

STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN YOUTH ORGANISATIONS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMPLOYABILITY

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Preface	5	4.2.4 Activities and tasks young people undertake in Non-Formal Education in youth organisations	81
Foreword by UNESCO	9	4.2.5 The importance of educational and assessment plans	87
Foreword by the European Commission	11	4.2.6 Usefulness of the soft skills developed through involvement in youth organisations in young people's current occupation	89
Executive Summary	13	4.3 Research question 3: To what extent are young people aware of those skills and competences and how to present them to employers?	89
1 Introduction	25	4.3.1 Young people's awareness of the skills and competences they develop in youth organisations	91
2 Non-Formal Education and employability: key concepts and policy context	31	4.3.2 Young people's awareness of how to present the skills and competences developed in youth organisations to employers	91
2.1 Non-Formal Education and Youth Organisations	33	4.3.3 The use of recognition tools: European portfolios, Youthpass, Europass and other instruments	95
2.2 Soft-skills and competences	35	4.4 Research question 4: To what extent, and under what conditions, do employers accept the skills and competences acquired through non-formal education in youth organisations?	97
2.3 Employability, qualifications and skills	39	4.4.1 Review of sources: young people, extracurricular activities and recruitment processes	97
2.4 The Recognition of Non-Formal Education and non-formal learning: international perspectives	41	4.4.2 Extent of employer's acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through non-formal education in youth organisations	105
3 Research aims and methodology	49	4.4.3 The conditions for employer's acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through Non-Formal Education in youth organisations	109
3.1 Aims and research questions	51	4.5 Research question 5: In what other ways does participation in youth organisations enhance employability?	111
3.2 Research methods	51	4.5.1 Review of sources	111
3.2.1 Overview	51	4.5.2 Participation in youth organisations, social capital development and employment opportunities	113
3.2.2 Review of sources	51	5 Conclusions and recommendations	119
3.2.3 Surveys: youth organisations and young people	55	Annex 1: Quantitative databases employed and main skills lacking by occupation where skills-shortage vacancies exist (UK)	129
3.2.4 Stakeholder workshop	61	Annex 2: Eurobarometer 75.2 data analysis approach and relevant questions	133
3.2.5 Employer interviews	63	Annex 3: Background characteristics of respondents to surveys	139
4 Findings	65		
4.1 Research question 1: What soft skills and competences, and at what level, are demanded in the labour market?	67		
4.1.1 Skills that employers demand	67		
4.1.2 Ranking of skills most frequently demanded by employers	67		
4.1.3 Employers' views on soft skills and successful job performance	69		
4.2 Research question 2: What soft-skills and competences are developed and at what level through Non-Formal Education in youth organisations?	69		
4.2.1 Soft skills and competences developed by young people in youth organisations	71		
4.2.2 Young people's degree of involvement in youth organisations and level of skills development	77		
4.2.3 Soft skills development and involvement in youth organisations outside the home country	79		

PREFACE

BY EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

Non-Formal Education (NFE) and its recognition are an essential component in the building of lifelong learning societies. As one of the main providers of non-formal education, youth organisations contribute to the holistic development of young people, from their development both as individuals as well as active members of society, to their inclusion in social and professional life. As a platform representing almost 100 national youth councils and international youth organisations in Europe, the European Youth Forum has long advocated for the recognition of non-formal education. In commissioning this study, the European Youth Forum aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based research on why and how the impact of the educational work of youth organisations on young people's employability should be recognised.

In today's deep economic and social crisis, with young people being the most impacted by its consequences, we believe that all acquired skills need to be recognised and young people empowered through that process. Entering the labour market became a greater challenge for young people. They need to be active and included members of society.

The Forum is happy that this research provides the long awaited evidence that long-lasting engagement and participation in youth organisations brings high skills development in young people. Also that participation in non-formal education activities abroad further increases the development of skills such as language, intercultural awareness and leadership. Finally, the match that has been identified between the skills demanded by employers and those gained through NFE in youth organisations confirms this impact on young people's employability.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research, the European Youth Forum calls on policy-makers, institutions, employers and private sector representatives, as well as academia and civil society and youth organisations, to take up their responsibility and ensure that all young people in Europe can participate in quality non-formal education to improve their skills and competencies. The following 8 recommendations are therefore put forward:

1. Ensuring funds and resources to be made available for quality NFE programmes and youth organisations as a way to allow youth organisations to offer more and more quality opportunities, while also taking steps to promote active participation of young people in these programmes.
2. European level mobility programmes for young people should be supported and enhanced and barriers to mobility must be progressively removed.
3. Participation in youth organisations should be supported as one of the measures that help young people in their transition from education to work. Particular measures should be taken to reach out to and provide welcoming environments for young people not in Education or Training (NEETs), early school leavers and young migrants.
4. Formal Education providers should ensure that the benefits of involvement in youth organisations, as well as other volunteering opportunities are emphasised and recognised.

5. The development of assessment and educational plans should be stimulated within NFE opportunities, together with quality assurance to ensure a quality experience.

6. Youthpass and other self-recognition tools that help the learner identify and describe their NFE learning outcomes should be promoted and their use supported widely. Synergies should also be found with other recruitment instruments and recognition tools.

7. Counselling and guidance should also be provided to young people in order to improve how to relate their experience in youth organisations in recruitment processes; youth organisations should take an active role in supporting it together with career-guidance services/advisors in schools and universities and public employment services and employers.

8. Interactions between youth organisations and employers should be supported and promoted as a means to raise awareness and bring visibility to non-formal education in youth organisations- focusing on the meaning and value. Public and private employment agencies should also be part of this process as well as those charged with stimulating youth entrepreneurship.

Finally, the European Youth Forum would like to thank Bath University and GHK Consulting for authoring this Study.

FOREWORD

BY UNESCO

I welcome this European Youth Forum study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability. The topic reflects the growing international interest in the value of what is learnt beyond schools and colleges, including through non-formal education. It also concurs with the recommendations of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum (October 2011, UNESCO HQ), at which 210 young women and men from 127 countries called for greater access to quality formal and non-formal education.

In times of widespread economic difficulties, many young people are experiencing huge challenges. In this context, those who have the most opportunities to develop their skills are usually best placed to make smooth transitions to adulthood. This study makes clear that youth organisations make a valuable contribution to our societies, both in their own right and for the learning opportunities they provide.

UNESCO's work on youth takes a holistic approach, which seeks to engage and empower youth, and promote civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation. Increasingly, emphasis is being placed on the development of employability skills through lifelong learning.

The study refers to UNESCO's Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning, which are intended to help make lifelong learning a reality. The Guidelines promote ways for valuing and recognising the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning to improve individuals' self-esteem and well-being, motivate them to participate in further learning, and strengthen their labour market opportunities.

It is especially appropriate that this study has been commissioned by a youth organisation, the European Youth Forum. This study demonstrates that, more than ever, young people are drivers of positive change in education and more broadly in our societies.

Qian Tang

Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

FOREWORD

BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

As our workplaces change under the twin impulses of globalization and technological progress, so do the skills required by employers. To help young people keep up with these changing requirements, the European Commission has been working on issues surrounding skills and their acquisition.

Formal education aside, it is increasingly evident that the learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings, for example through volunteering or participation in youth organisations, play a key role in providing young people with so-called "soft" skills which are highly valued and appreciated by prospective employers. These skills include the capacity for teamwork and for communicating effectively, coupled with a well-developed sense of initiative and self-confidence.

It is in my view essential that this experience is adequately recognised. My proposal for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning indicates concrete ways to improve formal recognition of youth work and other non-formal learning opportunities.

The importance of this type of learning is confirmed by empirical evidence from the Youth in Action programme: 75% of European Voluntary Service participants say that the experience has improved their employment prospects.

This study commissioned by the European Youth Forum is a valuable addition to this growing body of evidence and I am sure it will prove an important contribution to the debate.

Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou

European Commissioner for Education, Culture,
Multilingualism and Youth.

1 Non-formal education can be understood as an organised educational process that takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and the individual is usually aware that (s)he is learning.

2 Employability is understood in the context of this study as the relative chance of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment. It depends on fulfilling the requirements of a specific job and also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

In January 2011 the University of Bath and GHK Consulting were commissioned by the European Youth Forum to carry out a study on the impact of non-formal education¹ in youth organisations on young people's employability² through the development of 'soft skills'. Youth organisations are core providers of non-formal education. The value of this kind of education in youth organisations is not geared only, or even primarily, towards the enhancement of employability. Indeed, it could be said that non-formal education is considered a value of itself in the youth sector. On the whole, however, the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on employability through the development of soft-skills (which are a vital for employability) is not well understood and deserves further exploration. The research evidence available in this area is mainly anecdotal or case-based, including much valuable work on organisational 'good practices'.

While useful on a variety of fronts, previous research does not provide a comprehensive overview of the contribution of the youth sector to the employability of young people. The study thus contributes to the creation of a better evidence-base in this area and assesses the contribution of youth organisations as educational providers, which is often not sufficiently recognized. This study can thus be situated within wider debates on the recognition of non-formal education and non-formal learning, which have been central to the discussions on lifelong learning (learning 'from the cradle to the grave' that takes place in a variety of contexts: formal, non-formal and informal) that have taken place over the last decade.

Project aim and research questions

The aim of this study was to assess:

“whether the competences and skills obtained through non-formal education activities in youth organisations, contribute to the employability of young people.”

In order to fulfil this aim the study addressed five research questions:

- RQ1 What soft-skills and competences, and at what level, are demanded in the labour market?
- RQ2 What soft-skills and competences are developed and at what level through NFE activities in youth organisations?
- RQ3 To what extent are young people aware of those skills and competences and how to present them to employers?
- RQ4 To what extent and under what conditions do employers accept the skills and competences acquired through NFE in youth organisations?
- RQ5 In what other ways does participation in youth organisations enhance employability?

These research questions recognise that in order for the skills and competences developed in youth organisations to contribute to the employability of young people, such skills need to be produced, and they need to meet a demand in the labour market. Young people need to be aware of those skills and how to present them, to effectively use them in recruitment processes, and employers need to accept their legitimacy. The fifth question looks beyond the development of skills, to review the role of involvement in youth organisations in the creation of social capital for young people and the broadening of their career aspirations.

Methodology

In order to answer the above research questions the study gathered information through:

- a literature review;
- the analysis of large-scale secondary datasets, such as the Eurobarometer 75.2 on voluntary work, and various surveys of employers;
- a survey of 245 youth organisations based in over 40 European countries;
- a survey of 1,301 young people;
- a stakeholder workshop (with employers, guidance services and youth organisations); and
- in-depth telephone interviews with employers (all interviewees had direct experience in recruitment, either as director or human resources managers or an executives in recruitment firms; they were based in different countries across Europe).

In terms of the primary data collection for the study, it should be noted that the survey provided quantitative information on most of the research questions, while the workshop and in-depth employer interviews aimed to provide qualitative details in particular in relation to RQ1 and RQ4.

Surveys' Samples

Regarding the **survey of organisations**, respondents were based in over 40

European countries. Spain, Lithuania, Belgium, Ireland, Italy and the UK

were the countries most often present in the survey responses, but on the

whole there was a good distribution of respondents across countries.

Organisations defined themselves as 'international non-governmental youth organisations (28%)', 'members of a European Youth Forum member organisation'

(21%), 'national non-governmental organisations' (20%), 'national youth councils' (10%) or other type of organisation (22%). They also often defined themselves as educational associations (53%), community-based associations (32%), exchange associations (27%) and/or cultural/artistic associations (20%) – multiple responses were possible.

The organisations surveyed mainly catered for younger age groups, in particular 15 to 25 years of age. They reported to cater for a variety of groups of young people in terms of prior educational attainment, from primary to higher education.

Regarding the **survey of young people**, most respondents (44%) were between 20 and 24 years of age, followed by individuals aged 25-29 (27%). 13% were 30 or over and 16% were below 20 years of age. The survey obtained a wide geographical coverage, as individuals from over 50 nationalities replied to the survey. The greatest percentage of respondents came from Italy (17%), followed by Serbia (10%), Romania (7%), Spain (5%) and Germany (5%).

More than 40% of the sample had been involved in youth organisations' activities for five or more years; 28% for 3 to 5 years, 16% for one or two years and 14% for a year or less. The frequency of involvement in youth organisations' activities of 30% of the sample was three or more times a week, while 35% of the sample was involved once or twice a week. The remainder 35% of the sample reported to be involved in youth organisations less often than once a week.

Findings

This report has presented findings from a review of available sources, analysis of large-scale secondary survey data, two purposely made large surveys (of young people and youth organisations across Europe), a

workshop involving a range of stakeholders and eleven in-depth employer interviews on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability. A range of conclusions and recommendations can be formulated on the basis of the findings.

There is a match between skills demanded by employers and skills developed in youth organisations.

This study shows that there is a good match between those skills demanded by employers and those produced in the youth sector, with five of the six most frequently demanded soft skills also being amongst those skills developed to a greater extent in youth organisations –the exception being numeracy.

The soft skills that employers most frequently demand include: communication skills, organisational/planning skills, decision-making skills, team working skills, confidence/ autonomy and numeracy. These soft-skills are seen as a key element for successful job performance. Certain personality traits are also found to be important components of these skills and competences, contributing to their development. For instance, personal drive, sense of initiative and pro-activity are traits associated with confidence/autonomy and entrepreneurship.

There is less information regarding the general level to which the above-mentioned skills are required because this will vary by occupation, with 'levels' being understood differently across occupational fields. In spite of this, skills needs forecasts suggest is that the levels of skills required will increase across occupations in the mid-term, compared to current demand.

Higher skill levels are developed by young people with higher involvement in youth organisations

Those young people who report

higher levels of involvement in the youth organisations' activities (in terms of frequency and duration) also report higher levels of skills development. This held for all the skills for which the study gathered data.

Likewise, those who have participated in non-formal education activities in youth organisations **outside their home country**, even for short periods, report higher levels of skills development. Remarkably, this also held for all the skills for which the study gathered data, but the level of development was particularly strong in relation to foreign languages, intercultural communication and leadership skills.

Young people at the higher **levels of qualification** report greater skills development during their involvement with youth organisations (the reported skills gain is around 15% higher for those with higher education compared to those with secondary education). The improvements reported at lower levels of formal educational attainment, however, are still significant. For no skill the reported degree of improvement from involvement in youth organisations was lower than 2.0 on a scale of 5.

Furthermore, those youth organisations who have an **organised educational and assessment plan** for skills development report a higher level of skills improvement among their youth participants.

Young people are aware of the soft skills they develop.

Our results suggest that young people are aware that they developed skills and competences through their involvement with youth organisations, at least when directly asked about this topic. Strategies are in place in youth organisations to stimulate young people's awareness of the skills and competences they develop through their activities; the overwhelming majority of organisations reported that they assess whether young people have improved their skills (most often through peer-feedback)

“at least sometimes”, although less than a third of organisations did this “always”. Moreover, around 40% of organisations have recognised ‘making participants aware of the skills and competences that they develop through their involvement in the youth organisation’ an explicit objective of their work. However, for many organisations, ensuring such awareness depends on the specific group of young people or the activity in which young people take part.

Employers are positive toward young people's experience in youth organisations

Employers consider involvement with youth organisations as a positive experience, as they have implicit theories that associate certain experiences with certain skills sets. In fact, youth sector involvement can be seen to have a specialist skill set. Moreover, involvement with youth organisations also provides employers with information regarding an applicant's level of motivation and potential fit with the organisation. Young people also consider that youth sector participation helps them to obtain a job.

The importance employers give to experiences in youth organisations depends on their relationship to the qualifications and experience of the young person, as well as to the demands of the job opening. Thus, for instance, employers' acceptance of these skills in recruitment processes depends on the applicant's stage of involvement with the labour market –being more important for people who have less work experience. It also depends on certain conditions such as the number of experiences, their type (e.g. whether a leadership position has held) and the way in which they are presented (not only on the recognition/certification of the experiences, which has tended to be the main focus of policy action in this area, but also on the establishment of links with particular job openings, as already mentioned).

Young people need to be more confident in presenting the skills and competencies they develop in youth organisations

Despite these findings, according to employers young people do not provide enough information in their applications concerning the skills and competences they have acquired through participation in youth organisations. The employers consulted reported that they often only discover important elements of the engagement in youth organisations during the interview stage. This is, employers believe, because young people frequently consider that recruiters will not value their engagement in youth organisations.

Youth organisations need to “brand” themselves better to employers

Employers also reported being insufficiently aware of ‘what's going on’ in the youth sector and acknowledged that this may jeopardise the recognition of experiences in youth organisations during recruitment processes. Youth organisations do not often brand themselves well to employers, according to the information gathered during the employer interviews and stakeholder workshop, and they tend to develop networks with young people rather than employers. Moreover, there are instances where the information regarding involvement in youth organisations can be mistrusted, more than information regarding previous professional experience or academic achievement.

Beyond Skills Development: involvement in youth organisations creates networks and connections for young people

Involvement with youth organisations helps to enhance employability through other channels than the development of skills. Notably, it helped a large proportion of our sample of young people to develop networks and connections (social capital) that can aid in obtaining information about employment opportunities as well as in

securing employment. On the whole, such aspects significantly improve young people's chances of getting a job, especially for those people with previously limited levels of social capital.

Similarly, involvement with youth organisations has a strong impact on broadening the range of occupations that young people would consider in the future, providing young people with exposure to new vocations. Involvement also broadens the range of geographical locations where young people would consider taking-up a job.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions the following recommendations are put forward:

On Fostering Awareness and Participation:

- The existence of opportunities for involvement of young people from different ages and qualifications levels should be ensured. This is likely to require further joint work by the youth sector, public bodies and other stakeholders on issues such as financing and recognition, amongst others.

- Young people should be made aware of the additional benefits of sustained involvement in youth organisations. Young people should nevertheless be aware that even short periods on involvement can have significant effects in terms of skills and employability enhancement too.

- The participation of disadvantaged youth in youth organisations should be stimulated further given its value in developing social capital, which can aid to secure employment and bring additional benefits. Particular measures should be taken to reach out to and provide welcoming environments for, inter alia, NEETs, early school leavers and young migrants.

On Transitioning to Employability:

- Given that employers particularly value the involvement in youth organisation of young people with little or no work experience, their participation should be supported as one of the measures that help young people in their transition from education to work.

- There is also a need for greater guidance and coaching for young people so that they are better able to present effectively the skills and competences they develop in the youth sector in job applications and are able to better understand how these skills may be applied in working environments/ contribute to the performance of specific job-related tasks. This is a process to which career-guidance services/ advisors in schools and universities, the youth sector and public employment services as well as employers and international organisations can contribute. Providing information on 'top tips' to young people would also help in this respect.

- Young people should be made more aware of the value that employers place on the skills and competences developed in youth organisations. This is particularly the case for those individuals with lower educational achievement, who tend to be less aware of the value of this kind of activity for employers and less trained on how to present it.

On Mobility:

- Given the additional benefits of involvement with youth organisations outside the home country, opportunities for involvement with youth organisations abroad should be further supported and enhanced.

- Cost comparisons should be undertaken between the mobility of volunteers and other types of mobility that seek to achieve similar objectives in order to reach value-for-money calculations that can inform future public allocation of funds.

On Greater Recognition:

- Given the political emphasis on flexibility and mobility, the role of the youth sector in these areas should be better recognised at the political level. Involvement with youth organisations has a strong impact on broadening the range of occupations and geographical locations that young people would consider in the future, as well as on developing new vocations.

- Opportunities for youth organisations and employers –as well as private and public employment agencies- to interact should be promoted as a means to raise awareness and bring visibility to the meaning and value of non-formal education in youth organisations, while reinforcing mutual trust. Youth organisations, for instance, should be more regularly engaged in job fairs so as to develop a better understanding of their work amongst employers.

- The development of assessment and educational plans by youth organisations should be stimulated, as their existence is related to higher reported levels of skills development. In this respect, it should also be noted that the degree to which youth organisations assess the skills developed through their activities varies significantly, and that greater uniformity in the sector regarding this aspect should be promoted, as this would contribute to making more young people aware of the skills they develop by means of their involvement with the youth sector.

On Recognition Tools:

- Youth organisations should aim to provide certificates/proofs that detail the nature and outcomes of participation in their non-formal education activities, and should inform young people about the nature of their value. This is primarily related to their formative role (improvement of young people's awareness of the skills and competences they have gained in youth organisations and how to articulate them during a recruitment process), rather than their role as proofs of achievement.

- Taking the above point into account, self-recognition tools that help the learner identify and describe learning outcomes from youth organisations experiences, such as the Youthpass, should be promoted.

- Additionally, and given the frequency of use of the Europass CV by people who have taken part in youth related activities it will also be important to ensure that young people adequately use this tool to reflect their experience with youth organisations and that the tool facilitates the presentation of experiences and competences gained through non-formal education in youth organisations.

On Future Research:

- Continuous monitoring is required regarding current and future labour market skills needs in order to be able to assess the contribution of the youth sector to employability; in such monitoring stronger emphasis should be placed on the analysis of needs in a sectoral basis, and on skills rather than qualifications requirements.

- Further research could directly measure the skills developed by young people through non-formal education in youth organisations by measuring their skills levels before and after their participation in such activities, an approach that could not be adopted within the framework of this study due to resource and time constraints.



1 – Introduction

³ For further information on this concept see Section 2.1.

⁴ European Youth Forum (1999) http://www.youthforum.org/fr/system/files/yfj_public/strategic_priorities/en/study_nfe.pdf

⁵ Council of Europe and European Union (2011) Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/ education and of youth work in Europe. Strasbourg and Brussels, January 2011.

⁶ Hawley, J., Souto-Otero, M. and Duchemin C. (2010) '2010 update of the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning –Final report' GHK Consulting. Souto-Otero, M., McCoshan, A. and Junge, K. (2005) European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. See also OECD (2010) Recognising non-formal and informal learning: outcomes, policies and practices. OECD, Paris.

⁷ Souto-Otero, M., McCoshan, A. and Junge, K. (2005) European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Non-formal education can be understood as an organised educational process which takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and the individual is usually aware that (s)he is learning³. Youth organisations -defined as those social organisations (associations, clubs or movements) that are set up to serve young people and where young people are in charge of the operational structure⁴, which are democratic, non-governmental and not for profit - are core providers of non-formal education among young people. However, youth organisations do not always sufficiently record and communicate the learning that takes place through their activities and programmes⁵, nor their role as non-formal education providers is sufficiently recognised.

This study can be situated within wider debates on the recognition of non-formal education and non-formal learning, which have been central to the discussions on lifelong learning (learning 'from the cradle to the grave' that takes place in a variety of contexts: formal, non-formal and informal) that have taken place over the last decade. These debates have underlined the importance of the social, political, formal and individual recognition of non-formal education given the variety of benefits that such education brings about. Such benefits relate to the enhancement of individual 'human capital' – in particular through the development of soft-skills - but also wider aspects such as the stimulation of active citizenship, social inclusion and social cohesion as well as personal fulfilment and development.

Much research has shown that the benefits of non-formal education, in particular when this kind of education occurs outside the workplace, are often not sufficiently recognised⁶. This leads to a range of inefficiencies at the societal, company and education system level, which have been well documented elsewhere⁷. Suffice here to say that such inefficiencies have a common origin in a widespread lack of use, or even lack of awareness, regarding the skills and competences non-formal education generates.

The present report focuses specifically on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability through the development of soft skills. It aims to assess *whether the competences and skills obtained through non-formal education in youth organisations contribute to the employability of young people*. To that end, data has been collected and analysed from youth organisations, young people and employers across Europe, in the countries covered by the European Youth Forum membership. The study thus contributes to the creation of a better evidence-base in this area and assesses the contribution of youth organisations as educational providers.

This is not to suggest that the value of non-formal education in youth organisations is geared only, or even primarily, towards the enhancement of employability. Indeed, it could be said that in the youth sector, non-formal education is considered a value of itself. On the whole, however, and although the educational activities of youth organisations are often perceived to have a positive effect on young people, the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on employability is not well understood and deserves further exploration. The research evidence available in this area is mainly anecdotal or case-based, including much valuable work on organisational 'good practices'. This work tends to point

out that non-formal education in the youth sector enhances employability through the development of soft-skills. While useful, this body of work nevertheless does not provide a comprehensive overview of the contribution of the youth sector to the employability of young people.

In order to address this gap, in January 2011 the European Youth Forum commissioned the Department of Education of the University of Bath and ICF-GHK to undertake a study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability. This final report presents the results of this study. The report is structured in five chapters. Chapter 2 presents key concepts used in this study and its policy context. Chapter 3 reviews the study's research aims, questions and methodology. Chapter 4 outlines the findings of the research. Chapter 5 presents our conclusions and recommendations.



