



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

Country Report Netherlands

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Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU

Country report: The Netherlands

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This report presents the situation as of February 2013

1 Introduction: tradition, definitions and concepts

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
Definition for youth work	Yes
Legal definition for youth work	No
Approximate length of youth work tradition	Since late 19 th century
Approximate length of formal / professional youth work tradition	Since 1960s
Overview of relative importance of youth work in supporting young people	Remained the same
Main sectors/fields of formal / professional / statutory youth work	All areas
Main sectors / fields of non-formal / third sector led youth work	All areas (e.g. political, religious, environmental, cultural).

1.1 Definitions

Hans van Ewijk (2006) once said “youth work [in the Netherlands] is more or less an undefined field of activities”...“and there are endless ways of categorising it”¹. The main form of categorisation is to make a distinction between professional youth work and voluntary youth work (i.e. most commonly referred to as youth organisations) – this form of categorisation has been selected for the purpose of this research. It is noteworthy to mention that these two sectors operate in practice separately from one another.

The Dutch government does not apply a legal definition for youth work but a number of definitions exist; mostly commonly put forward by civil society or research institutes. Although the definitions and understanding of the concept varies, most refer to the following key words: support, pedagogic objectives, group-focussed, leisure time, children and young people in the 4 – 23 age range².

The three core tasks of professional youth work are recreation, informal education and support. With respect to the latter, there exist three main methodological approaches: individual coaching of young people, working with groups of young people, and social activation³. There are a wide variety of working forms which tie in with the abovementioned description including: child work (roughly 4-12 age range), teenager work (roughly 12-15 age range), community school, socio-cultural work, community work, youth participation, street work (i.e. “*straathoekwerk*”) and outreaching youth work (i.e. “*ambulant jongerenwerk*”)⁴. The work is carried out by professionals together with volunteers.

Neither does a separate legal definition on voluntary youth work exist. The abovementioned definition for professional youth work would to a large extent also

¹ Van Ewijk, H. (2010), *Youth Work in the Netherlands. History and Future Direction*. In: Coussée, F., Verschelden, G., Van de Walle, T., Medlinska, M. and Williamson, H. (eds.). *The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for youth policy today*. Vol. 2 (pp. 69-82). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. p. 71.

² See for instance: Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

³ Source: interviews

⁴ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

apply to voluntary youth work. The following key words are commonly used when referring to this sector: volunteers, offering activities in leisure sphere, recreation, development and participation⁵. In practice voluntary youth work refers to youth organisations which are volunteer organisations supervised and counselled by adults with professional staff at national or regional level. Examples of such youth organisations are: the Scouts, religious youth organisations, political youth organisations (e.g. trade unions, political parties, national and local youth parliaments) and self-organisations of young people with a migration or ethnic minority background^{6 7}.

In the rest of this document, the general term youth work refers to professional youth work. Voluntary youth work is referred to as such, or is referred to as youth organisations if appropriate.

1.2 Tradition and development of youth work

The first signs of early youth work emerged in the Netherlands in the 19th century **when the predecessor of the Young Men's Christian Association was established in 1853, the first fenced playground appeared in 1887 and the establishments of student clubs at the beginning of the 20th century. Youth work's objectives were in those days merely ideological than socio-psychological by nature⁸.**

In the 1920s Dutch society was segregated through pillarisation and in that period of time the first youth groups were established within each pillar (i.e. Catholic, Protestant and Socialist pillar). Youth organisations never reached more than 25% of young people⁹. At the beginning of the 20th century three main youth work trends emerged: youth organisations for the middle-class and emancipated working-class youth, **club houses for the poor and deprived, and "open-door work" for the in-betweens.** Youth movements hardly existed at the time¹⁰.

The Second World War led to a shift in thinking and socio-psychological approaches to youth work became more apparent. Youth work became a supportive instrument for young people to lead them into adulthood. It became a common place for young people to socialise with their peers. The 1960s were important as the professional youth work sector and youth organisations gradually drifted apart. Youth organisations were no longer part of mainstream youth work and youth policy as the government decided that youth organisations targeting middle-class young people could organise themselves without governmental support. Governmental support was reserved for youth organisations reaching out to marginal, low-educated young people. In the 1980s these organisations also lost their structural state support as the government felt that such organisations could and should gain sufficient income from their membership fees.

⁵ See for instance: <http://www.thesauruszorgenwelzijn.nl/vrijwilligjeugdwerk.htm> (Thesaurus Care and Welfare) and <http://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/XHTMLoutput/Actueel/Arnhem/20929.html> (municipality of Arnhem)

⁶ Van Ewijk, H. (2010), *Youth Work in the Netherlands. History and Future Direction*. In: Coussée, F., Verschelden, G., Van de Walle, T., Medlinska, M. and Williamson, H. (eds.). *The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for youth policy today*. Vol. 2 (pp. 69-82). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. P. 71.

⁷ Source: interviews

⁸ Van Ewijk, H. (2010), *Youth Work in the Netherlands. History and Future Direction*. In: Coussée, F., Verschelden, G., Van de Walle, T., Medlinska, M. and Williamson, H. (eds.). *The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for youth policy today*. Vol. 2 (pp. 69-82). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. P. 71.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

Youth work changed significantly in the 1960s and 1970s. Firstly the youth work sector professionalised due to the education of hundreds of educated youth workers and, secondly, it became more emancipatory focussed (i.e. (equal) rights for young people).¹¹ The first youth policy document produced by the government was launched in 1969 and emphasised meeting places for young people and support for the most marginalised youngsters. The development of young people was a priority and this line of thinking was further developed in the 1990s; in the 1995 youth policy document more emphasis was put on productive contributions from young people to society and space for developing their own identity. More attention was also given to social issues faced by young people (e.g. related to education, employment, living conditions). More efforts from youth work to cooperate with educational and labour market partners and the police were called for. Youth work has over time gradually become part of the social intervention chain together with the family, school, leisure time activities, youth care, mental health institutions, police and justice, labour market agencies and local social policy¹²; this is still true today.

