for self-assessment and peer assessment of work processes in open youth work

The tool consists of a set of 27 criteria that are used for self-assessment and peer assessment of open youth work. The criteria focus mainly on participation, relationships among young people and between young people and youth workers, and the work processes and knowledge used in everyday work.

There is a handbook for users of the tool. A new part, developed by young people who take part in youth work in the municipality of Lappeenranta, has since been added to the tool.

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- help to identify the strengths and areas of development of the youth centre open activities;
- create a shared meaning and understanding of the content of high-quality activities;
- set objectives for development.

The process includes the following:

- trainings of assessors;
- self-assessment that is done every year;
- peer assessment that is done by two colleagues visiting from another youth centre;
- feedback from the peer assessors.

Implementation:

In 2005 the idea was born to introduce a tool based on EFQM, the European Foundation for Quality Management [(11)], used in the UK, in Helsinki and an eastern region of Finland. Lapeeranta is one of the cities in that region.

The reasons given by directors of youth work for introducing the tool were:

- youth work seemed to be comparable;
- the goals seemed to be comparable (active citizenship, stimulating opportunities);
- the vision was similar, value based.

But for several reasons the tool could not be used in the Finnish context:

- different sub-goals;
- different priorities;
- cultural differences;
- different work methods;
- youth workers and local managers could not agree on the indicators.

[11] www.efqm.org

In the eastern region of Finland it was decided to develop a new tool and use a bottom-up process.

The youth workers re-designed the tool to suit their forms of youth work. Looking back on that process the important lessons learned are described below.

- A bottom-up process leads to an instrument that fits the needs and wishes of youth workers. The tool is customised to suit their methods and goals.
- The bottom-up development and design of the instrument also has its boundaries: it is based on the framework of the local context. It is linked to what youth workers already know and do. So it can be used to improve existing work processes but it could become an obstacle for developing new work processes.
- Not all wishes and expectations of different stakeholders were taken into account in the process, for example the needs of policy-makers. The instrument does not show the results of youth work.

The SPAM tool is used in the 27 cities that form the Kanuuna network. For further information, see the live story describing the use of the tool in Lapeeranta (Section 3.5).

Strengths of the tool:

- It enables peer learning and the mutual development of youth work.
- It facilitates regional cooperation.
- The benefit of the audit feedback is the recognition of the development areas and the power of positive feedback to inspire and guide the work in the right direction.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- The set of criteria is quite customised, though at the moment it is being developed towards a more generic form.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	Yes
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	Yes
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	Yes
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	No
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	Yes
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	No
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	Yes
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	No
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	-
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	Yes
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	Yes

Tool administrated by: Kanuuna network, Finland
Website: www.nuorisokanuuna.fi

5.3.6. Tool for assessment of preconditions for youth work in local municipalities

The tool consists of a set of indicators related to four aims/areas:

- versatile non-formal learning opportunities have been established for young people;
- young people have the opportunity of getting participation and membership experience;
- young people are guaranteed info and counselling, there is problem prevention;
- necessary environmental conditions are established for quality youth work.

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- map youth work in a local municipality, including strengths and areas of development;
- plan the development of youth work quality, including setting standards of youth work quality at the local level and informing local and state level youth policy;
- monitor progress;
- provide support and mentoring to the local municipality assessed.

It is used to assess quality in all youth work settings located in the local municipality, including:

- youth centres
- youth organisations
- youth councils
- youth camps
- youth information centres
- youth work in schools
- hobby schools.

The process includes the following:

- data-gathering (documents, action plans, interviews/questionnaires with young people, youth workers, representatives of youth organisations, etc.);
- internal and external assessment: the internal assessment form is filled in by youth workers and young people, while the external assessment form is filled in by 'guest' youth workers from other local municipalities;
- 'whole picture' data analysis carried out by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC);
- summary and feedback offered by the EYWC to every local municipality assessed;
- support, including training courses and consultation, to the local municipality on youth work quality development.

Implementation:
The tool was developed within the project called 'Developing youth work quality' which was co-funded by the European Social Fund.

The development started with an orientation on systems that are used elsewhere. Many stakeholders were involved in the development of the tool: amongst others the National Youth Council, the National Union of Youth Workers, and the National Organisation of Pupils and Youth Workers of some local municipalities. The stakeholders were consulted in working groups examining different topics: what are the common goals, what criteria should be used, and so on.

