

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

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Quality assurance

High-quality offers and the qualification of people working in extracurricular child and youth work are of particular importance in working with young people. Ensuring quality and the **continuous quality development of extracurricular child and youth work** has become an indispensable field of activity. The **definition of standards and the engagement of evaluation tools such as self-evaluation and impact analysis** serve to live up to the needs of the increasingly complex field of action.

Federal youth organisations that apply for **basic funding from the Federal Government** are **required to carry out continuous quality assurance**. Additionally, **depending on the area of Children and Youth work**, there are **different types of mechanisms** in place to evaluate the quality of youth work programmes and projects.

Professional Open Children and Youth work

Most professional Open Children and Youth workers are specifically qualified employees with relevant training in the total amount of at least 60 ECTS points or 1500 hours in the secondary, post-secondary and tertiary sector. Further **occupational training, supervision and intervision** are important elements of quality assurance. The **Quality Manual for Open Youth Work**, 4th edition, August 2016 ([Qualitätshandbuch für Offene Jugendarbeit](#), 4. Auflage, August 2016), developed by the Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in 2011, outlines the basic principles in the area of quality standards. It describes the **requirements in terms of structure, process and result** of Professional Open Children and Youth Work in Austria and makes **suggestions for further development**. Furthermore, the **impact concept** "Goals, achievements and effects of the Open Youth Work in Austria" ([Ziele, Leistungen und Wirkungen der Offenen Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#)) - a description of 5 dimensions of the Open Youth Work -, the **Toolkit** 'Tools and Methods of Quality Development for Open Youth Work' ([Werkzeuge und Methoden der Qualitätsentwicklung für die Offene Jugendarbeit](#)) and the **boJA-Documentation Database** contribute to the quality assurance and development of the field.

Children and youth work in youth organisations

Many seminars, courses, workshops and programmes are constantly held within the framework of internal educational and further training measures and are attended by thousands of volunteers and communicators. These **non-formal educational offers** contribute greatly to quality assurance in associational children and youth work. A detailed overview of the educational and further training measures in the area of associational child and youth organisations can be found in the publication 'This Way! Navigational Aid Child and Youth Organisations' ([Hier geht's lang! Navigationshilfe Kinder- und Jugendorganisationen](#)).

The 'Manual for the Promotion of Gender Mainstreaming in Child and Youth Work - Ideas and Tools' ("[Handbuch zur Förderung von Gender Mainstreaming in der Kinder- und Jugendarbeit. Ideen und Werkzeuge](#)"), developed by the National Youth Council and cooperation partners, aims to **support reflective and gender-related work** with children and adolescents. It is actively supported in the member organisations of the National Youth Council.

The **Federal Youth Promotion Act ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#))** stipulates that **basic support should only be granted to those youth organisations** which - in addition to a number of other conditions - **provide continuous quality assurance** in accordance with § 6 para. 1 no. 6 Federal Youth Promotion Act or § 13 para. 4 of the Guidelines of the Federal Youth Promotion Act perform their work. In view of this, as well as the fundamental meaning and necessity of quality assurance in associative youth work, **a series of measures and activities have already been set** in recent years, all aimed at finding ways, methods, standards, etc. A key message of these **cooperation projects** is the **recommendation of self-evaluation**. A form for the proof of the implementation of a continuous quality assurance ([Formblatt für den Nachweis der Durchführung einer kontinuierlichen Qualitätssicherung](#)) for the grant submission according to section 13 (4) of the Federal Youth Promotion Act must be completed compulsorily and submitted together with the application for basic funding.

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Youth Information

The following measures are being implemented in the **National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres**:

- **Ongoing further training offers for the staff** of Youth Information Centres – from beginner courses up to in-depth topics
- **Nationwide quality criteria and quality standards** as well as a **commitment to the European Youth Information Principles**. The brochure on “Quality in Youth Information” ([Qualität in der Jugendinformation](#)) describes the quality assurance mechanisms for the Austrian Youth Information Centres and is divided into key areas, criteria, and indicators. The key areas encompass structural framework and resources, information management, external communication, and information dissemination. The quality standards describe quantifiable and measurable measures, processes and resources.

