

Knowledge

# 11



# The history of youth work in Europe

## Volume 2

Council of Europe  
Conseil de l'Europe



European Union  
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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

Relevance for today's  
youth work policy

**The history  
of youth work in Europe  
Relevance for youth policy today  
Volume 2**

*Edited by Filip Coussée, Griet Verschelden, Tineke Van de Walle,  
Marta Mędlińska and Howard Williamson*

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Cover design: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP),  
Council of Europe  
Layout: Facompo

Council of Europe Publishing  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
<http://book.coe.int>

ISBN 978-92-871-6824-5

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Printed at the Council of Europe

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# The history of youth work in Europe – Volume 2

Relevance for today's youth work policy

**Y**outh work starts where young people are. It is perhaps this general principle that seems to create a certain 'myopic view' in youth work practice, policy and research. We tend to concentrate on the questions of today and take them as a starting point for our future plans. This sometimes makes youth work an uncertain and fragile practice. The lack of historical consciousness makes youth work vulnerable to instrumentalisation, whether by policymakers or even by young people themselves, claiming youth work should fulfil the needs they define to be urgent and relevant.

Youth work is a contingent practice and history will not reveal us its one and only real identity. Knowing where we come from, however, is an important step in establishing a confident, though not arrogant, identity. Youth work is a social and pedagogical practice that must be adapted to very diverse historical, geographic and social contexts, but there are still some underlying, basic assumptions that have structured practices and policies to date and continue to do so. In this light, a cross-cultural and transnational perspective can be most enlightening.

This second volume of *The history of youth work in Europe*, presents the youth work histories of some very different countries: Belgium and its three communities, the Netherlands, Ireland, Wales and Hungary. The reader is also introduced in the history of the relatively young European youth policies, and is even given a glimpse beyond European borders with a history of youth work in South Africa.

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*The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).*

ISBN 978-92-871-6824-5



9 789287 168245

€29 / US\$58

<http://book.coe.int>  
Council of Europe Publishing