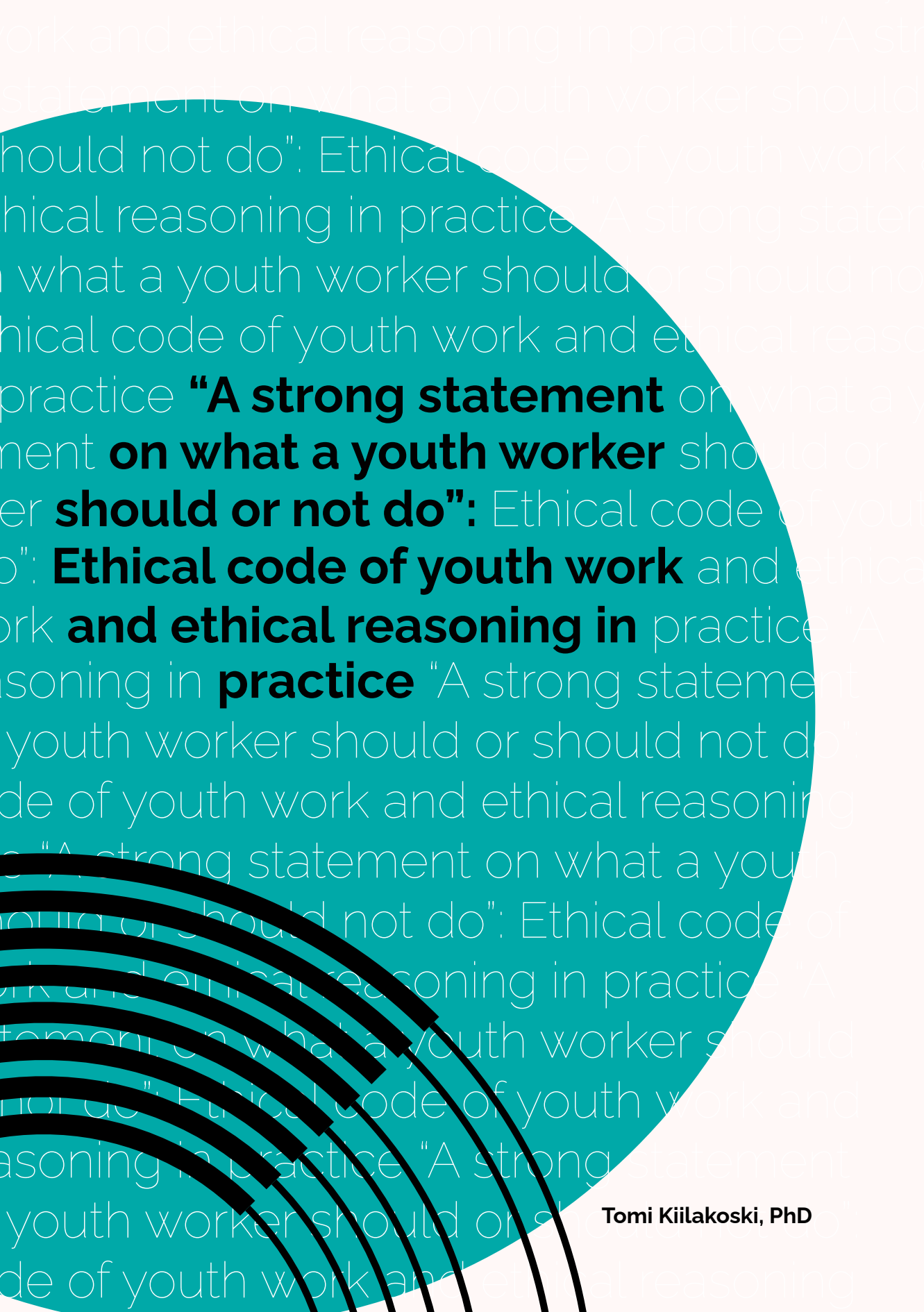

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This paper analyses the results of the survey conducted in spring 2022. It has been prepared as a part of the Art of ethics in youth work project, which is managed by NAPOR, National Association of Youth Workers in Serbia. One hundred and ten respondents from Australia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland and Serbia answered the survey. Nearly half of respondents (N=50) came from Australia. Research questions include the following issues: are youth workers aware of the ethical code and does it inform their practices; how the organisations inform youth workers and others about ethical code; what ethical problems are there in youth work; how youth workers are trained to tackle these and what type of organisational support is there to ethical reflection.

