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Qualified youth workers
for Europe

A manual
for the recognition
of competences

Introduction

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Dear readers,

on the one hand, this guide deals theoretically with the issue of the recognition of competences of youth workers and, on the other hand, presents two concrete practical examples. The guide thus works as a quality development tool for training and further education for youth workers. In this sense, it contributes to the transparency of their competences and their recognition and provides an overview of the relevant expert discourse.

For this purpose, the findings of formal academic qualification for youth work are linked to those from the non-formal sector. Valuable perspectives for future qualifications and recognition projects can thus be developed.

This guide is the result of the Erasmus+ project “Qualified Youth Workers for Europe”. The aim of the project partners aufZAQ¹ and “Youth work with perspective” (JumP in German) at the Kempten University² was to address the topic scientifically and at the same time in a clear manner for a broad target group.

The specific scientific expertise and practical experience of these two institutions are based, among other things, on the development of two different competence models for youth work, which are presented in this guide: the aufZAQ Competence Framework for Youth Work and the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work of the JumP project at the Kempten University. These do not relate to a specific field of activity within youth work but take a comprehensive approach. This, in turn, allows a wide applicability of the concepts.

¹ see www.aufZAQ.at

² see www.hs-kempten.de/JumP

This guide consists of three parts

- 1 The information section shows the relevance of recognition and transparency of competences of youth workers. It provides an insight into the discourse that forms the background for this guide. This part defines basic terms. It addresses the constitution of recognition and the political developments that go along with it. An overview of existing options for recognition of competences then leads to the two competence models.
- 2 Part two provides an overview of the model aufZAQ Competence Framework for Youth Work. This enables the classification of competences in youth work at levels II to VI of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In addition, this section describes the scientific approach for the development of the aufZAQ Competence Framework.
- 3 Part three presents the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work developed at the JumP project at Kempten University. It is a competence model for full-time professionals in youth work. It is also based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and makes acquired competences available for the higher education sector – and thus for formal education. It also encourages reflection and discussion of the professional self-understanding of full-time professionals in youth work.

This guide in practice

In practice, this guide is an aid in a wide range of areas and starting positions. It provides **voluntary and full-time youth workers** with guidance in developing their competences and offers support when specific skills are sought or required in teams.

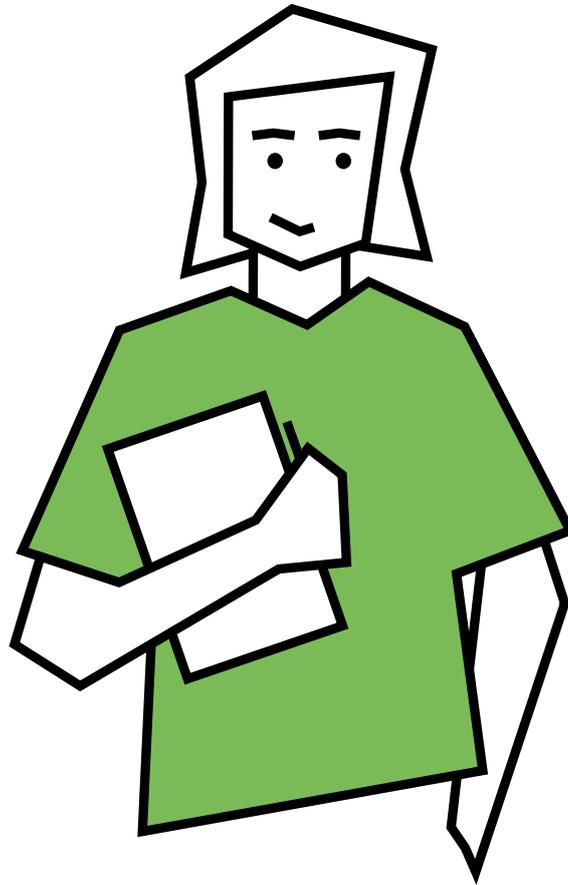
Training institutions in youth work receive a resource to classify and develop their educational offerings. They also need to be aware of the issues of recognition and transparency of learners' competences and the respective tools they need to use.

For **political stakeholders**, this guide works as a basis for argumentation that can drive political discourse forward, referring to practical examples. In addition, the complexity and diversity of the competences required in youth work will be visible, and how they are recognized in Germany and Austria.

At the scientific level, this guide represents a contribution to the specialist discourse in education science, social pedagogy and education policy. Above all, the scientific foundations and procedures of the presented practical examples show how the quality of the training of youth workers can be further developed and connected internationally.

The first part of the guide provides a theoretical and informative overview, whereas the second and third part present good practice examples in order to describe competences in youth work. Although in some countries, such as Estonia and Finland, training standards for youth workers already exist, the two presented models are pioneering work: Level-specific competence descriptions, which specify the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for youth work, have not yet been available in the form of complete competence models.

Individual, social and political relevance of recognition



Alex

Alex is 26 years old and was involved in a youth association for a long time: With the gained experience (organization of vacation camps, management of group sessions), the decision for a bachelor's degree in social work was obvious. Alex worked at a youth center after graduation. The competences accumulated over the years are clearly of crucial importance in theory and practice: for example, communication and social skills or skills in the application of methods. While working for the youth center, Alex attended further training courses and learned to respond to unforeseen situations, to be able to act in crisis situations and to communicate with different target groups.

Alex' example shows how wide and varied the range of competences and activities of youth work is. There are three different types of learning to acquire these competences: Formal learning involves learning in formal contexts, for example in the context of the bachelor's degree program social work. Non-formal learning, on the other hand, refers to voluntary, accompanied learning – such as further education and courses. The third form, informal learning, describes the unintended learning that takes place both in leisure time, in organizations, associations and at work.³ According to a study by the German agency “Jugend für Europa” (Youth for Europe), 80 percent of learning and competence acquisition happen outside formal education centers, such as schools or universities.⁴ This means that only a small part of learning is officially recognized, and a large part remains invisible.

Forms of Recognition

To begin with, this guide distinguishes between the following three forms of recognition.

Self-recognition

Self-recognition comes from the learners themselves. This is also done considering the transfer of acquired skills to other fields.⁵ Self-recognition does not happen “just like that,” but is a process. The core is a self-reflection of the learners themselves, in which the learning objectives are recorded in writing and, in retrospect, are considered concerning whether and how far they have been achieved. Methods for doing this may include writing a learning diary, creating a portfolio or reflecting with a learning companion.⁶

Alex

In a career orientation workshop after graduation from high school, Alex describes professionally relevant competences in order to gain an overview and orientation. This approach also strengthens confidence.

Social recognition

This form of recognition comes from social actors.⁷ Educational institutions, employers or the public can recognize competences. Schools and universities only form part of this area if they are understood as places of “individual education processes and biographical orientation.”⁸

Alex

During studies, Alex is already offered a summer job in the organization team of a vacation camp for young people, which is organized by a social institution. The offer specifically refers to the experience and competences Alex has acquired in the youth association.

Political recognition

Political recognition refers to recognition from the legislative power. Here, non-formal learning is included in the legislation or appropriate strategies are developed. It involves actors from the non-formal education sector. In the longer term, a possible consequence of political recognition is formal recognition and thus, for example, a reduction in the duration of studies.

Alex

Alex received a bachelor's degree. This includes various authorizations that are regulated by law. The certification results in Alex being classified at the youth center as a specialist in social work, receiving a corresponding salary and corresponding responsibility.

3 A deeper examination of the terms can be found in the chapter “Defining important terms”.

4 Jugend für Europa, 2012, p. 34

5 Baumbast et al., 2014, p. 48

6 Jugend für Europa, 2012, p. 25

7 Europarat/Europäische Union, 2011, p. 18

8 Baumbast et al., 2014, p. 50

So, there are different forms of recognition, all of which are related to each other. Thus, more social recognition would result in the political level also being forced to act – once this happens, action by the legislator can be implemented, leading to formal recognition. When competences acquired in non-formal or informal learning processes are made visible, they not only provide better opportunities on the labor market, but also increase visibility and value of youth work in general. The following chapter will now look more closely at the measures and developments that have taken place concerning the recognition of competences at political level.

