



Regional Policy Recommendations for the Integration of Outreach Youth Work into Youth Support Systems

1. Introduction

Young people across the Western Balkans do not have equal access to youth work, support services and opportunities for participation. Those living in rural and remote areas, young people facing poverty or discrimination, NEET youth, Roma youth, young people from minority communities, young people with disabilities, young parents and those without parental care or community support are particularly likely to remain outside existing programmes and institutional support systems.

Outreach youth work provides an important response to these inequalities. Rather than expecting all young people to approach existing organisations, institutions or youth centres, outreach youth work brings information, relationships, activities and support closer to young people and to the places where they live and gather. It is based on regular presence, trust-building, flexibility and a detailed understanding of local circumstances. Its role is not to replace public services, but to connect young people with opportunities and relevant support while strengthening their capacity to participate in community life.

Despite growing recognition of its value, outreach youth work in Serbia, Kosovo*¹ and Montenegro remains insufficiently integrated into public policies, institutional procedures and financing mechanisms. Its implementation frequently depends on short-term projects, limited organisational resources and the commitment of individual youth workers and civil society organisations. Unequal territorial coverage, shortages of trained practitioners, weak cross-sector cooperation and the absence of shared standards further limit its accessibility, quality and sustainability.

These Regional Policy Recommendations were developed within the project **“Poke the Bubble – Regional Outreach Youth Work Network and Policy Dialogue”**, implemented by the Centre for Youth Work – CZOR from Serbia, SIT – Centre for Counselling, Social Services and Research from Kosovo*, and Forum MNE from Montenegro. The project expanded the cooperation developed through the EU-supported initiative *“Poke the Bubble – Gender Mobile Youth Clubs for the New Good Neighbourly Social Initiatives between Serbia and Kosovo*”*, with additional support from the Western Balkans Fund.

The recommendations are based on the contributions of young people, youth workers, civil society organisations and other youth-care stakeholders from Serbia, Kosovo* and Montenegro who participated in the Regional Conference held in Novi Sad on 24–25 June 2026. Through panel

¹ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



discussions and working groups, participants examined barriers to participation, existing outreach practices, gaps in policy and professional support, and possible measures for improving the recognition, quality and sustainability of outreach youth work.

The purpose of this document is to provide practical and regionally relevant guidance for integrating **outreach, detached, mobile and street-based** youth work into wider youth support systems. The recommendations are addressed to national and local public authorities, donors and international organisations, youth work organisations, professional and training bodies, schools and other public services, as well as the newly established Regional Outreach Youth Work Network.

The central message of the Conference is that outreach youth work should be recognised and supported as a **long-term, preventive and relationship-based component of youth support systems**, particularly in communities where young people have limited access to existing services and participation opportunities. This requires stable financing, trained and supported practitioners, clear quality standards, meaningful youth participation and structured cooperation between youth work organisations and public institutions.

2. Understanding Outreach Youth Work

Outreach youth work is a proactive approach aimed at reaching young people who are not sufficiently included in existing youth programmes, public services or participation structures. Instead of waiting for young people to approach institutions or organisations, youth workers establish contact in the communities, spaces and environments where young people live, spend time and feel comfortable.

In this document, outreach youth work is understood as a broader approach that may include several complementary forms of practice:

- **Outreach youth work** informs, encourages and supports young people to access existing programmes, services and opportunities. It often serves as the first point of contact between young people and youth organisations or institutions.
- **Detached youth work** takes place directly in public and informal spaces where young people naturally gather. It is based on voluntary relationships and is not dependent on young people entering a youth centre or joining a predefined programme.
- **Mobile youth work** brings youth work activities, resources and professional support directly to communities through mobile teams, temporary youth spaces, mobile units or programmes delivered in accessible local facilities.
- **Street-based youth work** is used as a wider term for forms of youth work implemented outside traditional institutional settings, including outreach, detached and mobile approaches.

These forms of youth work may overlap and should not be treated as completely separate models. Their use depends on the local context, the needs of young people, available infrastructure and the purpose of the intervention.



Outreach youth work should also be distinguished from the simple promotion of activities or recruitment of participants. Although information-sharing can be part of outreach, quality outreach youth work is a longer-term process that includes:

- mapping communities, young people's needs, existing resources and barriers to participation;
- establishing contact through trusted local people, spaces and networks;
- building relationships through regular presence and reliable communication;
- adapting methods, schedules and activities to young people's circumstances;
- providing individual encouragement and practical support;
- connecting young people with relevant services and opportunities;
- supporting their gradual progression towards participation, peer support, leadership and decision-making.

