

**THE EIGHT KEY COMPETENCIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: AN
APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH TO DEVELOP THE
COMPETENCE OF TRAINERS IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK
OR JUST PLAIN POLITICS?**

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September 2009

This study is supported by

SALTO-YOUTH
TRAINING AND COOPERATION
RESOURCE CENTRE



Education and Culture



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INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to further the debate on the development of a competence profile for trainers in the field of European youth work. It considers the possible coherence between the eight key competencies for lifelong learning and such a competence profile, and analyses their possible impact on its elaboration. The following makes explicit reference to the study conducted by Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten entitled *Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work!* (henceforth, referred to as the study). The study presents a detailed exploration of why a competence profile for trainers in the field of European youth work is necessary; how we understand quality in non-formal education and training (especially in relation to European youth work) and the prerequisites or characterising elements of such a competence profile. It also presents the political and institutional framework within which contemporary European education, employment and youth policies are being developed, and their impact on the strategies and programmes of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, in which the community of practice concerned by such a competence profile has been developing.² While it is neither possible nor necessary to repeat all its considerations, it may seem to some readers that the concerns, needs and demands of trainers and youth workers on the ground are not explicitly enough articulated in this follow-up paper to the study. Hence, we strongly recommend that any reflection and discussion of this paper be done in full consultation of the study. We see these documents as inextricably linked.

The following considerations are structured in five sections. In the first, we summarise the main conclusions of the study referred to above, in relation to the need for and possible contents of a competence profile for trainers in European youth work. In the second, we consider the growing divergence between how processes of education and processes of training are perceived and, therefore, structured, by European programmes. This serves as social and political context for thinking about the projected roles of European level youth work trainers, the demands placed on them in terms of the quality and quantity of the education and training processes they are expected to deliver and for ideas about how these trainers should be qualified. In the third section, we consider the extent to which there is coherence between the competence profile we have already proposed for European level youth work trainers and the eight key competencies for lifelong learning, asking the question of the extent to which these can be considered a supportive framework for the development of that competence profile. This introduces the fourth section, which reviews in detail the eight key competencies for lifelong learning, considering how they can be interpreted in relation to the competencies required by European level youth work trainers, if they are to be considered to be doing a quality or professional job. In specific relation to each key

¹ SALTO, September 2008: www.salto-youth.net/EuropeanToTstrategy/.

² By community of practice we mean all those who are professionally and / or voluntary engaged in the delivery of non-formal education to young people at the European level, and who identify themselves as engaged in such. Several loose associations of such people already exist, in the form of the trainers' pools of various European institutions and non-governmental youth organisation (Council of Europe, SALTO, European Youth Forum, among others).

competence, we present what we consider to be a. possible objectives and b. advisable key contents (in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills) of an eventual training process that would serve to qualify such trainers in the field of European youth work in relation to that specific key competence and element of the competence profile. In the fifth and final section of this paper, we attempt to consolidate the main considerations outlined into a proposal concept for a training scheme that would serve to qualify European level youth work trainers in accordance with the competence profile and the eight key competences for lifelong learning and present some considerations as regards the framework conditions that will be necessary to bring about a meaningful process of qualification on that basis.

1/ Preliminary remarks on a competence profile for trainers in European youth work

As a prelude to discussing the possible strengthening potential of the eight key competencies for lifelong learning for a competence profile for trainers in European youth work, as presented in the study, we will here summarise its main points.

Before doing so, however, it seems pertinent to clarify that when we refer to trainers in European youth work we are referring to any person, either paid or voluntary staff, who is charged with the development, implementation and evaluation of non-formal educational activities with young people. These activities may take place within the youth related programmes of the European institutions, but they may also be run by the governmental and non-governmental youth sectors at the national level. However, these national actors are distinguished from any other national or local deliverer of youth work and / or non-formal education by the fact that they are responsible for educational activities with young people that are conceptualised with an explicit European dimension.

Therefore, when speaking about trainers we refer to those who deliver non-formal education to young people in various capacities, including but not limited to those who train others to conduct non-formal educational activities with young people, even if we are aware that de facto, those likely to be most interested in the competence profile are those who are providing training to other deliverers of non-formal education. These deliverers of non-formal education are inevitably intermediaries between institutionalised programmes and so-called “ordinary young people”, but they may very well be engaged in direct work with young people of different kinds in addition to their specific educational/training tasks. They are not exclusively trainers of trainers and they may be engaged in a variety of youth work educational activities at a variety of levels, from European to local. Hence, they may also be multipliers in the classical sense promoted by the European programmes. In the end, this paper is not so much about classifying who can be considered a trainer. Rather, it is about how those engaged in delivering non-formal educational to young people (whatever their specific profile) do their work – with an adequate level of professionalism and what that adequate level might mean in practice.

Now, to summarise the main and conclusive points of the study:

First, good quality youth work, as any other formal or non-formal educational work, requires qualified personnel responsible for its conceptualisation and delivery;

Second, being qualified as a trainer for European level youth work activities means to be in possession of highly developed individual competencies, in terms of personal and professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It also means being able to apply these competencies alone (i.e. autonomously) and in interaction with others (i.e. collectively) in contribution to the expressed goals of the European programmes in the context of which their activities take place;

Third, having these competencies demonstrates a level of personal and social maturity that allows the trainer concerned to both manage and master complex, even ambiguous, situations and tasks successfully, in particular those linked to the intercultural contexts European youth work activities represent. Being able to constructively deal with differences, contradictions and ambivalences requires role-distance, empathy and tolerance of ambiguity. These are the main meta-cognitive and meta-emotional skills for being able to function professionally in European youth work³;

Fourth, the professional dimension of these competencies is constituted by all those aspects which characterise the type and content of professional action, reflection and conduct in the field of European youth work, in other words: the *What I do*, the *Why I do it* and the *How I do it*. We have referred to this professional dimension as “reflective-thought” and “reflective-action”, which we consider to include self-reflective autonomy; analytical skills; differentiated self-perception; the ability to perceive and analyse one’s own experience with an external eye and non-dogmatic critical reason;

Fifth, applying “reflective-thought” and “reflective-action” means to be able to adequately perceive the subject, object, and situation of communication (including knowledge) and interaction in the non-formal educational context, in order to enable participants to learn sustainably according to their own needs and capabilities, and in accordance with goals of the activity and programme to which it belongs. This implies that the participants gain optimal advantage from their learning and transfer the outcome to their work (and daily lives). It is, thus, self-evident that the application of “reflective-thought” and “reflective-action” requires more, in terms of competence, than just a few pedagogical skills, methods of animation and facilitation techniques;

³ For further explanation please refer to: Hendrik Otten, “Ten theses on the correlation between European youth work, intercultural learning and the qualification and professionalisation demands on full and part-time staff working in such contexts”, IKAB and Council of Europe, February 2009. Available online at www.nonformality.org/index.php/2009/07/revisiting-icl/. Thesis 7 is specifically relevant for this point.

Sixth, today European youth work is seen in a political context. It is understood as having an important role to play and as being effective in promoting equal opportunities, encouraging intercultural dialogue, enabling growth and social integration, initiating and accompanying active European citizenship and improving employability. Qualification in European youth work, then, implies the necessity of competently working with intercultural education (including intercultural competence and intercultural discourse) as a specific form of political education⁴;

Seventh, the ability to adopt intercultural discourse relates directly to both the personal and the professional aspects of an individual trainer's competence. It is, in our estimation, the most complex and demanding dimension of competence for trainers in European youth work, because it requires interlinking, reflecting and applying knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in a dual perspective. On the one hand, so as to allow the trainer an ongoing autonomous, self-directed and self-managed development as a human being living and working in a setting of increasing cultural diversity and value pluralism. On the other hand, so as to allow the trainer to act professionally in contributing to the qualification of those working in the European youth field so that they can meet the challenges and demands described under point six above;

Last, if such a competence profile is not to remain the stuff of "wishful thinking" but to become the subject of a political debate on what, in the European youth work field, should be the professional requirements for trainers (to consider them employable), then labour market qualification standards, activities designed to qualify trainers and youth workers and opportunities for further professional development will all be needed, like those that already exist for other educational professions (for example, teaching). A first step in this process, in our opinion, is to accept the need for deep reconsideration of the implicit understanding of education that is expressed in the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission.

