NEW POWER in YOUTH

WP3: Competences to foster youth participation

National mapping exercise - ESTONIA

REPORT

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Objective of the Exercise

To map initiatives in Estonian context dedicated to building competences of educators in formal (teachers) & non-formal sectors (youth workers) aimed at fostering youth participation in democratic life (competence frameworks; degrees/educational programmes; other capacity-building initiatives).

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Outline of the Report

INTRODUCTION

Estonian education and youth work strategies strive to promote the development of the general and future competences required to become a citizen. Considering the decreasing ratio of young people in Estonia (being the lowest in the country's history), there is a great need to ensure that every young person acquires skills and behaviours necessary to contribute actively in society and act up to protect democracy (1) (2).

The Youth Work Act in Estonia defines a young person as someone between 7 and 26 years of age. Over this relatively long timespan, a young person's behaviors, attitudes, and skills are shaped by various forms of education, whose aims and core functions are defined in the legislative framework (an overview can be found in Table 1). From compulsory basic education, which aims to equip young people to fulfill different roles in society, to the potential attainment of a Master's degree, which supports students' active contribution to society, formal education in general aims to provide a solid foundation for young people to participate in democratic life. This is further supported by the field of youth work, which promotes diverse development opportunities and enables young people to be active and realize their potential based on their free will.

Basic education helps students to become creative and versatile personalities who are able to effectively realise themselves in various roles: in the family, at work and in public life, and choose a study path corresponding to their interests and abilities. (3)		**Youth work** is the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons which enable them to be active outside their families, formal education and work on the basis of their free will. (6)
Upper secondary education prepares young people to act as creative, versatile, socially mature and trustworthy personalities who are conscious of their goals and objectives and able to attain them in various fields of life (incl. as citizens responsible for the sustainability of society ...) (3)	**Vocational training** creates the possibilities for the formation of such individuals who possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes or competencies, and the experience and social readiness for working, participating in social life and for lifelong learning (incl. support the acquisition of competencies necessary for self-realisation and development, civil activity and social involvement...) (4)	**A hobby school** is an educational establishment operating in the area of youth work which creates an opportunity /--/ for the diverse development of the personality.. (7)
Higher education allows students to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for active contribution to society, work, research and development, and lifelong learning. (5)		

Table 1. Overview about Estonian formal- and non-formal education system (by the Author)

In addition to the legislative framework, general education in Estonia (including basic education and upper secondary education) is well-structured and standardized at the national level. Concrete learning objectives and relevant competencies defined in the national curricula, supported by methodological guidance and resources, serve as one of the prerequisites for allowing young people (regardless of their socio-economic background, cultural and religious influences, or the beliefs and values of their relatives) to acquire relevant knowledge and skills as part of their compulsory education, enabling them to become active members of society.

In addition to the theoretical base and standardized framework, the availability and access to quality education and youth work opportunities depend on the professionalism of teachers and youth workers. Although both teachers and youth workers are recognized as professions in Estonia, can acquire a Master's degree, and meet the Qualification Standard, their professional requirements vary (illustrated in Table 2). This also means that, in addition to the formal education opportunities and standards available, training and capacity-building opportunities outside formal education are relevant and necessary.

	Level of Study available	Compulsory Level to Acquire	Qualification Standard Available	Mandatory Nature of the Standard
Teacher	Bachelor's / Master's	Master's	Yes	Required
Youth Worker	Professional Higher Education / Bachelor's / Master's	Not defined	Yes	Optional

Table 2. Overview about formal education opportunities and requirements for teachers and youth workers (by the Author)

Considering the factors described above, the mapping exercise aims to provide an overview of both formal and non-formal education in relation to developing prerequisites for youth participation in democratic life. The work is mainly based on desk research, considering available online resources.

The **Key Findings** chapter is divided into three subsections:

- An overview of **national curricula** (both for basic education and upper secondary schools) and methodological materials (provided by the State), which aim to develop the competencies of young people to be active in society and participate in democratic life;

- **Requirements for professionalism** for both teachers and youth workers (including an overview of the Qualification Standard, curricula of degree programs, and quality assessment mechanisms provided by the State);

- **Development opportunities and additional resources** available (such as training and capacity building outside formal education and other resources to foster youth democratic participation in classroom or non-formal education environments).

The **Discussion** chapter includes the conclusions derived from the mapping exercise and its key findings.

KEY FINDINGS

National curriculas

The national curriculas in Estonia (last updated in 2023 for basic education and 2024 for upper secondary education) defines core values, primary learning objectives, competencies, leading topics, requirements for the learning environment, and the concept of learning and assessment principles. The fundamental value of education on both levels is to educate "intellectually, socially, emotionally, morally and physically mature people who /--/ ensure the sustainable social, cultural, economic and ecologic development of Estonian society".

Both curricula rely on the general human values (incl. honesty, compassion, respect for life, justice, human dignity, respect for self) and social values (incl. liberty, democracy, cultural diversity, tolerance, environmental sustainability, rule of law, solidarity, responsibility and gender equality etc.) which should be considered throughout the learning process. These values arise from the ethical principles defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the basic documents of the European Union.

Throughout the subsections of the curricula that describe teaching and educational goals, the learning process is expected to enhance young people's creativity, versatility, social maturity, and trustworthy character, enabling them to act - aside from other roles in their professional and personal lives - "as citizens responsible for the sustainability of society and the natural environment." The foundation for achieving this overarching goal and defining oneself as a self-aware individual is developed starting from the early years of school through priorities such as shaping students' worldviews and readiness to cope with life, fostering adequate self-esteem, promoting independent learning and cooperation skills, and encouraging civic skills, activity, and responsibility.

The teacher's role and responsibility within the learning process are defined as guiding students to recognize their relationships with the surrounding world, which is achieved through close cooperation with other members of the school as an institution, the students themselves, and their families. Throughout the process, the teacher is expected to share, when appropriate, the right to make decisions, act in collaboration with their peers, and encourage students to take responsibility. The school, as an institution, is expected to be organized as a model of society that respects human rights and democracy, ensuring equal treatment and dignity of every individual.

Aside from other general competencies such as self-determination, learning, communication, mathematics, natural sciences, and technology, which are defined at both levels of the curricula (with minor variations in the depth of specific competencies), the following competencies related to the prerequisites for democracy and participation are particularly worth highlighting:

- **Cultural and value competence** – the ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms and ethics; to sense, analyse and value one's ties with other people, the society, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others as well as the events of contemporary culture; /--/ to value general human and societal values, to value human, cultural and natural diversity; to acknowledge one's values and take them into consideration when making decisions; to be tolerant and co-operative and contribute to the achievement of joint objectives;

- **Social and citizenship competence** – the ability to become self-actualised; to function as an active, aware, helpful and responsible citizen and support the democratic development of society as well as the national independence of Estonia; to know and follow values and moral standards in society; to respect the rules of different environments, including communication environments, and societal diversity, human rights, the distinctiveness of religions and nations; to cooperate with other people in different situations; to accept differences in people and their values and to take them into account in communication; the ability to understand global problems, take co-responsibility for solving them; to value and follow the principles of sustainable development; to feel like a member of society capable of dialogue in the context of Estonia, Europe and the whole world;

- **Entrepreneurship competence** – the ability to create and implement ideas using the acquired knowledge and skills in different areas of life and activity; to see problems and the opportunities that lie within them, to contribute to solving problems; to set goals, make short-term and long-term plans, introduce and execute them; to organise joint activities and take part in them, to show initiative and take responsibility for the results; to react creatively, innovatively and flexibility to changes; to take judicious risks; to think critically and creatively; to develop and value one's own and others' ideas /--/;

- **Digital competence** – the ability to use changing digital technology to cope in a rapidly changing society /--/ acting as a citizen and communicating in communities; to use digital means for finding and storing information and to evaluate the relevance and reliability of the information; to participate in creating digital content; /--/ to use suitable digital tools and methods for solving problems, to communicate and co-operate in different digital environments; to be aware of the dangers of the digital environment and know how to protect one's privacy, personal data and digital identity; to follow the same moral and value principles as in everyday life.

In addition to the general competencies, curricula include leading topics that are cross-curricular, socially relevant, and designed to integrate general and field-specific competencies, subjects, and subject areas into the school environment and learning process. To implement the study of leading topics, cooperation with providers of extracurricular activities and hobby education, local institutions and enterprises, as well as other educational, cultural, and civic associations, is expected whenever possible.