Good preparation for the development of the quality instrument was important. It gave a good insight into what to develop and made it possible to avoid mistakes that could have had a long-lasting in uence on the process.

The implementation started in 2010 with a pilot phase, during which phase local communities could participate free of charge. After this pilot in 2011 an online version of the instrument was developed that could be used by local municipalities on a voluntary basis. In 2016 about a third of all the municipalities are using this instrument.

Strengths of the tool:
- The tool is good at motivating local municipalities to develop youth work practice as a whole in all settings and for all young people.
- The assessment does not force local municipalities to compete with each other; instead it supports and recognises them.

Weaknesses of the tool:
- The tool is not designed to assess the quality of a single youth project, programme or institution.
- The tool is more suitable for assessing youth work quality in medium-sized local municipalities than in small (fewer than 1,000 inhabitants) or large (more than 50,000 inhabitants) local municipalities.
- Filling in the forms is time-consuming and volunteer members of assessment teams need special training.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	No
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	No
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	Yes
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	Yes
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	Yes
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	No
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	No
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	-
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	-
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	-

Tool administrated by: Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC), Estonia
Website: www.entk.ee

5.3.7. Tool for assessment of youth organisations

The tool consists of:

The tool is based on the EFQM, the European Foundation for Quality Management, and has nine areas of assessment:

- management of activities;
- operating principles and planning of activities;
- staff and volunteers;
- partnerships and resources;
- processes;
- actors' (young people involved) results;
- staff and volunteers' results;
- social results;
- central performance capacity results.

It is comprised:

- a basic information form;
- an activity assessment form;
- a sample of the nine areas of assessment.

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- serve as a basis for assessing youth organisations when they apply for a salary grant from the Helsinki Youth Department;
- improve the quality of youth organisations through self-assessment in five different areas: Documentation, Planning and development, Assessment of result production, Management and personnel, and Volunteers.

The process includes:

- Organisations apply for a salary grant.
- The Helsinki City Youth Department sends out audit forms to the organisations that are going to participate in an assessment according to the grant regulations criteria.
- The organisations have to fill in the audit forms within four months, during which time they have the opportunity to discuss issues related to the assessment in a meeting with a representative of the Youth Department.
- After the form has been returned, there is an assessment meeting held between the Youth Department and the organisation.
- The final step is for the Youth Committee to decide if the grant will be awarded.

Implementation:

In 2005 the tool was used for 20-25 large-scale youth organisations. Most of these organisations had difficulties completing the assessment using this tool. The main difficulties were:

- the criteria/indicators were not very clear;
- not all the indicators were applicable for the Helsinki context;
- the language that was used was too abstract.

After this rather negative experience, the Helsinki youth department decided to create their own version of the EFQM, which was to be more user-friendly, less complicated and adapted to suit the Helsinki context. The Helsinki Youth Department produced a draft version of the adapted tool. In this version less attention was devoted to the structure of the organisations, and the organisation itself and the results of its activities became the main focus. This draft version was tested with the organisations. The umbrella organisation of the youth organisations played an important role in creating the new version of the tool. This new version was used in the second assessment during 2007-2008.

Before the third assessment started, a seminar was held in 2010 with the youth organisations. During this seminar there was a discussion about the fact that the previous assessments had also been carried out by an external auditor whose task had been to identify the strengths and areas of development of the organisations.

The unambiguous message from the organisations was that external auditing was not needed. The organisations felt that it was more important to have feedback discussions with the youth department, rather than to get external feedback; the Helsinki Youth Department also supported this view.

Strengths of the tool:

- It helps organisations to analyse and develop quality in their organisation.
- Organisations get feedback on the aspects of quality that need improvement.
- Youth participation is an important element of the assessment process.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- Smaller organisations find it difficult to understand the indicators being used.
- After going through an assessment for a second or third time some organisations do not see the point of it any more.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	No
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	No
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	No
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	Yes
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	Yes
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	No
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	Yes
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	No
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	No
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	-
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	-
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	-

Tool administrated by: Helsinki Youth Department, Finland
Website: www.hel.fi/www/nk/en

5.3.8. Youthwise – tool for coaching youth groups and interviewing collaboration partners

The tool consists of a web-based questionnaire. To show the interactions between the professional and a young person, and to see the results of these interactions, the young person and the professional fill in a digital questionnaire together.