⁴ For more on European youth work as political education, please refer to the following pieces: Hendrik Otten, Youth as a policy area of the Council of Europe – A call for legitimation and moral standards, and Gavan Titley, Human Geometry, in "Born in Flensburg, Europe: Journeys with Peter Lauritzen", Demokratie & Dialog, e.V., September 2008; Peter Lauritzen, Are Human Rights (the only) Universal Values?, Speech to the Human Rights Week, 1998, published in "Eggs in a Pan: Speeches, Writings and Reflections by Peter Lauritzen", Council of Europe Publishing, August 2008, and Hendrik Otten, Ten theses on the correlation between European youth work, intercultural learning and the qualification and professionalisation demands on full and part-time staff working in such contexts, IKAB and Council of Europe, February 2009. Available online at www.nonformality.org/index.php/2009/07/revisiting-icl/.

2/ On the divergence between the expectations placed education and training and their actual results

One does not need to be rooted in Humboldtian tradition of education⁵ to notice that something is wrong with education and initial and further training. The ever more clearly formulated expectations of education and of initial and further training in no way match with their manifest effects, neither in terms of the effects they have for the individual (finding a job, qualifying for doing the job well) nor in terms of the effects they have for collectives and society (becoming apt for labour market and social participation). Evidence for this mismatch abounds. At the end of 2008, the European Commission issued a communication in which it is stated that most of the benchmarks in the “Education and Training 2010” work programme will not be reached. On this basis, the Commission has identified four new strategic challenges for the field of education and training for the period to 2020. We will refer to these challenges and the European Commission’s response to them in the introductory remarks to section three of this paper.⁶

The reason for this lack of progress in achieving the European Union’s stated aims in the area of education and training is certainly not that people are becoming more stupid “by nature”.⁷ In our opinion, a plausible thesis is that, in the past decades, the purpose of education for both the institutions promoting it and for those who participate in it, has become ever more reduced to a limited interest in the immediate utilisation of its results. Education was exploited to gain selective expert knowledge that could be immediately put into practice. Being scientific became the measure of all things. Today, and as a result, education is, first and foremost, understood as the generation of need-oriented, usable, training results.

In 1963 (!) Adorno wrote

“... Despite all declarations stating otherwise, spontaneity, imagination, freedom on a topic are so limited by the ubiquitous question, “But, is this scientific?” that the spirit is already threatened to be de-spirited in its natural home. The function of the concept of science has capsized. The often cited methodological purity, general controllability, the consensus of the competent scholars, the evidence behind all claims, and even the logical stringency of thoughts do not equal spirit: the need to give chapter and verse for everything always counteracts it. Where a conflict has already been decided against unrestricted insight, it is impossible for a dialectic of learning, for an inner process involving subject and object to take place ...”.⁸

⁵ The Humboldtian educational tradition promotes universal interdisciplinary scientific enquiry and is at the root of the idea of the university as an open, democratic space for learning.

⁶ “An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training”, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, published 16.12.2008 (COM(2008) 865 final). Available for download at http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/com865_en.pdf.

⁷ See Peter Lauritzen, “*Wir können nicht gleichzeitig weniger werden, älter und auch noch dümmer*” (We cannot simultaneously become fewer, older and on top of all that, dumber” in “Eggs in a Pan: Speeches, Writings and Reflections by Peter Lauritzen”, Council of Europe Publishing 2008.

⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, “Note on Human Science and Culture”, in Adorno, “Interventions: Nine Critical Models”, Frankfurt: 1963, p. 55.

Today, economic growth very clearly, and for some of us, even offensively, sets the course to be navigated by education and training. This is most clearly stated in key policy documents of the European Commission:

“An advanced knowledge society is the key to higher growth and employment rates. Education and training are essential priorities for the European Union in order to achieve the Lisbon goals”.⁹

Not to be misunderstood, we recognise and accept the need for people to learn those things that are necessary for them to integrate into their working environment and into society. However, we contend that the catalogue of targets discussed for European youth work and youth policy can only be implemented if education is again assigned tasks separate from social inclusion and employability, such as developing an autonomous personality, learning to take on responsibility for oneself and fellow human beings, making commitments, developing a culture of reflection and clarity of expression, enabling emotional competence and supporting a positively critical approach to cultural heritage. Here, we have named just a few important aspects of the process of growing up and lifelong learning that we believe are currently not adequately guaranteed by the process of compulsory formal education each person in Europe goes through, which European youth work and policy have difficulty to compensate for and without which their own specific tasks become more difficult to fulfil. European Union policy documents and initiatives quoted in the study and in this paper all underline this point.

In ancient philosophy, the dominant thesis was that all human knowledge is *sui generis* related to practice. Aristotle called this the practical character of all knowledge. By this the ancients meant that knowledge is supposed to shape practice. Today, it is primarily practice, or so-called facts, that influence processes of gaining knowledge and learning. This has led to a significant dis-improvement in the level and quality of general knowledge possessed by ordinary young people and is at the origin of the divergence we are discussing here.¹⁰ Marcuse has described this development in the following terms:

“... Separating the functional and necessary from the beautiful and pleasurable is the beginning of a process that, on the one hand, leads to a materialism of civil practice and, on the other, confines happiness and spirit to the realm of ‘culture’”.¹¹

In our opinion, a reconsideration of this commonly found understanding of education is imperative, in order for it to be possible to sustainably implement the political and pedagogical aims of European youth work and for the field to attain long wished-for quality standards. The process of reconsideration of this understanding of education requires the abolition of the epistemological separation of senses and

⁹ Decision N° 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, 15 November 2006, establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Available for download at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_327/l_32720061124en00450068.pdf.

¹⁰ Evidence of this can be found in the studies published by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) run by the OECD. PISA is an internationally standardised assessment of educational performance jointly developed by participating countries and periodically administered to 15-year-olds in schools. PISA assesses how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society. More information: <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>.

¹¹ Herbert Marcuse, “The affirmative character of culture (excerpts)”, 1937. In: Ralf Konersmann, (Ed.), “Kulturphilosophie”, Leipzig: 1996, p. 80. First published in: Herbert Marcuse, Schriften. Frankfurt 1979. Volume 3.

emotions from ideas in concrete education and training processes in favour of holistic approaches. It further requires acknowledgement that knowledge which does not specifically qualify for some practical application is valuable when it underpins young people's social competence.

3/ on The key competencies as a support framework for a trainers' competence profile

The need for the acquisition of the key competencies for lifelong learning is explained by the contemporary primacy of the economy:

“... Key competences are essential in a knowledge society and guarantee more flexibility in the labour force, allowing it to adapt more quickly to constant changes in an increasingly interconnected world. They are also a major factor in innovation, productivity and competitiveness, and they contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of workers and the quality of work”.¹²

But, several remarks in the annex to the Recommendation of the Council and Parliament go further, providing other justifications for why key competencies might be important. These remarks point to an understanding of education that corresponds to the one we wish to promote, as outlined in the summary of the study presented in the introduction to this paper. The central concepts referred to are critical thinking, creativity, initiative taking, problem solving, risk management, decision taking and managing feelings in a constructive manner.¹³ These are further mentioned in the explanations provided for the individual key competencies. These central concepts correspond broadly to the canon of tasks established over time for European youth work.

An initial attempt at interpreting the key competencies for lifelong learning was made in the Fennes/Otten study.¹⁴ This was done with a view to understanding their compatibility with the competence profile for trainers in the field of European youth work, precisely because these have come to characterise all initiatives for education and training at a European level.¹⁵ The conclusion reached by the study is that the elements of the profile are not just compatible with, but partly go beyond, the key competencies for lifelong learning. Consideration of the four new strategic challenges for the field of Education and Training until 2020 briefly referred to in the preliminary remarks to this paper will provide further context to this discussion of the relationship between the key competencies for lifelong learning and the trainers' competence profile for the field of European Youth Work that we seek to translate into practical implementation through the elaboration of this paper.

¹² <http://europa.eu/cgi-bin/etal.pl>

¹³ Annex to the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework. Available for download at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/keyrec_en.pdf. See also remark 7 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

¹⁴ See remark 1 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

¹⁵ See remark 4 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

According to the recent communication¹⁶ four strategic challenges will determine the field of Education and Training until 2020. The first is **to make lifelong learning (and learner mobility) a reality**. This task is mainly seen as the responsibility of the individual member states of the European Union. It relates primarily to the implementation of national strategies for lifelong learning within which validation of non-formal and informal learning and necessary guidance and support for learners are to be ensured.