Political background and European perspectives

The recognition of competences that were acquired in a non-formal or informal manner has been on the agenda of various European institutions for about 20 years. The basis for this is the “EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning”, which was adopted in 2000. The aim is to “launch a Europe-wide discussion on a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of lifelong learning at individual and institutional level in all areas of public and private life.”⁹ Lifelong learning refers to “all learning throughout life, which serves to improve knowledge, qualifications and competences and is carried out within the framework of a personal, civic, social or employment-related perspective.”¹⁰

The consequences of this focus were various reforms of formal education systems and the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and derived tools at national level, such as the National Qualifications Framework in Austria. These tools make competences acquired in different settings comparable and transparent. In 2012, a recommendation from the Council of the European Union on validation of non-formal and informal learning was adopted. It defines procedural steps for the recognition of non-formal learning at institutional level. In addition, the recommendation considers, among others, “youth organizations, youth workers, education providers and civil society organizations” to be key actors who “play a crucial role in facilitating non-formal and informal learning and the subsequent validation procedures.”¹¹

These developments have also had an impact on youth work:¹² Competence-based training standards and models were developed there too, which make it possible to define competences acquired formally and non-formally. This way, especially political recognition should be fostered. Examples of such models were developed by the Estonian Youth Work Center in 2013, by aufZAQ in 2017 and the JumP project of the Kempten University. Their use is strongly endorsed by the Member States of the Council of Europe: In 2017, the Council of Europe recommended that existing validation systems for full-time professional and voluntary youth workers should be made more visible and further developed.¹³ The recommendation for the EQF has also been renewed: it now aims to ensure that the EQF is not only a tool for transparency and comparability but also for quality assurance of educational offers.

The political development toward a stronger competence orientation in youth work was based on the expert discourse: In the final declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, the implementation of competence models for youth workers is seen as a prerequisite for high-quality youth work. Further training courses for youth workers are therefore to be based on these competence models. At the same time, national strategies for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning should support the associated processes.¹⁴

9 Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 3

10 Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 9

11 Council of the European Union, 2012, p. 1

12 Since the end of the 1980s, the “Jugend für Europa” program has been considering non-formal learning in the context of European youth work (cf. Fennes und Otten 2008, p. 9–10).

13 Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers, 2017, p. 3 and p. 6

14 European Youth Work Convention, 2015, p. 9

2001 Lissabon — All learning, whether as young people or adults, formal, non-formal or informal, is politically considered equally important across Europe

2008 The first EU Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) — Learning outcomes will become a translation tool for formal and non-formal learning, which will be made visible and comparable across Europe at eight levels through the EQF

2012 EU Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning — Competences acquired non-formally and informally are to be validated and recognized as learning outcomes across Europe

2017 Recommendation of the Council of Europe on youth work and Second Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) — Validation systems should focus on the qualifications of youth workers. In addition to its function as a transparency and comparison tool, the EQF is also intended to serve as a quality assurance tool for educational offerings.

2019 Youth Goals in the EU Youth Strategy — Young people from all over Europe, in a dialogue process with policy makers, are calling for non-formal education at all levels to be ensured, recognized and validated.

In the future, recognition of non-formal learning is expected to be strengthened. The need for this is also reflected in the European Youth Goals, which were developed by young people throughout Europe in a participatory process and incorporated into the EU Youth Strategy 2019–27. It states that non-formal education should be ensured, recognized and validated at all levels.¹⁵ This requires a reflective approach and in-depth knowledge of recognition and validation.

¹⁵ European Union, 2018, p. 17

Our understanding of youth work

Since the concept of youth work is by no means used uniformly, at this point it should be clarified what it means for the project partners. Both internationally and within national borders, there is a very strong awareness that there is no uniform youth work reality and that neither uniform education nor a single theory are possible. However, this guide is based on attempts to develop a common understanding of youth work. Youth work is therefore oriented toward three cornerstones, which are illustrated in the following by Alex' example.

1 Voluntary participation

Participation in youth work programs is always voluntary. This principle of youth work is different not only from school and other formal education forms, but also from other fields of social work.

Alex

At the age of 13, Alex first went to a weekly group meeting of a youth association, as two friends had been participating for several months. Alex eventually joined the association after participating several times. From then on, Alex regularly took part in group sessions and vacation camps. However, there was no obligation on the part of the parents or the association.

2 Participation and focus on young people: from, for and with young people

Youth work is a joint negotiation and design process with young people. Opportunities for co-determination are organized in a low-threshold manner and are related to everyday decisions. It is common for the individual to have a growing margin of co-determination.

Alex

In the youth center where Alex is working now, space is made available free of charge for all young people from the surrounding area. Alex has elaborated the rules in force with the adolescents and, as a youth center employee, ensures that they are complied with. This ensures that everyone feels comfortable.

Youth work is done by young people:

Self-organization and voluntary work are important principles of youth work. Often young people themselves organize voluntary activities for and with young people and decide on the orientation of youth work in various positions. To accept responsibility and the joint negotiation enable essential participation experience in the everyday life of youth work.

Youth work is for all young people:

Youth work is deliberately aimed at all young people. The claim is that socio-economic, cultural, religious and other belongings do not exclude anyone from youth work offerings. Accordingly, youth work activities are not commercial.

Alex

The youth association, where Alex was a member of, is open to all young people as a matter of principle. This means: if you are interested in an activity you can participate, but of course you don't have to. Above all, young people are interested in the association, whose family or friends know the association, are or have been active themselves. In order to be open to all young people, the association has developed priorities and action plans. These target specific groups of people. For example, this way people with physical impairment should be included in group sessions.

Youth work is designed with young people:

For young people, youth work with its very different activities is an essential field of socialization. Whether in youth centers, on vacation camps, in group sessions or on adventure playgrounds: The activities are designed with young people and are geared to their interests. Thus, all participants are designers of the youth work reality.

Representation of interests:

Young people themselves determine how youth work is organized – also at political level. This means that youth organizations serve as a lobby for the interests of young people and represent them at local, national, European and international level.

Alex

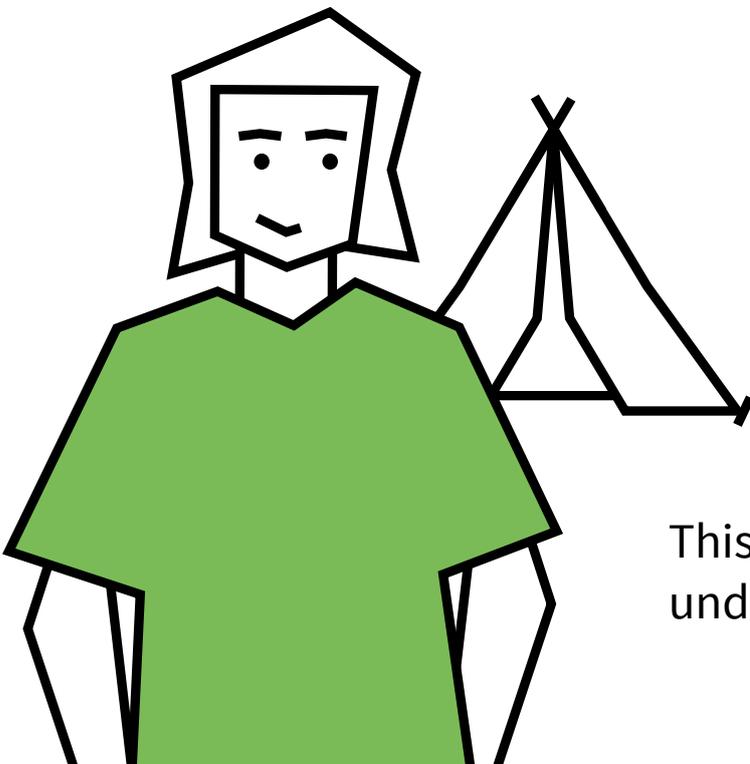
In the community where Alex' youth center is located, a local youth parliament takes place twice a year, in which young people can participate in decision-making on youth-related issues. In preparation for this a workshop takes place at the youth center, where current topics are collected, opinions on them discussed and common positions can be found. Following the workshop, a person is elected to present the developed positions in the youth parliament.

