

# 1. ABOUT THE MANUAL

## *Introduction to the manual*

The current manual is aimed primarily at members of preparatory teams of study sessions at the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe, and intended to be a useful handbook for course directors and facilitators of the sessions. It offers support and guidelines on three different levels, namely through presenting the *concept and criteria* for sessions and by developing *individual* and *team* competences. However, it will also hopefully be useful for facilitators and organisers of other similar youth activities.

The first *Manual for facilitators in non-formal education* was published in 2009 and has been extensively used by teams of facilitators in preparing and running study sessions and other activities at the European Youth Centres and beyond. The authors of the manual relied heavily on the learning accumulated through the Training Course for Facilitators of Study Sessions (TC4) when compiling the publication. However, in order to maintain the high quality of its educational activities, the Youth Department carried out an evaluation of its programme of study sessions in 2014-15, and its results and suggestions for improvement have been approved by the Programming Committee of the youth sector.<sup>1</sup> This version of the *Manual* is one of the direct results of the evaluation, and primarily targets those young people who work on study sessions but may not have had the possibility of attending preliminary training courses.

Following a brief introductory first chapter on the necessity and use of the manual and the role of a variety of persons normally involved, Chapter 2 – ‘What is a study session?’ presents the concept and quality standards of study sessions and leads through the first steps of developing an idea and applying for an activity. Chapter 3 – ‘Personal preparation’ sidetracks by giving an insight into the basics of non-formal and human rights education and other skills of extreme importance for facilitators when preparing and running study sessions. Chapter 4 – ‘Team preparation’ focuses again more on practical issues: the importance of setting up a team, collaboration and programme design, and debriefing. Both Chapters 3 and 4 also give practical guidance in relation to group dynamics and facilitation of workshops. Chapter 5 – ‘Evaluation and reporting’ provides support for facilitators regarding rules and good practices of evaluating and reporting study sessions, and Chapter 6 – ‘Follow-up and dissemination of results’ calls attention to the importance of making the outcomes of the sessions visible and thus ensuring a multiplying effect and long-term impact. Finally, the ‘Conclusions’ are followed by an extensive list of Appendices which form an integral part of the publication: they include background materials for supporting individual and team preparations and learning, as well as documents and templates of practical use that help in making study sessions more accessible and inclusive, and support reporting.

The overall publication is designed to serve as a stimulating and hands-on manual for the teams of study sessions and will hopefully be widely used throughout the application process and preparatory meetings, as well as during the implementation of the activities in the European Youth Centres.

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<sup>1</sup> All related administrative and financial documentation, along with the *Quality standards in education and training activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe*, have been updated and can be found online: [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/study-sessions](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/study-sessions).

## WHY A MANUAL FOR ORGANISERS OF STUDY SESSIONS?

The nature of youth work implies a regular turnover of volunteers and staff in the organisations active in this field, especially those facilitating educational activities on a sporadic and voluntary basis. Therefore, regular training of new generations of young people and youth leaders is required.

The programme of study sessions at the European Youth Centres, organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with international youth organisations or networks, consists of some 20-25 activities every year. They include more than 800 young people per year and more than 100 people are involved in preparing them.

The study sessions of the European Youth Centres have been trendsetters in European youth work and remain a benchmark for intercultural youth activities. Successful study sessions have always been dependent on the appropriate selection of a relevant topic, recruitment of participants with the right profile and a competent team of facilitators, trainers, youth workers or youth leaders.

This manual is published to support the quality of study sessions and other educational activities in its programme. Preparing study session team members and developing their competences is one of the essential prerequisites for enabling exchanges of views and dialogical learning, preparing the participants to act as multipliers in their day-to-day lives, and ultimately contributing to the values and priorities of the Council of Europe and its youth sector. We hope that international youth organisations and other organisers of study sessions will find value in this manual and make its use a standard feature in the preparation of teams running study sessions.

When revising the *Manual*, all attempts have been made to complete and update the information in the publication, with special regard to general quality standards, as well as human rights education and intercultural learning. The intention is to make the content easy-to-use, practical and short, while referring the user to other educational manuals for more guidance on specific issues, such as designing training courses and workshops, planning evaluation or integrating human rights and intercultural learning into the programme.

Additionally, the content is complemented with considerable practical information on administrative processes and regulations that are indispensable for ensuring a smooth preparatory process and implementation, as well as information relating to accessibility and gender mainstreaming.