The second is **to improve both the quality and efficiency of provision and outcomes**. Improvements in quality and efficiency of provision are seen as an outcome of all involved in education and training actually acquiring the key competencies. But, learning results must also be relevant for the citizen's professional and private lives. Both of these imperatives point to the fact that improvements in the qualification of teachers and trainers are needed. Greater investments in education and training are as such seen as a prerequisite for economic growth and social cohesion and, therefore, as a priority. Further, thinking ahead with regard to future qualification needs in the labour market is also supposed to increase the efficiency of educational provision. In this context, language skills in the mother tongue and in two foreign languages are mentioned as immediately necessary, as are better results in the natural sciences and mathematics. As such, this strategic challenge refers to several key competencies.

The promotion of equity and active citizenship is the third strategic challenge. The acquisition of key competencies citizens need for further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue is again called for. Apart from providing insights and abilities relevant for the workplace, though, intercultural competence plays an important social role, and as such, it is central to our competence profile for trainers in the field of European youth work.

Enhancing innovation and creativity (including entrepreneurship) at all levels of education and training is the fourth objective. This will be achieved by all citizens acquiring transversal key competencies: learning-to-learn and communication skills, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, digital competence including media literacy, cultural awareness and cultural expression.

By including most of the key competencies for lifelong learning in the updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, their political visibility and importance has been raised. As such, they should also be implemented in the context of the further development of educational policy. It is noteworthy that because it is not limited by national legislation, the field of European youth work and the development of the qualification and professionalism of those who work in the field, is particularly well suited to this aim.

¹⁶ "An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training", Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, published 16.12.2008 (COM(2008) 865 final). Available for download at http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/com865_en.pdf.

At the same time, a recently published communication from the European Commission on challenges facing young people across Europe that are seen as priority issues requiring solutions especially mentions education, employment, social inclusion and health.¹⁷ It concludes that young people must acquire the necessary competencies

“... to take advantage of opportunities such as civic and political participation, volunteering, creativity, entrepreneurship, sport and global engagement”.

One can only speculate as to why different European policy papers state ever-changing combinations of competencies and specify differing fields in which these competencies should be put to use. Important for the context of our discussion, however, is that the development, taking-up and interpretation of the key competencies for lifelong learning in European level initiatives for education and training is taking place in a way that we consider largely complementary to the development of the competence profile for trainers in European youth work.

4/ THE EIGHT KEY COMPETENCIES AND THE COMPETENCE PROFILE FOR TRAINERS IN EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK

In the coming section of this paper, we will review in detail the eight key competencies for lifelong learning, considering how they can be interpreted in relation to the competencies required by European level youth work trainers, if they are to be considered to be doing a quality or professional job. It should be noted that some key competencies have more importance for the trainers' competence profile we wish to promote than others, and as a result some are dealt with in more depth than others.

In specific relation to each key competence, we present what we consider to be a. possible objectives and b. advisable key contents (in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills) of an eventual training process that would serve to qualify such trainers in the field of European youth work in relation to that specific key competence and element of the competence profile. In the presentation of possible objectives, we use the term “learner/trainer”. In so doing, we are referring to the future participants of a training process to qualify the competence profile, which does not yet exist. In reading this part of the paper, therefore, it should be borne in mind that these learner/trainers will be drawn from the European non-formal education and youth work community of practice, have highly diverse profiles and may be working both in direct educational work with young people and as educators of other educators in the youth field, as we have outlined in the introduction to this paper.

¹⁷ “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities”, Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, published on 27.04.2009. Available for download at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0200:FIN:EN:PDF>.

a/ Key Competencies 1 & 2: Communication in the mother tongue and communication in foreign languages

Effective communication in one's mother tongue and in foreign languages (1st and 2nd key competence for lifelong learning) is fundamental to human social interaction, to intercultural contexts and to any form of educational work. It is, hence, a key area for the training and qualification of trainers in European youth work. To elucidate on the way we see language competence in relation to the competencies required of trainers in the European youth work field, we will first deal with issues related to mother tongue competence, then move on to foreign language competence.

First of all we would like to reiterate that applied languages contain an important cultural element, express a certain attitude of mind, emotional disposition and cognitive structure. Language makes the social environment accessible, helps individuals to develop perspectives, attitudes and patterns of perception. Language characterises a certain cultural style and shapes people's world and environmental views. Ultimately, the qualitative wealth of cultures is the result of efforts to articulate and differentiate themselves that have been taking place for centuries. Language has played a key role in such processes. But, an elaborate choice of language based on structured thinking and adapted to the subject, object and situation of interaction is only rarely found these days. The PISA studies are not the only evidence for this.¹⁸ In this era of text messaging and e-mail, it is both tempting and common to communicate using abbreviations and symbols. It is hardly surprising that many young people and adults have problems in understanding what they think and feel and in making themselves understood by others who do not use the same codes. Working on this is already a pivotal educational mandate of parents and it should be further worked on in school and further training. If adults attach less and less importance to differentiated and structured expression, how are children and young people supposed to become acquainted with its value and accept it as important?

We have defined the ability to take on intercultural discourse as a central competence in the trainers' profile.¹⁹ Intercultural discourse requires not only highly developed language abilities (especially in one's own mother tongue) but also adequate background knowledge concerning the issues at stake. Simple eloquence cannot replace knowledge. But, knowledge, nevertheless, needs to be conveyed in a way that accommodates the respective target group and situation. And, as further underlined in the study, European youth work practice demonstrates that the dominance of social competencies over content competencies is not adequate for its objectives (both political and pedagogical), just as much as the exclusive and dominant presence of content competencies, without relevant social competence, has long ago been rejected by the educational professions. Competence can only be achieved when the content and relational dimensions interact. Only the presence of both and the ability to link them in a way relevant for the educational activity being run should be considered as a verifiable quality feature in this respect.

¹⁸ An interesting discussion of this issue in the broader perspective of educational targets is presented by Andreas Karsten, in *Wasting Talent and Potential*, published on www.nonformality.org, May 20, 2007, available at <http://www.nonformality.org/index.php/2007/05/wasting-talent-and-potential/>.

¹⁹ See remark 1 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

Hence, in the initial and further training of trainers in European youth work, the question and use of language (in the first place, the mother tongue language) should be systematically addressed. Above all, there is a need to develop and practice the use of objectifying language (in other words, the practice of using formulations which allow one to discuss issues in an objective rather than subjective or emotional manner), given that realities are only perceived subjectively. This fundamental requirement gains additional importance in multicultural situations, where it is more difficult to relate objectively to the others involved in communication and there is an increased need for interpretation of reality.

When thinking about foreign language competence, it should be remembered that most projects aimed at initial and further training in the European youth field are conducted in a language that is not the mother tongue for the majority of learners, whether these be “ordinary” young people or youth leaders, workers, trainers, etc. While it is evident that trainers in the context of European youth work need to have a certain knowledge of foreign languages, it cannot be assumed that young people taking part in the activities they prepare have such knowledge, especially if they experience educational disadvantage. In addition, the increasingly pervasive absence of mastery in one’s own mother tongue²⁰ registered above questions whether most young people are able to competently function as a learner through a foreign language.²¹

The only comprehensive longitudinal study covering the significance of communication for international youth work conducted to date stipulates that

“... the realisation that intensity and scope of intercultural communication and intercultural learning are not directly proportional to the existing command of a foreign language. Instead, they depend far more on learning conditions set by the situation and group dynamics of the respective encounter so that approaches to overcome language-dependent barriers must not be taken from the didactics of foreign language acquisition alone but from an integrative group educational approach which also comprises language didactics”.²²

The above dimensions of language competence (i.e. mastery of one’s own mother tongue combined with foreign language competence) have consequences for differentiated, intercultural, communication and as such are an essential aspect of the competence profile for trainers working in the European youth field.

²⁰ Mastery here refers to the capacity for dealing with the cultural-linguistic dimension of communication and social interaction through language and intercultural discourse rather than the perfect command a given language.

²¹ It is for all of these reasons that, in our opinion, the feasibility of the demand made under the second objective within the updated EU strategic framework for Education and Training for all to learn two foreign languages must be questioned. Many institutions of education and training in EU member states have not been sufficiently reformed to live up to this expectation. As long as the curricula for school and further education are shaped by the member states instead of Europe, the extensive improvement of the foreign language competence of ordinary young people will remain something of a pipedream.

