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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Digital Youth Work

Delegations will find attached the conclusions on Digital Youth Work, as adopted by the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council (EYCS) on 21-22 November 2019.

Digital Youth Work

- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

RECOGNISING THAT

1. The Council conclusions on smart youth work contribute to the innovative development of youth work in Europe and enhanced efforts should be made to continue on this path.
2. Digital literacy and other 21st-century skills play a crucial role in young people's independence, social inclusion, employability and daily lives. Young people have diverse competences enabling them to operate in a digitalised environment. However, all young people will need an agile, flexible and critical approach to digital technology in their future work and everyday lives.
3. The digital divide needs to be bridged.¹ All young people should have equal opportunities to enhance their digital competences, regardless of their background².
4. Digital youth work can help to achieve the European Youth Goals³.
5. Gender gaps in digital competences and in engagement in digital activities need to be addressed, as do stereotypes related to the use of digital technologies.

¹ "Digital divide" explicitly includes access to ICTs, as well as the related skills that are needed to take part in the information society.

² "Digital divide" can be classified according to gender, age, education, income, social groups or geographic location.

³ Annex 3 to the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027

6. Youth work has a great potential to allow for experiential learning in a non-formal setting and to involve young people in activities to strengthen their digital competences and media literacy. Youth work can also engage young people who are at risk of being left behind in a digitalised society.
7. Youth work approaches, goals, principles and professional boundaries should be considered in the context of digitalisation and their impact should be assessed in this light.
8. Youth work empowers young people to be active and creative in digital society, to make informed and reasoned decisions, and to take responsibility and control of their digital identity. Youth work may also help young people to face online risks related to conduct, content, contact and commercialism⁴, including hate speech, cyberbullying, disinformation and propaganda.
9. Digitalisation of youth work has often been understood as the use of social media. However, new digital technologies are emerging rapidly. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, robotics and block-chain technology, inter alia, are affecting our societies beyond the sphere of communication. Not only basic digital competencies are required, but also specific digital competencies enhancing the employability of young people are important. Youth work should be able to address the challenges of convergence between the digital and physical environments and benefit from the opportunities offered by the digital transformation, while at the same time facing challenges in regard to services.
10. The rapid advances in digital media and technology in recent years have also influenced youth work. However, a significant number of youth work practitioners lack digital competences and knowledge to make the best possible use of digital technologies in delivering high-quality youth work due to financial, structural, material or administrative reasons.

⁴ <https://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Supporting-Young-People-Online.pdf>

11. Many youth policy documents lack foresight about the ways in which digitalisation will affect society, young people and youth work. Many strategies also lack a holistic approach to developing youth work in the digital era.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, IN LINE WITH THE SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE AND AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS, TO

12. Promote and develop youth policies and strategies that strive to be proactive with regard to technological development and digitalisation. When designing policies that affect young people's lives, the impact of digitalisation on societies, including youth work practices and services, should be taken into account and assessed. To that end, cross-sectoral cooperation between relevant policy sectors and stakeholders should be intensified.

13. Include, where applicable, in their youth strategies or other relevant policy plans, clear goals and concrete steps for developing and implementing digital youth work and assessing its impact on young people and youth work. These goals should be based on knowledge, evidence and data regarding young people's digital competences, and the needs for youth work services.

14. Encourage youth work and youth organisations to pursue these goals while developing their digital activities and services in accordance with their specific interests and needs, and to use innovative methodologies to support the achievement of youth work outcomes, including through digital youth work.

15. Consider, where appropriate, experimental and innovative approaches and new co-operation models, to deliver digital youth work activities and services.

16. Invest in and set up guidelines for building digital capacity among youth workers, youth organisations and organisations doing youth work, where needed. Digital youth work could be embedded in both professional curricula for youth workers and training for volunteers, and incorporated into youth workers' continuing education and training.
17. Encourage youth workers and young people to increase and improve their digital competences in a co-learning process.
18. Promote the use of existing materials⁵ and develop new digital youth work materials and training for youth workers by making use inter alia of the training needs list proposed by the expert group⁶ set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018. In addition, organise training on the strategic development of digital youth work.
19. Create the space and conditions for experimentation to develop digital tools and services in youth work, and to bring together youth work, youth research and the ICT sector in developing successful digital youth work practices and sharing experiences.
20. Provide opportunities for young people to practise and improve digital competences in various youth work settings, including key areas of digital competence as listed in the Digital Competence Framework DigComp 2.1: information and data literacy; communication and collaboration; content creation; safety; and problem solving. Learning modalities can include experiential learning, reverse mentoring and intergenerational cooperation.