## TRAINING COURSES FOR FACILITATORS

The first Training Course for Facilitators of Study Sessions (TC4) was held in April 2004. Since then, the aim of TC4 has been to train facilitators from youth organisations in non-formal education for ensuring a quality process, including preparing, implementing, evaluating and securing effective follow-up of international youth training activities in specific study sessions, organised and run in co-operation with the Council of Europe's Youth Department. The courses addressed the needs of youth organisations and other youth work institutions in having competent and autonomous volunteers and staff capable of facilitating training and education activities to meet the needs of their membership. The course became one of the generic training courses run principally every two years in a two-year frequency by the Youth Department and was reintroduced with a new curriculum as from 2018.

As not all young people who are involved in preparing and delivering study sessions are able to participate in such a specialised training course, this guide was produced to help them to prepare in their roles as facilitators / preparatory team members. The text has largely benefited from the *Youth Department guide for study sessions*, the two reports produced by the participants of the Training Courses for Facilitators and other training publications. The objectives and the methodology of this manual follow the logic and the educational rationale of the two training courses for facilitators.

# ***Objectives and use of the manual***

## **FOR THE INDIVIDUAL FACILITATORS**

This manual aims to equip facilitators with a basic knowledge of study sessions and to raise future preparatory team members' awareness of the Council of Europe quality criteria and principles related to their responsibilities. It is designed to increase their knowledge and awareness of the values underpinning non-formal educational youth activities taking place at the European Youth Centres. Objectives also include giving a basic insight into different concepts of learning in non-formal education, and developing preparatory team members' competences in, and motivation to use, intercultural learning and human rights education in study sessions.

The manual is also intended to assist facilitators in non-formal education to develop essential skills with multicultural youth groups (e.g. programme design, leadership, teamwork, chairing and facilitating, communication, group dynamics, evaluation and follow-up). A specific emphasis is placed on the development of preparatory team members' awareness of and skills in organising the follow-up, in particular in writing reports and securing other forms of dissemination of the results of study sessions. The Council of Europe's intention is to provide facilitators with a concise insight into the political and administrative framework of study sessions run in co-operation with the European Youth Centres.

## **FOR YOUTH ORGANISATIONS**

This manual promotes the values connected with study sessions, as well as the means to call attention to study sessions as a unique opportunity for youth organisations to implement their strategies and programme in co-operation with the Council of Europe. It also enables facilitators to achieve meaningful follow-up with their member organisations after the study sessions, and the communication of the results to a wider public. Ultimately, it contributes to the quality and impact of international activities initiated by youth organisations.

## **HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL**

This manual provides background information and suggestions on non-formal education, human rights education and intercultural learning applicable to study sessions. It also proposes links to related resources and information on the criteria set by the Council of Europe for the successful preparation, implementation, evaluation and follow-up of study sessions organised in co-operation with the European Youth Centres.

The publication reflects the life cycle of a study session from the initial idea to the implementation and follow-up. Certain issues inevitably appear more than once and are presented from different perspectives and in varying detail. For example, human rights education is reflected on in both Chapter 2 (defining study sessions as specific educational activities) and more in-depth in Chapter 3 on personal preparation. Similarly, the importance of follow-up and relevant expectations are both discussed in the chapter on writing a study session proposal, as well as at the end of the publication separately.

Additionally, a number of textboxes are included in the publication to highlight issues of key importance, and, through reflection points and case studies, we provide guidance to increase the quality of the study session in all phases of its implementation:

## KEEP IN MIND!

This box is designed to point out some specific **rules** which are applicable to study sessions. These rules might already be mentioned in the call and criteria for applications, the quality criteria applying to educational activities of the Council of Europe youth sector, or the technical and administrative requirements.

## REFLECTION POINTS

Reflection points propose questions that can be used when preparing a proposal or during the preparatory process with your team members. They are usually directly related to the preceding chapter or part of the text, and help the facilitators to connect the content in the manual with their own realities, and to apply the findings to their study session.

## CASE STUDIES

A few case studies are also presented, based on previous experiences from certain study sessions and other activities. These give an insight into how the programme of study session can be planned and defined in relation to the context of a specific youth organisation and help in handling typical challenging issues during the implementation of a study session.

For more detailed and up-to-date information on the rules and conditions applicable to study sessions, please consult the relevant website of the Council of Europe: [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/study-sessions](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/study-sessions)

## MAIN ROLES OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A STUDY SESSION

**Person (or people) responsible for the application on behalf of the organisation(s):** Official representative(s) of the organisation applying for a study session. They are notified about the decision of the application and are responsible for initiating the preparatory process by putting the Secretariat in contact with the course director.

