

YOUTH INFORMATION WORKERS FIT FOR YOUTH!

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european youth information and counselling agency

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introduction

Dear readers,

This Guide for best practices in Youth information work is a valuable resource for youth information workers containing methods and best practices of youth information work in Europe, and it is a product of the Strategic partnership project “Youth Information Workers fit for Youth” (2016-2-MK01-KA205-021756) between SEGA, UMKI and ERYICA. It contains methods for on-line information and best practices of youth information work in Europe.

The project “Youth Information Workers fit for youth” is supported by the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility in Macedonia, through the Erasmus + Programme, Key Action 2 - Strategic Partnership - Support for Exchange of Good Practices.

In complex societies and in an integrated Europe that offers many challenges and opportunities, access to information and the ability to analyse and use information is increasingly important for young Europeans. Youth information work can help them to achieve their aspirations and can promote their participation as active members of society. Information should be provided in ways that enlarge choices available to young people, and that promote their autonomy and empowerment.

Respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms implies the right of all young people to have access to complete, objective, understandable and reliable information on all their questions and needs. This right to information has been recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in the Recommendation N° (90) 7 of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe. This right is also the basis for youth information activities undertaken by the European Union.

Young people have a special need for information as during their transition phase from childhood to adulthood they have to take numerous important decisions that will have long-lasting impacts on their future lives, not least in areas such as education, employment, independence from parents and personal development.

introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s Youth Information spread all over Europe and developed into an integrated part of youth work in many countries. In the mid eighties, youth information and counselling was an important point of attention of the First European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Strasbourg, 1985), which included youth information and counselling among its priorities for future action and cooperation at the European level. As a result of one of the recommendations of the ministerial conference, the Council of Europe established in 1986 the Committee of Experts of Youth Information in Europe. The work of this committee contributed to the concepts and offers on local and national level, and also led to the creation of European Network - ERYICA.

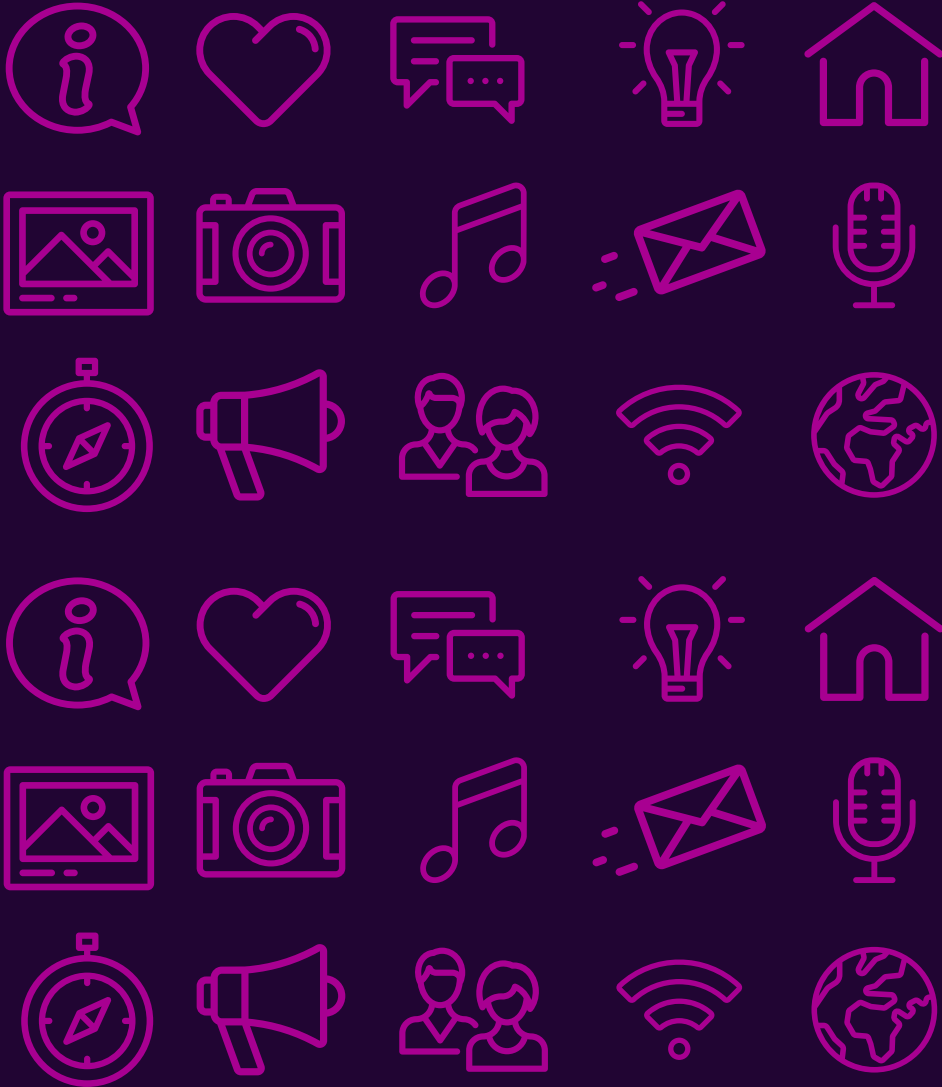
Nowadays Youth Information is a recognized part of youth work in many European Countries and in some of them looks back a history of 40 years. In those years we have seen lot of changes in Youth Information Work adapting to developments in society in general and the living conditions of young people in particular.

On the other hand, youth information is dynamic in terms of establishment of new information centers, mobility of youth information workers, and new trends in the field of information following the needs of young people. In conditions of easy access to Internet and other electronic media and tools of communication, young people still remain insufficiently informed on the available opportunities that fit them.

Therefore advocacy for the right of young people to have access to all information and support their need for their autonomous decision-making is utmost importance in today's society including not only a general debate on nowadays knowledge-society but also ongoing lobbying for the provision of information and counseling tailor-made for young people.

The purpose of this Guide is to provide youth information workers with knowledge and resources on youth information methods and techniques. Moreover, the guide will present different experiences and practices of the youth information centers in Europe.

Enjoy your reading,
Project partners SEGA, UMKI and ERYICA



CHAPTER I

What Is Youth Information Work?

1.1 What is Youth Information and its Importance

Young people who are in transition from childhood to adulthood are at a special and very important point in their lives. They have to make certain decisions that will have a significant impact on their future. The choices they make about their education, career paths and other parts of their personal lifestyle will define their lives. These autonomous first-time decisions need to be based on unbiased, complete and comprehensive information.

Often faced with dilemmas, young people turn to various sources of information, one of these being specialised or generalist youth information and counselling services. The term “youth information and counselling” can encompass a wide range of services that are set in different frameworks and provided by many different organisations.

The essential aim of youth information and counselling is to help guide young people in all aspects of their lives and in their autonomous decision-making. It builds on the fact that it is not possible to make a sound decision without knowing one’s options and alternatives. However, as well as being aware of the different possibilities, young people also need to evaluate the different options and relate them to their own abilities and aspirations.

Youth information aims to:

- provide reliable, accurate and understandable information,
- give access to different sources and channels of information,
- give an overview of the options and possibilities available on all relevant topics,
- help young people sift through the information overload they face today,
- ensure that young people are aware of all the rights and services available to them and that they know how to access them,
- provide support in evaluating the information obtained and in identifying quality information,
- guide young people in reaching their own decisions and in finding the best options open to them,
- offer different channels of communication and dialogue in order to directly support young people in their search for information and knowledge,
- contribute to the information and media literacy of young people.

A function of youth information, that has become ever more important over the years, is contributing to the information and media literacy of young people, especially in our digital age. A critical approach to information has become even more important since the Internet allows everybody to publish on any subject. Young people have to be aware of the necessity to challenge the information they find straight away and of all the possible techniques available to evaluate and identify quality criteria. Youth information strives to integrate these techniques, but not only in its own research, documentation and dissemination of information; it is also increasingly trying to develop different ways of transmitting the relevant key skills for modern life to young people themselves.