With regard to developments from the 2000s onwards, two main trends can be identified: on the one hand, the increased focus on prevention and youth care and, on the other hand, the focus on talent development among young people (as part of positive youth policy). Interviewees pointed out that the prevention aspect of youth work has taken a more prominent place in national policies as opposed to talent development. However, an increasing number of municipalities and providers of professional youth work are working on positive youth policy¹³. In 2009, 78% of professional youth work providers versus 64% of municipalities indicated that their youth services aimed at both on talent development and the prevention of youth nuisance. Approximately 18% of professional youth work versus 8% of municipalities pointed out that their youth services exclusively focus on talent development; and 6% of the providers versus 28% of municipalities exclusively focus on the prevention of youth nuisance¹⁴.

An interviewee also pointed out that youth work gradually became an integral part of local youth policy and no longer is a stand-alone service.

1.3 The current situation: the delivery of formal and non-formal youth work

In the Netherlands there is clear separation between the formal and non-formal youth work sectors and there are substantial differences between their target groups and service delivery models. The formal youth work sector (i.e. professional youth work) as a service provider mainly targets young people at risk and marginalised young people, who respectively make up 10% and 1% of the total population of young people as shown in Figure 1.1. Youth organisations (i.e. voluntary youth work) focus on young people who outside of these groups of at risk or marginalised, which is approximately 85% of all young people. The total population of young people amounted to 1,184,529 in 2009¹⁵.

The remaining youth service provider is the youth care sector. The youth care sector works with young people who have complex needs and who make up 4% of all young

¹¹ Veenbaas, R. Noorda, J. and Ambaum, H. (2011), *Handboek Modern Jongerenwerk: Visie, Methodiek en Voorwaarden*. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij.

¹² Ibid

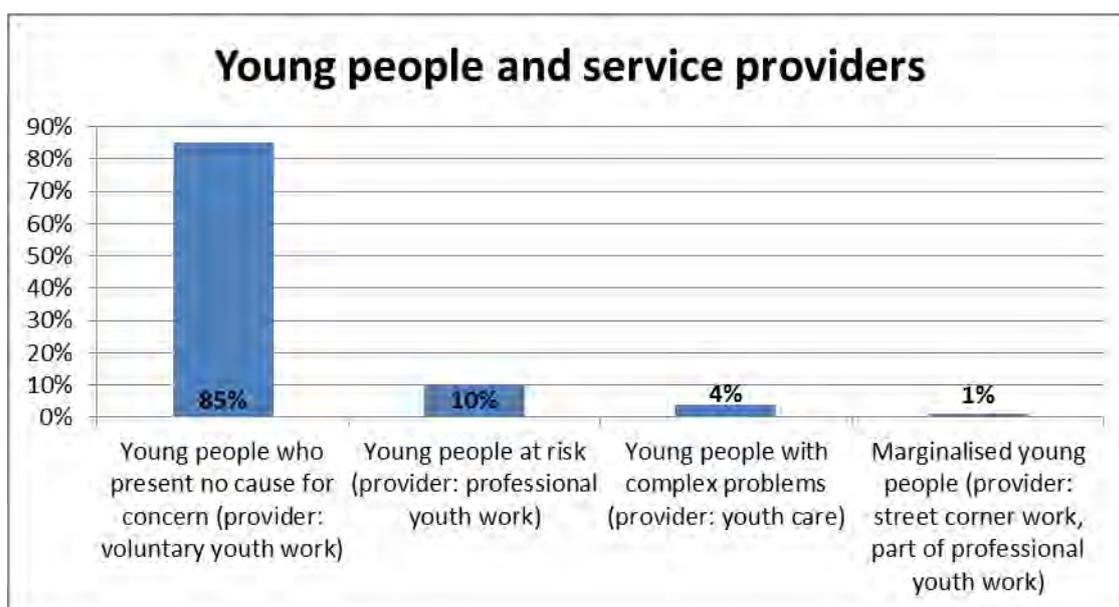
¹³ See: <http://www.vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/jeugd/nieuws/internationale-visitatiecommissie-onder-indruk-van-positief-jeugdbeleid-in-nederland>

¹⁴ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

¹⁵ Ibid

people in the Netherlands¹⁶. The main difference between youth care and youth work is that the youth care sector offers specialised care to young people who are facing serious mental and social issues whereas youth work focusses more on prevention of problems thereby looking at young people’s potential and talents (i.e. positive youth policy). As described above, in 2009 78% of professional youth work providers indicated that they focus on both talent development and youth nuisance prevention, 18% exclusively focus on talent development and only 6% tackle youth nuisance prevention¹⁷.

Figure 1.1 Estimates on young people’s needs in the Netherlands (and the service provider responsible for each needs group)



Source: NJI website¹⁸ and interviews

As described in section 1.1 the target groups and service delivery models of the professional youth work sector and youth organisations differ substantially; the main differences are summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Main differences between professional youth work and youth organisations

	Professional youth work	Youth organisations
Keywords	Support, pedagogic objectives, group-focussed, leisure time, children and young people in the 4 – 23 age range.	Volunteers, offering activities in the leisure sphere, recreation, development and participation.
Type of organisation	Welfare organisations (local social services) of which mostly are non-profit organisations (96%) and a	Volunteer organisations, mainly non-profit organisations.

¹⁶ Source: Interviews

¹⁷ MO Groep (2009), *Sterk Jongerenwerk: Jongerenwerkers Weten Hoe de Hazen Lopen*. Utrecht: MO Groep.