They also bear overall responsibility on behalf of the organisation for the implementation and follow-up of the activity, even if the *practical work* is in the hands of the course director. They may need to be involved in communication concerning issues and specific requests regarding the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the organisers.

Depending on organisational structure, sometimes – besides the person responsible for the application – there is also a person responsible for the activity who is ultimately in charge of the organisation's commitments *specifically related to the given study session*. This role does not necessarily fall into the hands of, or overlap with the course director, even if it is often the case.

**Course director (and facilitator):** The course director is the main person in charge of the preparation and implementation of the activity on behalf of the youth organisation(s). They take a leading role in co-ordinating

the preparations of the activity and are the liaison person between the organisation(s) and the Council of Europe. The course director should be experienced in managing a team and an international group of participants. They also secure practical and logistic work and deal with eventual conflicts and matters that may arise during the study session. They also co-ordinate the team of facilitators with the support of the educational advisor and, as member of the team, are often also involved in facilitating parts of the educational programme of the session.

**Preparatory team member (and facilitator):** Preparatory teams of study sessions are in general composed of three or four team members selected by the organisation(s) involved. Sometimes they are already mentioned in the application, but it is also valid if they are appointed after the activity is confirmed by the Council of Europe. All preparatory team members must have previous experience in national / international youth work and in organising youth activities; they must have knowledge of the topics of the study session and experience as a facilitator. The level of experience of facilitators varies; however, there should be always a balance of more and less experienced people in the team and, all in all, the team should have the capacity to run the educational programme safely. They should all be involved throughout the whole preparatory process, including the preparatory meeting and implementation of the study session and provide input to the assessment of the session. *Read more in Chapter 4.1.1 about team composition.*

**Educational advisor:** The Council of Europe provides educational support to the study sessions held at the European Youth Centre through an educational advisor. Educational advisors are staff members of the Council of Europe based in one of the two European Youth Centres, and have specific expertise in non-formal education, intercultural learning and human rights education. They also have institutional, political and administrative roles, beside their educational one. The Council of Europe sometimes contracts a trainer (from its Trainers Pool) to fulfil the role of educational advisor (external educational advisor).

The educational advisor is the organisation's contact person in the Council of Europe and administers the session, including when an external trainer is appointed to the study session. Youth organisations are expected to contact them to discuss the preparation of the activity and to arrange the first meeting of the preparatory team. *Read more on the role of advisors in Chapter 2.1.2: The specificity and unique value of study sessions.*

**Participant:** Participants are the direct beneficiaries of study sessions. In line with the pedagogical basis of human rights education, their participation – including making decisions about what and how they learn – as well as their learning and co-operation are at the centre of the programme. Also, as a result of the study session the expectation is that they become motivated to apply human rights values in their lives and take action for promoting and defending human rights. According to existing criteria, study sessions are intended for a group minimum of 20 and a maximum of 40 participants, including the preparatory team (with the exception of double study sessions). The recruitment of the participants is the sole responsibility of the youth organisation(s) involved, but they should ensure an adequate balance of participants from the various member states of the Council of Europe (minimum eight member states). Participants coming from one country should not exceed 20% of the total number of participants. Up to 15% of all participants may come from non-member countries. The organisation should also seek a balance of participants of each sex, unless running a single-sex activity already approved by the Programming Committee. The activities of the EYCs are designed for participants between the ages of 18 and 30 – with a maximum of 25% over the age of 30. Participants are meant to fully and actively take part in the study session for its full duration and they must be able to act as multipliers and contribute to the follow-up of the activity within their own context and organisation. The Council of Europe (and partners) welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the expected profile, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

**Lecturer or resource person:** Preparatory teams of study sessions are encouraged to bring in specific expertise to complement the programme of their session if needed by inviting external lecturers. They can be academic lecturers, experts in certain topics related to the theme of the session or practitioners in the field of formal or non-formal education. Their contribution intervention should be well integrated into the flow of the overall programme. In order to respect participant-centredness and encourage dialogical and non-dogmatic approaches, no single expert should take over major parts of the programme alone: contributions are usually limited to one or two sessions within in the activity. Travel, board, lodging expenses and a fee for up to two lecturers per activity are paid by the Council of Europe. Youth organisations wishing to invite one or more lecturers from countries outside Europe should first discuss this with the educational advisor. *More on the rules of inviting lecturers can be found in the document 'Administrative and technical information – Reference document for youth organisations holding study sessions at the EYCs' and in Chapter 4.2.3 In between meetings of this manual.*<sup>2</sup>

**Administrative assistant of the European Youth Centre:** The logistical and administrative support of the Council of Europe for the study session is provided by an administrative assistant, under the supervision and guidance of the educational advisor. The assistants are the contact people for the team and the course director / team member for matters related to administrative and practical issues, such as visa and travel arrangements, handling the participant list, and playing a role as liaison people with the EYC in logistic matters.

