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Deliverable D3.3 – Report "You(th) will be free"

THE PROFESSIONAL ROLE OF THE YOUTH WORKER IN EUROPE AND IN THE MENA REGION

WP3 – Educational Pilot Program

Task 3.5 – Research, Analysis, Publication

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the economic, cultural and social changes affecting countries in Europe and the MENA region have clearly highlighted the need for educational professionals capable of interpreting the complexity of contemporary youth experience. In many areas, young people face conditions marked by economic insecurity, structural unemployment, digital divide, emotional fragilities, discrimination, geographical marginalisation, and a lack of meaningful spaces for participation. The gradual weakening of family, school and community networks amplifies the risk of social isolation and disengagement from public institutions. On the MENA side, partners have described contexts marked by additional challenges: political instability, persistent economic crises, social tensions, weaknesses within educational systems and obstacles in accessing the labour market. Egyptian and Tunisian reports show, through narrative data and youth testimonies, how these vulnerabilities are particularly concentrated in peripheral neighbourhoods, rural areas and territories affected by educational poverty. Within this complex landscape, the figure of the youth worker emerges strongly as a profession that is increasingly central to local welfare systems and community networks. The youth worker is a facilitator of growth and empowerment processes; a guide towards new opportunities; a “border figure” who connects institutional and informal worlds; and, ultimately, a mediator capable of reconnecting young people with their communities and with the opportunities available in their local environments. The European project **YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE** was born precisely out of this need: to explore, compare and enhance the role of the youth worker across eight countries, bringing into dialogue both European and MENA models. The project goes far beyond theoretical research: it involves partners in concrete pathways of training, job shadowing, field activity and professional awareness-building. In particular, **WP3 – Educational Pilot Program** placed young people and practitioners directly in front of the tangible reality of the profession, demonstrating that youth work, when practiced daily, is a job made of listening, relationships, emotional balance, attention to detail, the ability to read needs and to design realistic interventions.

This Deliverable **D3.3**, based on materials submitted by all partners, integrates research, narrative and comparative analysis to provide an in-depth and realistic description of the role of the youth worker in the areas involved.





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2. OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report aims to provide a rigorous, multi-layered picture of the figure of the youth worker, highlighting differences between national contexts while identifying the common traits that make the profession recognisable and transferable. Its objectives are multiple, unfolding across descriptive, comparative and propositional dimensions.

1. The **first objective** is to reconstruct the professional profile of the youth worker by analysing their educational, relational, project-design and community-based competences. Greek documentation, for example, shows how youth workers often serve as bridges between vulnerable young people and local services; Tunisian material highlights their role as digital facilitators and social mediators; Italian contributions underline their capacity to transform informal spaces into educational ones.
2. A **second objective** is to analyse the different national models, comparing countries where the profession is formalised (such as Malta and North Macedonia) with countries where the sector is driven by NGOs and European project culture (such as Greece, Italy and much of the MENA region).
3. The **third objective** is to map the competences required of youth workers and examine how these vary across contexts: in Egypt, key themes include emotional resilience, digital justice and employability; in Greece, multicultural inclusion; in Tunisia, community leadership; in Italy, networking and active citizenship.
4. A **fourth objective** concerns the observation of concrete practices, made possible by the WP3 Pilot Programme, which enabled the analysis of youth work not only in abstract terms, but in its daily implementation.

Finally, the report aims to demonstrate how youth work can represent a **second chance**, a powerful tool for vulnerable young people, and how it can become a sustainable professional pathway when supported by adequate policies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this Deliverable is qualitative and comparative, integrating the following components:





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- **Collection and analysis of materials provided by partners**

All documents were carefully reviewed, categorised into thematic areas and integrated into the narrative text.

- **Direct observation of WP3**

Direct observation made it possible to assess, in real settings, the actual competences of youth workers: management of vulnerable groups, organisation of educational activities, creation of safe spaces, mediation roles, production of reports and professional content, and the capacity for critical self-reflection.

- **Transnational comparative analysis**

Finally, a comparative analysis was carried out between European and MENA models, highlighting structural differences, training gaps, innovative strategies developed in challenging contexts, and areas of convergence useful for constructing a shared model.

4. THE PILOT COURSE

Phase 1 of the Educational Pilot Programme in Italy represents a crucial element of the project— not only because it enabled the training of the consortium’s first cohort of youth workers, but also because it provided concrete data on how Italian young people experience the learning process of an emerging profession.

The first meeting served as a moment of introduction and group-building. The presentation of the project was accompanied by a discussion on the role of the youth worker in contemporary societies. This was a particularly meaningful moment, as it allowed young participants to recognise their own vulnerabilities and motivations through an anonymous exercise on expectations and fears.