Youth work ethics as professional ethics

When thinking about what unites youth work one of the most often offered answers is that value-base is one of the corner stones. It has been said that youth work "is based on values and is about the promotion of human rights, diversity, social cohesion, peace and democracy" (Shildt, Vanhee & Williamson 2017, 8). Therefore, ethics is at the heart of youth work practice. Youth work is committed to defending and promoting democratic and social values.

According to the philosopher Aristotle, the aim of ethics is to build a better and more humane society. For him, thinking about ethics is not only about reflecting how an individual human being should behave, but it is also about thinking how we could provide good life for everyone: "To secure the good of one person only is better than nothing; but to secure the good of a nation or a state is a nobler and more divine achievement" (Aristotle 1996, I.ii.8.) To express this thought in a youth work context, the purpose of youth work ethics is to build a better world for the young and other generations and to describe how youth work contributes to this societal project.

Professional ethics may refer to two different things. The first and foremost, professional ethics refers to values, norms, duties, responsibilities and obligations that should guide the conduct of professionals when they do their work. When making practical decisions professionals may make conscious and explicit references to written rules or norms, but these decisions often involve a lot of practical reasoning. Secondly, professional ethics can mean "a fully idealized set of values whose purpose is to explicate the best possible world in which the given profession could be working". This requires writing a code of conduct which describes the values of the profession and its contribution to society. Professional ethics is in this sense a declaration and manifestation of good intentions that are supposed to characterize a given profession (Airaksinen, 2011.) Professional ethics, then, is both about ethical reflection in action, and about clearly and explicitly expressed norms of the profession. Ideally these two types of professional ethics could go hand in hand. This requires that the code of conduct actually describes what the professionals do when they act, and that the legitimacy of the code is recognised by the community of practice itself. Professional ethics describes what a good youth worker should do. Internally, within the youth work context, it is about

creating standards for working with young people. Externally, it is about communicating the guidelines that shape the practices of youth work to the general public. They should also describe the ways in which youth workers serve the young and society in general.

As rules and norms, professional ethics are sometimes criticized for being too rigid. Critics have claimed that there is a distinction between "an "academic" view of an ethic – based on principles and expressed in regulation" which may limit the professional freedom and "a professional" ethic which is captured in the relationship the professional person has with those whom he/she serves" (McGettrick & Su, 2012). This criticism points out that ethics is a lived practice with a lot of situational factors which need to be taken into account when working with clients. Professionalism with clearly stated ethical codes and principles has not been automatically accepted in youth work, and earlier decades have seen debates between professionalism and anti-professionalism for example within the youth work community in Australia (Goodwin, 2021). Another form of critique states that, for example, rather than being moral enterprises professions try to establish a societal monopoly by maintaining control of what counts as good youth work (Chadwick, 2005). If the norms of the profession are created internally, there is a danger that the profession is guided by standards which are other than ordinary morality (Chadwick, 2005:250). To respond to these criticisms, youth work ethical code should be applicable to practice instead of being distant from it. In addition, it should be based on shared values of society. Basing ethical code on human rights for example is a way of securing that ethical code of conduct promotes public good.