**Interpreters:** Study sessions can normally be held in two working languages with simultaneous interpretation by professional interpreters contracted by the Council of Europe. The need for interpretation is to be indicated in the application for the study session, and organisations are required to ensure that the need for interpretation is real and to inform the educational advisor as soon as possible regarding any necessary changes to the interpretation request or if interpretation is no longer needed and should be cancelled. *International sign interpreters and palantypists* can be also invited to support study sessions if requested in the application, and if their presence is justifiable.

**Personal assistant:** Personal assistants assist individuals with physical disabilities, mental impairments, and other health and practical needs in their daily life. The European Youth Centres take appropriate measures also to ensure the participation of young people with special needs with respect to, among others, mobility and personal assistance. In case youth organisations anticipate participants wanting to attend the activity with their own personal assistants, please consult with the educational advisor about practical details before sending invitations. *Appendix V. Access needs of participants* offers help with managing the preparations of sessions with mixed-ability groups.

**Financial officer of the European Youth Centre:** The financial officer / accountant at the Secretariat of the EYC takes an important role in handling reimbursement of travel expenses for participants of study sessions. They may be consulted by the educational advisors and administrative assistant on questions related to the budget of the overall activity (preparatory costs, general financial rules for study sessions). One of their main roles is to inform and consult the preparatory teams and participants about the rules for reimbursement of travel costs, and to manage the reimbursements after the submission of all necessary supporting evidence. Please note that roles and processes may, to a certain extent, differ at EYC Strasbourg and Budapest.

**Executive Director of the European Youth Centre:** The Executive Director of the European Youth Centre provides leadership to and management of the centre, including services, human resources, premises, facilities and occupancy of the EYC, with special concern for safety, logistical and health matters. Traditionally, they

<sup>2</sup> Documents on financial, administrative and technical information related to study sessions: [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/financial-and-administrative-documents](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/financial-and-administrative-documents); on lecturers, consult the 'Administrative and technical information – Reference document for youth organisations holding study sessions at the EYCs', p. 6.

are invited to welcome participants of study sessions and provide information about the expectations and conditions of the European Youth Centres applying to the participants; they may also address issues specifically related to the theme of the study session and the overall work and mission of the Council of Europe.

**Head of the Education and Training Division:** The Head of the Education and Training Division is responsible for the overall management and implementation of the programme activities of the Youth Department, including the study sessions. The educational advisors report to the Head of Division; they can also be directly contacted by course directors and external educational advisors about any matter relating to the study session.

**Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe:** The Head of the Youth Department provides leadership and management to the Youth Department that is a part of the Directorate of Democratic Participation within the Directorate General of Democracy ('DGII') of the Council of Europe. In relation to study sessions, the Head of Department represents the Youth Department as a signatory party in the agreement of co-organising the activities with the youth organisation(s), and takes decisions in matters requiring changes to the decisions of the Programming Committee or any exception to the administrative and financial rules applying to study sessions.



*European Youth Centre Budapest*

*European Youth Centre Strasbourg*

## 2. WHAT IS A STUDY SESSION?

### ***The concept of a study session and its place in the programme of the Council of Europe and its Youth Department***

Study sessions are international educational youth seminars (meetings), lasting between four and eight days, which bring together young people, members of international / European youth organisations or networks, to deepen their understanding of a specific subject relevant to the priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector and of their youth organisation / network. They are held at one of the European Youth Centres, in Strasbourg or Budapest. Study sessions **are based on co-operation** between the international youth organisations / networks and the Council of Europe.

The selection of topics and partner organisations for study sessions is based on applications submitted by youth organisations twice a year, and decided upon by the Programming Committee on Youth.<sup>3</sup> These activities are financed by the Council of Europe's budget to the youth sector and decided according to biennial work priorities set by the Joint Council on Youth. The specifics of the financial rules applying to the study sessions are to be found in the document 'Criteria for study sessions'.<sup>4</sup>

Every year, the European Youth Centres host some 20 to 25 study sessions. These activities address a variety of subjects, corresponding to the work priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector.<sup>5</sup> The scope and extent of the subject matter indicate that they remain a key tool for co-operation with youth organisations in developing their own thematic focuses and multiplying their organisational cultures. The objectives are set by the youth organisation(s) and accepted by the Programming Committee on Youth. Youth organisations recruit the participants and are responsible for the follow-up. Creativity and innovation in methodological as well as thematic terms are also important aspects of study sessions.