The conference discussions confirmed that meaningful outreach depends on continuity and trust. Occasional visits and one-off activities cannot replace sustained relationship-building, particularly in communities affected by social exclusion, discrimination, poverty or low trust in institutions.

Outreach Youth Work as Part of Youth Support Systems

Outreach youth work has an important preventive and connecting role. Youth workers can identify barriers at an early stage, establish contact with young people who may be reluctant to approach formal institutions and help them understand and access available support. They can also provide institutions with a better understanding of young people's lived realities and the obstacles that prevent them from using existing services.

However, outreach youth work should not replace the responsibilities of schools, social services, healthcare institutions, employment services or other public bodies. Its role is complementary: to build trust, facilitate access, support participation and strengthen coordination between young people and the systems responsible for addressing their needs. The conference participants explicitly warned against expecting civil society organisations and youth workers to compensate for gaps in public services.

Gender-sensitive and Inclusive Outreach Youth Work

Gender sensitivity is a cross-cutting principle of quality outreach youth work rather than a separate activity or topic. It requires youth workers, organisations and institutions to consider how gender roles, safety concerns, family responsibilities, social expectations and peer pressure affect young people's access to programmes and support.

A gender-sensitive approach examines:

- who is reached and who remains excluded;
- who feels safe to participate and speak openly;
- who has time and freedom to attend activities;
- whose interests and experiences shape programme content;



- who is encouraged to take leadership and decision-making roles;
- how communication, timing, locations and group composition affect different young people.

For example, young women and young mothers may face caregiving responsibilities, restrictions on mobility or safety concerns, while boys and young men may be discouraged from participating or seeking support because of traditional masculinity norms and peer pressure. Outreach programmes therefore need to adapt their methods and create conditions in which different groups of young people can participate safely and meaningfully.

Inclusive outreach youth work also recognises that young people may face multiple and intersecting barriers related to poverty, disability, ethnicity, language, place of residence, family situation, education, employment status or experience of discrimination. Quality practice starts from young people's actual circumstances rather than assuming that one model will work equally well in every community.

3. Development of the Recommendations

As already described, these Regional Policy Recommendations were developed through a participatory process involving young people, youth workers, representatives of civil society organisations and other actors connected with youth support systems in Serbia, Kosovo* and Montenegro.

The consultation process took place primarily during the Regional Conference held in Novi Sad on 24–25 June 2026. The conference combined panel discussion, facilitated working groups and regional exchange. Participants were invited not only to identify existing problems, but also to consider realistic measures, responsible actors, implementation conditions and the role of regional cooperation.

Four parallel working groups were organised:

- two groups composed primarily of young people;
- two groups involving youth workers, civil society organisations and other youth-care stakeholders.

The sessions were structured in two stages. The first focused on identifying which young people are most likely to remain outside existing programmes and support systems, the barriers that affect their participation, and the influence of gender norms and other forms of inequality. The second focused on possible solutions and recommendations for improving the accessibility, quality, recognition and sustainability of outreach youth work.

Contributions from Young People

Young participants contributed with perspectives grounded in their experience. They highlighted unequal access to opportunities, social isolation, financial difficulties, geographical barriers, low trust in institutions, lack of emotional support and the absence of safe and non-judgemental spaces.

They also emphasised that information alone is not enough. Young people may need encouragement, mentoring and practical support in order to understand procedures, apply for



opportunities, communicate with institutions and become more actively involved in their communities.

Their recommendations focused particularly on:

- safe and inclusive environments;
- access to emotional, educational, health and financial support;
- reliable and transparent communication;
- meaningful participation in decisions;
- opportunities to take leadership roles;
- continuity and long-term relationships with trusted adults;
- greater attention to young people facing multiple barriers.

Young people also stressed that participation should lead to visible responses. ***When their views are collected but not acted upon, consultation can become symbolic and further weaken trust.***

Contributions from Youth Workers, Civil Society Organisations and Other Stakeholders

Youth workers and civil society representatives focused on the structural and professional conditions required for quality outreach youth work.

They identified challenges related to:

- unstable and short-term financing;
- weak policy recognition;
- shortages of trained youth workers;
- insufficient supervision and mentoring;
- uneven territorial coverage;
- fragmented cooperation between sectors;
- lack of shared standards and clearly defined competencies;
- limited evidence and impact measurement;
- weak public understanding of youth work.