2 – Non-formal education and employability: key concepts and policy context

Table 2.1
Features of non-formal learning in the youth sector

Common elements in existing definitions

- purposive learning
- diverse contexts
- different and lighter organisation of provision and delivery
- alternative/complementary teaching and learning styles
- less developed recognition of outcomes and quality

Essential Features

- balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning
- linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical teaching/learning relations
- participatory and learner-centred
- holistic and process-oriented
- close to real life concerns, experiential and oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices
- voluntary and (ideally) open-access
- aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life

Non-formal teaching/training and learning methods

- communication-based methods: interaction, dialogue, mediation
- activity-based methods: experience, practice, experimentation
- socially-focused methods: partnership, teamwork, networking
- self-directed methods: creativity, discovery, responsibility

Source: Council of Europe (2001)

⁸ Fennes, H. and Otten, H. (2008) Quality in non-formal education and training of European Youth Work. Council of Europe, Paris.

⁹ European Youth Forum (2005) Policy paper on 'recognition of non-formal education: confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society. Brussels, 11-12 November 2005, p.2.

¹⁰ Hopper, W. (2006) Non-formal education and basic education: a conceptual review. UNESCO, Paris.

¹¹ Council of Europe (2001): Symposium on non-formal education, Strasbourg (EYC), 13-15 October 2000. Report (Sympo/Edu (2000)rap.) Strasbourg.

¹² Several of these elements are developed further in Fennes, H. and Otten, H. (2008) Quality in non-formal education and training of European Youth Work. Youth Partnership and Salto Youth.

¹³ Fennes, H. and Otten, H. (2008) Quality in non-formal education and training of European Youth Work. Council of Europe, Paris.

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/informal_en.htm

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/informal_en.htm

This chapter presents key concepts employed in this report, including 'non-formal education', 'non-formal learning', 'youth organisations' and 'knowledge, skills and competences' and 'employability'. Thus, it offers a thematic introduction to the main elements of the research, providing a reflection on their meaning. This is necessary to better understand the policy context also outlined here, which presents recent and current trends in relation to those elements.

2.1 — Non-Formal Education and Youth Organisations

Definition of non-formal education and non-formal learning

For the purposes of this study, and following the European Youth Forum Policy Paper "Youth organisations as non-formal educators: recognising our role", **non-formal education** is understood as an organised educational process which takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and the individual is usually aware that (s)he is learning – unlike in informal learning. Often, non-formal education in youth organisations is articulated through learning in groups, interactive, participatory and experiential methodologies⁸. The European Youth Forum tends to relate non-formal education to activities that happen within youth organisations, while extending the notion of non-formal learning to experiences that can be organised in the workplace too⁹. UNESCO also uses the term 'non-formal education' and has analysed definitional aspects and its sub-types in-depth¹⁰. In fact, the concept 'non-formal education' was already used in the Conference on the World Crisis in Education organised by UNESCO in 1967, as also noted below in this section.

The final report of the 2001 Council of Europe's Symposium on non-formal education outlines common elements in existing definitions of non-formal education as well as essential features and methods of non-formal training and learning with a special focus on the youth sector. The main characteristics of what the Council of Europe¹¹ calls 'non-formal learning in the youth sector' are provided in Table 2.1¹² ←.

As Fennes and Otten¹³ note the term 'education' is complemented by the term 'learning' which reflects a shift in terminology that has taken place in research and policy documents. Fennes and Otten, moreover, argue that learning is related to activities as well as individual and group processes while education is more closely related to systems and outcomes. Thus, a related concept to 'non-formal education' is '**non-formal learning**'. The European Commission defines 'non-formal learning' as "learning that is not provided by an education and training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However, it is intentional on the part of the learner and has structured objectives, times and support"¹⁴. Informal learning, on the other hand, is defined as the learning that results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure, that is not structured and usually does not lead to certification¹⁵. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner.

There are thus obvious commonalities between the definitions of non-formal education and non-formal learning outlined above (regarding the exclusion of formal education, the typical lack of certification and the intentionality of learning) as well as some differences. Given that 'non-formal education' refers to a conscious provision of education opportunities and that the European Youth Forum represents providers of non-formal education, this report focuses on non-formal education.

¹⁶ European Youth Forum (1999) http://www.youthforum.org/ft/system/files/yfj_public/strategic_priorities/en/study_nfe.pdf

¹⁷ See also European Youth Forum (2011) Youth Employment in Europe: A call for change. European Youth Forum, Brussels.

¹⁸ Council of Europe and European Union (2011) Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/ education and of youth work in Europe. Strasbourg and Brussels, January 2011.

¹⁹ European Youth Forum (2007) Policy Paper on Youth Employment. Castelldefels, 2-3 May 2008.

²⁰ European Youth Forum (2005) Policy paper on 'recognition of non-formal education: confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society. Brussels, 11-12 November 2005.

²¹ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/vocational_training/c11104_en.htm

Youth organisations as providers of Non-Formal Education

Youth organisations are understood in this report as any social organisation (associations, clubs or movements) that is set up to serve young people and where young people are in charge of the operational structure¹⁶, which are democratic, non-governmental and not for profit. By 'youth' this report refers to young people aged between 15 and 35, which is also consistent with the European Youth Forum definition.

Through non-formal education, youth organisations aim to enhance skills and competences that empower young people in their personal development - boosting their self-esteem and awareness of their identity-, help them become responsible and active citizens in their communities and access and stay in labour market¹⁷. These aims are sought through a variety of methods, programmes and activities linked to non-formal education, as detailed in chapter 4 of this report. In particular, and although other types of skills – such as technical skills - can also be developed through non-formal education in youth organisations, the youth sector is seen to contribute to the development of 'soft skills', considered key for employability.

Diversity in the activities, methods, approaches, tools and priorities is thus a key element of the youth sector, and of the non-formal education that is provided within it. While this diversity adds complexity to the sector, it is also a trait that should be both respected and cultivated, according to youth organisations themselves¹⁸. This report has thus tried to take such diversity into account, to the extent that this has been possible, by looking at a range of activities that take place in this sector.

The above mentioned points, together with the developments on its recognition presented below in this chapter, underline the increasing emphasis that needs to be placed on the type of non-formal education

that occurs in youth organisations. In this respect, the Pathways 2.0 paper argues that problem solving, intercultural skills, team spirit, creativity are fundamental competences, and are exactly the competences that young people acquire in non-formal learning schemes of youth work. Similarly, the European Youth Forum Policy Paper on Youth Employment¹⁹, argues that through participation in youth organisations, young people learn to be committed, to show initiative and to take responsibility. They learn how to show respect for others by acquiring competencies such as communication and interpersonal interaction, conflict resolution, leadership, management, planning, team-working skills, and problem-solving skills. The European Youth Forum paper also argues that the competences that young people gain from non-formal education should be better recognized by employers and the labour market in general. The European Youth Forum policy paper on 'Recognition of non-formal education: Confirming the Real Competencies of young people in the Knowledge Society²⁰, relates 'soft skills' to interpersonal, team working, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, coordination and practical problem-solving competences, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility, provides a range of ways forward to achieve this.

2.2 — Soft- skills and competences

Non-formal education leads to the development of '**knowledge, skills and competences**'. The European Qualifications Framework divides learning outcomes into knowledge, skills and competences and states that knowledge can be theoretical or factual. 'Skills', on the other hand, means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems²¹. Skills can be divided into cognitive (involving

- 22 Bimrose, J. and Barnes, S.A. (2011) Profiling systems for effective labour market integration. Mutual Learning programme reports, GHK and Budapest Institute.
- 23 Bimrose, J. and Barnes, S.A. (2011) Profiling systems for effective labour market integration. Mutual Learning programme reports, GHK and Budapest Institute.
- 24 Sondergaard, L. and Murthi, M. (2012) Skills, not just diplomas. Managing education for results in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Washington, The World Bank.
- 25 Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.A., Brown, A., Hasluck, C., & Behle, H. (2007). Skills Diagnostics and Screening Tools: A Literature Review. (459, research report). Leeds: Department for Work and Pensions/Corporate Document Services. Retrieved from <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2007-2008/rep459.pdf>
- 26 European Youth Forum (2005) Policy paper on Recognition of non-formal education: confirming the real competences of young people in the knowledge society. COMEM 0716-05. (p.2). See also Council of Europe and European Union (2011) Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/ education and of youth work in Europe. Strasbourg and Brussels, January 2011.
- 27 CEDEFOP (2010) The Skills Matching Challenge. Analysing skills mismatch & policy implications. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Commission.
- 28 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/vocational_training/c11104_en.htm
- 29 European Parliament; Council of the European Communities (2008) Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning. Official Journal of the European Communities, 2008, C 111, p. 1-7.
- 30 The impact of non-formal education on young people and society, cited in the Commission Staff Working Paper Impact Assessment of the Erasmus for All programme, European Commission (2011:15) http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2011/sec_2011_1402_en.pdf
- 31 Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.
- 32 OECD (2012) Better skills, better jobs, better lives. A strategic approach to skills policies. OECD, Paris, p.12. See also Toner, P. (2011) Workforce skills and innovation. An overview of major themes in the literature. OECD Education Working Papers, number 55. OECD, Paris.
- 33 OECD (2012) Better skills, better jobs, better lives. A strategic approach to skills policies. OECD, Paris.

the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). Skills are also often divided into academic, generic, technical and soft skills²².

Soft skills, the focus of this study, are the most difficult to define²³. Yet, employers often report to value these skills as much as academic and/ or technical skills²⁴, and that some young people have not developed the necessary 'soft skills' to market themselves effectively in the labour market. This is something which has been confirmed by European-wide surveys, for instance the recent 'Eurobarometer on Entrepreneurship in the EU and beyond' which showed that only half of respondents agreed that their school education had helped them develop an entrepreneurial attitude – a much lower proportion than in other parts of the world such as the USA or China. The term 'soft skills' can refer to motivation or disposition, and often relates to a combination of personal attributes and abilities that enhance employability²⁵. The European Youth Forum has defined 'soft skills and competences' as "others than the ones developed in the framework of formal education" and that "include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility.²⁶" It should also be noted that skills gaps in the area of soft skills can occur among highly qualified staff, and their development is therefore important for people with very varied formal educational achievements²⁷.

Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development²⁸. In the European Qualifications Framework²⁹ (EQF) competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy. Individual attitudes can be understood as competences based on an individual way of being and behaving, and which encompass unconscious patterns of actions and values³⁰.

The European Union has furthermore identified eight key **competences for lifelong learning**³¹, which it expects to provide added value for labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship and should be acquired by all. The eight key competences include communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competences, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression. Several of these key competences relate to 'soft-skills' aspects. A number of them, such as social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression could be closely associated with the kind of activities that youth organisations aid in developing.

Often, however, the terms "skills" and "competences" are used interchangeably, for instance in the OECD skills strategy³², which defines skills (or competences) as the bundle of knowledge, skills and capacities that can be learned and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning. Such strategy refers to 'soft skills such as teamwork, communication and negotiation' but also 'sense of command, initiative and honesty³³'. There is, therefore, some agreement on the 'substance' of soft skills, even when there

34 Toner, P. (2011) Workforce skills and innovation. An overview of major themes in the literature. OECD Education Working Papers, number 55. OECD, Paris.

35 Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and Williams, S. (2002) 'Employability in a knowledge driven economy' Working Paper Series number 26, University of Cardiff.

36 Brown, P. and Hesketh, A. (2004) *Employability and Jobs in the Knowledge Economy*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

37 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database_indicator/lfsa_urgaed, checked on 16-07-2012.

38 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database

39 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2012) *Young people and NEETs in Europe: First Findings*. EFILWC, Dublin.

40 CEDEFOP (2012) *Skills mismatch. The role of the enterprise*. Cedefop Research Paper number 21. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Union.

41 <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/forecasting-skill-demand-and-supply/skills-forecasts/main-results.aspx?CountryID=31&case=ETBQ> Data published in 2012.

are different approaches to their definition or the use of the term skills, competences or personality traits. There is also agreement that these skills are important for economic development and innovation³⁴. Given its simplicity for stakeholders and the purposes of this report we adopt the OECD approach, using the terms skills and competences broadly interchangeably.

2.3 — Employability, qualifications and skills

This section reviews recent trends on the relationship between employability, qualifications, and skills. Employability is understood here as the relative chance of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment³⁵. Employability depends on fulfilling the requirements of a specific job and also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers. Employability, thus, has two dimensions: its external conditions (the labour market) as well as individual characteristics (individual dimension). Brown and Hesketh (2004³⁶) refer to these as “relative employability” (related to the variable conditions of the labour market), and “absolute employability” (related to individual attributes such as skills and knowledge), both of which affect the degree to which an individual can gain employment. Even in very different labour markets, skills and competences enhance employability at the individual level, therefore the absolute dimension of employability (the focus of this study) counts. It nevertheless needs to be kept in mind that favourable conditions regarding ‘relative employability’ are required in order to have high levels of employment. High levels of skills and competences in the population can be a factor in shaping relative employability by attracting capital investments that may create employment opportunities, but are only one factor amongst others.

Eurostat data³⁷ shows that in 2011 unemployment rates for the population 15-64 in the EU-27 varied substantially by level of educational attainment, being approximately three times as high for individuals who had not achieved beyond lower secondary education (16.7%) than for those who had achieved tertiary education (5.6%). In some countries youth unemployment rates are twice and even three times as high as those of the entire working population³⁸. Indeed, the situation for people 15 to 39, an age group for which the Eurostat database provides specific data, is significantly worse in absolute terms. However, the level of unemployment for those individuals with tertiary education (7.4%) is still approximately one third the rate for those who have not achieved a level beyond lower secondary education (22.7%). The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has recently reported that in the first quarter of 2011, the overall youth employment rate in Europe rose to 32.9%, the highest value ever recorded in the history of the European Union, while in July the youth unemployment rate in Europe reached 20.7%, equal to around five million young unemployed³⁹. Young people are also more likely to suffer from skills mismatches in their employment⁴⁰.

These trends are compounded by the changing nature of the current and future labour market where young people are required to continuously up-skill in order to find employment. According to CEDEFOP forecasts, employment trends in the period 2010-2020 will show an increase of 20% in employment requiring high qualifications, a 4% increase in employment requiring medium level qualification and a reduction of almost 19% in employment requiring low qualifications⁴¹. These changes in the external conditions of employability require changes in individual characteristics if young people are to find work. International competition from China and India, who are

42 Brown, P., Lauder, H. and Ashton, D. (2011) *The global auction*. New York, Oxford University Press.

43 WHO-Europe, (2009) *A Snapshot of the Health of Young People in Europe*, Copenhagen; European Princes' Trust (2009) *YouGov Youth Index 2010*. London.

44 European Youth Forum (2005) *Policy paper on 'recognition of non-formal education: confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society*. Brussels, 11-12 November 2005.

45 Room, G. (1995) *Beyond the threshold: the measurement and analysis of social exclusion*. Bristol, Policy Press.

46 Atkinson, A. B. and Hills, J. (1998) *Exclusion, employment and opportunity*. CASE Paper 4, London School of Economics.

47 European Youth Forum (2010) *Position paper on Youth Guarantee*. Antwerp, 2-3 September 2010.

48 Council of Europe (2003) *Study on the links between formal and non-formal education*. Directorate of Youth and Sport, Strasbourg, March 2003.

49 European Youth Forum (2006) *Policy Paper on Equality and Diversity*. Rotterdam, 13-15 November 2006.

50 European Youth Forum (2008) *Policy Paper on Early Education Leaving*. Prato, 28-29 April 2006.

51 The concept 'non-formal education' was already used in the Conference on the World Crisis in Education organised by UNESCO in 1967.

52 Hopper, W. (2006) *Non-formal education and basic education: a conceptual review*. UNESCO, Paris.

53 UNESCO (2012) *Guidelines on the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning*. UNESCO, Paris.

now investing more in the higher levels of education, than in the recent past, is likely to exacerbate the importance of high skills for employment while it is also seen to pose new challenges in terms of the returns that most individuals in Europe and the USA can expect from their skills⁴².

An associated problem is the increase in young people disengaged both from education, employment and training (NEET), who in 2010 amounted to over 12% of the population of 15-24 year-olds in the EU-27 - or around 7.5 million people. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions estimated the costs of NEETs' lack of participation in the labour market in 21 countries at €100 billion per year, including foregone earnings and excess transfers. In addition to this, there are significant costs associated with the social and health costs of youth unemployment⁴³.

Employment, it must be kept in mind, is not only related to economic growth, competitiveness and individual returns. It is also a key mechanism for social inclusion. It can be an important element in shaping relational issues, social participation⁴⁴ and social integration⁴⁵. This is more so when employment is of quality. As Atkinson notes, 'marginal' jobs (that lack continuity, training or possibilities of promotion) may be no solution in terms of social inclusion⁴⁶. This is a crucial aspect to consider regarding the situation of young people, as this group is increasingly being caught in a cycle of temporary contracts and unpaid internships⁴⁷.

Higher skills development that leads to labour market integration can, then, aid social inclusion as well as economic competitiveness. Thus, education needs to go beyond purely instrumental considerations to provide people with the skills they need for active participation in society⁴⁸ and personal development. In both respects non-formal education has an important role to play⁴⁹. The next subsection looks at different

international perspectives and actions in this area.

2.4 —The Recognition of Non-Formal Education and non-formal learning: international perspectives

The above trends underline the importance of making all of young people's learning visible, regardless of whether it has been acquired in formal, non-formal or informal settings, for economic and social reasons. In this context, non-formal education can be understood as a key tool for skills development, a tool to combat early school leaving, and a tool to compensate for the competences formal education may sometimes fail to foster⁵⁰. Below, we review international perspectives on the recognition of the importance of non-formal education.

UNESCO and the United Nations system

UNESCO has shown a long-standing commitment regarding lifelong learning in general and non-formal education in particular, going back to the 1960s⁵¹. Recently, UNESCO has noted how in recent years the focus on non-formal education has gained new momentum, a momentum that, UNESCO argues, is strongly enhanced by the increasingly effective participation of civil society organisations in the planning and development of education sector programmes in different countries⁵². In this context, UNESCO has launched its Guidelines on the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning⁵³ as part of its work in this area. This will be followed-up by the development of a recognition, validation and accreditation observatory for collecting best practices.

On the other hand, the resolution 'Youth in the Global Economy', adopted by the 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations in

54 United Nations (2012) Resolution 66/121 Policies and programmes involving youth. February 2012

55 OECD (2010) *Recognising non-formal and informal learning: outcomes, policies and practices*. OECD, Paris.

56 OECD (2012) *Better skills, better jobs, better lives. A strategic approach to skills policies*. OECD, Paris.

57 Schleicher, A. (2012) *It all starts with building the right skills* May, 21st OECD Educationtoday, Paris.

58 OECD (2012) *Erasing the 'bright red dividing light' between education and work*. June, 04th, OECD Educationtoday, Paris.

59 "The future of the Council of Europe's youth sector: Agenda 2020" – Background document prepared by the secretariat of the Directorate for Youth and Sport, October 2008.

60 Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 November 2008 at the 1042nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

2007, recognises the important role of non-formal education in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and asks Member States to ensure sufficient funding for non-formal education. More recently, a number of other resolutions have stressed the importance of non-formal education. Of particular relevance is the 2012 resolution 66/121 on Policies and programmes involving youth. This affirms the importance of investing in young people and urges Member States to address youth employment by promoting entrepreneurship, volunteerism, and the development of formal, informal and non-formal educational and training systems in line with the needs of young people. It also asks Member States to encourage all stakeholders (including academia, the private sector, trade unions and financial institutions) to promote social responsibility and to develop partnerships in this regard⁵⁴.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The OECD has also recently emphasised the importance of non-formal learning in a major research project that identifies different types of benefits from its recognition: a) economic, by reducing the direct and opportunity costs of formal learning and allowing human capital to be used more productively; b) educational, by allowing people to complete formal education more quickly, efficiently and cheaply as they do not have to enrol in courses for which they already mastered the content, thus underpinning their motivation and enhancing lifelong learning; c) social, by improving equity and strengthening access to both further education and the labour market for disadvantaged group, disaffected youth and older workers; and, c) psychological, by making individuals aware of their capabilities and validating their worth. However, this research also concludes that recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still marginal and its procedures

require improvement⁵⁵. The OECD skills strategy⁵⁶ has also clearly underlined the importance of non-formal learning. The strategy, which aims to transform skills into better jobs and better lives, argues that compared to purely government designed curricula taught exclusively in schools, learning in non-formal settings allows young people to develop 'hard skills' on modern equipment and 'soft skills' such as negotiations, communication and teamwork skills⁵⁷. In their response to this strategy, business leaders, such as Business NZ, have stressed the importance of soft skills to employers and have made a strong case for the development of such skills in today's global labour markets⁵⁸.

The Council of Europe and the European Union

The Council of Europe has a strong commitment to non-formal education and has been working in partnership with various international institutions and youth organisations in this area. Its Directorate of Youth and Sports, supports the development of youth associations, networks and initiatives and promotes international cooperation in the youth field. The Council's youth sector's priorities for 2010-2012 have been focused on the development of European Youth cooperation through youth policy, youth work and non-formal education/ training, in line with its overall youth policy: 'Agenda 2020'⁵⁹, adopted in 2008. This Agenda was followed-up by the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers, also in 2008, which stated that recognition of non-formal learning plays a crucial role for social inclusion through ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life⁶⁰. In 2010 the Council of Europe adopted the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, which again stresses the important role of non-formal education in providing each individual with the

⁶¹ Council of Europe (2010) 'Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education' Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

⁶² See Council of Europe and European Union (2011) *Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/ education and of youth work in Europe*. Strasbourg and Brussels, January 2011. This paper was produced by the EU-CoE youth partnership in cooperation with the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, the German National Agency for Youth in Action and SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.

⁶³ For further information see http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/attachments/STATEMENT_Symposium_participants_081211.pdf

⁶⁴ Schild, J. (2012) 'From Pathways to Pathways 2.0' Coyote, n.18, pp. 7-11.

⁶⁵ Hawley, J., Souto-Otero, M. and Duchemin C. (2010) '2010 update of the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning –Final report' GHK Consulting.

⁶⁶ European Youth Forum (2005) Policy paper on Recognition of non-formal education: confirming the real competences of young people in the knowledge society. COMEM 0716-05.

⁶⁷ Council of the European Union (2004) *Conclusions of the Council and representatives of the governments of Member States meeting within the Council on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*. (EDUC 118 SOC 253, 18 May 2004).

⁶⁸ CEDEFOP (2009) *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

opportunity of democratic citizenship and human rights education⁶¹. The Council has had a key role in the development of tools such as the European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers, which aims to aid in the recognition of the competences of those active in youth work and youth organisations.

The EU-CoE youth partnership has provided the framework for much of the joint work of these institutions in the area of youth policy, and has highlighted the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning as one of its specific fields of action for the period 2010-2013. Highlights of the work of the partnership include the production of documents such as the Pathways papers⁶², the last version of which describes the current state of play of recognition of youth work and of non-formal education in the youth field, and its development in Europe over the last decade. The partnership has also organised a number of symposia, such as the 2011 Symposium on the 'Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/ education in the youth field', co-organised by the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, together with the German National Agency for the Youth in Action programme, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre and the European Youth Forum⁶³.

The European Union has been a key player in the area of non-formal education in particular during the last decade, for its economic as well as social benefits. The employability of young people is also a strong concern for the European Union, as recognised in the Europe 2020 Agenda, the Education and Training 2020 work programme, the 'New Skills for New Jobs' Council Conclusions, the Youth on the Move and Youth Opportunities initiatives. These initiatives are expected to support the engagement of all young people in society and in the labour market, and underline the importance of non-formal learning for both

types of integration.

The strategy to bring non-formal learning in youth work closer to the agenda on lifelong learning is even more evident in the 'Youth on the Move' flagship initiative within the Europe 2020 Strategy; it proposes non-formal and informal learning as ways to expand life-enhancing learning for young people with fewer opportunities and/ or at risk of social exclusion and advocates for the strengthening of its recognition and validation⁶⁴. The Lifelong Learning and the Youth in Action programmes (as developed further below in this section) have also been instrumental in this respect.

Thus, the 2009 Council Conclusions on the new Strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training ("ET 2020") reiterated the equal importance of all different kinds of learning – formal, non-formal and informal learning – to make lifelong learning a reality. This includes, amongst other things, strengthening the structures for volunteering and youth participation, and supporting the acquisition of key skills through non-formal educational activities, as a supplement to formal learning or as an incentive to reintegrate back into the formal education system. Non-formal education is thus acknowledged at European level and national level as a key component of the lifelong learning approach⁶⁵.