Moreover, a speciality of youth information is a certain form of translation facilitated by youth information workers. There is a lot of knowledge available nowadays, not least through the Internet. Often, and especially when it comes to topics that concern rather formal or legal issues – such as education, family affairs, contracts, rights and duties – the information provided is not easy to access and understand. In those situations youth information does not create the information itself but acts as an interpreter.

Organisations providing generalist youth information and counselling services

The basic idea behind the development of generalist youth information services and structures has always been the right of young people to have access to comprehensive, accurate and balanced information that responds to their needs and questions and is designed for them, thus being customised and easily understood.

Essentially, generalist youth information is a user-centred approach. This approach implies that the youth information provider adopts as its starting-point the questions and needs of the young people who are its users. As these cover a wide range of issues and problems, the centre or service providing youth information and counselling services is organised either to respond directly to a large number of topics (hence the term “generalist”), or to refer the user to an organisation or service which is competent in the desired area.

The centre may provide other services, which are complementary to its basic information and counselling role, such as youth discount cards, tickets for concerts and transport services, cheap accommodation, rooms or equipment for youth activities, and help in organising youth projects.

It may also make available information and information materials from a wide range of sources (official administrations, associations, commercial services) that promote activities and opportunities aimed at young people. But in its contact with each individual user, the primary concern of the centre (or service) is to respond to the question or need raised by the user, irrespective of any other external interest. It seeks to do this in a way which enables the user to have a maximum of choice, and which respects her / his autonomy and anonymity.

Accordingly, “generalist” youth information and counselling centres (and services) have the following characteristics, which are based either on the European Youth Information Charter, or on a national set of standards or a national Charter where these exist:

- they are specifically designed to respond to the needs of young people,
- they are open to all young people without exception, without an appointment,
- they provide information on a wide range of subjects, in a variety of forms, prepared both for young people in general and for groups of young people with special needs,
- the information that they provide is practical, pluralistic, accurate and regularly updated,
- they operate in a way which personalises the reception of each user, respects confidences and anonymity, provides a maximum of choice and promotes her / his autonomy,
- they may refer the user to a specialised service, when necessary.

This is the approach adopted by the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency’s (ERYICA) partners, and which has been tried and tested since the late 1960s in a number of countries. Today such approach is used in more than 30 European countries.

A very important function of a “generalist” youth information centre (or service) at local level is to develop and maintain good knowledge-base of the local and national specialised information services. Furthermore, the centre (service) continually develops contacts and co-operation with relevant youth-related services in its locality to be able to offer the best possible and most comprehensive service to its users.

1.2 Perspectives

Youth information, as for all other forms of youth work, is directly influenced by changes in society, as young people's lives and their needs depend on the demands of modern life. Some current developments give us a new perspective on issues that youth information will have to tackle in the future.

1.3 The merging of online and offline lives

Mobile phones, the Internet and the availability of applications for every topic and situation have led to 24/7 access and use of new technology. Young people tend not to differentiate between, what some years ago was called, "real life" and their online activities. Friends, interests, news, hobbies and all other aspects of life are seen as equally close, valid and real, in their online lives as much as offline.

The natural consequence of this development is the demand for youth information to respect this reality and offer services tailored to the needs of a generation that believes in sharing through social networks as much as in an online chat.

Youth information has made big strides in this direction over the last few years, e.g. using social network sites or chats to interact with young people. But there is still a long way to go and a need to keep constantly up-to-date with recent developments, both technical and sociological. Furthermore, all those new options raise ethical questions and the need for an exchange of experience and debate about adopted professional principles and guidelines.

1.4 Oversupply of information and lack of advice

Complexity is a serious issue in the coming of age of young people today. They are faced with an ever-growing range of choices, when it comes to education and employment, for example. However, this freedom of choice might become an illusion for those who are not skilled enough to sift through the deluge of information available or do not have access to all sources of information in the first place. In addition, this (for some, theoretical) freedom of choice is combined with an insecure future due to constant changes in the economy, social security and educational systems, and the rather negative image of the future of modern European societies transmitted, for example, by the mass media.

Besides, it is not only young people themselves, but also their first point of contact for advice – such as parents, teachers and friends – who are often unable to provide first-hand experience on the issues in question, as this issue of complexity affects them, too. In such situations young people need accurate and reliable information as well as dialogue with and advice from professionals. This is a need that youth information will have to respond to in the future, even though it might go beyond current concepts and the resources available.

1.5 Quality and information literacy

The quality of the information provided is an issue that youth information has worked on since the beginning and important steps have been made with the provision of training, exchange of expertise and the creation of quality criteria and standards in many countries. The idea of a common European Quality Label is proposed at regular intervals whenever youth information workers come together to discuss the development of their work.

The experience of the last 50 years is that youth information shares the same values and principles across the continent, but that the situation at national level is very diverse. However, even if a common quality label remains a vision, it is a valid vision that is worth exploring. In addition to high expectations regarding the quality of the information provided by and through youth information centres and services, a new challenge has emerged over the last few years. Today, youth information workers are not only called upon to secure the quality of their own products, but also have to take up and develop their role in supporting young people in becoming information-literate.

1.6 Youth information and participation

Young citizens pose a special challenge when it comes to participation processes. Two tendencies can be identified and need to be balanced out. On the one hand young people's motivation to take part in participatory processes and politics only arises when they feel taken seriously and when their communication habits and Internet usage patterns are catered for¹. On the other hand, without having the right information and knowledge, young people can be vulnerable to diverse risks related to Internet usage, such as disclosure of personal information, cyber bullying or manipulation².

From this perspective, access to accurate, objective and reliable information is a requisite to effective participation. It is not possible to make a sound decision or opinion without knowing one's opportunities, options, and alternatives. In order to ensure an active participation of young people in society, first, they need to be provided with the opportunity to participate. This means that they must have easy access to information on how to get involved, what the opportunities available are and where they are. Knowing what is going on is the initial step to gain interest and to make informed decisions about being involved.

Sometimes young people may not participate, not because they have no interest, but simply because they do not have information about existing opportunities³. However, as well as being aware of the different opportunities, young people also need to critically evaluate the existing options and alternatives, and relate them to their own abilities, opinions, and aspirations. The essential aim of youth information and counselling is precisely to guide them in their autonomous decision-making by building their capacity to put these options and alternatives into perspective in an objective and accurate manner.

¹Schols, M. (2015). *Young, online and connected. The impact of everyday Internet use of Dutch adolescents on social cohesion*. Rotterdam: Erasmus Research Centre of Media, Communication and Culture. <http://repub.eur.nl/pub/78734>

²Livingstone, S., Mascheroni, G., Ólafsson, K. & Haddon, L. with the networks of EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile (2014) *Children's online risks and opportunities: Comparative findings from EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile*, November. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60513/>

³*Manual on the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life from the Council of Europe* http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/HAVE_YOUR_SAY_MANUAL_ENG.pdf