Participants also reflected on existing practices that could be further developed, including mobile youth clubs, detached work, community-based activities, peer support, service-learning, intersectoral working groups, local memoranda of understanding and youth spaces.

In the recommendation-building phase, participants considered:

- which actors should be responsible for each measure;
- what realistic first steps could be taken;
- what resources and partnerships would be required;
- how gender sensitivity should be integrated;
- how young people should participate;
- how the Regional Outreach Youth Work Network could support implementation.

This process ensured that the recommendations were not developed only as broad statements of intent, but as proposals linked to identifiable actors and practical conditions for implementation.



The recommendations presented in this document reflect areas of broad agreement across the three participating contexts. At the same time, they recognise that policy frameworks, professional systems, institutional capacities and local realities differ between Serbia, Kosovo* and Montenegro. For this reason, the recommendations propose a shared regional direction while allowing for national and local adaptation. Their purpose is not to impose one uniform model, but to establish common principles, responsibilities and priorities that can guide the stronger integration of outreach youth work into youth support systems across the region.

4. Analysis of Current Challenges

The analysis reflects both young people's experiences and the perspectives of youth workers, civil society organisations and other youth-care stakeholders. The conference discussions confirmed that the limited reach of youth work is not caused by a single barrier. Young people's exclusion is shaped by the interaction of geographical, economic, social, institutional and personal factors. At the same time, the ability of youth workers and organisations to respond is constrained by insufficient resources, limited professional support and weak integration into wider public systems.

4.1. Young People Remaining Outside Existing Support Systems

Certain groups of young people are particularly likely to remain outside youth programmes, public services and participation opportunities. These include young people living in rural and remote areas, NEET youth, Roma youth, young people from ethnic and linguistic minority communities, young people with disabilities, young people in conflict with the law, young parents and those without parental care, emotional or community support.

Their exclusion is rarely the result of one factor alone. Geographical isolation, poverty, discrimination, limited mobility, poor transport and digital infrastructure, lack of information and inaccessible services often reinforce one another. Some young people also face social anxiety, fear of judgement or a belief that institutions will not listen to them or take them seriously.

Young participants stressed that exclusion is also experienced at a personal and relational level. Many feel anxious, judged, invisible or insufficiently supported when trying to access opportunities or formal institutions. Those without family, school or community support are often expected to navigate complex procedures independently. As a result, access to information does not necessarily translate into actual access to opportunities.

Services are not always adapted to young people's circumstances. Language barriers, limited cultural awareness, inaccessible spaces and rigid institutional procedures can further reduce participation. In some communities, support is available only through occasional projects, while regular and reliable services are absent.

4.2. Unequal Territorial Access to Youth Work

A major regional challenge is the unequal availability of youth work between larger urban centres and smaller, rural or remote communities.



Young people outside cities often have fewer opportunities to participate in youth exchanges, non-formal education, mobility programmes, scholarships and community initiatives. They may also have limited access to safe youth spaces, public transport and trusted professionals.

Even where youth centres or other facilities exist, young people do not necessarily experience them as accessible, safe or belonging to them. Programmes delivered only from fixed institutional spaces are therefore unlikely to reach everyone.

This territorial inequality is made worse when one youth worker is expected to cover several municipalities or communities. Without regular field presence, it becomes difficult to understand local realities, establish relationships and maintain continuity.

4.3. Low Trust and the Absence of Sustained Relationships

Low trust in institutions, organisations and professionals was identified as one of the strongest barriers to participation.

Young people may have previous experiences of being ignored, judged, misunderstood or consulted without seeing any result. Trust can also be weakened by political - partisan influence, lack of transparency, inconsistent communication and negative public narratives about civil society organisations.

Parents and other community actors may have limited understanding of youth work and may discourage participation, especially where youth organisations are viewed with suspicion or portrayed as politically influenced or as “foreign agents”.

From the perspective of young people, trust is closely connected with being listened to, accepted and taken seriously. They expect institutions and organisations not only to invite them to consultations, but also to explain how their contributions were used and what concrete changes followed.

Trust cannot be built through one-off events. It requires:

- regular presence;
- consistent communication;
- respect for commitments;
- knowledge of the local community;
- visible responses to young people’s contributions;
- enough time for relationships to develop.