Among topics such as lifelong learning and career planning, environment and sustainable development, cultural identity, technology and innovation, and health and safety, the following topics related to the prerequisites for democracy and participation are particularly noteworthy:

- **Civic initiative and enterprise** – the aim is for the student to become an active and responsible member of the community and society who understands the principles and mechanisms of the functioning of society and the importance of civic initiative, feels like a member of society and draws on the country's cultural traditions and development directions in their activities;

- **Information environment and media use** – the aim is for the student to develop into an informed and analytical person who adequately perceives and is aware of the surrounding information environment, is able to critically analyse and use the content and sources of the world of media, who respects intellectual property, is able to create quality media content, considering their objectives and socially accepted communication norms, and acts safely and responsibly in the surrounding information environment;

- **Values and morals** – the aim is for the student to develop into a morally mature person who is aware of generally recognised values and moral principles in society, follows them in school and outside school, who does not remain indifferent when they are flouted and intervenes within their means when necessary (8) (9).

Complementing the general part of the curricula, syllabuses for compulsory subjects provide detailed descriptions of specific competencies, learning objectives, and expected outcomes for each subject. An overview of basic education and upper secondary education syllabuses can be found from Table 3.

	Basic education	Upper secondary education
Core topics	Expanding the understanding of Active Citizenship (outside of democratic elections) - incl. civic activism, participation in school life 4th-6th Grade: System of social relations (coexistence of socially different personalities and groups around us) 7th-9th Grade: Functions and operating principles of national institutions, civil rights and the manifestation of politics in everyday life.	Developing "social literacy", i.e. skills, knowledge and attitudes to be an active, competent and responsible citizen, who is able to adopt and adjust themselves in a multicultural and changing environment. 10th-12th Grade: State and Democratic Governance, Development of Society, Basics of Economy, Globalization and sustainable development, Communication and Media literacy

| Relevance to participation and democracy | As expected outcome the student:
4th-6th Grade:
- Understands the principles of democracy and participation inside the class and school environment.

7th-9th Grade:
- Recognizes the characteristics of democracy, acknowledging potential threats to it and the risks of undermining democracy for individuals.
- Makes connections between democracy and the protection of human rights.
- Recognizes diversity and the potential for discrimination against different cultures and social groups, and is willing to act according to their abilities. (10) | As expected outcome the student:
- Participates as an active and responsible individual within society.
- Takes part in civic initiatives in cooperation with the public sector and other partners.
- Recognizes the characteristics of democracy, human and civic rights, and responds to them according to their abilities.
- Understands the principles of elections, their role in society, and personal responsibility as a voter.
- Differentiates between democratic and non-democratic decision-making processes in society and communities.
- Is able to protect their interests and rights, consider the rights of others, and stand against the violation of democratic values.
- Understands their ability to influence societal processes as an active citizen, both within and outside of school.
- Is able to analyze the impact of civic activism on communities and society.
- Recognizes the role and significance of individuals acting as global citizens. (11) |

Table 3. Core topics and expected learning outcomes for Civic subject

Requirements for professionalism

For both teachers and youth workers, qualification standards are defined, outlining the expectations, competencies, and performance indicators necessary to fulfill their professional role. As referred to in Table 2, for teachers, the qualification standard is compulsory to obtain (along with a field-specific Master's degree and compliance with the Estonian language level). For youth workers, the qualification standard is optional (with exceptions for some forms of youth work activities, such as open youth centers and youth and project camps). The qualification standard is a compulsory basis for professional degree programs and is recommended for consideration in other training (12). The qualification can be obtained either by completing a professional degree programme through a higher education institution or by passing a qualification exam administered by the qualification awarding body (13).

Standard for Teachers

The standard describes 6 mandatory competence and 2 optional competence for teachers (presented in Table 4). Each of the competencies consists of various performance indicators, which should help teachers better understand their tasks and responsibilities in performing their role. Applicants are expected to base their self-reflection on the competencies during the qualification obtaining process and include relevant evidence and examples inside the portfolio (13).

Mandatory competences	Optional competences
- Supporting the learner - Planning of learning and teaching activities - Teaching - Reflection and professional development - Collaboration and instruction - Development, creative and research activities	- Supporting the learner with special educational needs - Application of digital pedagogy

Table 4. Competences of the Teacher (by the author based on Estonian Qualification Authority resource)

The performance indicators encompass various elements and keywords that, when effectively implemented, can help young people learn democratic principles and human rights, gain real-life experiences, and take responsibility for their learning environment through their learning process from early years. For example:

- **Supports the development of social and collaborative skills**; drafts together with the learner(s) agreements based on mutual values; guides learners to take each other into account and support each other, taking into account group processes and dynamics; supports the feeling of unity in a group and in the educational institution;

- **Creates consciously a caring, bullying-free and collaborative atmosphere** (incl. digital environment), originating from agreements based on mutual values, learners´ individual needs, learning goals and principles of inclusive education; notices and prevents conflicts, finds effective solutions and when needed includes learners, parents and support specialists;

- **Shapes the physically, spiritually and emotionally secure collaborative study environment** supporting wellbeing, health, development and creativity, based on the needs and learning goals of learners and mutually agreed values; contributes to shaping the study environment of the organisation;

- **Guides students to apply digital technologies** while searching for information, communicating and in content creation; organises meaningful use of digital technologies in class/group during individual and collaborative study, incl. problem solving.

Standard for Youth Workers

The standard describes 4 mandatory competence for youth workers - organisation and development of youth work, management and guidance, ensuring a safe environment and professional self-development. Each of the competencies consists of various performance indicators, which should help youth workers better understand their tasks and responsibilities in performing their role. For example:

- **Helps young people set goals for learning**; plans and/or carries out various non-formal learning activities; supports young people in making sense of their learning outcomes and provides constructive feedback;

- Plans and coordinates activities that **create opportunities for young people to participate in youth work** (including internationally) and social life and support entrepreneurship and self-initiative;

- **Learn about the interests and needs of young people**, relying on actual research and communicating with young people if necessary. Designs an activity plan based on the obtained results in accordance with the goals of the field and organisation and with regional specificities. Plans the necessary resources to implement the activity plan.

Applicants are expected to base their self-reflection on the competencies during the qualification obtaining process and include relevant evidence and examples (14).

Formal degrees and educational programmes

Following subsection describes formal training opportunities available in Estonia for acquiring the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to work as a teacher or youth worker. The sample of curriculas observed as part of the mapping exercise is presented in Table 5.

	Teachers		Youth workers	
	Tallinn University	University of Tartu	Tallinn University	University of Tartu
Bachelor's degree	Teacher of History and Civic	History (with speciality to Teacher of History and Civic)	Youth Work	Youth Work
Master's degree	Teacher of Several Subjects	Teacher of Several Subjects in Basic School	Youth Work Management	n/a
Professional Higher Education	n/a	n/a	n/a	Community Education and Hobby Activity

Table 5. Sample of formal degree programmes observed as part of the mapping exercise (by the author)

Relevant connections between the curricula of the programs and the preparation to support and develop young people's skills, knowledge, and attitudes to participate in democratic life and society are presented in the format shown in Table 6. The main focus is on compulsory courses that every student has to take as part of their studies.