The European Union has also for long advocated the importance of making non-formal and informal learning visible through the validation of non-formal and informal learning, to ensure that non-formal learning is recognised through different means and at different levels (social, political, individual)⁶⁶. The European principles⁶⁷ and guidelines⁶⁸ for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the periodic production of a European Inventory on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning are examples of this. Furthermore, the upcoming Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning will give the

69 Schild, J. (2012) 'From Pathways to Pathways 2.0' Coyote, n.18, pp. 7-11.

70 Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (2009/OJ C 311/01).

71 Council of Europe and European Union (2011) *Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/ education and of youth work in Europe*. Strasbourg and Brussels, January 2011.

72 Schild, J. (2012) 'From Pathways to Pathways 2.0' Coyote, n.18, pp. 7-11.

73 See Salto-Youth (2011) *Youthpass: Making the most of your learning. Youthpass Guide*. Salto-Youth Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.

74 ECVET promotes geographical and professional mobility. It helps to validate, recognise and accumulate work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in other situations, so that these experiences count as part of vocational qualifications. See OECD (2012) *Better skills, better jobs, better lives. A strategic approach to skills policies*. OECD. For a more detailed account of the ways in which ECVET can support the validation of non-formal and informal learning see European Commission (2012) *Using ECVET to support Lifelong Learning*. Note prepared by the ECVET user's group.

75 European Parliament: Council of the European Communities (2008) Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning. Official Journal of the European Communities, 2008, C 111, p. 1-7. The EQF supports lifelong learning and mobility by being the common reference framework for qualifications. Its eight levels enable national qualifications (general and higher education, and vocational education and training) to be compared with each other and with those of other countries. Establishing the EQF has spurred development of national qualifications frameworks in many European countries, as they are seen as the best way to link national qualifications to the EQF see OECD (2012) *Better skills, better jobs, better lives. A strategic approach to skills policies*. OECD, Paris.

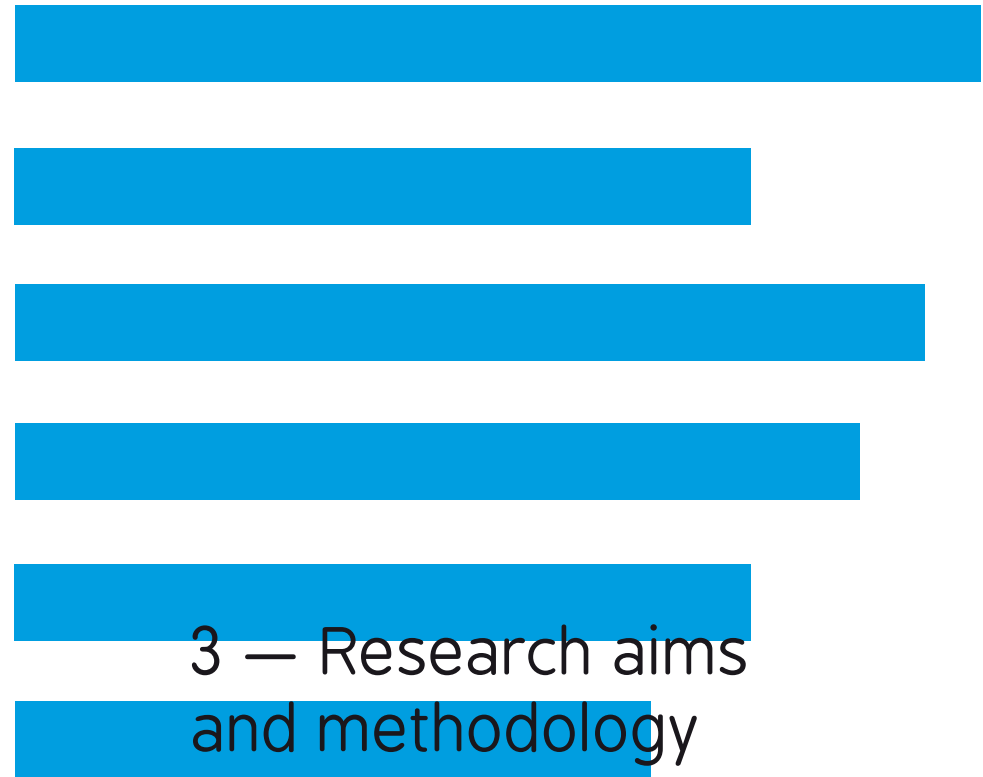
76 Europass is a portfolio of documents that supports mobility by helping people to communicate their knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through education, training, work experience, or in informal settings. Europass includes the Curriculum Vitae, Language Passport and the Diploma Supplement, which records additional information on learning from a stay in another European country, linked to a VET qualification and diploma in higher education. See: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

subject of recognition a new dynamism focusing on aspects such as guidance and information, reliability of instruments and trust of stakeholders⁶⁹.

Specifically in the youth field, with the 2009 Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018⁷⁰), non-formal education became for the first time a priority for policy cooperation in the youth area at European level⁷¹. The Strategy underlines that non-formal education for young people should be supported to contribute to lifelong learning in Europe. This is done by developing its quality, recognising its outcomes and integrating it better with formal education. The aims of this resolution thus include increasing the public awareness of the value of non-formal learning outcomes. The new EU Youth Strategy, the 'Youth on the Move' flagship initiative within the Europe 2020 Strategy, and the Youth in Action programme stress the need to foster the professional and personal development of young people through the development of professional skills and the validation of their competences through appropriate frameworks such as the EQF and various credit transfer systems. They also propose non-formal and informal learning as a way to expand life-enhancing learning for young people with fewer opportunities and/ or at risk of social exclusion and advocate for strengthening its recognition and validation⁷². The 2011 European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship, which includes the recognition of skills and competences developed through volunteering in its objectives, also helped to build momentum in this area.

The development of a range of recognition tools by the EU and the Council of Europe such as Youthpass⁷³, various credit transfer systems (which aim to improve the recognition of learning outcomes and thus to enable people to build on what they have learned abroad, in a different education and

training institution or in different situations including non-formal and informal learning) such as ECTS and ECVET⁷⁴, the European Qualifications Framework⁷⁵, Europass⁷⁶ and the European Skills Passport, support this process. In the youth field, the use of European tools related to youth work, such as Youthpass and the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers, are meant to support their users in identifying, describing and assessing competencies gained through youth work and intend to contribute to the recognition (at different levels) of non-formal education.



3 – Research aims and methodology

Table 3.1
Research questions and data collection methods

Research Question Number	Research Question	Data collection tools
RQ1	What soft-skills and competences, and at what level, are demanded in the labour market?	Review of sources Secondary data analysis Stakeholder workshop
RQ2	What soft-skills and competences are developed and at what level through non-formal education in youth organisations?	Review of sources Survey of youth organisations Survey of young people
RQ3	To what extent are young people aware of those skills and competences and how to present them to employers?	Survey of young people Survey of youth organisations
RQ4	To what extent and under what conditions do employers accept the skills and competences acquired through non-formal education in youth organisations?	Review of sources Stakeholder workshop Employer interviews Survey of youth organisations Survey of young people
RQ5	In what other ways does participation in youth organisations enhance employability?	Review of sources Survey of young people

⁷⁷ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field [Official Journal C 168, 20.7.2006].

⁷⁸ These are searches which enable combination of words through the use of Boolean operators such as 'and', 'or', 'not' when searching by keywords or sentences, which enable more targeted searches to be performed.

3.1 — Aims and research questions

The aim of the present study is to assess: “whether the competences and skills obtained through non-formal education in youth organisations, contribute to the employability of young people.”

The study focuses on the non-formal educational activities of youth organisations targeted to young people in the countries covered by the European Youth Forum membership. The main research questions, and associated data collection methods, are outlined in Table 3.1 ←

These research questions and data collection tools were interlinked in the research process. Thus, for instance, the review of sources regarding RQ1 provided a list of skills to include in the survey of young people and youth organisations, related to RQ2 – see chapter 4 of this report for further details.

While the aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of the role of the youth sector in enhancing the employability of young people (in its individual dimension) by means of non-formal education, it should be noted – as already mentioned in chapter 2 - that employability is only one of the positive outcomes of non-formal education. Other outcomes of non-formal education are linked to personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and social cohesion⁷⁷. Moreover, it should also be stressed that employability can also concern and positively affect several of these aspects.

The main argument to test in the present report is that participation in the non-formal educational activities of youth organisations positively affects the development of skills and competences, which in turn enhance the employability of young people, including those young people at greatest risk of social and labour market exclusion.

3.2 — Research methods

3.2.1 — Overview

The research gathered information through a review of sources, analysis of the large-scale Eurobarometer 75.2 on voluntary work dataset, two dedicated (anonymous) surveys to youth organisations and to young people in Europe and of young people), a workshop with stakeholders (mainly employers but also youth guidance services and youth organisations representatives) and in-depth interviews with employers aimed to complement the survey information. The remainder of this section provides further details on the review of sources undertaken and the primary data collection activities – information on the analysis of Eurobarometer 75.2 data is provided in Annex 2. The results from the analysis of these data are presented in Chapter 4. In terms of the primary data collection for the study it should be noted that the survey provided quantitative information on most of the research questions for this study (as presented in Table 3.1), while the workshop and employer in-depth interviews aimed to provide qualitative details in particular in relation to RQ1 and RQ4.

3.2.2 — Review of sources

A review of sources (extant literature and employer surveys on skills issues) was undertaken to obtain an up to date view of existing research, in particular in relation to RQ1, R2 and RQ4 –see Table 3.1- for which the study team undertook less intensive primary data collection and for which there are a number of secondary sources available. The literature review was undertaken through Boolean searches⁷⁸ in educational databases and encompassed academic publications and grey literature (in particular reports from international and youth organisations). Literature written in English and international

- 79** ECORYS (2007) Final external evaluation of the Youth Community Action programme 2000-2006. Final report. ECORYS NL, Rotterdam.
- 80** Ord, J. (2004) 'The Youth Curriculum as a process, not as outcome and output to aid accountability' *Youth and Policy*, num.85, pp.53-69.
- 81** Ord, J. (2009) 'Experiential learning in youth work in the UK: a return to Dewey' *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, vol.28(4), pp. 493-511.
- 82** Giroux, H. (2005) *Border crossing*. Oxon, Routledge.
- 83** Harland, K. and Morgan, T. (2010) 'Undervalued or misunderstood? Youth work and its contribution to lifelong learning' *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, vol. 23, pp. 201-214.
- 84** Muller B. (2006) 'Similarities and links between early childhood education and informal education in youth work for adolescents' *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, vol.14(2), pp. 21-33.
- 85** Wood, J. J. (2009) *Young people and active citizenship: An investigation*. PhD Thesis, De Montfort University.
- 86** Boeck, T. J. (2011) *Young people and social capital: an exploration*. PhD Thesis, De Montfort University.
- 87** Coburn, A. (2011) 'Building social and cultural capital through learning about equality in youth work' *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol.14(4), pp. 475-491.
- 88** Walker, K. C. (2010) 'The multiple roles that youth development programme leaders adopt with youth' *Youth Society*, vol. pp. 1-21.
- 89** Nichols, G. (2004) *Research methods in outdoor education*. In P. Barnes and B. Sharp (eds.) *The RHP companion to outdoor education*, (pp. 26-33). Lyme Regis, Russell House.
- 90** Larson, R. W. and Walker, K. C. (2010) 'Dilemmas of practice: challenges to program quality encountered by youth programme leaders' *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol.45, pp.338-349.
- 91** Miles, S. (2007) 'Different journeys at different speeds: young people, risk and the challenge of creative learning' *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol.10(3), pp. 271-284.
- 92** Furlong, A., Cartmel, F., Powney, J., Hall, S. (1997) *Evaluating Youth Work with vulnerable young people*. University of Glasgow.

surveys were reviewed, in order to keep the literature review manageable. This created a certain bias towards the experience of the UK and USA. The literature search, however, was not circumscribed to a particular geographic focus and aimed to gather data on the experience of other countries whenever available in English language.

Regarding RQ1, related to the nature of the skills demanded by employers, information on these from a comparative perspective does not disaggregate information by level of education. Most available information refers to skills demanded from graduates. There is less information regarding other groups; however, available information suggests that there is a certain degree of overlap between the soft skills demanded by employers from graduates and non-graduates, as detailed in the body of this report. For RQ1 a number of major surveys on the skills demanded by employers were reviewed. These are listed in Annex 1.

Regarding RQ2 it should be noted that there are very few studies that focus systematically on skills development in the youth sector and even fewer that particularly look at the development of soft skills in this field. In this respect, it is interesting to note, for instance, that the final external evaluation of the Youth in Action programme 2000-2006 (ECORYS 2007⁷⁹) focused only on the citizenship competences acquired by young people through their participation in the programme (and its impact on their attitudes, skills and knowledge in that respect) and not on the development of soft skills. Several studies have provided important insights on the relationship between youth work and education/ learning. Ord discusses curriculum aspects (2004⁸⁰) and experiential learning (2009⁸¹) in youth work, Giroux (2005⁸²) analyses 'youth work as a border pedagogy', and Harland and Morgan (2010⁸³) refer to the fact that youth work encompasses a range of skills not well covered in the school curriculum. Muller

(2006⁸⁴) focuses on the aims of informal education in youth work. Wood (2009⁸⁵) suggests that some of the benefits of being involved with youth projects concerned the development of 'soft skills' such as increased confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, leadership and knowing more about the world young people live in; and the development of networks and contacts (see also Boeck 2011⁸⁶). Coburn (2011⁸⁷) and Walker⁸⁸ underline the impact on youth workers in improving the problem solving skills of young people. Nichols (2004⁸⁹) refers to the increased self-efficacy, increased confidence and social and personal skills encouraged by outdoor education. Similarly, Larson and Walker (2010⁹⁰) explore the dilemmas faced by youth leaders in the creation of high quality youth development programmes and argue that such programmes are thought to develop initiative, social skills and civic values. Miles (2007⁹¹) argues that creative learning could equip young people with the sort of skills necessitated by a less predictable job market and acknowledges that non-formal and informal youth settings have the potential to stimulate such creative thinking.

However, these studies do not do try to quantify the development of new skills through youth work. Furlong et al. (1997⁹²) do this. They report that more than half of participants in youth clubs and sports clubs felt that their current club or group had 'helped them a lot' in learning new skills and around a quarter reported that it had helped them a lot to arrive at decisions. Moreover, a third of those participating in youth clubs and around two thirds of those participating in sports clubs reported that this participation had helped them a lot with practical skills. They suggest that these new skills can lead to further education or open up new pathways towards employment. However, their work refers specifically to vulnerable young people and does not provide detail regarding soft skills in particular. Other studies, such

⁹³ Broadbent, R. S. and Papadopoulos, T. (2010) 'We didn't even realize that kids like us could go on the radio' – an evaluation of a Victorian schools youth development programme, *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol.13:2, pp.235-254.

⁹⁴ Bois-Raymonds, M., Plug, W., Stauber, B., Pohl, A. and Walter, A. (2002) How to avoid cooling out? Experiences of young people in their transitions to work across Europe. Yoyo research project.

⁹⁵ See for instance Uyttersprot, J. P. (2012) 'Does recognition lead to jobs?' *Coyote*, n.18, pp. 28-31. Salto Youth (2011) *Bridges to Work: creating better chances for young people on the labour market*. Chapter 6. Salto Youth, Antwerp.

⁹⁶ Holding page of Survey of Organisations: <http://www.ghkint.com/surveys/EuropeanYouthForum/Organisations/> Holding page of Survey of Young People: <http://www.ghkint.com/surveys/EuropeanYouthForum/YoungPeople/>

⁹⁷ We would like to acknowledge the help of volunteer translators from the European Youth Forum member organisations.

as Broadbent and Papadopoulos (2010⁹³), provide some information on the skills developed during youth activities but refer to flexible school-based programmes only and not to programmes from youth organisations - the focus of our report.

There are virtually no studies on the extent to which the development of soft skills in the youth sector affects the employability of young people (RQ4). To take one example, the Yoyo research project⁹⁴ contains useful information regarding the experiences of young people during their transitions from school to work, based on extensive interview work (280 interviews of young people). However, while the project explores the potential of youth organisations to engage individuals who are disengaged in the formal education sector, it did not review the situation of young people who were not in their transition from school to work, and did not specifically examine the importance of skills development in the youth sector for employability.

Moreover, much of this literature relies on anecdotal or case-based evidence⁹⁵. Available evidence tends to point out the importance of soft skills for employers and suggests that youth activities can be a way in which this kind of skills can be developed. Given the relative lack of systematic research in this area focusing on the youth sector, the literature review in relation to RQ4 makes use of a related strand of literature on extra-curricular activities and volunteering, which are considered a proxy for youth activities – although evident differences between volunteering and participation in youth organisations by young people exist. This literature has the advantage of providing more and better evidence thanks to the use of stronger methodological designs and larger sample sizes. There is in principle no a-priori reason why employers should value less participation in youth organisations than volunteering activities - something that is confirmed recent by our analysis

of Eurobarometer survey data, as detailed below in chapter 4.

Given the relative lack of systematic research on the soft skills developed through non-formal education in the youth sector and their acceptance by employers, it is not surprising that there is also a scarcity of research in relation to more specific questions for this study, on the extent to which young people are aware of the skills and competences that they develop through involvement in youth organisations and how to present them to employers (RQ3) and other ways than skills development in which participation in youth organisations enhances employability (RQ5). Again, in relation to these aspects there is a range of case-based evidence that young people value the skills and competences they develop during their participation in youth organisations and that they may use them in their application for employment and that participation in youth organisations can enhance employability through the development of social capital, but that more comprehensive exercises in the collection of information in relation to those questions is largely lacking.

3.2.3 — Surveys: youth organisations and young people

Survey implementation

Within the scope of the study, two surveys were undertaken: a survey of youth organisations and a survey of young people. Both surveys were made available online through two “holding pages”⁹⁶ on the website of ICF-GHK where users could choose to complete the surveys in one of the following languages: English, French, German, Italian, Russian or Spanish⁹⁷.

The surveys were officially launched on 9 May 2012 and closed on 20th June 2012. The survey of organisations was broken down into 14 questions and the survey of young people consisted of 26 questions. In addition,

both surveys provided an option for users to add further comments and leave their email address if they would be interested in receiving the results of the study.

With regard to the dissemination of the survey, all European Youth Forum member organisations were contacted with the request to send the surveys to their members. They were all requested to complete the survey of organisations and to ask young people who participate (or are interested) in their activities to complete the survey of young people. The European Youth Forum also announced the surveys on their website, in their newsletter and social media tools, and during events with member organisations and working structures. The survey was also disseminated amongst European Youth Forum partners (such as UNESCO's Youth Network, CoE Advisory Council, Eurodesk, European Youth Information and Counselling Agency, the Alliance/ Social Platform, Youth partnership of EU-CoE, EUCIS-LLL and the European Youth Portal), who widely circulated it among their networks. All National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme were contacted with the request to disseminate the survey to youth organisations and young people. Out of the 35 National Agencies, 28 Agencies had reported back to the research team on the dissemination channels they used. The most common channels used by the National Agencies to inform of the surveys their network included: a mailing list, newsletter, agency's website, Eurodesk website and/or social media such as Facebook and Twitter. SALTO Resource Centres were also contacted (although mostly integrated in the National Agency of the Youth in Action programme), and in particular, the study team liaised with the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre in order to ensure dissemination of the survey in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Additionally, 23 local youth councils mainly

in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany and the Slovak Republic, 9 national organisations in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom and 158 youth organisations across Europe were also contacted to increase response rates. These were selected based on referrals and the availability of information about their profile.

Survey sampling and comparison group

245 organisations completed the survey of organisations and 1,301 people completed the survey of young people.

The Internet surveys through which data were collected largely relied on youth organisations to distribute the survey. It is not possible to check the extent to which different organisations have met the request for distribution of the survey. The sample obtained is a non-probability sample, for practical reasons.

Initially, it was expected that the sample included both individuals who had been involved with youth organisations and those individuals who had not, to compare both groups regarding key variables such level of soft skills. Thus, the comparison would allow a review of differences in outcomes (skills) between participants and non-participants; it could be hypothesised that these differences (if they exist after controlling for other factors, such as level of education) could be due to participation in youth organisations (provided that there are no issues with self-selection - for instance people taking part in youth activities (applying and being selected) having higher levels of skills - communication - when they started participation).

This approach, however, faced a number of challenges that could not have been envisaged at the start of the research process. The definition of 'youth organisation' used in the survey was based on the European Youth Forum definition. While using this definition has several advantages, it is also a very open definition, which consequently somehow

⁹⁸ The research team would like to thank those individuals and organisations involved in the piloting of the questionnaire.

restricts the number of individuals outside it. Second, it is difficult to identify and reach individuals who have not had involvement with youth organisations in an efficient and systematic way. Third, while it was envisaged that youth organisations would contact individuals who applied but did not take part in volunteering activities in the end - so that the comparison group were close to those of participants in a number of respects such as attitudes, etc.- it was later agreed that application/selection is not necessarily the norm in the youth sector. Fourth, there are limitations associated with the degree to which youth organisations keep the contact details of those who apply.

Thus, comparisons in this study are made not between non-participants and participants but between 'low intensity' participation and those with 'high intensity participation' in the youth sector, to see their differences and applying a similar logic to the non-participant comparison.

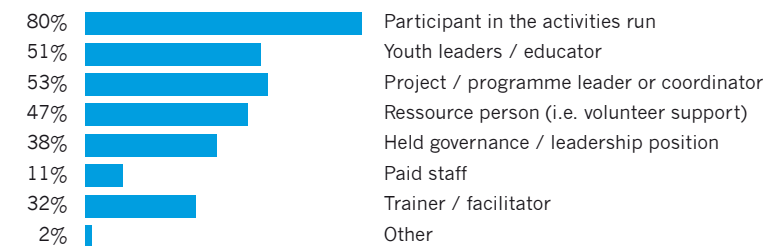
The sample is restricted to young people who have access to the Internet, which can create some bias towards more educated respondents; respondents from lower socio-economic backgrounds may also be underrepresented. The survey was available in six languages; while these were widely spoken languages, this may have excluded a number of respondents without the necessary competence in any of those languages. Similarly, the topic researched (non-formal education, soft skills development) is not easily grasped, and individuals with limited literacy/ analytical skills may have found filling in the survey without support challenging. Measures were taken through the piloting of the survey questionnaires to make this understandable for the target group⁹⁸. However, it is still the case that it will be difficult for individuals to disentangle the effects of the non-formal and informal learning that occurs in youth organisations in the development of their skills.

Demographic characteristics of the sample

Background characteristics of the respondents to both surveys are presented in Annex 3 of this report. Regarding the survey of organisations, respondent organisations were based in over 40 European countries. Spain, Lithuania, Belgium, Ireland, Italy and the UK were the countries most often present in the survey responses, but on the whole there was a good distribution of respondents across countries. For both surveys, responses were received from all countries covered through the European Youth Forum membership (see Annex 3 for a full list of countries).

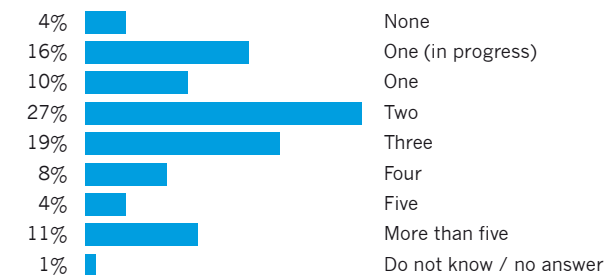
Over 90% of organisations reported that they provide non-formal education directly to young people, whereas less than 10% reported that this was done through their member organisations at local or national level. Organisations defined themselves as 'international non-governmental youth organisations (28%)', 'members of a European Youth Forum member organisation' (21%), 'national non-governmental organisations' (20%), 'national youth councils' (10%) or other type of organisation (22%). They also often defined themselves as educational associations (53%), community-based associations (32%), exchange associations (27%) and/or cultural/artistic associations (20%) – multiple response possible. By contrast, professional associations/trade-unions, political associations, health organisations and faith-based organisations were the least represented – less than 10% of the sample identified itself as such kind of organisation in each case. The organisations surveyed mainly catered for younger age groups, in particular 15 to 25 years of age. They reported to cater for a variety of groups of young people in terms of prior educational attainment, from primary to higher education. At the secondary education level, people who had attained general secondary

Figure 1 Ways in which young people have been involved in youth organisations



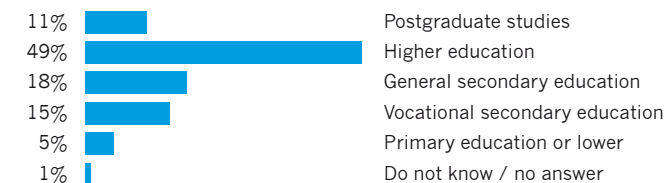
Source: Bath/ ICF-GHK survey.