The requirement to conduct independent research compelled participants to engage with institutional sources, professional profile descriptions, European materials and youth policy documents. A multifaceted picture emerged, highlighting both the lack of formal recognition of the profession in Italy and the richness of the contexts in which it is practiced.





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During the blended Training Course, young people experienced an educational environment built on participation and experiential learning. Leadership exercises, inclusion simulations and group work demonstrated how central the relational dimension is to youth work. The principles of non-formal education were learned not only theoretically but through direct application.

A full month of observation and active participation in the activities of the association allowed young people to experience the everyday reality of youth work: preparing meetings, interacting with partners, checking deadlines, drafting project proposals, managing workshops. This phase represented the transition from theoretical learning to professional practice.

The final days were dedicated to designing training modules for European youth workers—a complex task that required participants to work on activity planning, time management, content organisation and methodological coherence.

The process resulted in young people who are more aware, more competent and more confident in their ability to manage groups, design activities and understand the social responsibility inherent in the profession.

Following the completion of Phase 1 of the Educational Pilot Programme in Rome, the project entered its second and crucial implementation stage: the replication of the pilot pathway at local level in all partner countries. This phase represents a key element of the WP3 strategy, as defined in the Grant Agreement, aiming to test the transferability, adaptability and scalability of the training model across different European and MENA contexts.

Phase 2 was designed as a decentralised pilot action, coordinated at transnational level and implemented locally by each partner organisation. Its main objective was to involve young people—particularly those at risk of social exclusion, disengagement or marginalisation—in a structured educational pathway introducing them to the professional role of the youth worker and to the core competences associated with youth work.

Building on the methodology, contents and tools developed during Phase 1, each partner adapted the pilot course to its local socio-cultural, institutional and organisational context, while maintaining a shared framework in terms of objectives, learning outcomes and pedagogical approach. This ensured both coherence at consortium level and contextual relevance at local level.





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Overall, the local pilot phase demonstrated that youth work can function as a powerful tool for inclusion, empowerment and social rehabilitation, confirming its relevance both in European and MENA contexts and reinforcing the strategic objectives of the YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE project.

5. WHO IS THE YOUTH WORKER?

The youth worker is an educational, social and community-based professional who operates through non-formal methodologies, creating connections, facilitating processes and accompanying young people along their paths of growth.

From partner materials, several transversal elements emerge. The youth worker emerges as a key figure in very different contexts, playing crucial roles at the social, educational, and professional levels. On one hand, they act as a bridge of proximity, entering marginalized neighborhoods and addressing social isolation. On the other hand, they stimulate social innovation, promoting activities ranging from digital storytelling to community leadership. They are also agents of empowerment, helping young people overcome insecurities and build new professional identities. Furthermore, they stand out for their professionalism, being recognized and trained, and for their territorial connection, working closely with communities and transforming informal spaces into educational environments.

TABLE 1 – The Identity Dimensions of the Youth Worker

Dimension	Description	Evidence from Partners
Educational Relationship	Building a relationship based on trust, active listening and continuity	Strong in Greece, Italy, Egypt



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<p>Facilitation</p>	<p>Ability to manage groups and create safe and inclusive environments</p>	<p>Central in Tunisia and North Macedonia</p>
<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>Supporting young people in recognising their abilities, rights and opportunities</p>	<p>Crucial in Egypt and Jordan</p>

6. YOUTH WORK IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: A COMPARATIVE READING

Across the Mediterranean, two major families of youth work models can be identified.

The European countries involved in the project (Italy, Malta, Greece and North Macedonia) display varying levels of institutionalisation, with Malta and North Macedonia among the most advanced thanks to dedicated legislation, specialised academic pathways and recognised public structures. In these countries, youth work is often integrated into national youth policies and takes on a clearly defined professional dimension. While some European countries, such as North Macedonia, have adopted comprehensive legal frameworks recognising youth work as a profession, the effective implementation of these policies often depends on local resources, territorial coverage, and long-term public investment.

In the MENA countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan), by contrast, the profession is not yet formally recognised, but plays a crucial role within community settings, NGOs and international programmes. Here, youth work is not only educational: it is a tool for resilience, digital inclusion, emotional support and social prevention. In several MENA countries, and particularly in Syria, youth work is mainly carried out through **youth NGOs and locally rooted youth clubs**, often organised within religious and community-based structures. These spaces provide continuity, trust, and accessibility in contexts where formal youth services are limited or unavailable.





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Despite these differences, all countries converge on the idea that youth work must be participatory, community-based, inclusive and oriented towards competence development.