Study programme title (ECTS credits) - Name of the university (Study level)	
Learning outcomes connected to **democracy and/or participation** or supporting competencies	
Course title	Expected learning outcomes connected to **democracy and/or participation** or supporting competencies
Elective courses which are connected to **democracy and/or participation** or supporting competencies	

Table 6. Example of presenting the key findings from the curricula's (by the author)

Teachers

Teacher of History and Civic (120 ECTS) - Tallinn University (MA)

- is familiar with the subject field trends and current issues, is <u>ready to</u> speak actively on educational issues and <u>take part in civil society</u>;
- adheres to the professional and ethical requirements, is aware of the ethical and social aspects, the possibilities and limitations of the role as a history and civics teacher, and <u>has a tolerant attitude towards the diversity of positive opinions and values.</u>

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS:

Societal Development and World Politics (6 ECTS)	- the main themes include society, state, **and democracy**. /--/ Human capital, globalization and competitiveness are also addressed.
Teacher and Student as Learners in School and Society (6 ECTS)	- can understand the <u>connection between education, era and society</u>, and visible as well as invisible influence that a <u>school's institutional framework has on an individual</u>; - is aware of <u>responsibilities of a teacher</u> and opportunities in a <u>changing school and society</u>, reflects its professional identity and actions /--/; - is aware of its <u>influence on students' values and self-determination processes</u> and is <u>able to direct</u> corresponding <u>processes in a classroom and school environment.</u>
Supporting Learning and Development (6 ECTS)	- sees possibilities of <u>designing learning environments</u> that <u>support autonomy and cooperative processes</u> in subject-matter teaching;

ELECTIVE SUBJECTS:

- **Educational Technology and Digital Competence** (6 ECTS) - designs, prepares and critically analyzes digitally supported learning scenarios to support learning, <u>empower learners</u>, <u>assess and develop learners' digital competence</u> (15)

History (with speciality to Teacher of History and Civic) (120 ECTS) - University of Tartu (MA)

not applicable

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS:

State and Society (3 ECTS)	- understands and can explain <u>the development, composition and functioning of the contemporary society,</u> including social identities; - knows different political regimes and the mechanisms of **democracy**, <u>including role of human rights</u> in these regimes; - understands and can explain <u>the functioning of the civil society, its necessity</u> and the link to the state institutions.

ELECTIVE SUBJECTS:

- **Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Mindset in Teaching** (3 ECTS) - is able to plan activities for <u>development of students' entrepreneurial skills</u> (16)

Disclaimer: Teacher of Several Subjects in Basic School (both University of Tartu, MA and Tallinn University, MA), the courses are similar. Therefore, they are not presented in an individual table.

Youth workers

Youth Work (180 ECTS) - Tallinn University (BA)

- has <u>systematical overview of the International and governmental youth policies</u>, the history of youth movement and work, and, interprets the law of youth work;
- analyzes and applies <u>the knowledge and abilities for</u> the speciality's development and <u>the support of youth development.</u>

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS:

Communication, Counselling and Collaboration Competencies (6 ECTS)	- has <u>knowledge of the importance</u> and <u>possibilities of involving different target groups</u> in their work.
Youth and Youth Groups (6 ECTS)	- knows different subcultures and lifestyles; the role of social media in the formation of lifestyles, <u>community and social movements</u>, <u>civic initiative</u> and **online and offline participation**.
Foundations of Youth Work (6 ECTS)	- knows <u>the main methods and work forms of youth work</u> (incl. **youth participation and involvement**).
Entrepreneurship and Career (6 ECTS)	- analyses <u>the methodology</u> of learning core competences <u>supporting entrepreneurship and career development</u> (incl. <u>shaping students' future work skills</u>); - designs and implements <u>the necessary learning activities to develop entrepreneurship</u> and career development <u>competencies</u>.
Youth Policy and Regulation of Youth Work (6 ECTS)	- understands <u>the main principles, influences and processes of youth policy and youth work</u> (incl. **knowledge of young people's and youth workers' participation in youth policy and youth work processes**, understanding of the <u>connections between youth policy and organisation of youth work on different levels</u>).
School and Project Youth Work (6 ECTS)	- analyzes <u>the youth work taking place in the school based on the principles of the organization of youth work</u>, the principles of subject integration and the development of general competences (incl. integration of subjects, recognition of non-formal learning, **involvement and representation of students** - student council, board of trustees - **and school democracy**).
Inclusive Youth Work (6 ECTS)	- understands <u>the principles of inclusion</u> and the **importance of youth participation in youth work** (incl. <u>young people's activeness</u>, **treatments of youth participation** and **forms of participation**); - is familiar with and can use <u>different forms of inclusion</u>; - knows <u>how to approach target groups in youth work</u> and how to choose <u>appropriate forms of inclusion</u>; - is familiar with <u>the principles of leading a youth group</u> and is able to instruct it.

ELECTIVE SUBJECTS:

- **Design of Product and Service** (6 ECTS) - uses <u>basic concepts and terminology specific to product and service design</u> in the context of their field of study; designs simple products and/or services in their field of study, <u>based on the needs, wishes and expectations of the clientele</u>;
- **Educational Technology in Learning Process** (6 ECTS) - analyses their own educational technology competencies, <u>creates and uses different ICT options to plan and conduct the study process</u>. (17)

Youth Work (180 ECTS) - University of Tartu (BA)	
- possesses <u>skills of</u> critical learning, coaching, counseling, <u>collaboration and teamwork;</u> - uses <u>technological developments and digital solutions to work with young people</u>	
COMPULSORY SUBJECTS:	
State and Social Studies (6 ECTS)	- analyses **the foundations of** countries and **democracy**, incl. in the context of Estonia and Eastern Europe and the foundations of the EU; - explains **the principles of functioning a democratic society**.
Human Rights and Professional Ethics in Youth Work (6 ECTS)	- analyses, **on the basis of value-based youth work, opportunities for support to participate in youth activities**; - values <u>human rights, including the rights of young people, and their meaning in youth work.</u>
Youth Development and Welfare (6 ECTS)	- understands <u>the risk of exclusion for young people;</u> - plans <u>activities to prevent and mitigate exclusion risks</u>, to <u>develop environmentally friendly, healthy and law-abiding attitudes for the development of young people based on youth work principle</u>s.
Youth-centred Development of Public Services (6 ECTS)	- differentiates between **young-centered** and **youth-oriented policy-making**; - understands <u>the organization of public services for young people </u>and analyzes challenges.
Digital Tools for Working with Young People (6 ECTS)	- understands the most <u>important approaches to using technology in education, including informal learning;</u> - describes the <u>technologies that are used in developing work with young people;</u> - analyses <u>digital technologies used to develop activities in work with young people</u>, to consider dangers of the Internet.
Information Society and Digital Competences (6 ECTS)	- understands <u>the content of digital competences of young people </u>and related goals in Estonia and the European Union; - analyses <u>the links between digital competences and information behaviors of young people</u>, and o<u>pportunities for developing digital competences.</u>
Young People in the Digital Era (6 ECTS)	- analyses <u>trends in technological change in relation to young people;</u> - assesses <u>the opportunities for hedging the risks associated with the technology use</u>.
Creativity and Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship (6 ECTS)	- understands <u>approaches to developing young people's creativity and innovation;</u> - understands <u>the use of creative activities as a method for working with young people;</u> - plans <u>activities to develop the creative and innovative capacity of young people;</u> - understands <u>the approaches of design thinking and co-creation;</u> - analyses <u>the use of design thinking and collaborative approaches in work</u>.
Future Work and Entrepreneurship (6 ECTS)	- describes <u>the key concepts of the entrepreneurial, enterprising and entrepreneurship competence;</u> - connects work objectives with <u>the development of key competences for young people in the future.</u>

Youth Participation and Inclusion (6 ECTS)	- understands **the concept of youth participation**, **the purpose of participation** and the method in youth work; - defines **the basis for active citizenship**; - analyses **participation opportunities for young people**, including youth associations, youth councils, etc.; - assesses **the bases and methods for involving young people** in the planning, implementation and evaluation of youth work; - values the support and development of youth initiative and entrepreneurial civic mind-set. (17)

Community Education and Hobby Education (180 ECTS) - University of Tartu (prof. higher education)

- value the principles of civil society and identify themselves as members of it;
- can apply different methods of developing social skills according to the needs of the target group.

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS:

Youth work speciality module

Environments for Youth Work (5 ECTS)	- knows the fields of work of professionals working with young people and their role in cooperation networks; - knows **the principles of youth participation;** - knows the quality of the environment and activities that support the positive development of a young person and can justify them; - is able to create non-formal creative learning environments with experts and communities; - understands **the value of up-to-date digital environments and tools to engage young people**.
School-based Youth Work Practice (15 ECTS)	- have an overview of the work as a leisure time manager-creative activities instructor, and understand their role both in the educational work at school and in youth work in the broader sense.

Community work speciality module

Civil Society (3 ECTS)	- understands **what democracy is** and its connection to civil society; - understands what civil society is and knows its forms of expression; - can make sense of the role of the individual in civil society; - understands what civil competence is and can support the development of civil competence of other people.