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- work effectively on the personal development goals of young people;
- strengthen the self-reliance and social resilience of young people;
- teach young people to deploy their abilities and to take the initiative, and gain better insight into the quality and social value of youth work;
- give valuable insight into the target groups' issues, goals and successes.

The process includes the following:

- A working method which is based on the learning circle.
- Young people and professionals fill in a digital form through Youthwise and draw up a personal development plan that describes the individual young person's goals and actions. Together the young person and professional formulate actions, examine the contribution of the professional and consider who else can help, e.g. someone from the network or an institution. The questionnaire can be seen as a contract that is signed. After the agreed period, the professional will receive a message that it is time to evaluate. The young adult and the professional use the final questionnaire for this evaluation.
- Drawing up a plan for groups of young people with goals and actions. The professional can create questionnaires for groups and this way help provide the youth worker with direction for the coaching of groups. The group dynamics and group processes as well as a specific activity can be formulated as a result.
- Questionnaires for external partners enable the experience of the various partners to be evaluated. This feedback helps to further increase the quality of youth work and creates a broader picture of the results.
- The questionnaires are analysed and presented in a report. On request DSP-groep provides statements and results from the data in Youthwise in order to give the professional (and/or management and/or client) feedback on the progress. DSP-groep draws up an overall report for the City of Amsterdam and separate reports for districts.

Implementation:

A civil servant from the City of Amsterdam was the developer of the original idea for a quality tool for youth work. The department of welfare provided a grant for the development of a quality tool in line with the original idea. DSP-groep was hired as the facilitator of this process. A working group was formed with managers of three youth work organisations for open youth work and civil servants from the City of Amsterdam.

The working group discussed a first draft version of the tool and the next step was to discuss this prototype with youth workers from the three youth work organisations. After this, the youth workers tested the tool in sessions with young

people and together they filled in the questionnaire. The youth workers reported their experiences and their suggestions for improvement to the facilitator. DSP-groep used these experiences and suggestions to create a new and improved version of the tool. In 2012 this new version was implemented.

The development and implementation of the tool has continued since 2012. Some new features were added to the digital tool and the other four youth work organisations in Amsterdam also began working with Youthwise.

Strengths of the tool:

- Youthwise helps young people to formulate goals and necessary actions, to attribute a duration time to this and to evaluate afterwards whether the goals have been achieved or not.
- The professionals gain more focus in contributing to the personal development of young people.
- The professionals learn to reflect on their role and develop a role as coach and they encourage individual development.
- Managers use the instrument to coach their staff as it provides tools for discussing goals and results.
- Each user has a personal and password-protected homepage in Youthwise where lists can be created, viewed and archived. Professional and management executives can monitor the progress via a personal inbox.
- The reports that Youthwise provide give valuable insights into the target groups' issues, goals and successes. Youthwise enables youth workers to report their results to the local governments.
- Municipalities/clients gain better insight into the demands and needs of young people and the views of cooperation partners.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- Some young people with language difficulties need help to understand the questions.
- Youthwise is not connected with other quality systems that are used in youth work organisations.
- The system does not produce reports itself.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	Yes
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	Yes
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	Yes
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	Yes
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	No
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	Yes
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	No
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	No
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	Yes
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	Yes

Tool administrated by: DSP-groep, Netherlands
Website: www.dsp-groep.eu, www.youthwise.eu

5.3.9. Journal de Bord – tool for documentation of youth centre activities

The tool consists of a simple questionnaire for collecting data about the involvement of young people in the activities of youth centres. This data includes:

- members (number, sex, age, nationality, address);
- visitors per day (male/female);
- activities (male/female participants, number of activities);
- information and guidance (male/female, date, main theme).

The main purpose of the tool is to:

- systematically gather data about the extent to which young people participate in activities which are organised by youth centres and to use this as a base for self-evaluation;
- have a clear and updated picture of the national situation in youth work.

The purpose is not to make comparisons between organisations but to relate the data to statistical information about young people in a particular city or area.

The process includes the following:

- The data are used mainly as input for the regular self-evaluation of the youth centre. In addition, the data are also used for evaluation of youth work at national level.
- The City of Luxembourg compiles a report, which it discusses with the youth organisations once a year. This meeting also determines the priorities of the organisation for the upcoming year.