Figure 2 Number of youth organisations in which young people had been involved



Source: Bath/ ICF-GHK survey.

Figure 3 Highest level of education of any parent or primary caregiver



Source: Bath/ ICF-GHK survey.

education were more likely to be involved with the organisations surveyed than people from vocational backgrounds – see Annex 3 for further details.

Regarding the **survey of young people**, most respondents (44%) were between 20 and 24 years of age, followed by individuals aged 25-29 (27%). 13% were 30 or over and 16% were below 20 years of age. The survey obtained a wide geographical coverage, as individuals from over 50 nationalities replied to the survey. The greatest percentage of respondents came from Italy (17%), followed by Serbia (10%), Romania (7%), Spain (5%) and Germany (5%). Young people reported to have been involved with youth organisations as participants in the activities run (80%), project/programme leader or coordinator (53%), youth leader/educator (51%), resource persons (47%), had had a governance/leadership position (38%) or had been a trainer/facilitator (32%) – multiple response were possible. 11% reported to have been involved as paid staff and 2% in some other capacity – see Figure 1 ←.

More than 40% of the sample had been involved in youth organisations' activities for five or more years; 28% for 3 to 5 years, 16% for one or two years and 14% for a year or less. The frequency of involvement in youth organisations' activities of 30% of the sample was three or more times a week, while 35% of the sample was involved once or twice a week. The reminder of the sample was involved twice a month or less –see Annex 3 for further details.

Just under half of the sample (43%) had finished their involvement with a youth organisation more than six months ago. The large majority of the sample (slightly under 75%) had not participated in any other NGO activities outside a youth organisation. This reduces the influence that skills development in other NGOs activities may have had on the results reported.

The majority of respondents had been involved in two or fewer youth organisations, but 11% had been involved in more than five –as shown in Figure 2 ←.

Most respondents were students (60%) or (self)-employed (39%). Fewer respondents were unemployed (9%), were doing an internship/ apprenticeship (7%), were in between two study periods (3%) or reported to be in another occupation (4%) –multiple responses possible.

Exactly 30% of respondents had applied for a job at some point in the past, 18% had applied for an internship/apprenticeship, a further 30% had applied for both, a job and an internship/apprenticeship and 23% had never applied for a job, internship or apprenticeship.

It should also be mentioned that respondents tended to come from high socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, as shown in Figure 3 ←, 60% of the sample had at least one parent or caregiver who had achieved a higher education credential, whereas only in the case of 5% of respondents parents or caregivers had not achieved above primary education or lower.

3.2.4 — Stakeholder workshop

The objective of the workshop with stakeholders was to better understand whether and how employers take young people's experience in youth organisations into consideration. The stakeholder workshop also was a means to gather information regarding employers' views on the ways in which young people articulate their engagement in youth organisations on their CV's and/or motivation letter.

The workshop took place on the 27th June 2012 in Brussels, and brought together employers, guidance services and youth sector representatives. Seven people, mainly from Brussels and Paris area, participated, including:

- Three senior human resource managers with each over eight years of experience in recruitment for organisations in the Benelux, Europe and beyond;
- Two senior managers, involved in management and recruitment with over twenty years of experience;
- A director of a Flemish youth guidance service; and
- A representative of a youth organisation.

Out of the three senior human resources managers, two were employed by a Brussels-based organisation; one of which was a recruiter at a large University and annually recruits between 200 – 300 people for a range of functions (from academic to administrative, managerial or marketing positions); the second person was a human resources manager who works for an international company that recruits staff from across Europe and beyond. The other senior human resource manager had over eight years of experience in human resources for a large Paris-based multinational corporation. The two participating senior managers were based in Brussels and had over 20 years of experience. The representative of the Flemish youth guidance worked in the areas of formal and non-formal education, in particular for disadvantaged youth, and their linkages to employment. The representative of a youth organisation had been a member of the organisation for six years and had been involved in several project management roles. Most participants recruited young people with 'general' academic qualifications and to a lesser extent young people with a vocational education background.

3.2.5 — Employer interviews

The research team conducted eleven telephone in-depth interviews with employers to collect their views on young people's involvement with youth organisations and

its impact on employability. The objective of these interviews was to better understand:

- Whether employers take into consideration young people's engagement in youth organisations during recruitment;
- If so, what do employers think it reflects (i.e. the type of skills, competences and attributes) about the person;
- Under what conditions employers take youth organisation experience into account in relation to the duration of engagement, the role of the person in the youth organisation and/or the type of youth organisation; and
- Whether employers think that young people present adequately the skills and competences they gain through their involvement in youth organisations in their CV, motivation letter and/or during the job interview.

Interviewees were identified during the European Business Forum on vocational training held in Brussels on 7 and 8 June 2012 and the "Shaping Talents Conference 2012" organised by CEEMET in Brussels on 28 and 29 June 2012. Additional interviewees were put forward by the European Economic and Social Committee and through desk research. All interviewees had direct experience in recruitment, either as a director or human resources manager (ten interviewees) or as an executive in a recruitment specialist firm (one interviewee). Seven interviewees had over 15 years of experience in human resources management and four participants had between 5 to 10 years of experience. Interviewees were based in the following countries: Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Portugal and the Slovak Republic. Interviews took place between mid-June to mid-July 2012.



4 — Findings

Table 4.1
Top skills and capabilities looked for by employers

Survey	Skills and capabilities employers that consider important
2010 Eurobarometer survey perceptions graduate employability	Good with numbers, good reading/ writing skills, foreign language skills, computer skills, sector specific skills, communication skills, analytical and problem solving skills, ability to adapt to and act in new situations, decision-making skills, team-working skills, planning and organisational skills
I-Graduate international employer barometer	Communication skills, team working, integrity, intellectual ability, confidence, character, organisational skills, literacy, numeracy, decision-making
QS top MBA jobs and salary trends 2010-11 Worldwide	Communication, interpersonal skills, strategic thinking, leadership, relevant experience, finance skills, international awareness, marketing skills, academic achievement, IT skills, entrepreneurship, risk management, foreign language skills.
Brunello and Schlotter (2011)	Willingness to help other people and avoid antagonism, organisation skills, emotional stability, autonomy and extraversion
Cartwright and Goldstraw (2005)	Self-reliance skills (self-awareness, proactivity, willingness to learn, self-promotion, networking, planning action), people skills (team working, interpersonal skills, communication, leadership, foreign language), general skills (problem solving, flexibility, customer orientation, business acumen, IT literacy, numeracy, commitment), specialist skills
2009 UK's Learning and Skills Council annual National Employers Skills Survey	Technical skills, overall handling skills, problem solving, team working, communication skills, management skills, literacy skills, numeracy skills, administrative skills, foreign language skills, IT skills.
2009 UK's Council for Industry and Higher Education 'Graduate Employability: the views of employers' survey	Communication skills, team-working skills, integrity, intellectual ability, confidence, character, planning and organisational skills, literacy, numeracy, analysis and decision-making skills
2010 IBM CEO report	Leadership: Creativity, integrity, global thinking, influence, openness, dedication, focus on sustainability, humility, fairness

Source: University of Bath/ GHK Consulting

⁹⁹ For further information on how the analysis was undertaken please refer to Annex 4.

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, M. (2007) 'How far merit selection? Social stratification and the labour market' *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol.58(3), pp. 367-390. Analysed over 5,000 newspaper job advertisements to find the qualifications, personal characteristics and attitudes that employers look for at different levels.

¹⁰¹ Cedefop (2010a). Skills supply and demand in Europe: medium-term forecast up to 2020. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

This section presents the main findings from the literature review, analysis of Eurobarometer data⁹⁹, dedicated surveys to youth organisations and young people, a workshop with stakeholders and in-depth interviews with employers. The presentation of results is organised according to the research questions.

4.1 — Research question 1: What soft skills and competences, and at what level, are demanded in the labour market?

4.1.1 — Skills that employers demand

There is a range of sources available to answer this question. Some of those sources are high-quality large-scale surveys. Details on the sources, and associated indicators employed are provided in Annex 1.

Most of the available sources refer to skills demanded in relation to graduates. However, those sources that include wider sets of employees (like the UK National Employers Skills survey) suggest that the skills employers would like to see developed do not, on the whole, differ substantially by level of occupation (except for 'management skills', which are more important at the top of the occupational scale) –see Annex 1. This suggests that the skills demanded by employers presented in the next section do not concern only higher education graduates. Similarly, Jackson (2009¹⁰⁰) compares the importance of experience, effort, technical skills, social skills, and personal characteristics across different categories of the occupational scale. She finds that soft skills are important across the board –although importance increases as one moves up in the occupational scale.

On the whole, these high-quality large-scale

surveys provide a good indication of the skills and competences that employers demand. Additional information is provided in Table 4.1 ←, from which a set of 'core'/ frequently mentioned skills and competences were identified for selection in the study surveys.

There is logically scant information in the surveys about the required skill level or the more specific definition of these skills, as this will vary by specific profession: the communication skills required for a journalist and a IT programmer or a plumber, for instance, will be very varied. However, on the whole, as mentioned in chapter 2, research by CEDEFOP¹⁰¹ suggests that on the whole higher levels will be more demanded in the coming years.

4.1.2 — Ranking of skills most frequently demanded by employers

Table 4.2 → provides a summary of the number of mentions per skill/competence/ personality trait in the above studies/ surveys. It covers those items that received more than one mention.

The list shows that employers rank soft skills (the focus of this study) very highly, compared to technical skills. This is consistent with the review by Brunello and Schlotter (2011) who report that non-cognitive skills (within which these authors include aspects such as a wide range of social skills, motivation and leadership) are at least as important as cognitive skills in determining employment and earnings success. The list also shows a hierarchy of the soft skills that are more often valued by employers, which have been used in subsequent phases of the research after some minor adaptations to the reality of the youth sector – see section 4.2.

It should be noted at this point that personality traits are not skills and competences per se, which are the focus of

Table 4.2
Number of mentions per
skill/ competence/ personality trait

Skill/ competence/ personality trait	Number of mentions
Communication skills	6
Organisational/ planning skills	6
Decision-making skills	6
Team-working skills	5
Confidence/ autonomy	5
Numeracy	5
Literacy	4
Problem solving skills	4
IT skills	4
Foreign language skills	4
Sector specific skills	4
Leadership	3
Emotional intelligence	3
Intellectual ability	3
Integrity	3
Adaptability	2
Entrepreneurship	2
Commitment	2
International awareness	2
Networking skills	2

Source: University of Bath/ GHK Consulting

¹⁰² See Costa, P. T. Jr. and McCrae, R. R. (1992) Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) manual. Odessa, FL, Psychological Assessment Resources.

¹⁰³ Feldberg, H. R. (2011) 'S'more than just fun and games: teachers' perceptions on the educational value of camp programmes for school groups' MA Thesis, University of Waterloo, Canada.

¹⁰⁴ Henderson, K. A., Powell, G. M., & Scanlin, M. M. (2005) 'Observing outcomes in youth development: An analysis of mixed methods' Journal of Parks & Recreation Administration, 23(4), 58-77.

this study, yet their relationship with those is clear. Personality traits are important components of skills and competences and factors that contribute to their development. Thus, Brunello and Schlotter (2011) in their discussion of the eight key competences included in the 'European Framework for Key Competences for lifelong learning' note how "learning to learn" include self-discipline, perseverance and motivation, which are also facets of conscientiousness in 'Big five' factors model¹⁰² of personality and may also be related to the internal locus of control. Similarly, the keywords associated to "social and civic competencies" include ability to communicate, tolerance, empathy and coping with stress, which are clearly related to the facets of agreeableness and extraversion. Employers thus may report the importance of some personality traits because they see these as being related to a range of skills and competences that they require from employees.

4.1.3 — Employers' views on soft skills and successful job performance

While their number does not allow for a robust check or contrast with the results based on the databases presented in the literature review section, it is interesting to note that the employer interviews undertaken for this study largely confirmed the importance of the soft-skills mentioned in the literature review, as soft skills are seen as a key element for successful job performance. In terms of particular skills, team working, organisation, decision-making and leadership skills were commonly mentioned. Other attributes mentioned, such as personal drive, a sense of initiative-taking and proactivity were associated with confidence/autonomy and entrepreneurship.

As one workshop participant put it:
"Although employers want young recruits to obey to the rules, at the same time they also want them to be able to think out of the box, be creative and innovative" – stakeholder workshop.

4.2 — Research question 2: What soft-skills and competences are developed and at what level through Non-Formal Education in youth organisations?

There is limited literature on the impact of participation in youth organisations on soft skills development. It is acknowledged in many of the available studies that 'hard evidence' regarding the claims made in those studies that refer to involvement in youth organisations and employability between participation in youth organisations and skills development is lacking (Feldberg 2011¹⁰³; see also Henderson et al. 2005¹⁰⁴). This study, therefore, placed an important emphasis on the collection of primary data to answer this question.

The chapter is organised as follows: first, it presents data on the level of skills development in youth organisations. Second, it explores a range of individual and organisational factors (degree of involvement in youth organisations, involvement with youth organisations outside the home country, existence of an educational plan and method of assessment for the skills developed in the youth organisation) that may affect such degree of development. Third, it examines the usefulness of the skills developed in youth organisations for young people's current occupation.

Table 4.3
Individual level of skills development in youth organisations
by highest level of educational attainment

Which of the following skills and attitudes have you gained or improved through your involvement in youth organisations?	Second stage of higher education (e.g. postgraduate studies)	First stage of higher education (e.g. first degree -bachelor)	General secondary education (e.g. A-levels, or equivalent)	Vocational secondary education (e.g. trade school, technical school)	Primary education or lower
Number of respondents*	N=360	N=464	N=377	N=48	N=52
Adaptability / flexibility	4.09	3.99	3.98	3.56	3.72
Communication skills	4.22	4.14	4.03	3.89	3.74
Capacity to understand and present my abilities to others	3.83	3.78	3.59	3.47	3.23
Creativity	3.72	3.68	3.48	3.62	3.22
Decision-making skills	3.94	3.82	3.74	3.39	3.56
Emotional intelligence	3.60	3.71	3.55	3.46	3.45
Entrepreneurship	3.51	3.56	3.54	3.46	3.40
Foreign language skills	3.62	3.49	2.99	2.78	2.43
Integrity	3.58	3.69	3.54	3.67	3.38
Intercultural skills	4.12	4.02	3.79	4.02	3.46
IT skills	2.50	2.51	2.08	2.52	2.04
Leadership	3.92	3.79	3.58	3.29	3.17
Literacy and/or numeracy	2.53	2.60	2.40	2.89	2.57
Organisational skills	3.91	3.88	3.62	3.52	3.60
Problem solving skills	3.85	3.79	3.63	3.64	3.57
Self-confidence	4.03	4.02	3.75	3.76	3.62
Team-working skills	4.22	4.18	4.14	3.98	4.26

Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey * The vast majority of survey respondents (around 85%) were over 20 years old, meaning they were at the age when they are either working or in higher education. 16% of respondents were between 16 and 20 years old, meaning still possibly enrolled in general education.

4.2.1 — Soft skills and competences developed by young people in youth organisations

The soft skills and competences developed by young people in youth organisations, as **reported by young people** themselves, are outlined in Table 4.3 ←. This table and subsequent tables on skills development show the degree to which skills and attitudes have been gained or improved by young people through involvement in youth organisations, on a scale from 0= no improvement to 5= high improvement.

Table 4.3 shows data broken down by level of education of respondents. We see that, on the whole, young people at the higher levels of qualification report greater skills development during their involvement with youth organisations. The improvements reported at lower levels of formal educational attainment, however, are still significant – with most improvement levels above 3.0.

The high degree of development of team-working skills, self-confidence, intercultural skills, adaptability / flexibility and communication skills was also reported in the survey of organisations, which suggests a strong robustness of the results in this respect.

Out of the top 6 skills and competences most often mentioned as demanded by employers reported in section 4.1 five are also amongst those developed to a greater extent through involvement in youth organisations, reflecting a very strong match between both aspects. Thus, communication skills, organisational/planning skills, decision-making skills, team-working skills, confidence/autonomy are also amongst those skills developed to a greater extent through involvement in youth organisations, and are very often demanded by employers. This pattern is only less neat for numeracy,

which was also often mentioned as being demanded by employers, but is developed to a less significant extent through youth work than the other five skills and competences previously mentioned.

During the stakeholder workshop, employers and other stakeholders also supported, the view that young people develop a wide range of skills and competences through their involvement in youth organisations, including the following:

- Team working;
- Organisation of work and time;
- Taking responsibility;
- Adaptability;
- Autonomy;
- Resilience and perform under stress;
- Commitment;
- Motivation;
- Solving open-ended problems;
- Capacity to understand;
- Proactivity;
- Professional social skills (e.g. coming to work on time, following rules and assignments, doing immediately what is asked);
- Decision-making skills; and
- Leadership.

As one participant in the workshop with stakeholders added:

“involvement in youth organisations indicates that these individuals want to steer their career and do not just sit and wait.” “You can be more certain than with other candidates that they can take responsibility, work in teams and know how to organise themselves to achieve a good result” – stakeholder workshop participants

While there are other reasons for young people to get involved in youth organisations these quotes reflect that employer believe that those individuals that take part in youth organisations' activities are proactive and have a strong sense of initiative. During the

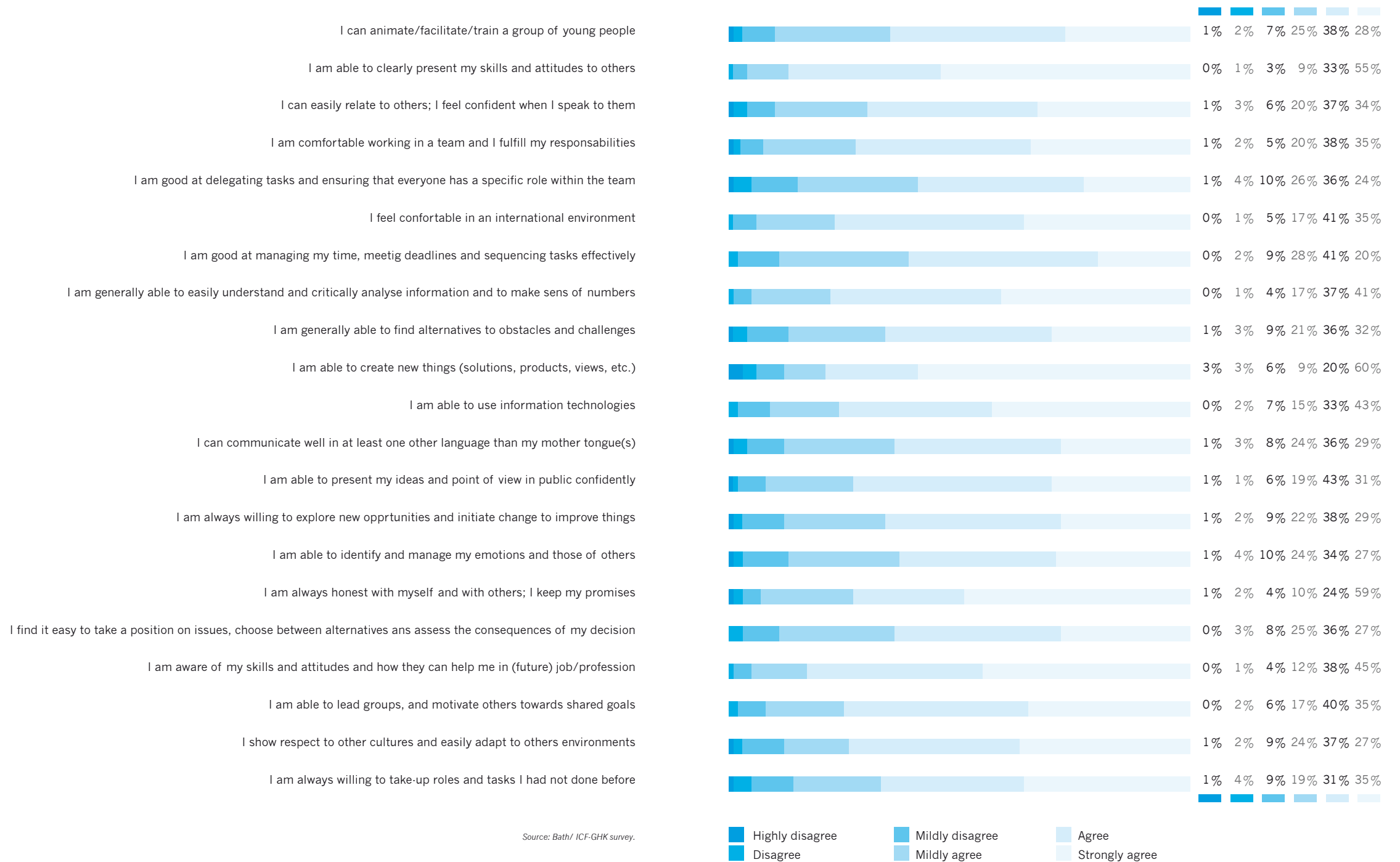
workshop it was also explicitly mentioned that gains in terms of organisational skills could be high for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The degree to which individuals surveyed felt able to undertake tasks associated with the skills and competences previously outlined at the time of replying to the survey is presented in Figure 4 →. The responses naturally varied by task. Respondents reported as particularly high their capacity to communicate in at least one language other than their mother tongue and their intercultural skills (had a greater proportion of responses from young people reporting that they strongly agree with their capacity to perform tasks in those areas). By contrast, emotional intelligence, decision-making skills and organisational skills were ranked lowest (had a greater proportion of responses from young people reporting moderate or lower agreement with statements of capacity to perform tasks in those areas). Other tasks that the survey enquired about fell between these two extremes.

The picture is varied regarding the relationship between level of development of skills and competences within youth organisations, importance to employers and young people's confidence in the development of tasks. Particularly interesting is the case of some tasks that can be associated to skills and competences that are highly important to employers and that individuals do not feel very confident about, that are developed to a high degree through youth sector work. This would underline a potential for high impact of youth organisations in those areas. For instance, willingness to take-up new roles and tasks they had not undertaken before is an area that respondents to the survey find challenging, while 'adaptability and flexibility' is an area often highlighted as important by employers and – importantly - was reported by young people as an area where involvement in youth organisations contributes strongly to skills development. The case of organisational skills (and associated tasks such as delegation of tasks, time management and effective sequencing of tasks) is similar. On the other extreme, numeracy is an area where young people also face challenges - as Figure 4 shows - and is important for employers; however the contribution from youth organisation involvement to the development of numeracy skills is lower.

