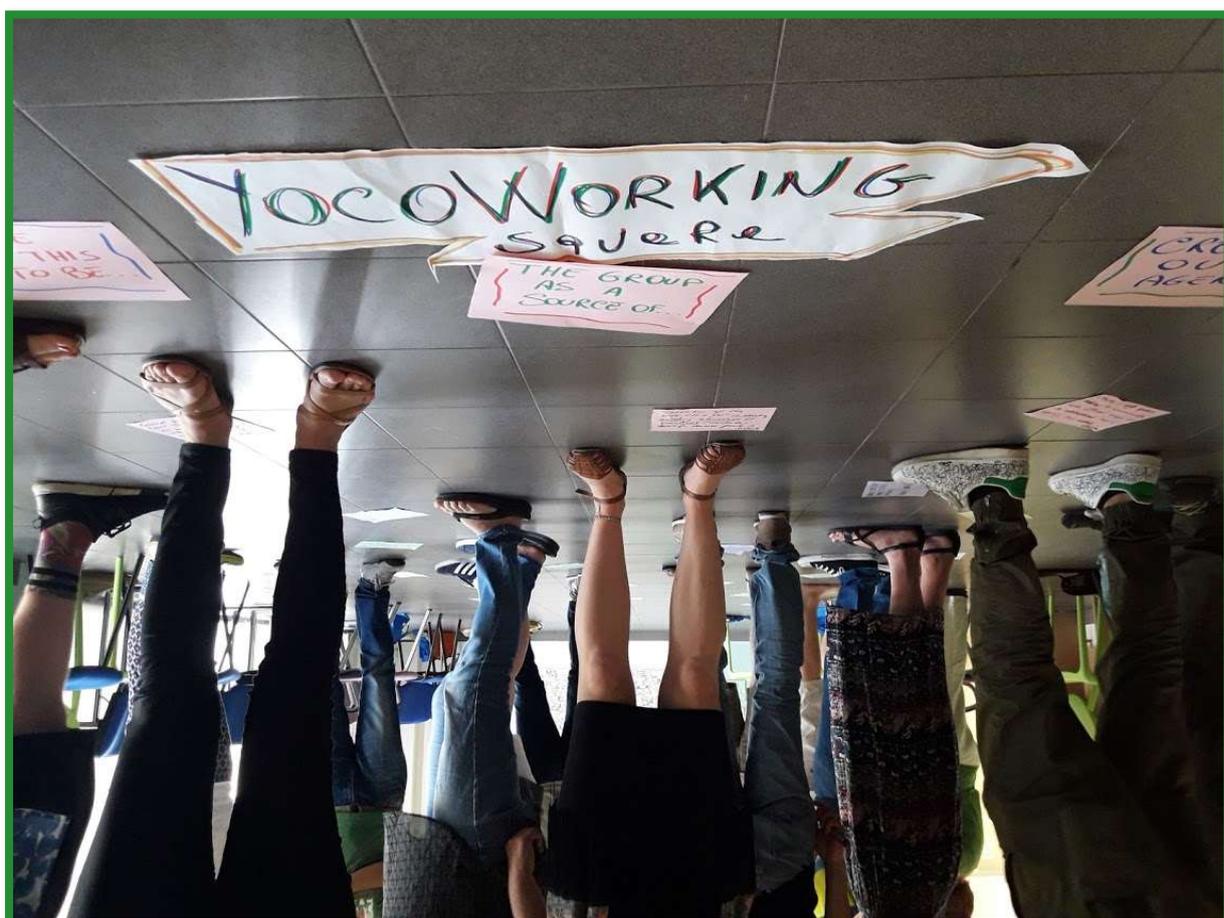


YOCOMO

First pilot course for youth workers on working with the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally

4-10 June 2018 - Roma, Italy



Report by Snežana Bačlija Knoch and Salvi Greco

Background and summary of the course

The first YOCOMO training course for Youth Workers to Work Internationally, was developed in the context of the European Training Strategy (ETS) by SALTO T&C RC with the support of the Italian and German National Agencies of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme.

The ideas behind this first course lie in a longer-term pilot phase of the implementation of the competence model. The intentions of the pilot course were above all to be a meeting point and offer to youth workers working internationally a space to reflect and exchange on their practices and understanding with regard to the competence model, its approach and its competence areas. The main purpose was to enable youth workers to take further steps in their professional practice.



By exploring and working on and with competences, main focus were on reflection and self-reflective practice, learning to learn, how to work on a competence-based approach, self-directed learning and to define personal paths towards further competence development.

The first pilot course, developed in a wider long-term idea and approach, was meant as a support for youth workers in their competence [further] development. The objective is that - when the final versions of this long-term training approach and support will be designed - each course will focus on

different dimensions and levels of complexity of the competence model. The series of pilot courses will support fine-tuning and developing the final versions of the courses based on the Competence Model for Youth Workers with both residential and online learning elements.