Short-term projects often end precisely when trust is beginning to emerge.

4.4. Weak Institutional Recognition and Integration

Although outreach youth work is increasingly recognised by practitioners and young people as effective, it remains insufficiently embedded in laws, youth strategies, action plans, institutional procedures and public budgets.



Outreach, detached, mobile and street-based youth work are implemented in practice, but their roles are not always clearly defined. This creates uncertainty regarding professional responsibilities, financing, quality expectations and cooperation with other services.

The preventive, educational and social inclusion functions of youth work are often less visible than individual activities or events. As a result, youth work may be treated as an optional or recreational addition rather than as a relevant component of wider youth support systems.

Formal recognition is particularly important because outreach youth work connects young people with education, employment, health, social protection and participation opportunities. Without policy recognition, this connecting role continues to depend largely on individual organisations and informal arrangements.

4.5. Dependence on Short-term and Inadequate Financing

Short-term project funding was repeatedly identified as one of the greatest barriers to effective outreach youth work.

Quality outreach requires substantial work before, during and after visible activities. This includes:

- community mapping and needs assessment;
- repeated field visits and initial contact;
- transport and mobile outreach;
- trust-building;
- safeguarding and risk management;
- cooperation with families and institutions;
- supervision and mentoring;
- follow-up and documentation of outcomes.

These processes are rarely adequately covered by short project cycles. Programmes may end before stable relationships have been established, while staff turnover and insecure employment further interrupt continuity.

Funding systems also tend to prioritise easily measurable outputs, such as numbers of activities and participants. Less visible but essential outcomes—trust, confidence, continued engagement and access to services—may receive insufficient recognition.

4.6. Shortage of Qualified Youth Workers and Limited Professional Support

Participants identified a shortage of trained youth workers with the competencies required for quality outreach practice.

Outreach work can involve vulnerable young people, sensitive family and community relations, gender-related issues, safeguarding risks, discrimination, mental health concerns and contact with several public systems. Youth workers therefore need a combination of relational, educational, ethical and coordination skills.

However, practitioners often work without sufficient:

- specialised training;
- supervision;



- mentoring;
- peer support;
- organisational guidance;
- stable employment;
- adequate compensation.

The work frequently requires travel, evening and weekend engagement, flexibility and sustained emotional involvement. Without decent working conditions and professional support, motivation declines and the risk of burnout increases.

Shared standards and clearly defined competencies for outreach, detached, mobile and street-based youth work are also insufficiently developed across the region.

4.7. Fragmented Cross-sector Cooperation

Young people's needs often involve several sectors at the same time, including education, social protection, healthcare, employment services, local government and civil society.

Nevertheless, cooperation between these actors is frequently informal and dependent on personal relationships. Clear referral procedures, designated contact persons, follow-up mechanisms and agreed responsibilities are often absent.

This creates two risks.

First, young people may be referred from one institution to another without receiving coordinated support.

Second, youth workers and civil society organisations may be expected to address needs that exceed their mandate and professional competence.

Outreach youth work should help young people access relevant services and should contribute knowledge about barriers faced by young people. It should not, however, replace the responsibilities of specialised public institutions.

4.8. Gender-related and Intersecting Barriers

Gender norms influence who participates, which activities are considered acceptable and who feels safe enough to seek support.

Boys and young men may avoid youth programmes because of peer pressure and traditional expectations of masculinity. Participation, emotional expression or asking for help may be seen as weakness or as inconsistent with expected male roles.

Young women and young mothers may face different barriers, including caregiving responsibilities, restrictions on mobility, safety concerns and limited encouragement to take leadership roles.

These gender-related barriers intersect with poverty, ethnicity, disability, location, family situation and other forms of inequality. Programmes that do not intentionally examine these differences may unintentionally reproduce exclusion.

A gender-sensitive approach therefore requires adaptation of schedules, locations, communication, group composition and facilitation methods, rather than simply adding a separate activity on gender equality.



4.9. Limited Evidence and Impact Measurement

The impact of outreach youth work is often difficult to demonstrate through existing monitoring and reporting systems.

Current reporting frequently focuses on:

- the number of participants;
- the number of activities;
- attendance and completed outputs.

These indicators are useful but do not capture the full value of relationship-based work. Important changes may include increased trust, confidence, sense of belonging, continued participation, improved communication, access to services, stronger peer support and better institutional cooperation.