1.7 Outreach & peer-to-peer

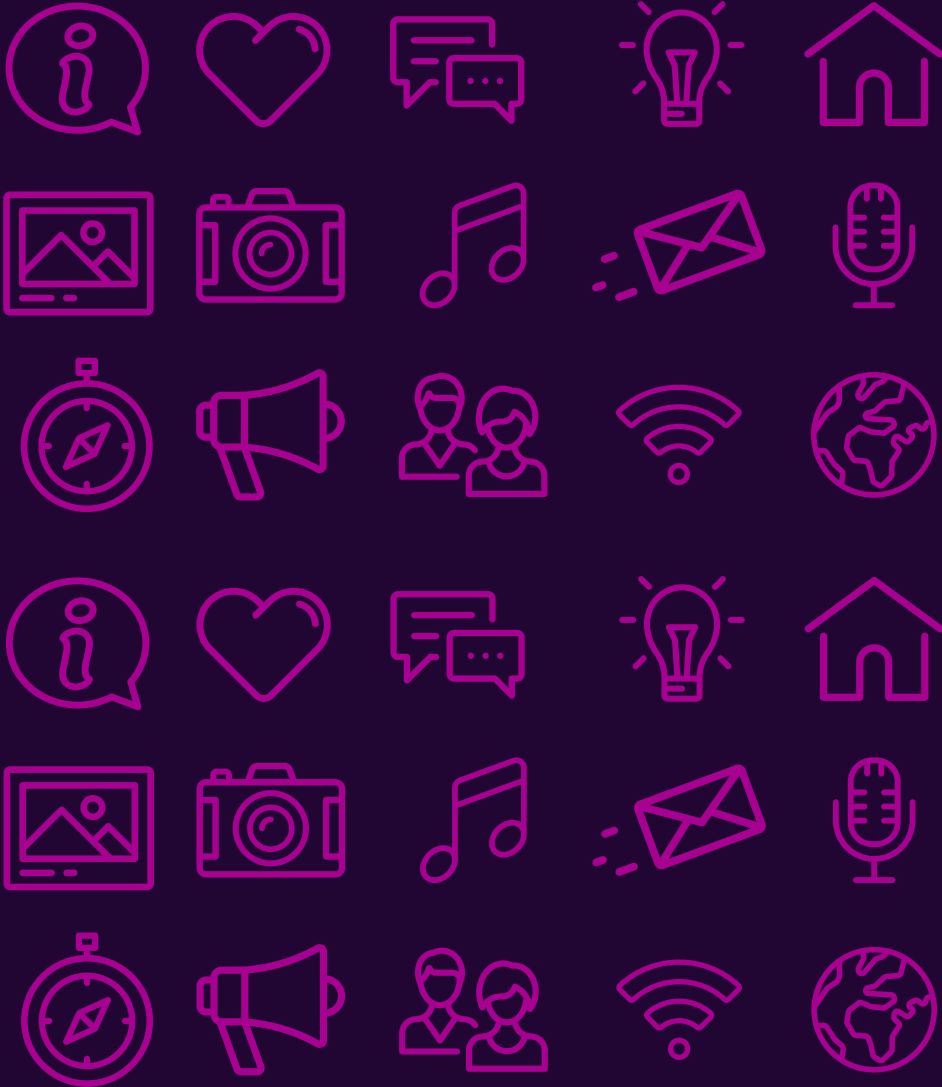
The involvement of young people in all aspects of youth information is one of the underlying principles defined in the Council of Europe's recommendations on youth information and has become more and more important in youth information work all over Europe. Youth information centres have also acknowledged in the past few years that providing easy access to a centre/shop/office is no longer enough to reach all young people and respond to their needs.

Hence, concepts have been developed all over Europe to meet young people where they are as well as involving young people as peers directly in the dissemination of information. Youth information strives to do this while considering the concerned young people's needs as the crucial factor, supporting them in all phases of the experience, from planning to evaluation, to making sure that they are ultimately enriched and not exploited. A tokenistic approach is avoided at all times. Those activities have become part of the basic options made available by youth information services all over Europe and can be developed further, discussed and evaluated in the coming years.

1.8 Networking and advocacy

Networking has always been essential for the provision of youth information as, for many enquiries from young people, experts need to be consulted and young people have a right to be referred to a specialist for their specific question on the basis of the professional knowledge of the youth information worker. Looking at the increasingly complex environment that young people live in and to which youth information needs to respond, it is immediately clear that networking has an even more crucial role to play within the functions of a youth information service.

Last but not least, advocacy for the right of young people to have access to all the information and support they need for autonomous decision-making is of the utmost importance in today's society. This process must involve continuing to discuss our knowledge-based society as well as lobbying for the provision of information and tailor-made counselling for young people.



CHAPTER II

Values and Principles in Youth Information Work

2.1. The European Youth Information Charter

The European Youth Information Charter is ERYICA's core framework documents, adopted by the ERYICA General Assembly in 1993, followed by the adoption of its revised version in 2004 as a reaction to the changing environment of young people. The principles of the charter are aimed at all forms of generalist youth information work and "constitute a basis for minimum standards and quality measures which should be established in each country as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work, which is a part of youth policy."

Preamble

In complex societies and in an integrated Europe that offers many challenges and opportunities, access to information and the ability to analyse and use information is increasingly important for young Europeans. Youth information work can help them to achieve their aspirations and can promote their participation as active members of society. Information should be provided in ways that enlarge the choices available to young people, and that promote their autonomy and empowerment.

Respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms implies the right of all young people to have access to complete, objective, understandable and reliable information on all their questions and needs. This right to information has been recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in the Recommendation N° (90) 7 of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe. This right is also the basis for youth information activities undertaken by the European Union.

Introduction

Generalist youth information work covers all topics that interest young people, and can include a spectrum of activities: informing, counselling, advising, guiding, supporting, befriending, coaching and training, networking, and referral to specialised services. These activities may be delivered by youth information centres, or through youth information services in other structures, or using electronic and other media. The principles of this Charter are intended to apply to all forms of generalist youth information work. They constitute a basis for minimum standards and quality measures which should be established in each country as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work, which is a part of youth policy.

Principles

The following principles constitute guidelines for generalist youth information work, which seeks to guarantee the right of young people to information:

1. Youth information centres and services shall be open to all young people without exception.
2. Youth information centres and services seek to guarantee the equality of access to information for all young people, regardless of their situation, origin, gender, religion, or social category. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged groups and to young people with specific needs.
3. Youth information centres and services should be easily accessible, without any appointment being required. They should be attractive for young people, with a friendly atmosphere. The operating hours should meet the needs of young people.
4. The information available shall be based on the requests of young people and on their perceived information needs. It should cover all topics that could interest young people, and should evolve in order to cover new topics.
5. Each user shall be respected as an individual and the response to each question shall be personalised. This shall be done in a way that empowers users, promotes the exercise of their autonomy, and develops their capacity to analyse and use information.

6. Youth information services shall be free of charge.
7. Information is given in a way that respects both the privacy of users and their right not to reveal their identity.
8. Information is provided in a professional manner by staff trained for this purpose.
9. The information offered is complete, up-to-date, accurate, practical and user-friendly.
10. Every effort is made to ensure the objectivity of the information provided through the pluralism and verification of the sources used.
11. The information offered shall be independent of any religious, political, ideological or commercial influence.
12. Youth information centres and services shall strive to reach the largest possible number of young people, in ways that are effective and appropriate to different groups and needs, and by being creative and innovative in their choice of strategies, methods and tools.
13. Young people shall have the opportunity to participate, in appropriate ways, in different stages of youth information work, at local, regional, national and international levels. These can include, among others: identifying information needs, the preparation and delivery of information, managing and evaluating information services and projects and peer group activities.
14. Youth information centres and services shall co-operate with other youth services and structures, especially in their geographical area, and shall network with intermediaries and other bodies that work with young people.
15. Youth information centres and services shall help young people both to access information provided via modern information and communication technologies, and to develop their skills in using them.
16. Each source of funding for youth information work should not act in any way that prevents a youth information centre or service from applying all the principles of this Charter.

The European Youth Information Charter is available in 32 languages [**here**](#).

2.2 Principles for Online Youth Information

On 5 December 2009, the 20th General Assembly of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency ERYICA adopted, in Rotterdam (The Netherlands), a set of 16 principles that aim to ensure the quality of provided online youth information services and guarantee their added value and trustworthiness. By doing so the Agency stressed the importance of the Internet as a powerful source of information and communication and recognised online youth information to be an integral part of youth information work. Hence, all the principles formulated in the European Youth Information Charter also apply to online youth information but the additional 16 principles outlined in this document provide additional criteria for the development and provision of online youth information.

Introduction

Internet is a powerful source of information and communication, as well as an integrated part of the social environment of young people. Provision of generalist Youth Information and Counselling online, as well as orientation on the Internet are new tasks, which are complementary to existing Youth Information work.

In addition to the role of Youth Information, helping young people find the right information and take their own decisions, Online Youth Information supports them to maximise the benefits of the Internet and minimise its potential risks.

Online Youth Information is an integral part of Youth Information work and thus, shall comply to all the principles formulated in the European Youth Information Charter. As Online Youth Information has some specific characteristics, an additional set of guidelines is needed.