[aufZAQ](#) - Certified training quality for extracurricular child and youth work

On the one hand, the aufZAQ certificate is a means of proving personal qualification, on the other hand, it **helps to ensure quality standards in education and training** for full-time and voluntary youth leaders and youth workers. With the certificate, the [Section of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), the Youth Departments of the Federal States, and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Italian Province of Bozen/Bolzano – South Tyrol **confirm the high quality of educational courses in the non-formal area**. aufZAQ makes the quality of courses visible, **comparable and recognisable**. Thus, people working in extracurricular child and youth work receive orientation when choosing a training or further education offer. For course participants, the aufZAQ certification is proof of the high quality of their education. For employers and institutions of child and youth work, aufZAQ guarantees that the respective course is a high-quality vocational education and training that is strongly oriented towards professional practice.

According to the aufZAQ [Competence Framework](#) there are five different competence areas. Each of the five areas is subdivided into different dimensions that specify the area in each case.

I. Enable, initiate and promote learning

- **Set educational goals using a participatory approach** and support children/youths in achieving these objectives
- **Create settings which promote (self-)education** and learning processes

- Facilitate (self-)educational processes and **shape learning processes**
- Use **appropriate methods for successful learning**
- **Evaluate and develop** learning processes

II. Support identity development and approaches in coping with everyday life

- **Support children/adolescents in the development of their identity** and further personal development
- **Enable** children/youths to experience **self-efficacy**
- **Promote responsibility and independence** of children and adolescents
- Strengthen **personal recognition and sense of community**
- Support children/adolescents in **coping with everyday life**

III. Enable participation and represent interests

- **Organise** activities, offers and projects **participatory**
- Use **appropriate methods and procedures** for successful participation
- **Enable** participation **in the development of the organisation**
- **Promote social and political participation** of children/adolescents
- **Represent the interests** of children/young people

IV. Act and interact consciously and responsibly

- **Take responsibility**
- Implement roles conscientiously and with **consideration**
- **Include** the different **dimensions of diversity** in the work
- Design **group/team settings**

- **Initiate** and design **group/team processes**
- **Accompany** and develop group/team processes
- Act constructively and **solution-oriented in problem and conflict situations**
- Act **competent with risks**

V. Organise and manage projects

- **Design** organisational **processes**
- Use appropriate **methods for successful organisation**
- **Evaluate and develop** organisational processes
- Carry out **administrative tasks** and use financial resources responsibly
- Carry out **communication** and public relations
- **Shape and develop** the organisation

In addition to the content-related division into areas and dimensions, the competence framework also makes a **distinction between different levels**. There are **five levels starting at Level 2**:

- **Level 2:** Work with children/adolescents **under guidance** with some autonomy and **taking responsibility** for one's own actions. Being responsible for one's own actions, **adapting one's own behaviour** under certain guidance to common situations and circumstances in a **pre-structured framework**
- **Level 3:** Work with children/adolescents **in simple situations autonomously and self-responsibly**. Take responsibility for one's own actions consistent to the situation. **Independently adapt one's own behaviour** to the state and circumstances of common situations in a pre-structured framework
- **Level 4:** Work autonomously and self-responsibly with children/adolescents **in changing routine situations. Plan, carry out, and evaluate projects**. Independently adapt one's own behaviour to different situations and under **varying conditions** to the respective state and circumstances
- **Level 5:** **Act independently and flexibly in varying and even unpredictable situations**. Coordinate and manage projects and/or teams independently. **Instruct colleagues** in changing assignments. Participate in the **professional development of organisational structures** and/or pedagogical concepts
- **Level 6:** **Lead complex and comprehensive functional areas** and/or projects

independently and as ultimately responsible. **Deal critically and responsibly with actions of colleagues as well as project** and working teams. Take responsibility for **managing the professional development** of individuals, teams, organisational structures, and pedagogical concepts or those of a similar nature

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

The [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) has a budget to finance youth research and youth reports.