The first YOCOMO pilot course was designed having in mind this long-term format and blended learning. It therefore included:

- A residential course of 5 full working days;
- E-learning moments prior the residential course (to prepare) and after (to experiment, harvest and further learn) through the SALTO [HOP platform](#);
- A two-day consolidation meeting in September 2018 (due to its experimental nature).

The general approach followed the principles of non-formal learning.

The first YOCOMO TC was held in Campus X in Rome from the 4th to the 10th of June 2018 (4th arrivals, 5th-9th five full working days, 10th departures)

The team of trainers for this first pilot course were Snežana Bačlija Knoch and Salvi Greco, while the overall team also included: Alessia Cecchini and Adele Tinaburri (Italian NA), Gisele Evrard Markovic and Rita Bergstein (SALTO TC RC) and Andreas Rosellen (external evaluator, Transfer e.V.).

Programme

	04/06	05/06	06/06	07/06	08/06	09/06	10/06	
08:00 - ... 09:30 - 13:00	Arrivals	Buongiorno Yocommunity Competent opening to get to know each other "Pilot" and "Experimental" training – what does that mean for us? Me and others as learners	Buongiorno Yocommunity The transition challenge: a competent group What is a competence? What is a competence-based approach? (Exploration)	Breakfast Buongiorno Yocommunity Harvesting from the Actionbound exploration Me and the ETS Youth Worker Competence Model (with the special focus on attitudes and behaviours) Standing on the YW CM: where am I right now with it...	Buongiorno Yocommunity ETS Competence Model as a self-directed process of exploration based on personal/group needs	Buongiorno Yocommunity Connectedness: how to journey with self to others? Continuation of my journey as a youth worker? (How to use the ETS competence model in my future work?)	Departures	
13:00 - 15:00 15:00 - 18:30	Arrivals	(Why) am I a youth worker? My journey as a youth worker until now Self-reflective practice as a base for my learning journey Youthpass in a new outfit	ETS Competence Model – Actionbound (Exploration)	Afternoon in Rome	ETS Competence Model as a self-directed process of exploration based on personal/group needs Harvesting	Introducing the external evaluation Towards the Consolidation meeting Evaluation (for now...) Closing	Departures	
18:30 - 19:15 19:30 - ... 21:00 - ...		My journey on the training (self-reflection and reflection in trio) Dinner Dinner and evening in Rome						

Detailed daily programme

Monday, June 4

Arrival of participants throughout the day.

Welcome dinner.

Short welcome activity: round of names, with sharing some little element of the trip from home to the venue. To start getting to know each other a few table top games were placed around the room on different tables and participants could freely go around playing and interacting with others.



Tuesday, June 5

The first day focussed on getting familiar with the group, building the group, creating the learning, working environment, have a first touch with competences, give some background info of the course, introduce the programme flow, look together at the HOP platform, start building the YOCOMMunity, and reflect on the conditions needed for learning.

Participants could also reflect on their individual youth-worker paths, on the milestones, motivations and developments connect to deeper circles and the 'inner youth worker' and share the stories with others. The self-reflective dimension/practice was also introduced, including some tools for reflection, like the personal YOCOMO Story Book for personal reflection and the 'trios' for reflection with others.



Daily flow and activities implemented

1) Welcome and getting to know

- Introducing the day
- Round of names (adding a couple of information)
- SELFie, writing on a piece of paper: something that makes the person unique, something that (almost) nobody knows about that person, and one of the person's strengths. Then mingling and sharing walking in the 'YOCOMO square'.

2) YOCOMO pilot/experimental TC: what does this mean?

- Asking participants, how have they felt when they heard:
 - ♦ Pilot

- ♦ Experimental
- ♦ YOCOMO
- Input on the YOCOMO general idea, with background information of the project (informal talk with key words)

3) YOCOMmunity - Me and others as learners 1

- YOCOMmunity ('[Village](#)' inspired) interaction in the YOCOMO square. Participants could follow their own body and, when they feel like it, without words or eye contact, they communicate with the others through vertical and horizontal distance.
- Participants, in smaller groups, shared about the places/corners in the room and interactions that made them feel comfortable, challenged, and possibly also uncomfortable.

YOCOMmunity - Me and others as learners 2

- Introducing the 'YOCOMO Playground' in the YOCOMmunity, where participants engaged with others.
- There were several activities in the **Playground**, which participants could join in small groups:
 - ♦ Digital storytelling: video (laptop) corner for recording videos about "What would support your learning in the best possible way?" "What are my/our learning needs?"
 - ♦ Story-cubes (pairs): telling stories of successful learning experiences.
 - ♦ Learning out of the box: Quotes to describe needs as learners.
 - ♦ Making links: Participants can pick one of the random object on the floor (e.g. toothbrush, plug, plastic bottle, scarf, rope etc.) that for them represents learning. Then, they seek for the links between different objects chosen.
 - ♦ All the letters of the alphabet are on the floor and people write something that relate to characteristics that are true to them as learners (A: Ambitious, S: Slow...)
- Harvesting in plenary

4) Sharing visually the programme flow

5) (Why) am I a youth-worker? My journey as youth-worker until now

- Participants were supported to go on their youth worker development journey - from the very first steps, all the way to the present day. This was facilitated by guided phantasy and supported by the photos from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.
- Participants individually captured (with the possibility of drawing 'snapshots') their development paths in a visual way and integrated the photos in the journey as well. To do so, they used half a flipchart (vertically), with leaving a bit space at the end for the future.
- Participants shared their paths in pairs, focusing on the question: Why am I a youth worker?