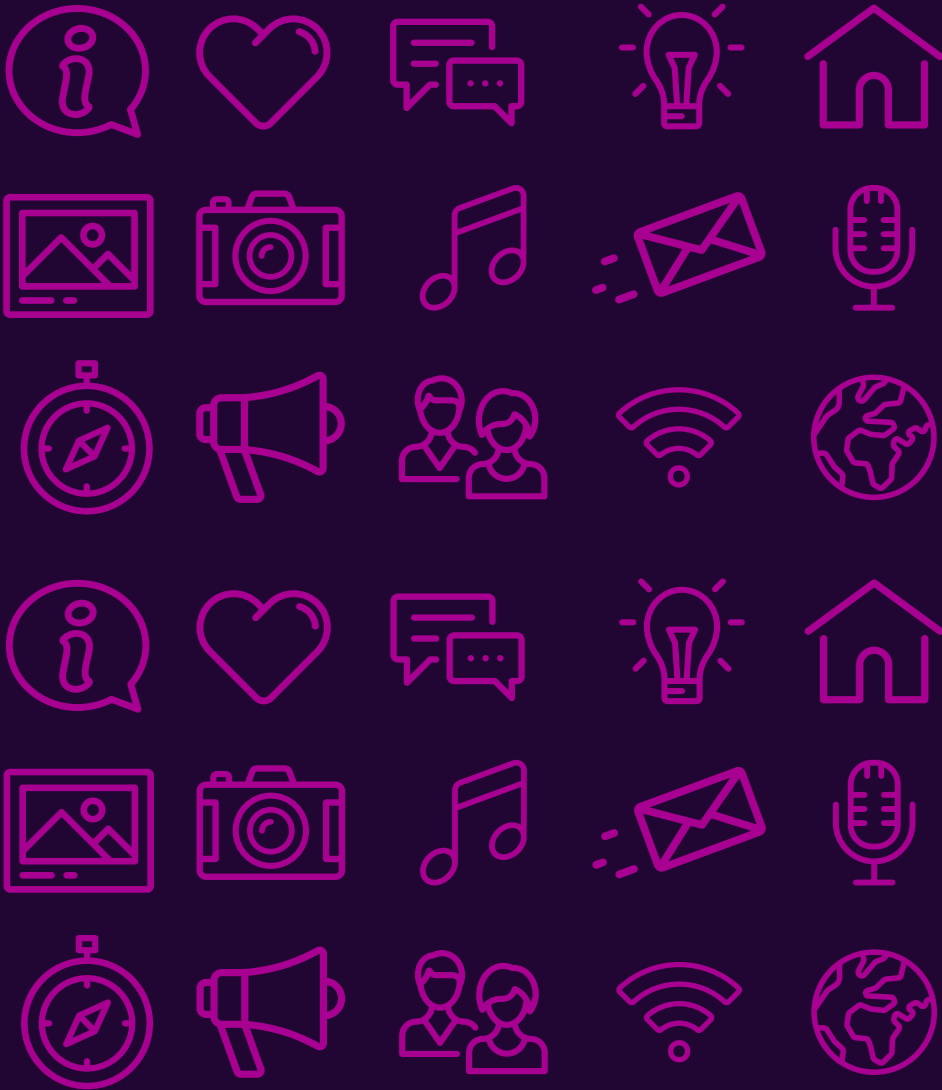
In order to ensure the quality of provided Online Youth Information services and to guarantee their added value and trustworthiness ERYICA, the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency adopted the following principles.

Principles

1. Online Youth Information shall be accurate, up to date and verified. The date when it was produced or updated shall be clearly mentioned.
2. The content shall be based on the needs of young people. Those needs have to be identified and evaluated in an ongoing process.
3. The content shall be a selection of relevant, free of charge information that provides an overview of different options available. The applied selection criteria must be made public and understandable.
4. Online Youth Information shall be understandable for young people and presented in an attractive way for them.
5. Online Youth Information services shall be operable for all, especially taking into account users and groups with specific needs.
6. When young people have the opportunity to ask a question online it shall be clear within which time limit they will receive an answer. The answer shall be tailor-made and it shall be clear who is providing it.
7. When young people are included in producing content, the accuracy of the final content shall stay the responsibility of the youth information organisation.
8. Encouraging young people to give feedback shall be an integrated part of the ongoing development of Online Youth Information services. The feedback shall be easy to submit. It must be then evaluated and used to adjust the content. Young people shall be made aware of how their feedback has impacted on the services.
9. The author and the purpose of the Online Youth Information shall be clear and visible. If content of third parties is used, the source is clearly indicated.
10. It must be clear to the users who the providers of the Youth Information service are and what their motivation is. Full contact information should be clearly displayed. Sources of financial support shall be transparently displayed.

11. Online Youth Information services should provide methods and guidance which help young people increase their information literacy and online competences.
12. Online Youth Information services shall inform and guide young people on how to act in a safe and responsible way in online environments.
13. Online Youth Information services shall be a safe environment for young people.
14. Online Youth Information respects and protects the privacy of the users and allows them to modify or delete their own published private data.
15. Online Youth Information services respect the copyright of third parties and are aware of their own.
16. Youth Information workers shall be competent on the use of online tools and have information literacy skills. They shall be aware of new developments, relevant law and keep themselves informed about trends and new online practices among young people.

The Principles of Online is available in 23 languages ***here***.



CHAPTER III

Methods of Youth Information Provision

Youth information uses a vast range of techniques – from informing to signposting and referring, to orienting to counselling – to guide young people through this process and support them in reaching their own decisions.

Below is a closer look at these techniques:

Informing: Providing reliable, accurate and up-to-date facts on all relevant topics for young people in an understandable and user-friendly way and putting them in a meaningful context.

Generalist youth information work: A user-centred approach of youth information, which covers all topics that interest young people and provides them with quality and reliable information. Responding to the needs of young people in a way which enables them to have maximum choice and which respects their autonomy and anonymity. Youth information proves to be a universal and important channel in several different policy areas.

An important function of a “generalist” youth information centre (or service) at local level is to develop and maintain good knowledge of the local and national specialised information services, in order to allocate material or refer young people to these centres when necessary. Furthermore, the centre (service) shall continually develop contacts and co-operation with relevant youth-related services in its locality to be able to offer the best possible and most comprehensive service to its users.

Specialist youth information: Services offering “specialised” information for young people e.g. housing support, job advice etc. The following topics fall under “specialised information services” – it is an indicative list and the types of services available at different providers depend largely on available funding and other resources:

- career guidance,
- studies and scholarships,
- jobs and training,
- general health matters,
- relationships and sexuality,
- social security benefits,
- rights of young people,
- consumer rights,
- legal advice,
- European opportunities for young people,
- youth activities and exchanges.

Networking: A supportive system of sharing information and services among organisations with common interests. Networking in youth information work includes collaboration with various entities starting from the obvious youth information centre – school – parents - youth houses and youth clubs, ending with municipality, youth police, social services, medical services, decision makers, financiers, other stakeholders.

example

SHERYICA

SHERYICA, the online platform for European youth information workers, aims at enhancing collaboration between youth information work professionals from a variety of backgrounds. As such SHERYICA wants to facilitate networking in the youth information field on a European scale. On SHERYICA, youth information workers exchange ideas on upcoming projects in the youth information field, share their individual competences, discuss experiences and exchange good practice. On top of that, SHERYICA promotes international projects making use of this unique European network of youth information professionals.

Read more: www.sheryica.org

Signposting: The provision of a piece of information that will allow young people to be directed to the service they need. Signposting may involve giving information about an alternative provider and explaining options and/or contacting another agency or individual in order to seek further information on behalf of the young person.

Referral: Involving a third party (from within or outside the YIC) in the work with an individual when the demand of a young person requires the involvement of another service or institution. A referral is generally made in order to provide the most comprehensive and appropriate service to the young person.

Orientation: Putting the information offered in a broader context and offering the young person, through interaction with a youth information worker (whether online or not), the possibility to reflect on different alternatives and the consequences of deciding on each option.