Table 2 – Comparison Europe vs MENA

Element	Europe	MENA
Recognition	High/medium	Low
Structures	Youth centres	NGOs, community spaces
Training	Academic + non-formal	Mainly non-formal
Focus	Active citizenship	Resilience, inclusion

7. COUNTRY SHEETS

The following section collects and analyses in depth the contributions of the national partners involved in the YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE project. The Country Sheets represent the qualitative core of Deliverable D3.3: they are not simple static descriptions of youth work systems, but a set of narrative analyses, empirical materials, observations, testimonies and reflections gathered directly from local contexts through training activities, job shadowing, research and transnational exchange. Each country presents its own history, its own youth ecosystem, a different degree of development in public policies, and a different level of recognition of the youth worker profession. However, as emerges from the shared materials, there are transversal elements connecting these territories: the need for safe spaces for young people; the growing demand for educational figures





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capable of listening, supporting and facilitating; the centrality of non-formal education as a common language; and the necessity to rethink the relationship between young people, communities and institutions.

This section therefore offers a plural and deeply contextualised perspective: it brings into dialogue formalised systems, such as those in Malta and North Macedonia, with systems in consolidation, such as Italy and Greece, and with contexts characterised by structural fragilities and extraordinary resilience, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

The Country Sheets do not aim to judge or classify the different models, but rather to acknowledge their richness and specificity, identifying convergences and differences that will be further explored in the subsequent comparative analysis.

The purpose is twofold: on the one hand, to show how youth work is concretely rooted within local communities; on the other, to highlight how the different approaches contribute to building a shared vocabulary—essential for strengthening Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and for supporting the central goal of the project: **offering young people, particularly the most vulnerable, real opportunities for growth, participation and autonomy.**

7.1 Italy – Youth Work Between Educational Tradition and Social Innovation

In Italy, youth work emerges at the intersection of three traditions: popular education, the third sector and cultural associations. Although the youth worker profession is not formally recognised by national legislation, it has de facto existed for decades and represents a fundamental component of the Italian community welfare system. The experiences collected through the WP3 Pilot Course confirm this reality: Italy stands out for its rich ecosystem, widespread educational competences, strong project-design capacity and long tradition of socio-educational interventions. Italian youth workers operate mainly in municipal youth centres, social cooperatives, cultural associations, parish oratories, EU-funded projects and local initiatives promoted by municipalities and regions. Their work focuses on creating safe and inclusive spaces, promoting transversal skills, supporting young people in situations of hardship and fostering civic participation. The Italian material illustrates the complexity of the profession through the Pilot Course experience. Young participants had the opportunity to explore all dimensions of youth work: project design, event



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organisation, facilitation and international co-design. Job shadowing allowed them to observe youth workers negotiating daily with institutional partners, managing unforeseen issues, coordinating heterogeneous groups and supporting vulnerable youth. The individual research conducted by participants showed that the figure of the youth worker in Italy may take on different titles (educator, socio-educational facilitator, project officer, animator, community builder) but retains a common core identity: being a reliable and accessible point of reference for young people. Italy is characterised by a strongly community-based approach in which youth workers deeply know their territory, build networks and design activities based on local needs. A structural weakness concerns the absence of formal recognition and standardised pathways. However, this gap is partially compensated by a rich informal training offer and by the central role that European programmes play in the professionalisation of young people. Although fragmented, the sector is vibrant, innovative and capable of generating real social change.

Table 7.1.1 – Country Profile: ITALY

Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	Not formalised at national level; strong presence in the Third Sector and EU projects.
Main work contexts	Youth centres, street work, informal spaces, cultural associations, social cooperatives.
Required competences	Non-formal education, project design, facilitation, active citizenship.
Target groups	At-risk youth, NEETs, young people in peripheral urban areas.



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Main challenges	Lack of formal recognition; fragmentation of opportunities.
Strengths	Rich ecosystem, strong project design capacity, widespread social innovation



7.2 Malta – An Advanced Institutional Model

Malta represents a unique case in the Mediterranean landscape due to the presence of a legislative system that formally recognises the youth worker profession. Specific university training, professional accreditation, the existence of widely distributed public youth structures and the supervision of Agenzija Żgħażaġh define a solid, structured model fully integrated into public policies.

The Maltese youth worker is a professional operating within a clear system, with defined standards and precise roles. They work in modern youth hubs and in youth centres equipped with libraries, creative laboratories, multimedia rooms and mentoring services. The profession is recognised not only by the Ministry but also by civil society, and is perceived as a dignified and stable career path.



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Their function is twofold: on one hand, they support young people in their personal growth through structured empowerment pathways; on the other, they promote democratic participation through activities related to active citizenship and intergenerational dialogue. Maltese youth workers are also involved in major European programmes, fostering a continuous flow of cultural and professional exchanges.