The ethical code of youth work has been debated, and criticism similar to the described above have been expressed. For the code of ethics to actually serve the youth work community, "a code needs to encourage youth workers to think ethically through whatever situations they face, and to talk together about them, to give them tools to do that" (Sercombe, 2010:58). The code should also be an aid to ethical thinking, not a substitute for it (ibid). To express this idea in other words, the written norms of professional ethics should be connected to actual practical reasoning in youth work settings. If "all youth workers have a value system that informs their work" (Greene, 2010:135), it is important to create platforms for common dialogue, and to ensure that the written norms are accepted by the occupation itself.

This paper analyses three research questions which are connected to the above issues:

1. Are youth workers aware of the ethical code and does it inform their practices? How do the organisations inform youth workers and others about the ethical code?

2. What ethical problems are there in youth work? How are youth workers trained to tackle these?

3. What does an ethical code of youth work do for the youth work? What type of organisational support is there to ethical reflection?

Methodological remarks

The survey on which this paper is based was launched in spring 2022. It was intended for youth workers, youth work managers and youth leaders working in Australia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland and Serbia. These countries were chosen because they participated in the Art of ethics in youth work project. The survey was launched in March. The answering time was prolonged to be sure that all the informants could answer the survey. Last answers came in May. The survey was gathered using Webropol.

There were 110 respondents answered the survey. Nearly half of them (50) came from Australia, 21 came from Serbia, 44 per cent of the respondents were aged between 25 to 34, and 34 percent between 35 and 44, while 20 percent in total were above 45, and 6 per cent under the age of 25. The majority of them worked as youth workers (63 per cent), one third worked as managers (34 per cent) and 4 per cent as youth leaders. Over two thirds worked full time (68 per cent), 19 per cent part time and 13 per cent casually. When speaking about the education level, 74 per cent had a bachelors' degree or above, and 24 per cent had level 4 in education. Roughly two thirds had a degree on youth work.

Despite the efforts to attract more answers, there were only 110 answers. For the analysis this means that the number of respondents in country groups is too limited to analyse the differences within groups. For this reason, the analysis is done by examining total answers in most of the cases. The respondents, however, got different questions depending if their country had an ethical code of youth work (Australia, Finland, and Serbia) or not (Bulgaria, Croatia). Most of the analysis is based on analysing

frequencies. Also, there were four open questions which large majority of the respondents answered to.

Web surveys are time and cost effective, which is one of the reasons they have gained popularity (de Leeuw, 2004). The limitations include that there is no selection of participants, and that the respondents are likely to be biased. Usually, it is impossible to properly analyse which groups did not answer the survey. The analysed survey was conducted in English, which limits the pool of people who can answer the survey. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents had a university education. Also, most answers came from Australia where youth workers could use their native language. Additionally, international surveys usually attract youth workers who have experience in international youth work. Since this survey was about youth work ethics, it could have attracted youth workers who are more interested in ethics than their peers.

For the reasons explained above, the results cannot be generalized. In other words, they do not tell us how all youth workers of the examined countries think about ethics. Instead, they are a sample of youth workers who are likely to be more educated, more favourable towards international youth work and more interested about ethics. The readers are advised to take these results as an example of how certain youth workers view the matters instead of seeing them as talking about attitudes of the community of youth work as a whole.

Quantitative results

The individual and collective use of ethical code

The first set of questions was about opinions and experiences on the ethical code of youth work. More questions were offered to those respondents who came from the country that had an ethical code of youth work. Respondents were asked three questions about their personal relation to ethical codes of youth work in their own country and in other countries. Majority of respondents, 90 per cent agreed that they were familiar with the ethical code of youth work. A little more than two thirds answered that they agreed strongly, making this statement one of the most strongly shared themes in this study. Similar share of respondents, 91 per cent, said that they understand the ethical code. National ethical codes were known and understood. However, knowledge about ethical codes outside their own country was rarer.