²² Diether Breitenbach (Ed.), “*Kommunikationsbarrieren in der internationalen Jugendarbeit*” (Barriers to communication in international youth work.) *Ein Forschungsprojekt im Auftrage des Bundesministeriums für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit.* (A research project commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Youth, Family and Health.) 5 volumes, Saarbrücken/Fort Lauderdale: 1979. Hendrik Otten was a member of the research group and contributed to the contents of the study. Quotation from volume 1, Introduction, p. 2.

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the trainers' competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Sensitivity to the challenges of conducting training in a manner understandable for participating learners, who may not master their own mother tongue or a foreign language sufficiently well for the intercultural context presented by a European youth work activity, and capacity to adapt one's use of language to the challenges identified
- Ability to explain contents that learners should learn in a manner accessible to them, using a variety of methods, including those not dependent on classical language based communication (speaking, reading, writing), taking into account the learners' level of language competence
- Ability to deal with the intercultural dimension of working in a foreign language with multi-cultural groups who come from different linguistic traditions and educational backgrounds
- Awareness of the need to "go beyond the words" (i.e. perfection of grammatical language skills for verbal and written presentations) and to develop one's working knowledge of the cultural meanings and practices associated with the language/s one works in (i.e. mother tongue or foreign language)

Key contents:

- Significance of the use of language for intercultural discourse and communication in multicultural youth work contexts, and educational situations more broadly
- Specificity of working with young people from different educational and cultural backgrounds, in terms of communication through language
- Theories of communication and educational practices emanating from them
- Psycho-social functions of communication and language as one of its key vehicles
- Learning styles and methods
- Ideas about learning to learn, practices for training learning to learn
- Diverse methods for working on the development of communication competence through structured use of language

The above considered, the training and learning objective of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To enable learner/trainers to communicate and develop intercultural discourse in the group educational setting through the practice of a structured and culturally sensitive use of language, in their mother tongue and/or the foreign language they habitually use in European non-formal educational activities with young people and trainees.

b. Key Competence 3: Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

At first glance, one might question whether this competence is in any way relevant for trainers in European youth work. We do not consider it desirable for youth work to replace the teaching of such fundamental knowledge for the ability of young people to function in modern society as those implied by this key competence, even though we are aware that there is some disagreement in this regard and this is increasingly coming to be demanded of youth work, whether by default or by design. Nevertheless, we find that there is an increasing need to support young people in finding explanations for the ever more complex world in which they grow up, to help them to understand and to use different models of explanation for the situations they encounter, and to help them solve the problems they face in a constructive manner without recourse to violence or inordinate risk. Contemporary multicultural societies, and their increasing complexity, place growing demands on young people, while offering fewer and fewer opportunities to develop well-reasoned and justified judgements on what is happening around them in society, politics and even the family. Learning to live with difference, in a time when the public sphere, the media and the immediate social environment functions on the basis of an increasing number of initial, unreasoned, judgements, without becoming discriminatory against or excluding others is a challenge. Educational appropriately delivered can help address this challenge.

In the study we, therefore, interpreted this key competence for our trainer's profile as **non-dogmatic critical reason, bound to ethical principles**. European youth work – and European level training in particular – is taking place in the politically normative context of the European Union and the Council of Europe. Participants in those training activities experience in their every day life value pluralism and have to develop their value reference system in conformity with this normative working context and their own ethical principles. In this relation we consider the recognition of the connection between cognition, political consciousness and ethics essential. European youth work is a form of political education, one that proposes an integral and humanistic approach, where morality as a political category, including ideas of justice and equality and human rights, should have an important place.²³

In our opinion, the most important ethical principle for trainers certainly remains the “prohibition of overwhelming” agreed upon by professionals of the field in the late 1970s.²⁴ The “prohibition of overwhelming” refers, on the one hand, to the total renunciation of manipulation or any form of indoctrination in formal and non-formal learning situations, and to the admissibility of diverging moral

²³ Non-dogmatic critical reason does justice both to the diversity of non-formal learning and educational / training situations and to the individual learners.

²⁴ The “prohibition of overwhelming” (*Überwältigungsverbot* in German) was established on the basis of the Beutelsbach Consensus of 1976, which proposes that controversial subjects should be treated as such, and that priority should be given to the learners' interests and needs, in addition to proposing that learners should not be overwhelmed. Since then, this consensus has and continues to lead political education (*politische Bildung*) in Germany. For more on the Beutelsbach Consensus and the “prohibition of overwhelming” see Siegfried Schiele and Herbert Schneider (Hrsg.), “Reicht der Beutelsbacher Konsens?“, Wochenschau Verlag, Didaktische Reihe, Band 16, 1996, the website of the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Baden-Württemberg: http://www.lpb-bw.de/beutelsbacher_konsens.php/ and www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beutelsbacher_Konsens.

concepts, on the other. Developed non-dogmatic reason can best guarantee that this prohibition is observed. At the same time, the prohibition does not condone relativism or arbitrariness, because non-dogmatic critical reflection and behaviour demands that clearly defined positions be taken when ethical and moral principles are disregarded. In different texts we have pointed towards human rights as a concept of justice that protects and ensures individual and social rights and obligations in a multicultural European civil society. In this context we also formulated an “obligation to be intolerant” in the sense of active intervention if human rights, as the ethical-political foundation on which European youth work is based, are violated.²⁵

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Ability to apply non-dogmatic reason, in combination with ethical principles, in educational processes
- Clarity on and commitment to the ethical principles underpinning European youth work as a field of work and training in the field of European youth work²⁶;
- Practice oriented understanding of the “prohibition of overwhelming”;
- Familiarity with and methodological competence in non-formal educational approaches relating to those ethical principles, for example, human rights education; anti-racism education; youth work for the social inclusion of disadvantaged young people; gender sensitive youth work; etc.

Key contents:

- Discourse ethics²⁷
- Concepts of critical thinking and critical self-examination and how to develop this competence among young people
- Principles of non-formal education underpinning the field of European youth work²⁸
- Historical development of the field of European youth work and its acceptance of those principles, including the institutional framework which “guarantees” these principles

²⁵ See remark 2 in the preliminary remarks to this paper and Thesis 5.

²⁶ For interesting discussions of the principles underpinning European youth work, see Eggs in a Pan – Speeches, Writings and Reflections by Peter Lauritzen and Hendrik Otten, Youth as a Policy Area of the Council of Europe, in “Born in Flensburg, Europe” Demokratie & Dialog, e.V., September 2008.

²⁷ Discourse ethics refers to a type of argument that attempts to establish normative or ethical truths by examining the presuppositions of discourse, and was developed by Juergen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel.

²⁸ For interesting discussions of the principles underpinning European youth work, see Eggs in a Pan – Speeches, Writings and Reflections by Peter Lauritzen, Council of Europe Publishing, August 2008, and Hendrik Otten, Youth as a Policy Area of the Council of Europe, in “Born in Flensburg, Europe” Demokratie & Dialog, e.V., September 2008.

- Ideas about how these principles are translated into various forms of non-formal educational work with young people; various educational practices associated with those forms; examples of methods developed to “live and learn” the principles
- The Beutelsbach Consensus and the “prohibition of overwhelming” – what is it, where did it come from, how was it developed, how it came to be applied in practice in non-formal education and youth work and its meaning and practical implications for the professional conduct of non-formal education with young people

The above considered, the training and learning objective of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To enable learner/trainers to coherently apply non-dogmatic reason and the ethical principles of the field of European youth work in their educational practice (with young people and trainees), thereby empowering their participants and themselves for reflected social interaction in both learning settings and daily life

c. Key Competence 4: Digital competence

Again, at first glance, and similarly to key competence 3, digital competence sounds rather technical. The extent, to which digital competence has become important for the field of European youth work, and training, is apparent, however, when one considers the contribution made by information and communication technologies to the internationalisation and globalisation of youth work in Europe, and the increased recourse to e-learning approaches that can be observed in all forms of education.