3 Personal development

Youth work offers opportunities for the personal development of young people. It is holistically oriented and follows an emancipatory approach. This means that it contributes to the individual's capacity for action and autonomy. The activities are therefore oriented toward personality development and not, for example, vocational training.

Alex

The voluntary involvement in the youth association as a youth leader enabled Alex to develop valuable social skills in regular work with young people. These include, for example, argumentation, taking responsibility and a confident appearance.



This guide is based on this basic understanding.

Key terms

Overview — The following figure provides an overview of the current political and specialist discourse concerning recognition of competences. The following chapter also contains definitions and hints on how to understand the terms and concepts and how they relate to each other.

Guide to the Term Map

Learning and learning spaces are diverse, including in youth work. The systematization of **formal, non-formal and informal learning** enables this diversity to be mapped. It is the starting point for the recognition of personal and socially relevant competences.

Learning processes contribute to the development of **competences**. It is not just about measurable knowledge and skills, but a more holistic view to assess what a person has learned. The concept of competence is therefore an essential basis for enabling recognition(s).

It is not so easy to distinguish **learning outcomes** from competences. In principle, learning outcomes are understood primarily as standardized knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy, which are measured (observed, evaluated and assessed) at the end of a learning process.¹⁶

Learning outcomes are understood as reference points (especially in their bridging function between formal and non-formal learning):

They

- focus on what learners should know and be able to do at the end of a process
- make different learning types comparable and thus enable recognition

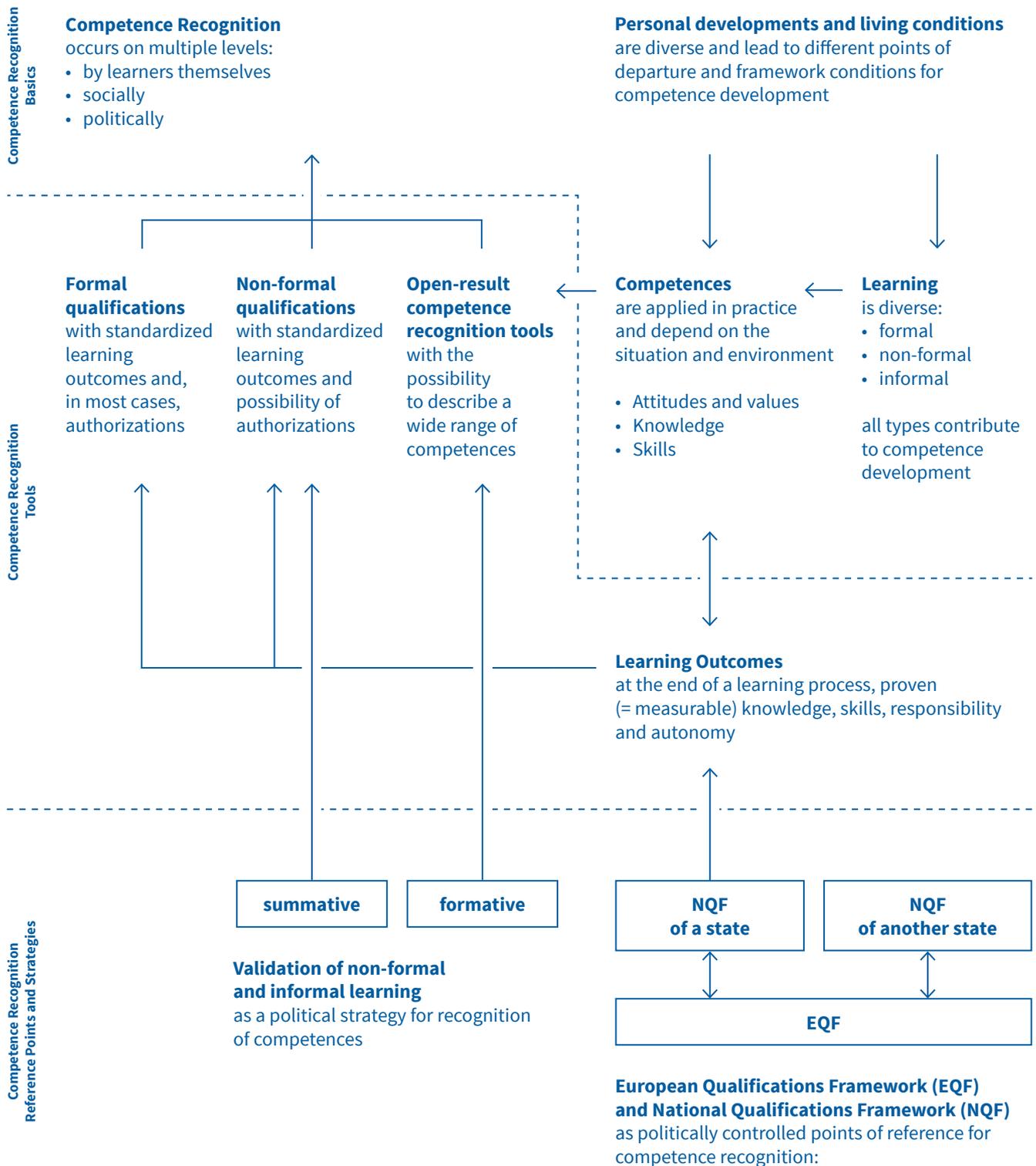
In order to facilitate the **recognition of competences** developed in non-formal and informal learning processes, the Council of the European Union has described the **validation of non-formal and informal learning** as a multi-stage process, the implementation of which it recommends to the Member States.¹⁷ The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**, to which the **National Qualifications Frameworks** of individual countries refer to, provides the necessary common perspective. Recognition is thus possible and feasible across national borders.

¹⁶ Originally, the term comes from the English-speaking world and was already used in 1918 and 1949. The focus here was on making the intentions of teachers visible. Since the 1970s, the approach to focus on learners has been chosen (cf. Cedefop 2017, p. 31): "International trends in education show a shift from the traditional 'teacher-centred' approach to a 'student-centred' approach. This alternative model focuses on what the students are expected to be able to do at the end of the module or programme" (Kennedy 2007, p. 18).

¹⁷ Council of the European Union 2012, p. 1

Term Map:

Competence and recognition in the scientific and political discourse



Definition of terms

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

As mentioned earlier, there are different ways and spaces where learning processes (can) take place. As a result, there are basically three forms of learning that are also relevant in youth work:

Formal learning describes learning within the publicly recognized educational institutions such as school or a higher education institution. It is aiming to specific goals and leads to certification, for example to a school-leaving qualification diploma.

Non-formal learning means that while learning takes place through planned activities and is structured (i.e. based on learning objectives, learning time, etc.), it takes place outside formal educational institutions. Usually, certification with educational qualifications is not achieved, although certificates are issued more and more frequently.¹⁸ Non-formal learning is of great importance for youth work, as it is one of its main tasks to offer this form of learning.¹⁹ The focus lies on personal development, group learning, interactive, participatory and experience-based learning.²⁰ This enables self-determined and self-organized learning without any pressure for success or results. In youth work, non-formal

education is also characterized by free access, voluntary participation and subject orientation.