Implementation:

- Before the instrument was designed, the developer set up a work group of youth work organisations in response to the top-down approach that was developed by the National Government in 2004. This work group was involved in the development of the tool.
- The tool was developed in 2010 for the City of Luxembourg. The aim was that it should take little extra time for youth workers and it should provide an overview of their work, particularly with regard to the number of activities and visitors.
- The first version of the tool was a simple spreadsheet to be filled in by youth work organisations.
- In meetings with the organisations the main indicators were determined to make their work more transparent.
- Later on in the development stage questions were added about the goals to be achieved by the activities. A distinction was made between non-formal education and counselling to young people.
- There was a two-year test phase in the City of Luxembourg before the tool was launched nationwide in 2012. Since 2012 the development of the tool has continued and the use of it is now mandatory nationwide.
- Youth workers are given training on how to use the tool.

Strengths of the tool:

- The tool makes it possible to gain a rapid and systematic overview of the activities in a youth centre.
- The summary of all the individual reports provides a good national overview of youth work.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- The statistics need further discussion and interpretation so that they can be related to aims.
- The tool only gathers basic quantitative information.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	No
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	Yes
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	Yes
Is there a manual for handling it?	No
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	No
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	No
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	Yes
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	Yes
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	Yes
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	Yes
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	No
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	Yes

Tool administrated by: City of Luxembourg

Website: http://www.vdl.lu/Citoyens+et+r%C3%A9sidents/Enfants+_+Jeunes-p-64376/Jeunesse.html

5.3.10. Transformative evaluation – tool for a participatory evaluation process

The tool consists of a number of participants' Significant Change stories during a given time period and the systematic collective analysis of these stories.

The main purpose of the tool is to:
Engage people in a spirit of co-inquiry as a core part of practice improvement and shift learning from an individual activity to an organisational activity by creating collective reflective spaces and enabling dialogue up, down and across the organisation. Transformative evaluation is a participatory evaluation process, based on the 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) technique and is dialogical in nature.

The process includes the following:
Transformative evaluation follows a four-stage process, repeated every three to four months:

- Story Generation Stage. This stage involves youth workers generating significant change stories. The process of facilitation enhances relationships, supports young people's reflection and identification of learning. Story generation takes place in the everyday practice of youth workers, through reflective conversations between youth workers and young people.
- Analysis and Selection Stage. This stage involves the analysis and selection of the generated stories and begins with the sorting of stories into domains and assigning of domain names. This leads to in-depth analysis and reflection and is a challenging part of the process as the youth workers explore the 'nature' or essence of the young person's account.
- At this stage the Steering Group discusses the stories forwarded to them. They review and select the most significant change story for the whole circle, and then return this MSC story to the youth workers group together with the reason for their selection. This stage requires additional time (generally 2-3 hours for each circle, i.e. once every 3 months). Projects which have adopted Transformative evaluation use it as part of their overall evaluation process.
- Meta-evaluation Stage. This is a period of reflection and evaluation of the process to identify learning for the future.

Implementation:

- Youth workers were involved in the development of the method, originally through a participatory research project (2010-2011). The method includes an aspect of continual refinement to ensure its maximum potential in a given context.
- Young people were also involved in the development of the method in terms of generating stories, and their feedback has been used to improve the first stage of the process.
- Other stakeholders, such as project managers, partner organisations, funding bodies and community members, have been involved, some of whom have quality assurance knowledge and skills.
- The process does not align with any specific or particular quality standards or frameworks. It is used alongside

other forms of evaluation, and complements these.

Strengths of the tool:

- It offers a methodology which promotes interaction and communication between stakeholders.
- Establishing a dialogue between the 'evaluators', in this case the youth workers, and community members, the young people and stakeholders is a critical element of a transformative paradigm.
- The youth workers engage young people in conversation, ask questions and record the responses.
- The process is relatively straightforward, although training is required to ensure that stories are generated appropriately, and ethically. The group processes in the following stages require knowledge and understanding of group facilitation to ensure a robust and participatory analysis of stories.

Weaknesses of the tool:

- The tool is not clearly linked to quality indicators.