Within the Youth for Democracy programme of the Council of Europe, a study session is emblematic in youth work by combining pan-European youth work with work at grassroots levels and by directly associating young people to the priorities of the programme. The contents of study sessions filter down to the grassroots, as participants in a study session are mostly national level or local leaders. This means that the results of study sessions can be implemented and used by participants in their role as multipliers with other young people.

#### **⚠ KEEP IN MIND!**

##### **Double study sessions and special projects**

Besides regular study sessions that bring together between 20 and 40 participants from four to eight working days, youth organisations may also apply for *double study sessions* and *special projects*.<sup>6</sup>

4 Criteria for activities to be held in co-operation with the European Youth Centres [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/financial-and-administrative-documents](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/financial-and-administrative-documents).

5 The priorities for each biennial programme of the youth sector are defined by the Joint Council on Youth, which is the central co-managed political body of the youth sector and can be found at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth).

6 For more detailed information on study sessions, consult: [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/study-sessions](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/study-sessions).



## REFLECTION POINTS

We have presented the different organisational and institutional contexts of a study session.

What is the main use of study sessions within your organisation / network?

What is the difference between a study session and other activities of your organisation?

The following criteria might help reflection on the definition of a study session:

What is a study session?	What is a study session NOT?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A co-operation activity between the youth organisation and the Council of Europe. As such it is linked with the organisation's mission and the priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector</li><li>• Held at the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg or Budapest</li><li>• An international activity with and for young people (majority aged between 18 and 30) from at least eight countries</li><li>• A non-formal education activity, run by a team of facilitators, based on participants' learning needs and providing space for holistic, experiential and co-operative learning</li><li>• An activity that entails an intercultural learning process and a human rights education approach</li><li>• An activity that has a well-developed and flexible programme in accordance with quality criteria of the Council of Europe</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An activity of based on ad-hoc co-operation of a number of youth organisations; it has to be initiated and run by existing network(s) of youth organisations</li><li>• An academic seminar</li><li>• A youth festival</li><li>• A sports activity</li><li>• Open to everyone; specific criteria for selection of participants are defined</li><li>• A holiday or study trip</li><li>• A statutory meeting for the organisation</li><li>• Individual work</li></ul>

## The study session as a holistic learning experience

Participants in a study session go through an intercultural experience of living and learning together in a multicultural group, a situation of personal and group learning. According to the pedagogical basis of Human Rights Education (HRE) in the *Compass* manual, as human rights issues concern the whole person (body, mind and soul), HRE necessarily also involves a holistic learning approach. Therefore, study sessions as educational activities are also meant to promote the development of the whole person, their intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. It also means that educators should seek to address and

involve cognitive, practical and attitudinal dimensions of learning.<sup>7</sup>

A study session is considered to be a participatory learning experience because it is an activity *for* young people, *by* young people and *with* young people. Young people in a study session have the opportunity to discuss an issue of concern to them and their organisation from a variety of perspectives.

The micro-society formed within the study session is a great source of social and intercultural learning. As the group will have a diversity of opinions, values, and styles of learning and communication, it is essential to learn to live together, to communicate across linguistic and cultural divides, and to respect others. The primary educational methodology to be used for facilitating these processes is non-formal education (NFE), taking the ethical and education standards of the Council of Europe as applied to youth work and non-formal education into consideration. Participation, co-operative and experiential learning are some of the pillars of NFE and form the basis of the educational approach in study sessions. Intercultural learning and human rights education are based on these methodologies and are the key to study sessions as well. The values, identities, stereotypes and prejudices of the participants may be challenged while their learning experiences are influenced by the issues discussed in the intercultural environment of the European Youth Centres and by the personal experiences they bring with them.

Participants are also expected to become aware of their role as social actors and to become motivated to take social action – not only to learn *about* and *through*, but also *for* human rights. This may manifest itself in multiplying processes after the study session, in follow-up projects within the youth organisation and/or its member organisation, in co-operation activities between participants, and in different kinds of online and offline actions.