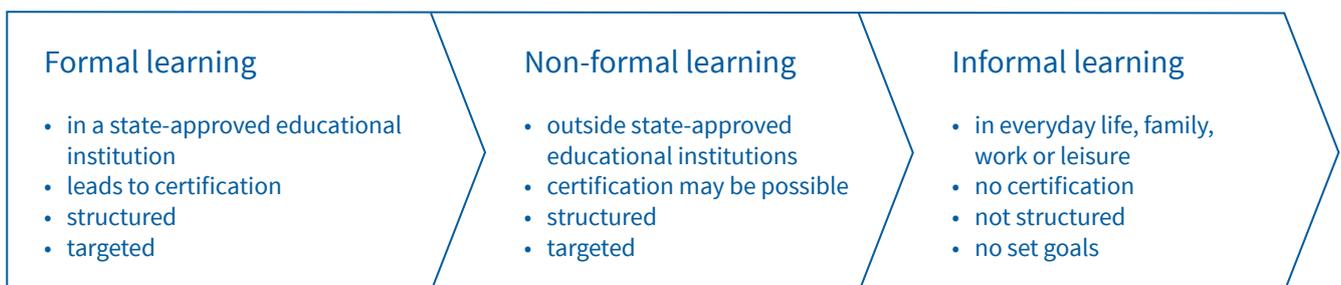
Informal learning means learning that results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organized or structured in terms of objectives or learning support.²¹ Informal learning also takes place in youth work, on the one hand young people naturally learn there, but also the full-time professional or voluntary youth workers.

Of course, it is not always clear which learning experiences were created in which context. The borders are blurry: “These three types of learning are neither completely different nor does one exclude the other. Furthermore, there are no clear borders between them. Rather, they represent archetypal constructions between formality and informality along the continuum.”²²

Alex

Formal learning would be Alex’ school education and bachelor’s degree. The many trainings and further education courses that Alex completed over time as a youth worker are non-formal learning. Apart from this, what Alex learned in daily dealings with young people, on the other hand, is informal learning.

An overview of forms of learning



Competence

Competence is applied in practice and is characterized by the way in which personal resources are mobilized or used depending on the situation.²³ It is made up of knowledge, skills and underlying attitudes and values. The latter, in particular, play a major role in youth work, as attitudes and values contribute significantly to the successful relationship practice with young people.

Alex

In the youth center where Alex works, there is a dispute between young people which almost escalates. Alex is able to react correctly in this situation and contributes to the fact that the adolescents settle the dispute. Alex’ attitude towards them plays a major role in this situation. On the one hand, Alex draws on previous experiences, but on the other hand Alex also uses theoretical knowledge about dealing with conflicts.

Learning Outcome

The term “learning outcome” is used as a central element in the policies of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. Thus, learning outcomes are “statements about what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after they have completed a learning process. They are defined as knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy.”²⁴ In contrast to competences, the term learning outcome refers to everything that is demonstrable (= measurable), whereas competences are not always measurable. The aim is to “make the competences to be acquired or already acquired competences visible and comparable.”²⁵

Alex

Alex is taking part in a training course in the field of theater pedagogy. In order to obtain a certificate, the required learning outcome is a theater project that must be planned, managed and evaluated. For the completion of the course, the project documentation will be evaluated, in which Alex demonstrates the achievement of the required learning outcome.

The current strong focus on learning outcomes enables transparency, comparability and recognition at international level. At national level, learning outcomes also play a major role in quality assurance. For institutions and educational providers, it influences the offer and development of study programs up to the course and module level, for which learning outcomes can be formulated specifically.

Advantages and criticism of the focus on learning outcomes

There are several advantages in orienting formal and non-formal teaching and learning processes to learning outcomes. Here are a few examples:

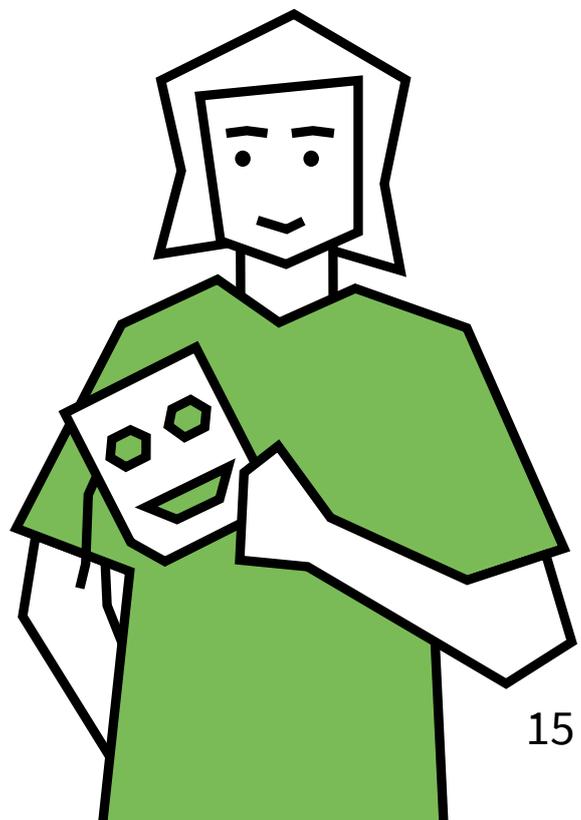
- Learning outcomes facilitate mobility and recognition of students' qualifications.²⁶
- They help to plan the (correct) education, the (correct) training or the educational path.²⁷
- Access to learning outcomes helps teachers plan their teaching, find appropriate methods and support the learning process of learners.²⁸
- For educational institutions, learning outcomes are an important tool for planning and communicating internally and externally. They provide an overview of what a course offers and the extent to which it overlaps or relates to other courses.

- Learning outcomes enable a change in perspective: The focus is no longer on the teachers, but on the learners.²⁹
- For society and the labor market, learning outcomes allow clearer communication, which skills are required and how they can be acquired.³⁰

Of course, learning outcomes not only have benefits but must also be viewed critically for a variety of reasons. A first and not insignificant point of criticism is that they are too simple to represent complex cognitive processes. A prominent representative of this criticism is Allais (2014): She fears that by formulating concrete and specific learning outcomes, learning processes will be reduced and their context ignored. This puts openness, as a characteristic of learning processes, at risk and especially the potential that lies in this openness, for example creativity or self-control of learners.³¹ This openness is, however, of crucial importance in youth work.

18 Baumbast et al. 2014, p. 16 f.
19 Jugend für Europa 2012, p. 86
20 Fennes und Otten 2008, p. 13
21 European Commission 2015, p. 14
22 Fennes und Otten 2008, p. 15
23 Spiegel 2013, p. 72
24 Council of the European Union 2017, p. 8

25 Bundesministerium für Unterricht,
Kunst und Kultur 2012, p. 6
26 Kennedy 2007, p. 76
27 Cedefop 2017, p. 24
28 Cedefop 2017, p. 24
29 Cedefop 2017, p. 24 f.
30 Cedefop 2017, p. 25
31 Cedefop 2017, p. 37 f.



Validation

Basically, validation means setting a value for, in this case, acquired competences. Achieved learning outcomes or acquired skills are valued in this process, which also enables translation into formal educational contexts. The aim of validation of non-formal and informal learning is to make the importance of the acquired competences

more visible and achieve social recognition for them. In 2012, the Council of the European Union recommended a four-stage procedure for the validation of non-formal and informal learning: 1. Identification of competences or learning experiences, 2. Documentation to make them visible, 3. Formal assessment of experiences and 4. Certification of the results of the evaluation.