Participants highlighted the need for practical tools that combine quantitative information with qualitative evidence, case studies and longer-term indicators.

Without stronger evidence, it remains more difficult to improve programmes, communicate results and advocate for sustainable public financing.

4.10. Weak Public Understanding and Visibility of Youth Work

Youth work remains insufficiently understood outside the youth sector.

Its contribution to education, prevention, inclusion, employability, participation and access to support is often overshadowed by the visibility of individual events and recreational activities. This limited understanding contributes to weak policy recognition, insufficient funding and low professional status.

Youth organisations also face limited communication capacities and resources for long-term public outreach. Misinformation and politicised narratives can further damage trust.

Stronger and more coordinated communication is therefore needed to explain what youth work is, how it differs from other services and what concrete changes it contributes to in the lives of young people and communities. Young people themselves should be involved in shaping these messages, since their experiences provide the most credible evidence of its value.

5. Regional Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations translate the challenges and stakeholder inputs identified during the regional consultation process into measures addressed to actors with primary responsibility for their implementation. Other relevant stakeholders are identified as partners within individual recommendations.

The recommendations are mutually reinforcing. Formal recognition without adequate financing will not ensure sustainable practice, while funding without trained practitioners, professional support



and structured cooperation may not result in safe and effective outreach youth work. Their implementation therefore requires coordinated action at national, local and regional levels.

5.1. Recommendations to National Governments and Ministries Responsible for Youth

National governments and ministries responsible for youth have a central role in creating the policy, regulatory and financial conditions needed to integrate outreach youth work into wider youth support systems.

The following actions are recommended:

1. **Formally recognise outreach, detached, mobile and street-based youth work** in youth laws, strategies, action plans and other relevant policy frameworks. Recognition should be developed through consultation and cooperation with young people, youth workers, professional associations, civil society organisations and relevant public institutions.
2. **Support youth work providers and professional bodies in agreeing clear definitions of these forms of youth work** and formally incorporate the agreed definitions into policies, programmes, public calls and institutional procedures.
3. **Integrate outreach youth work into relevant national policies and measures** concerning social inclusion, education, employment, health, prevention, gender equality and youth participation. Particular attention should be given to young people who remain outside existing support systems, including those living in rural and remote areas, NEET youth, Roma youth, young people from minority communities, young people with disabilities, young people without parental care, young people in conflict with the law, young parents and young people facing poverty, discrimination or social isolation. Relevant policies and measures should support **early outreach and prevention**, enabling young people to be reached before their disconnection from education, employment, services and community life deepens.
4. **Establish sustainable public financing mechanisms**, including multi-year support for regular outreach programmes, and recognise the full costs of quality outreach work. Financing should cover community mapping, field work, transport, safeguarding, supervision, mentoring, cooperation with institutions, follow-up, monitoring and impact measurement.
5. **Create conditions for the professional recognition and development of youth workers**, including education and training, validation of competencies, continuous professional development, supervision and decent working conditions. Stable contracts, adequate compensation and professional support are particularly important because outreach work often requires travel, flexible schedules and sustained emotional engagement.
6. **Establish interministerial and cross-sector coordination frameworks**, linking youth policy with education, employment, social protection, health and local government. These frameworks should define the responsibilities of relevant institutions and provide guidance for cooperation, linkage, timely institutional response, follow-up and feedback between youth work providers and specialised services.



7. **Require meaningful youth participation and gender-sensitive practice** in publicly supported programmes and throughout the programme cycle.
8. **Support practical monitoring frameworks** that capture not only activities and participant numbers, but also changes in trust, confidence, participation, access to services, social inclusion and institutional cooperation.

National authorities should recognise youth workers and civil society organisations as important partners in reaching young people and connecting them with support. Outreach youth work should, however, complement rather than replace the responsibilities of public institutions.

5.2. Recommendations to Local Authorities and Public Bodies Responsible for Youth

Local authorities and public bodies responsible for youth have a central role in creating local conditions for outreach work, supporting experienced providers and coordinating cooperation between relevant services and organisations.