Under one quarter of respondents, 23 per cent, knew about the ethical codes outside their own country. Almost half of the respondents disagreed that they were familiar with the ethical codes outside their own country. Even though this survey was launched in English and may attract youth workers familiar with European programmes and/or international youth work, it was still rare to know the ethical codes outside their own country. 70 per cent of the Australian youth workers disagreed. Besides their opinions, respondents were asked about how they evaluated how other youth workers approach the ethical code. The share of those who thought that other youth workers were aware of the ethical code was smaller compared to those who thought that they themselves were knowledgeable about the code. One half was in agreement that the other youth workers were aware about the code of conduct of the country. Little less than half of the respondents thought that youth workers in their country refer to ethical code when handling ethically challenging situations. About one fifth disagreed.

Two statements were about the usage and the role of ethical code in their country. 86 per cent of respondents agreed that ethical code is important for the recognition of youth work. Over two thirds agreed strongly. Only seven percent disagreed. 95 per cent of those respondents that came from countries who did not have an ethical code of youth work agreed that the ethical code of conduct would be beneficial for youth work. Besides recognition of youth work, the ethical code was seen as being important for young people themselves. 82 per cent agreed the ethical code of youth work benefits young people in their country. Having an ethical code of youth work is seen as being important for youth work, and respondents themselves know and understand the code. However, the respondents were more doubtful about the other youth workers. This can be interpreted to mean that the selected group who answered this survey about the ethical code is more interested in ethics than the other youth workers.

Table 1. Opinions on ethical code of youth work

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided/neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am familiar with the ethical code of youth work.	69%	21%	6%	1%	3%
I am familiar with ethical codes outside my own country.	6%	17%	29%	39%	9%
Other youth workers in my country are aware of the ethical code.	11%	40%	25%	22%	2%
I understand the ethical code of youth work in my country.	57%	34%	6%	2%	1%

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided/neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Youth workers in my country refer to ethical code when handling ethically challenging situations.	8%	35%	36%	18%	3%
Ethical code of youth work benefits young people in my country.	45%	37%	10%	5%	3%
Having an ethical code of youth work in my country is important for the recognition of youth work.	68%	18%	7%	5%	2%

The other set of questions dealt with how ethical issues were discussed, and how an ethical code of conduct was used in the daily practice. Youth work had been seen as value-based practice and reflective practice as one of the cornerstones of youth work activities. Therefore, it could be expected that there is a strong agreement on the importance of thinking about values. This is also the case in this survey. Two thirds of

the respondents think about core values of youth work often, and 27 per cent sometimes. There was not one answer saying that the core values of youth work are never thought. This reflection of values is not connected to having an ethical code of youth work, since 96 of the respondents from countries with no ethical code of youth work said that they think about the core values either often or sometimes. Thinking about values is part of the professional ethical reflection of the youth work in practice.

However, code of ethics clearly informs the reflection about ethical issues in youth work when it is available. A large majority of the respondents used ethical code to reflect of their youth practice, 45 per cent of them used ethical code often, and 41 per cent sometimes. Two thirds also read the ethical code either often or sometimes. Compared to an individual use, the collective use of the ethical code was less visible. Three quarters of the respondents discussed ethical code of youth work with other youth workers often or sometimes. However, one quarter discussed it seldom or never. Based on the questions asked, it is more common to use ethical code in individual reflection or with other youth workers than with the young themselves. Two thirds of the respondents said that they talk about ethical code with young people often or seldom. One out of nine respondents said that they never talk about ethical code of youth work with the young.