6) Self-reflective practice as a base for my learning journey

- Brainstorming on the meaning of (self)reflection, in small groups, finding questions and definitions.
- Sharing in plenary.
- YOCOMO Youthpass: Introducing a guiding question to think about how the Competence Model for Youth Workers can work with the Youthpass, support it, or even change it? (note: this is a pilot experience also for the 'YOCOMO Youthpass').

7) Reflection time

- Participants were invited to form trios for reflection. This happened as follows: walking around the space being given instructions:
 - ♦ **Feel** the space, get in the groups of 4 and share
 - ♦ **See** the space, get in pairs and share
 - ♦ **Touch** the space, get in groups of 5 and share
 - ♦ How do **you feel** in the space, get in 3 and share
- **'Dating with yourself'**: introducing the Personal YOCOMO StoryBook (personal journal). Participants could customize their own StoryBook. Different tools to support the reflection were introduced.
- Introducing **two reflection tools and questions for reflection** (and two guiding questions).
- Participants had 15 minutes to reflect individually with their Story Books and the reflection tools.
- After the individual reflection, they had time for a reflection in their fixed trios.

Wednesday, June 6

Starting the second day, 'Buongiorno' (good morning) was introduced as a nice wish to say in the morning, used in this context to start well the day, to create a nice atmosphere and a safe environment. The idea was also to keep bringing the group together and explore individual and group strengths and weaknesses, and to open the door to competence exploration. There was a focus on what defines 'competence', to see if there are different understandings of 'competence' in different countries, cultures, and languages. That day was also



the time to explore a competence-based approach from different angles, to inspire discussions and dilemmas; to get more familiar with Competence Model, the culture behind it, to engage with it. The day ended as usual with personal and trios reflection time.

Daily flow and activities implemented

1) BUONGIORNO YOCOMmunity!

Back to the YOCOMmunity square, participants woke up and share a song, a book, a painting, a movie that somehow defines 'who they are', and why. Every morning, four or five persons would share. In the background, their HOP platform pages are shown and/or the facilitator introduced them.

2) The transition challenge: a competent group.

- Participants were presented with a group challenge, which brings the objects they used for reflecting on them as learners scattered on the floor in no particular order.
- Their task was to reconstruct the links made and make a group learning picture.
- For the planning, they were not allowed to touch the object, but make a strategy.
- For the implementation, those who would be able to touch the objects were blindfolded and those who would not, were muted.
- The activity was debriefed (until the concluding phase) in plenary.
- Participants gathered in their learning trios, first self-reflected and then gave each other feedback on the specific competences they observed in plenary.

3) What is a competence?

- Short input on the competence elements, those that are supposed to represent a common ground. This was followed by a discussion in the group about potential different understanding of 'competence'.
- Competence in the ETS Competence Model – exploration and reflection.

4) What is a competence-based approach? (Exploration)

- Smaller groups of participants were given a cube, placed inside another bigger cube. The way to see the inside cube and its 5 sides (the six one is facing the table) is through little windows made in the outside cube. The windows had to be opened one by one to discover:
 - ♦ WHAT: offering several definitions/approaches
 - ♦ WHY: why using a competence-based approach? (question to discuss)
 - ♦ HOW: 360 approach (short intro + who would be your 360 crew?)
 - ♦ WHEN: when have you used it? (question for discussion)
 - ♦ Where is the MAGIC in all that? (question to discuss)

- In the end, when reaching for the inside box, participants could read on the bottom side: is it boxing?
- Harvesting in plenary with each participants bringing two key insights from the exploration.

5) The ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers (Exploration)

- Exploration through Actionbound of the ETS Competence Model and the support materials (booklet, posters, etc.)
- Gisèle was one of the stations, but in a more structured way, where all the groups get together in order to get the 'story' behind the Competence Model.
- Questions addressed to the group were: Have you worked with competence models before? What is the implication on my practice?

6) Reflection time

YOCOMO Story Books and Trios

Thursday, June 7

After the start with Buongiorno YOCOMmunity, we closed the Actionbound exploration of the day before looking at the results, outcomes of the exploration and debriefing it. The activities of the morning were about practically engaging with the Competence Model and self-reflective practice, and to play a bit with the 360° approach.

The afternoon was dedicated to a bit of free time in Rome with a dinner all together in the evening in the city.