¹⁸ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-work-and-participation/Youth-work-policy>

	Professional youth work	Youth organisations
	few are profit organisations (4%). ¹⁹	
Professionals versus volunteers	The work is carried out by professionals together with volunteers.	The work is carried out by volunteers supervised and counselled by adults who are professional staff at national or regional level.
Target group	Young people at risk.	Young people who present no cause for concern.
Service delivery	Individual coaching of young people, working with groups of young people, and social activation.	Offer young people possibilities for recreation, development and participation.
Examples	Child work (roughly 4-12 age range), teenager work (roughly 12-15 age range), community school, socio-cultural work, community work, youth participation, street work (straathoekwerk) and outreaching youth work (i.e. ambulante jongerenwerk).	Scouts, religious youth organisations, political youth organisations (e.g. trade unions, political parties, national and local youth parliaments) and self-organisations of young people with a migration or ethnic minority background.

Source: Interviews and literature review

2 Legislative context and governance

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
Legislative framework for youth work	No
Level of regulation for youth work	Local (municipality-level)
Body(ies) with a responsibility for governing youth work	Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport and the municipalities

2.1 Legal background

In the Netherlands there is no dedicated Youth Act nor is there a dedicated youth work policy plan in place at national level. Youth policy and youth work is a decentralised responsibility of local municipalities.

The Social Support Act of 2007²⁰, replacing the former Welfare Act, is one of the main legislative instruments in the area of children and youth. The Act supports active citizenship and participation at local level through the creation of a coherent set of

¹⁹ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

²⁰ See: http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0020031/geldigheidsdatum_22-11-2012

social support services at the local level. The Act is not directly aimed at children and young people but they are certainly affected by it as the act creates one window of support for local citizens. Municipalities are required to develop a four-year plan for their services which may include supporting provisions for young people in the local community²¹. Municipalities are largely autonomous in developing its youth policy and setting local priority targets; youth policies and the extent to which they include youth work and youth organisations may differ substantially as a result.

Although not part of the youth work sector, the second main legislative instrument at national level in the field of youth policy is the Youth Care Act of 2005²². It provides a legal framework for youth care services. The responsibility for youth care services lies currently at provincial level but it is foreseen that it will be transferred from 2015 onwards to the local level. The transfer should be completed by 2016 after which all competences of youth policy lie at local level.

No legal framework exists for the voluntary youth sector; governmental funding support was abolished in the 1980s.

2.2 Governance

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is responsible for the general youth policy at national level. The ministry is responsible for setting the overall framework and adopts a **“stimulating role rather than of a policy making role”**²³. Through the Social Support Act municipalities receive funding from the government to implement their youth policy. Municipalities are thus primarily responsible for youth policies.

The rationale for making municipalities responsible for youth policy is that local governments are closest to their citizens and can offer services which are tailored to their needs. This could, however, also imply that service offerings for youth may vary substantially among municipalities; whereby some municipalities could have a very well-functioning youth work policy in place and in other municipalities it could be somewhat of a neglected area. Secondly, the decentralisation of youth policy to the local level including the youth care sector, centralises funding opportunities which will then solely be offered at local level.

3 Policy and programme framework

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
General level of political commitment to the issue of youth work	Weak (i.e. national level)
Dedicated policy / strategy on youth work	No
Programmes on the development of youth work	At municipal level
Net impact of economic crisis on funding for youth work	Varies across municipalities

3.1 Policy commitment

The policy commitment to youth policy appeared stronger under the Balkenende IV Cabinet (governing period 2007-2010) when a Ministry for Youth and Families was

²¹ European Union (2012), *The Netherlands National Youth Report 2012: First Cooperation Cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012*. Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/national_youth_reports_2012/the_netherlands.pdf

²² See: http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0016637/Hoofdstuk1/geldigheidsdatum_22-11-2012

²³ Source: interviews

established and a dedicated policy plan “Opportunities for All Children” was developed. When Balkenende IV was succeeded in 2010 by the Rutte I Cabinet the Ministry of Youth and Families was, due to renewed national priorities, adjourned and youth policies were transferred to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

Currently, there is no dedicated youth work strategy in place. Overall national Dutch youth policy is mostly problem-oriented (i.e. focussed on e.g. young people with complex needs but also on youth loitering) and has a specific focus on youth care. The government is mainly concerned with prevention aspects and those youth with complex needs; the latter is targeted through the youth care sector. In 2011 the Dutch government published two policy documents²⁴ on the restructuring of the youth care sector (i.e. transfer to municipal level by 2016). There are no recent policy documents related to youth work.

Due to the decentralisation of youth care, municipalities will be responsible for all fields of youth policy by 2016, which covers a wide range of fields including voluntary activities, youth participation, social inclusion, education and health services²⁵. Discussions have emerged at municipal level to better develop non-problem oriented youth policy (i.e. development of a “positive youth policy”) aimed at all children and young people and not only young people with complex needs. This could become particularly topical in 2016 when all youth policy competences are transferred to the municipalities; municipalities may decide to invest in talent development of young people at an earlier age in order to prevent problems at later ages. As stated before, it is up to municipalities to decide on the extent to which they wish to engage in developing a positive youth policy versus a problem-oriented youth policy.

Overall interviewees labelled the national political commitment to youth work as “weak” due to a lack of national-level legislation, strategy and knowledge vis-à-vis the role and impact of youth work. The national administration focusses very much on youth care and prevention aspects with less focus on the development of talents as part of positive youth policy. Interviewees pointed out that talent development is seen, at national level, as a responsibility of the educational sector.