The term used at the Council of Europe to refer to young participants / youth leaders who share their experience after study sessions or after other educational activities and use their newly acquired knowledge to promote human rights and social change on local, national level or international levels is ‘multipliers’. An added value of a study session is that these multipliers can become key actors in different fields in their communities and organisations, and may play key roles in education as well as in political contexts.

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7 *The pedagogical basis of HRE in Compass, Compass. Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people.* p. 32.

## The specificity and unique value of study sessions

The specificity and unique value of study sessions at the Youth Department comes from four main characteristics:

### A. Institutional support and context

- Possibilities to create links with the work of the Council of Europe and meet experts and high-level officials
- The programme benefits from, and may provide input to, the work of the various Council of Europe sectors about human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
- The label of the European Youth Centre makes it easier to attract experts and lecturers.
- It facilitates participation through support of visa application processes (invitation letters issued by the Youth Department), smooth reimbursement of travel costs and low registration fees.
- Study sessions are a catalyst for creativity: organisations tend to be more creative in their choice of themes, adopting topics of greater general interest, because the activity has to face competition to be accepted.
- Outcomes of study sessions and recommendations by participants can be directed to the political level by addressing the statutory bodies of the youth sector of the Council of Europe, and the Advisory Council on Youth specifically.
- The sessions themselves, and the EYCs facilitate contacts between different organisations, when both have a study session at the same time (through meeting other leaders and participants) or when two or more organisations apply together.

### B. Educational support by professional educational advisors<sup>8</sup>

- The educational advisors / external trainers have expertise in non-formal education and on specific topics. They also have political and administrative roles, as well as their educational one.<sup>9</sup>
- The educational advisors / external trainers provide immediate use of different Council of Europe publications and methods developed at similar activities, which are much more accessible and easier to use and understand when activities take place in a youth centre.
- The educational advisors / external trainers provide support for people on the leadership in the team.
- The educational advisors / external trainers have accumulated expertise through working with different organisations and therefore provide a selection of methods, contents, findings and conclusions made by previous groups, which are transferred from organisation to organisation.
- The involvement of educational advisors / external trainers during the preparation phase emphasises the need for a careful preparatory process.
- The special educational support provides opportunities for a good combination of methods and contents, allowing the sessions to be simultaneously process-orientated as well as product-orientated.

### C. Logistical and administrative support

- Holding an activity at an EYC means the organisation and team in charge do not have to waste time on technical and financial questions and can therefore concentrate on the programme and educational aspects.
- Professional simultaneous interpretation is provided free by the Council of Europe (on request, for two languages with simultaneous interpretation), including International Sign and palantyping.

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8 Educational advice may be provided by the educational advisors of the European Youth Centres or by trainers / educational consultants contracted by the Council of Europe.

9 More details on the role of the educational advisor can be found in 2.2.2. *Writing a proposal for a study session*, point E: *What can be expected from the educational advisor?*

- EYCs are spaces with competent staff and services for working and living together, catering for the needs of all to the extent possible, and accessible to young people with disabilities.
- Working rooms and spaces appropriate for different types of meetings and collective activities and individual rooms are offered for good and lively social and intercultural learning experiences. Common areas are accessible, as are some of the individual rooms.
- Support with visa procedures is also provided to facilitate the process for participants and team members.

#### D. Financial support

Financial support for study sessions include the following:

- Provision for accommodation, meals, working rooms and materials by the Council of Europe
- Preparatory costs of the study session, including reimbursement of expenses for a preparatory meeting
- Reimbursement of travel expenses for participants and team members
- Payment for up to two external lecturers to be invited to the programme
- The framework for financial support also enables disadvantaged young people or young people with additional access needs, who usually have less access to activities, to participate.

For details regarding financial support, please consult the financial and administrative documents for study sessions, with special regard to 'Technical information for the partners of the Youth Department holding study sessions at the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest'.<sup>10</sup>

## Quality assurance in study sessions held in the European Youth Centres

The quality assurance system has at its core the *Quality standards in education and training activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe*. This document reviews the main steps of the life cycle of study sessions and provides standards, criteria and information about the existing tools to be used for reaching the desired quality; it is available for consultation online. The following model gives an overview of the process, which is based on a continuum, meaning that measures have been put in place for ensuring that the study sessions generate further feedback, which will be used for continuously improving the programme.

Model of quality insurance and tools for the study sessions



<sup>10</sup> The documents here provide you with financial, administrative and technical information related to study sessions: [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/financial-and-administrative-documents](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/financial-and-administrative-documents).