⁵ E.g. the Salto toolbox for training and youth work, <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/>

⁶ The training needs defined by the expert group on 'Risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy' include 1. Digitalisation of society, 2. Planning, designing and evaluating digital youth work, 3. Information and data literacy, 4. Communication, 5. Digital creativity, 6. Safety and 7. Reflection and evaluation (<https://publications.europa.eu/s/fouj>)

21. Empower young people, including those who feel they are not-listened-to and/or who have fewer opportunities, to actively participate in democratic decision-making processes, including EU Youth Dialogue, by engaging them in digital and other innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation.
22. Consider all barriers, including all forms of discrimination and gender stereotyping, that could negatively affect young people's opportunities and motivation to acquire digital competence throughout their education, training and professional pathways, and to take up science, technology, art, engineering and mathematics (STEAM) studies and careers.
23. Strengthen the role of youth work in supporting young people's creative use of technology and give them the skills to be both critical consumers and active creators in technological terms.
24. Promote better access for young people, in particular those with fewer opportunities and those living in rural and remote areas, or where face-to-face access is not feasible, to youth work services through the use of digital technologies.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, TO

25. Encourage the exchange of best practices with regard to the implementation and development of digital strategies, including by making use of the opportunities provided by Erasmus+ and other relevant EU funding instruments.
26. Promote and make use of existing digital and physical platforms for peer-learning activities on using digital technology in youth work as a tool, an activity or as content.

27. Organise events bringing young people, youth workers, experts, researchers and ICT sector figures together to innovate new ways and approaches to using technology in youth work.
 28. Encourage and support Europe-wide research to increase the knowledge on the impact of digitalisation on young people and youth work.
 29. Improve the digital competences through non-formal learning and training, taking into account the updating process of the Digital Education Action Plan in view of extending it to youth work.
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A. References

In adopting these conclusions, the Council takes note of the following documents:

1. Council Conclusions on smart youth work (2017/C 418/02)
2. Council conclusions on the protection of children in the digital world (OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 15–18)
3. Expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018 on Risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy: Developing digital youth work - Policy recommendations and training needs (2017);
4. European Commission. DigComp 2.1: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use (2017);
5. Communication from the Commission on the Digital Education Action Plan, COM(2018) 22 final;
6. Communication from the Commission on a European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (COM/2012/0196 final)
7. European Commission. Study on the Impact of the Internet and Social Media on Youth Participation and Youth Work (2018);
8. Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European Cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01)
9. Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR) (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1–88)

10. Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01)
11. EIGE’s report “Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalization” (14348/18 ADD 2)
12. Screenagers: Using ICT, digital and social media in youth work. A review of research findings from Austria, Denmark, Finland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (2016)
13. EU-CoE Youth Partnership Symposium Report - "Connecting the dots: Young people, social inclusion and digitalization (Tallinn, 26-28 June 2018)

B. Definitions

For the purpose of these Council conclusions:

- “Digital competences” involve the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes [...] information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property-related questions, [...] problem solving and critical thinking. (Source: Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01))
- “Digital youth work” means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work. Digital media and technology can be either a tool, an activity or a content in youth work. Digital youth work is not a youth work method. Digital youth work can be included in any youth work setting and it has the same goals as youth work in general. Digital youth work can happen in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments, or in a mixture of the two. Digital youth work is underpinned by the same ethics, values and principles as youth work. (Source: <https://publications.europa.eu/fi/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1>)

- “Digital divide” refers to the distinction between those who have internet access and are able to make use of new services offered on the World Wide Web, and those who are excluded from these services. At a basic level, the participation of citizens and enterprises in the information society depends on access to information and communication technology (ICT), i.e. the presence of electronic devices, such as computers, and internet connections. The term explicitly includes access to ICTs, as well as the related skills that are needed to take part in the information society. The digital divide can be classified according to criteria that describe the difference in participation according to gender, age, education, income, social groups or geographic location. (Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Digital_divide)
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