The government’s policy commitment to youth work is characterised by the funding schemes allocated to the municipalities through the Social Support Act as part of the local youth policy in the Netherlands. The total sum of funding available for local professional youth work in the Netherlands is estimated at approximately €250,000,000.²⁶

3.2 Policies and programmes to develop youth work

Youth work policies and programmes are implemented at municipal level, funded by the government through the Social Support Act. Municipalities are autonomous in setting their policy, programmes and service delivery offer, in line with the needs of its citizens. Governmental funding could sometimes be complemented by co-financing from partners such as housing associations, educational institutes and funds²⁷.

In addition to available local government funding, youth organisations can receive funding from other non-governmental funding programmes such the National Youth

²⁴ “Stelselwijziging zorg voor Jeugd” (September 2011) and “Geen Kind Buiten Spel” (November 2011).

²⁵ European Union (2012), *The Netherlands National Youth Report 2012: First Cooperation Cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012*. Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/national_youth_reports_2012/the_netherlands.pdf

²⁶ Source: interviews

²⁷ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

Fund “Jantje Beton” or the “Oranjefonds” which finances sustainable projects that actively contribute to social cohesion and social participation. Generally speaking however, youth organisations mainly gain income through membership fees. Political youth organisations may receive funding from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations²⁸.

No general information on local youth policies and programmes is available due to the high level of diversity across municipalities. No aggregate statistical data is collected on the municipal budgets reserved for youth issues. The funding received through the Social Support Act is used for a wide range of social services (related to participation at large which includes e.g. home care, elderly persons) of which youth is only a part of.

The economic crisis in Europe has resulted in budget-cuts at municipal level (approximately 25% budget cuts for welfare institutions in the next two to three-year period) but this does not necessarily imply budget cuts on youth policy or, more specifically, youth work and youth organisations as it depends on the priorities of the municipality; the effect of the economic downturn on youth work sector as such is unknown. However, interviewees suggested that the harsh economic climate means that the youth sector also has to do more with less means and also led to dismissals of youth workers in some instances.

²⁸ See: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Participation/2011/information_sheet_participation_of_young_people_Netherlands_2011.pdf

4 Youth workers: training, status, population and profile

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
Minimum qualifications standards for youth workers	No
Youth worker as a recognised profession / occupation	No
Availability of formal, dedicated qualifications for youth workers	No
Education background of the majority of youth workers	Social work
Number of youth workers	3,870 (in 2009 and expected to be roughly the same in 2012)
Trend in the overall number of youth workers	Increase

The information provided in section four will mainly relate to professional youth work unless otherwise specified.

4.1 Training and qualifications

‘Youth worker’ as such is not an officially recognised profession in the Netherlands and there are no specific youth worker training programmes in VET or higher education. Most youth workers are trained via other professions, most notably social work but also other educational backgrounds are common, for instance, pedagogy. Youth workers need to at least complete VET education²⁹. Some VET or higher education providers offer specialised minor programmes on youth work to their students. Overall it seems that professional youth workers are trained “on the job”.

Youth workers can also undertake supplementary training during their career organised by different (civil society) actors such as BVJong³⁰ (i.e. professional association of youth workers), or private training providers³¹. In 2009 approximately 52% of youth work professionals did not or did not often undertake supplementary training post-graduation. Roughly 39% described their on-the-job training through their employer as “occasionally” and 9% of professionals engage a lot in training opportunities^{32 33}.

There are no official standards set for volunteers in the youth work sector and youth organisations. As a general rule of thumb, volunteer work is accessible to all but organisations may set specific requirements (e.g. with regard to skills and competences).

²⁹ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-work-and-participation/Youth-work-policy>

³⁰ See: <http://www.jongerenwerker.nl/>

³¹ See: <http://www.fcb.nl/welzijn/scholing%20en%20loopbaan/opleidingsdatabase.aspx>

³² Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

³³ The data in this report taken from “Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.” and refers only to professional youth workers, working with young people between 12 to 18 and 23 years of age.

4.2 Status of youth worker profession

"There is no legal basis for social work and neither for the youth worker as a professional. Nor is there a legal basis for youth work as such, or its definition and description"³⁴. Although the profession is not officially recognised as such, two important developments had been initiated by actors in the field: the launch of a competence profile for youth workers and the establishment of the professional association of youth workers "BVJong".

In 2008 a competence profile for youth workers³⁵ was published under the auspices of BVJong supported by ABVAKABO (i.e. employees' union) and the MO-Groep (i.e. employer branch organisation). The profile described a set of knowledge, attitudes, skills and qualities that youth workers need to have in order to execute their profession. Although this is not an officially recognised competence profile, many youth work organisations now make use of it (e.g. for staff recruitment).

BVJong was established in 2003 and it aims to monitor, reinforce and support the profession of youth work in the Netherlands. They not only aim to increase the knowledge and skills of professional youth workers but also aim to identify and promote the interest of the professional sector to governments and other important actors³⁶. The establishment of BVJong is an important step towards uniting the sector and advocating its interests and concerns.

4.3 Youth worker population

In 2009 approximately 3,870 professional youth workers were employed in the professional youth work sector³⁷. With regard to the number of professional youth workers exclusively working with young people in the 12-23 age range, the number of professionals has increased by 60% in the period 2000-2009; in 2009 2,818 professionals were counted. By comparison, the number of youth workers working with the 12-23 age range increase only by 2% in the period 1989-2000³⁸. The increase between 2000-2009 can be explained by the increasing number of municipalities which consider youth work(ers) to be an effective instrument to approach local youth issues and to support youngsters from socially disadvantaged environments³⁹. In the interview stage it was suggested that a further increase of the youth worker population is expected due to the growing need for support to young people from socially disadvantaged environments⁴⁰.

