

CODE OF ETHICS FOR YOUTH WORKERS

PROJECT “YOUTH WORKERS FOR YOUTH”

SEGA - Coalition of Youth Organizations

National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility

Erasmus+

Agency for Youth and Sport

INTRODUCTION:

Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA in cooperation with the Agency for Youth and Sport implemented the project **“Youth Workers for Youth”**. **The project is implemented with the support of the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility, through the Erasmus + Key Action 3 (Structural Dialogue) programme.**

The purpose of this project was to influence youth participation in the democratic life by promoting the role of the Youth Worker. The approach that we propose is based on the recognition of the role of the Youth Worker as a separate profession, and on the development of a **“Code of Ethics for Youth Workers”** by which the professional skills, knowledge and competencies of youth workers will be standardized in the services they provide to the youth.

The first activity within the project was the National workshop with the decision-makers, entitled **“Recommendations for creating a Code of Ethics for Youth Workers”**, and it was aimed at defining and discussing the recommendations for improving youth work in Macedonia through the profession and role of the Youth Worker.

The next activity within the project was **an online questionnaire** for the youth nationwide. The youth group covered by the online survey were asked to list some of their opinions about the Youth Worker as an ethical profession. The main focus was on the design of the document **“Code of Ethics for Youth Workers”** in order to survey the opinion of young people whether they would feel more secure to approach Youth Workers to ask questions and obtain relevant information if there were such an official document.

The main event was a three-day **National Workshop on Creating a Code of Ethics for Youth Workers** where decision-makers and engaged youth jointly drafted a document titled **Code of Ethics for Youth Workers**, which contains recommendations on how a youth worker should behave both professionally and ethically.

POSITION:

Youth work as a profession in our country is still not acknowledged, while in other European countries it exists as a valid and recognized profession. In some European countries the youth worker has existed as a profession for years. However, although youth work is not sufficiently visible and recognizable, behind the model realized by youth workers, there is a system of established standards in terms of competencies, a code of ethics and professional conduct, as well as precisely defined goals and tasks that only a very small number of people are familiar with, especially the representatives of the government and the legislator.

Recognition of the occupation of a youth worker would be one of the indicators for systematic comprehensive care for the youth, and at the same time quality work with the youth is established through non-formal education.

A starting point for the acknowledgement and recognition of youth work in the Republic of Macedonia is the National Youth Strategy 2016 - 2025, which contains a section on local youth work which is defined as an organized and systematic process of education and support of authentic youth development with the purpose of them realizing their overall personal, social and societal potential. Youth work is directly related to the development of the local community through which young people not only become active entities in the process of their own development, but also active stakeholders in the life in the community. Therefore, many youth and non-governmental organizations have raised this issue and to date a number of public hearings have been organized with government institutions on the possible recognition of this occupation and future systematization of jobs for the occupation of a youth worker.

In their work, youth workers can - either independently or under supervision - plan, organize, implement and evaluate the effects of the activities, apply research procedures that look into youth needs, design youth programmes according to their expressed needs, prepare projects, create strategies for ensuring youth care, develop youth skills for their faster employment and employability, participate in the community, take care of quality and develop an effective, efficient and ethical practice in youth work, advise and inform youth on career development opportunities, organize youth exchange, festivals, campaigns, events, youth educational camps, entertainment programmes, etc.

Key competencies of the youth worker are as follows:

- planning, organizing and implementing activities independently or under supervision, individually or in a group;
- researching the needs of young people in order to work with them;
- designing and implementing programs and projects based on the expressed needs;
- planning activities for acquiring knowledge, developing skills and building attitudes among young people on various topics;
- creating strategies for ensuring youth care and creating conditions for exercising youth rights;
- implementing activities for youth training on active participation in social and decision-making processes;
- evaluating and supporting youth-proposed initiatives;

- organizing youth exchanges, festivals, camps, youth educational camps, educational-entertainment programs, managing info centres, etc.
- developing skills that increase youth employment opportunities;
- managing the overall human resources; mentoring, collaborating with, leading and directing activists as individuals, groups and teams;
- using materials, equipment and time rationally;
- communicating with service beneficiaries, group participants, superiors and institutions, applying ethical principles;
- applying measures for protection of health and healthy environment, in accordance with technical, hygiene, fire fighting and other protective measures;

“Development and application of a code of ethics in professional and volunteer youth work” is yet one of the measures contained in the National Youth Strategy 2016 – 2025, under the thematic area *Local Youth Work*, as part of *Goal 2: Formal recognition and realization of the application and offer of youth work as an integral part of the educational system of the country*. This is the rationale behind the design of this particular document, and it contains recommendations made by youth and decision-makers at the local and national level, aiming to increase the awareness of decision-makers about the role of the youth worker as a separate profession.

Ethical principles:

A YOUTH WORKER SHALL:

1. Promote and respect youth integrity and dignity.
2. Treat every single young person with empathy and shall promote the same conduct.
3. Promote and encourage direct youth participation in decision-making processes on issues that are of youth interest.
4. Promote and care for youth well-being, security and safety.

