

Attention to learning through Youthpass what difference does it make to youth work?

Youthpass, the recognition instrument in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme – and earlier in the Youth in Action Programme – is probably best known as a certificate³². Others may appreciate more its impact on the personal awareness of one's learning which in its turn may also affect individual pathways. Somewhat less visible is the impact that Youthpass has, or may potentially have, on the nature and quality of the youth work projects where it is applied. That is the focus of the reflection below.

We, in SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, always emphasise that Youthpass is not just a certificate but that it should come with a process. We call it the Youthpass process; it can also be called a learning process, a reflection process... The idea is to pay attention to the learning potential throughout the project where a (young) person participates. He or she may set personal

learning goals, reflect on the process, analyse the learning outcomes, adjust the goals, influence the process, document the outcomes, revise them for the certificate... It sounds like a lot of individual effort to come to the Youthpass certificate. But also organisations and youth workers put a lot of effort into the work with Youthpass, and ideally much more to support the reflection rather than to the technical part of filling the necessary fields in the Youthpass database.

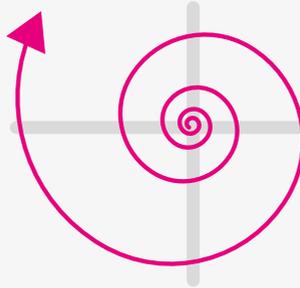
This support for the reflection process needs time and effort but it also gets rewarded through the greater awareness of the value of their work, and through the further development of their work. The organisations that receive a grant in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme are required to offer Youthpass for the participants. To be able to explain the nature of Youthpass for the participants implies identifying – at least to a certain extent – the possible learning value of their planned project. Through accompanying the participants in their dialogue process, the youth workers witness the individual learning progress of the young people in certain areas. And finally, when helping the young people rephrase the learning outcomes as key competences acquired from the project, they get a better understanding of

32 Youthpass Impact Study, *Young people's personal development and employability and the recognition of youth work (2013)*, p. 16.
<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/downloads/youthpass-impact-study/>

**BENEFIT OF THE
YOUTHPASS
PROCESS FOR THE
PARTICIPANT**

**AWARENESS OF THE
LEARNING POTENTIAL**

**AWARENESS OF THE
BENEFIT OF THE
YOUTHPASS PROCESS
BY YOUTH WORKER**



**QUALITY OF THE
SUPPORT TO THE
PARTICIPANT IN THE
LEARNING PROCESS**

the actual learning impact of the project. Thus, working with Youthpass offers a structure for the organisations to discuss and develop the educational value of their work.

In the Youthpass Impact Study carried out in 2013, at least 80% of the respondents; organisations with Youthpass experience, agreed with statements like „Youthpass increases recognition of the value of non-formal education and youth work“, „Youthpass increased the value/usefulness of the project for the participants“, and „Integrating the Youthpass approach into the project contributed to the quality of the project“³³. It was not asked explicitly in that study, but one might suggest that using the Youthpass process also contributes to the benefit that the youth worker receives from the project, becoming more aware of its impact and developing his/her competences to support the reflection process. The spiral diagram below shows how, in general, the interrelated impact of using the Youthpass process might look:

- The greater knowledge of the learning potential of the project supports the motivation by the youth worker to properly implement the reflection process

- This in its turn, helps to plan time and methodologies to provide good quality support for the participants
- The more and better support the participant receives for the reflection about the learning outcomes, the greater benefit there is for the participant – he or she may see further aspects of the acquired competences, be able to better formulate the outcomes for the certificate, etc.
- The better outcomes of the Youthpass process also contribute to the better awareness of the learning value of the project, the picture of the outcomes may become more complete for the youth worker supporting the process
- The greater knowledge of the learning impact of the concrete project, enhances the understanding of the youth worker about the value and importance of paying attention to learning in youth work...

So there is value – how to ensure and enhance it?

A lot in this spiral described above depends on the competences of youth workers plus their awareness of the potential of learning in youth

work and of how their projects can make a difference in the competence development of the young people. The youth workers need competences to plan projects keeping the learning dimension in mind. Youthpass supports this kind of awareness in youth workers and certainly contributes to the different ways of dealing with the learning process. Therefore, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre is planning standard training activities for youth workers to raise the competences related to the learning value of youth work and Youthpass.

Further, a lot depends on the motivation of the youth workers and young people about whether and how they approach the Youthpass process. It is essential that Youthpass stays a voluntary tool to enhance the individual learning process and outcomes in the project. Whether the participants wish to 'work' on Youthpass, depends also on the way they are introduced to the learning potential of the project and to the role that Youthpass may have in this. It is also important in youth work to take care that it doesn't become only about learning, that 'the right to play' doesn't get neglected; this seems to be an important question of balance that may also influence the motivation of both young people and youth workers to work with Youthpass.

Who sees the value of Youthpass in the projects supported by the EU programme, may see it also in the work outside the programme

There is a request from the youth field to make Youthpass as a tool available also outside the framework of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme – for example it is being considered for use in national youth work in Estonia and Latvia. These are great initiatives that SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre is happy and proud to support. But we hope that in parallel to such initiatives, 'Youthpass outside the programme' is also happening in a much more simple way and on the very grassroot level – by just using the benefit of the Youthpass principles also in the work that is not financed by

the programme. This does not mean that youth work should become all about learning, it should keep all the aspects that make it 'youth work' – participation, engagement in the community, developing social contacts, and so on. All this in combination has a lot of potential to impact the pathways of the young people, and there is a lot of potential in the Youthpass process to help organisations enhance that impact.

Kristiina Pernits

SALTO TRAINING AND COOPERATION RESOURCE
CENTRE