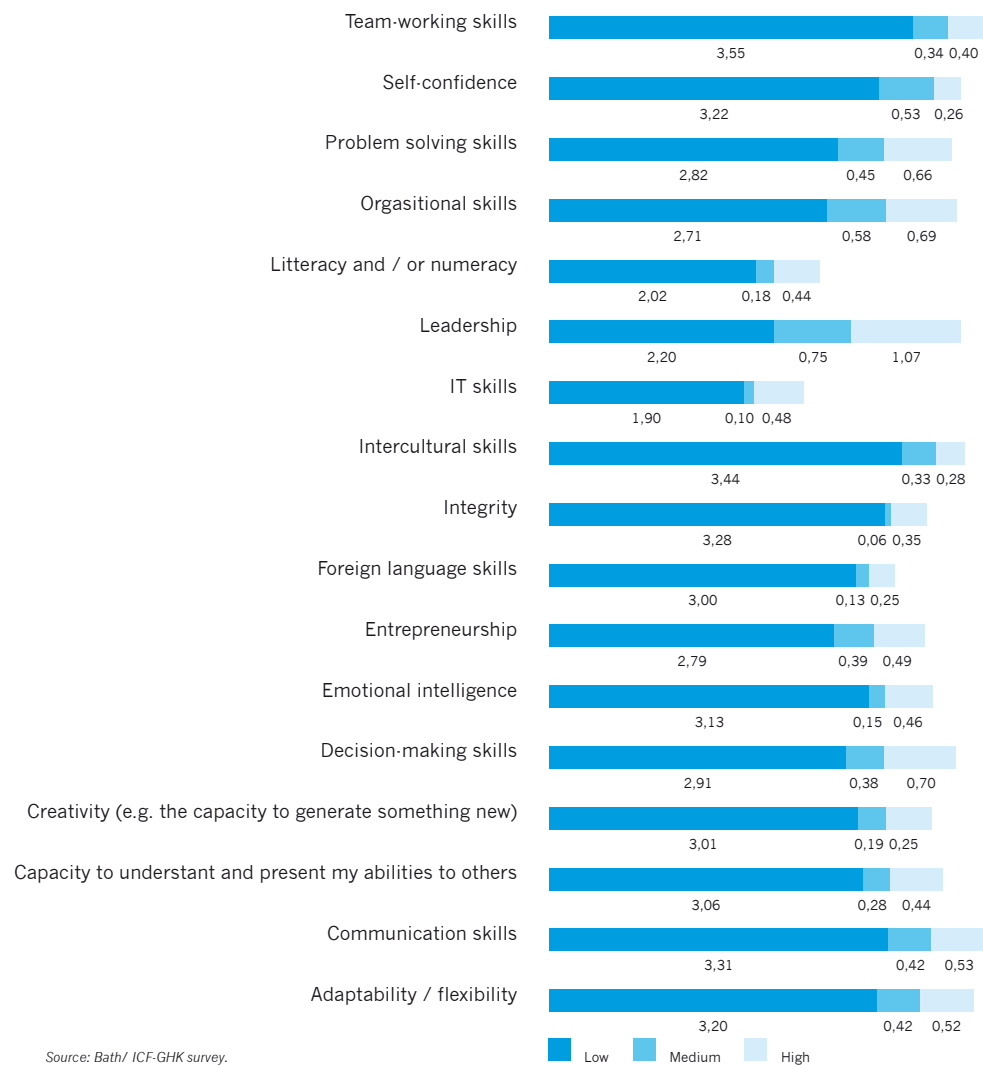
Figure 4

Individuals assessment of their capacity to undertake 'soft-skills' related tasks



Source: Bath/ ICF-GHK survey.

Figure 5 Individual level of skills development in youth organisations by level of involvement with youth organisations' activities



Source: Bath/ ICF-GHK survey.

* Measured by the amount of months of involvement and the frequency of involvement as detailed in Annex 3.

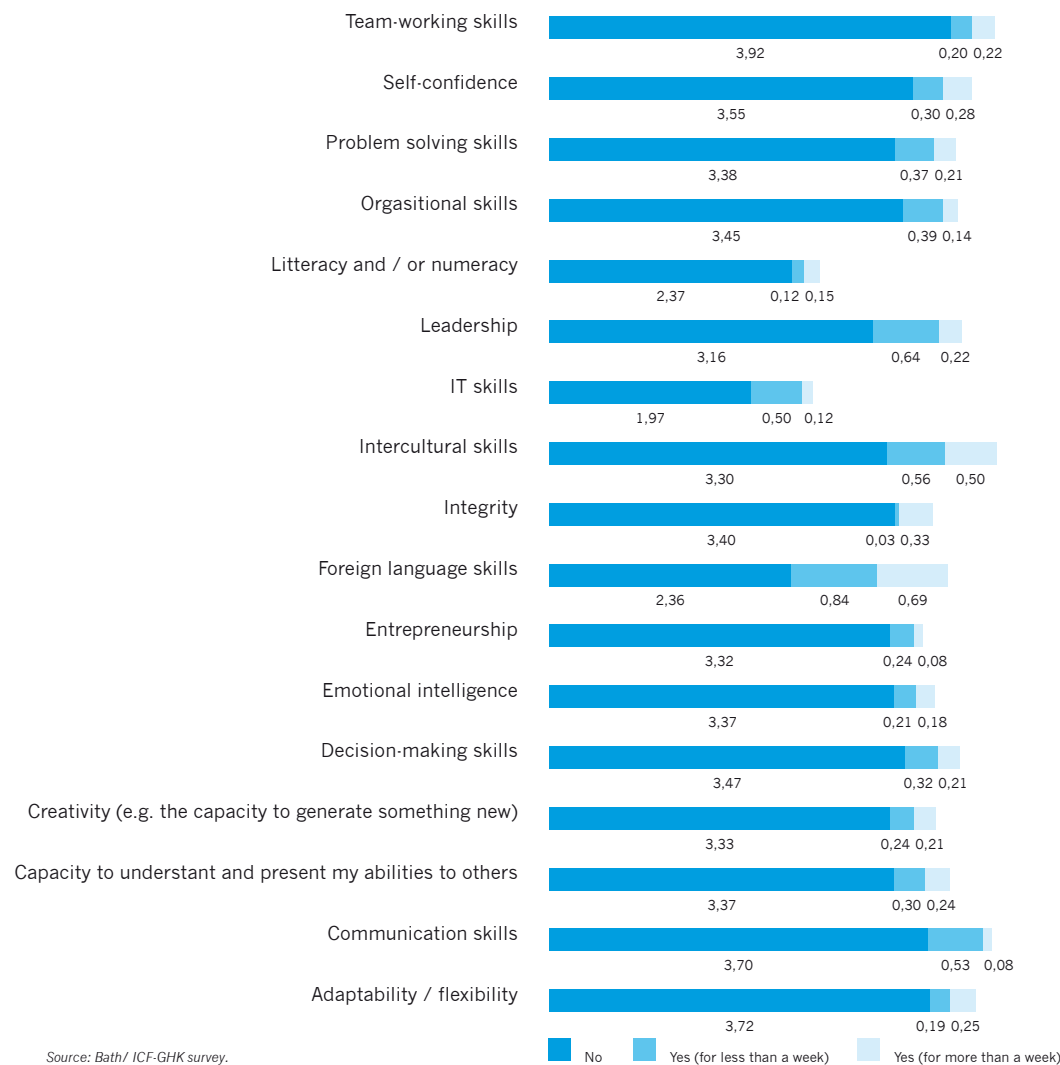
4.2.2 — Young people’s degree of involvement in youth organisations and level of skills development

The degree of involvement in the organisations’ activities has an important effect on the degree to which individuals reported having increased their skills, as shown in Figure 5. Those people who reported higher levels of involvement (defined in terms of frequency and duration) in the youth organisations’ activities also reported higher levels of skills development. This relationship was very clear, and applied to all the skills for which this study collected information. Clearly, longer-term and more intense engagement has its benefits.

Those skills and competences that seem to benefit more markedly from long-term involvement with youth organisations are leadership skills, organisational skills, problem solving skills, decision-making skills, adaptability/ flexibility and communication skills. In relation to these, changes in the reported level of skills development from individuals with low levels of involvement and individuals with high levels of involvement are above 0.9 points. Foreign language skills, integrity, IT skills, emotional intelligence, intercultural skills and literacy/ numeracy are those skills that were reported to be less sensitive to the level of involvement: in relation to these, changes in the reported level of skills development from individuals with low levels of involvement and individuals with high levels of involvement are below 0.65 points.

In this context, it should be noted that even individuals with low degrees of involvement reported benefits in skills development around the 3.0 average for most skills, and substantially higher for intercultural skills, integrity and team-working skills. Thus, according to the study survey of young people, there are benefits from even limited periods of participation in youth organisations, in terms of skills development.

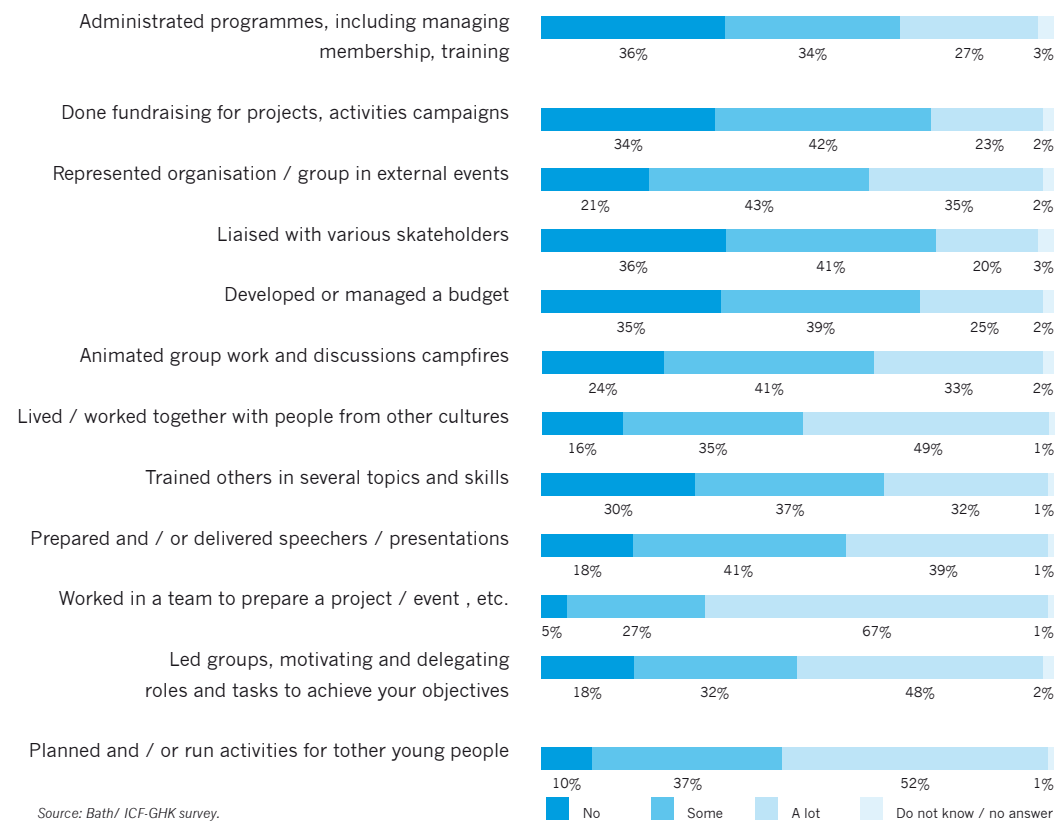
Figure 6 Individual level of skills development in youth organisations by level of participation in activities outside home country



4.2.3 — Soft skills development and involvement in youth organisations outside the home country

The benefits of participating in non-formal educational activities in a youth organisation outside the home country, in terms of skills development, are also remarkably clear – as shown in Figure 6. For all skills, development is higher for those who have participated in educational experiences abroad for more than a week, than for those who had participated in those experiences for less than a week. This group, in turn, reported higher levels of skills development (again for all skills) than those who had not participated in non-formal educational experiences in youth organisations outside their home country. Even a short period abroad can help to improve skills further. Differences between groups varied from modest increases (in literacy and numeracy, entrepreneurship and integrity) to larger increases (for instance in relation to foreign language skills, intercultural skills and leadership).

Figure 7 Activities developed by young people in youth organisations (survey of youth organisations)

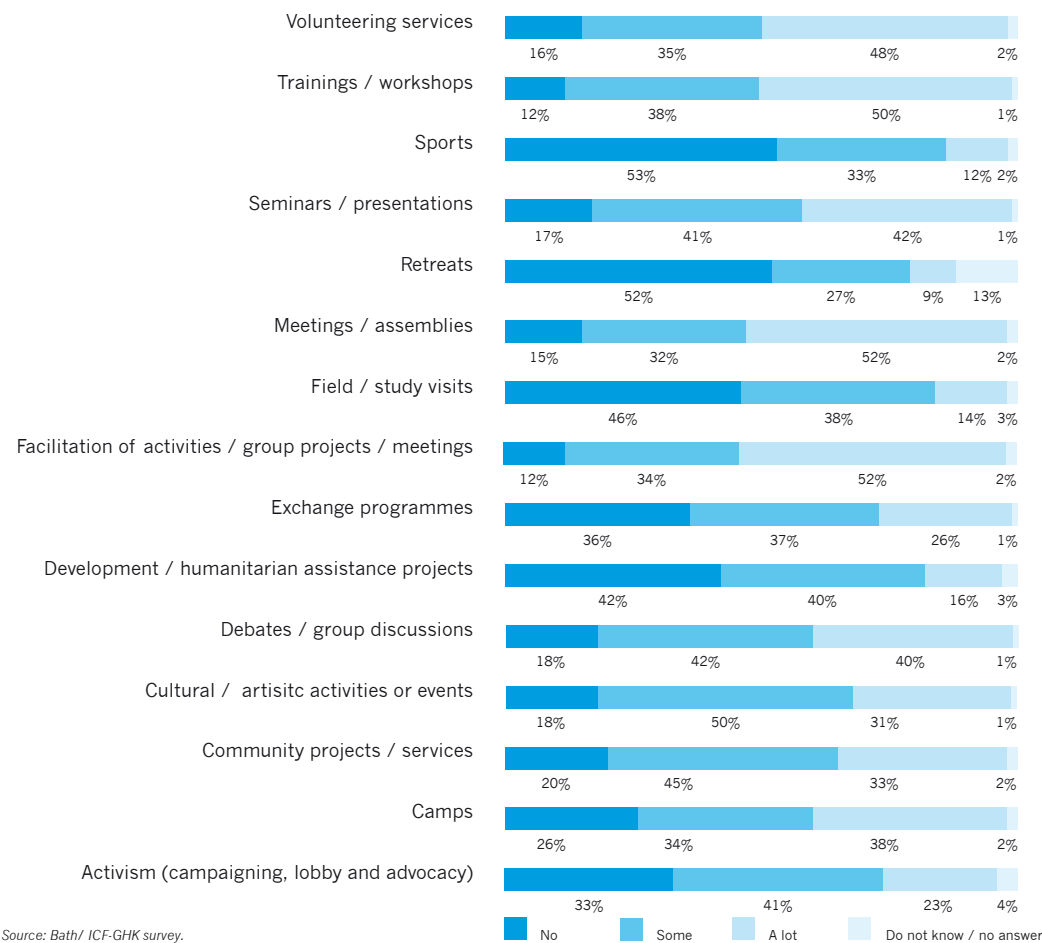


4.2.4 — Activities and tasks young people undertake in non-formal education in youth organisations

An important aspect regarding the development of soft-skills through non-formal education in youth organisations relates to the kind of activities and related tasks through which such education is organised and delivered. The survey of organisations revealed a wide range of non-formal education activities implemented by youth organisations.

According to youth organisations, the activities undertaken more often include: working in teams, planning and running of activities, leading groups, living with people from other cultures and preparing and delivering speeches and presentations, as shows in Figure 7 ←. Activities such as programme administration, fundraising, liaison with stakeholders and budget management, are less frequent. Other activities fell in between these two groups of activities.

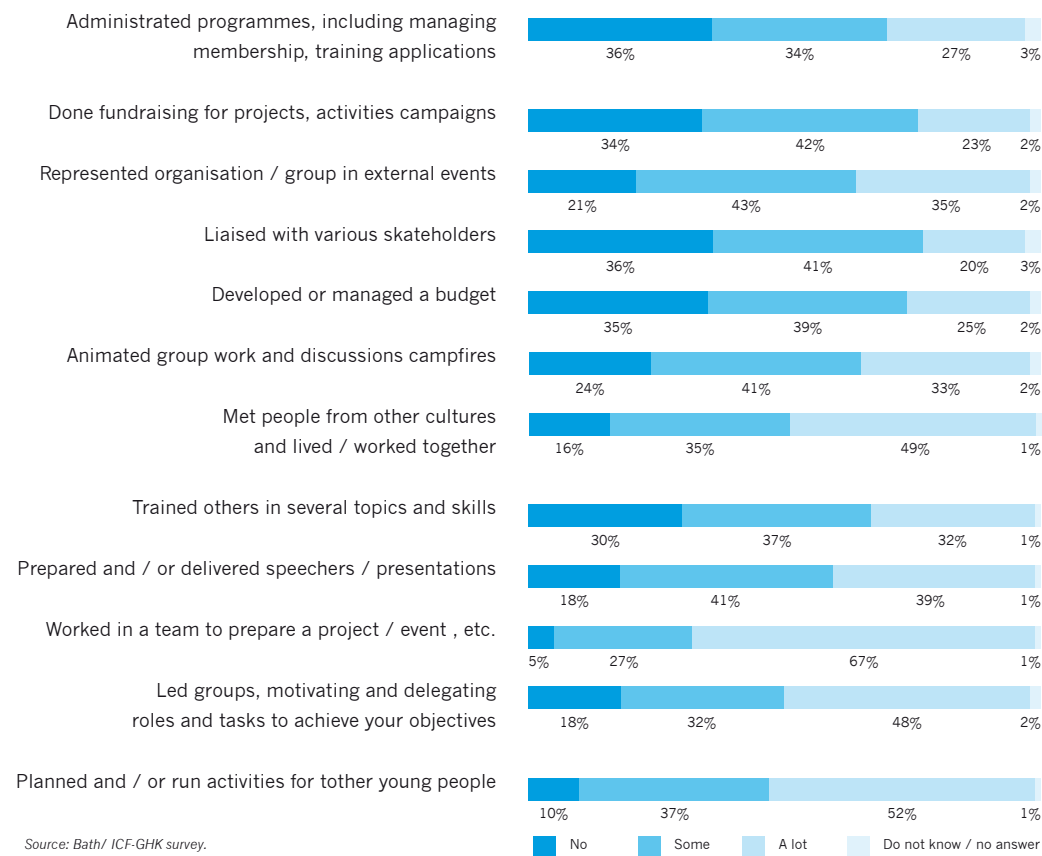
Figure 8 Activities developed by young people in youth organisations
(survey of young people)



Source: Bath/ ICF-GHK survey.

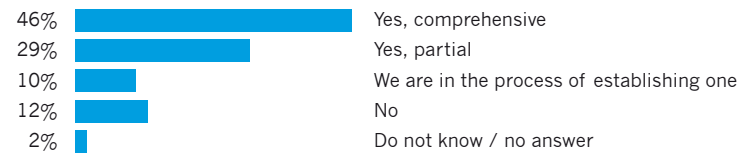
The list of activities provided in the survey of young people was different, in order to make them closer to young people's experience. Figure 8 shows that facilitation of activities/ group projects, meetings/ assemblies, training/workshops, volunteering services, debates and groups discussions and participation in cultural or artistic activities or events were those activities most often undertaken by the young people in our sample. Thus, both the survey of organisations and the survey of young people suggest that the most common activities in youth organisations relate to group and team-work, group leading, communication and dialogue, training and varied (multi) cultural activities.

Figure 9 Tasks undertaken by young people as part of their involvement in youth organisations (survey of young people)



Concerning the tasks that participation in such activities may involve, the survey of young people suggests that group working, planning of activities, working with people from other cultures, supervising and leading other young people and preparing and delivering speeches and presentations are the most common tasks undertaken by young people –as shown in Figure 9 ←.

Figure 10 Degree of development of educational plans in youth organisations



Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

Note: A comprehensive plan refers to one that incorporates a learners' needs analysis; setting of objectives and expected learning outcomes; a planning and implementation process, and an evaluation. A partial plan incorporates some of the above elements (setting of objectives, learners' needs analysis, etc.) but not all.

Table 4.4 Level of skills development, organisational and assessment plans in youth organisations

What is the overall level of improvement that you see in the development of skills in young people as a result of their participation in NFE activities?	Does your organisation assess whether young people have improved these skills/attitudes?			
	Organisations that have an organised educational plan to develop skills and attitudes		Organisations that do not have an organised educational plan to develop skills and attitudes	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Adaptability / flexibility	3.59	3.13	2.81	3.00
Communication skills	3.94	3.57	3.40	2.88
Capacity to understand and present my abilities to others	3.50	3.00	3.14	2.88
Creativity (e.g. the capacity to generate something new)	3.62	3.43	3.21	3.25
Decision-making skills	3.30	3.00	2.62	2.13
Emotional intelligence	2.82	3.43	2.24	1.63
Entrepreneurship	2.56	2.57	2.31	1.13
Foreign language skills	3.40	2.83	2.76	2.13
Integrity	2.31	2.50	1.98	1.38
Intercultural skills	3.67	3.57	3.27	2.88
IT skills	2.27	1.43	1.83	1.13
Leadership	3.74	3.86	3.49	3.00
Literacy and/or numeracy	3.81	3.57	3.54	3.38
Organisational skills	3.86	4.00	3.79	3.25
Problem solving skills	3.68	3.50	3.36	2.63
Self-confidence	3.66	3.14	3.69	2.50
Team-working skills	4.15	3.57	3.77	3.38

Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

"Yes" means that the organisation assesses skills at least sometimes. Thus, the columns in grey show data for those organisations that responded having an organised educational plan. The columns in white show data for those that do not report having such a plan. The figures reported go from 0= no improvement to 5= high improvement.

4.2.5 — The importance of educational and assessment plans

To what extent are such activities part of an educational plan or programme to develop the skills and competences of young people within youth organisations? As Figure 10 shows, almost half of the youth organisations surveyed had a comprehensive educational plan, but over 50% did not have a comprehensive plan (over a quarter of the organisations), or did not have a plan at all (around a quarter of organisations).

Table 4.4 relates the improvement in soft skills by young people as perceived by youth organisations to the presence of an organised and comprehensive educational plan and method of assessment for skills improvement. The message is very clear. First, those organisations that have an organised educational plan and assess whether young people have improved their skills during their participation in their activities report a higher level of skills improvement. On the other hand, those youth organisations without those elements report the lowest level of skills improvement.

Second, having an assessment plan should help organisations to provide more reliable data in relation to this aspect. When we compare those organisations with an assessment plan and an educational plan with those that have an assessment plan but no educational plan, we see that the first type of organisation reports higher mean scores. Having an educational plan, therefore, seems to facilitate skills development.

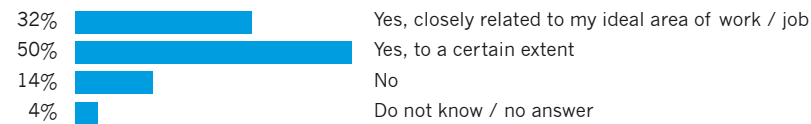
Third, most skills are developed to a significant extent (3 points or more on a scale 0 to 5) but some skills are developed to a greater extent than others. Thus, for instance, teamwork skills, communication, intercultural, leadership, organisational, problem-solving and literacy/ numeracy

skills, adaptability/flexibility and self-confidence, which are developed to a higher extent in those organisations with an educational plan and an assessment plan than other skills.

Finally, some skills seem to be more sensitive than others to the presence of an assessment and an education plan. Thus, differences between organisations with these two elements and those without them are particularly high regarding communication skills, decision-making skills, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship, foreign languages, IT skills, problem solving skills and self-confidence which could indicate that the development of these skills benefits highly from the presence of these kinds of plans – although it could also simply indicate, for instance, that when those elements are not present, youth organisations tend to underestimate the degree of development of these skills. On the other extreme, differences regarding creativity, literacy and/or numeracy are smaller.

The above results also show that contrary to previous research that had reported that youth organisations tend to overestimate the degree of skills development which results from engagement with them, the views of young people surveyed for this study tend to be even more positive than those of organisations, regarding the skills and competences gained or improved through participation in youth organisations – although there are of course different trends depending on the particular skill reviewed. This trend was confirmed by further data analysis where we selected two organisations with which a high number of young people who responded to the survey of young people had been involved – again young people tended to give higher ratings on skills developed than the organisations themselves.

Figure 11 Degree of relationship between youth activities and ideal area of work/job of the individual



Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

4.2.6 — Usefulness of the soft skills developed through involvement in youth organisations in young people's current occupation

Besides the nature of the activities and tasks that young people undertake in youth organisations, a good match between these and young people's desired area of work can help improve employability in a way that is most meaningful for this group. The assessment that young people make of the relevance of their involvement in youth organisations is highly positive. Over 80% reported that their youth related activities were related to their ideal area of work to a certain extent (50%) or closely (32%) –see Figure 11 ←.

It is important to note that a substantial proportion of young people reported to have participated in non-formal educational activities in a youth organisation outside their home country for over a week (54%) or under a week (14%) – whereas 32% had not participated in such activities outside their home country. This would suggest that young people involved in youth organisations have often acquired skills related to international work and international awareness.

On the whole, the young people surveyed considered that the skills they acquired during their involvement in youth activities are quite useful (4 on a scale of 0 to 5) or very useful (5 on a scale of 5 to 5) in their current occupation (67%) and will be even more useful in future occupations (82%).

4.3 — Research question 3: To what extent are young people aware of those skills and competences and how to present them to employers?