ELECTIVE SUBJECTS:

- **Design Thinking and Service Design** (3 ECTS) - knows how to conduct a service design project choosing relevant methods according to the specific nature of the problem. (18)

Youth Work (120 ECTS) - Tallinn University (MA)

- understands the principles of management and the starting points of innovation management in the field of youth work at international, national, local and organisational level.

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS:

Youth and Youth Studies (6 ECTS)	- The topic of **youth participation** and motivation is approached in wider context of **civic engagement** (distinguishing **public**, **social** and **individual participation**);

Youth Field Networks and Development (6 ECTS)	- able to use design process to solve youth field problems; - analyzes themselves as a service designer, initiator, leader of a network. (19)

Competence frameworks and models

Based on the desktop research, there are only a limited number of holistic and structured approaches published in Estonia, which aim to conceptualize the roles and responsibilities of teachers and/or youth workers in fostering youth participation and developing relevant skills, knowledge, and attitudes connected to democracy. The following chapter provides an overview of most widely used approaches.

Quality Assessment of Youth Work at the Local Government Level

The assessment model for the quality of youth work is a tool for local governments that helps identify the strengths and areas needing development in youth work, plan further development based on the results, and monitor progress. Undergoing the assessment, which combines self-evaluation and external evaluation, is optional for municipalities.

The first assessments based on the evaluation model took place at the end of 2010. In 2022, the Education and Youth Board published "The Quality Assessment Handbook" to assist evaluators in gaining a comprehensive overview of youth work, mapping the current situation, identifying strengths, and recognizing development opportunities (20). Over the past four years, 48% of municipalities in Estonia have undergone the assessment (21).

In 2024, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Education and Youth Board published a revised version of the assessment model (presented in Table 7) with specified indicators and descriptions. The model still includes four specific targets that support an overarching vision: "Versatile opportunities for personality development are available to each young person in youth work and hobby education." (22).

Vision	Versatile opportunities for personality development are available to each young person in youth work and hobby education			
Target	1. The environment has been created for high-quality youth work and hobby education	2. Young people have more choices to unlock their creative and developmental potential	3. Youth participation in decision-making processes is supported	4. Information targeted to young people is accessible
			3.1. Supporting young people in experiencing participation	3.2. Supporting youth civic activism	

Table 7. The Quality Assessment model targets and vision (source: (22) translated by the author)

Quality Indicator	Description
3.1 Supporting young people in experiencing participation	
The municipality has established a youth council that complies with the principles of youth participation and is acting together with the municipality council	The indicator is met when there is a municipality youth council that complies with the principles of youth participation (composed of young people from different age groups, elected by young people, involved in the municipality's decision-making process, and representing the interests of young people)
The youth council on municipality level is active	The indicator is met when the youth council meets at least once a year, is involved in the meetings of the council commission(s) and represents the interests of the youth. Young people are involved in the areas of action of youth policy (youth work, education policy, employment policy, health policy, cultural policy, social policy, family policy, crime prevention policy, environment and national defence, and others)
There is a youth activity group functioning in the municipality	The indicator is met when there is a youth activity group (excluding youth council and school student councils) in the municipality. Young people are involved in the areas of action of youth policy (youth work, education policy, employment policy, health policy, cultural policy, social policy, family policy, crime prevention policy, environment and national defence, and others)
School student councils operate in general education and vocational schools	The indicator is met when school student councils operate in 90% of general education and vocational schools (except primary schools)
Financial support to school student councils and youth participatory bodies is provided	The indicator is met when annual financial support is applied to school student councils and youth councils
The municipality has created opportunities for young people to meet with representatives of the municipality	The indicator is met when representative of the municipality meets at least twice a year with young people of the municipality (e.g. through working groups or participatory cafe format)
3.2. Supporting youth civic activism and self-initiatives	
A mechanism has been established and implemented to provide financial support to the youth civic activism and self-initiatives	The indicator includes supporting civic initiatives at the local level, e.g. youth organizations, youth civil associations, youth self-initiatives (excluding a youth participatory body)
Youth civic activism and self-initiatives are supported with non-monetary contributions	The indicator includes non-monetary support to civic initiatives at the local level, e.g. youth organizations, youth civil associations, youth self-initiatives (excluding a participatory body) by enabling the use of premises, counselling, training
At least 20% of young people participate in school student councils, participatory bodies ad youth organizations	The indicator is met if the percentage of young people participating is at least 20% of total % of all young people in the local government territory
Young people are satisfied with youth associations, youth organizations and other forms of participation	The indicator is met if at least 90% of young people in age between 7-19 years who have participated in youth associations, youth organizations or other forms of participation are satisfied with their experience
At least 80% of youth associations rate cooperation with municipality good	The indicator is met if at least 80% of youth association rate cooperation with municipality good (22)

Competency model for teachers

To increase teachers' awareness of the expected attitudes and behaviors in the school and classroom environment, a competency model with a 360-degree evaluation and feedback methodology has been made available for general education teachers. The model, which is based on and complements the Qualification Standard for teachers, helps individuals identify their strengths and areas for development, thereby supporting their professional growth. In 2020, the Education and Youth Board published a revised tool with evaluation, questionnaires and guiding materials to assess teachers' daily behavior, actions, and attitudes. In addition to self-evaluation, feedback is provided by the headteacher, colleagues, students, and their parents. The model combines five key competence areas with performance indicators(presented in Figure 1).
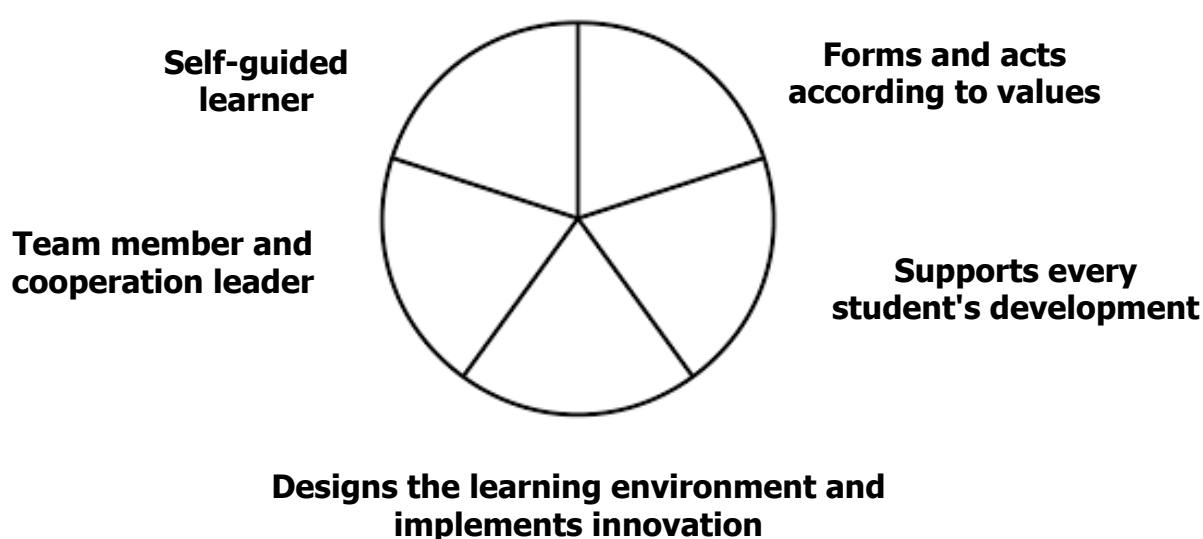

Figure 1. The Competency model for teachers (source: (23) translated by the author)

Among the areas focused on the teacher's professionalism and self-development, there are several areas and performance indicators dedicated to engaging students and other relevant stakeholders in designing the learning environment. For example:

- Involves students in shaping the learning environment;
- Uses the opportunities in the community in the learning process;
- Supports student's entrepreneurial attitude;
- Shapes a secure environment for tolerant handling of sensitive topics;
- Discusses topics of importance in society (23).

Model for Increasing Youth Participation

In 2023, Tallinn University published collection "Model and Reports for Increasing Youth Participation (in Estonian Noorte osaluse suurendamise mudel ja raportid), which provides an overview of a project aimed at developing a research- and practice-based model for increasing youth participation that can be applied in practice (24). Based on international academic literature, empiric research, imitation games, seminars and discussions, the

authors have drafted a conceptual model (presented in Table 8) focussing on three pillars - redefining the meaning of participation, recognizing and adopting the concept of digital participation and developing youth-centric civic education (25).