The following actions are recommended:

1. **Include outreach youth work in local youth policies, action plans and budgets**, with particular attention to rural, remote and underserved communities. Local measures should be developed in consultation with young people and experienced youth work organisations and other relevant service providers.
2. **Support local mapping and early identification of young people at risk of becoming disconnected from education, employment and community life.** This should be carried out in close cooperation with youth work organisations and practitioners with outreach experience and should directly involve young people. Local authorities should facilitate access to relevant information, institutions, services, community actors and spaces.
3. **Provide financial, institutional and logistical support for mobile, detached and community-based youth work.** This may include funding, transport, access to facilities, links with local services and support for regular field presence.
4. **Facilitate access to safe, inclusive and youth-friendly spaces.** Where dedicated youth facilities are unavailable, suitable schools, community centres and other accessible local facilities may be used in cooperation with youth work organisations and young people.
5. **Coordinate regular local intersectoral cooperation and establish clear arrangements for connecting young people with appropriate services.** Local authorities should bring together youth work organisations, schools, social services, health institutions, employment services and other relevant actors. Cooperation should include designated contact persons, clearly defined responsibilities, agreed procedures for connecting young people with appropriate services, and arrangements for timely institutional response, follow-up and feedback. Relevant public services should actively participate in these mechanisms and respond within their professional mandates, while youth workers should not be expected to replace specialised services.
6. **Support the removal of practical barriers to participation**, including transport, physical accessibility, language, unsuitable schedules and other barriers identified through local consultation. Where necessary, local measures should **also enable young people to receive practical guidance and support** in understanding procedures, accessing opportunities and communicating with institutions.



7. **Create mechanisms for young people to influence local youth policy and programmes** and provide transparent feedback on how their contributions were used. Young people should be informed about the decisions made, the changes introduced and, where their proposals could not be implemented, the reasons for this.

Local authorities are best placed to coordinate regular cooperation through designated contact persons, agreed referral procedures, joint mapping and arrangements for follow-up and feedback.

5.3. Recommendations to Youth Work Organisations and Professional Youth Work Bodies

Youth work organisations are responsible for translating outreach principles into consistent, participatory and ethical practice. Professional associations and other professional youth work bodies have an important role in developing shared standards, competencies and professional support systems.

The following actions are recommended:

1. **Treat outreach as a long-term and relationship-based process**, rather than only as promotion or participant recruitment. Practice should be based on community mapping, regular presence, trust-building and reliable follow-up. Organisations should seek to ensure continuity of practitioners and communicate transparently about the support they can provide. They should also strengthen cooperation and networking with other youth work organisations and practitioners in order to exchange experience, share methods and provide opportunities for mentoring and professional support.
2. **Adapt activities, locations, schedules and communication methods** to young people's circumstances and local realities.
3. **Create safe, inclusive and non-judgemental environments and integrate gender-sensitive, inclusive and safeguarding principles throughout the programme cycle**. Practice should protect young people's dignity, voluntary participation, confidentiality and safety, while recognising professional boundaries, managing risks and enabling access to specialised support when needed.
4. **Maintain structured cooperation with relevant public services and clear procedures for connecting young people with appropriate support**, while respecting confidentiality, professional boundaries and the distinct responsibilities of youth work and specialised institutions. Youth workers may act as trusted links between young people and institutions, but should not assume responsibilities outside their professional role.
5. **Involve young people as partners**, including in needs assessment, programme design, peer support and peer education, leadership, implementation and evaluation. Organisations should provide clear feedback on how young people's contributions were used and what decisions or changes followed.
6. **Provide youth workers with supervision, mentoring and peer support** and take measures to protect their professional well-being and reduce burnout.
7. **Promote and exchange effective practices at regional level**, not only in outreach, detached, mobile and street-based youth work, but also in supervision, mentoring, practitioner support, impact measurement and other elements of quality youth work. Professional associations, youth work organisations and regional networks should document and share



practical examples, tools and lessons learned, and create opportunities for peer learning and adaptation across different national and local contexts.

8. **Document outcomes beyond activity and attendance figures**, including trust, confidence, continued engagement, participation, access to services and cooperation with institutions.
9. **Develop common professional competencies and quality standards** for outreach, detached, mobile and street-based youth work through a professionally led and participatory process. The process should include experienced practitioners, youth work organisations, young people and relevant specialist actors.
10. **Develop and deliver practical education and training programmes** covering community mapping, trust-building, field work, gender-sensitive facilitation, language and culturally responsive practice, safeguarding, work with young people at risk and intersectoral cooperation.
11. **Advocate for the formal recognition of professionally developed competencies and quality standards by relevant authorities and funders.**
12. **Strengthen public communication about the value of youth work**, using concrete examples and involving young people as co-creators of messages.