Trainers, of course, need to be able to use and work with different kinds of technologies required for the execution of their educational work, from simple presentation technologies through complex online learning and training platforms. However, the widespread penetration of information and communication technologies into society, has also brought with it new challenges, such as those to civil liberties (human rights) presented by new surveillance technologies to mention just one which has been and continues to be hotly debated. Hence, a critical handling of technologies offered by the information society, is also required. By critical handling we mean the ability to decide what, when, how and why one uses a particular technology in the educational context. It means the ability to differentiate between the necessary from the unnecessary; the ability to choose and process information received from the ever-faster torrent selectively and the ability to make the transfer from acquisition and processing of information to knowledge enhancement.

In the study we proposed that trainers in European youth work are more than ever called upon to act as “knowledge managers”, a demand that will only grow in volume in the coming years. We deduce this from the objectives outlined in European policies, and consider it valid to the extent that indeed youth work staff, both professional and voluntary, need to be able to broker the masses of information thrown at young people in this digital age, as a means of helping young people to acquire and improve their knowledge. We would like to reiterate, however, that it is essential to clearly differentiate between the

concept of knowledge management used in the context of business and industry (knowledge as a key factor for improving production) and that we would like to promote in the European youth field. The equation of a knowledge-based society with an information-based society, as can be found so frequently in colloquial speech, is misleading.²⁹

Having information is not automatically equivalent to knowing something, having an insight into it and understanding it. In the “Phenomenology of the Mind”, Hegel proposed that what is familiarly known is by no means properly known (lack of cognition) just for the reason that it is familiar. However, both are mostly equated, something that he calls the “commonest” form of self-deception and a deception of others as well.³⁰ Knowledge and knowledge acquisition are necessarily bound to a process of developing insights and understanding that, from a philosophical perspective, include the individual goal of wanting to find some form of “truth”. This is why knowledge does not need to be bound to being able to use it in a specific context of action. This is different for information, which is procured for a certain purpose, because it is relevant to the use to which it will be accordingly put.

Irrespective of whether Europe is rather headed towards an information-based society or, indeed, a knowledge-based one (and this is still an important debate), the European programmes supporting youth and education do allow for both better access to targeted information and support for the transformation of information into knowledge, with the aim of enlarging the scope of action of the young people participants concerned (and this despite the increasingly dominant employability focus).

“This aspect is crucial in our discussion of a competence profile: Knowledge needs to be transferred and acquired so that young people may learn to find their way in complex societies by gaining insights, understanding themselves and their socio-political and socio-cultural environment, and thus enabling them to shape their present and future”.³¹

In this context, digital competence is far more than a key competence relating to the mastery of communication and information technology. It is important for the competence profile of trainers, because these are under permanent pressure to continue their education themselves at a high standard of knowledge, to collect and filter information and share information with others, and to increase efficiency by using these technologies (even including cost reductions, for instance by organising virtual instead of face-to-face meetings).

²⁹ For interesting and relevant discussions of knowledge management that go in the direction we propose, see Gabi Reimann, Heinz Mandl, Hrsg., *Psychologie des Wissensmanagements*. 2004: Hogrefe Verlag, Göttingen/Bern/Seattle/Oxford and Peter Schütt, *Wissensmanagement*. 2000: Falken Verlag, Niedemhausen /Ts. In addition, the work of David Snowden published in several volumes is instructive, see Snowden, D & Stanbridge, P (2004) “The landscape of management: creating the context for understanding social complexity” in *Emergence: Complexity and Organisation* Volume 6 Numbers 1&2 Fall 2004 pp 140 – 148; and Snowden, D. (1999) “Liberating Knowledge” Introductory chapter to *Liberating Knowledge* CBI Business Guide, Caspian Publishing October pp 9-19.

³⁰ Hegel, “Phenomenology of the Mind”, translated by J. B. Baillie, London: Harper & Row, 1967.

³¹ See remark 1 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Knowledge management skills – i.e. brokering information; creating knowledge out of information; selective interpretation of information
- Critical attitudes towards technologies – when they are appropriate to use in educational processes, and for which purposes, and when not
- Critical reflection on the increased space ICT takes up in young people’s lives in relation to the challenges it poses for society and linkage of that reflection with educational processes aiming greater and deeper participation of young people in society
- Mastery of the basic information and communication technologies required for the kind of non-formal education work being done
- Familiarity with latest developments in ICT relevant to the implementation of the objectives of the European youth work field, and specifically relevant to specific specialisation groups within European youth work

Key contents:

- Ideas about the difference between knowledge society and information society; relationship to life long learning
- Challenges to society posed by ICT, specifically those important for young people
- Everyday contexts in which ICT is being used and play a role in young people’s lives (including Human Rights considerations like civil liberties)
- Realities of young people who are “digital migrants”; “digital natives”; “digitally excluded”; how this plays a role for participation in European non-formal educational activities and active participation in society (digital citizenship)
- Knowledge about how ICT changes (non-formal education) learning environments; key ICT practices relevant for European youth work and non-formal educational processes
- Knowledge about how ICT can be used as a learning environment – advantages and limits (e-learning, etc)
- Understanding of importance of and how to work with modern youth information approaches

The above considered, the training and learning objective of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To enable learner/trainers to function as knowledge managers and brokers with a view to developing the competence of their participants for active participation in all spheres of life (social, political, economic, cultural), from the local through the European level

d. Key Competence 5: Learning to learn

The fifth key competence – **learning to learn** – is central, as it supports the acquisition of all key competencies through various learning activities. Trainers and youth workers are themselves in a lifelong learning process and, thus, this competence is a prerequisite for the maintenance and improvement of their level of qualification. Further, one of their key functions is to be able to motivate others to engage in new learning processes and to support others in developing a fundamentally positive attitude towards learning throughout the life-course.

This is easier said than done, as demonstrated by the many experiences of projects in the context of the European Commission's Grundtvig programme.³² Projects within the programme seek pathways to improved knowledge and competence among adult learners³³ so that they become able to apply lifelong learning autonomously. There is no shortage of relevant theory – the psychology of learning, developmental psychology and most recently the neurosciences, all provide interesting and useful perspectives. But, the question of how exactly education and training are to be shaped in practice remains. A likely solution is to relate learning and, therefore, the development of attitudes, behaviours and the capacity for action to the immediate and real needs of learners.

But, this is not a fundamentally new realisation. The principle of orienting learning processes towards the needs, and therefore the motivations, of learners has characterised non-formal and informal education for decades. But, learning to learn today presents a novel challenge, in that practice shows that it has generally become more difficult for learners to identify their needs, so that they create the willingness to learn. It is not just the sensory overload caused by the huge amount of information every individual has to deal with on a daily basis that has brought about this challenge, but also, and maybe even, especially, the complexity of everyday life.³⁴ Above all, this complexity has led to greater uncertainty and disorientation among young people and, increasingly, among adults. This impedes individuals in facing their own needs, both emotionally and cognitively.

As such, it is clear that individual key competencies, in and of themselves, do not reach far. Only when they are combined do they qualify knowledge, abilities and skills in the sense of rewarding development of the personality. Concretely, promoting and developing learners' competence for learning within a European training activity implies working specifically on perceptual habits, on attitudes specific to situations or certain persons, and on learning practices.

³² See Decision N° 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, 15 November 2006, establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Available for download at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_327/l_32720061124en00450068.pdf. See also Chapter IV of the Lifelong Learning Programme (Grundtvig).

³³ Ibid. Article 29 1. (b).

³⁴ This underlines the importance of key competencies 1, 3 and 4.

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Ability to develop a positive attitude to learning among participants
- Ability to motivate themselves and young people to learn through the life course by demonstrating its necessity and benefits
- Familiarity with current debates, theories and approaches for helping learners improve their learning practices
- Familiarity with the political-institutional framework within which the learning to learn of young people can be supported

Key contents:

- Up to date knowledge on how learning to learn takes place and on learning theories
- Ideas and approaches for how to support the learning to learn competence of young people in the context of non-formal educational activities
- Diverse tried and tested methods for working on learning to learn with young people
- Up to date information about the political-institutional framework for supporting lifelong learning in general and learning to learn specifically (EU, OECD and CoE policies programmes) and about opportunities available to young people to make use of them, as relevant
- Participants own learning biographies and approaches / methods for working with other learners on the identification and analysis of learning biographies

The above considered, the training and learning objective of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To enable learner/trainers to function as motivators and facilitators of the learning to learn process of the participants of their educational work, with a view to the development of a positive attitude to learning throughout the life course among those participants.

e. Key Competence 6: Social and civic competence

The sixth competence area that of **social and civic competencies** embraces three aspects: personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence. As such

“... it is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights) equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation”.³⁵

³⁵ See remark 8 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

First and foremost, these competencies can be understood as addressing the altered educational concept we have demanded in response to the dislocation of education and training from its real results. Considering the contemporary reality of the multicultural European society, these competencies are fundamental prerequisites for conducting one's life as an individual and as a member of one or several collectives, while respecting an overarching concept of justice (best expressed in human rights). This is why the creation, promotion and evolution of these competencies is integral to any kind of formal, non-formal or informal education. They are the skills for life that young people need to negotiate their path to full adulthood and through the life course. We develop on these competencies in greater detail below, as they represent a particularly important and crucial dimension in our competence profile for trainers.