Redefining the meaning of participation	Recognizing and adopting the concept of digital participation	Developing youth-centric civic education
Changing participation indicators To consider and measure youth participation outside of traditional formats (e.g. youth councils)	Digital competencies development To develop knowledge and attitudes to ensure safety when using various online platforms	Considering youth experiences Young people should be considered and recognised as an experts of their lives. Rethinking traditional attitudes and beliefs towards participation and allowing young people to participate (also politically) in modern way by adjusting to their attitudes and behaviours
Competencies development Increasing awareness of youth work specialists about different formats of and environments where youth participation can take place	Smart youth work in social media Introducing platforms where young people navigate to the youth workers and other specialists, to plan smart youth work activities in online platforms where young people feel themselves already comfortable	Youth-adult partnerships Providing mentorship to young people to act and learn together and build connections with local communities
Supporting participation in broader context To also consider as a form of participation taking part of societal movements or initiating and participating in civic activism projects	Involving the influencers To introduce local politics and youth organisations to young people, and to engage local influencers relevant for young people (who distance themselves from traditional participation forms and methods)	Integration of civic education Involving youth organisations and activists to formal civic education teaching in schools. Introducing infotainment type of online activism as part of formal education

Table 8. Youth participation increasing components (source: (25) translated by the author)

The authors discuss that applying the model in practice would require an extended definition of participation, which does not focus solely on participation in organizations, but also includes various activities related to lifestyle choices based on the interests of the young people themselves in the expression- dam of political sentiment. The rethinking of participation would begin with raising awareness and competence among target groups, focusing on professionals in the youth field who, as a result of their duties, have the opportunity to establish truthful communication with young people and also have the responsibility to address the topic of youth participation and support young people (25).

Other educational and training materials

Proovikivi initiative

"Proovikivi" is an educational collaborative initiative coordinated by the Estonian organizations GTL Lab NGO and EDULabs GTL, aiming to help young people acquire the

necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to become responsible world citizens from an early age. Through the program, companies, state agencies, and NGOs connect with innovative ideas and potential future employees, enhancing their visibility and societal contribution.

The challenges addressed by the initiative are real, aligning with the development goals of both the Estonian state and the United Nations, such as poverty reduction and environmental protection. Through project-based learning, young people learn to take responsibility for themselves, their surroundings, and their communities while actively contributing to shaping the future of their local area, country, and the world. The value proposition from the organisation to teachers and youth workers include:

- **materials** to implement project-based learning in their classrooms;

- the opportunity to participate in the **Proovikivi Innovation Lab**, where they can network with colleagues, share best practices, and enhance their skills;

- the possibility to invite Proovikivi representatives to their organizations for a **brief introductory training session** (26).

The Estonian Cooperation Assembly

The Estonian Cooperation Assembly (in Estonian Eesti Koostöö Kogu) coordinates various initiatives to strengthen civil society and promote democratic participation in Estonia. To enhance youth engagement in democracy, the organization identifies schools as "places where young people can gain their first positive experiences of democratic participation." Additionally, the organization aims to address the misconception that young people inherently possess a high level of digital literacy, which is one of the prerequisites for their effective participation in elections (via online platforms) and broader societal activities.

To achieve these goals, the organization has developed and published various digital resources as well implemented a three-year action plan for period of 2023–2025, focusing on four thematic areas:

- Institutionalizing **participatory budgeting initiatives** in schools nationwide;

- Piloting a **youth participatory budgeting model** at the local government level;

- Expanding the **use of e-voting** to increase the number of school student councils and municipal youth councils to be elected through this format;

- Strengthening democracy by enhancing **dialogue and conflict management skills** among young people as a form of non-violent interaction.

Based on the thematic areas, following activities have been implemented:

<u>Online environments and digital tools</u>

To familiarize young people with electronic identification methods (such as ID cards, Mobile ID, or Smart ID, which are commonly used for accessing various digital services and participating in e-voting), the Assembly has developed a safe sandbox solution, where young people can practice digital signing of documents. To organise school student council or class president elections through e-voting method, a secure online environment has been created by the Assembly for schools to use.

<u>Participatory budgeting methodology for schools</u>

To allow young people experience real-life democracy, have their say and make decisions together, the participatory budgeting for schools (in Estonian Koolide kaasav eelarve) allows the students to practise managing projects, negotiate, work together, draw up budgets and devise campaigns. The students can decide how part of the school's budget will be spent. In the longer term, the aims of the mechanism are to boost the level of civic activity among young people, to improve their understanding of democratic processes and thereby to minimise abuse of authority for personal gain i.e. corruption.

The methodology was developed and piloted in cooperation with the Assembly and NGO Transparency International Estonia. During the 2020–2021 academic year, the organisations ran a pilot in four different schools around the country. As a result of the pilot project, the proportion of students who want to actively participate in school life increased by 15%. Additionally, 19% of students stated that their belief in the school's involvement of students in important decision-making processes had grown. 70% of the participating students reported that they have a sufficient understanding of the basics of school budget formulation.

Over the years the methodology has been provided to 28 schools and over 2 000 students. The handbook and other guiding materials are available in Estonian, Russian and English through an online platform kaasavkool.rahvaalgatus.ee (27) (28).

Transparency International Estonia

The Transparency International Estonia (in Estonian Korruptsioonivaba Eesti) has set the youth integrity as one of their thematic priorities. The association frames the challenge using findings from various studies, which indicate that young people (aged 15–29) are generally more tolerant of corruption than older generations."Young people tend to not recognize corruption, but at the same time those in power are found to be corrupt and efficiency is preferred to freedom of corruption in government." Due to this reason the organisation aims to raise awareness of young people "about the nature and harmfulness of corruption as well as about democratic values and active citizenship" and identify school as a starting point for democracy.

To achieve these goals, the organisation aims to "create opportunities for teachers and schools to actively shape young people's anti-corruption attitudes" through the following

means (in addition to participatory budgeting methodology, which was already described in the previous chapter). For this reason, following activities have been implemented:

Network of democratic schools

Since 2022, the association has provided a platform for teachers to exchange ideas, share tools and methods, learn about international practices, and support one another. The network aims to further promote a democratic approach to school management and active student engagement. To achieve this goal, the association develops and provides guidance materials for teachers on topics such as corruption, whistleblowing, and school democracy. Additionally, the association offers guest lessons and conducts surveys for better situation awareness and to ensure evidence-driven design for new activities and materials (29).

Democracy Fitness

Democracy Fitness (in Estonian Demokraatiatrenn) is a playful training programme to strengthen the behaviours and attitudes connected to democratic participation. A 45-minute activity focuses on concrete elements - such as expressing your personal opinion, engaging other people, accepting different perspectives, self-expression, active listening, empathy, compromising or civic engagement. Democracy Fitness is combined with participatory budgeting methodology, but also provided independently by the NGO Demokraatiatrenn (30).

Estonian National Youth Council

The Estonian National Youth Council (in Estonian Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit) is an umbrella organisation for youth councils and youth organisations. In addition to advocacy activities, the organisation is supporting establishing and improving the quality of municipality level youth councils and youth active groups. With support of the Ministry of Education and Research and Education and Youth Board, the council is providing regular networking opportunities and activites for youth councils all across the country, as well as individual consultations to the municipality representatives on youth participation tools and methods. As a result of that, the organisation has in recent years significantly increased the share of municipalities which have at least one kind of youth representative body.

The council also provides simulations and civic education lectures to familiarize young people with the nature of local government, participation in democratic elections and other participatory opportunities. The target group is primarily 8-12th grade students, but training is also provided to teachers, youth workers and municipality youth work specialists. For example:

- **Civic education lecture** - in 45 minutes young people get an overview of democratic elections, local government functions, civic engagement and participation opportunities in general;

- **Simulation of municipal coalition negotiations** - in 45-90 minutes, the participants can analyze the various electoral promises and incarnate as members of the

municipality council who will enter into negotiations in the creation of a coalition agreement;

- **Simulation of the European Parliament negotiations** - in approx. 30 minutes, the participants can exchange the views of the various European Parliament groups and simulate the negotiation process to form the coalition

- **Simulation "Planning of interest education in the local government"** - in up to 90 minutes, the participants can step into the role of officials and simulate the work of the local government from the view of the planning of recreational activities. (31).