In 2009 there were at least 346 providers of professional youth work, the majority (i.e. 96%) non-profit organisations and a small number (i.e. 4%) of profit organisations⁴¹. The latter category emerged in the 2000s. Out of all providers, 55% offers youth work in only one municipality and 45% are active in multiple municipalities⁴². 68% of the providers were completely funded as part of the local

³⁴ Van Ewijk, H. (2010), *Youth Work in the Netherlands. History and Future Direction*. In: Coussée, F., Verschelden, G., Van de Walle, T., Medlinska, M. and Williamson, H. (eds.). *The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for youth policy today*. Vol. 2 (pp. 69-82). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

³⁵ Van Dam, C. and Zwicker, N. (2008), *Jongerenwerker*. Utrecht: MOVISIE.

³⁶ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-work-and-participation/Youth-work-policy>

³⁷ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

youth policy, 11% received additional funding through the governmental programme “youth and security” and 21% had additional other funding sources⁴³.

With regard to voluntary youth work, it is impossible to draw up a complete picture of this sector as there is a great variety of types and identities. In most cases voluntary youth work is not part of the local youth policy plans. Youth organisations are mostly organised by local organisations that have regional or national support structures or are based on private initiatives⁴⁴. The sector is volunteer-led; professional staff are not very common and mostly work on regional or national level. There are no statistical data available regarding the number of volunteers in youth organisations. In 2010 the Eurobarometer⁴⁵ of the Youth on the Move Campaign found that the volunteering rate of Dutch young people in organised volunteer work was the highest in the EU with approximately 40% of young people engaged in it⁴⁶. Although this does not accurately reflect the situation of the youth work sector, it does suggest that a relatively reasonable share of young people is engaged as volunteers.

4.4 Profile of youth workers

In 2009 55% of professional youth workers had completed a degree at a university of applied sciences and 45% has a VET qualification⁴⁷. Roughly 48% had between 3-9 years of working experience in the sector, 22% had more than 10 years of experience and 30% had less than 2 years of experience⁴⁸. This disputes the assumptions about the high turnover rate among professionals in the youth work sector⁴⁹.

There is no data available on the profile of youth workers in youth organisations as this sector is mainly volunteer-led. As a general rule of thumb, volunteer work is accessible to all, however organisations may set specific requirements (e.g. with regard to skills and competences).

5 The role and value of youth work

Interviewees pointed out that youth work has an important role to play in Dutch society and particularly fulfils an essential role in the empowerment and participation of young people at risk. There is, however, no evidence available on the role, value and impact of youth work in the Netherlands which many consider a weakness of the Dutch youth work. It is however evident that youth work can make a difference in society, in the lives of young people and can contribute to the eight priority fields set out in the EU Youth Strategy. For each of the categories below a number of project examples are given to demonstrate how youth work in the Netherlands contributes to the development of young people in these areas.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-work-and-participation/Youth-work-policy>

⁴⁵ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-work-and-participation/Youth-work-policy>

⁴⁶ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-work-and-participation/Volunteering-and-leisure-time-figures>

⁴⁷ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

5.1 Education and training

The link between youth work and education and training is of paramount importance. **Cooperation with the formal education is essential due to youth work's role in tackling early- school leaving and bringing young people back into formal education.** With regard to non-formal learning, both professional and voluntary youth work make use of non-formal learning methods and consider it an essential part of the sector. An example of how the formal education sector and youth work cooperates is through the **"rock and water programme"**⁵⁰. This is an educational programme aiming to enhance the social, emotional and spiritual development of boys and girls. In the Netherlands, **there are youth workers that offer trainings as part of the "rock and water programme" at schools.** Another example in relation to education and training includes the following:

"De Mast" is a unique concept, launched in the city of Enschede in 2010, as it combines youth work and special needs education at secondary school level by locating the two in the same building. Young people attend formal education while also making use of after-school activities offered by youth work. Youth work engages in those forms of education which are not offered by the formal sector, for instance young people learn how to cook and paint. **The project's purpose is to assist in making smooth transitions** between formal education and leisure time⁵¹ which is facilitated due to the fact that formal education and youth work are located at the same premises.

5.2 Employment and entrepreneurship

The theme of employment and entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important whereas youth workers are becoming more involved in bringing young people back into employment. To this end, there exist also links between youth workers and enterprises, especially enterprises with social corporate responsibility policies in place. Youth workers are essential partners in this chain due to their relation of trust with young people. Youth work, both professional and voluntary, also undertakes activities that encourage entrepreneurship, for instance by supporting young people in creating a music band or setting up business (activities). The following two examples demonstrate how youth work contributes to the theme of employment and entrepreneurship:

"LEARN2WORK" is a project for the NEET group (i.e. young people not in education, employment or training) in the 16-24 age range. Over a period of ten months young people undertake training on empowerment, job interviews and social skills with the aim to help them (re)enter into education or employment equipped with an improved skills set (i.e. work attitude, skills and motivation)⁵².

"Dream Youngsters" is a partnership between a welfare organisation and an educational institution to support young people to realise their dreams in an effort to tackle early-school leaving and youth unemployment. Youth workers help young people to deal with their problems after which they get support to

⁵⁰ See: <http://www.rockandwaterprogramme.com/>

⁵¹ See: <http://www.deweekkrant.nl/pages.php?page=1194000>

⁵² See: <http://www.lerenenwerkenindewijk.nl/>

obtain a qualification. An essential part of this project is to firstly focus on the issues young people face before starting education⁵³.

5.3 Health and well-being

In the Netherlands it is very common for the youth work sector to cooperate with health service providers, especially institutions working on the issues of drug or alcohol use and the prevention thereof. The following two projects are examples of how youth work contributes to the health and well-being of young people:

"0% Alcohol, 100% Feest" is a thematic week organised by three youth work providers in the Utrecht area to make young people aware of alcohol and drug use. For this purpose youth workers drove around in bus to different schools and had young people engage in "fun yet informative activities" on alcohol and drug use⁵⁴.