Youth Report

The [Austrian youth report](#) ([Jugendbericht](#)) is composed at request of the National Council, commissioned by the Department/Ministry of Youth and submitted to the National Council once during each legislative period. The most recent report on the situation of youth in Austria has been published in 2016. The preparation of Parts A and B of the 7th Report on the Situation of Youth in Austria was entrusted to the [Danube University Krems'](#) Department for Migration and Globalization in cooperation with [Statistics Austria](#). The outcomes of these reports are integrated into the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#).

Dialogue Youth Research ([Dialog Jugendforschung](#))

Dialogue Youth Research serves to **present and discuss current research results and activities** in the field of youth research.

Bellow is a brief overview of **recent events** of Dialog youth research:

- **Impact evaluation of mobile youth work** ([Wirkungsevaluation mobiler Jugendarbeit](#)), September 2017

Mobile youth work represents an outreach, life-world-oriented social support offer for a particularly vulnerable target group. A **complex research design and a mix of five methodological approaches highlight the high complexity of impact dynamics and contexts**. Each research access is characterized by special strengths, which complement each other and enable meaningful knowledge of action. The publication Impact evaluation of mobile youth work ([Wirkungsevaluation mobiler Jugendarbeit](#)) can be obtained as Open Access Version on the website of the [Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology](#) ([Instituts für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie, IRKS](#)).

- Knowledge on young people in Austria: results from the [7th Austrian youth report](#)

At the Dialogue on Youth Research, the authorship of the 7th Report on the Situation of Youth in Austria ([Siebenter Jugendbericht](#)) gave an **insight into the most important and surprising results of the 7th Youth Report** - Part A: Knowledge of Young People. Both **existing studies and especially prepared analyses**, for example from the Austrian Health Survey ([Österreichische Gesundheitsbefragung](#))

), were used for this purpose. For example, the following questions were dealt with:

- **Who** is the Austrian youth?
 - Which **educational paths** do Austrian young people take?
 - How are young people with a **migration background** doing?
 - Which **health problems and diseases** are particularly affecting young people?
 - When do young people start **smoking and** how is their health behaviour (**alcohol, exercise, diet**)?
 - How are young people behaving in their **home environment**, with their **relationships**, with their **sexuality**, with themselves?
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- **Youth-specific data**

Austrian Institute for Family Research: Collection of youth-relevant data

In a research project, the **Austrian Institute for Family Research** ([Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung, ÖIF](#)) documented **which youth-relevant data are regularly collected by institutions**. This makes it possible to **quickly and easily access different contents** of youth topics and to link them in content. All previous studies can be viewed on the website of the ÖIF.

The publication "Focus on Youth - An Overview in Numbers" ([Fokus Jugend 2019 - Ein Überblick in Zahlen](#)) was developed by the Austrian Institute for Family Research at the University of Vienna in cooperation with the Competence Centre for Youth in the Federal Chancellery and under participation of youth policy stakeholders. It provides a **compact overview of existing data on young people in Austria**. For this purpose, existing, publicly available statistics were researched and processed in a user-friendly way.

Impact box Youth Work

The impact box Youth Work ([Wirkungsbox Jugendarbeit](#)) provides a **comprehensive collection of empirically proven and well-founded effects of extracurricular work** for children and youth. This collection is based on the results of literature research funded by the Federal Chancellery and carried out by the Centre of Competence for Non-profit Organisations and Social Entrepreneurship of Vienna University of Business and Economics (WU) ([Kompetenzzentrum für Nonprofit Organisationen und Social Entrepreneurship](#)) on evidence-based, societal effects of extracurricular child and youth work. The impact box youth work contains **effects from about 200 relevant contributions in scientific and grey literature**. These effects of various activities of extracurricular Child and Youth Work are described in the

impact box, according to the original language of the article, in German or English. The concept of the effect box developed by [Schober/Rauscher](#) (2017) is used here.