Daily flow and activities implemented

1) Buongiorno YOCOMmunity

2) Actionbound harvesting

3) Me and the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers (with a special focus on attitudes and behaviours)

- How to become a (millionaire) youth worker?

- Participants were given 12 steps/questions to reflect, related to behaviours and attitudes. For some they were asked to write answers, for some others to provide stories, or capture 'snapshots', etc.
- The goal was to answer as many of them as possible.
- Participants could use help:
 - ♦ 'Ask a friend' (colleagues they are working with via social media or WhatsApp, for example).
 - ♦ 'Ask the audience' (to consult with other participants).

Note: this exercise can be adjusted depending how many participants did the related online task because its outcomes could be used to 'enrich the YOCOMO Playground'. In case participants did not do the online task, they can do it on the spot. But even if they did, they could ask a friend or ask the audience, as proposed above).

- Reflection in plenary - how was this experience? How do they feel within the self-reflective practice?

Friday, June 8



Usual start with Buongiorno YOCOMmunity. This day was about going deeper into personal and group learning needs at that stage of the training course. For this, the team used a more self-directed approach with the YOCOWORKING Square, a co-created agenda where each participant could choose which topic (with reference to the Competence Model). Clustering the different topics, needs, smaller groups were formed and in those groups participants worked until the reflection time in the afternoon.

Daily flow and activities implemented

1) BUONGIORNO YOCOMmunity!

2) YOCOWORKING SQUARE: ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers as a playground: self-directed exploration process based on personal/group needs.

A first round was about making clear what learning needs each participant had. After sharing in the group, participants chose how, with whom to work on it. A few tools to support this process were provided.

3) Harvesting

After a full self-directed day we shared in a plenary group discussion thoughts, findings of the YOCOWORKING Square

4) Reflection time

YOCOMO Story Books and Trios

Saturday, June 9

This day was to stimulate opening up to the community and understanding the competences in the wider context; to reflect back on the youth worker journey and project steps for the future; to ensure that the next steps are clear and participants motivated to continue; to introduce the external evaluation process with the project researcher Andreas; to evaluate and close the training course.



Daily flow and activities implemented

1) BUONGIORNO YOCOMmunity!

2) Connectedness: how to journey from self to others?

- Back to the YOCOMmunity Village.
- Participants were repeating the activity from the first day, with exactly the same instructions.
- Afterwards they reflected on how their experience changed, what changed and how they felt about it.
- In smaller groups, they chose Dixit cards that would represent their ideal communities.
- They reflected on how their self-reflective practice and development as youth workers may contribute to that ideal community, and how is the community influencing their path as well.

3) Continuation of my journey as a youth worker (How to use the Competence Model in my future work?)

- Participants went back to their youth worker paths and reflected on two things:
 - ♦ Are there any new stations/milestones/steps they would add in the past journey? (based on the insights from the previous days)
 - ♦ What stations/milestones/steps are they seeing in the future?
- They repeated the method used on the first day, first by introducing the new stations to their paths and then taking each other through their journeys and into the future.
- They took an actual photo of themselves to complete the other three, used at the beginning of the course.
- Harvesting of the key insights in plenary.

4) Towards the Consolidation meeting

- Plenary.
- Emphasis on the long-term nature of the process: suggestions, ideas?
- Planning the steps, how to communicate, how to bring togetherness out of individual plans.
- Introduction of the project researcher Andreas and the external evaluation process.

5) Evaluation of the training course with a silent floor, writing on different flipcharts following questions/inputs about the contents, methodology and other elements of the TC.

6) Closing round, with participants who could share their last thoughts in the circle, and getting back their YOCOMO Personal Story Books.

Sunday, June 10

Departures

Conclusions of the trainers on the outcomes and results of the training

If the main aim and intentions of the training course was to provide a space, a meeting point for youth workers to explore self-reflective practice, the Competence Model as tool for self-development, and to support each other, we can say that these were successfully achieved. The training design and the programme flow allowed creating a safe and dynamic learning environment. The group was fully engaged and committed throughout the training.

Different activities have proven useful to support understanding the concept of the Competence Model, its main purpose, how it is a tool for self-assessment, development besides being a tool that can be used also in other contexts like organisations and groups. Still, there was the need, expressed by some participant, of having some more concrete examples of how to put in practice the Competence Model. Overall, in the end, the 'meaning' of the Competence Model was understood.

The group seems to have enjoyed going in depth into the self-reflective aspect of the training, in different ways: personal reflection with the 'Personal YOCOMO Story Book', and the reflection in the 'trios' that were formed on the first day, besides the moments of reflection at the end of every activity, debriefing it.

When it comes to the dynamic between the team and the group, it was smooth and constructive from the first moment until the end.

As results of the training, we can mention in particular the outputs of the 'YOCOWORKING Square' (the activity day based more on self-directed learning), where different groups have developed workshops, sessions, training course ideas, study-cases, on how to introduce the Competence Model, or how to understand its concept.