Formative versus summative validation

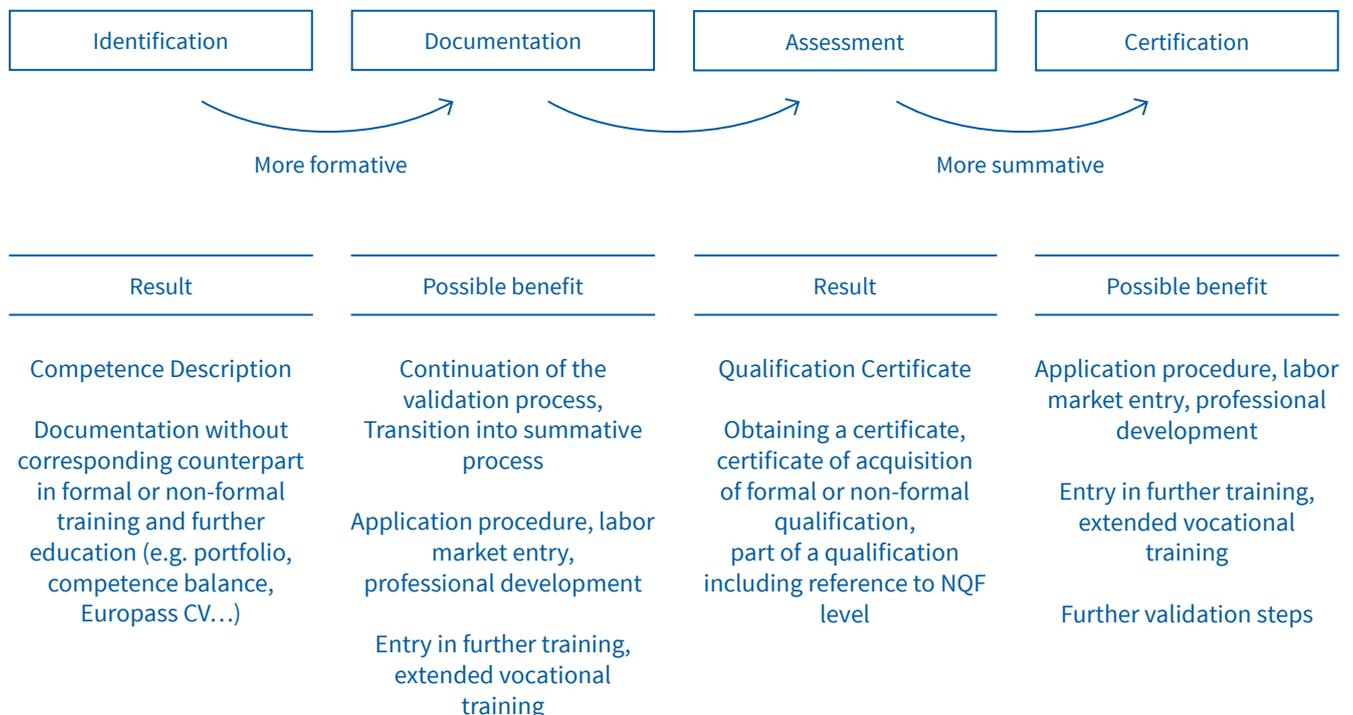
Validation can be performed in two ways:

Formative validation reflects and documents a person's competences – mostly using qualitative methods such as interviews, portfolios or observations. This can either be done independently or professionally accompanied. It is not about meeting defined standards, but about the individual and their competences. Formative processes lead to proof of individual competences, which can then be presented – for example in the Europass.³²

On the other hand, **summative validation** focuses on clear requirements and standards. It is about evaluating, assessing and ultimately certifying acquired competences based on these standards. In most cases, formative process steps are integrated in advance but specific methods such as simulations, tests or exams are also used. Summative validation procedures are carried out by a body or authority that is authorized to issue certificates and these procedures result in the acquisition of a qualification (or part of a qualification). They are also geared toward the labor market.³³

A summative validation procedure can be used to assign results of non-formal and informal learning processes, for example, to a qualifications framework.

Various types of validation and their significance



Source Federal Ministry for Education (BMB) 2017, p. 14

³² Federal Ministry for Education (BMB) 2017, p. 13

³³ Federal Ministry of Education (Bundesministerium für Bildung, BMB) 2017, p. 15

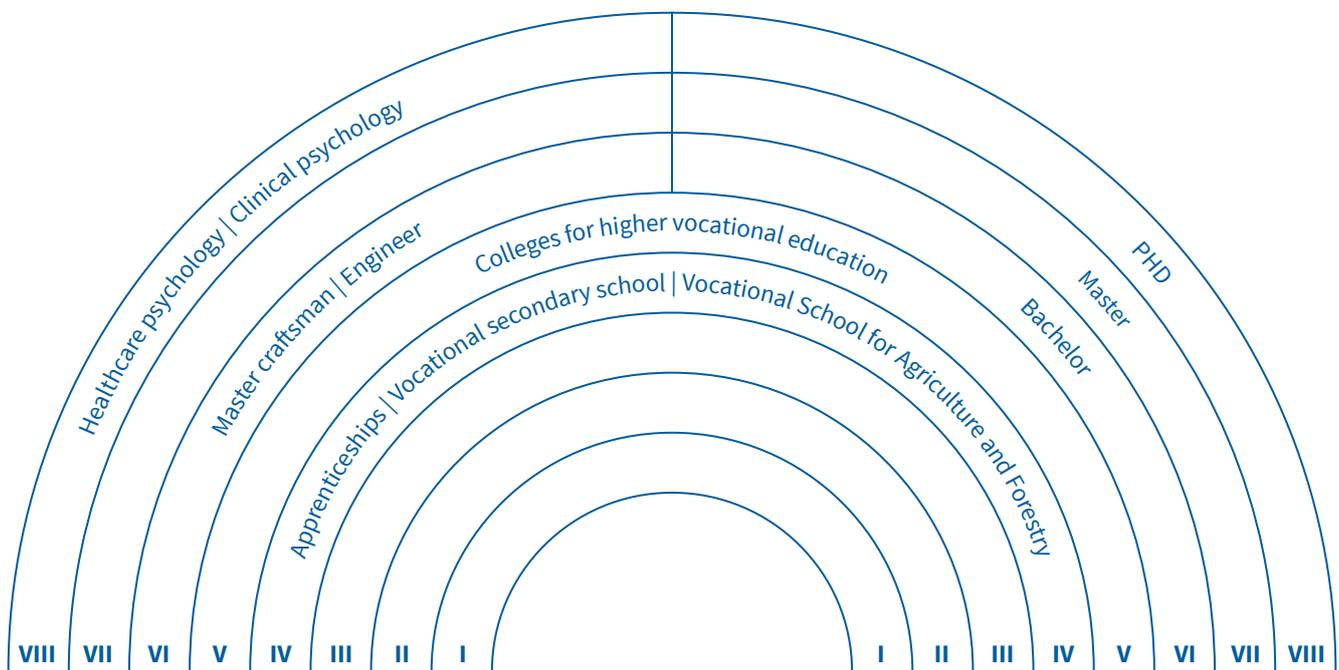
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The European Qualifications Framework is a tool aimed at making qualifications visible, transparent and comparable. Through this, formal, non-formal and informal learning should be connected more properly. In addition, validation of informal and non-formal learning can be supported with the EQF.³⁴ In the EQF, qualifications are assigned to specific levels based on their learning outcomes: The more complex the requirements for the described knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy, the higher the level. These requirements are documented in so-called descriptors for each of the eight EQF levels.³⁵

Examples of EQF assignments are already available for formal education: For example, a bachelor's degree is assigned to level VI, a master's degree is assigned to level VII and a PhD degree is assigned to level VIII. However, qualifications are not directly assigned to the EQF but are taken over from the national level: Member States are encouraged to develop their own qualifications frameworks, such as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Austria. An assignment to the NQF also means an assignment to the EQF. For this purpose, the NQF has adopted the descriptors of the EQF and its eight levels.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Austria