The materials collected depict a country that consistently invests in youth work, granting the profession a high degree of institutional legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

Table 7.2.1 – Country Profile: MALTA

Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	Official and regulated; certified profession.
Main work contexts	State youth centres, schools, national programmes.
Required competences	Advanced non-formal education, mentoring, structured project design.
Target groups	Young people aged 13 to 30, including vulnerable groups.
Main challenges	Need for continuous upskilling in digital and inclusive practices.
Strengths	Highly professionalised model; stable institutional support.



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7.3 Greece – Youth Work Between Social Crisis, Community Resilience and Inclusion

Greece has been navigating a socio-economic landscape for over a decade, which has significantly influenced and reshaped the circumstances of its youth. The material provided by Youth Horizons describes a country where young people face complex challenges: very high unemployment, job insecurity, internal and external migration, discrimination, social exclusion and a strong sense of distance from public institutions.

It is within this context that Greek youth workers play a crucial role. Although operating in a system that does not formally recognise the profession, they work daily in community spaces, social centres, European projects, peripheral neighbourhoods and multicultural settings. As the materials highlight, Greece has seen the emergence of a vast network of NGOs dedicated to supporting young people in vulnerable situations.

Greek youth workers often work closely with NEET youth, young migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors and early school leavers. Documented activities include artistic workshops, empowerment pathways based on storytelling, emotional support sessions, sports used as an educational tool, and volunteering initiatives aimed at reclaiming civic engagement.

The Greek material emphasises that the youth worker is perceived as a figure capable of providing emotional stability and guidance in a context of pervasive uncertainty. Their role goes beyond activity management: it includes light psychological support, cultural mediation and assistance in rebuilding trust in institutions.

Another relevant aspect is the use of collective memory and community values as educational tools. Greek NGOs work extensively on identity, belonging and the reconstruction of social ties—central elements in societies that have experienced profound crises. It is a highly emotional educational approach, based on the idea that young people, above all, need to feel part of a welcoming community.

Greece therefore represents an emerging model of youth work—innovative and powerful—rooted more in civil society engagement than in a formal regulatory framework.



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Table 7.3.1 – Country Profile: GREECE

Indicator	Description
Recognition status	Not formalised
Main contexts	NGOs, community centres, intercultural projects
Priority target groups	NEETs, refugees, young migrants
Required competences	Cultural mediation, non-formal education, active listening
Challenges	High unemployment, urban poverty, migration flows
Strengths	Strong NGO network, high capacity for innovation

7.4 North Macedonia – A Recognised and Highly Professionalised System

North Macedonia represents one of the most advanced contexts among the partner countries in terms of the **formal recognition of youth work**. The adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies has officially recognised youth work as a profession and established a clear legal framework for its development.

However, while the legislative framework is in place, **the implementation of the law remains uneven**. Youth centres are not yet established in all municipalities, and several of the existing centres operate with limited financial, human, and infrastructural resources.

This gap between formal recognition and practical implementation highlights a key challenge for the Macedonian youth work system. Despite the strong legal foundation, further investment is

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needed to ensure adequate coverage, sustainability, and quality of youth services across the country.

Youth workers in North Macedonia therefore operate in a context where professional recognition exists, but where everyday practice still requires adaptability, strong personal commitment, and the ability to work with constrained resources.

Table 7.4.1 – Country Profile: NORTH MACEDONIA

Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	High; a national law exists, with training standards and a dedicated Master’s degree.
Main work contexts	Certified youth centres, Youth Offices, public systems.
Required competences	Structured facilitation, project management, institutional networking.
Target groups	Students, young workers, vulnerable groups.
Main challenges	Financial sustainability of youth centres.



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Strengths	Stable, recognised and highly professionalised system.
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7.5 Syria – Youth Work as a Community Response in Crisis Contexts

Syria presents a particularly complex context among the partner countries. The prolonged political, military, and economic challenges have contributed to a fragile environment for young people, who are navigating significant hardships, including trauma, interruptions in education, limited access to essential services, housing instability, and a pervasive sense of uncertainty.

In Syria, youth work takes place in a highly complex and fragile context, marked by prolonged crisis, instability, and limited access to formal public services. In this environment, youth workers operate primarily through **youth NGOs and youth clubs organised by religious institutions**, including churches and mosques, which represent some of the most stable and trusted spaces available for young people.

These youth NGOs and faith-based youth clubs play a crucial role in providing educational, psychosocial, and community-based support. They offer young people safe environments for dialogue, learning, and social interaction, often compensating for the absence or limited reach of formal youth infrastructures. Youth workers in Syria focus on emotional support, resilience-building, informal education, and the reconstruction of social bonds. Their role is deeply rooted in trust, proximity, and cultural sensitivity, and they act as key reference figures within their communities.