On the last day's activities, looking at future steps, participants - mostly through the reflection trios – have also planned how to keep working and supporting each other back home and until the consolidation meeting. At a personal level, some participants already shared how they will work with the Competence Model during some summer activities and projects, with young people.

Summary of post-training evaluations

Note: sent out 10 days after the training

To which extent did the learning environment allow you to engage, to fully participate and express during the training?

Overall, participants expressed that the learning environment was safe and comfortable and it allowed them to be active and engaged. Several participants mentioned that they do not usually find it so easy to share in the group, but this time they felt it was easy to open up, to intervene, to express their feelings, thoughts and questions, their strengths and vulnerabilities. To quote one participant: *“For me it was the first time that I had participated in such a training and I was a bit worried I might not be ‘up to it’, but I never felt judged or unsuitable.”* And another one: *“I felt safe and encouraged to participate and express my opinion (because I felt that my opinion mattered), while at the same time I felt that I am not obliged to, and that I can move through my learning process on my own pace.”*

Participants felt that what contributed to the learning environment was the group itself (including the size of the group and profile of the people), the style of facilitation and methodology (participatory), as well as, more specifically, the reflection trios and the visual harvesting it (helped recognizing the highlights of the days). In terms of the venue, some of the participants said that it was a bit sterile, dispersed and ‘Orwellian’, but that the atmosphere made up for it. One participant wrote: *“Though the physical setting was a bit dispersive sometime, I felt engaged for the complete duration of the training course.”* Moreover, while for some it was a challenge being away from city and somewhat ‘enclosed’, the others appreciated the ‘isolation’ because it allowed them to focus on the process.

To which extent do you feel that the programme flow was effective, included relevant content on the Competence Model, as well as offered good variety of methods, approaches, to work on it?

In general, participants appreciated the flow/red line of the programme, the way that the programme developed gradually, and the methods and approaches. *“The red line was always visible, one could follow it, trust you. I also appreciated the diversity and selection of methods applied.”* Some of the participants wished that it had been possible to go deeper, more concrete and more practical in the Competence Model.

When it comes to the methods and approaches, many participants emphasised the variety of methods used and they felt that the activities chosen allowed to engage with the model. Additionally, many of them highlighted reflection as an important part of the programme. *“I think that the programme was very effective in terms of facilitating one’s personal reflection and helping one rethink one’s goals, motivations and methods as a youth worker and as a person.”* Some participants also mentioned that the methods and activities used provided inspiration for them, so they could use them as well when working with the Competence Model, but also in working with the young people. For example, ActionBound was also mentioned as a method to be used further on for a youth exchange. One participants expressed: *“I was excited about how you used senses in this training, at a first glance I thought it was going to be a training focused on technical aspects of ETS.”*

On the other hand, in a significant number of evaluations, participants expressed that they would have wished to have a more comprehensive overview of the Competence Model; a more extensive

exploration of the competence areas; going deeper into how and where it can be implemented; as well as in understanding its implications on their personal development - how could they improve, how could they change? They felt that there were things missing and left unanswered. While some of them believed this was due to a short duration of the training, others felt the focus should have been more practical. One participant said: *“However, I would have liked to learn about the Competence Model from a more practical perspective, with examples of how I can really implement it in my work.”*

Nonetheless, good number of participants still felt that they got to understand the Competence Model better. *“I feel I had a better understanding of the CM, through the activities I had the opportunity to explore deeper and trying to develop project idea to work with.”*

To which extent did the pilot training help you to understand the essence and objectives of the Competence Model?

Regarding this aspect, participants had quite diverse opinions. Majority of participants felt that the training provided them with overall information about the Competence Model, its objectives and content. What was missing was deeper exploration, practical insights and application and potentially, more concrete understanding of each of the competence areas. One participant said: *“I think that it would have been useful for me if we could have seen a practical application of the competence-based model.”*

Some participants highlighted that they feel that they could explain the Model to others, but not necessarily work with it in depth and use it for their development as youth workers. At the same time, many of them said that what could help them was spending more time after the training in exploring the model, as well as having support from the people who feel more competent in using it.

One element that was highlighted by a number of participants was that the usefulness of the Competence Model when reflecting on their professional path and sharing it with others, as well as working on it during the self-directed sessions and trying to put it in practice. *“[...] this competence model should be a tool to play with and reflection on.”*

At the same time, there were participants who felt that the training really delivered in this respect. One person wrote: *“Without the TC – most probably – I would never even try to understand and really “work through” such a Model.”* And another: *“Totally, in my opinion the training is one the few methods of getting so closer to the essence of the Model.”*

How satisfied are you with the outcomes of the training? (personal/group learning process, exploration of the Competence Model, understanding of the Competence Model)

“The training was like an appetizer for me, it created the context where I can reflect more and better on who am I as a facilitator/trainer/educator.”