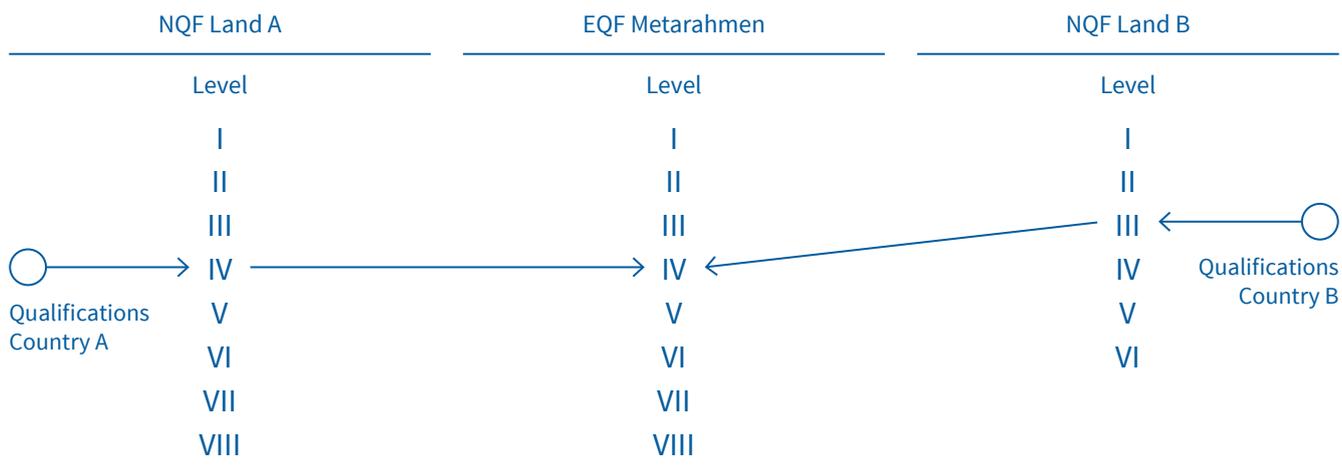


Source www.qualifikationsregister.at

The fact that national qualifications frameworks can be referenced to the EQF is particularly relevant when persons want to work in another country: The EQF allows qualifications to be translated into another national framework. This one does not necessarily have to have eight levels, like the Austrian NQF. At the same time, however, this also means that a level VI qualification can be compared to a bachelor's degree, regardless of which country.

34 Council of the European Union 2017, p. 1
35 Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 8

The qualifications framework and its translation in the international context



Alex

Alex wants to improve their Spanish skills and decides to work abroad for a year. A course that Alex completed while working as a youth worker is assigned to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). In Alex' application for a Spanish youth center Alex states that the "Group and Youth Management" course corresponds to level V of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and, in addition to the bachelor's degree certificate, also provides the qualification certificate. The youth center in Spain now knows what knowledge and skills Alex has proven and how autonomously Alex can work with groups of young people.

In the following chapters we will discuss the aufZAQ Competence Framework, the Qualification Profile and other exemplary tools which already exist. They serve the transparency and visibility of competences in youth work and support full-time and voluntary youth workers in their career orientation as well as employers and institutions in clarifying their claims. As mentioned, there are various youth work realities. Therefore, the following chapter provides a brief introduction to youth work and describes the relevant qualification system of the respective country.

aufZAQ Competence Framework for Youth Work

Context Information: Youth work in Austria

In Austria, the ministry responsible for youth defines youth work as a “social educational field of action and an extracurricular socialization field.”³⁶ The focus is on leisure activities which aim at informal and non-formal learning.

The institutions providing youth work are as versatile as their offered activities. They are non-profit associations, self-administered youth clubs or social organizations, some with their own youth groups or corresponding departments. Local authorities and confessional or party-political institutions can also assume this role. Youth work is therefore carried out in different settings, for example in coffee shops for young people, parks, community institutions or other places. The different activities basically correspond to the mentioned dimensions of our understanding of youth work.

Youth work plays an interface role: with partners such as legal guardians, school systems, child and youth assistance, health care institutions, cultural organizations and educational institutions, legal and executive branch, municipal work, labor market service, private sector companies, interest groups as well as administration and politics.

In Austria, youth work is regulated by legal and institutional framework conditions at the municipal, state and federal level. In principle, the nine federal states with their corresponding youth departments are responsible for the technical management and funding. In addition to the states, local authorities and municipalities are the most important and nearest regional contacts and funders: they create the necessary resources for personnel and infrastructure. In some cases, local authorities offer activities that enable young

people to participate and provide a platform for their suggestions and needs. The Federal Ministry responsible for youth work oversees the quality assurance of trainings and commissioned aufZAQ for quality assurance matters.

In Austria, a distinction is made between three main areas: youth work in associations, open youth work and youth information. In addition, there are regional or local initiatives which are often organized by young people themselves. The three areas are also reflected in the establishment of the three national organizations: The Federal Youth Association as a legally anchored interest group, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information and the Nationwide Network of Open Youth Work (bOJA).

There is no uniform qualification or study program in Austria, which is mainly concerned with youth work. There are different courses at universities, universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschule in Austria), higher schools and middle schools, which consider youth work as one of several fields of social-educational activity. In addition, there are various trainings which also prepare for youth work.³⁷ Non-formal qualification offers for full-time professional and voluntary youth workers are provided in several federal states on behalf of the corresponding youth departments by regional educational institutions. Here aufZAQ uses its certification services: they offer a quality certificate in the form of certification and quality assurance for educational providers who prepare for extra-curricular youth work with their courses. This not only makes the skills of youth workers more readable, but also ensures the quality of their training, while aufZAQ is acting in accordance with current technical developments and European-wide education policies. In 2016, 61 % of youth workers in open youth work in Austria had formal tertiary education, 27 % had non-formal education and 12 % had no specialist training.³⁸

³⁶ Federal Ministry for Family and Youth 2015, p. 4

³⁷ bOJA 2016, p. 22

³⁸ bOJA 2016, p. 15

Goals, development and benefits

The aufZAQ Competence Framework for Youth Work was developed by aufZAQ and serves as a translation tool for the qualifications of youth work to the Austrian and European Qualifications Framework. As a quality assurance tool for youth work trainings, aufZAQ has included the aufZAQ Competence Framework as a standard in order to be able to consider different learning paths for the completion of the course. Through the aufZAQ Competence Framework, courses can be assigned to the National Qualifications Framework in Austria.

The aufZAQ Competence Framework displays the competences of youth workers systematically and at different levels. It is also the basis for a course certification by aufZAQ: curricula of trainings and further education courses are assessed and classified according to the aufZAQ Competence Framework. Therefore, the aufZAQ Competence Framework is not only of interest to education

providers and students but also to those who want to work competently with young people (e.g. universities, schools, students, scientists, etc.).

The aufZAQ Competence Framework was empirically developed: In a multi-annual process, practitioners, representatives of organizations and specialist institutions and scientists throughout Austria were asked: "What do youth workers do when they act competently in their work?" This resulted in more than 2000 individual actions. These were summarized in competence descriptions which are now clearly presented in five competence areas.

Apart from being a training standard for courses in Austria, these competence descriptions can be used as a resource for the new and further development of all educational programs. The content can also be adapted and used to create job profiles, job postings and self-assessment tools.

Qualifications Profile for Youth Work

Context Information: Youth work in Germany

Youth work in Germany is characterized by its pronounced heterogeneity. It takes place in forms of open activities, for example in youth centers, active playgrounds, youth associations, in a mobile manner, as well as in communities and municipalities, youth education centers and many other places.

The Eighth Social Code (Achttes Sozialgesetzbuch SGB VIII) forms the legal basis for youth work in Germany. The legal mandate is formulated very openly: "Young people shall be provided with the necessary youth work services to promote their development. These shall build on the interests of young people and be co-determined and co-shaped by them, to enable them to self-determination and to encourage and lead them to social co-responsibility and social engagement."³⁹

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, activities are provided primarily by independent bodies. Public institutions are required to support the existing offers and to provide their own measures only if necessary.⁴⁰ "Among the numerous institutions that offer services for young people, the largest groups are youth associations, Catholic and Protestant institutions, as well as cities and municipalities, even without their own Youth Welfare Office."⁴¹ Measures taken by free providers are characterized by "different value orientations, contents, methods and working methods."⁴² This structure of free and public institutions characterizes youth work in Germany at all levels (from the municipality to the federal level). In order to meet the needs of the different regions, youth work is initially the responsibility of the municipalities with the Youth Assistance Committee and the Youth Welfare Office from the public side, and of the City Youth Council as well as other actors concerning the free institutions. The Youth Councils represent the different youth associations and have an organizational structure up to the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR in German).