The conference participants directly linked quality outreach work with shared standards, trained practitioners, supervision, mentoring and decent working conditions.

5.4. Recommendations to Donors, International Organisations and the Regional Outreach Youth Work Network

Donors and international organisations can create the financial and programmatic conditions needed for sustainable outreach youth work. The Regional Outreach Youth Work Network can support continued learning, evidence-building and joint advocacy across Serbia, Kosovo* and Montenegro and broader in the region.

The following actions are recommended:

1. **Provide longer-term and flexible funding** that allows organisations and practitioners to maintain a regular presence in communities, build trust over time and adapt implementation to changing local needs and circumstances.
2. **Recognise the full outreach process as eligible work**, including community mapping, transport, field work, safeguarding, supervision, mentoring, cooperation with institutions, follow-up and impact measurement.
3. **Accept qualitative evidence, case studies and longer-term indicators** alongside numerical indicators when assessing programme results.
4. **Support safe youth spaces based on participation and co-management principles**, with outreach and detached approaches embedded in their regular work.
5. **Recognise training, supervision, mentoring and practitioner well-being as necessary quality costs.**
6. **Support regional learning, professional exchange and practitioner support**, including training, study visits, peer learning, practical resources and exchange of effective practices.



7. **Use the Regional Outreach Youth Work Network to collect and communicate regional evidence**, coordinate common advocacy messages and develop joint awareness-raising initiatives.
8. **Facilitate resource-sharing and cooperation between network members**, including joint initiatives and funding applications.
9. **Ensure that young people and practitioners are involved** in programme development, regional dialogue, advocacy and decision-making.
10. **Maintain clear priorities, regular communication and shared responsibility within the Network** to support cooperation beyond individual projects.

These roles reflect the areas of joint regional work identified during the conference, including shared terminology, peer exchange, evidence collection, advocacy, resource-sharing and youth participation.

6. Cross-cutting Principles for Implementation

The implementation of these recommendations should be guided by a set of common principles applicable to all actors:

- **Youth-centred and rights-based:** outreach youth work should respond to young people's rights, needs, interests and circumstances.
- **Voluntary and participatory:** young people should choose whether and how they participate and should be meaningfully involved in shaping programmes and decisions.
- **Gender-sensitive and inclusive:** programmes should recognise different and intersecting barriers related to gender, disability, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, place of residence and other circumstances.
- **Relationship-based and long-term:** continuity, trust and regular presence should be recognised as essential elements of quality outreach work.
- **Locally adapted:** methods, locations, communication and timing should reflect the realities of individual communities.
- **Safe and ethically responsible:** safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection, professional boundaries and the dignity of young people should be protected.
- **Intersectoral, with clear responsibilities:** cooperation between youth work and other services should be structured, while the mandates and professional limits of each actor remain clear.
- **Adequately resourced:** funding should cover the full outreach process and the conditions required for quality implementation.
- **Evidence-informed:** monitoring should combine quantitative data with qualitative evidence and longer-term outcomes.

7. Priority Regional Actions

As an initial step towards implementation, the following regional actions are proposed:

1. Map the current policy recognition and practice of outreach, detached, mobile and street-based youth work in Serbia, Kosovo* and Montenegro.



2. Facilitate a regional process for agreeing shared terminology and quality principles.
3. Develop a regional programme of training, peer learning and professional support.
4. Collect and publish examples of effective outreach practice and evidence of its impact.
5. Coordinate joint advocacy towards national authorities, local governments, the European Union and donors.
6. Support local cooperation models based on designated contact persons, joint mapping, clear responsibilities and arrangements for connecting young people with appropriate services.
7. Establish a mechanism for the regular participation of young people in the work and decision-making of the Regional Outreach Youth Work Network.

Conclusion

The recommendations presented in this document were developed through the work of young people, youth workers, civil society organisations and other stakeholders during the Regional Conference. They provide a common regional framework for strengthening the recognition, quality, accessibility and sustainability of outreach youth work.

At the same time, the document should be understood as a basis for continued discussion within the youth sector and across the region. The recommendations may be further reviewed and revised in response to emerging needs, new evidence and changes in national and local contexts. Their implementation should be regularly monitored, with progress, challenges and lessons learned used to inform future regional dialogue and further development of outreach youth work.

The ultimate purpose of this process is to ensure that young people who remain furthest from existing systems have access to trusted support, meaningful participation and equal opportunities.