A good number of participants said that they were very satisfied with the training and it provided them with what they needed. One thing highlighted by many participants was the development of self-reflective practice, ongoing reflection on how the persons are in relation to the Competence Model and identifying areas of improvement. *“This competence-based approach together with the importance of self-reflection on the learning process, were pretty new to me and I think this training has opened my eyes on a new field that I would like to explore.”* Another participant said: *“I was really*

amazed from the outcomes, because we developed a training course and a session on the theme of the competence model so we have something to adopt at our daily routine."

At the same time, and similarly to the previous question, number of participants said that they would have wished to be provided with more information and practical details, as well as with hints on how to work with the model for their personal development. *"I'd say that I would have liked to explore the Model more into details, challenging me and the group more on the personal development."*

How ready and willing do you feel to really use the Competence Model for your work and personal development? Can you now better define your personal path towards further competence development?

Almost all the participants wrote that they are willing to use the Competence Model. Especially on the level of self-reflection and personal and professional development, integrating it in their youth work practice as well as in working on new projects in the future. *"I need to go into deeper and really understand better the Competence Model, but I think that this approach will lead my next work."* Another participant said: *"The first application that I see is to the Youthpass and to the work I am doing with our volunteers, both from EVS and from National Civil Service."*

Some participants even said that they are already using it, in order to reflect on their practice (even in informal moments), but also presenting it and using it with their colleagues. One participant wrote: *"I'm using the Competence Model to monitor my summer job that will involve more than 150 young people."*

When it comes to readiness for using it, some participants said that they are not necessarily ready and they need to learn more, research more and even to clarify some basic concepts. Especially when it comes to using it for their personal development. *"Maybe I am not 100% ready to start using it but everything comes with practice."* On the other hand, some participants said that it is complex and hence, needs an extra effort to be really implemented. *"The Model is also complex and articulate and, in my understanding, it needs to be continuously referred to, in order to allow me to generate a long-lasting positive development."* Additionally, one person said that them using it also depends on the outcomes of the consolidation meeting.

To which extent did you feel understood, supported and encouraged by the team in the YOCOMO process?

All the participants said that they felt understood, supported and encouraged by the team. They felt that the team was open and well built. In some cases, they even extended this appreciation to the whole group of participants as a team. Things that participants appreciated about the team were: being professional; making them feel comfortable and ready to learn and contribute with their competences: being inspiring, motivated and engaged; balancing between providing space and giving own insights; being able to get on the level of each of the participants and get the best out of them; helping them overcome their doubts; supporting their reflection. As one participant wrote: *"Thank you for being there for me, for offering us your best to help us explore deeper ourselves as well as the colleague Yocomoers."* And another: *"The team was simply fantastic, very kind and at our disposal. I felt very well although the language and the topic which was very "hard".*

After the pilot training, would you recommend other youth workers to work with the ETS?

Similarly to the previous question, every single participant, even those that were a bit more critical towards the way that the model was explored and understood during the training, said that they would recommend ETS to other youth workers and some of them already did it at the time of filling in the evaluation form.

A common reason among a few participants was that the ETS gives recognition to youth work profession, and a framework, a common understanding that could be very beneficial for the youth workers, who seem to have very diverse opinions about their job and the competences needed. *“A strategy, like ETS, which collects and structures different positions and proposes a direction for development, without creating a formal standard, will have a positive impact on international youth work.”* Other people said that they would recommend it beyond the youth sector, in other environments as well as on the individual level, for personal development.

The practical dimension of it was highlighted as well. Some participants said that they would recommend it, because it can improve the work with groups, organisations and communities, while others emphasised on the benefit for developing further projects. At the same time, one participant wrote *“Yes. The question is (and stays) how to proceed besides a “recommendation”. Since I strongly believe that the system is too complex and cannot be used as a “blueprint” or “recipe”.”*

In addition to recommending the ETS and the Competence Model for Youth Workers, some participants also highlighted that they would recommend YOCOMO training to the others. In the words of a participant: *“I would definitely recommend doing the same training as I did, because to me it was very inspiring. I am afraid that the approach to ETS without a proper training might seem too ‘theoretical’”.*

The final evaluation round on the last day gave us already some very good insights, but what would be your overall feedback that could have made the training a more meaningful experience for you?

Common points in some of the evaluation were the need for more thorough information about the model, including concepts and theories behind it, as well as examples how to implement the model in practice and how to use it for one’s professional development. One of the suggestions was to focus on assessment of competences, as well as pathways for their improvement and the other to adopt the COMETS approach and focus on one competence area at the time.

Other participants used this question to repeated some of their previous feedback and highlight its importance for their work and development, as well as the inspiration that it has given them, while also mentioning that they wouldn’t change it. One participant wrote: *“I really appreciated that the methodology has been lived by participants instead being explained by experts to learners. Doing that by the trainers was really calling the participants to this common creation and evolution of our job.”* while the other said: *“I hope that this pilot project will gain the status of a permanent project “.*

Special Features of the Pilot Project



Being a series of learning experiences and in this case, a pilot residential course, YOCOMO had a number of ‘special features’, which were developed in order to support the unique YOCOMO learning journey, as well as to ensure that there is enough feedback provided for the future editions of the course and YOCOMO process as a whole.