"Sport Activities in Youth Centres" – promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports is a common method applied to young people. The youth centre in Geldrop-Mierlo offers kickboxing and soccer classes to young people; supervised by youth workers. Sport activities are not only a healthy leisure activity but they also train young people to work together with their peers to achieve common goals.

5.4 Participation

In the Netherlands there is no specific definition of youth participation by law⁵⁵. **Instead participation is a generic term which may relate to young people's opportunities to influence decision-making structures and to take initiatives to be actively involved in society.** Participation is a process and not a goal in itself. Participation of young people in society is becoming an increasingly important theme.⁵⁶

Most provinces in the Netherlands have a budget for youth participation projects; two examples of the province of Groningen and the province of Gelderland are described below:

"Youth Participation Budget Province of Groningen" – the main aim is to encourage youth participation activities for and by young people and provide information about participation to young people. The funding is for organisations that focus on young people between 12 and 25 years of age, in particular young people in (pre-)vocational education⁵⁷.

"Youth Participation Budget Province of Gelderland" – the province is funding a number of youth volunteer organisations to stimulate the involvement and interest of young people in society. Scouting, Rural Youth Gelderland, and Youth work Bureau Lava organise weekly activities centred on developing

⁵³ Hoogendoorn, K. Hilverdink, P. and Darwish, L. (2012), *Including All Children and Young People: Moving Towards a Positive Approach in Youth Policy in the Netherlands*. Utrecht: Netherlands Youth Institute. Accessed on the 21st of November 2012.

⁵⁴ See: <http://www.jou-utrecht.nl/actueel/0-procent-alcohol,-100-procent-feest!>

⁵⁵ See: http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0020031/geldigheidsdatum_27-02-2013

⁵⁶ See: <http://www.nji.nl/smartsite.dws?id=127479>

⁵⁷ See: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Participation/2011/information_sheet_participation_of_young_people_Netherlands_2011.pdf

social skills and independence. Young people learn to take initiatives and are encouraged to participate in social work and voluntary work. They also discuss current issues such as alcohol abuse⁵⁸.

“Young Leaderz” trains 12 Moroccan-Dutch youngsters how to become good leaders who could contribute to the community. The aim is that the youngsters become Ambassadors and role models to their peers and contribute to the neighbourhood. The project contributes to the development of young people and enhances their social participation⁵⁹.

5.5 Voluntary activities / volunteering

Youth organisations are characterised by volunteerism and is, as described above, a volunteer-led sector; many young participants become volunteers at their youth organisations when they reach the age of 16. Therefore youth activities in this area are an example of how to move young people into volunteer youth work.

5.6 Social inclusion

Social inclusion of young people, especially in times of economic downturn, is considered to be an important theme in the Netherlands and youth work is one of the main actors to contribute to young people’s social inclusion. As one of the interviewee’s put it: “youth work guides young people from social exclusion to inclusion”. Youth work often employs the “community approach” when it comes to promoting the inclusion of young people, whereby community-based activities are the main instrument to include youngsters (see “Street League” example). This is in line with the well-known saying “it takes a village to raise a child”. The following projects aim for the social inclusion of young people:

“Street League” – young people from a number of districts form soccer teams and compete against each in the “street league”. Young people from different districts, cultures and lifestyles meet in order to learn from one another and learn mutual respect. Young people do not only engage in play but also get involved in their community.

“Raster Kinderwerk” – is a partnership between youth work and youth care which offers after school activities to support children to develop their social-emotional and cognitive development. A youth worker is present to help the children with their social skills⁶⁰.

5.7 Youth and the world

Young people are more globally oriented through the use of internet and social media and also exchange programmes in formal education as well as youth work (e.g. Youth in Action Programmes). With regard to exchange programmes, it is however important to note that the participation rate of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is considerably lower compared to young people from affluent backgrounds. The following two projects are examples of how youth work is connected to the wider world:

⁵⁸ See: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Participation/2011/information_sheet_participation_of_young_people_Netherlands_2011.pdf

⁵⁹ See: <http://www.stad-haarlem.nl/nieuws-item/young-leaderz-schalkwijk>

⁶⁰ See: http://www.nji.nl/nji/dossierDownloads/Gouden_kans_gemeenten_transformatie.pdf

“Red Cross Student Desk” – students organise events and activities in nine university cities in the Netherlands to raise-awareness about the Red Cross and its work in the Netherlands and the rest of the world. The purpose is not **only awareness raising but also aims to increase students’ involvement Red Cross activities**⁶¹.

“Jongeren in de Natuur” is a youth organisation for young people between 12-25 years interested in nature. The volunteers of the organisation organise excursions and camps to national parks in the Netherlands and Europe. Through participation in the camps and excursions, young people learn about nature in a fun and playful manner while being exposed to a group-setting. It is seen as an excellent way to complement the teaching in formal education as young people explore animals and plants in real life⁶².

5.8 Creativity and culture

With a view to the increased focus on talent development of young people, more consideration has been given to developing creativity and cultural aspects among young people. Youth work has been working on supporting sub-cultures (e.g. hip hop, rap, urban, dance) as well as arts (e.g. drama) by developing community arts and culture projects. Talent development is an important driver for investing in creativity, culture and arts. The following two examples demonstrate how creativity and culture are part of youth work.