First of all, we find that it must be criticised that, unlike the first drafts, the latest version of the key competencies regards intercultural competence as just one aspect of social competence, and does not consider it independently. This is not only astonishing from the point of view of the pedagogical and socio-political objectives of the European Commission in the field of education and training, and particularly youth, but also because in an increasing number of countries in the EU (and further afield), both employers and trade unions consider intercultural competence as a necessary interdisciplinary qualification for the modern workforce. We understand the standpoint that contemporary social competence always contains elements of the organisation of life in the multicultural society, considering that if these elements are missing, social competence needs improving. Nevertheless, we would argue that intercultural competence goes beyond social competence by relying on empathetic reflection based on intercultural learning to name just one aspect of differentiation.

As we have already established, European youth work is a form of non-formal education that is expected to help young people to learn skills that are relevant for the biography of participants and recognised as such by the public beyond the youth field. Specific work on and with intercultural competence through intercultural learning characterises the quality and professionalism of the actors working in this field. In the context of the competence profile we are promoting, we have defined the capacity for intercultural discourse as a benchmark for quality and professionalism. Points 3, 4, 6, and 7 of the profile description in the preliminary remarks provide some initial reflections on this. A few more issues need to be raised by way of explanation.

It is not just since the introduction of the term *intercultural dialogue* that we can see the desire for *interculturality* being expressed instead of the descriptive of *multiculturality* being used to characterise society. Using intercultural to describe processes of dialogue may indeed make sense. But, it does not make sense, when it comes to characterising social structures and their classification systems. Generally speaking in Europe, these remain largely exclusive, and have led to the development of specific cultural forms of expression. Additively, these may form a multicultural society, but the multicultural *per se* does not by definition represent any added value. It is only the individual and collective approach to dealing with this

form of social reality and the way in which society's resources (meant in the broadest sense) are used that demonstrate the quality of state action or the competence of individuals in respect of the multicultural composition of the society and the differences present in it. Like it or not, "otherness" in today's European society has become increasingly complex, or at least is perceived as such by a large number of ordinary people, and ideas about how mutual understanding should bridge such differences, have increasingly come to be seen as limited in their effectiveness and appropriateness. This does not make racist, exclusive or any other form of violent attitude and behaviour any more acceptable. But, it does point to the increased significance of one specific question: How can the individual maintain a positive attitude in the face of the increased "strangeness" that accompanies the broader spectrum of cognitive and cultural meanings presented by life in contemporary European society?

Of late, intercultural dialogue has become popular in the European Union and the Council of Europe. Despite the favoured status this approach enjoys, it is unclear whether dialogue is supposed to replace communication processes (these always include mutual learning!) or whether it is supposed to take place when communication is no longer possible. Dialogue requires standpoints. If these standpoints are exclusively based on culture-specific determinants, and if no serious effort to find and include cultural universals is made, there can be no cultural self-reflection and no development towards an intra-cultural change of perspectives. From our perspective, therefore, there is no viable political or pedagogical alternative to intercultural learning.

"... in education aimed at the respect for and the application of human rights (i.e. in a normative context) intercultural learning is always also political learning. Intercultural learning has to contribute to the formation of a crucial minimum consensus on human rights as a concept of justice that protects and ensures individual and social rights and obligations in a multicultural European civil society. Only then can intercultural learning rightly be defined as a necessary prerequisite and as an educational approach to establishing competence for intercultural dialogue ... Intercultural dialogue without a concrete reference to the concept of justice cannot initiate learning processes and does not lead to change in society".³⁶

We would argue that intercultural learning is one of the main tasks of trainers in the European youth field for four main reasons. Intercultural learning:

- characterises a "learning multicultural society" and individual democratic citizenship, here understood as political learning;
- creates conditions enabling people to deal with the integrity of all cultural ways of life as a matter of principle (within the limits implied by the "obligation to be intolerant") and to debate about or dissent from these ways of life with the help of democratically legitimated and politically just procedures only;
- is a lifelong educational process aimed at the development and stabilisation of all individuals' willingness and ability to acculturate;

³⁶ See remark 2 in the preliminary remarks to this paper and Thesis 6.

- is part of the political socialisation process that will bring about the development of a European civil society.

Under point 3 of the summary of the conclusions of the study outlined in the preliminary remarks to this paper we formulated the need for

“... a level of personal and social maturity that allows the trainer concerned to both manage and master complex, even ambiguous, situations and tasks successfully, in particular those linked to the intercultural contexts European youth work activities represent. Being able to constructively deal with differences, contradictions and ambivalences requires role-distance, empathy and tolerance of ambiguity. These are the main meta-cognitive and meta-emotional skills for European youth work”³⁷

These attitudes and skills define the capacity for intercultural discourse, and are, in our opinion, among the most important personal and professional competencies required of qualified trainers working in European level training activities.

As such, some more explanation as regards the notions of role distance, empathy and tolerance of ambiguity is required. Otten’s most recent description of these is quoted below:³⁸

“... Our everyday lives mostly consist of situations of interaction. Each interaction – understood as an action-related communicative act – is regulated by role relationships. If nothing unusual happens, we do not have to question our roles: they have been internalised and we act accordingly. The more complex role adoption is, as a result of unconscious processes of socialisation, the more secure we feel (ego strength) and the more we believe that we are behaving in a manner appropriate to the respective interactive situation. We do not reflect on the fact that this process of role adoption is not completed once and for all at a specific moment in time. We do not think about the fact that roles always also exist in varying degrees of consistency and concreteness and are subject to change as a result of intervening events and situations.

Without this basic possibility for change in role adoption (social ego identity) there would hardly be any chance for intercultural learning to succeed, as our interactions increasingly take place in a multicultural environment where the usual role behaviour is less and less successful in achieving the intended effect. The need for minor and major role changes, in the sense of role taking and role making, is thus increasing. In order to learn new roles and to be able to accept others, role distance is necessary. This refers to the individual ability to see and put into perspective one’s own attitudes, perception habits and patterns of thought against the background of the norms of one’s own culture. This ability is so important because, without this relativisation, stimuli from a different culture will not be accepted as positive learning stimuli. Instead, they will rather result in a strengthening of existing prejudice structures and a fixation on existing role patterns. Role distance is, therefore, an essential prerequisite for intercultural learning.

New understanding of an old or as yet unfamiliar role presupposes the ability to place oneself in new situations. Without empathy, perception remains confined to one’s own respective cultural context and, as such, general everyday practice is also not reflected upon. Empathy is, thus, an important condition for developing the ability to interact and competence to act – both important characteristics of the ability to take on intercultural discourse as described below.

Intercultural discourse is aimed at establishing extensive agreement between the content and relationship aspect of communication and agreement between the interacting partners at the relationship level. Without empathy, without putting oneself in someone else’s place and situation, this cannot succeed. A situation new to all those involved requires a common interpretation of

³⁷ See remark 3 in the preliminary remarks to this paper.

³⁸ See remark 2 in the preliminary remarks to this paper and Thesis 7.

what is perceived to be the reality of that situation, in order to develop new competence for action. Looking at the complexity of everyday situations where cultures overlap, empathy also implies the anticipated review of what can be communicated or conveyed to others as experience through action.

This addresses tolerance of ambiguity: the ability to tolerate different interests, expectations and needs (within the limits described in thesis no. 5) and to make allowances for them in situations of interaction. Apart from that, tolerance of ambiguity describes the degree to which a person can endure not being able to implement his or her own ideas and expectations. Intercultural learning can help us to avoid using competing stereotypes as a means of maintaining and asserting our own position. Unfortunately, we still all too often witness this kind of behaviour at the political level.