## Quality standards in education and training activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

The Quality Standards describe what should be done in certain activities and also relate to how they are prepared, delivered and evaluated. The notion of quality is socially, institutionally and culturally marked, and it concerns the whole spectrum of context, partners, people, methods and stages of the activity or project. Therefore, different understandings of it may occur between partners, but a minimum common understanding of what it entails is needed. Quality in non-formal education should be seen as a permanent endeavour to those responsible for its practice, and the standards below are intended to provide practitioners with a *minimum* set of criteria.

Many of these criteria may be difficult to measure in the short or even medium term; however, this does not mean that they cannot be evaluated. The standards should apply to all the activities organised by or in co-operation with the Youth Department having a predominant education or training nature, regardless of the place where they are held. This model should also serve as inspiration for other activities in the youth field.

The purpose of these standards is also to ensure that the education and training activities can benefit from the best conditions possible and are run according to the most efficient and effective usage of educational, financial and technical resources.

### The quality standards as applicable to the activities of the Youth Department are:<sup>11</sup>

1. **A relevant needs assessment** – basing activities on clear needs and expectations of the Council of Europe and its partners and on the political, social, cultural and educational reality they are meant to address.
2. **Specific, achievable and assessable objectives** – each activity, in addition to the overall aims that derive from the needs analysis, must always have specific educational and social objectives that will allow for a suitable programme to be developed, for the identification and recruitment of the best suited target groups, for an appropriate evaluation process and for consistent follow-up. Objectives must be specific, achievable and assessable.
3. **Definition of competences addressed and learning outcomes for the participants** – activities should have explicit and identifiable learning outcomes, with a clear set of competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) to be developed.
4. **Relevance to the Council of Europe programme and Youth Department's priorities** – study sessions are a means of making the priorities and programme of activities of the Council of Europe known and accessible to its target groups; they are therefore meant to be reflected in the aims and programme.
5. **An appropriate and timely preparation process** – a successful activity depends largely on a timely, thorough and complete preparatory process. Study sessions must have a two-day preparatory meeting at the latest six weeks before the activity, and should be facilitated by the same team of facilitators that prepared them.
6. **A competent team of trainers and facilitators** – multicultural and multinational team of facilitators should be composed of at least three people; their profile and competences should be in accordance with the needs of the activity; gender balance, geographical and cultural diversity must be ensured, as well as a balance of senior and junior facilitators. The team is supported by at least one member of the Youth Department staff, or by an external trainer with the supervision of an Educational Advisor.

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11 This is only a list of the standards with a brief explanation with special regard to study sessions. For the full description and explanation, please consult the [original document online](#) on the Youth Department's website.

Teams are also encouraged to bring in expertise from outside the team.

7. **An integrated approach to intercultural learning, participation and human rights education** – Intercultural Learning (ICL) should be part of the formal programme (in an explicit or implicit manner) and should enable everyone to contribute to and benefit from the activity regardless of, and with respect to, their cultural backgrounds and identity affiliations. Participants should take part in making decisions about their learning, and methods need to be adapted to facilitate everyone's active participation. HRE is a fundamental human right itself; it should therefore be mainstreamed in all activities with respect to all its three dimensions – learning about, through and for human rights.
8. **Suitable recruitment and selection of participants** – transparency, objectivity and equality of chances for all those applying and the reaching of the intended target groups.
9. **A consistent practice of non-formal education principles and approaches** – activities should apply the commonly accepted pedagogical principles of non-formal education, notably participant-centeredness, action-orientation and be value-based in nature.
10. **Appropriate, accessible and timely documentation** – activities must be documented especially with regard to their results and outcomes, and final activity reports are to be presented within four months of the completion of the activity. Documentation should be made available to all participants and their organisations and potentially to all those concerned.
11. **A planned and open process of evaluation** – adequate evaluation of the activities is crucial to secure, among other things, stocktaking of the results, the evaluation of the quality of the learning process and the follow-up. Evaluation meetings of study sessions may be held immediately after the end of the activity with the team of facilitators at the EYC.
12. **Optimal working conditions and environment** – an appropriate, accessible and favourable physical environment for learning
13. **Appropriate institutional support and integrated follow-up** – institutional and educational support from the Council of Europe should create synergies for the advancement of co-operation with youth organisations.
14. **Visibility and communication** – visibility supports the recognition of the value of the activities, a condition for their viability and an effort in transparency of the organisation. Activities should be promoted using the offline and online communication channels of the Youth Department and of the partner organisations, and institutional logos are to be used.
15. **Concern for innovation and research** – organisers of study sessions should make use of relevant research and should seek to bring in specific expertise relevant to the topic addressed. It is also advisable to leave space for new methods, approaches and interpretations of issues.