“EventHands” is carried out in Amsterdam by the welfare organisation B-Challenged. Young people at risk in the 16-23 age range work at cultural and music events such as Mysteryland, Mundial or Over het IJ Festival. Young people undertake varied and easy-to-do tasks (e.g. selling tickets). They are supported by youth workers and the aim is to activate young people and have them participate in society. It also allows young people to work together with their peers and learn not only how to work in teams but also independently. Young people discover their talents, which they would not necessarily learn in formal education⁶³.

“UCee Station” – media is used in this project as a tool for young people to discover their talents, increase their tenability and involvement in society. Young people learn how to produce movies, radio shows, articles and photographs. They receive support by youth workers and trained media coaches. It is also a means to connect to the community; their work is by and for young people in the neighbourhood and covers topics that are of concern to young people. The project ensures that young people are more involved and feel responsible for their neighbourhood. An impact assessment by the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam concluded that the project helped young people to stimulate language development, learn about different presentation methods which are useful for educational and employment purposes⁶⁴.

⁶¹ See: <http://www.rodekruis.nl/wat-kunt-u-doen/jongeren/paginas/jongeren.aspx>

⁶² See: <http://www.jongerenindenatuur.nl/>

⁶³ See: http://www.nji.nl/nji/dossierDownloads/Gouden_kans_gemeenten_transformatie.pdf

⁶⁴ Ibid

6 Outcomes and impact of youth work

6.1 Target and reach

6.1.1 Target groups

It is often suggested that youth work in the Netherlands focusses on “all young people” but literature and interviews with stakeholders point to a different conclusion. As described in previous sections, there are great differences between the target groups of professional youth work and youth organisations.

Professional youth work mainly attracts young people at risk whereas youth organisations attract young people who present no cause for concern. With respect to the latter category, these are very much capable to organise their own leisure time and do not need additional support from the professional sector⁶⁵. This group is however targeted by the voluntary youth sector.

6.1.2 Reach

In 2009 professional youth work reached 161,991 young people⁶⁶. Professional youth work is mainly a service offering for lower-skilled young people and young people at risk. It was found that 79% of young people in youth work have a secondary school or VET qualification at the highest. Roughly 80% of the young people in professional youth work are at risk, although the extent (i.e. young people at minimum risk to severe risk) ranges⁶⁷. An interviewee pointed out that professional youth work is successful in reaching young people that are not reached through the formal education system and the labour market based on a relation of trust with youngsters. Approximately 79% of young people reached by youth work has at most completed VET level which points to the fact that youth work is mainly reaches low or medium educated youngsters⁶⁸.

With regard to ethnic background, 59% of the providers pointed out that their target group mainly consists of young people of Dutch origin, 23% indicated that their target group is ethnically diverse and 19% pointed out that their target group has primarily an ethnic minority background⁶⁹.

Voluntary youth work reaches young people who present no cause for concern. There are no data available on the number of young people reached by their services. Interviewees estimate that a few million young people are reached by youth organisations.

6.2 Outcomes and impact

The national government, municipalities and youth work each have their own views on the role and value of youth work in Dutch society. Youth workers often are confronted with the gap in expectations from young people and those of society or policy makers

⁶⁵ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

⁶⁶ Noorda en Co. (2009), *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

who demand youth workers act as “problem-solvers” for societal issues⁷⁰. Youth work’s main objective is however to increase the participation and empowerment of young people. The strength of youth work is their ability to easily reach young people due to their position in the community and their relationship with young people.

In reality there is very little data available about the field of practice and the impact it makes. *“There is very little data available, both quantitative data about the field of practice (although it has existed for more than a century); and qualitative data: what do youth workers actually do about youth at risk?”*⁷¹. Due to the lack of data it is therefore difficult to identify how and to what extent the sector impacts the lives of young people and society (e.g. reduce early school learning or youth unemployment). Nevertheless, it is evident that youth work indeed can make a difference in the lives of young people.

Recently two impact studies on youth work and similar activities have been carried out.⁷² The results indicate that youth work can indeed have an effect on young people provided that the supply of youth work is almost equal to the demand for youth work among youngsters. In that sense, youth work is a powerful alternative to street culture. Results of youth work under those conditions are a high decline in youth nuisance over a one-year period and a remarkable decline of youth crime over a five-year period. Moreover, the studies also found other effects of youth work such as general positive effects on the neighbourhood, effects on young people themselves for participating youngsters as youth work provides a more meaningful and independent spending of their leisure time, and an increase of young people’s **social competences**. More impact studies have to be carried out in order to investigate whether these effects are long-lasting.

Youth work’s main objective is to increase the participation and empowerment of young people. This is achieved through a wide range of methods including: recreational and educational activities, courses, services, information provision and coaching. Youth work fulfils an important role in communities with regard to prevention of youth nuisance⁷³.

Noorda en Co’s research (2009)⁷⁴ found that the following five services were pointed out as the most basic services of youth work:

- Meeting people
- Development (including personal development and social participation)
- Recreation
- Referral to specialised organisations for questions and problems
- Mediation between elderly and young people in the community

By offering these services, youth work certainly makes an impact. Individual coaching of young people was also considered to be an important element of youth work. Individual coaching is particularly important for the NEET group (i.e. young people not in education, employment or training) and youth work has a role to play to help them

⁷⁰ Hilverdink, P. Meijer, E. and Bakker, K. (2010), *Empowerment and repositioning youth work in a threesome of research, policy and practice*. In: Forum 21, pp. 80-87.

⁷¹ Baillergeau, E. and Hoijtink, M. (2010) *Youth Work and “Youth at Risk” in the Netherlands*. In: L’inclusion sociale en pratique. Intervention sociale et jeunes marginalisés en Europe.

⁷² (1) Noorda en Co (2012), *Effectonderzoek Jongerenwerk in Drie Werksituaties, Amsterdam*. (2) Van de Pol, M. and Noorda, J. (2011), *Buurtsport voor Jeugd: Goed voor Sociale Cohesie, School en Werk*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Jeugd zaken.