This section looks at the degree of young people's awareness of the skills and competences that they develop in youth organisations. The research team found virtually no literature on this issue, so the section relies on the primary data collected during this study. The section first looks at the extent to which organisational strategies (such as the assessments of young people's level of skills improvement during their involvement with youth organisations or the existence of an organisational objective related to making young people aware of the skills and competences that they develop through their involvement in the youth organisation) are in place in youth organisations to stimulate young people's awareness of the skills and competences they develop in youth organisations. Moreover, the data from the survey of young people presented in relation to RQ2, on the level of skills development during young people's involvement in youth organisations is relevant in relation to RQ3. The reader is therefore also referred to section 4.2, which shows that young people report to have improved their soft skills significantly during their involvement with youth organisations.

This section then moves on to review the extent to which young people are aware of how to present the skills and competences that they are aware they have developed in youth organisations to employers.

Figure 12 Degree of assessment of the improvement of the skills of young people in youth organisations



Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

4.3.1 — Young people's awareness of the skills and competences they develop in youth organisations

One way to make young people aware of the skills and competences they develop in youth organisations is to assess whether young people have improved those skills and competences during their youth activities. According to the survey of youth organisations, the overwhelming majority assesses that young people have improved their skills, at least sometimes (91%). However, less than a third of organisations did this “always” –see Figure 12 ←.

Such assessment most often took the form of peer-feedback (almost three quarters of organisations) or self-assessment (over two thirds of organisations). Third party assessments other than peer feedback (e.g. education or training institution/ personnel) were, by contrast, only undertaken in around a third of youth organisations, making it the least common type of skills improvement assessment.

A more reliable way to ensure that young people become aware of the skills and competences that they develop through their involvement with youth organisations is to make this an explicit objective of the youth organisation. The survey of organisations suggested that around 40% of organisations have recognised ‘making participants aware of the skills and competences that they develop through their involvement in the youth organisation’ an explicit objective of their work. For most other organisations, ensuring such awareness depends on the specific group of young people (35%) or activity (50%) in which young people take part – multiple responses possible. Only 4% of organisations reported that this was not an objective in relation to any groups or activities.

4.3.2 — Young people's awareness of how to present the skills and competences developed in youth organisations to employers

The employers interviewed for this study reported that in their recruitment processes they undertake a first screening of CVs and/or motivation letter followed up by one or more interviews with the applicant, which sometimes may include or be related to specific exercises. The awareness of the importance of youth organisation involvement and the ways in which such involvement is presented at each of these recruitment stages is presented below.

According to the survey of young people, a very large majority of those engaged in youth organisation activities include information on their youth activities in their CV (90%) and to a lower extent in their motivation letters (57%) and interviews (61%). Only 5% of the young people replying to the survey reported not using their youth activity during application processes. Those who did not mention this experience in recruitment processes most often justified this decision by the lack of relevance of such experience to the position they were applying for (52%). These individuals also reported that they did not consider that employers would value youth sector experiences (28%), referred to limited space availability in their CV (4%) or some another reason (20%).

Most people reported providing a good range of information on their youth organisation participation, including the name of the organisation (89%), the way(s) in which they were involved with these organisations (88%) and the types of skills they developed (68%). 5% of respondents highlighted that they also referred to other aspects – this can be done, for instance, through the use of recognition tools as detailed in section 4.3.4.

According to the employers interviewed, the situation is rather different. Young people do not present their engagement in youth organisations effectively. Most employers indicated that there are young people who include their engagement in youth organisations in their CV, but mostly in a highly generic manner using one-liners (dealing with aspects such as years of involvement and/or name of the organisation only). There are also many young people who do not include their youth organisation experience into their CV and/or motivation letter – but may mention it later on in the recruitment process. This view was confirmed during the stakeholder workshop, where an employer reported that:

“Applicants do not necessarily include youth organisation experience in their CV. Sometimes I do not find any reference. In the best case, they include very generic information on their youth organisation experience” –stakeholder workshop.

According to employers, some more detailed information can help applicants, in particular when it is organised in a clear way (see also discussions on RQ4 below in this report):

“Recruiters only have a limited amount of time to spend on the first screening of CV's and it is therefore difficult to make an informed decision if there is limited or no information in the CV and/or motivation letter. [...] Youth organisation experience can be used by young people to differentiate themselves from others, and, if tailored to the job, it might convince employers to invite them to the interview stage of the recruitment process” –stakeholder workshop.

Employers believe that young people often consider that employers will not value their engagement in youth organisations. As one interviewee stated:

“Young people often have little understanding regarding how a job interview works and what employers are

looking for in an applicant. They mainly think about technical skills (e.g. diploma) and if they do not have any [from previous work experience] they say that they have no previous experience” –employer interviews.

Interestingly, another employer pointed out that young people have said to her that they did not think that employers would be interested in such experience. **“Many young people consider it their private life. They only connect it if their youth organisation experience is in the same field of work.”**

A further reason why young people do not articulate well what they have learnt was pointed out by an employer who reported that: “many young applicants do not know themselves yet and are not aware of their skills and abilities.” Again, on the whole, employers pointed out that many young people do not know how best to show their capabilities, their experience in youth organisations and the competences they have thus acquired:

“In some cases young people do not realise that there is indeed a link between their youth organisation experiences and the job they are applying for” –stakeholder workshop.

Even in those countries where there is a tradition of involvement in youth organisations, young people do not use their experience effectively. An Irish interviewee explained that in Ireland there is a strong tradition among University students to be engaged in youth organisations. The interviewee estimated that approximately 80% of young applicants include such experience in their CV. However, as the interviewee reported:

“Young people wrongly include it under the ‘other interests’ section while they should mention it in a more substantive way and give it the same kind of weighting as a previous job. I consider both of them to be equivalent. It is not a lack of appreciation by young people but a lack of sense as to what employers take seriously or not. Equally

important are summer and student jobs; young people acquire very specific soft skills and many young people under-sell themselves in the beginning. They need to be more aware of what employers consider as important” –employer interviews.

Of course, the opposite can also happen and the value of youth organisations experience can also be misunderstood and included in CVs when it is not relevant to the job offer, or the relevance is not made apparent to the recruiter:

“I have seen CV’s where people simply list that they are a member of a tennis club. This is not relevant and it looks to me that they are trying to fill up their CV. Unless they have been a captain or team leader, it is often not relevant to include in a CV” – stakeholders workshop.

In terms of including youth engagement into a **motivation letter**, the responses by employers highly varied; some employers mentioned that young people hardly ever include their experience in the motivation letter, while others pointed out that young people indeed mention such experience although they should try to make a better linkage between the vacant post and their youth organisation experience. As one employer put it:

“My advice to young people is that they should try to link what they did in the youth organisation to the job description in the motivation letter. Emphasise specific skills and capabilities and link them to that position” –stakeholder workshop.

One interviewee pointed out differences by educational attainment. Highly qualified applicants have usually been trained on how to produce a CV and motivation letter and can be more aware that their experience in youth organisations is a positive feature than lower qualified applicants – whose CV and motivation letters moreover tend to be very short.

A final chance to present one’s experience in a recruitment process (besides CV and cover letter) is at the time of being interviewed. The employer interviews revealed that although many young people do not include their engagement in youth organisations in their CV or motivation letter, such experience is often discussed during the interview; either brought up by the applicants themselves or by the employer.

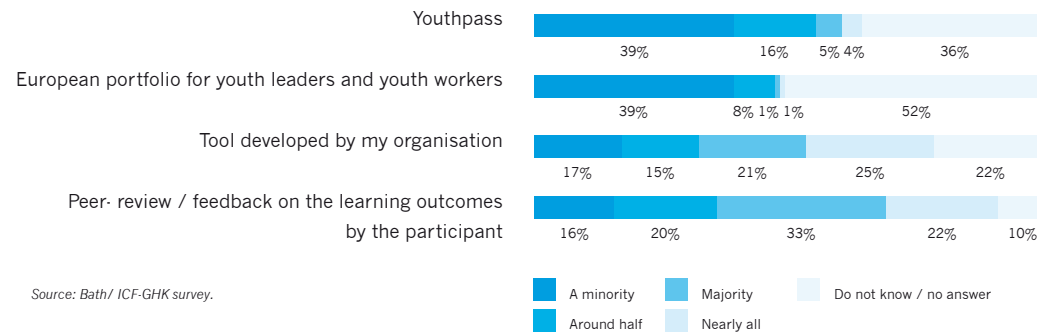
“Young people usually do not mention their experience; they are poor at selling themselves and do not articulate well enough that they have such experience. I will probably never ask about youth organisation experience if they have other previous work experience. If they do not have any work experience, I will ask about social activities or non-profit experience and then youth organisation experience usually comes out. When you ask them, they are able to explain relevant aspects” –employer interview.

However, another employer considered that “young people are sometimes not even aware of what the experience has given them. Sometimes as a recruiter you need to ask two or three questions before they talk about it.”

4.3.3 — The use of recognition tools: European portfolios, Youthpass, Europass and other instruments

Young people and youth organisations, generally, use certificates and recording instruments to a low extent. Thus, less than 5% of the sample of individuals had used the European Portfolio for Youth Workers and Youth Leaders in job/ internship or apprenticeships applications (it should be kept in mind that around 50% of the sample had been involved with youth organisations as youth leaders/educators) and 16% had used Youthpass. On the other hand, 50% had used the Europass CV. This reveals

Figure 13 Degree of use of skills and attitudes recording tools by youth organisations (tools used to record skills and proportion of young people with which they are used)



the importance of continuing to make the Europass CV a user-friendly and appropriate tool for young people who have taken part in youth organisation activities.

The ways in which youth organisations tend to record the skills and competences young people gain through their involvement in non-formal education activities are most often tools developed by the organisation or are peer reviews – see Figure 13. A slightly lower proportion of organisations use Youthpass or the European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers, but the main difference is that European tools – perhaps due to the nature – are used with a much lower proportion of young people.

4.4 — Research question 4: To what extent, and under what conditions, do employers accept the skills and competences acquired through Non-Formal Education in youth organisations

This section presents findings in relation to RQ4, based on a review of human resources (recruitment process) literature, an analysis of the Eurobarometer survey data 75.2 on voluntary work in Europe and primary data collected for this study.

4.4.1 — Review of sources: young people, extracurricular activities and recruitment processes

4.4.1.1 Introduction: the importance of extracurricular activities, academic achievement and experience in recruitment processes

The topic of skills development in youth organisations and its link with employability has so far received very little attention, beyond case-based research, as already advanced above in this report. For instance,

the 2009 ILO paper on youth employability concentrates on the role of other institutions, in particular the formal education sector and companies, in increasing employability instead¹⁰⁵. Adams (2007¹⁰⁶) work for the World Bank and the World Bank report ‘Skills, not just diplomas’¹⁰⁷, review the role of ‘youth skills’ in the transition to work in advanced and developing countries and offer a range of insights, but their focus is also on skills development in schools and the workplace. These works thus make limited reference to the role of youth organisations.

There is, on the other hand, a rich literature on the use of biographical information on **academic achievements, experience and extracurricular activities** in recruitment processes. Some of this research has specifically included volunteering activities in their designs. Although the work of youth organisations and what young people learn through these is not identical to volunteering, we can use employers’ acceptance of volunteering activities **as a proxy** for employers’ acceptance of youth work experience. An advantage of this body of research is that it often refers to people who are in the early stages in their careers – so **the conclusions are based on young people**. As a drawback, most of this research tends to concentrate on graduate recruitment. Most of the studies reported presented either real of researcher-produced CVs to employers (staff with recruitment responsibilities) for their assessment in terms of employability/ chances of obtaining and interview. Sample sizes tended to be between 100 and 200 employer assessors.

The main conclusion from the review is that employers do **value** extracurricular activities, including skills and competences achieved through volunteering, but the degree of value attached to them **depends on certain conditions** such as the **number of volunteering experiences, their type and the way in which they are presented** – not only of the recognition/certification of the

¹⁰⁵ ILO (2009) ‘Enhancing youth employability is a business mission’ ILO Asia-Pacific Working Paper Series.

¹⁰⁶ Adams, A. V. (2007) *The role of youth skills development in the transition to work: a global review*. The World Bank.

¹⁰⁷ Sondergaard, L. and Murthi, M. (2012) *Skills, not just diplomas. Managing education for results in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. Washington, The World Bank.

108 Keenan, A. and Scott, S. (1985) 'Employment success of graduates: relationships to biographical factors and job-seeking behaviour' *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, vol.6(4), pp.305-311.

109 Thomas, G. (2001) *Human Traffic: Skills, employers and International volunteering*. Demos, London.

110 Cole, M. S., Rubin, R. S., Field, H. S. and Giles, W. F. (2007) 'Recruiters' perceptions and use of applicant resume information: screening the recent graduate' *Applied Psychology: and International Review*, vol.56(2), pp. 319-343.

experiences, which has tended to be the main focus of policy action in this area. In fact, employers are less positive regarding requests for volunteering experiences from current employees given the short-term organisational demands that they impose (Thomas 2001), than about the volunteering experiences of new recruits. Only one, and rather dated, of the reviewed studies (Keenan and Scott 1985¹⁰⁸) reported that neither membership of clubs and societies nor being an office holder in societies had a high predictive power for final employment decisions.

4.4.1.2 Linking extracurricular activities and skills development: the view of employers

The way in which volunteering and youth work affect positively the recruitment process is based on the idea that **recruiters have implicit theories that associate certain experiences with certain skills sets**. Thus, Brown and Campion (1994) report that recruiters associate participation in community activities with the development of interpersonal skills and high motivation, and associate ability and motivation with high performance. Thomas (2001¹⁰⁹) focuses specifically on international volunteering experiences to show that employers associate such experiences with adaptability, handling responsibility, stress management, self-assurance and problem solving in particular. Chen et al. (2011) include 'volunteering for community activities' as one of the three items making up their indicator for 'extracurricular activities'. They find that this indicator is of importance when explaining recruiters' decisions to offer an interview to a candidate, and also that the degree of detail on these activities matters. The authors suggest that applicants for job openings should not only enhance their involvement in extracurricular activities during their studies, but also report on their resumes as

much extracurricular activity information as possible. This approach could enhance the likelihood that a candidate is seen as highly interpersonal and also the chances of being offered an interview.

Cole et al. (2007) argue that prior research has often failed to distinguish between recruiters' judgements regarding the relevance (i.e. the importance) of CV's item information in recruiters' perceptions of applicants and the actual presence of specific information reported by applicants. Their study assessed both the level of importance and the actual presence of specific CV information reported by applicants and examined their relationship with recruiters' employability ratings of applicants. They report that when employers must choose among applicants for whom they have differing amounts of information, they devalue negative and missing information and prefer applicants with complete information as long as the applicants are rated at least average on the focal attribute. Of course, recruiters not only look for resume item presence but also consider how important particular items are for successful job performance. The authors conclude that given their findings, future resume evaluation studies could benefit greatly by incorporating recruiters' perceptions of the importance of resume content in addition to item presence in predicting employability ratings, which could also be a topic for further research regarding the best conditions for reporting young people's involvement in youth organisations during recruitment processes.

4.4.1.3 Employers' acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through extra-curricular activities

Cole et al. (2007¹¹⁰) look at the **interaction effects** between qualifications, experience and extracurricular activities, an aspect that had tended to be under-researched, rather

111 Brown, B. K. and Campion, M. A. (1994) 'Biodata phenomenology: recruiters' perceptions and use of biographical information in resume screening' *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol.79(6), pp. 897-908.

112 Chen C.C., Huang Y. M. and Lee, M. I. (2011) 'Test of a model linking applicant resume information and hiring recommendations' *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, vol.19(4).

113 Day, K. M. and Devlin, R. A. (1998) 'The payoff to work without pay: volunteer work as an investment in human capital' *Canadian Journal of Economics*, vol.31(5).

114 Tay, C., Ang, S. and Van Dyme, L. (2006) 'Personality, biographical characteristics and job success: a longitudinal study of the mediating effects of interviewing self-efficacy and the moderating effects of internal locus of causality' *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol.91(2), pp.446-454.

115 Nemanick, R. C. and Clark, E. M. (2002) 'The differential effects of extracurricular activities in resume evaluation' *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, vol.10, pp. 206-217.

than simple association between content and employability ratings. They propose that resume content interacts in ways that may increase or decrease applicants' chances of further consideration in selection processes. Regarding simple effects, they report that experience does not influence resume assessment as much as qualifications and extracurricular activities. Making use of hierarchical regression analysis to estimate interaction effects, they report that applicants who ranked low in all three dimensions received the lowest employability ranking, whereas those who ranked high in all dimensions received the highest rankings; applicants who ranked high on qualifications or extracurricular activities and low in the other two dimensions still received a positive employability ranking. **One dimension can compensate for another, even if the weak dimension is qualifications: recruiters judged applicants with low academic qualifications but high amounts of work experience and extracurricular activities as being highly employable.** In fact, **people performing highly in extracurricular activities can be seen to have a specialist skill set.**

Unsurprisingly, **the way in which experience is presented also matters.** Brown and Campion (1994¹¹¹) report that recruiters rate resumes more attractive to the degree that the biodata they contain reflects attributes required by the jobs they target (see also Nemanick and Clark 2002). In this respect, knowledge of the organisation to which the application is directed is important; as Chen et al. (2011¹¹²) note, the effects of resume content on hiring recommendations are mediated by recruiters' perceptions of person-job fit and person-organisation fit. This also suggests that youth volunteering experiences will be judged more favourably in some organisations than others, even if they present the same skills set for the same type of job.

The acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through volunteering can also be measured by looking at the existence of economic returns that it generates once in employment. In one of the few studies that analyses this aspect Day and Devlin (1998¹¹³) make use of a dataset for volunteers in Canada and report a return of 6% in annual earnings to participation in volunteering activities – which would suggest a high degree of acceptance.

Tay et al. (2006¹¹⁴) put a particular emphasis on the importance of playing a **leadership role** in the extracurricular experience, although they focus specifically on fraternity and professional associations. Consistently with previous research by Brown and Campion (1994), they find that active leadership and involvement help to improve perceived interview self-efficacy and interviews evaluations – as leadership, communication and interpersonal skills are valued by employers. Nemanick and Clark (2002¹¹⁵) report positive effects for the number of extracurricular activities in which individuals are involved and the holding of positions of leadership.

This section has reviewed extant sources of information regarding the skills that employers value and the extent to which employers specifically value skills and competences developed in through youth sector activities. Most available research focuses on young people. Although the reviewed research disproportionately focuses on graduates, available information show a good degree of consistency between the requirements for managers and professionals – which tend to be highly educated - and for people in less knowledge-intensive occupations, in terms of the skills demanded by the labour market; what is likely to vary is the degree to which those skills should be developed. The level of skill development also depends on the particular profession analysed and therefore does not lend itself easily to generalisation.

Table 4.5
Identification of the acquisition of knowledge and competences for professional integration as one of the two main benefits from participation in volunteering

	Frequency	Percent
Not mentioned	20,864	77,8
Mentioned	5,961	22,2
Total	26,825	100

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 75.2

Table 4.6
Identification of the acquisition of knowledge and competences for professional integration as one of the two main benefits from participation in volunteering: individuals 'with high hiring potential'

	Frequency	Percent
Not mentioned	2,547	77,5
Mentioned	739	22,5
Total	3,286	100

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 75.2

4.4.1.4 Employers' acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through volunteering within and outside youth organisations: a comparison

As already mentioned there is very little research that looks at the acceptance by employers of the skills developed in the youth sector. Data collected through the Eurobarometer survey 75.2 on voluntary work in Europe – for more information on this survey see Annex 2 - however, provides very valuable information in this respect, as it helps us to examine differences between youth organisations and voluntary sector organisations outside the youth field. This enables us to check the extent to which the above conclusions regarding the importance of volunteering experiences can apply specifically to youth organisations.

Table 4.5 ← presents the results on the contribution of participation in volunteering to skills development in the eyes of Europeans (EU-27). The table shows that over a fifth of Europeans believe that the facilitation of knowledge and competencies that allow a good professional integration is one of the two main benefits from volunteering.

There are statistically significant differences by age group. There is a negative relationship between age and views of the contribution of volunteering to skills development. The dataset divides individuals in four age groups (15-24; 25-39; 40-54 and 55 and over). The most positive views of the role of volunteering on skills development were reported by the 15-24 group (36%), followed by the 25-39 group (24%), the 40-54 group (21%) and the 55+ group (20%).

Out of the total sample of 26,825 individuals, 3,286 reported themselves in occupational categories that could be classified as likely to involve participation in recruitment processes (business proprietors, employed professionals, general managers or middle-managers). Individuals in these groups have similar views to the general

population regarding the importance of skills development aspects in volunteering activities –see Table 4.5 and Table 4.6. ← This would suggest that a large proportion of employers are aware of the role of volunteering in skills development.

It is worth noting that Chi2 tests revealed no statistically significant differences between categories of individuals who are likely to be involved in recruitment processes. All categories ranged from 21% and 24%. On the other hand, differences by country were statistically significant (Chi2 .000), although some country sample sizes were very small. For those countries with more than 100 individuals in the high hiring potential category, Netherlands, Germany and Spain reported values below 20% for skills development being one of the two main benefits from participation in volunteering, whereas Great Britain and Romania reported values above 30%, with other countries (France, Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Sweden) falling in between.

The survey also enables a comparison between youth organisations and other organisations where volunteering takes place, to confirm or reject the hypothesis that those who are engaged in hiring decisions do not consider that lower levels of skills are developed in youth organisations vis-à-vis other organisations where volunteering takes place. This is important because, as we have seen above in this section, employers do value volunteering experiences in their recruitment processes.

Of the 3,286 individuals with 'high hiring potential' identified, around a third (1,008), were engaged in some kind of volunteering activity themselves, and within those 100 (3% of the total sample) were engaged with a youth organisation or association. It could be argued that these 100 individuals will give significant weight to their views on youth organisations when replying to the questions about the benefits of volunteering, as they have first hand experience of such

Table 4.7

Identification of the acquisition of knowledge and competences for professional integration as one of the two main benefits from participation in volunteering: individuals with high hiring potential, depending of their involvement in different types of volunteering organisations

	No involvement in volunteering*	Involvement in other volunteering	Youth organisation involvement
Mentioned skills development	22.3	22.4	27.0
Not mentioned skills development	77.7	77.6	73.0
Number of individuals in group	2,159	1,008	100

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 75.2

*19 individuals from high hiring potential groups reported they did not know whether they had been involved on a voluntary activity.

Table 4.8

Identification of the acquisition of knowledge and competences for professional integration as one of the two main benefits from participation in volunteering (total sample)

	No involvement in volunteering*	Involvement in other volunteering	Youth organisation involvement
Not mentioned skills development	78.3	75.7	81.1
Mentioned skills development	21.7	24.3	18.9
Number of individuals in group	20,152	6,091	432

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 75.2

*150 individuals from high hiring potential groups reported they did not know whether they had been involved on a voluntary activity.

organisations. Table 4.7 ← shows that those individuals with high hiring potential who are involved with youth organisations report a higher importance of skills development as a benefit from participation in volunteering than individuals who are involved with other volunteering organisations or who have no involvement in volunteering. Thus, the importance of skills development as a benefit derived from the involvement in youth organisations is comparable to, if not higher than, that of most other organisations where volunteering takes place.

In fact, the views of those with high hiring potential in this respect are more favourable than those of the population as a whole, as shown on Table 4.8. ←

4.4.2 — Extent of employer's acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through Non-Formal Education in youth organisations

In our employer interviews and stakeholder workshop most employers considered academic background, work experience and youth organisation engagement as a bundle, yet attached greater value to the academic background of applicants. However, non-formal education through youth organisation involvement was still important for these employers – one reported that he values the academic background of the application at 70% and the experience in youth organisations at 30%, which is very significant taking into account the time invested in education and youth activities respectively. Even in the case of highly regulated professions youth activities can play a role in recruitment, although not always:

“Governmental institutions in my country and sector make it compulsory to comply with regulations that set out specific rules of procedure applicable to the recruitment

process, including the required educational background of the applicant. Applicants are however invited to demonstrate any previous relevant experience, e.g. in youth organisations, that equals the required educational level” –stakeholder workshop.

Moreover, two respondents revealed during the interviews with employers that the academic status of the applicant was not always a decisive factor and more important than youth organisation engagement.

“Experience could sometimes be more important than a diploma. For specific positions social skills are important and therefore I would also consider hiring a person with only experience in youth organisations.”

Although most of the interviewed employers attach greater value to the academic profile of applicants, they see youth organisation experience as an advantage.

On the whole, five out of the eleven interviewees indicated that they consider engagement in youth organisations important. Another five reported youth organisation experience to be important for them, although not a decisive factor in the recruitment process, particularly during the first screening (i.e. CV and motivation letter screening). This is because applicants often only provide generic information on their involvement; if applicants specify how their youth organisation experience relates to the vacancy this is nearly always considered an added value. Finally, one employer mentioned that his company does not attach importance to youth organisation experience at all.