Although the profession is not formally recognised, youth work in Syria represents a vital response to the needs of young people, helping them cope with uncertainty, trauma, and social fragmentation through community-based and locally rooted initiatives.



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Table 7.5.1 – Country Profile: SYRIA

Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	Absent; role carried out by NGOs and volunteers.
Main work contexts	Safe spaces, community centres, emergency programmes.
Required competences	Basic psychosocial support, trauma management, informal education.



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Target groups	Young people in crisis contexts, displaced youth, orphans, vulnerable minors.
Main challenges	Instability, lack of resources, risk of burnout among youth workers.
Strengths	Youth work as a vital response with strong human impact.

7.6 Jordan – A Mixed System Between Public Institutions and NGO Innovation

Jordan presents a complex landscape, characterised by an institutional framework that supports youth work through the Ministry of Youth and a network of public youth centres, while the greatest transformative potential comes from NGOs and international programmes. The main challenges faced by young Jordanians include high unemployment, territorial disparities, gender-based inequalities and the management of a large youth population in a country with limited resources.

Jordanian youth workers operate in highly diverse settings, ranging from densely populated urban areas to underserved rural zones. Activities include women’s empowerment, digital literacy, youth leadership, emotional support, and sports and artistic activities used as educational tools. The materials also highlight the central role of volunteering and active citizenship, often used as a way to engage young people in transforming their local communities.

The Jordanian system is characterised by strong political commitment to promoting youth participation, yet structural constraints and territorial inequalities make NGO work essential for reaching the most vulnerable young people.



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Table 7.6.1 – Country Profile: JORDAN

Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	Partial; supported by the Ministry of Youth and NGOs.
Main work contexts	Youth centres, NGOs, leadership and digital education projects.



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Required competences	Women’s empowerment, digital education, facilitation.
Target groups	Rural and urban youth, unemployed young people, girls.
Main challenges	Territorial disparities, demographic pressure, limited resources.
Strengths	Transition towards innovative models; strong youth activism.

7.7 Egypt – Youth Work as Emotional, Digital and Social Empowerment

The materials submitted by Egypt are richest and articulated: job shadowing logs, analytical papers, testimonies, project proposals, studies on digital inclusion, documents on non-formal education and observations concerning the socio-economic context. This provides a deep understanding of the role of the youth worker in Egypt.

According to partners and youth contributions, the condition of young Egyptians is marked by multiple vulnerabilities: economic hardship, lack of job opportunities, family pressure, anxiety, emotional insecurity, educational inequalities and cultural barriers. Many testimonies reveal a strong sense of inadequacy and a deeply rooted *imposter syndrome*, which hinders the development of autonomy and aspirations.





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In this context, the youth worker is a facilitator of emancipation: they help young people recognise their abilities, build confidence, overcome fear of judgment and experiment with new roles. A central dimension of Egyptian youth work is the digital one: for many young people, digital spaces represent new opportunities for employment (freelancing, creative platforms, storytelling, social communication). The activities proposed by participants—such as workshops on digital inclusion, research on informal labour, and transformative storytelling—demonstrate the sector’s creative richness.

Job shadowing allowed Egyptian youth to observe NGO work from the inside: the complexity of project design, the need to build relationships, the importance of communication and the constant emotional dimension. Many participants stated that the experience “changed their perception of life” and represented a turning point in the construction of their professional identity.

Egyptian youth work, although lacking formal recognition, is a powerful transformative force combining non-formal education, digital literacy, emotional support and community participation.



Table 7.7.1 – Country Profile: EGYPT





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Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	Absent; NGOs play a central role.
Main work contexts	NGOs, informal youth spaces, digital programmes.
Required competences	Digital inclusion, soft skills, emotional resilience, creative engagement.
Target groups	Young people with emotional fragilities, NEETs, youth in complex urban contexts.
Main challenges	Anxiety, insecurity, lack of professional opportunities.
Strengths	High creativity; observable personal transformation in WP3 participants.

7.8 Tunisia – Youth Work as Community Leadership and Educational Innovation

Tunisia presents an evolving youth work sector, marked by socio-economic fragilities but also by significant youth potential. The material submitted by the Tunisian partner (FHIRD) shows young



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people engaged in intensive training pathways, job shadowing experiences and autonomous project design, with a surprisingly high level of educational awareness.

The activities carried out by Tunisian youth include digital storytelling workshops, leadership pathways, community-based initiatives in peripheral neighbourhoods, employability workshops and civic awareness projects. Job shadowing observations highlight real growth in communication skills, conflict management, leadership abilities and the capacity to design educational activities.