⁷³ Noorda en Co. (2009) *De Staat van Professioneel Jeugd- en Jongerenwerk in Nederland anno 2009*. Utrecht: MO Groep Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening.

⁷⁴ Ibid

make their way back into society. Providers think this is especially important in times of economic crisis.

6.3 SWOT

Table 6.1 Summary of key strengths and weaknesses of the youth work sector in the Netherlands

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth work is strongly embedded in local communities, which shows: (for professional youth work) the close relationships that exist between professionals and (young) people in the neighbourhood and (for voluntary youth work) the strong commitment from the citizens. The “streets are youth work’s front office” and they maintain close ties with other actors (e.g. schools, policy, health practitioners). ■ Professional youth work has the ability (due to their expertise and close relationship with people in the neighbourhood and relation of trust) to reach young people at risk, those who are in most need of such support. ■ Despite of the lack of evidence, interviewees think that youth work makes a valuable contribution to society and the lives of young people. ■ Highly motivated volunteers in youth organisations, which are predominantly volunteer-led and are the backbone of the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A more structured and better organised sector of professional youth work at national level with closer cooperation between the organisations could potentially be beneficial for lobbying purposes and for gaining more influence as a sector at national level. This would also be essential in demonstrating the value and role of youth work to the government. ■ A more structured and better organised sector of youth organisations at national level with closer cooperation between the organisations could potentially be beneficial for lobbying purposes and for gaining more influence as a sector at national level. This would also be essential in demonstrating the value and role of youth organisations to the government. ■ Legislative instruments (or policy plan or strategy) at national level could serve as a tool to demonstrate the political importance attached to the youth work sector with respect to the development of young people and their contribution to society. ■ The decentralisation of general youth policy to municipal level may be an incentive for municipalities to invest more in positive youth policy and talent development. Investing in talent development at an early stage in young people’s lives helps to deal with problems they may have at an early stage.

WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of political commitment and acknowledgement of the contribution youth work makes to the development of young people and society. ■ Due to a lack of a centralised policy, regulations and a pool, of knowledge municipalities are “reinventing the wheel”. ■ Youth work and youth organisations are merely scattered, highly diverse and not well organised at national level neither as a sector as such. ■ Funding opportunities for youth organisations are scattered across municipalities, non-governmental funds, European funds (e.g. Youth in Action programme) ■ Lack of evidence on the role and value of youth work ■ Lack of dedicated youth worker training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of definition and positioning the sector at national level. ■ The national authorities put too much emphasis on prevention ■ Professional youth work is not a recognised profession. ■ The economic crisis has forced municipalities to cut back their budgets which may also impact the youth work sector. ■ The decentralisation of the youth care sector to municipalities in 2016 could potentially result in even more focus on prevention and health with not enough focus on talent development. ■ The youth work sector and youth work organisations have no or limited influence at national level.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendations to national level authorities

- It is important that positive youth policy is emphasised more at national level and the focus is not only on prevention and health aspects.
- National authorities should, in turn, encourage municipalities to focus more on (positive) youth work and include youth organisations as part of their local youth policy in addition to prevention and health aspects.
- There is a lack of data on the effects and impact of youth work in the Netherlands; evidence would be helpful to convince the government of the added-value of the sector given the current lack of political support at national level.
- Some interviewees questioned whether youth policy should be placed at municipal level; municipalities are highly autonomous in implementing youth policy and deciding to what extent it fits in with their overall policy objectives. This means that youth policy takes a more prominent place in local youth policy in some municipalities than in others. More involvement and steering from the national government would be considered a positive development to ensure that youth work is an equal part of local youth policy in every municipality.
- It is important to continue to implement targeted activities for young people with a migration or ethnic minority background.

- National authorities (as well as European) should invest in building a knowledge-base built on research and practice-based evidence, support European exchanges and develop standards (recognised by law) in order to better develop professional youth work.
- Due to decentralisation of youth policy, there is a lot of knowledge centred at municipality and organisational level. The national government should take a more prominent role in collecting and synthesising information in order to prevent municipalities and organisations to “continuously reinvent the wheel”.

Recommendations to the EU

- EU youth policy should be made more obligatory by nature among the Member States in order to ensure that Member States implement a youth policy, in line with EU standards and priorities.
- More input from young people themselves in youth policy is desirable.

The following recommendation was made at the European Expert Meeting for Youth Workers in Rotterdam on 17-19 March 2010 and it is still valid today:

- There is a need for the development and exchange of knowledge at European level (and also at national level), for example by means of the European Knowledge Centre. Network building, pilot projects and funding remain necessary to further develop and enhance knowledge of youth work⁷⁵.

Recommendations to the youth sector

The youth work sector (both the professional sector and the voluntary sector) should organise itself better as they have a role to play to convince local and national authorities about the added-value and role of youth work.

The following recommendations were made at the European Expert Meeting for Youth Workers in Rotterdam on 17-19 March 2010 and are still valid today:

- The youth work sector (both the professional sector and the voluntary sector) should increase its professional level by speaking a common language (i.e. make use of similar terminologies and definitions) and further develop (continuous) education and training with formal qualifications and registration of the profession⁷⁶.
- Facts and figures on results and effects of youth work (both the professional sector and the voluntary sector) and its methods are essential in order for youth work to anticipate the future needs of young people. To this end, it was suggested to apply research into the effects of methods and approaches within youth work as it raises the quality level and demonstrates the effects of youth work. Moreover, participants at the European Expert Meeting suggested that there is a need for increased cooperation and dialogue between youth work, youth policy (and policy makers) and research⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ See: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/downloadsyp/Conclusions-in-short.pdf>

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