Overall employers recognised and appreciated the added value of experience in youth organisations in the recruitment process. Workshop participants especially valued the fact that young people involved in youth organisations often are equipped with **social skills and work values** that are essential for working in an organisation.

Figure 14 Recruiters' reaction to individual involvement with youth organisation according to young people



Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

Figure 15 Young people's assessment of the influence of experience in youth organisation on chances of getting a job



Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

Workshop participants also argued that having a background in youth organisations may increase young people's self-confidence and thereby their decision-making skills.

“Decision-making skills often have to do with self-confidence. When you are straight of University and have not done a particular task before, you are not comfortable with decision-making. Experience in youth organisations may help in this respect as you have gained this experience” – stakeholder workshop.

It is important to note that the value of youth organisations experience also gives employers valuable information regarding applicants' motivations and potential fit with their organisation:

“Involvement in youth organisations is often unpaid and therefore the person's motivation is intrinsic rather than extrinsic, which gives the employer an idea what drives people to do something. In a similar vein, employers should look more into the applicant's hobbies in order to better understand what motivates them [...] Many students are not free to choose their internship placement, yet they are free to choose the youth organisation they want to get involved in. I would thus put much more emphasis on their involvement in youth organisations” - stakeholder workshop.

There was, however, also some recognition by employers that involvement in youth organisations is not always sufficiently recognised in recruitment processes:

“As recruiters, we sometimes underestimate the social skills and the fact that these youth organisations are places where young people without any professional background learn the skills required for working in an organisation” – stakeholder workshop.

There are instances when the information regarding involvement in youth organisations can be mistrusted, more than information regarding previous professional experience or academic achievement. While one

participant in the stakeholder workshop reported to have checked the website of a youth organisation to verify whether the applicant had indeed the position he claimed to have.

“It only took me three minutes to find it on the organisation's website; we also have Facebook nowadays”.

During the employer interviews, two respondents mentioned that they had never asked applicants for evidence regarding their youth organisation experience as they double-check the actual level of engagement of applicants during the interview. A recruiter pointed out that they would never undertake a reference check for youth organisation engagement as they consider youth organisations to be a rather informal organisation where young people are very much acquainted with each other. When undertaking a reference check, the employer would like to have the opinion of a supervisor and not of a co-worker or 'friend' within the youth organisation.

Young people surveyed for this study were also asked about the reaction of recruiters in relation to their involvement with youth organisations. Responses confirm that employers consider involvement in youth organisations a positive experience – see Figure 14 ←.

Virtually no respondent stated that employers had considered such involvement a negative experience. Only 3% of respondents to the survey of young people considered that their experience in youth organisations had not influenced their chances of getting a job, whereas over 25% reported that this experience would help them 'a lot', as shown in Figure 15 ←.

4.4.3 — The conditions for employer's acceptance of the skills and competences acquired through Non-Formal Education in youth organisations

Most employers interviewed for this study did not express a preference for a certain type of youth organisation, which means that the views reported below apply to the whole sector. However, simply being engaged in non-formal education in youth organisations is not enough to count as a positive factor in recruitment processes, according to the results of the stakeholder workshop and employers interviews. The extent to which employers discuss and value the young person's involvement in youth organisations depends on the type of activity young people have been involved in and, more importantly, how relevant their experience is in relation to the vacancy they are applying for. Some participants referred to the experience and position held within the youth organisation as an indicator to determine the relevancy of the youth organisation experience, while others referred to the skills and competences acquired.

Those cases in which the interviewed employers tended to attach lower value to the skills developed during youth activities were related to positions where 'hard skills' (rather than 'soft skills') are very important. Labour market conditions are also important. One interviewee reported that because of the shortage of vocational workers in her country she was willing to hire anyone who is available to work regardless of the development of soft skills.

The employers' acceptance of these skills depends to some extent on the **applicant's stage in his/her level of involvement in the labour market**. The human resources managers who rated youth organisation experience as an important factor in the recruitment process said that experience in youth organisations is often the only

experience young persons have and therefore it is taken into consideration. The skills and competences that young people develop through their engagement are rated as highly positive by these interviewers. This was confirmed during the stakeholder workshop:

“I will mainly look at previous work experience for applicants above the age of 30, but for applicants with only one or two years of experience I will always look whether they have completed their studies in a normal amount of time and whether they have had, for example, a student job or were involved in a youth organisation [...] it shows that this person can function in the real world and can function independently.”
- stakeholder workshop.

Interviewed employers also considered the **role of the young person in the youth organisation** as important. Six of them reported that the role of the young person in the youth organisation might be an indicator of the level of responsibility, tasks executed and the competences and skills acquired by the person. One employer, on the other hand, mentioned: *‘I am not interested in the official title, but only in the learning’*.

Workshop participants, on the other hand, did not all agree about the importance of the **duration** of the youth participation experience. While some attached value to the duration, others argued that it is about skills and achievements, which can also be acquired during the organisation of a one-time event. Overall, the participants agreed that it all depended on individual stories and the position the young person is applying for. During the employer interviews, half of the interviewees reported that the duration of engagement with youth organisations could be a useful indicator of long-term commitment and motivation, which was positively viewed.

The level of formalisation of the involvement with youth organisations is important for its recognition. The **use of certificates and recording documents**

116 Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster.

117 Human capital can be defined as the stock of competences, knowledge and attributes embodied in an individual. For a seminal analysis see Becker, G. (1964) *Human capital: a theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. Chicago, Chicago University Press. Human capital theory proposed a straightforward link between investment in education and training, skills, and individual and firm productivity –see Souto-Otero, M. (2007) 'Access to post-compulsory education and training: economic, sociological and political determinants and remaining research gaps' *Comparative Education*, vol.43(4), pp. 571-586.

118 GHK (2010) *Volunteering in the European Union. Final Report to the European Commission*, Brussels.

119 Haski-Leventhal, D., Ronel, N., York, A. S. and Boaz, M. B. D. (2008) 'Youth volunteering for youth: who are they serving? How are they being served?' *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol.30, pp. 834-846.

120 Omoto, A. M., Snyder, M. and Martino, S. C. (2000) 'Volunteerism and the life course: Investigating age-related agenda for action'. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, vol.22, pp. 181-197.

can help in this respect. None of the two employers who reported that they double-check information regarding youth sector involvement achievements (see section 4.4.3 above) had ever seen certificates specifying learning objectives and skills developed through involvement in youth organisations such as Youthpass, and when introduced to these, both reported that they could see the advantages of this kind of document. One of these recruiters mentioned that:

“If a person is able to present such a certificate (like Youthpass) then this is an advantage. I never thought about asking for it and I did not know youth organisations gave out such things, but it is a strong plus. If young people have a certificate recording their youth organisation experience then they will feel more confident and self-aware about their skills, competences and abilities. Such certificates are especially important for young people.” – employer interview.

The other mentioned:

“Such certificates help people to realise that they can use their skills and competences acquired through youth organisations. The applicant will acknowledge the added value of such a certificate. It is also useful for the employer and the CV will increase in value.” – employer interview.

Employers in the workshop considered Youthpass and other tools for the recognition of non-formal education/learning as instruments that help young people to articulate their skills. A participant in the workshop commented: *“it is more about speaking the same language as the recruiter and such tools would help youngsters to express and sell themselves in a way that the employers understand them.”* Participants agreed that such tools help young people to speak the same language as recruiters.

4.5 — Research question 5: In what other ways does participation in youth organisations enhance employability?

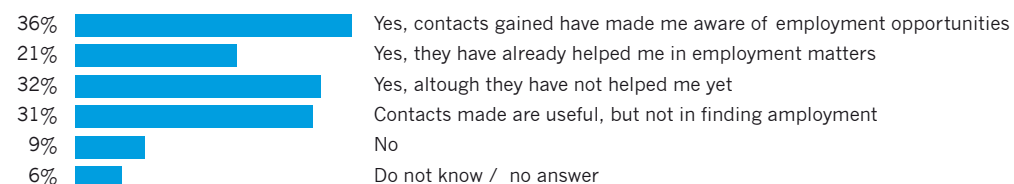
This section looks at other ways in which participation in youth organisations can enhance employability, besides the development of skills. The section focuses particularly on the development of social capital and the ways in which this can help in finding employment. Social capital is based on the idea that “social networks have value” derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups in them¹¹⁶. It is often associated with the amount of trust and reciprocity in a community.

This section also looks at the ways in which involvement with youth organisations can enhance employability by broadening the range of occupations that young people would consider for their employment.

4.5.1 — Review of sources

Previous research has suggested that those who participate in volunteering tend to have higher human capital¹¹⁷ (GHK 2010¹¹⁸) and social capital than those who do not. In this respect, volunteering has been reported to have an impact on the increase of social capital, which can be mobilised in different ways in order to improve individual employability. Haski-Leventhal et al. (2008)¹¹⁹ argue that as social capital is in decline in society today, youth volunteering can offer important services to young people and to organisations. It has also been noted that relationship building is a very important aspect of youth work¹²⁰. The connection between, specifically, involvement in youth organisations and the development of social capital is examined in more detail below.

Figure 16 Degree to which involvement in youth organisations leads to social capital that can be used in employment search



Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey.

Table 4.9 Influence of social capital developed through involvement in youth organisations on employment search success

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Have you ever established any contacts through your involvement in a youth organisation that you think can help you in your search for employment?				
	Yes, contacts gained have made me aware of employment opportunities	Yes, they have already helped me in employment matters	Yes, although they have not helped me yet	Contacts made are useful, but not in finding employment	No
I would not have my current job without my youth activity experience	3.48	3.77	2.24	1.91	1.02
I would not have any job at all without my experience in youth organisations	1.96	1.88	1.39	1.18	0.75

Source: Bath/ICF-GHK survey

4.5.2 — Participation in youth organisations, social capital development and employment opportunities

The survey of young people checked the importance of the development of social capital in youth organisations in relation to employment searches. On the whole, young people considered that their involvement in a youth organisation influences their chances of getting a job significantly, with 30% reporting that it helps somewhat and a further 26% stating that it helps a lot. The results also show that over a quarter of respondents had developed contacts that had helped them in employment matters. Contacts and participation in social networks can lead to obtaining information about employment opportunities that individuals would not otherwise obtain. Thus, 36% of respondents to this study's survey of young people reported that they had been aware of new employment opportunities thanks to their involvement with youth organisations and 32% considered that contacts developed will be useful in finding employment in the future – multiple response possible. Around a third of respondents believed that contacts developed would be useful for them in the future, although not in finding employment. Less than 10% of respondents considered that contacts developed at youth organisations would not help them in their search for employment in the future – see Figure 16 ←.

The plausibility of these results are further confirmed in Table 4.9 ←, which relates three statements on the achievement of employment outcomes with the development of social capital in youth organisations. As shown, results are largely consistent with expectations; for instance, those individuals who reported that contacts developed in youth organisations had helped them in employment matters or had made them aware of employment opportunities

also reported more often than other groups that they would not have their current jobs without their youth activity experience.

Moreover, the table shows that most young people who have taken part in youth organisations and were in employment believe that they would have not achieved this job without such experience; those in the two groups who report a stronger importance of involvement with youth organisations (who are a large proportion of the sample) also tend to agree rather strongly that they would have been unable to obtain their current job without their youth activity experience. It could be inferred that these individuals would be in a less satisfactory job, or that they would have taken more time to obtain a similarly satisfactory job, without that experience.

The stakeholder workshop suggested that involvement in youth organisations can enhance the capacity to develop social capital in other contexts too. As one participant reported:

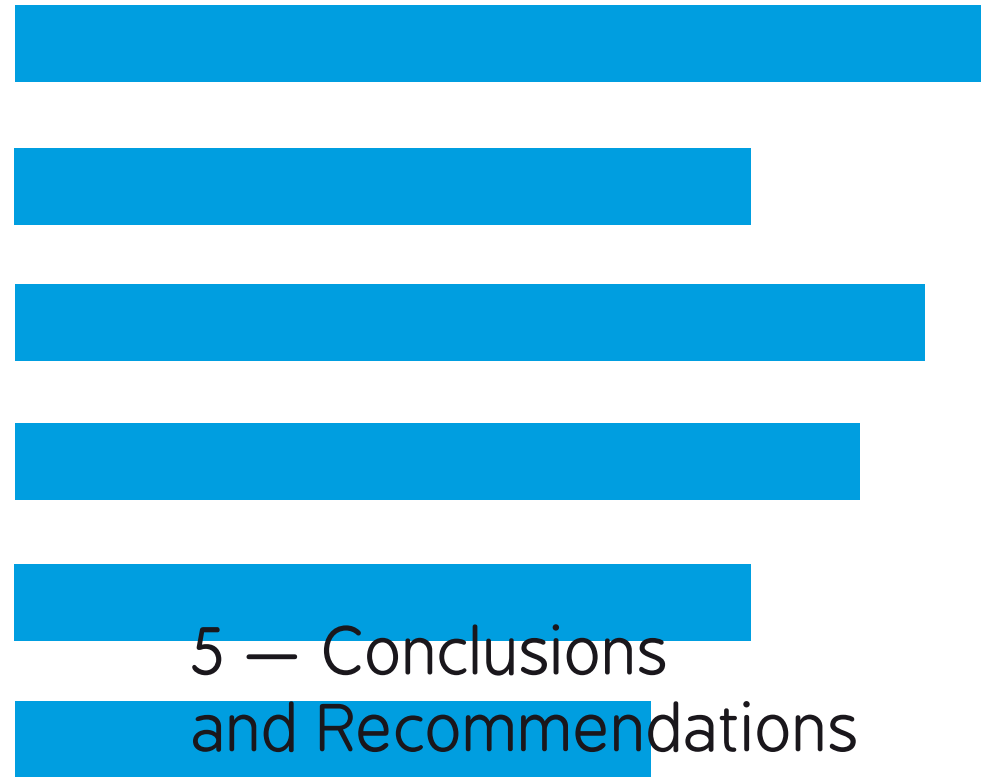
“By being in youth organisations young people learn to live/work with people they do not necessarily like. So they learn to be exposed to developing contacts with other people” – stakeholder workshop

Taken together, these results are strongly suggestive of the importance of the social capital developed through participation in youth organisations in employment searches for a large proportion of young people.

Finally, the survey of young people also suggests that involvement with youth organisations has an impact on the range of occupations young people would consider in the future. Over a third of respondents (37%) fully agreed (5 in a scale 0 to 5) that their involvement with youth organisations has broaden the range of occupations/jobs that they would consider in the future. Another third (31%) fully agreed that involvement with youth organisations had given them a new vocation. In a context where occupation and geographical mobility are political

goals, it is also worth noting that 40% of respondents fully agreed that involvement with youth organisations broadened the range of geographical locations (cities/countries) where they would consider taking up a job.

Over 25% of respondents also fully agreed that involvement with youth organisations had motivated them to undertake greater/more intense job search. Only 10% of respondents fully agreed that their involvement with youth organisation had not changed their job plans or aspirations.



5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This report has presented findings from a review of available sources, analysis of large-scale secondary survey data, two purposely made large surveys (of young people and youth organisations across Europe), a workshop involving a range of stakeholders and eleven in-depth employer interviews on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability. A range of conclusions and recommendations can be formulated on the basis of the findings. These are presented in this chapter.

1. There is a match between skills demanded by employers and skills developed in youth organisations

This study shows that there is a good match between those skills demanded by employers and those produced in the youth sector, with five of the six most frequently demanded soft skills also being amongst those skills developed to a greater extent in youth organisations –the exception being numeracy.

The soft skills that employers most frequently demand include: communication skills, organisational/planning skills, decision-making skills, team working skills, confidence/ autonomy and numeracy. These soft-skills are seen as a key element for successful job performance. Certain personality traits are also found to be important components of these skills and competences, contributing to their development. For instance, personal drive, sense of initiative and pro-activity are traits associated with confidence/autonomy and entrepreneurship.

There is less information regarding the general level to which the above-mentioned skills are required because this will vary by occupation, with 'levels' being understood differently across occupational fields. In spite of this, skills needs forecasts suggest

is that the levels of skills required will increase across occupations in the mid-term, compared to current demand.

2. Higher skill levels are developed by young people with higher involvement in youth organisations

Those young people who report higher levels of involvement in the youth organisations' activities (in terms of frequency and duration) also report higher levels of skills development. This held for all the skills for which the study gathered data.

Likewise, those who have participated in non-formal education activities in youth organisations **outside their home country**, even for short periods, report higher levels of skills development. Remarkably, this also held for *all* the skills for which the study gathered data, but the level of development was particularly strong in relation to foreign languages, intercultural communication and leadership skills.

Young people at the higher **levels of qualification** report greater skills development during their involvement with youth organisations (the reported skills gain is around 15% higher for those with higher education compared to those with secondary education). The improvements reported at lower levels of formal educational attainment, however, are still significant. For no skill the reported degree of improvement from involvement in youth organisations was lower than 2.0 on a scale of 5.

Furthermore, those youth organisations who have an **organised educational and assessment plan** for skills development report a higher level of skills improvement among their youth participants.

3. Young people are aware of the soft skills they develop

Our results suggest that young people are aware that they developed skills and competences through their involvement with youth organisations, at least when directly

asked about this topic. Strategies are in place in youth organisations to stimulate young people's awareness of the skills and competences they develop through their activities; the overwhelming majority of organisations reported that they assess whether young people have improved their skills (most often through peer-feedback) "at least sometimes", although less than a third of organisations did this "always". Moreover, around 40% of organisations have recognised 'making participants aware of the skills and competences that they develop through their involvement in the youth organisation' an explicit objective of their work. However, for many organisations, ensuring such awareness depends on the specific group of young people or the activity in which young people take part.

4. Employers are positive toward young people's experience in youth organisations

Employers consider involvement with youth organisations as a positive experience, as they have implicit theories that associate certain experiences with certain skills sets. In fact, youth sector involvement can be seen to have a specialist skill set. Moreover, involvement with youth organisations also provides employers with information regarding an applicant's level of motivation and potential fit with the organisation. Young people also consider that youth sector participation helps them to obtain a job.

The importance employers give to experiences in youth organisations depends on their relationship to the qualifications and experience of the young person, as well as to the demands of the job opening. Thus, for instance, employers' acceptance of these skills in recruitment processes depends on the applicant's stage of involvement with the labour market –being more important for people who have less work experience. It also depends on certain conditions such as the number of experiences, their type (e.g. whether a leadership position has held) and

the way in which they are presented (not only on the recognition/certification of the experiences, which has tended to be the main focus of policy action in this area, but also on the establishment of links with particular job openings, as already mentioned).

5. Young people need to be more confident in presenting the skills and competencies they develop in youth organisations

Despite these findings, according to employers young people do not provide enough information in their applications concerning the skills and competences they have acquired through participation in youth organisations. The employers consulted reported that they often only discover important elements of the engagement in youth organisations during the interview stage. This is, employers believe, because young people frequently consider that recruiters will not value their engagement in youth organisations.

6. Youth organisations need to "brand" themselves better to employers

Employers also reported being insufficiently aware of 'what's going on' in the youth sector and acknowledged that this may jeopardise the recognition of experiences in youth organisations during recruitment processes. Youth organisations do not often brand themselves well to employers, according to the information gathered during the employer interviews and stakeholder workshop, and they tend to develop networks with young people rather than employers. Moreover, there are instances where the information regarding involvement in youth organisations can be mistrusted, more than information regarding previous professional experience or academic achievement.

7. Beyond Skills Development: involvement in youth organisations creates networks and connections for young people

Involvement with youth organisations

helps to enhance employability through other channels than the development of skills. Notably, it helped a large proportion of our sample of young people to develop networks and connections (social capital) that can aid in obtaining information about employment opportunities as well as in securing employment. On the whole, such aspects significantly improve young people's chances of getting a job, especially for those people with previously limited levels of social capital.

Similarly, involvement with youth organisations has a strong impact on broadening the range of occupations that young people would consider in the future, providing young people with exposure to new vocations. Involvement also broadens the range of geographical locations where young people would consider taking-up a job.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions the following recommendations are put forward:

1. On Fostering Awareness and Participation:

- The existence of opportunities for involvement of young people from different ages and qualifications levels should be ensured. This is likely to require further joint work by the youth sector, public bodies and other stakeholders on issues such as financing and recognition, amongst others.
- Young people should be made aware of the additional benefits of sustained involvement in youth organisations. Young people should nevertheless be aware that even short periods on involvement can have significant effects in terms of skills and employability enhancement too.
- The participation of disadvantaged youth in youth organisations should be stimulated further given its value in developing social

capital which can aid to secure employment and bring additional benefits. Particular measures should be taken to reach out to and provide welcoming environments for, inter alia, NEETs, early school leavers and young migrants.

2. On Transitioning to Employability:

- Given that employers particularly value the involvement in youth organisation of young people with little or no work experience, their participation should be supported as one of the measures that help young people in their transition from education to work.
- There is also a need for greater guidance and coaching for young people so that they are better able to present effectively the skills and competences they develop in the youth sector in job applications and are able to better understand how these skills may be applied in working environments/ contribute to the performance of specific job-related tasks. This is a process to which career-guidance services/ advisors in schools and universities, the youth sector and public employment services as well as employers and international organisations can contribute. Providing information on 'top tips' to young people would also help in this respect.
- Young people should be made more aware of the value that employers place on the skills and competences developed in youth organisations. This is particularly the case for those individuals with lower educational achievement, who tend to be less aware of the value of this kind of activity for employers and less trained on how to present it.

3. On Mobility:

- Given the additional benefits of involvement with youth organisations outside the home country, opportunities for involvement with youth organisations abroad should be further supported and

enhanced.

- Cost comparisons should be undertaken between the mobility of volunteers and other types of mobility that seek to achieve similar objectives in order to reach value-for-money calculations that can inform future public allocation of funds.

4. On Greater Recognition:

- Given the political emphasis on flexibility and mobility, the role of the youth sector in these areas should be better recognised at the political level. Involvement with youth organisations has a strong impact on broadening the range of occupations and geographical locations that young people would consider in the future, as well as on developing new vocations.

- Opportunities for youth organisations and employers –as well as private and public employment agencies- to interact should be promoted as a means to raise awareness and bring visibility to the meaning and value of non-formal education in youth organisations, while reinforcing mutual trust. Youth organisations, for instance, should be more regularly engaged in job fairs so as to develop a better understanding of their work amongst employers.

- The development of assessment and educational plans by youth organisations should be stimulated, as their existence is related to higher reported levels of skills development. In this respect, it should also be noted that the degree to which youth organisations assess the skills developed through their activities varies significantly, and that greater uniformity in the sector regarding this aspect should be promoted, as this would contribute to making more young people aware of the skills they develop by means of their involvement with the youth sector.

5. On Recognition Tools:

- Youth organisations should aim to provide certificates/proofs that detail the nature and outcomes of participation in their non-formal education activities, and should inform young people about the nature of their value. This is primarily related to their formative role (improvement of young people's awareness of the skills and competences they have gained in youth organisations and how to articulate them during a recruitment process), rather than their role as proofs of achievement.

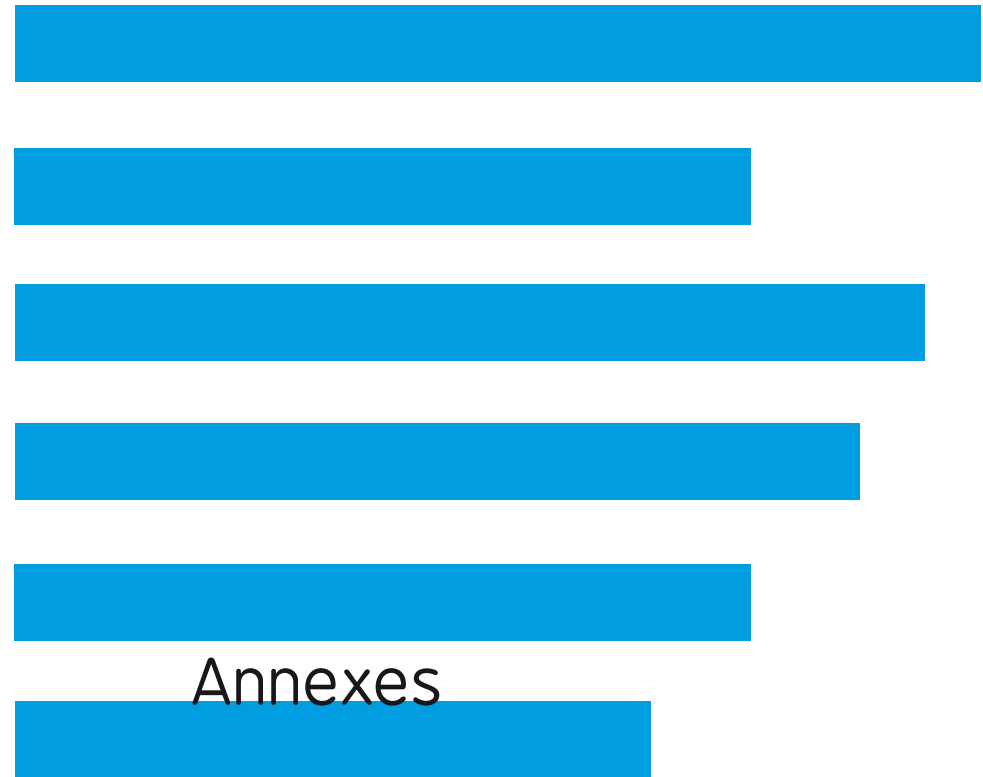
- Taking the above point into account, self-recognition tools that help the learner identify and describe learning outcomes from youth organisations experiences, such as the Youthpass, should be promoted.