Tunisia shares several structural weaknesses with Egypt: lack of formalised pathways, reliance on NGOs and absence of professional recognition. However, the response of Tunisian youth is particularly energetic and innovative: they conceive youth work as a tool for community emancipation and as a shared social responsibility.



Table 7.8.1 – Country Profile: TUNISIA



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Indicator	Description
Recognition of the profession	Not formalised; growing within NGOs.
Main work contexts	Youth centres, NGOs, community activities, digital storytelling.
Required competences	Leadership, communication, digital literacy, project design.
Target groups	Unemployed youth, peripheral communities, students.
Main challenges	Unemployment, economic instability, lack of structured training.
Strengths	Strong youth motivation, emerging project-design capacity.

Table 7.9 – Transnational Comparison of Youth Work Systems

Country	Recognition	Training	Contexts	System maturity
Italy	Medium	Non-formal	Youth centres, NGOs	In consolidation
Malta	High	University level	Public youth centres	Structured

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Greece	Medium	Non-formal	NGOs, neighbourhoods	Strongly emerging
North Macedonia	High	Master’s level	Official centres	Structured
Syria	Low	Community-based	Safe spaces	Emerging
Jordan	Medium	Mixed	Ministry + NGOs	Hybrid
Egypt	Low	NGO-based	Community centres	Emerging
Tunisia	Medium–low	NGO-based	Youth and community spaces	Growing

8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The comparative analysis of youth work models in partner countries offers a privileged perspective on the complexity of the sector in the Mediterranean. The differences are not only legal, but also cultural, economic, pedagogical and community-based. However, these very differences make it possible to identify a common ground that defines the essence of the profession: the educational relationship, the creation of safe spaces, the facilitation of participation pathways and support towards autonomy.

Malta and North Macedonia: full formalisation

Malta and North Macedonia represent the most advanced contexts. Here, youth work is regulated, clearly defined, taught at university and supported by public policies.



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The quality of the work is guaranteed by national professional standards, structured training pathways, accredited youth centres and a clear professional identity. The case of North Macedonia illustrates how **formal recognition of youth work does not automatically guarantee full implementation**. Even in contexts with advanced legislation, challenges such as limited funding, unequal territorial coverage, and insufficient infrastructure can affect the quality and accessibility of youth services.

Italy and Greece: rich but non-formalised systems

Italy and Greece share a common feature: the profession exists in practice, but is not formalised in law.

In Italy, the sector is vibrant, supported by NGOs, cooperatives and municipalities, and rooted in strong educational and civic traditions. The Italian youth worker has a strong territorial and community dimension: they work in the streets, in youth centres, in informal contexts and in cultural spaces. The absence of a legal framework does not prevent the sector from spreading, but it does fragment it and undermines employment stability.

In Greece, as shown by Youth Horizons' material, youth workers operate mainly within NGOs and community initiatives targeting vulnerable youth, migrants, refugees and unaccompanied minors. Here, youth work clearly functions as a tool of collective resilience. Despite the lack of formal recognition, Greece demonstrates an extraordinary capacity for educational innovation in the most fragile contexts.

Tunisia: youth leadership and the role of NGOs

Tunisia shows a dynamic sector made up of young people seeking educational spaces, digital opportunities and ways to self-determine their future. Tunisian materials highlight the importance of community leadership and of activities such as digital storytelling, digital inclusion, career guidance and civic participation.

Egypt: emotional and digital emancipation

Egypt offers the strongest testimony of the transformative power of youth work. Materials submitted by young Egyptians describe a sector in which non-formal education intertwines with





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emotional resilience, digital justice, psychological fragilities and the search for autonomy. Many participants describe the WP3 pathway as a turning point in their lives, capable of changing perceptions, expectations and self-esteem.

Syria: youth work as a social necessity

In the Syrian context, youth work relies strongly on **youth NGOs and faith-based youth clubs**, which function as informal but essential educational and social hubs. These structures enable youth workers to maintain continuity of support and community engagement despite structural constraints.

Jordan: a hybrid system between institutions and NGOs

Jordan presents a sector that is formalised at policy level but heavily dependent on NGO initiatives to reach the most vulnerable youth. Jordanian youth workers face challenges linked to unemployment, territorial inequalities and emotional fragilities, combining educational, sports, cultural and digital activities.

Similarities

- The youth worker emerges wherever young people need to be listened to.
- Non-formal education is the common language that makes it possible to work with heterogeneous groups.
- All countries recognise the centrality of socio-emotional competences.
- The educational relationship is the foundation of every intervention.
- Empowerment is the shared objective: helping young people to “feel capable”.