Professional principles

A YOUTH WORKER IS A PERSON WHO:

1. Knows how to balance personal and professional life, whose behaviour is also dignified outside of work hours, who can serve as a positive role model for the youth to identify with.
2. Actively cooperates with other youth workers and encourages critical thinking among the youth by building compromise and avoiding conflict situations.
3. Has designed an adequate work programme in line with the National Youth Strategy, according to the age and needs of young people, encouraging their creativity, innovation and initiative for themselves and for the environment, with adjustable working hours for both parties through mutual cooperation.
4. Applies accountability, professionalism, responsibility and appropriately manages the resources that are fundamental when working with youth.
5. Possesses the required knowledge, skills and competencies for working with youth, continuously upgrades and invests in one's personal and professional development in accordance with the needs of the youth.

CONDUCT OF THE YOUTH WORKER - ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

1. The youth worker shall promote and respect youth integrity and dignity:

The youth worker shall:

- Treat all young people equally and without discrimination, and shall encourage others to do the same
- Treat young people with honesty, integrity, responsibility and tolerance
- Promote and advocate for the realization of youth rights and needs

2. The youth worker shall treat every single young person with empathy and shall promote the same conduct:

The youth worker:

- Shall listen to young people with attention and understanding
- Shall not impose personal views, beliefs and convictions on other young people
- Shall encourage young people to make their own decisions

3. The youth worker shall promote and encourage direct youth participation in decision-making processes on issues that are of youth interest.

The youth worker shall:

- Promote and care for youth well-being, security and safety
- Possess the right knowledge on youth safety, security and well-being and shall regularly upgrade it
- Assess risks and take responsibility of one's own work

4. The youth worker shall promote and encourage direct youth participation in decision-making processes on issues of interest to young people.

The youth worker shall:

- Be in constant communication with the youth
- Respect youth opinions
- Recognize the real needs of the youth
- Maintain a continuous link between the youth and the decision-makers
- Inform the youth about social change
- Inform decision-makers about the needs of the youth
- Work on creating conditions and mechanisms for active youth participation
- Have equal approach when working with the youth
- Conduct self-evaluation (personal and professional development plan)
- Develop competencies based on personal development, based on the needs of the youth
- Monitor and evaluate the success of the activities required for active participation and promotion

CONDUCT OF YOUTH WORKERS – PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. The youth worker shall know how to balance between personal and professional life, with dignified behaviour outside of working hours, and serve as a positive role model for young people to identify with.

The youth worker shall:

- Speak in a language that all young people understand
- Be focused on the interest of the youth while working
- Have a positive approach to work
- Distinguish personal from professional life
- Be a person with self-confidence, and shall also instil confidence in the youth
- Be a good listener and sublimate youth needs
- Be a person who establishes trusting relations
- Possess knowledge in the field of developmental psychology

2. The youth worker shall actively cooperate with other youth workers and promote critical thinking among the youth by building compromises and avoiding conflict situations.

The youth worker shall:

- Not discriminate and shall be tolerant and flexible when working with different groups
- Possess developed notification skills
- Create an adjustable work atmosphere (cohesion)
- Have a creative and innovative approach to work in accordance with the work plan and programme
- Have an open and proactive approach to work (taking initiatives to implement youth ideas and solve youth problems)
- Build trust among the colleagues and the youth, and shall be capable of teamwork through regular meetings and joint activities
- Be a versatile person and possess knowledge in many areas in line with the interests of the youth
- Be able to recognize and overcome conflict situations (report on the manner of implementation of activities).

3. The youth worker shall have an adequate work programme in line with the National Youth Strategy, according to the age and needs of young people, encouraging their creativity, innovation and initiative for themselves and for the environment, with adjustable working hours for both parties, through mutual cooperation.

The Youth Worker shall be:

- Flexible in terms of working time management

- Professional in terms of the implementation of the programme (evaluation of the work - questionnaire and monthly report on the work done)
- Communicative and open for cooperation, accepting ideas and initiatives by young people
- Understandable at a level appropriate to the age of the youth
- Competent (possessing skills, knowledge and abilities)
- Creative in the preparation and implementation of the activities listed in the programme
- Moderate and youth-friendly
- Authoritative (positive identification model)
- A person who does not generalize but who is guided by the interest of smaller target groups

4. The youth worker shall apply accountability, professionalism, responsibility and shall appropriately manage the resources that are fundamental when working with the youth.

The youth worker shall:

- Present the activities in public
- Organize info events
- Engage in continuous education
- Constantly communicate through different modalities and in different ways
- Regularly attend the workplace
- Publish reports on the conducted work
- Present accounts and reports.

5. The youth worker shall possess the required knowledge, skills and competencies for working with the youth, and shall continuously advance and invest in his personal and professional development in accordance with the needs of the youth.

The youth worker shall:

- Hold a work license - (continuous investment in the personal and professional development of the youth worker)
- Possess an appropriate diploma and certificates
- Attend workshops, seminars and trainings
- Continuously follow new youth trends
- Consult professional literature and use appropriate work methodology
- Be a member of youth associations and unions
- Network with domestic and international youth associations.