- Additionally, and given the frequency of use of the Europass CV by people who have taken part in youth related activities it will also be important to ensure that young people adequately use this tool to reflect their experience with youth organisations and that the tool facilitates the presentation of experiences and competences gained through non-formal education in youth organisations.

6. On Future Research:

- Continuous monitoring is required regarding current and future labour market skills needs in order to be able to assess the contribution of the youth sector to employability; in such monitoring stronger emphasis should be placed on the analysis of needs in a sectoral basis, and on skills rather than qualifications requirements.

- Further research could directly measure the skills developed by young people through non-formal education in youth organisations by measuring their skills levels before and after their participation in such activities, an approach that could not be adopted within the framework of this study due to resource and time constraints.



Annexes

Annex 1 — Quantitative databases employed and main skills lacking by occupation where skills-shortage vacancies exist (UK)

Quantitative databases employed

Source	Relevant variable or indicator
2010 Eurobarometer survey on employers perception of graduate employability (Europe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Employers' rating of skills and competencies in terms of how important they are when recruiting higher education graduates -Employers' rating of satisfaction with the skills and competences of higher education graduates that their company/organisation has recruited in the last three to five years? -Employer rating of the skills and competencies they predict will be the most important for new higher education graduates in the next 5-10 years?
i-Graduate's international employer barometer (Global)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Top 10 skills and capabilities that employers look for -Level of satisfaction in relation to some of those skills and capabilities
IBM's Global Chief Executive Survey 2010 (Global)	-List of top leadership qualities
QS top MBA jobs and salary trends 2010-11 worldwide (Global)	-Most important skills for MBA (Master of Business Administration) employers
2009 Learning and Skills Council annual National Employers Skills Survey (UK)	-Main skills lacking in the workforce as a whole, where skills gaps exist
2009 UK's Council for Industry and Higher Education 'Graduate Employability: the views of Employers' survey (UK)	-Top 10 most important skills when recruiting Graduates

Source: University of Bath/ ICF-GHK Consulting

**Main skills lacking by occupation
where skills-shortage vacancies exist**

	Overall	Managers	Professionals	Associate prof.	Administrative	Skilled trades	Personal service	sales	Operative	Elementary
<i>Unweighted base (SSVs)</i>	5,118	300	1,035	1,098	328	614	585	356	331	440
<i>Weighted base (SSVs)</i>	63,089	3,735	8,303	12,693	4,573	8,908	9,123	5,480	2,908	6,932
<i>Unweighted base (employers with SSVs in occupation)</i>	2,450	243	338	542	231	394	294	215	156	233
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Technical and practical skill	62	60	76	55	51	73	60	51	73	59
Customer-handling skills	41	40	37	36	49	28	45	56	24	60
Problem-solving skills	38	39	45	28	39	42	38	41	21	45
Team working skills	37	25	31	31	33	41	42	41	26	54
Oral communication skills	35	27	17	26	46	38	46	49	27	44
Written communication skills	34	29	19	29	47	39	40	45	22	36
Management skills	32	63	29	33	30	37	24	34	11	32
Literacy skills	30	30	14	26	39	35	35	41	20	28
Numeracy skills	26	23	11	21	40	34	27	31	18	29
Office/admin skills	18	19	11	24	40	11	17	22	7	12
Foreign language skills	18	11	28	13	17	13	19	19	8	30
General IT user skills	16	18	9	16	31	13	15	22	9	11
IT professional skills	15	13	13	15	28	10	12	20	6	19

*Base: All skill-shortage vacancies
Note: column percentage add to more than 100 since multiple responses were allowed
Source: 2009 National Employer Skills Survey for England.*

121 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2011/juillet/04_07/SA_en.pdf

122 The full list of categories is available in Annex 2.

123 The full list of categories is available in Annex 2.

124 The full list of categories is available in Annex 2.

Annex 2 — Eurobarometer 75.2 data analysis approach and relevant questions

The recent Special Eurobarometer 75.2¹²¹ on voluntary work contains relevant questions for this study, even though it is restricted to volunteering and not other forms of engagement with youth organisations. Micro data for this survey was thus obtained and analysed by the research team. The Eurobarometer 75.2 is a high quality database, containing nationally representative samples for the 27 EU countries. Fieldwork for the survey took place between April and May 2011. 26,825 European citizens were surveyed.

Question QA13 of the Eurobarometer asked about the two main benefits from volunteering in the EU. Ten options were given to respondents, including 'It facilitates acquisition of knowledge and competencies which allow a good professional integration¹²²'. Respondents were asked to choose two of those options. Therefore, the estimates provided in this report may in fact underestimate the views of Europeans regarding the contribution of volunteering to skills development –as those surveyed may have considered that volunteering contributes to skills development, but less than to two other aspects.

The survey also asked the type of organisation or association, if any, in which respondents do their voluntary activity. Answers were coded post-survey into 16 options, including¹²³: 'In a leisure organisation or club for the young people' (scouts, youth clubs, etc.). In chapter 4 we refer to these as 'youth organisations'. While this is an incomplete account of youth organisations (all those organisations included in the category are youth organisations, but other categories of organisation provided in the survey such as 'cultural, educative or artistic association' or 'community or neighbourhood association'

may also be youth organisations), it enables a comparison of a whole set of youth organisations with other types of voluntary sector organisations.

Relevant socio-demographic characteristics, such as age and current occupation, were also included. The current occupational question was coded into 18 categories, including various sub-types within the non-active, self-employed and employed groups¹²⁵. A new variable differentiating individuals with 'hiring potential' –those individuals in categories more likely to take part in recruitment interviews/ processes-, which included those individuals in categories:

- 9 "Business proprietors, owner (full or partner) of a company",
 - 10 "Employed professional: employed doctor, lawyer, accountant, architect"
 - 11 "General management, director or top management (managing directors, director general, other director)" and
 - 12 "middle management, other management: department head, junior manager, teacher, technician")
- was generated to employ in our analysis.

On the whole, this dataset offers a unique opportunity to provide information regarding some aspects of interest for this research, in particular regarding RQ4, as shown in chapter 4 of this report.

The Eurobarometer questions employed in this study are provided below.

QA 13	Which of the following do you think are the two main benefits from volunteering in the EU?
-------	--

(SHOW CARD · READ OUT · ROTATE · MAX. 2 ANSWERS)
--

(237-246)

It gives Europeans the opportunity to develop their civic participation	1.
It facilitates acquisition of knowledge and competencies which allow a good professional integration	2.
It strenghtens fundamental values of solidarity of the EU	3.
It allows maintening and reinforcing social cohesion	4.
It plays an important role in the economy of the EU	5.
It plays an important role in the sustainable development and in the protetion of the environment	6.
It contributes to the self-fulfilment and to the personal development of volunteer workers	7.
Other (SPONTANEUS)	8.
None (SPONTANEUS)	9.
DK	10.

NEW

QA 16	In which type(s) of organisation(s) or association(s) do you do your voluntary activity?
-------	--

(PRE-CODED OPEN ENDED QUESTION · DO NOT PROMPT · MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

(249-264)

In a sports club or club for outdoor pursuits (sports, fishing and hunting)	1.
In a cultural, educative or artistic association	2.
In a trade union	3.
In a professional organisation	4.
In a consumer organisation	5.
In an organization for the defence of the rights of minorities (association against racism, against discriminations of women, or for the rights of homosexuals, etc.)	6.
In an organization for protection of the environment, animal rights, etc.	7.
In a charity organisation or social aid organisation, NGO, a humanitarian association, development aid	8.
In a leisure association or club for the elderly	9.
In a leisure association or club for the young people (scouts, youth clubs, etc.)	10.
In a religious or church organisation	11.
In a political party or political organization	12.
In an association defending the interests of patients and/or disabled	13.
In a community or neighbourhood association	14.
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	15.
DK	16.

NEW (BASED ON EB73.4 QE11)

D15a	What is your current occupation?
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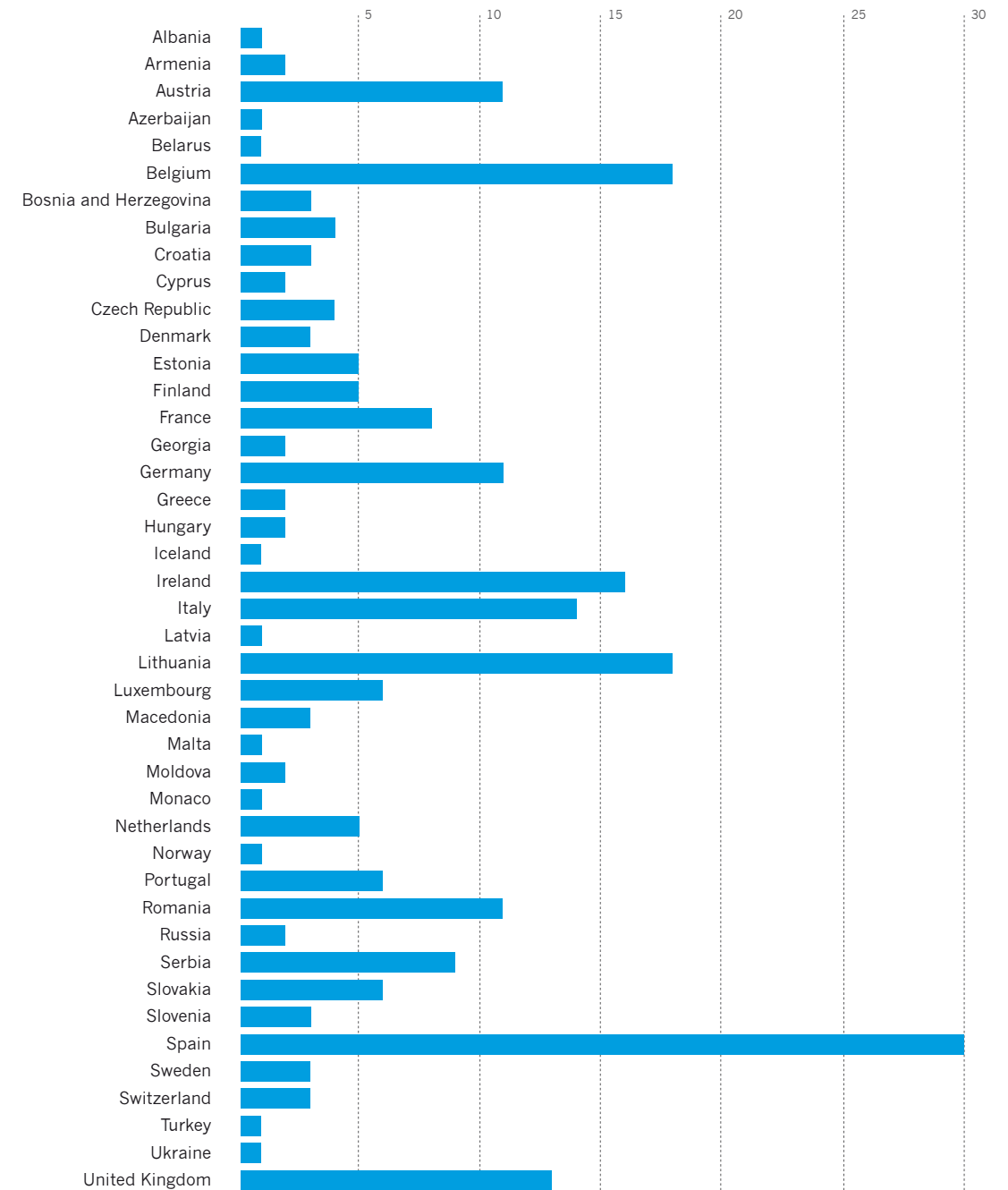
D15b	Did you do any paid work in the past? What was your last occupation?
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(PRE-CODED OPEN ENDED QUESTION · DO NOT PROMPT · MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

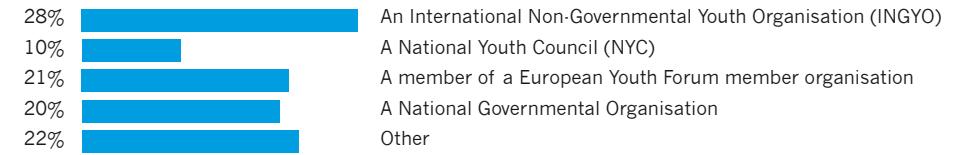
	(711-712)	(713-714)
	D15a	D15b
	CURRENT OCCUPATION	LAST OCCUPATION
NON-ACTIVE		
Responsible for ordinary shopping and looking after the home, or without any current occupation, not working	1.	
Student	2.	
Unemployed or temporarily not working	3.	
Retired or unable to work through illness	4.	
SELF EMPLOYED		
Farmer	5.	5.
Fisherman	6.	6.
Professional (lawyer, medical practitioner, accountant, architect, etc.)	7.	7.
Owner of a shop, craftsmen, other self-employed person	8.	8.
Business proprietors, owner (full or partner) of a company	9.	9.
EMPLOYED		
Employed professional (employed doctor, lawyer, accountant, architect)	10.	10.
General management, director or top management (managing directors, director general, other director)	11.	11.
Middle management, other management (department head, junior manager, teacher, technician)	12.	12.
Employed position, working mainly at a desk	13.	13.
Employed position, not a desk but traveling (salesmen, driver, etc.)	14.	14.
Employed position, not a desk but in a service job (hospital, restaurant, police, fireman, etc.)	15.	15.
Supervisor	16.	16.
Skilled manual worker	17.	17.
Other (unskilled) manual worker, servant	18.	18.

Annex 3 — Background characteristics of respondents to surveys
Survey of organisations

In what country is your organisation officially registered? (N=245)

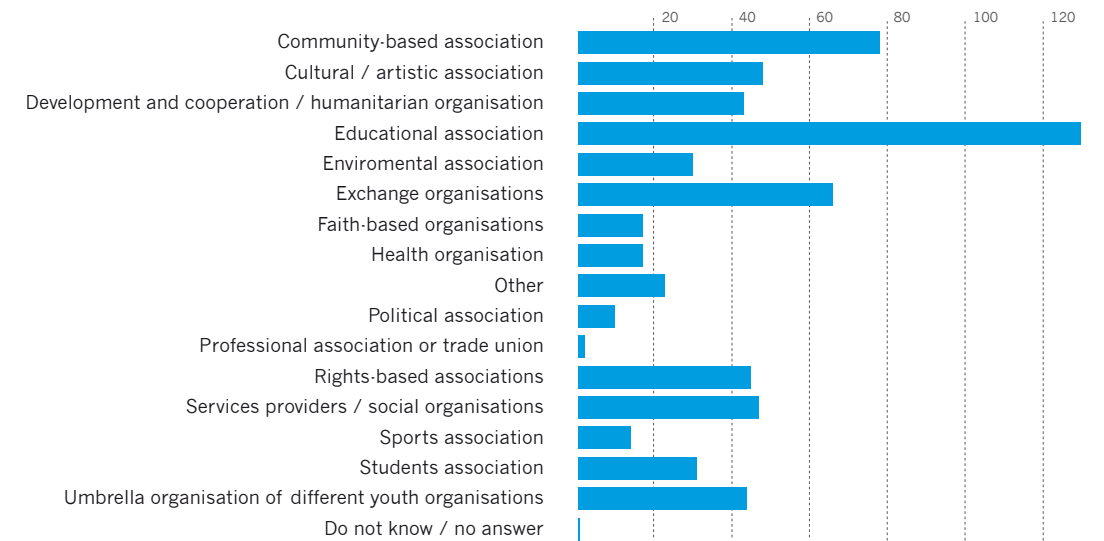


Degree Your organisation is...

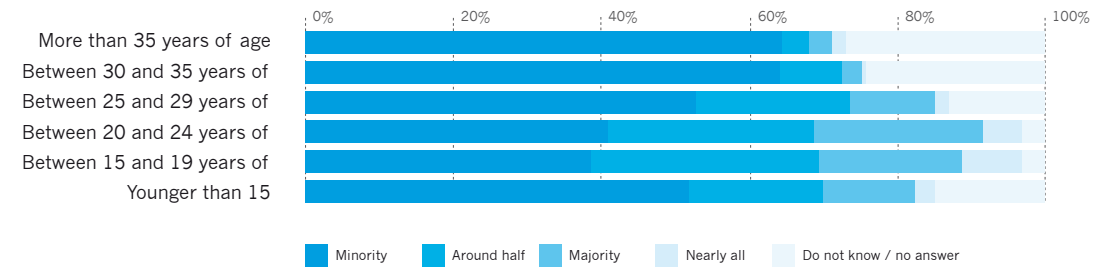


In what category / categories does your organisation fit?

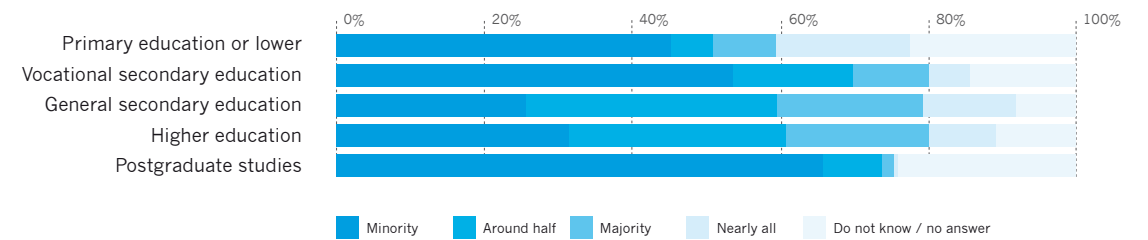
(multiple choice question)

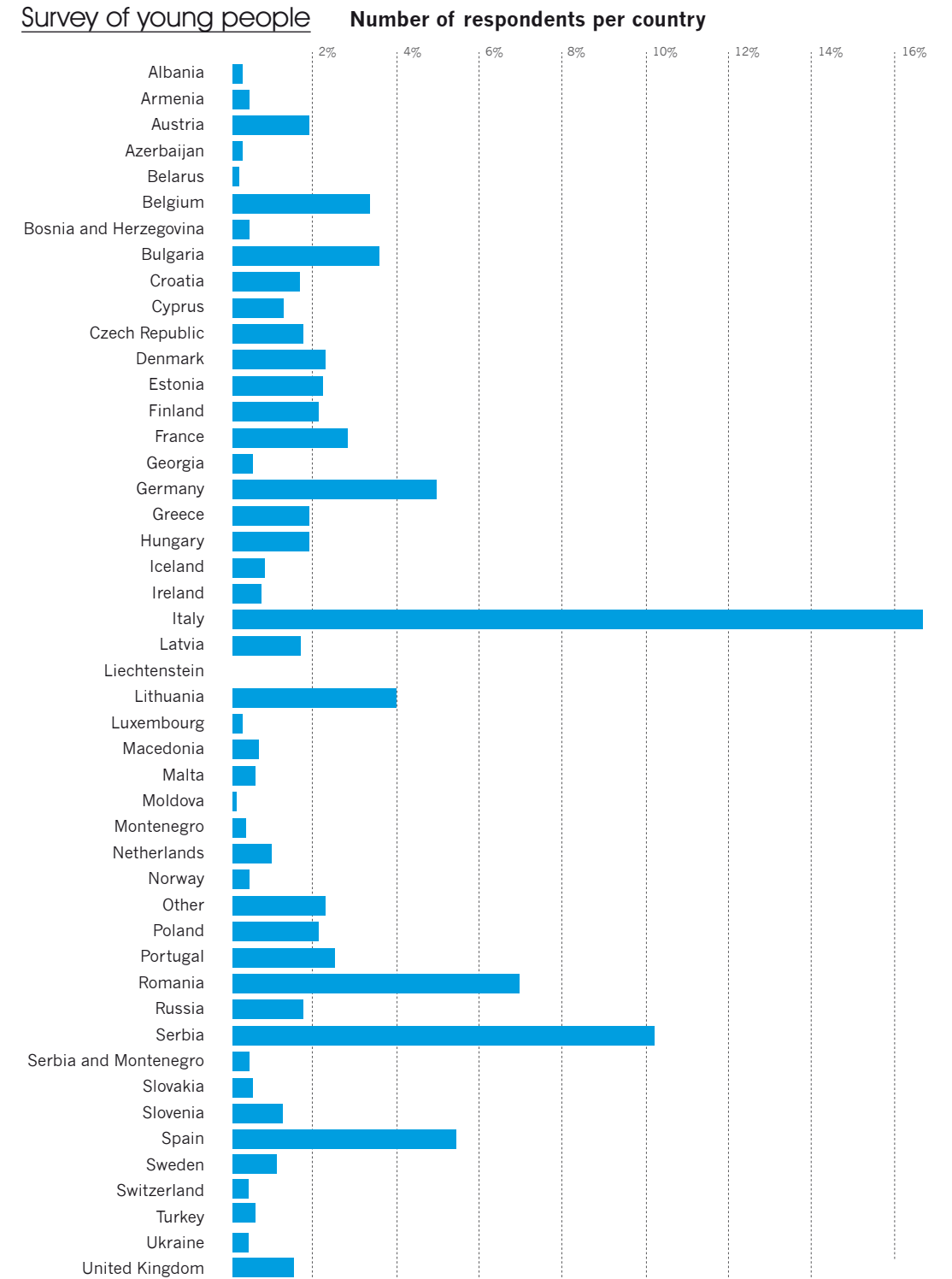


What proportion of participants in the activities of your organisation are:

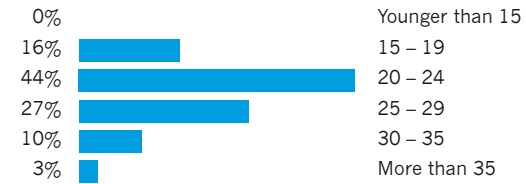


What proportion of young people currently involved with your organisation have as their highest level of formal education:





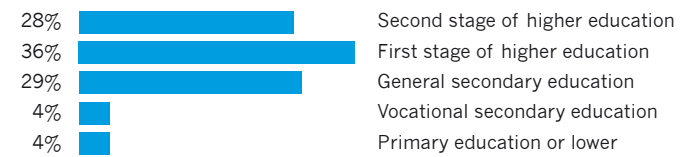
What is your age?



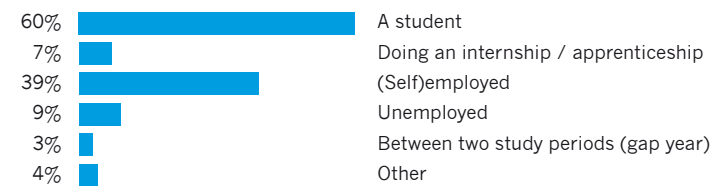
What is your gender?



What is your highest level of formal education?



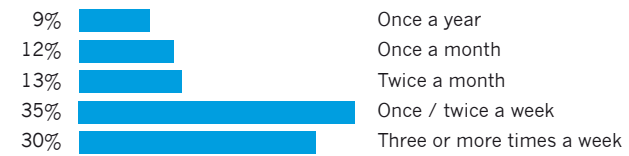
What is your current occupation? I am ...



Approximately for how long have you been involved in youth organisations' activities so far?



And how frequently have you been involved on average in youth organisations during that period?



Level of involmment

Approximately how long have you been involved in youth organisations' activities?	How frequently have you been involved on average in youth organisations during that period?				
	Once a year (e.g. during summer programmes)	Once a month (e.g. one week-end per month)	Twice a month	Once / twice a week	Three or more times a week
Less than six months	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Six months to a year	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
One to two years	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Three to five years	Medium	High	High	High	High
More than five years	Medium	High	High	High	High

Note: number of respondents in each category are as follows: low level of involvement with youth organisations 76; medium levels were 197, and high levels were 905.