Advising/Guiding: In addition to tailor-made information, young people from time to time also need the advice or guidance of a professional. Youth information aims to help them by offering several points of view, while always ensuring that the decision itself is taken by the young person independently. This activity may be delivered by youth information centres, or through youth information services in other structures, or using electronic and other media.

example

youth.inc

Malta Aġenzija Żgħażaġġ– National Youth Agency

Youth.inc is an inclusive educational experiential programme for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who wish to continue to build on their educational experience and gain more information, knowledge, values and skills to either enter the labour market or gain qualifications to continue further training. It is based on the premise that success can be achieved by young people if they are engaged and motivated to participate actively in an applied learning environment which is practical in its approach.

Read more **here** (page 12).

Counselling: Offering young people the opportunity to explore and clarify issues of concern within a well-defined counsellor-client relationship. It gives the young person an opportunity for self-exploration and change. In the youth information context, counselling very often focuses on clarification. In a guided and professional conversation the youth information worker and the young person first identify the reasons and motives behind a question or a problem and then seek to clarify what the next steps might be. Counseling is the activity of a youth (information) worker or youth counsellor.

example

Career guidance in terms of curriculum reform

Czech Republic Národní ústav pro vzdělávání

The basic idea of the project is built on the premise that for qualified decisions about education and career, it is necessary to have reliable and relevant information. It concerns both programs offered by schools and the situation of the labour market, including information about transition from school to work and about perspectives of their further employment – thus not only about the possibilities of education but also about the next applicability of the various disciplines.

Read more **here** (page 16).

Advocacy: Negotiating, mediating or representing another person. Acting as an intermediary body in the youth information context representing a young person's interests. For our purposes an advocate can function only in the ethical boundaries of youth information work and should not be mixed with the domain of social work. An example could be a case from youth participation where youth (information) worker is helping young people in setting up a local youth council and represents and negotiates on their behalf in the beginning of the process. The emphasis of youth advocacy is to empower young people through their own actions in situations that affect them.

Participation: Involvement of young people in different stages of youth information work at local regional, national and international levels. (Decision-making concerning the collection of information, as well as the provision of information and counselling). Youth participation fosters a sense of citizenship and makes policy processes more transparent and accountable towards young people. At the same time, it helps young people build self-confidence, develop a sense of initiative and acquire and test skills that are relevant for the workplace, such as communication, negotiation or teamwork, in a practical environment.

example

Participation Café

Estonia Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit (Estonian National Youth Council)

Participation cafés started in Estonia back in 2008. Throughout the years, the café has grown into the biggest event of its kind in the country. Each year around 1,500 young people and 200 decision-makers take part in 15 regional cafés, discussing different topics particularly relevant to youth. Each year five to six topics are discussed, depending on the participants' interests.

Read more **here** (page 34).

Empowerment: Moving someone from dependency to self-advocacy. Youth empowerment is a process where young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve it. Engaging youth in pro-social, meaningful, and community-enhancing activities that the young people themselves define and control, helps them gain vital skills, responsibilities and confidence necessary to become active and productive adults.

example

Empowerment through Project-Based Participation - “The Project Cradle”

Norway Tvibit Youth Centre (Youth Information Centre of Tromsø)

The method ‘Project-Based Participation’ gives young people the opportunity to influence their communities and their own lives by realising their own ideas and thus actively contributing to the development of society. The Project Cradle is a key tool that the youth information centre uses in Project-Based Participation. Key concepts here are youth participation and a focus on the young person’s own ideas and initiative. The reason why this method works is that it is based on young people’s own energy and interest, and that it challenges young people in taking responsibility for implementation and result.

Read more [here](#) (page 38).

Outreach activities: Organising different ways of taking youth information services outside the YI centre to places where young people are. Outreach work takes place on young people’s own territory and supports and compliments centre-based youth information work. A key component of outreach is that the groups providing it are not stationary, but mobile. Outreach activities give young people the chance to meet youth (information) workers in person; it is often the first step to accessing help. Primarily used to inform young people of services that exist in their locality and to encourage them to use such services, outreach can also seek to identify, through consultation with young people, any gaps that exist in services aimed at meeting their needs. Most of these activities take place outside school or working hours, so that the timing makes it easier for young people to get involved.

example

Outreach youth information and counselling work in rural areas

Finland City of Kuopio

The 'Local service for youth information and counselling work in rural areas of Kuopio' is being carried out in five villages in the region of Kuopio and the target group is 10-18 year olds. The actions that have been carried out in this project so far include creating a model for youth information services in the rural area of Kuopio, info packages of the most common youth information topics, peer-to-peer information sessions and active peer-to-peer groups, groups of young people with a shared purpose who meet online and face-to-face, sharing professional knowledge between operators (school and youth work), improving online counselling work and using social media as an active tool to carry out youth information and counselling work.

Read more [here](#) (page 10).

Peer-to-peer work (P2P): A form of youth participation, allowing young people to express, share and develop their talents, skills and knowledge. It is mostly organised in a group, conducted in an informal way, in which young people participate in the service delivery of the youth information centre. Young peer workers also have the role of giving feedback to the youth information services and helping youth information workers to better understand the quickly changing realities of young people. The peer-to-peer approach requires resources from the youth information service and the worker, namely through establishing and supporting peer educators.

example

Info-Peers

Austria aha - Tipps & Infosfürjunge Leute

In 2005 the youth information centre of the Austrian province of Vorarlberg, aha – Tipps & Infosfürjunge Leute, worked out a concept which includes young people in the information activities – the Info-Peers. The basic idea is that young people inform young people. A new information channel, also for not so widespread topics, was created and it raises curiosity and interest among young people. The Info-Peers serve as an “antenna” to get feedback from young people on the existing activities and on their wishes and interests as well as on trends

Read more **here** (page 23).

Online Youth Information: Internet is a powerful source of information and communication, as well as an integrated part of the social environment of young people. Provision of generalist youth information and counselling online, as well as orientation on the Internet are tasks that are integral parts of centre-based, offline youth information work. In addition to the role of youth information to help young people find the right and reliable information and take their own decisions, online youth information supports them to maximise the benefits of the Internet and minimise its potential risks.

example

CLIConline

Wales UK Pro Mo-Cymru

CLIConline is a network of 22 youth-led websites, which offer information, news and peer-to-peer support for all young people aged 11 to 25 in Wales, on a wide range of subjects and issues including where to get help or advice in their local areas.

Read more **here** (page 24).

Not all youth information centres and services offer all these forms of intervention. For example, in Europe counselling is not always seen as an integral part of youth information. What youth information services offer often depends on the provision of other services for young people in the area. The focus therefore should be on meeting unaddressed needs and not on duplicating existing services.

Youth information is a part of youth work and shares its key values, such as: being open to all young people, acting in the interest of young people or defining its options based on the needs of the target groups.

The approach to youth information that is adopted by actors in this field today can be two-fold based on the scope of information services that are provided.

Various organisations at local, national and European level provide specialised information and services. These are specialised local, national and European bodies in different areas that inform young people (and the general public) about their area of competence. Their activity may or may not be targeted exclusively at young people.

Youth Information Services (YIC)

The arguments in favour of a youth information service are limited to the possibility of helping a large amount of young people with a relatively limited staff. This argument is used by workers at youth information centres in large cities who have to deal with thousands requests for information per year. What is more, youth information centres do not require highly qualified personnel such as social workers and psychologists.

The main argument against the youth information concept is that young people who need counselling are left out in the cold or have to be referred to a counselling centre.

Youth Counselling Services (YCC)

The concept of counselling services is defended with the argument that counselling demands more tranquil, long, and confidential conversations than giving information. The counselling is hindered when large numbers of young people with requests for information visit the centre at the same time. As an argument against the YCC, one could mention the danger that it keeps young people away from requesting assistance, because they are afraid of being stigmatized as problem cases when entering a YCC.

Nowadays youth information, advice and counselling services are more differentiated. The role of the youth “information centre” is rarely limited to a strict information function. Some core services that differentiate several functions and go beyond that of simply “informing” young people are advice and advocacy, support work or counselling. These functions differentiate centres from each other.