In the context of European youth work, this behaviour should have largely been outgrown because tolerance of ambiguity, usually in combination with role-distance and empathy, is understood as a crucial basic qualification of social action in a European civil society.”³⁹

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Familiarity with concepts of and approaches to education for democratic and European citizenship with young people
- Commitment to the added value of an intercultural approach when working with young people on the development of civil and social competence
- Skills and attitudes essential for conducting intercultural learning activities: empathy, distance from social roles, tolerance of ambiguity (and the ability to represent one’s own identity)
- Understanding of European youth work as an intercultural context requiring approaches and methods appropriate to the diversity of the groups of young people taking part

Key contents:

- Social and political concepts (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights) that equip individuals to engage in active and democratic participation
- Specific concepts of young people’s participation and citizenship
- Structures and channels of civic and social participation for young people in Europe
- European citizenship

³⁹ Hendrik Otten first presented this correlation in detail in: Hendrik Otten, “*Zur politischen Didaktik interkulturellen Lernens*”, Opladen: 1985. The chapter *Kommunikative Didaktik als methodisches Prinzip* (p. 40 ff), in particular, explains the interplay of role distance, empathy and tolerance of ambiguity with a view to the development of personal and social ego identity, the ability for intercultural interaction and competence for action. This publication remains a key reference for the general definition of objectives for intercultural learning, the political legitimacy, thereof, and its epistemological foundations. The didactic implementation would, of course, have to be adapted to the changed demands placed on European youth work and would certainly place stronger emphasis on the political dimension.

- Concepts and practices of intercultural education as political education, methodology and methods of intercultural learning with young people
- Up to date information about the EU and Council of Europe political-institutional framework for supporting intercultural education with young people in Europe, including specific youth education and mobility programmes

The above considered, the training and learning objective of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To equip learner/trainers with capacities for developing and implementing intercultural non-formal educational processes that encourage their participants' ability to develop the motivation and competence of the young people they work with for active democratic (European) citizenship

f. Key competence 7: Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

The seventh competence – **sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** – is the one that brings together all our thoughts on those personal and professional competencies required for employment in the European youth field. With the growth of employment within the civic sector at European level, the discussion on quality, professionalism, validation and recognition of European youth work, and, thus, on the recognition of trainers' and youth workers' applied competencies has also become more important. These have become essential for recognising and dealing effectively and creatively with the increasing quality demands of employers and funders in the European youth sector. Even so, having this competence, or any of the others outlined in the trainers' competence profile we propose, does not guarantee anyone a well paid and fulfilling job in their preferred field of European youth work. Competition for those few full time institutionalised positions that exist remains high, and many employers continue to prefer to engage "cheap labour" in the form of volunteers and interns than to create correctly protected and paid positions with long term perspectives for professional development.

While we recognise that considerations related to a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship also concerns those who conduct training on a voluntary basis in the many youth organisations active on the European level, we imagine that the following considerations might primarily be relevant for those who have taken the decision to make European youth work their profession, i.e. those who also earn their living from their work in the field. *De facto* many of those considering themselves trainers at the European level are working freelance (i.e. are self-employed) or run small-scale consulting or training service provision companies. Of course, the demand for quality and professionalism is no less pronounced in the voluntary youth work sector. Those conducting training and non-formal education with young people in the context of their voluntary commitments within civil society organisations are also expected to conduct themselves and their trainings according to high quality standards, although these are not always explicitly communicated or documented.

In this relation, discussion of the importance of this key competence raises some very contentious issues for the community of practice concerned. First, it raises the question of the commodification of (non-formal) education. Many members of the European non-formal education community of practice reject, on principle, the imposition of quality criteria on the field, as they believe this to be an indicator for the imposition of market principles and for the subversion of the sector's voluntary character. Second, it raises the issue of accountability structures for the quality of non-formal education delivered in the youth sector. In a European youth sector whose financiers (whether state authorities or European institutions) are increasingly concerned with the utility of the experience gained by young people through non-formal education, demands for the codification of standards have become clearer, and with them legitimate questions about the competence of the staff delivering such education. Due to the absence of structured and transparent debate on the issue between members of the community of practice and the institutions making greater quality demands, the extent to which the members of the community of practice are inclined to subject themselves and their competencies to the kind of scrutiny that would be demanded if quality criteria were applied more rigorously cannot be judged.

Nevertheless, we believe that qualification according to a competence profile of the kind we are promoting will become a condition *sine qua non* for accessing employment with European and other international bodies to conduct youth work training and other related activities. The tendency to outsource the development of training models, strategy and policy documents, research and evaluations by these institutions and other large scale international organisations with a growing interest in youth has risen significantly since the beginning of the 2000s. This implies that entrepreneurship and a sense of initiative, combining in a certain kind of business acumen, will be an important factor in the ability of trainers (among others) in the field of European youth work to secure sustainable livelihoods and, therefore, to pursue their vocation in the civic sector.⁴⁰

We also understand this competence as being expressed through a non-bureaucratic and flexible, but steadfastly ethical, attitude towards the many challenges of work life in the field. To mention just a few, these include dealing with clients who represent a variety of organisational cultures, interpreting and brokering expectations for the delivery of a quality product while managing political and institutional imperatives, maintaining social solidarity with other members of the community of practice in the face of increasing competition for assignments, facing up to the risks that speaking frankly in relation to the ethics and values of the field can have for professional position or advancement, juggling projects and deadlines and dealing with complex tax regulations and social security provisions.

⁴⁰ A recent cross-check of the competence profile proposed in the study, and further elaborated in this paper, against the expectations of participants of the Training for Advanced Learning in Europe (TALÉ), developed and implemented by the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth, in relation to competence development, points to significant coherence. For more information on this training programme, see Newsletter of the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth, (No. 25, May 2009), available for download at: www.youth-partnership.net.

Finally, but not least, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship have increasingly come to be aspects that youth work educators are expected to pass on to the young people they work with. Non-formal educational activities, as outlined above, are increasingly expected to lead to the successful labour market integration of young people. Whether professional or volunteer, this means that those responsible for delivering non-formal educational activities with this aim have to have some lived experience of these competencies and require skills for translating that experience into educational offers relevant to the needs of their target groups.

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Awareness of the “market dimension” of the European youth field, its implications for pursuing full time paid employment in the field of European youth work and of the need to reflect on its challenges
- Understanding of quality standards as applied by both funding institutions and employers in the European youth field
- Ability to maintain a non-bureaucratic, flexible and ethical attitude towards the many challenges of work life and long term voluntary engagement in the field
- Familiarity with the community of practice that forms the professional and voluntary “cadre” within European youth work and capacity / information required for networking within it
- Willingness to participate in relevant associations and their debates about professionalisation and quality among peers and colleagues at the European level
- Ability to communicate effectively with clients and funders and to manage projects emanating from a variety of organisational cultures
- Service orientation, ability to identify opportunities and take initiatives, dynamism and ability to assess and take risks (as appropriate)
- Familiarity with the political-institutional framework within which the debate on quality, professionalisation, qualification and validation within the field of European youth work takes place

Key contents:

- Ideas and concepts of quality development and maintenance within educational processes
- Concepts and methods of evaluation, monitoring, quality assessment, quality management and service culture appropriate for the field of non-formal education
- Project management

- Up to date information and ideas emanating from European (and national) level debates on quality, professionalisation, qualification and validation for the field of European youth work
- Information about the political-institutional framework within which the debate takes place
- Concepts of organisational culture, ideas about how to work and communicate effectively across differences in organisational culture, ideas about creativity and initiative taking

The above considered, the training and learning objectives of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To equip learner/trainers with the knowledge and skills they need for participating actively in the community of practice to which ongoing debates on quality, professionalisation, qualification, validation and quality development relate and to manage the emerging market aspects of the European youth field.

g. Key competence 8: Cultural awareness and expression

The last, but certainly not the least, key competence is **cultural awareness and expression**. Its adaptation in the context of this trainers' competence profile certainly deserves further thought. A first interpretation made in the study, considers cultural competence a key feature of the professionalism of European level trainers because they are required by the nature of the educational work they do to actively use their imaginations, work with from the idea of "creativity" and with "creative methods" and to create attractive learning environments that motivate individuals to learn through creative means. In other words, cultural competence as the ability, very much in the sense of holistic learning and living, to engage one's senses for the training and learning process in a conscious and deliberate way, to convey aesthetic sensations, and to use the psycho-social functions of culture in learning processes, for instance those of language, art, music, dance or history, to name just some.