HOP E-learning Platform, which is, like YOCOMO, in its pilot phase and which hosted the prep phase of the course. HOP is based on the [Moodle](#) technology, and

developed by SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre. YOCOMO was the first e-learning course offered on the platform and, due to a rather short preparation period, it offered two sessions to the participants: ‘Who is here?’ and ‘Entering the YOCOMO Playground’. ‘Who is here?’ offered the possibility for participants to get to know each other, by building their profiles based on predefined questions, as well as posting questions to other participant on a specially designated forum. Almost all participants have completed their profiles and the answers have later been used during ‘Buongiorno YOCOMmunity’ to accompany their introductions. ‘Entering the YOCOMO Playground’ was an opportunity for participants to have a little teaser of self-assessment of attitudes and behaviours based on the Competence Model for Youth Workers. 13 out of 19 participants have submitted their self-assessments and they could go back to them during the session ‘Me and the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers’ or ‘How to become a millionaire youth worker?’ on day 3 of the residential course. It is planned to have a couple of follow-up sessions on the HOP platform and, in the final day of the course, participants expressed their needs for this phase.

External evaluation was introduced into the YOCOMO process, based on the need to have a thorough evaluation of the pilot courses (all three residential courses, as well as the e-learning ones) in order to learn as much as possible from it and implement the insights into the next YOCOMO cycle. For this purpose, Transfer e.V. was contracted and Andreas Rosellen joined the team of the first YOCOMO course. He participated in the preparation for the course, as well as joined the YOCOMmunity for the last day of the residential course, where he got to know the participants and discussed his plan for the evaluation with them. After the residential course, participants received the external evaluation form designed by Andreas and in the following weeks have also planned to have ‘focus groups’ in their reflection trios. The external evaluation will also be an important part of the Consolidation Meeting.

YOCOMO Youthpass is a special edition of Youthpass that has been developed for the purpose of the YOCOMO course. Given that self-reflective practice was one of the key pillars of YOCOMO, it made sense to also support this process with the tailored certificate. It was introduced, as such, during the residential training and sent out to participants as a form (e.g. Google form), to record the outcomes of their self-reflection before the Consolidation Meeting.

Graphic recording was introduced to YOCOMO by the Italian National Agency of Erasmus+: Youth in Action in their support for the young, talented graphic recorder, Alessandro Donati. Alessandro was capturing what was happening during the course and producing one flipchart per day, which served as a great overview to start the next training day with. During the last afternoon, Alessandro also provided a verbal overview of all the days, which were a great intro into the evaluation.

The group of participants

The group of participants, which made the main part of the YOCOMmunity, was composed of 19 youth workers, coming from 10 different countries. Their youth worker profiles varied significantly, from new youth workers to those with more than 10 years of experience, from those just setting foot into international youth work to those involved with different formats of international youth work. However, all of the participants – really: all - were very dedicated to the course, invested in working on their professional



development, curious to explore the Competence Model for Youth Workers in as much detail as possible, committed to self-reflection and willing to take any challenge presented to them by the team. It appeared that none of them was there by chance and they gave importance to the course and its impact on their practice. This could be one of the reasons why this group of participants was really a group, given that they created a strong cohesion and, besides focussing on their own process, were there to support each other. This was visible in their 'trio' reflection, where they could be seen around the CampusX deeply engaged in the conversations well passed the time of the reflection. It is worth to add that, putting all the rational explanations for such a strong group bonding together, there was certainly a little bit of 'magic' involved in making it so special and rewarding. It was truly a pleasure working with this kind of group.

Teamwork

The YOCOMO team involved quite a few people along the way and each of them had a very important role to play. During the preparatory meeting, the team was composed of Alessia Cecchini and Adele Tinaburri (Italian NA), Gisele Evrard Markovic and Rita Bergstein (SALTO T&C RC), Salvi Greco and Snežana Bačlija Knoch (trainers). As said earlier, during the preparatory meeting it was decided to involve an external evaluator and shortly after, Andreas Rosellen from Transfer e.V. joined the team as well. During the course, the main persons involved in the programmatic part of YOCOMO were the trainers and Gisele (until she left halfway through the course), with the support of Alessia and Adele. Towards the end of the course, Andreas joined the trainers in planning the last day, as well as the transition between the course and the Consolidation Meeting. Rita worked in parallel on the

YOCOMO Youthpass. Being such a diverse and big team came with a lot of advantages, such as richness of ideas and perspectives, sounding board for the trainers, support for the implementation of the programme, transfer of competences offered to the participants and overall a very strong basis for the implementation of the YOCOMO process.