Integrated Youth Information and Counselling Services (YICC)

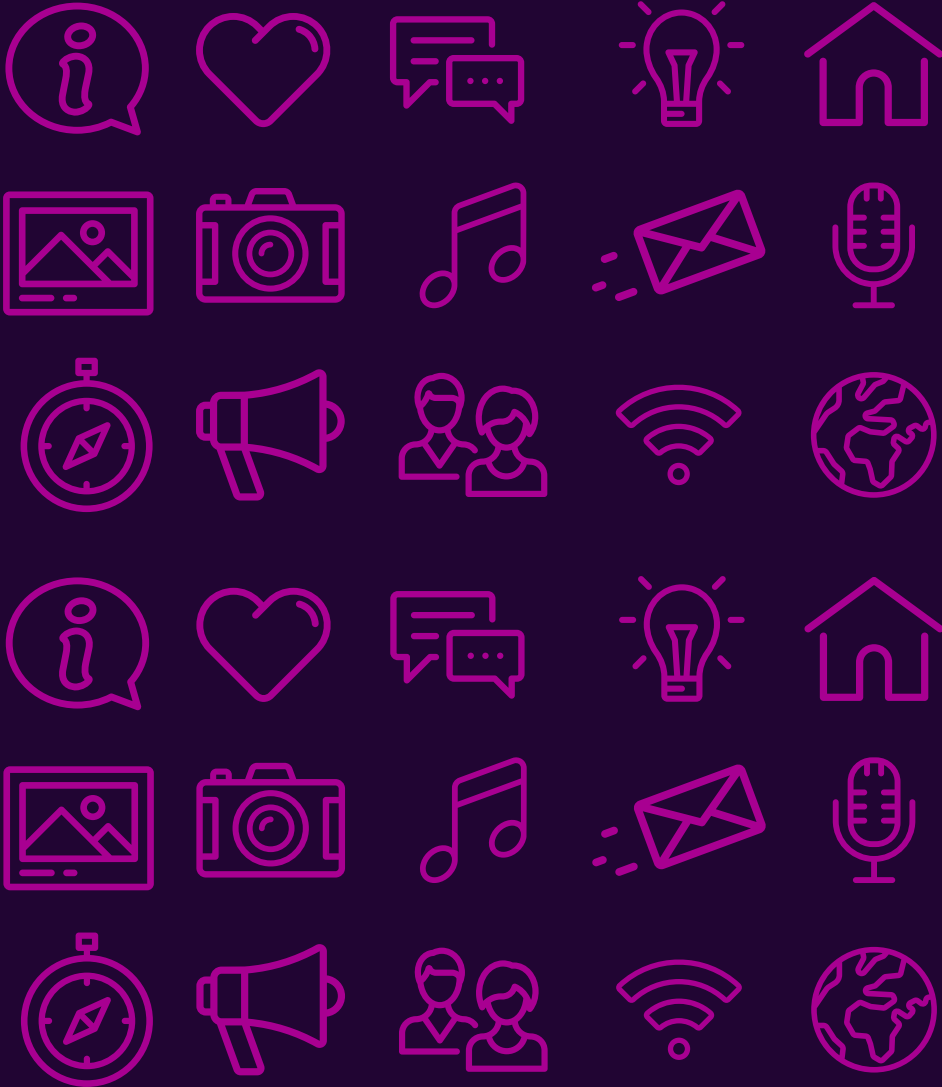
The integration of informing and counselling in one service is sustained by referring to the fact that requests for information may, unforeseen, lead to a counselling conversation. This may take place for different reasons. It may be because young people do not easily admit their need for counselling in problematic situations. Often they experience a serious problem as a mere lack of information. It may also be because a young person has not yet realised that there are people who are prepared to discuss his problem and its possible solutions and who take him seriously.

When one has not yet realised that can be helped through dialogue, one can hardly build up and expectations in this field. Counselling can also develop from the initial informative conversation. Therefore it is difficult to distinguish between informing, that is the process of finding relevant information, and counselling because they may be interrelated. Young people sometimes use a request for information as a stepping-stone toward a request for counselling. The request for information then allows them to see how far the worker can be trusted and how far anonymity is guaranteed. Whoever offers information to young people must therefore take into account that he/she can also be asked to be a counsellor. However, we do not imply that a worker must seek a request for counselling behind each inquiry for information.

The integration of informing and counselling in one service has still other arguments. By integrating the various kinds of assistance into one service, one also limits the number of situations in which young people have to be referred to another organization. Referral also holds the risk that clients quit when they have to tell the whole story again in another organization. What is more, because of their lack of insight into the complex structure of the service system, young people often do not know where to go with which question. Therefore it is very important for them to be able to turn to one location with all their questions. In a limited number of situations, it permits the worker to see a problem that the young person is not even aware of behind a more obvious problem, and to point this out to the youngster.

Finally, integrated information and counselling services accommodate those who often do not wish to admit that they have a problem or who may be unable to formulate their distress in terms of a specific problem.

One remarkable finding from our international survey was that workers in youth information centres mention the same advantages of integrated youth information and counselling services as people who work in the youth information centres. Yet the workers of the youth information services mention that the YICC-concept cannot always be realized, even if one wished it could. The government, which grants subsidies, sometimes obliges an organization to only give information, for different reasons, for example, informing is less labour intensive and it can therefore help a larger number of young people with the same number of workers. Indeed, the realization of integrated youth information and counselling service demands a number of conditions, of which the number of workers and their expertise are the most important.



CHAPTER IV

Further resources

Useful Documents

European reference documents

- Council of Europe's Recommendation on young people's access to rights (2016)
- European Framework for Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018)
- Council of Europe's Recommendation on Youth Information (2010)
- EU Resolution on Common Objectives (2005)
- Commission's Working Paper on Youth Participation (2003)
- European Commission White Paper on Youth (2001)
- Council of Europe's Recommendation "Concerning Information and Youth Counselling for Young People in Europe" (1990)

- **Compendium on National Youth Information and Counselling Structures**

The Compendium has the aim of being the main systemized source of information for stakeholders in countries where no youth information and counselling structures have yet been established. It gather information about the concept and history of the youth information, its impact and benefits, and an overview of how to establish youth information and counselling structures on national level.

Read the compendium *here*.

- **Youth Information Starter Kit**

The Kit gives a first insight in what Youth Information is, the underlying working principles and missions, how to start creating Youth Information Services and some practical information on what the different European structures have to offer to those who want to step into the world of Youth Information.

Youth Information Starter Kit in *English*.

Youth Information Starter Kit in *Macedonian*.

- **European Youth Information Charter in several languages**

The European Youth Information Charter is ERYICA's core framework documents, adopted by the ERYICA General Assembly in 1993, followed by the adoption of its revised version in 2004 as a reaction to the changing environment of young people. The principles of the charter are aimed at all forms of generalist youth information work and "constitute a basis for minimum standards and quality measures which should be established in each country as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work, which is a part of youth policy."

Read the European Youth Information Charter *here*.

- **Principles for Online Youth Information in several languages**

In order to ensure the quality of provided Online Youth Information services and to guarantee their added value and trustworthiness ERYICA, adopted a set of 16 principles in 2009 at the 20th ERYICA General Assembly. By doing so the Agency stressed the importance of the Internet as a powerful source of information and communication and recognised online youth information to be an integral part of youth information work.

Read it *here*.

- **Quality Management in Youth Information and Counselling: A Competency Development Framework**

This publication aims at helping all those involved in youth information services in order for them to provide a quality information and services. It is divided in three parts: First, a theoretical approach to quality management is given, then an evaluation tool for your youth information service and finally, six examples of already functioning quality management systems in Europe.

Read it *here*.

- **SHERYICA Good Practice in Youth Information booklets**

The SHERYICA Good Practice in Youth Information booklet is a biannual publication that showcases good practices in the ERYICA network, with the intention of providing visibility to these practices and encouraging other successful projects in the ERYICA network. The good practices featured in the booklets represent the trends and developments in youth information practice across Europe. They have been selected from the SHERYICA platform, on the basis of their quality, innovative potential and demonstrated successful outcomes.