Estonian School Student Councils Union

The Estonian School Student Councils Union (in Estonian Eesti Õpilasesinduste Liit) is an umbrella organisation for school student councils nationwide. The organisation has stated in their advocacy platform that "decisions concerning students must be made at the level closest to the student. At the same time, the participation of the young person in various decision-making processes must be increased in order to motivate the young person to have a say and take responsibility." (32)

As part of the unions' five-year strategy for period of 2022-2026, the union prioritize to "provide all support and assistance to members in order to successfully implement school democracy" and "promote school democracy in schools" (33). The actions and activities of the organisation is mainly oriented to strengthening the quality of student councils, not particularly supporting the specialists working with students.

Although, aside from advocacy activities and developing their member organizations, the union also provides a variety of training sessions and simulations aimed at strengthening school democracy and the quality of participation, which the specialists who would like to improve school student councils' quality can benefit from. For example:

- **Make your voice heard** (in Estonian Tee oma hääl kuuldavaks) - participants debate over access to education as one of the most important human rights for young people. The terms "education" and "school democracy" are defined, followed by a discussion on how to ensure that everyone have their say and can express themselves freely;

- **Create your own school** (in Estonian Loo ise oma kool) - participants discuss a hypothetical situation where students gain power over school management and can reorganize the organizational structure and functioning based on their expectations;

- **Gender-neutral bathrooms** (in Estonian Sooneutraalsed tualettruumid) - participants discuss how to balance different viewpoints and achieve a democratic outcome in a situation where a student council's proposal to establish gender-neutral bathrooms is met with differing perspectives and opposing opinions;

- **School facilities** (in Estonian Koolirajatised) - participants must resolve a situation where the school has limited resources to establish new recreational facilities and cannot meet all expectations or accommodate all alternatives (34).

Estonian Debating Society

The Estonian Debating Society (in Estonian Eesti Väitlusselts) is a NGO aiming to create attractive conditions for the development of debating skills in general, high and adult education. The society defines debating as "a great opportunity to develop skills that cannot be done without in the 21st century: public speaking, clear self-expression, rapid response, the distinction of convincing information from unreliable and so on". The society operates on a professional basis and to achieve their stated vision - "every member of society should be able to think critically and listen structurally" - their key activities include developing debating education in schools and providing opportunities for young people to engage in debate.

As part of the three-year action plan for period of 2023–2025, the society has defined specific focus area "Discussing education" (in Estonian Arutlev haridus) aiming to ensure that "every young person comes out of the education system in a way that can think critically and communicate argumentatively." The sub-targets include introducing debating methods to journalism students, who can use the method for information analysing and content-creation, providing quality argumentation training in universities as well through availability of user-friendly and uptodate training materials and opportunities.

Specific sub-target has been set to introduce the basics of debate method to every person graduating from teacher's training and to allow them to apply the method inside their classroom (35).

<u>Trainings for teachers</u>

The society does encourage to use debating elements as a method to develop students' critical thinking, information analysis, and self-expression skills inside the classroom despite the lessons of matter - from humanitarian and social subjects to real and natural substances. As part of the training "How to use the argument in the lesson?" provided by the society, the teachers are given practical instructions for the implementation of the debate method within the framework of their subject. The society is flexible to adjust the training according to the needs of the participants to take into consideration their specific subject, the age of the students, etc. To deepen the professionalism of the teachers and prepare them to act as debating teacher, the society provides dedicated "Program of the starting debate teacher" (in Estonian Alustava väitlusõpetaja programm) (36).

In addition to a dedicated training programme, the society has also developed a base of guiding materials and lesson plans for teachers to use as part of any kind of subject. Specific web page allows the teacher to find and filter relevant materials based on their subject, duration of the lesson, kind of methodology, and age of the target group. For example, lesson plan "What do I consider important" targeted for students in age 16-19

years to strengthen as part of Civics class students information searching and analytical skills, which allow them to acknowledge ang formulate thematic topics important for them in context of democratic elections.

The society has also highlighted connections between methods and exercises with curricula of general education. For example, to develop the competence of first level of school (1st to 3rd grade) - "be able to find and understand the information contained in texts (including data, terms, characters, activities, events and their time and place) and to perform it orally and in writing" - the argumentation game in classroom can be applied despite the subject matter (37).

Discussing School

The Discussing School initiative (in Estonian Arutlev Kool) provides schoolchildren across Estonia with a deepened argumentation education. The program has four substantive activities: argumentation in the syllabus, basic argumentation learning, debating activities and the introduction of deliberative education practices in school life (38). As part of the initiative, the guiding material "Argumentation in learning process" (in Estonian Argumenteerimine õppeprotsessis) has been published to provide practical methods for teachers to apply in regular learning process (39).

Community Practice

The Community Practice programme (in Estonian Kogukonnapraktika) is a methodology developed by the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations in close cooperation with civic education teachers. The methodology is based on international examples, such as the International Baccalaureate programme Creativity, Action, Service and the Community Service movement in the United States. Over the past 10 years, the programme has been implemented in more than 50 schools, reaching approximately 4 000 students.

During the programme, students contribute approximately 10–15 hours over a few weeks to the activities of a non-governmental organization (NGO) of their choice. They fulfill tasks that are both feasible and of personal interest while also meeting the needs of the NGO. By participating in the work of the NGO, students gain insight into how a civic initiative is born and operates. A supervisor within the NGO helps students understand why the organization's work is important to the community. Simultaneously, the civic teacher helps students analyze their experiences in the classroom by connecting them to theoretical knowledge.

The programme enhances students' self-recognition as members of society who can contribute to important causes and influence societal development. Students learn to motivate themselves, collaborate, plan their time effectively, and engage meaningfully. The programme complements the achievement of upper secondary education learning outcomes. For instance, a young person who has completed the Community Practice programme is more likely to actively participate in social life, including civic initiatives. Additionally, the programme fosters a wide range of general competencies, including social

and civic competence, cultural and value competence, self-determination, learning and communication skills, and entrepreneurial competence. (40)

The organisation (Kogukonnapraktika MTÜ) provides various guiding materials and example models for integrating the methodology into the learning process of upper secondary schools. For example:

- **Mandatory Component in Social Studies** - all students in one or more classes must complete community practice to pass the subject;

- **Community Practice as a Selection Course** - a 35-hour course, consisting of 20 hours of practice and the remaining hours dedicated to theoretical instruction, an introduction to practice, and subsequent analysis of the practice;

- **Mandatory Community Practice Course** - required for all students within a specific speciality of the upper secondary school (such as humanitarian speciality);

- **Part of a Three-Year Entrepreneurship Course** - community practice is integrated into the Basics of Business class, which is an elective for students;

- **Graduation Requirements** - community practice may be tied to graduation requirements, such as a school exam or the mandatory 11th-grade research project;

- **Voluntary Component in Social Studies -** students can choose community practice as one of the activities within the subject. Typically, students engaged in community practice are exempt from other activities such as control work, referee tasks, or similar;

- **Creative Integration into Various Subjects -** community practice has been blended into subjects like journalism, career studies, or entrepreneurship studies. (41)

The Mondo's Global School

Mondo is an Estonian organisation aiming to reduce global inequality by focussing on education, health, environmental and digital competence programmes. The Global School (in Estonian Maailmakool) is Mondo's center of Global Education and public outreach. (26). As part of the organisations' five-year strategy for the period of 2021-2025, the organisation focuses on teachers, youth workers and future education workers as important target groups "to have the knowledge, skills and attitude to implement global education in their work and support children and young people in their growth as global citizens." As one of the key indicators, the organisation monitors the number of education workers who participated in training events and educational trips or used global education services or materials (42).