Differences

- In EU countries (Malta, North Macedonia), youth work is a recognised profession; in MENA countries it exists mainly thanks to NGOs.
- In Europe, the focus is on civic participation; in MENA, on resilience and inclusion.
- In Italy and Greece, the profession is widespread but fragmented; in Tunisia and Egypt, it is an emerging response to social needs.



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Summary Table – Themes, Convergences and Divergences

Theme	Convergences	Divergences
Youth worker	Facilitator, educator, mentor	More institutional role (EU) vs more community-based (MENA)
Methods	Non-formal education everywhere	Formalisation only in some countries
Challenges	Unemployment, vulnerability, social exclusion	Different levels of intensity (high in MENA, medium in EU)
Opportunities	Empowerment, participation	Different levels of public investment

9. YOUTH WORK AS A “SECOND CHANCE”

One of the most powerful elements to emerge from the Educational Pilot Programme is the capacity of youth work to represent, for many young people, a concrete second chance—often after years of difficulty, uncertainty or social exclusion.

Egyptian materials are particularly explicit: several young people describe how educational work helped them to overcome anxiety, fear of judgment and feelings of inadequacy. These testimonies show that youth work is not just a set of techniques, but a transformative practice that acts on emotional and identity dimensions.

In Italy, many young people involved in the Pilot had never imagined working in the socio-educational sector. Job shadowing allowed them to discover a new, concrete and recognisable profession, with real career prospects.





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In Tunisia, young people acquired digital and leadership skills that enable them to access emerging sectors.

In North Macedonia, professionalisation makes youth work a stable and recognised career.

In Greece and Jordan, many vulnerable young people discover in youth work the possibility of becoming positive agents of change in their neighbourhoods. It is not just a question of finding a job, but of finding a meaningful place within their community. The youth worker becomes a figure who resists resignation, builds bridges between distant worlds, restores hope and generates empowerment.

In an era in which many young people feel they have no future, youth work restores the possibility of imagining new pathways.

Table – Second Chance and Perceived Impact by Country

Country	Competences acquired	Emotional growth	Reflections from job shadowing
Italy	Project management, teamwork	Increased sense of confidence	Discovery of the role
Tunisia	Leadership, digital skills	Greater self-confidence	Ability to design educational activities
Egypt	Soft skills, digital inclusion	Reduced anxiety and insecurity	“Transformative experience”
North Macedonia	Facilitation, coordination	Strengthening of professional role	Better understanding of the professional structure





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Malta	Structured youth work methodologies, educational documentation	Increased professional awareness	Observation of high standards and good governance
Greece	Cultural mediation, management of vulnerable groups, intercultural education	Increased personal resilience and capacity to manage stress	Discovery of the complexity of working with NEETs, migrants and refugees
Syria	Informal education, basic psychosocial support, community facilitation	Strengthened emotional resilience	Understanding the role of youth NGOs and faith-based youth clubs as key community reference points
Jordan	Women's empowerment, digital literacy, public speaking	Greater autonomy and confidence in self-expression	Greater autonomy and confidence in self-expression (reinforced)

10. POLICY AND OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis clearly highlights the need to strengthen the sector along five strategic directions.

In countries where youth work is not yet regulated (Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan), it is recommended to initiate institutional processes that define competence profiles, training standards and accreditation systems.

All partners underlined the need for stable, modular and recognised training programmes, including:

- non-formal education





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- socio-emotional competences
- facilitation
- project management
- digital literacy
- support to young people’s mental health

NGOs are the backbone of the sector in Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and part of Italy. It is essential to ensure stable funding and appropriate governance tools. Youth work must interact with schools, social services, local authorities, cultural centres and sports associations in order to build inclusive territorial ecosystems. The project has shown that exposure to different models increases the quality of educational work. Permanent exchange and job shadowing programmes are therefore needed.

Summary Table – EU vs MENA Priorities

Area	EU Priorities	MENA Priorities
Professionalisation	European standards, academic training	Modular pathways, progressive recognition
Funding	Consolidation of youth centres	Support for NGOs
Competences	Digital, green, participation	Resilience, social inclusion
Governance	Integrated youth policies	Ministry–NGO cooperation

11. CONCLUSIONS

The pathway developed through the YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE project allows for broad and structured conclusions about the role of youth work in the Euro-Mediterranean area and the





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transformative potential it represents—not only for young people, but also for the social, educational and democratic systems of the countries involved.

The work carried out clearly confirms what the European Commission has formally recognised for over a decade: youth work is an essential component of modern youth policies and a pillar for building inclusive, resilient and democratic societies.