- **SHERYICA Good Practice Booklet 2016**

- **SHERYICA Good Practice Booklet 2014**

- **SHERYICA Good Practice Booklet 2012**

- **SHERYICA Good Practice Booklet 2010**

• **Young People's Access to Rights through Youth Information and Counselling**

The aim of this document, produced in partnership with the Council of Europe, is answering the question: how to inform young people about their rights in an appealing way? It does not only include information on how to do it but also a list of practical activities in order to make youngsters aware of this topic.

English version. *French* version. *Russian* version.

• **ALTYO - Toolkit for Civil Society Organizations**

The purpose of the ALTYO project was to empower/build the capacities of local youth CSOs in F.Y.R of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in advocacy and lobbying in order to effectively influence local and national policies. In order to reach named results, the delivery of this course was foreseen as a crucial activity within the project.

Read it *here*.

• **Safety and Quality in online Youth Information**

This guide analyses the benefits and risks of the Online Youth Information, and tries to provide youth information workers a training in order to ensure that young people can safely access the quality information. The guide is available in three languages, English, French and Finish.

English version. *French* version. *Finish* version.

• **Position Paper: Engage. Inform. Empower.**

The position paper with recommendations for the European Youth Strategy, is written in collaboration with ERYICA's partner networks, EYCA and Eurodesk. The paper addresses the challenges facing young people, and offers recommendations on how youth information and mobility can help young people make the most of the opportunities and information available to them. The position paper is available in three languages: English, German, and Polish. It will shortly be available in Spanish and Finish.

English version. *German* version. *Polish* version.

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Read it *here*.

European Youth Information Networks

ERYICA

The **European Youth Information and Counselling Agency** (ERYICA) is an independent, international not-for-profit association. ERYICA works to intensify European co-operation in the field of youth information work and services. It aims to uphold the right of young people to full and reliable information, which helps them make the choices they face in their lives, and which promotes their autonomy and active participation in a democratic society.

Read more about ERYICA in Project Partners.

Eurodesk

As a support organisation to Erasmus+, **Eurodesk** makes information on learning mobility comprehensive and accessible to youth professionals and young people. The Eurodesk network unites over 1000 national, local and regional partners in more than 34 European countries. Members of the network are located in generalist youth information structures, in National Agencies of the EU Youth Programme, or other national NGOs in the youth field.

Eurodesk's target groups are young people and those who work with them. The organisation can be contacted by visiting an information point or contacting them by phone, e-mail, online and during events and conferences.

The organisation offers:

- free enquiry answering and advice on questions related to European mobility opportunities to young people,
- fast, online access to European youth-related opportunities (such as studying, volunteering, doing an internship abroad or participating in European consultations and competitions) via the Eurodesk Programme Database to both young people and youth workers,
- training and professional support to Eurodesk youth workers.

The network is also responsible for ongoing provision of information and news to the European Youth Portal and answers enquiries submitted by users of the portal.

EYCA

The **European Youth Card Association** (EYCA) is a non-governmental, non-profit association of 40 member organisations in 37 countries across Europe. Together they work to empower Europe's youth. EYCA member organisations issue the European Youth Card to over 6 million young people and strive to achieve their vision of a Europe where all young people are mobile and active.

The European Youth Card is a great tool to support young people to travel and expand their horizons, access culture and entertainment, take an active role in their communities, further their education and lead enriching lives. The card offers young people under 30 over 60,000 discounts on travel, accommodation, transportation, culture, sports, education, insurance and products in 37 European countries. In addition, card holders have access to services and opportunities such as:

- quality youth information
- employability and entrepreneurship programmes
- volunteering opportunities
- scholarship schemes
- awards programmes
- projects aiming to encourage youth participation and active citizenship among non-organised young people.

In order to increase the impact of the European Youth Card on young people's lives, EYCA has developed long-standing partnerships with the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Since 1999, EYCA has been working with the European Commission to issue European Youth Cards to all young people in the European Voluntary Service to help them make the most of their mobility experience.

In 1991 EYCA teamed up with the Council of Europe under the framework of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the European Youth Card. 21 Council of Europe member states contribute to the Agreement and work together with EYCA members to develop better policies and programmes for youth mobility. The Partial Agreement continues to grow with new member states preparing to join in 2017.

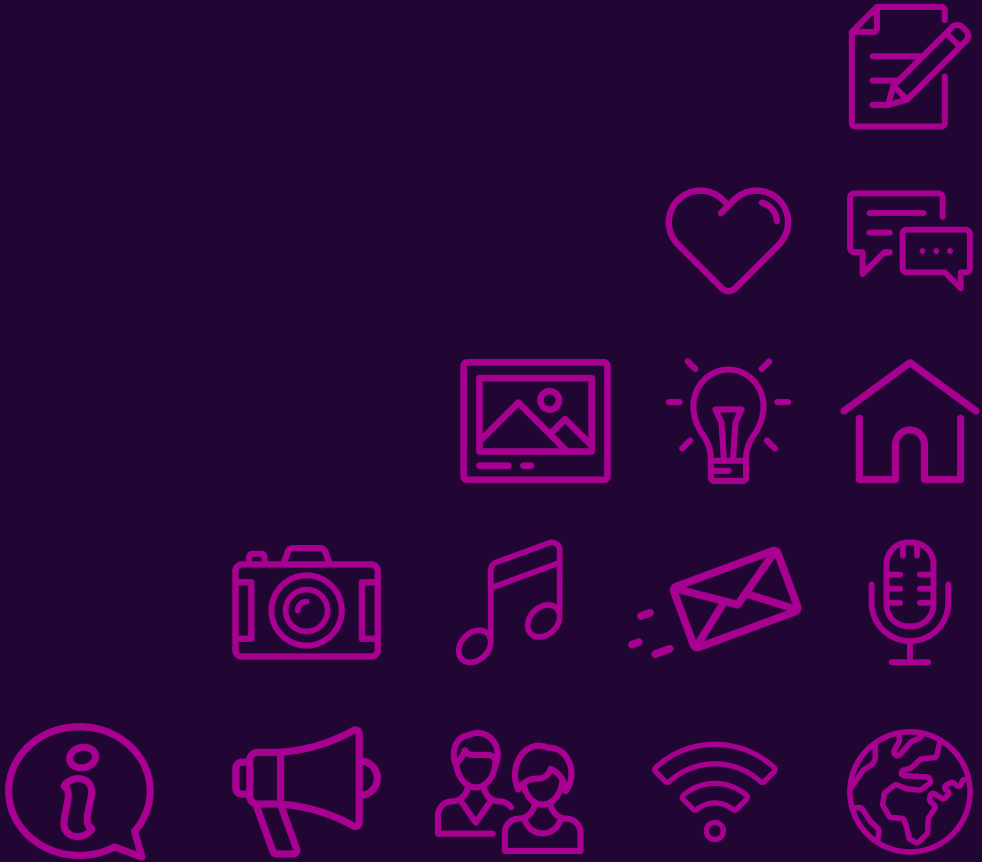
about the project

Coalition of youth organizations SEGA in the beginning of October 2016 started with the implementation of the project “Youth Information workers fit for Youth (YIW for Youth)” in partnership with the European Youth Information and Counseling Agency (ERYICA) and the Regional Youth Center I Rijeka – UMKI. The project was supported by the National Agency for European Educational programmes and mobility, as part of the programme Erasmus+ KA2 (Strategic partnership in the field of youth).

The project aimed at enhancing the quality of Youth Information by developing Guide for youth information workers based on exchange of practices applicable by the Youth Information Centers in Europe. In particular, the project objectives reflected to: exchange experiences of innovative tools and techniques for youth information; developing European dimension among countries in the field of youth; exchanging working methods among organizations; acquisition of new professional skills and competences for youth information workers; promoting transnational learning experiences and proposing best practices in the long term; building a dynamic network among countries and a sustainable partnership.