39 §11 par. 1 of SGB VIII

40 § 4 SGB VIII

41 Kinder- und Jugendhilfereport 2018, p. 115

42 § 3 par. 2 SGB VIII

In line with the federal structure of the Republic of Germany, the public institutions are also joining forces at the state and federal level.

In 2016, 30,302 persons were employed in the entire field of youth work, according to the youth welfare statistics.⁴³ The main group is made up of 24,938 professionals, of whom almost 18% are employed on a temporary basis. In addition to full-time professional employees, youth work is especially carried out by many volunteers. Almost two-thirds of all services are carried out in cooperation of full-time and voluntary workers and 27.6% are exclusively carried out by volunteers. The training and professional background of the full-time professional workers is as versatile as youth work itself. In part, youth work is characterized by so-called “career jumpers”. Nevertheless, the rate of those with a professional qualification is relatively high. 63.4% have a formal qualification in the field and 45.9% have a corresponding academic qualification.⁴⁴

In this sense, there is no uniform qualification for the field of youth work. As a rule, the qualification is obtained through study programs like social work, educational science or other social science studies. However, youth work is rarely an integral part of the curriculum. In the field of training, full-time professionals in youth work completed the training as a state-certified educator.

Goals, development and benefits

The Qualifications Profile for Youth Work was developed by the JumP project at Kempten University and defines the competence requirements, that are nowadays placed on full-time professionals in youth work, systematically and at the level of higher education (level VI) of the German Qualifications Framework.⁴⁵ It was developed within the framework of an accompanying research project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in order to contribute to the universities opening up to this topic.

The Qualifications Profile for Youth work facilitates the recognition of youth work competences in the higher education system and supports their recognition in society and politics. In addition, the Qualifications Profile provides an important impetus for the debate on the professionalism of youth work and, among other things, stimulates the discussion about the further development of academic teaching in the field of youth work.

The Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is therefore of interest to professionals and actors in youth work, universities and other training institutions, but also to scientists, political representatives and the public. The empirical basis of the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is one of its special features: The starting point were group interviews with associations of professionals from various fields of youth work. The qualitative and content-analytical evaluation results were discussed at meetings with other representatives of youth work, professionals, scientists and teachers and thus gradually discursively systematized. The result are seven competence dimensions and a characterization of the field of work (across the different fields of activity of skilled workers). The competences of youth workers described above are compatible with both the German and the European Qualifications Framework.

The Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is also used in other contexts:

For example, in the qualification and further training of youth workers, in the development of job profiles or in specialist debates on the professional self-image of youth work. Thus, the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work also contributes to the recognition of the skills of youth workers and their professional self-assurance.

⁴³ Kinder- und Jugendhilfereport 2018, p. 115

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 118

⁴⁵ Riechert et al. 2018, p. 2

Tools for the recognition of competences

This chapter describes further tools that make competences readable and transparent, like the aufZAQ Competence Framework and the JumP Qualifications Profile of the Kempten University. Especially, tools that are suitable for youth work or are already being used and are of interest.

International Competence Certificate (Kompetenznachweis International)

In Germany, the Association for International Youth Work (IJAB in German) developed the International Certificates. These are three types of certificates that make the acquired competences readable at international level. There is the International Participation Certificate, the International Involvement Certificate and the International Competence Certificate. The International Competence Certificate is an education pass that certifies individually displayed competences. These are identified by a detection method:⁴⁶ Special coaches elaborate the Competence Certificate together with young people in four steps: 1. Project analysis, 2. Project monitoring by the coaches, 3. Dialog between coach and young people and 4. Elaboration of the Certificate based on the observed competences.

ProfilPASS

The ProfilPASS was also created in Germany.⁴⁷ It was developed in a cooperation between the German Institute for Adult Education at the Leibniz Center for Lifelong Learning and the Institute for Development Planning and Structural Research at the University of Hannover. The ProfilPASS is available both online and as a print version and is especially aimed at young people aged 13 and older. It basically consists of two parts, namely a) a portfolio and b) a special consultation, which is intended to further deepen the reflection process.

Youthpass

Youthpass is a recognition tool for competences acquired during youth work projects throughout Europe. In the first place it certifies the learning outcomes of people who participate in youth mobility projects from Youth in Action – Erasmus+. The result is the cooperation of project managers and young people and is intended to foster the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.⁴⁸ The Youthpass was developed by the European Commission and wants to highlight the learning culture of funded youth projects.

The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio

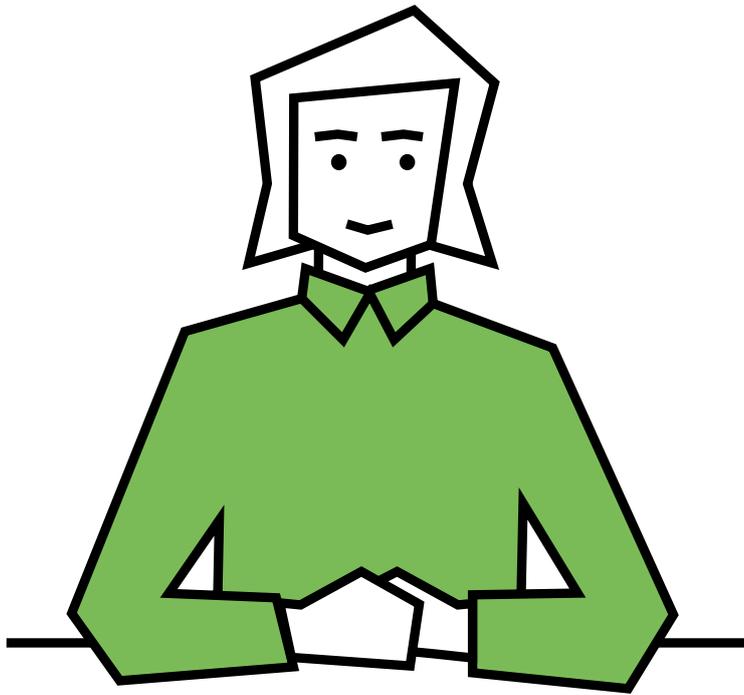
Unlike the examples mentioned above, the Youth Worker Portfolio⁴⁹ designed by the Council of Europe is explicitly aimed at all those involved in youth work. This ranges from regional to international level, from youth leaders to administrative managers and heads of responsible institutions. Unlike the examples ProfilPASS and the International Competence Certificate, the use of this tool is not accompanied by trained consultants: The portfolio is process oriented. Specific learning objectives are set and progress is reflected.

⁴⁶ see <http://www.nachweise-international.de/welche-gibt-es/kompetenznachweis.html>

⁴⁷ see <https://www.profilpass-fuer-junge-menschen.de>

⁴⁸ see <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>

⁴⁹ see <https://www.coe.int/web/youth-portfolio>



Professional qualifications standard for youth workers in Estonia

Estonia has its own professional qualifications standard for youth workers. This is part of a professional qualifications system that aims to link the labor market and lifelong learning. This standard describes youth work as a profession and specifies the competence and level requirements. It is also linked to the Estonian Qualifications Framework, which in turn refers to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The responsible institution is the Estonian Youth Work Center.⁵⁰ Interested parties fill out a portfolio in advance, in which they describe all formal and non-formal qualifications and practical experience to date. Once this portfolio is assessed, they are invited to an interview. After a positive evaluation they receive their qualification certificate from the aforementioned Youth Work Centre. The certification is available for different levels for tasks as a youth worker, as a camp supervisor and camp manager.