But, being able to creatively use cultural forms of expression for the learning process is not necessarily the only advantage of cultural competence for this kind of educator. Cultural competence is also important in order for trainers and learners to become aware of and apt for working with the various cultural meanings that have been so much shaped by the art, language, history and religion of the many and diverse cultural groups and shared ways of living to be found in Europe, and that are so essential to the functioning of human society. Trainers and learners in European non-formal educational situations need to gain access to dimensions of meaning in other cultures in order for learning to be achieved, and this demands the ability for cultural self-reflection in the sense of reviewing habits of perception, thinking and feeling (in other words, deep cultural awareness). In this sense, cultural competence is inherently interlinked with intercultural competence. Empathy, explored in more detail above, helps learners to make the necessary shift in perspective by raising their awareness for new interpretations of the situations they encounter. Artistic expression is very suitable to educational work of this kind, and under the right conditions can make a strong contribution to the efforts of any individual to find the focal point of their own existence on the personal and professional levels.

Considering the above discussion and issues, we propose that the following elements be taken into account in the development of a training concept for the purpose of training the competence profile, in relation to this key competence:

Specific competence requirements (knowledge, attitudes, skills) to be trained for:

- Capacity to develop holistic learning environments and experiences, that engage all senses in the learning process
- Capacity to create attractive learning environments that motivate individuals to learn through creative means
- Capacity to use the psycho-social functions of culture in learning processes
- Capacity to actively use one's imaginations, work with the idea of "creativity" and with "creative methods"
- Awareness of and aptitude for working with the various cultural meanings that have an impact on the development of social interaction between people with different senses of belonging (i.e. awareness of the intercultural dimension of working with different cultural meanings)

Key contents:

- Concepts of and ideas about holistic learning, including experiential learning and the role of the senses in learning
- Ideas about working with creativity in educational processes
- Ideas about learning to learn
- "Creative" methods – ideas and practices of working with different cultural forms of expression and artistic approaches
- Good practices from other fields of work that successfully develop life skills through artistic forms
- Concepts and ideas about culture/s and how culture/s influence human interaction

The above considered, the training and learning objectives of any process to qualify for this competence within the profile might be formulated as follows:

To enhance the learner/trainers' capacity for the development and implementation of holistic learning experiences that make full use of the senses and creative potential of the participants and of their own imaginations and creative talents, that raise the cultural awareness of participants and that enhance their ability for cultural reflection.

CONCLUSION – FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT A TRAINING PROCESS

In the previous section we interpreted each of the eight key competencies for life long learning in relation to the contents of the competence profile for trainers in the field of European youth work that we have proposed in the study. In so doing, we arrived at the formulation of at least one key learning / training objective for each competence area that would form part of a training concept designed to qualify trainers.

Taken together, the list of objectives would look like this:

To enable learner/trainers to communicate and develop intercultural discourse in the group educational setting through the practice of a structured and culturally sensitive use of language, in their mother tongue and/or the foreign language they habitually use in European non-formal educational activities with young people and trainees.

To enable learner/trainers to coherently apply non-dogmatic reason and the ethical principles of the field of European youth work in their educational practice (with young people and trainees), thereby empowering their participants and themselves for reflected social interaction in both learning settings and daily life.

To enable learner/trainers to function as knowledge managers and brokers with a view to developing the competence of their participants for active participation in all spheres of life (social, political, economic, cultural), from the local through the European level.

To enable learner/trainers to function as motivators and facilitators of the learning to learn process of the participants of their educational work, with a view to the development of a positive attitude to learning throughout the life course among their participants.

To equip learner/trainers with capacities for developing and implementing intercultural non-formal educational processes that encourage their participants' ability to develop the motivation and competence of the young people they work with for active democratic (European) citizenship.

To equip learner/trainers with the knowledge and skills they need for participating actively in the community of practice to which ongoing debates on quality, professionalisation, qualification, validation and quality development relate and to manage the emerging market aspects of the European youth field.

To enhance the learner/trainers' capacity for the development and implementation of holistic learning experiences that make full use of the senses and creative potential of the participants and of their own imaginations and creative talents, that raise the cultural awareness of participants and that enhance their ability for cultural reflection.

On this basis, we would like to propose that the overall aim of such a training process might be formulated as follows:

To enable learner/trainers to become familiar with, further develop and gain practical experience of the fundamental spectrum of competence that defines the professional and quality conduct of (non-formal) education and training activities in the field of European youth work as per the defined trainers' competence profile.

In the title of this paper, we ask the rhetorical question: The eight key competencies for lifelong learning: an appropriate framework within which to develop the competence of trainers in the field of youth work or just plain politics? It seems obvious to us, and we hope that this is clear from the thoughts we present in this paper, that indeed, the integration of thinking and policy work on trainers' competence with efforts to secure the achievement of the eight key competencies would be a positive step forward in the process to ensure quality in the European youth sector.

We have noted earlier in this paper that it is sometimes difficult to assess the extent to which new policy initiatives in the area of training and education have been thought out in consideration of the results of previous and ongoing ones, and that with each new policy document reacting to educational failure among young people we are presented with ever more complex combinations of competencies that young people are expected to have. While this can indeed be frustrating for those engaged in the field, it remains a fact that we see many overlaps between the eight key competencies and our trainers' competence profile. In the end, any coupling of these in conceptual and policy terms, would give the competence profile a chance of gaining "hands and feet", would give it a chance of becoming a reality. At present it remains a matter for hypothetical discussion or voluntary adoption by individuals concerned. As such, the answer to our rhetorical question might indeed be it's "just plain politics".

But, taking the commissioning of this paper as an indication that there is indeed political interest in making the competence profile a reality, we would like to conclude with some ideas about what that might actually imply. For such an ambitious list of training and learning objectives to be translated into a practical training and learning process, we believe that some basic and minimum framework conditions need to be put in place. These relate to the human, financial and time resources that will be invested in the training process, to the structure of the learning process and the variety of attendant learning environments required and to its external validation as a qualification.

In relation to time, we cannot imagine such a training process being possible without a significant long term investment on the part of the trainees and it will clearly require a relatively long preparatory and recruitment phase. In relation to learning environments, such a process will certainly require a differentiated approach to learning settings and must include the use of both face to face and online learning components and may potentially also require recourse to periods of in-work practice. In relation to recognition, such a training process would ideally provide a qualification formally recognised at the national level, but possibly accredited at the international level and although a mechanism for assuring such recognition and validation remains absent for the moment, it should be explored how a suitable qualification could be guaranteed, if only to once and for all end the vicious circle of informal European institutional recognition that is only valid for the institutions providing it.

In our opinion, the person who coined the imperative “Good, cheap and fast? Choose two, you cannot have all three!” was a very wise person. Clearly, achieving the above will be expensive. In terms of human resources, significant staff investments will have to be made to develop, pilot, evaluate and revise the training concept and model. Further investments will have to be made in political advocacy efforts to ensure the provision of a relevant and widely recognised qualification.

The open question that remains, however, in relation to the framework conditions for such a training process to be developed, relates to the availability of a political consensus among the European institutions that currently host the debate on quality, professionalisation, qualification and validation in the European youth work field for the elaboration of a European system for the qualification and certification of trainers in the field of European youth work. For this political consensus to be achieved, systematic debate between the policymakers within the institutions, those active in the field in the provision of training, who consider themselves part of the concerned community of practice, and relevant elements within the research community would be necessary. To the extent that this paper has been commissioned, it is clear there are elements working towards the development of such a political consensus. Nevertheless, a clearly recognised and inclusive system within which all stakeholders could participate in the debate and be part of the development of a strategy for working towards a common goal remains fledgling. By way of conclusion, therefore, we would propose that the most important framework condition for the further development of any such training process would be the institutionalisation of an inclusive and open process allowing for the emergence of the necessary political consensus.

And, finally, in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche

“... And with that, forward on the path of wisdom with a bold step and full of confidence! However you may be, serve yourself as your own source of experience! Throw off discontent with your nature, forgive yourself your own ego, for in any event you possess in yourself a ladder with a hundred rungs upon which you can climb to knowledge”.⁴¹

⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Human, All Too Human – A Book for Free Spirits” (translated by R.J. Hollingdale). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1986 & 1996, p. 134.