The project envisaged two specific aspects:

- Preparation of Guide of best practices in the field of youth information work “Information fit to youth”, according to structured and detailed Need assessment of youth information workers. The Need assessment of Youth information workers was launched from 03 to 20 February 2017. The questionnaire was available in three languages EN, FR and ES. This consultation aimed to identify the needs of youth (information) workers around Europe in order to improve and increase the resources available to them.
- Training for youth information workers in Macedonia in order to build the capacities of youth information workers. In the period from 13 to 17 March 2017 in Struga, Macedonia a training was held between youth information workers from Macedonia, Luxembourg and Croatia as part of the project “Youth Information Workers fit to Youth”. At the training, they exchanged experiences and best practices on methods and techniques for youth information with special focus on European trends in online media. Within the project was analyzed the needs of youth information workers in Europe, and based on the identified needs was developed The Guide for best practices aimed for youth information centers in Europe.



PROJECT PARTNERS

Coalition of youth organizations SEGA - Prilep



The Coalition of youth organizations SEGA is a national platform of youth organizations in Macedonia, dedicated to lobbying for legislative changes as well as supporting youth activism, participation and access to information. Currently, Coalition SEGA strives to ensure that the goals and objectives of the national Youth Strategy are fulfilled. In addition, SEGA works with domestic and international partners to provide capacity building training to the member organizations of SEGA and youth organizations throughout Macedonia. Furthermore, SEGA designs projects to improve youth information and active youth participation. In short, SEGA represents and will continue to be the voice of the youth in Macedonia to the national institutions and European youth associations.

During the years of work SEGA has developed and implemented procedures and mechanisms that allow them to be today's leading national youth organizations with 21 current member NGOs that implement different activities throughout the country.

Through a number of activities we have gained the knowledge and the best practices of working to improve the quality of life for youth, including but not limited to developing awareness for young people in order to increase acceptance of the differences between cultures and practice mass socializing by organizing public community service activities. Also, we have promoted standard and ethical values of youth life, and respect and tolerance among young people through activities that aim to overcome cultural and ethnical differences, broadening their views and opportunities inside and outside the country.

On the basis of the European experiences and standards of the European Agency for Youth information and Counseling (ERYICA), and regarding to the increase of the youth information, in 2010 SEGA opened the first "Youth Informational and Counseling Centre INFO SEGA" in Macedonia. Last year (2015) we opened the second Youth Information center INFO SEGA in Kavadarci. The YIC INFO SEGA in Prilep and Kavadarci are projects from Coalition SEGA and they are devoted to inform, educate and counsel young people about various possibilities available for youth (studying abroad, scholarships, volunteering, trainings and seminars, events, information for employment, etc.) through providing a direct and on-line contact with youth. The centers also facilitate activities with youth in local high schools in both towns and creative workshops.

Coalition of youth organizations SEGA - Prilep

Coalition SEGA has implemented several successful Erasmus+ project including projects in different actions KA1 for youth mobilities (EVS), KA2 (strategic partnership) and KA3 (structure dialogue). In all these projects have been laid possibilities for increasing the Youth participation in democratic life at local and national level, and method for improving the communication, among the young and decisions makers for their needs and problems at local and national level.

In the past ten years, SEGA has produced a number of publications, toolkits, manuals and monitoring reports and has organized number of seminars and trainings in an effort to raise the awareness for the needs of youth participation in society as well as advocacy and lobbying for the youth needs. The Coalition of youth organizations SEGA works on developing and implementing youth policies in Macedonia as well as connecting and strengthening young people to improve their overall state.

Moreover, SEGA is a sustainable and developed youth organization active at the local, regional and national level, a long-term and serious partner in the implementation of youth programmes along with young people, NGOs, state institutions and the business sector.

Our work has led to an improved overall state of youth, their inclusion in decision-making processes and their use of applicable laws.

Our success is recognized in the promotion of the young people as a resource in the society, ready to answer new challenges.

Coalition SEGA has given significant contribution towards creation of the National Youth Strategy of the Macedonia and the Action Plan for implementation of the National Youth Strategy of the Macedonia. In 2009, SEGA prepared Alternative report for the implementation of the Convention on the rights of the child in Macedonia. In 2010, the report was presented to the UN Committee for the Rights of the child in Geneva. The recommendations of the Alternative report (in the same year) were presented to the Commission for labor and social policy of the National Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

Coalition of youth organizations is national network of youth NGOs with head office in Prilep, Macedonia. SEGA continuously works on developing and implementing youth policies in Macedonia as well as connecting and strengthening young people to improve their overall state. SEGA as a national organization builds upon collective membership.

The main focus of field of work of SEGA is:

- Youth activism;
- Youth participation;
- Youth employment;
- Democracy, mutual confidence and cooperation;
- Community development;
- Information;
- Advocacy and lobbying for youth policy.

European Youth Information and Counselling Agency



European Youth Information and Counselling Agency

The European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) is an independent, international not-for-profit association. ERYICA works to intensify European co-operation in the field of youth information work and services. It aims to uphold the right of young people to full and reliable information, which helps them make the choices they face in their lives, and which promotes their autonomy and active participation in a democratic society.

The aims of the organisation are:

1. Promote respect for the principles of the European Youth Information Charter, and to work for their implementation.
2. Sustain and promote a network of youth information and counselling structures.
3. Ensure European and international co-ordination and representation in the field of youth information and counselling.

ERYICA is an umbrella organisation for generalist youth information and counselling providers. Its network consists of 24 Members, 6 Affiliated- and 4 Co-operating Organisations working in 27 countries.

All of them are governmental or non-governmental organisations responsible for generalist youth information services and most of them coordinate national or regional networks of youth information centres.

All together, ERYICA members offer services in more than 7.400 local and regional youth information centres (Youth Information and Counselling Centres, Youth Information Points and a specialised online services), where 13.000 youth workers provide young people with information and guidance under the principles of the European Youth Information Charter.

As part of its Strategic plan 2015-2017, ERYICA identifies four Strategic Directions for its activities, namely:

- Quality and Training;
- Research & Innovation;
- Participation & Empowerment;
- Policy & International Relations.

Established in 1986, the Agency has closely co-operated since its creation with the Council of Europe, as well as the EU institutions.

In 2004 ERYICA, Eurodesk and EYCA signed a declaration for cooperation, which was followed by jointly organized events concerning the development of youth information and counselling and quality initiatives in this field. The three organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2016 to enhance their cooperation in the field of youth.

Regionalni Info Centar za Mlade Ri



According to our Statute, Association develops and implements projects aimed at improving the totality of life for youth, linking local authorities, institutions, economy and citizens, advocacy at all levels, organizing public actions, services, information, databases, providing technical assistance and resources to implement projects, organize events, sporting events, concerts, exhibitions, seminars, workshops, and publishing activities in accordance with special regulations and cooperate with other organizations and with organizations and institutions in the fields of education, science, culture, sports, entertainment and environmental protection to achieve the objectives of the Association.

As a Regional Youth Information Center we are partners with local and regional government and partially financed by the state. That gives us the privilege to cooperate with all stakeholders regarding youth in our communities such as other NGOs and relevant institutions working for children and youth interests and their families.

We are involved in creation, implementation and evaluation of youth policies on local, regional and national level as well as European level, being a part of ERYICA (European Youth Information and Counseling Agency) and EURODESK the main provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them) in a role of national multiplier.

Organisation is a member of several networks such as:

Croatian Youth Network (MMH) - an alliance of 69 non-governmental youth organizations acting as the National Youth Council in the Republic of Croatia.

Association of Youth Information Centers in Croatia - national network of regional and local youth info centers across Croatia

European Youth Information and Counseling Agency - an international not-for-profit association established in 1986, a network which consists of 25 Members, 7 Affiliated- and 2 Co-operating Organisations working in 28 countries.

Regionalni Info Centar za Mlade Ri

EURODESK network - the main provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them. A non-profit-making International Association aiming to provide high quality information and advice concerning Europe to young people and those who work with them throughout national co-ordinators in 32 European countries.

Football against racism Europe (FARE) network - an umbrella organisation that brings together individuals, informal groups and organisations driven to combat inequality in football and use the sport as a means for social change. It is an international organisation with more than 130 members in over 30 European countries.

The Football Supporters Europe network (FSE) is an independent, representative and democratically organised grass-roots network of football fans' in Europe with members in currently 45 countries across the continent recognised by UEFA as their European dialogue partner on fans' issues.