Assessment:

Development of tool or system	
Have young people been taking part in development?	Yes
Have other systems for quality development been used as reference?	No
User friendliness	
Is it easy to handle, uncomplicated?	Yes
Is there a manual for handling it?	Yes
Are users getting training in how to handle it?	Yes
Efficiency in relation to quality development	
Is the information gathered clearly linked to aims, standards or indicators?	No
Is the information gathered used in the process of setting concrete objectives?	Yes
Is all information gathered used for analysis and reflection?	Yes
Credibility of information gathered	
Will different users come up with the same result? (If the information is possible to verify.)	-
Is there a clear routine for analysing information gathered?	Yes
Relation to work process	
Is it integrated into daily work?	Yes
Is it connected to other tools, as part of a system? (If it is a tool.)	No
Are the different tools clearly connected to each other? (If it is a system.)	-
Further development of tool or system	
Is there a clear routine for users to give feedback on it?	Yes
Has it been further developed as a result of feedback?	Yes

Tool administrated by: Sue Cooper, University of St Mark & St John, United Kingdom
Website: http://www.marjon.ac.uk/about-marjon/staff-list-and-profiles/cooper-dr-susan.html

5.3.11. Manual for quality assurance of non-formal education

This tool has been added to the handbook as inspiration with a short description. It has not been assessed unlike the 8 tools described in Sections 5.3.3 to 5.3.10.

The manual is based on a circle of different steps that are to be followed by the implementing organisation based on a set of quality indicators and with the support of a group of peer organisations. The indicators proposed focus on key elements of non-formal education activity, such as learners' needs and the learning process, the resources, the educators and the content.

The main purpose of the tool is to provide organisations with a tool for growth and self-improvement regarding their work with non-formal education.

You can find the manual at: https://issuu.com/yomag/docs/nfeqa_manual_single

Manual developed by: European Youth Forum
Website: www.youthforum.org

5.3.12. Self-assessment tool for youth information centres

This tool has been added to the handbook as inspiration with a short description. It has not been assessed unlike the 8 tools described in Sections 5.3.3 to 5.3.10.

This publication aims to help all those involved in youth information services to provide quality information and services. It is divided into three parts:

- a theoretical approach to quality management;
- an evaluation tool for your youth information service;
- six examples of functioning quality management systems in Europe.

The main purpose of the tool is to improve youth information and counselling services.

You can find the publication at: http://eryica.org/sites/default/files/EURYICA_v2_page%20by%20page_0.pdf

Publication developed by: European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)
Website: www.eryica.org

5.4. Links to some important reference documents

If you need formal support for your arguments, some of these official documents might be useful.

Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018).
You can find it at:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009G1219%2801%29

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on youth work
You can find it at:
http://eurlex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:42010Y1204%2801%29

Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people
You can find it at:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52013XG0614%2802%29

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 20 May 2014 on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015
You can find it at:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:42014Y0614%2802%29

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018
You can find it at:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A42015Y1215%2801%29

5.5. Links for further reading

Below you will find links to some documents that might be helpful to improve youth work.

Working methods:

Methods for 'democratic meetings'
You can find some examples of methods for holding more democratic meetings at:
www.democracy.se/category/en07/en07mtd

Declarations:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Read the declaration at: http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Read the convention at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

Declaration of the First European Youth Work Convention, 2010
Read the declaration at:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2010_Declaration_European_youth_work_convention_en.pdf

Declaration of the Second European Youth Work Convention, 2015
Read the declaration at: http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/eywc-website

European programmes:

Erasmus+
Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport.
Read more at: http://ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus

Europe for Citizens
Europe for Citizens is a programme that aims to foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level.
Read more at: http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/

Reports:

Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability, 2014

This Expert Group report addresses the connection between youth work and learning outcomes.
You can find it at:
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/creative-potential_en.pdf

Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union, 2014

This is a broad study of youth work in the EU Member States.
You can find it at:
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf

Quality Youth Work – A common framework for the further development of youth work, 2015

The Expert Group report that led to the writing of this handbook.
You can find it at:
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf

2015 EU Youth Report

The 2015 EU Youth Report provides a picture both of young people in Europe and of youth policies at EU level and in Member States. It presents what EU countries and the European Commission have done to implement the the framework for European cooperation in the youth field over the past three years, and how this has helped to improve the lives of young people.
You can find it at:
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/youth-report-2015_en.pdf

Other:

Glossary of the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field

The glossary of the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field defines some key terms relating to European youth policy and youth work.
You can find it at:
http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary

ABSTRACT

Improving Youth Work – Your guide to quality development is a handbook that targets all stakeholders involved in youth work, from young people to people working in public administration and politicians. It provides the reader with an extensive and easily accessible step-by-step guide on how to engage in quality development in youth work. It gives the reader guidance on how to develop indicators, as well as the tools needed in order to see to what degree these indicators are met. The reader will also learn how to turn the implementation of a system for quality development into a means for positive organisational development. By doing this, the handbook provides the reader with a solid base for continuous and knowledge-based quality development.