The *Quality Standards* also include a glossary with the terms used in it, especially for readers less familiar with the “jargon” of the Council of Europe’s youth sector. It should not be understood as an official definition of the Council of Europe of those terms but might be useful for organisers and facilitators of study sessions.

## ⚠️ KEEP IN MIND!

### Human dignity and safety and security at study sessions

The quality standards listed above actually implicitly include that study sessions are also a “safe space” for participants. Facilitators have an important responsibility in this respect: they need to be aware and fully respect safety and security rules of the European Youth Centres and, in addition, abide by the principles and norms applying to human dignity in a workplace and make all the necessary efforts to be a role model in this respect for other participants.

Also note that none of the advice provided in the current publication should be understood as an exemption for a facilitator for taking personal responsibility for their individual acts in this respect.

## ▶ REFLECTION POINTS

When and where does it make sense to reflect on the *Quality Standards* during the process of implementing a study session? Could you identify one or more points in the process?

Does quality depend more on an organisation(s) and their working culture, or more on the competences of the actual team of facilitators?

When it comes to your organisation, can you think of any strengths and weaknesses with regard to these standards?



# The life cycle of a study session

## First steps – needs assessment and preparing the proposal

Organising an international intercultural educational activity with participants from many countries requires thorough and timely preparation. Below are the main stages of a study session in chronological order. Subsequent chapters of the manual discuss the steps in detail, and also suggest timeframes.

1. Needs assessment
2. Preparing the proposal (concept, aims and objectives and links with the work of the Council of Europe, target group / profile of participants, identifying up to five team members)
3. Preparation of the study session and recruitment of participants
4. Implementing the programme of the study session
5. Evaluation of the study session
6. Financial report to claim the reimbursements of costs related to the preparations (before or after the session)
7. Preparation and submission of the narrative final report
8. Follow-up.



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

When conducting a needs assessment for a study session, youth organisations should tackle the following questions:

- What are the current needs of our members or of our organisation as a whole?
- Are these needs being addressed through other activities? How?
- Can they be addressed in one study session of four to eight days?
- Are the needs linked to Council of Europe mission and priorities of the youth sector? How?

There are various approaches and methods for conducting a needs assessment, depending on the context of your work and the given study session itself. Nevertheless, you might find the recommendations below interesting and adapt them as needed:



## Different ways of identifying needs

- Consultation with national movements / branches
- Questionnaire (to member organisations / e.g. at a General Assembly)
- Follow-up of previous activities – suggestions from former participants and teams
- Identification of priorities of the organisation / network
- Strategic development plan of the organisation
- Analysis of achievement of the organisation's objectives / aims to date
- Analysis of current issues / "hot issues" affecting young people in society

### **⚠ KEEP IN MIND!**

#### **In the application for a study session**

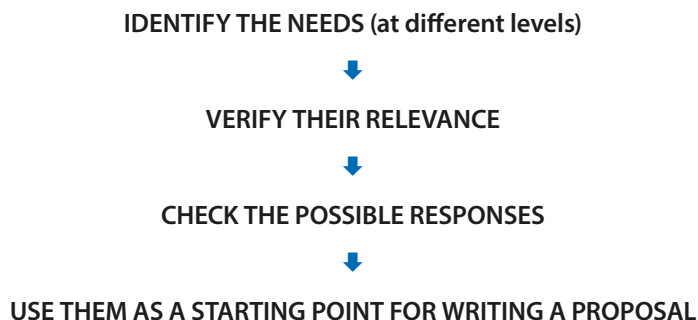
#### **12. Links with organisational strategy and annual programme**

Here you should explain the need for the activity and its purpose in the organisational annual / long-term programme, and indicate previous experience (if any) in the subject area of the activity. This is a point when you have to identify clear links between your organisation's strategy, related needs and the planned study session.<sup>12</sup>

In most of the cases it is necessary to combine different ways of identifying the needs listed above. Depending on the structure and functioning of your organisation(s), you may need to gather information from various levels (international, national or local branches), management and supervisory bodies and possibly also consult future team members if they are have already been anticipated at this point.

The application also has to be written in a concise format and length and connect to wider social-political context and the realities of young people.

Before using the identified needs as a starting point for your proposal, it may also be useful to cross-check the relevance of your findings:



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<sup>12</sup> The numbers in the 'Keep in Mind' textboxes refer to the corresponding question on the application form for the study session.