The organisation provides trainings to the teachers and youth workers, such as the World Education course (in Estonian Maailmahariduse kursused) which introduce in 60 academic hours most relevant topics regarding the World Education (e.g. climate, migration, human rights, sustainable development, etc.) as well as the best practices in their teaching. In addition to the course, various lesson plans and other teaching materials are provided to

the teachers. (43). The educational materials are connected to the "Global citizen competency model" (in Estonian Maailmakodaniku pädevusmudel), which combines various thematic topics, skills and values. The model also describes expected learning outcomes for each school level, which are partially related to the democracy and behaviours regarding participation of young people. For example:

1st-3rd Grade	4th-6th Grade	7th-9th Grade	10th-12th Grade
explores possible ways to make the world better within your means	discusses the meaning of individual and collective action	develops and uses the skills necessary for active participation and acts in the common interest	values democracy and understands why a more socially just world and the reduction of global inequality are important
	participates in community work	knows the various media text content and creates media content that supports democratic civic participation and proceeds from ethical principles	develops and implements skills of effective civic engagement alone and with others
	identifies ways to be involved and is a leader in action in the learning situation	analyzes dilemmas related to social justice and ethical responsibility, understands the impact of individual and collective action, and conducts activities on their subject	critically appreciates the issues of social justice and ethical responsibility and acts to reduce discrimination and inequality
		ready to contribute to activities that support the creation of a fairer world at the local, national and global levels	

Table 9. Global citizen competency model elements (44)

The Estonian Youth Workers Association

The Estonian Association of Youth Workers (in Estonian Eesti Noorsootöötajate Kogu) unites qualified Youth Workers, those in the middle of Youth Work studies as well as those without formal qualifications but with extensive youth work experience. The association represents and supports its members through advocacy activities as well developing and organising youth work and youth work environments.

In addition to awarding the qualifications to Youth Workers, the organisation is also organising training programmes for Youth Work professionals and municipality youth officers. As an example, the association organised with support of Erasmus+ programme a long-term training for municipality youth officers introducing them tools, methods and good practices of youth participation. In total, 20 representatives from municipalities accross Estonia took part of the programme. The association has recently launched an open call for 2025 edition to replicate the programme for new participants (45).

DISCUSSION

Following chapter provides main conclusions derived from the mapping exercise and its key findings.

There are links and references in national curricula of general education in Estonia related to social and citizenship competences, directly through compulsory civic classes in both basic and upper secondary education. This places responsibility on history and civic teachers. There is also a cross-curricular aim to enable young people to become active and responsible members of the community and society. It remains unclear to what extent and by what means this competence should be developed.

History and civic education are usually considered part of the same field of specialization in general education in Estonia. This is also reflected in teacher degree program curricula, where history-related courses form the majority of the curriculum. Given the ratio between history and civic education courses in general education curricula, this is understandable. However, due to the limited number of civic education-specific subjects in teacher degree programs, there are few opportunities to enhance civic education teachers' professional preparation, particularly in developing methods and knowledge to deepen their understanding of relevance and methods to support young people's role participating in contemporary democracies and experiencing new forms of youth participation.

During the mapping exercise, there was very limited evidence of recent educational programs or training initiatives aimed at improving the community of practice among civic education teachers. For example, the Society of History and Civic Education Teachers (in Estonian Eesti Ajaloo- ja Ühiskonnaõpetajate Selts), which is a network uniting civic education teachers across Estonia, has not recorded any related training activities in their public sources. There are also very limited records of thematic training activities in Juhan, the Information System for Continuing Education. As previously mentioned, various NGOs provide training, simulations, and lesson plans. However, the usability of such resources depends on the capacity and outreach of these NGOs, as well as the motivation and awareness of the community of practice and the executive board of their employing schools.

In recent years, the respective ministry for education and youth sector has attempted to create favorable conditions to foster cooperation between schools and youth work providers by systematically approaching to integrate formal and non-formal learning opportunities. However, during the mapping exercise, no concrete examples were found to demonstrate effective and sustainable cooperation mechanisms (e.g. an equivalent to Community Practice) that enable young people to seamlessly acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes by combining experiences from both general education and youth work activities. At the same time, there are no evidential barriers explicitly preventing such cooperation.

One potential solution to help improve the variability of civic education initiatives, methods and school democracy in general is through school youth work specialists. As referred in previous chapter, there is a dedicated degree programme available which prepares specialists to work in school environment. Additionally, there are other degree programmes which prepare community managers profession, which have become common amongst in "state curated gymnasiums". The role of the community manager is to coordinate both hobby education and cultural activities in school, but also support and empower student democracy and in some cases entrepreneurial activities (through coordinating thematic projects).

Relevance of existing practices addressing new forms of youth participation

Based on the mapping exercise, national curricula tend to focus on traditional forms of participation in democratic life, such as knowing and following societal values and moral standards, respecting rules in various environments (including communication environments), understanding the structure of the state, the function of civil society, and democratic elections. From the perspective of safeguarding democracy, this approach contributes to maintaining a stable societal model. However, there seem to be limited efforts to introduce alternative forms of participation in contemporary society, such as the blurring of lines between the public and private spheres, non-hierarchical movements, online platforms and tools and related risks[1], which young people are experiencing, but might not link to participation of democratic life. The risk of manipulation through online infotainment may be addressed in other subjects, such as media literacy, which is an independent course in upper secondary education. However, there is limited evidence of clear connections regarding how young people are prepared to navigate contemporary society or whether this responsibility falls specifically on civic education teachers.

The curricula of youth workers' degree programs, on the other hand, include compulsory subjects that could influence how young people participate in democratic life. For example, introducing design thinking and co-design as methods could enable young people to engage in processes as experts in their own lives without a formal connection to a youth association or other organization. However, the implementation of these skills remains debatable, as the role of youth workers at the local level may not have sufficient connections to influence policy design and decision-making at the municipal level. Since youth participatory bodies at the municipal level (such as youth councils or youth activist groups) tend to follow traditional forms of participation (e.g. by replicating the procedures and hierarchy of the local government council), there are limited opportunities to systematically adopt and experience alternative formats of participation in the youth work.

Young people gain their first experiences in decision-making processes through school student councils or local youth councils. However, the quality of student councils varies greatly - from democratically elected bodies to so-called "elitist clubs," where new

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[1] SALTO. *Alternative Forms of Participation*. https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/participation-in-democratic-life/alternative-forms-of-participation/

representatives are chosen solely by previous members. The role of student councils is often perceived as limited to organizing cultural events and fundraisers, while their core function - representing students' interests in school democratic processes - is significantly diminished. Given that in some municipalities, representatives of school student councils also make up the local youth council, there is a strong need to improve the quality of these structures, ensure transparency, and implement democratic elections when selecting representatives.

The Quality Assessment model for municipalities includes indicators such as measuring the satisfaction of young people participating in these formats. However, there is limited reflection on their impact and overall quality. If implemented in a non-democratic manner - such as by failing to hold regular council elections or prioritizing project implementation and solidarity activities over ensuring representation of young people from diverse backgrounds - it can shape young people's perceptions of their role in the local community and reinforce stereotypes, distinguishing between behavior-oriented and project-oriented approaches.

One way to address this issue is to revise the indicators in the Quality Assessment to consider new forms of youth participation and to increase awareness among teachers and youth workers about improving the quality of young people's participation in democratic life. This means providing the necessary support for young people to participate, express their views, and have decision-making power on issues that affect them.

Potential needs

Educators and teachers

From the perspective of the teacher's agency, there is a need to balance their role as a gatekeeper/enabler with their position as a role model and opinion leader (e.g., in discussing various societal topics) in the classroom. From a civic education point of view, the Vote@16 initiative in Estonia for local government elections provides a real-life practical case for debate and discussion in the classroom. Considering that, for a certain proportion of young people, teachers serve as role models for values and attitudes, it places significant pressure on them to balance personal beliefs and honesty (which is expected from students) with the guidelines provided by the ministry and the Chancellor of Justice's office on how to avoid political manipulation within educational institutions.[2] In other words, in the potential case of a conflict of interest, leaving the topic unspoken may seem like an easier option, even though this could be avoided by involving NGOs or other politically neutral stakeholders who could support the teacher in debating and discussing these topics. This, in turn, circles back to the level of awareness of potential options.

Comparing teachers' qualification standards, degree programs curriculums, and the expectations set in national curricula with the European Training Strategy competence

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[2] Ministry of Education and Research (2021). *Valimised ja kool.* https://www.hm.ee/valimised-ja-kool

model for trainers - specifically in the area of Being civically engaged - the focus tend to be primarily on competencies such as "Supporting learners in developing critical thinking" and "Applying democracy and human rights principles." More support could be needed to better navigate competencies related to "Connecting (youth) policies and educational programs" and "Integrating values and beliefs."