The handbook is designed in a way that makes it useable regardless of the form of youth work concerned, how and by whom it is delivered, and the conditions under which it takes place. In addition to this, it also contains concrete examples of various tools for quality development currently used by different organisations. It also holds a section containing reference information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improving Youth Work – Your guide to quality development provides a detailed, step-by-step guide on how to build a system for, and work with, quality development. It does this in an easily accessible manner, with many examples, and in clear language that is free of technical terms. It can therefore be read by all of the different stakeholders who need to be involved in the process of quality development, from young people and youth workers to people working in public administration and politicians. It also gives concrete advice on how these stakeholders should interact in order to produce the best and most constructive process possible.

It builds on the report *Quality Youth Work – A common framework for the further development of youth work* produced by the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States, published in April 2015. In this report the Expert Group gives a working definition of youth work and states the core principles that must guide youth work if it is to be successful. Taken together, this establishes a common ground and framework for quality development and for this handbook. It enables users with different backgrounds to start from where they are and develop youth work in accordance with their own needs and conditions.

The process of building and running a system for quality development described in this handbook is applicable to all different forms of youth work, from open youth work in youth centres to mobility projects and the financing of youth organisations. It can be used regardless of the setting and conditions under which youth work takes place. It is useful regardless of the type of organisation that provides youth work and by whom it is carried out, be they paid youth workers or volunteers. In this way it fully respects the diversity of youth work.

After an introduction in which the reader is shown how it is structured and how it can be used, the handbook is divided into four main chapters and an appendix.

In Chapter 1 'Preparing a process of quality development', the reader learns how to run an efficient and inclusive process which takes into account the needs and interests of all the different stakeholders.

Chapter 2 'Establishing common ground for quality development' lays the foundation for sustainable development of youth work through discussing and defining all the central terms and concepts, such as 'quality', 'indicators' and 'the core principles of youth work'.

Chapter 3 'Developing indicators and tools to gather information' has a learning-by-doing approach, which the reader can use to formulate their own indicators as a basis for quality development. Running parallel to the development of indicators, the reader is guided on how to identify the degree to which the indicators are met. What different methods could be used to do a follow-up on, for example, youth participation, non-formal learning and the inclusion of marginalised groups of young people? In the last section, the reader learns how to find or develop the concrete tools needed in order to put these methods into practice. The chapter is supported with a lot of practical examples and discussion questions.

Chapter 4 ‘Working with continuous quality development’ gives step-by-step guidance on how to run a system for quality development. The reader learns how to manage the information gathered through different tools, and how to use this information to decide on measures for development and the setting of objectives. Having come this far, the reader will have a system for on-going and structured quality development and know how to operate it. The only thing left, which is covered in the next section, is to implement it. Here the dos and don’ts of implementation are discussed and advice is given on how to turn the implementation process into a means for positive organisational development.

In the final section ‘Evaluating a quality system’, the reader can discuss and evaluate the outcome of their process and, hopefully, feel that it has been a good and rewarding one.The appendix consists of a glossary, definitions and explanations and a lot of reference material, mostly through websites. It also contains some examples of existing tools used for quality development. This list of examples is by no means exhaustive; it is only there to illustrate what different tools might look like and to function as inspiration.

The main messages in this handbook are:

- The backbone of quality development is a clear and structured process that uses well-customised tools, but the heart and soul of it is constructive reflection and thorough analysis based on reliable information.
- Reflection and analysis, whether it takes place during the creation or running of a system for quality development, needs the views and engagement of all stakeholders concerned.
- Quality development should be a continuous process. Having a good atmosphere and fun while you work is therefore essential.

Hopefully, this handbook can function as an inspiring and steady partner on that long and winding road!

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