Alex

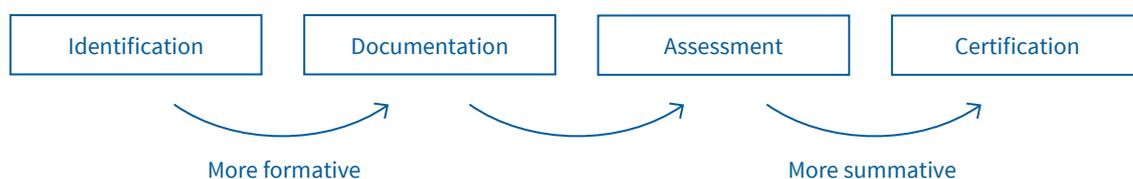
After completing a bachelor's degree and several years of practice in youth work, as well as several further training courses, Alex would like to obtain a degree as a youth worker at level VII, comparable to the master's degree level, and by doing so, validate the non-formal and informal acquired competences. This is possible in Estonia. In the first step, Alex completes a portfolio and submits it for evaluation together with certificates for practical experience, training and further education. The Assessment Committee examines the submitted documents to determine whether Alex matches the competence set of the professional qualification for youth workers at level VII. The assessment is positive and Alex is invited to a face-to-face meeting where the Assessment Committee will evaluate the competences in an interview. Alex is convincing during the interview and is awarded the professional qualification for youth workers at level VII.

⁵⁰ see <https://entk.ee/en/about-estonian-youth-work/>

Context of the aufZAQ Competence Framework, Qualifications Profile and other tools

This guide introduced some tools that may be helpful in making competences visible and recognizing them. The table below shows how these tools relate to each other, the objectives for which tool is suitable and the resulting consequences.

Forms of validation an competence tools



Examples	Qualifications Profile for Youth Work, International Competence Certificate, ProfilPASS, Youthpass, Youth Work Portfolio	aufZAQ Competence Framework in conjunction with an assignment to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), professional qualifications standard for youth workers in Estonia
Result	Competence Description	Qualification Certificate
Goals	Motivation and promotion of learning Identification and documentation of the individual learning process	Review, assessment and certification of acquired competences Acquisition of a qualification
Methods	Open-ended methods: Interviews, discussions, portfolios, observations	Standardized assessment procedures (oral examination, evaluation of written work, simulations, tests, examinations ...)
Implementation	independently or professionally accompanied process-like, regular	Authorities or institutions issuing a certificate one-time, at specific times
Output	Feedback on the learning process individual situation determination, orientation and further development	Qualification certificate to display learning outcome for use in the labor market or in the formal education system
Orientation to/ comparison with	Individual, not at defined standards	Comparison with equally valid standards
Position in the qualification system	different	Tools that also lead to the acquisition of a qualification in the education and training system
Qualification within the EQF/ NQF possible?	No Individual Competence Certificate	Yes A qualification associated with the NQF

A diverse field of action, such as youth work at international level but also within individual states, requires a variety of different strategies to make necessary competences visible and transparent. Precisely when these are acquired through informal or non-formal learning, this is a great challenge. The aufZAQ Competence Framework and the Qualifications Profile can support in this.

aufZAQ Competence Framework and Qualifications Profile in direct comparison

A direct comparison between the aufZAQ Competence Framework and the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is particularly useful because the two tools link the formal and non-formal areas of youth work for the first time. This is possible despite the different development background and context: while the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work was developed by a research project at a university in Bavaria, the aufZAQ Competence Framework was created in the area of quality development of non-formal education offers in Austria.

Both models have in common that they make relevant youth work competences visible. In doing so, they make various forms of recognition possible at all. However, they are not limited to a specific field of activity but are based on a comprehensive, cross-organizational and cross-activity approach. Thus, the two models provide useful tools for reflecting professional actions. Apart from this, they also serve as quality development and assurance tool of educational offerings. Their methodological openness enables a wide variety of methods, pedagogical approaches and forms of identification.

Theory and practice knowledge can be considered as interrelated by the two competence models.

Aside from their comprehensive claim, the two models share their empirical and theoretical basis: both build on the practice of youth work in the respective region. They are thus of very high significance for training institutions, scientists, political actors and many other groups.

In this context, the respective connection to the National (Austria) and the German Higher Education Qualifications Framework and the associated reference to the European level are important. Therefore, the two models have the potential to strengthen the transparency and visibility of competences, qualifications and recognitions in the European area. The novelty of the models is particularly noteworthy here: The aufZAQ Competence Framework specifies the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for youth work, while the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work provides a technically sound description of the competences specific to youth work at higher education level.

Overview — similarities and differences between aufZAQ Competence Framework and Qualifications Profile for youth work

Similarities between Qualifications Profile for youth work and aufZAQ Competence Framework

- Both are competence models
- People engaged in youth work are the reference point.
- Both models were developed empirically discursive (group discussions, qualitative content analysis and then discursive formats).
- The common motivation is to generate more recognition for the competences of youth workers.
- An essential basis for this is the EQF and the two national counterparts that reference to it (NQF in Austria and GQF in Germany).
- Both models generalize competence descriptions so that they can be applied to different fields of activity, such as youth work in associations and open youth work. However, they are specific enough to give precise technical names to characteristics of youth work.

Differences between Qualifications Profile for youth work and aufZAQ Competence Framework

Qualifications Profile for youth work

aufZAQ Competence Framework

Divided into different forms of competences (e.g. action competences)

Divided into content areas, which furthermore are divided into content dimensions. For example, the dimension “youth workers create longer-term plans (e.g. annual planning) for various extensive activities/offers and implement them” in the area “organize and manage (projects)”.

In addition to the group discussions, questionnaires were also completed by organizations and evaluated by aufZAQ.

The Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is based on level VI of the GQF.

The aufZAQ Competence Framework specifies the descriptors from level II to VI of the Austrian NQF.

The Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is aimed at the full-time professionals in youth work.

The aufZAQ Competence Framework represents the actions in youth work in associations and in open youth work. Voluntary involvement is consciously and explicitly included.

The Qualifications Profile for Youth Work is process-oriented and incomplete.

The aufZAQ Competence Framework is currently a valid standard for the qualifications of youth workers. It will be evaluated in a few years' time and developed or updated accordingly.

Conclusion

In the previous chapters it was shown why the aufZAQ Competence Framework and the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work are pioneering work. Both are competence models that treat youth work holistically and on the one hand represent clear standards, but on the other hand offer scope for the very diverse area of youth work. This means that youth work has two tools at its disposal, which represent the learning areas that are so important for practice – non-formal and informal learning – much better than models tailored to formal criteria.

The guide and, above all, the two presented models show that recognition of these learning processes at political level is not only desirable but also possible and feasible. Politically and in implementation, this relevance to reality is of crucial importance: For example, training courses in youth work are already continuously being certified and quality-assured in accordance with the aufZAQ Competence Framework.

Apart from this, it was shown that at many different levels a lively discussion is already underway about recognition and validation: at political and scientific level, internationally as well as within the EU Member States and, of course, also among relevant stakeholders and practitioners.

On the one hand, this is linked to the need for competent youth workers, but on the other hand it is also linked to the need to grasp their competences, to make them visible and to show how diverse and broad the field of youth work is and must be.

In the following parts two and three of this guide, the two competence models are presented and their application in concrete terms is explained: What is their essence? How were they developed? How and where are they already being implemented in practice and what are the possible future and development prospects that result from it? Part two is dedicated to the aufZAQ Competence Framework for Youth Work, part three to the JumP Qualifications Profile for Youth Work of the Kempten University.

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This guide deals with the recognition of competences in youth work. It was developed as a cooperation between the project “Youth work with perspective” (JumP) at University of Applied Sciences Kempten (Germany) and aufZAQ (Austria). On the one hand, it provides an overview of the European political discourse in the field of competence recognition. On the other hand, it presents concrete possibilities and tools that make the recognition of competences possible. Two examples of this are the Qualifications Profile for Youth Work of the project JumP and the aufZAQ Competence Framework for Youth Work. This publication compares the two competency models and places them in context with other tools. The guide shows which models and possibilities for the recognition of competences already exist and how they are used.