Participative Youth Work

Participatory youth research

As young people can be professionals for their worlds, this approach aims to develop them into **co-researchers**. The aim of participatory research approaches is to **involve affected persons** in sub-stages or the entire research process, and thus to **improve the applicability of research results**. Marginalised groups without a public presence are **supported in expressing their opinions** and giving their voice weight.

In a first step towards the (further) development of participatory research approaches, the Institute for Children's Rights and Parental Education ([Institut für Kinderrechte und Elternbildung, IKEB](#)) was commissioned to **compile a literature review** ([Literaturanalyse – partizipative Jugendforschung](#)) on methods of participatory research projects with young people.

Get active Team

Alongside the Nation Network of Youth Information Centres (Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos) the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) initiated the founding of the [Get-Active-Team](#). The aim was to **set up a youth participation pool: a group of young people who actively and regularly participate in projects and measures for young people** and want to **help develop them** with different organisations. The Get Active team consists of around **25 young people aged 16 to 24 from all over Austria**. Since November 2017, they have been participating in projects of ministries and organisations that aim to better reach young people and/or involve them in the implementation of measures. The added value for the administration and the organisations is the achievement of **measures that are more oriented towards the needs of young people**. Young people have the opportunity to contribute their opinions to different projects, to actively participate and to **cooperate with political decision-makers**. They receive free training in the areas of project development, rhetoric/communication, media and Austria's political landscape.

Reality Checks

As part of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#), each Federal Ministry formulates one or more youth goals ([Jugendziele](#)) that are aimed at young people in Austria. In a 'reality check' an **exchange on the respective youth goals of the ministry between young people and representatives of the departments** is held. In the reflection, the **relevance of the goal to young people** and its connection on their realities of life is discussed. Through the discussion with the Get Active Team, the ministries want to **take up and integrate ideas, suggestions, and perspectives of young people** into the formulation of goals or the development of further measures. So far, reality check workshops were **held with four different Ministries**:

- BKA ([Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#))
- BMBWF ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- BMF ([Federal Ministry of Finance](#))
- BMJ (Federal Ministry of Justice) on the reform of custody and contact rights in family law

Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

Symposium and magazine on digital youth work

The Centre of Competence for Professional Open Children and Youth Work ([Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit, bOJA](#)) organised their **annual symposium with a focus on digital youth work in 2017**. All lectures are provided online. With the 2018 edition of the bOJA **'Explizit'** online magazine, the content of the symposium is provided online.

International conference on digital youth work competencies

In 2020, the conference "[Exploring the digital dimension of youth workers' competencies](#)" was held in Vienna. Around 120 participants received an **overview of the latest developments concerning the digital dimension of youth work** and exchange their skills. The was targeted at youth workers, youth leaders, and trainers as well as other stakeholders of youth work. It was organised by the National Agency ERASMUS+ Austria ([Agency for Education and Internationalisation, Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung](#), OEAD) in cooperation with [aufZAQ](#), [POYWE](#), and [the SALTO Youth Resource Centres](#).

Study on digital lives of young people

The study WhatsApp - a 'must-have', Snapchat - a teen phenomenon, YouTube - an increasingly important daytime companion of the 'Generation Cloud TV' ([WhatsApp – ein „Must-Have“, Snapchat – ein Teenie-Phänomen, YouTube als zunehmend wichtiger Tagesbegleiter der „Generation Cloud-TV](#)) of the Institute for Youth Culture Research ([Institut für Jugendkulturforschung](#)) gives **insights into the digital lives of young Austrians**. The Institute has **interviewed 300 'digital natives' aged 16 to 24 years on their digital communication**. The study shows that social media is an indispensable part of youth cultural life.

make-IT-safe 2.0

The project [make-IT-safe 2.0](#) is a **peer project of ECPAT**. Peer education aims to **strengthen the media literacy of children and adolescents** so that they can avoid the risks of violence when using digital media.