This Deliverable is not only a comparative analysis; it is concrete proof that transnational cooperation can generate change, professionalisation and a shared vision.

1. Youth Work as Democratic and Social Infrastructure

The testimonies collected in the different countries show that youth work is not an accessory service, but a form of social infrastructure that guarantees young people:

- safe spaces
- non-formal educational opportunities
- support in building their identity
- active participation in community life
- access to resources and tools for competence development

This function is fully consistent with the **EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027**, which defines youth work as “essential for reaching out to young people, especially those with fewer opportunities” and emphasises that it represents a gateway to rights, services, opportunities and democratic decision-making processes.

In the YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE project, this dimension was evident: in European contexts, youth work supports civic participation; in MENA contexts, it supports emotional resilience, social inclusion and community regeneration.

2. Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation as a Political and Pedagogical Value

The comparison between European countries and countries in the MENA region has confirmed a central idea in European policies: youth development cannot take place in isolation, neither in





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Europe nor in neighbouring countries. Young people’s challenges are global: precariousness, unemployment, migration, mistrust in institutions, social polarisation and exposure to emotional and digital vulnerabilities.

The project has shown that partner countries, although extremely diverse, share common educational needs. This reinforces one of the most important European policy lines in recent years: the idea that cooperation with neighbouring countries is essential to promote stability, inclusion, growth and democratic participation.

YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE thus becomes a concrete model of cultural and educational diplomacy.

3. Professionalising Youth Work: A Shared Urgency

The comparison reveals sharp differences: some countries already have professional standards (Malta, North Macedonia); others experience fragmented systems (Italy, Greece); others still have no form of recognition but display surprising vitality (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan).

This heterogeneity is not a limitation; it confirms what the Commission has been stressing for years: Europe needs to invest in the professionalisation of youth work.

The project has shown that:

- young people aspire to a recognisable, stable and qualified profession;
- transnational training increases competences and motivation;
- job shadowing is a powerful tool for developing professionalism;
- legal formalisation is not the only path, but it is an important condition for ensuring sustainability and continuity.

Professionalisation is not only a technical issue; it is a matter of social justice, as it allows youth workers to be recognised, valued and adequately supported.

4. Youth Work as a Second Chance and a Lever for Empowerment





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One of the most significant findings of the project concerns the role of youth work as a space for personal and social redemption, fully aligned with the European mission of “leaving no one behind”.

From Egyptian, Tunisian and Italian testimonies, it clearly emerges that:

- youth work helps vulnerable young people rebuild confidence in themselves;
- it enables them to acquire competences that are transferable to the labour market;
- it offers a professional horizon to those who feel excluded;
- it transforms fragility into capability and fear into opportunity.

What the European Commission defines as youth empowerment takes concrete form in this project: young people who previously felt marginal become protagonists, activity leaders, facilitators, group leaders and project designers. This is the strongest evidence of the social value of youth work.

5. The Importance of Digital, Emotional and Community Competences

The project has perfectly captured current European priorities: digitalisation, innovation, mental well-being and inclusion. In partner materials, three key areas emerge that the Commission identifies as pillars for modernising the youth sector:

a) Inclusive digitalisation

Tunisia and Egypt show how digital inclusion can be decisive for youth employability. Increasingly, the youth worker is also a digital educator.

b) Socio-emotional competences

All contexts report widespread psychological fragility among young people. The European Commission, with the 2022 European Year of Youth, reiterated the need to integrate emotional well-being into youth policies.

c) Community as educational infrastructure

Europe recognises that the community is an ecosystem: the youth worker is a community-builder and a regenerator of social ties.





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6. Youth Work as a Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

The project is also aligned with the global dimension of European policies: the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Youth work contributes to:

- **SDG 4 – Quality Education**, through non-formal education;
- **SDG 5 – Gender Equality**, through inclusive pathways;
- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**, through empowerment and employability;
- **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities**, by supporting vulnerable young people;
- **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**, by promoting civic participation;
- **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals**, through transnational cooperation.

YOU(TH) WILL BE FREE is fully consistent with the European vision of education as a driver of sustainable development.

7. A Political Conclusion: Why We Must Continue Investing in Youth Work

The project has demonstrated that youth work:

- responds to concrete social needs;
- develops key competences for the 21st century;
- promotes democratic participation;
- strengthens community resilience;
- prevents marginalisation, deviance and radicalisation;
- builds bridges between young people and institutions;
- supports international cooperation.

The results obtained are not temporary; they constitute a solid basis for future development. For this reason, it is essential that:

- national institutions continue to invest in training, youth centres and professional recognition;
- the European Commission continues to support capacity building, exchanges and job shadowing;



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- transnational partnerships remain active beyond the formal duration of the project.

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