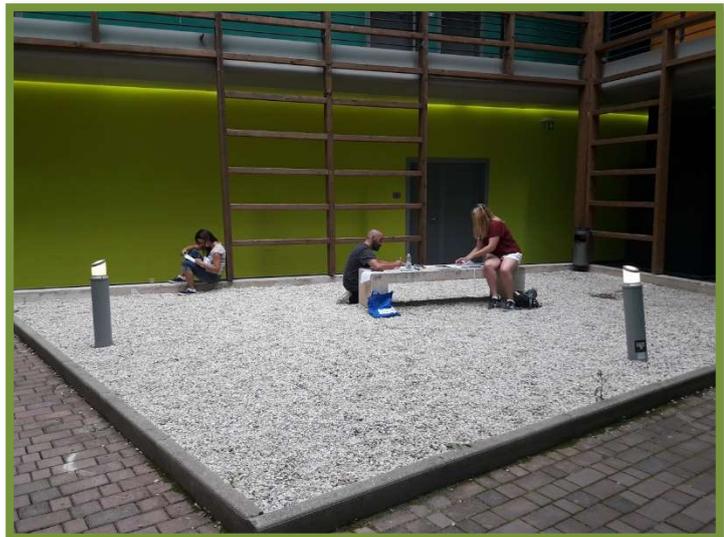


The main challenge was the dynamics of presence of the team members in different phases of the course, as well as additional inputs that were sometimes slowing down the process of planning, which was anyway quite comprehensive given the pilot and experiential nature of the course. In its narrow sense, the team (of trainers) worked very well, especially since this was the first time they work together. Their competences and approaches complemented each other and they were quite invested in the process from the very beginning, with almost daily

Skypes at some point. In addition, they enjoyed the process and the group very much and feel that they benefited a lot both individually and as a team.

Logistics

In general, logistical support was good, both in the preparation phase and during the course itself. There was a slight challenge with the arrivals to the venue that trainers had to figure out on their own and pass it onto the participants, but other than that, everything else was running smoothly. It was particularly beneficial to have Alessia and Adele on the spot most of the times, and beside the role of the host, their enthusiasm and connection to the training could really be felt. CampusX was perhaps not an ideal venue in many ways, with quite basic facilities and very detached from the city, but this proved to have number of benefits. For instance, it brought the group together and it gave them freedom to engage in ways that would not be so possible in most of the hotels. The atmosphere was also very positive and the food was very good. Overall, it might not be the perfect venue, but it served its purpose well.



Recommendations

To keep the course. But really! Based on the evaluations and insights of the team of trainers, it was very, very beneficial to have a course that allows participants to explore the Competence Model for Youth Workers, play with it and see how they can use it for their own benefit. YOCOMO is a unique opportunity for youth workers working on the international level to gain the understanding of the tool that would allow them to gain the overview of the competence needed for working on the international level, reflect on their own competences and plan the ways of developing them further. The course, and potentially the whole YOCOMO process, also have a potential to significantly contribute to the recognition of the international youth work and consequently to the confidence of youth workers as well.

To keep the profile of the participants and try to learn what created 'magic' in the selection process. Both the participants and the team agreed that YOCOMO group was very special and their cohesion contributed greatly to the outcomes of the course. In addition, while all of the factors that contributed to it cannot be quantified, it seems that the course itself attracts youth workers who are willing to work on their professional development. At the same time, this will and motivation was more important for the learning process itself than the extent of international youth work experience.

To keep the focus on the self-reflective practice. Self-reflective practice was identified as one of the key pillars of the YOCOMO learning process and it was in the focus of the methodology used by the team. The participants responded to it very well and it really brought an encompassing and deep exploration of their competences as youth workers, as well understanding of the importance of an ongoing reflection on their practice. Self-reflection is a very good companion of the Competence Model and it is important that the youth workers themselves adopt it.

To use variety of methods that stimulate different senses. Given the complexity of the Competence Model for Youth Workers and the multiple dimensions for its exploration, it was important to introduce a variety of methods, which would make it challenging, engaging and stimulating. At the same time, in order to truly walk the talk and encompass different elements of the competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours), it is essential to be able to stimulate all the parts of one's body. This being said, this is not an attempt to endorse use of as many different methods and activities as possible, just for the sake of diversity, but rather to keep in mind engaging different senses for in order to enable a holistic exploration of the model.

To try out and introduce a more practical dimension. One thing that was missing for a good number of participants was a more practical approach to the Competence Model, together with concrete tools to put it in practice and be able to reflect on one's competencies and identify ways to improve them. This might be resolved by having a set of tools and approaches for working with Competence Model (tools for self-assessment for example), but also by introducing practical examples into the course. In addition, an e-learning phase could help in bringing in the more practical side to the Competence Model.

To have more time for planning the e-learning support. That said, e-learning phase(s) also need proper planning and implementation time in order to have maximum impact on the learning process, so one of the recommendation is to makes sure that there is enough time dedicated.