Youth workers can find an overview of the chapters covered and additional background

information. The **toolbox** has been developed by peer experts together with their coaches. It is a collection of methods that can be used in extracurricular youth work to **raise the awareness of children and adolescents regarding 'Child Protection Online'**.

Webinar and research on digital youth work ([digi4family](#))

Digi4family is an initiative of the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) to **increase the media literacy of families**.

A **webinar by the initiative** addressed the topic 'Youth Work in a digitised society' ([Jugendarbeit in einer digitalisierten Gesellschaft](#)) – an event with an interactive live broadcast.

In the workshop results of a **research project on digital youth work** ([E-YOUTH-works](#)) were combined with the **know-how of [saferinternet.at](#)** and the following questions were worked on together:

- Which **fields of work and types of use of digital youth work** exist?
- Which **social networks** do young people use?
- How can **Instagram** be used as a communication and working medium in youth work?
- **What do you have to consider** when working with Instagram?
- **What knowledge and skills are helpful** for digital youth work?

In one of the interactive parts, **Instagram posts were reflected on together**. In order to make this as practical as possible, posts from the account of the participating youth organisation could be forwarded in advance as examples for the reflection.

MAKING: digital fiddling for youth work ([MAKING: digitales Tüfteln für die Jugendarbeit](#))

This **workshop seminar invited to try out different possibilities of MAKING**. From electronic components useful or funny **workpieces were soldered and created**. Analogous and digital designs for the foil cutter (T-shirts, bags, stickers or inscriptions) were designed and first own objects planned for 3D printing. The seminar was free of charge as **part of the Erasmus + project [Digitally Agile Youth Work](#)**.

Workshops and services (bOJA, University of Vienna and [saferinternet.at](#))

The Centre of Competence for Professional Open Children and Youth Work ([Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit, bOJA](#)) and the [Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology at University of Vienna](#) provided **[workshops on digital youth work](#)** in cooperation with the umbrella organisations in the federal states.

[saferinternet.at](#) provides [services](#) (tools, news, FAQs, material and tips) for youth workers

online and offline.

Regional projects

The [wienXtra-medienzentrum](#) presents the **results of an Austria-wide online survey** and **talks with young people and youth workers on young media behaviour** and media in youth work. The **report on digital media in Austrian youth work** ([Screenagers - Digitale Medien in der österreichischen Jugendarbeit](#)) provides insight into the results of the online survey as well as the case studies and focus group discussions. Screenagers International was a project funded by Erasmus+.

The blog www.medienkompetenzja.wien is a **virtual exchange platform for employees of Vienna's child and youth work**. They share their knowledge, their experiences and information about media work with children and adolescents. The blog is also available to an interested professional audience. The project is funded by the City of Vienna.

The Federal State Styria published the book 'youth work: analogue and digital - an interdisciplinary discussion' ([jugendarbeit: analog und digital - Versuch einer interdisziplinären Auseinandersetzung](#)).

The [Fachstelle NÖ](#) (Expert body Lower Austria) with its approximately 100 qualified employees is a **hub and competence centre for addiction work and sexual education** in Lower Austria. This institution offers **seminars addressing digital media in youth work**: Seminar on addiction-preventive access to digital media: At what point is internet usage problematic? What signals are there for a pathological internet use? What dangers can exist and how can they be handled? ([Seminar über den suchtpreventiven Zugang zu digitalen Medien: Wann liegt eine problematische Internetnutzung vor? Welche Signale gibt es für einen pathologischen Internetgebrauch? Welche Gefahren können bestehen und wie kann damit umgegangen werden?](#))