As part of their degree programs and in a form of upskilling courses, there is a great potential to deepen the understanding of the relevance of supporting young people's participation in democratic life from an early age (considering the evidence of how it improves their future behavior as active citizens and their practical understanding of the democratic society model). In addition to the theoretical perspective, offer alternative practical tools and methods to enrich the classroom and learning process with non-formal education methods (in addition to the methodological courses provided as part of their professional degree programs).

Youth workers

As already referred to in the model provided by Tallinn University, youth workers need to increase their knowledge of platforms and online environments where young people spend their time and feel comfortable using, as well as broaden their understanding of methods and forms in which youth participation can take place. Former Estonian Youth Work Centre (current Education and Youth Board) has made great efforts to conceptualize the concept of smart youth work which relies on principle that young people and youth workers can extend the access to, variability and quality of youth work formats and actions through using technology where convenient and relevant. The preparation of youth work professionals to cope with digital technologies and familiarize themselves with platforms and online environments should be prioritized through degree programmes and upskilling initiatives for youth workers.

The role and responsibilities of youth workers in supporting young people's participation in decision-making processes remain unclear. Given their close connection and the trust they share with young people, youth workers could be well-suited to act as mediators between young people and relevant stakeholders. However, without appropriate preparation and effective methods, this could lead to unintended and even negative outcomes.

Current degree programmes already include thematic subjects with strong potential to prepare youth workers for this role. Nevertheless, there is a significant risk that assuming the role of mediator could damage the trust-based relationship between a youth worker and a young person. For this reason, youth workers should be more actively involved in the planning and coordination of youth work at the municipal level—both to be trusted and recognized as experts, and to ensure they are equipped with the necessary tools and methods to effectively engage young people in decision-making processes. To strengthen the professional standing of youth workers and place them on equal footing with teachers, it is worth considering the establishment of clear professional standards and the mandatory acquisition of relevant qualifications.

Key conclusions and recommendations for the national context

To structure the outcomes, the author has relied on the recommendations of the analytical paper "Youth Participation and Citizenship Education: A Cross-sectoral Perspective" and the "Guidelines for Collaboration between the Formal and Non-formal Education Sectors." (presented in Table 10).

Recommendations from the paper	Evidences from the mapping exercise
Recognise that youth participation in democratic life is a term referring to the way young people behave and interact with democracy.	Learning objectives and expected outcomes of national curriculum and civic education (in result of acquiring compulsory basic education): - **Recognizes** the characteristics of democracy, **acknowledging** potential threats to it and the risks of undermining democracy for individuals. - **Makes connections** between democracy and the protection of human rights. - **Recognizes** diversity and the potential for discrimination against different cultures and social groups, and is **willing to act** according to their abilities. (in result of acquiring upper secondary education): - **Participates** as an active and responsible individual within society. - **Understands** the principles of elections, their role in society, and personal responsibility as a voter. - **Differentiates** between democratic and non-democratic decision-making processes in society and communities. - **Is able to protect** their interests and rights, **consider** the rights of others, and **stand against** the violation of democratic values. - **Understands** their ability to influence societal processes as an active citizen, both within and outside of school. - Is **able to analyze** the impact of civic activism on communities and society.
Recognise that citizenship education and youth participation projects are distinct but closely connected and overlapping concepts that both seek to promote young people's participation in democratic life.	Principle in the national curriculums for general education, which leaves an opportunity to blend into the curriculum also youth participation projects "To implement the study of leading topics (such as civic initiative and enterprise), cooperation with providers of extracurricular activities and hobby education, local institutions and enterprises, as well as other educational, cultural, and civic associations, is expected whenever possible."

Recognise that citizenship education primarily encourages young people's participation in democratic life by developing the competences of young people.	Learning objectives and expected outcomes of national curriculum, for example: - to function as an active, aware, helpful and responsible citizen and support the democratic development of society; to know and follow values and moral standards in society /–/ to accept differences in people and their values and to take them into account in communication; the ability to understand global problems, take co-responsibility for solving them; to value and follow the principles of sustainable development; to feel like a member of society capable of dialogue in the context of Estonia, Europe and the whole world.
Recognise that youth participation projects encourage young people's participation in democratic life, changing the conditions and possibilities around young people and/or supporting their young people's learning.	The Proovikivi initiative which aims to help young people acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to become responsible world citizens from an early age. Through project-based learning, young people learn to take responsibility for themselves, their surroundings, and their communities while actively contributing to shaping the future of their local area, country, and the world.
Recognise that experiential learning methods are identified as one of the more effective methods for influencing young people's democratic behaviour and that non-formal methods can be delivered in both the formal and the non-formal sectors.	The participatory budgeting methodology in schools, provided by the Estonian Cooperation Assembly. As a result of the pilot project, the proportion of students who want to actively participate in school life increased by 15%
Recognise that when non-formal learning methods are applied to democracy, they require learners to actively engage with democracy. This means there is a significant degree of overlap between learning and active involvement.	The Simulation of Municipal Coalition Negotiations, provided by the Estonian National Youth Council, allows participants to analyze various electoral promises and role-play as members of the municipal council, entering into negotiations to create a coalition agreement. Through this practical experience, they also gain an understanding of democratic elections and their aftermath.
There is a distinction between youth participation in democratic life (the behavior) and youth participation projects (initiatives that support the behavior and young people's interaction with democracy).	The Community Practice initiative. By volunteering for an organization for 10-15 hours, the experience enhances students' self-recognition as members of society who can contribute to important causes and influence societal development. Additionally, the program fosters a wide range of general competencies, including social and civic competence, cultural and value competence, self-determination, learning and communication skills, and entrepreneurial competence.

Table 10. Main outcomes of the Mapping Exercise

As concrete recommendations:

- To revise and improve teachers' degree programs and develop upskilling training to deepen their understanding of the importance of supporting young people's participation in democratic life from an early age, while also providing relevant tools and methods for use in the classroom.
- To include youth participation-related performance indicators in both teachers' and youth workers' quality standards, such as their ability to strengthen students'

debating and argumentation skills, and to consider participation in society and democratic life holistically across various subject matters.

- To appoint a single point of contact within the school context who will revise and recommend relevant civil society initiatives (from the regional and/or national level) to be systematically integrated into the school's curriculum, either as part of compulsory subjects or as electives - such as Community Practice.
- To consider creating guiding material and an ideal set of quality indicators for both the school student council and the local government youth council. As referenced in the national curriculum for general education, the school, as an institution, should also reflect democratic values and attitudes. This means there is potential to define good practices for quality indicators in the school student council, enabling it to recognize areas for improvement and benchmark its progress. This could also help identify shortcomings, which could then be addressed with support from youth workers or other relevant stakeholders.

Challenges and limitations of the mapping exercise

Despite the fact that the national curriculum of general education and both teachers' and youth workers' formal education program curricula include references to these topics, there is limited evidence of how this translates into teaching and non-formal education provision.

Recommendations for European initiatives

Harmonising or developing competence models/frameworks for educators and youth workers

- Building on already existing resources from the EU level, to consider designing and introducing a quality framework on how to blend and integrate democracy learning into the study process (by combining together the roles and responsibilities of both formal and non-formal education). e.g.:
    - How to create democratic classroom / non-formal education learning space;
    - How to create democratic school environment / youth work institution;
    - How to balance power relations inside the organisation (to also act democratically);
    - How to cooperate between relevant stakeholders influencing young people
    - How to extend democratic values and attitudes in relation with the local community etc.

Establishing an online platform to exchange good practices between educators and youth workers in order to avoid duplication of tools and methods as well provide inspiration.

Developing training/educational opportunities based on the needs of educators and youth workers

- Considering the time constraints of teachers and youth workers, it would be beneficial to develop and make available online e-courses on the subject matter. These could either serve as methodological guidance on how to introduce the topic of participation in society and democratic life in an age-appropriate manner, or as material to enrich lectures or youth work activities (while also helping to develop young people's digital and media literacy skills).

Developing guidance/educational materials for educators and youth workers

- To develop guiding materials on how to support the quality and democratic functioning of formalized youth participation bodies, such as school student councils and local government youth councils.

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