Table 2. Ethical code and youth work practice

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
I read the ethical code of youth work in my country.	18%	49%	32%	1%
I think about the core values of youth work.	66%	27%	7%	0%

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
I discuss ethical code with other youth workers or youth work managers.	32%	43%	18%	7%
I use ethical code to reflect on my youth work practice.	45%	41%	12%	2%
I talk about the ethical code of youth work with the young.	26%	40%	23%	11%

Support to ethical reflection

Preceding chapter dealt with the ethical reflection of youth workers, and with how ethical code is known and used. Another major theme of this report is looking at ethical code as a part of professionalization. In this process occupations seek public recognition and try to convince general public that they are beneficial to society. In professionalization, occupation seeks to ensure that workers are able to do quality work and seek to increase the social impact of the occupation. For example, it has been argued that youth work code of ethics could "raise the standards of youth work practice and thereby bring greater human rights outcomes to young people" (Corney, 2021:19). If ethical code is properly used, it will increase the quality of youth work. Although youth work is a value-based practice, ethical reflection needs to be supported by the youth work organisations and training and education is needed. This section describes how well the respondents are supported, how the information on ethical

code is shared with different partners of youth work, and how well other professions are aware of the existence of the code.

It has been shown that the respondents think that they know and understand the code. They also use the code when reflecting about ethical issues in youth work. However, the share of youth workers who think that they had enough training is smaller. Less than half of the respondents (46 per cent) agree that they have had enough training on ethical issues in youth work. A quarter of the respondents disagree. Even smaller share of respondents thinks that youth workers in general are well trained to debate ethical issues in youth work. Only 24 per cent agree that youth workers in their country are well trained to discuss ethical issues. 40 per cent of the respondents disagree. When asking about how well other youth workers know the ethical code, there is a difference between thinking about how well one is trained and how well the other youth workers are trained. The results point out to the need to increase and maybe improve ethical training in youth work. The need for training was pointed out also in the answers to open questions, for example when suggesting that "all organisations especially the ones that are government-funded should be mandated to do ECOY training on a yearly or bi-yearly basis as part of the organisation's funding agreement and the YW job contract."

70 per cent of the respondents agreed that they know how an ethical code is prepared in their country. 27 per cent were undecided. A large majority of the respondents are also familiar with the ethical code, understand it, and use it to reflect on the ethical issues. It is perhaps fair to say that the ethical code is fairly well accepted within the community of practice of youth work. However, attention must be paid to the fact that only half of the respondents agree that other youth workers are aware of the ethical code (see Table 1).

The matter is different with other professions. According to the respondents, other professions outside the youth field are not well aware of the ethical code of youth work. This question can be interpreted to highlight problematic issues in the public recognition of youth work. Only 11 per cent of respondents agree that other professions are aware of the ethical code of youth work. Almost two thirds (62 per cent) disagree with this statement. The majority of the respondents think that the other professions do not know about the ethical code. This is connected to how youth work organisations supply information about the code of ethics to different stakeholders.

Table 3. Training on ethical code and the role of the code

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided/neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have had enough training on ethical issues in youth work.	18%	28%	29%	24%	1%
Youth workers in my country are well trained to discuss ethical issues.	4%	20%	36%	33%	7%
I know how an ethical code of youth work is produced in my country.	20%	45%	27%	6%	2%
Other professions, such as social workers, police or teachers, are aware of the ethical code of youth work.	4%	7%	27%	33%	29%

Youth organisations supply information about the ethical code of youth work to a certain extent. While 25 percent supply information

often to volunteers, 21 per cent to young people, and 8 per cent provide information to citizens of the community of the respondent. Over half of the respondents say that organisations sometimes or often provide information about the ethical code of youth work to volunteers (55 per cent) and to young people (also 55 per cent). Approximately, one third (34 per cent) provide information about the code of ethics to the citizens of their community. It should be noted that about quarter of organisations never provide information to young people or to volunteers. Information about the code is never provided to the citizens of the community by one third. Given these numbers, it is perhaps not surprising that other professions are not aware about the ethical code of youth work.

Table 4. How youth work organisations supply information. Countries who have an ethical code of youth work.

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
My organization supplies information about the ethical code of youth work to volunteers.	25%	30%	21%	24%
My organization supplies information about the ethical code of youth work to citizens in my community.	8%	26%	33%	33%
My organization supplies information about the ethical code of youth work to young people.	21%	34%	22%	23%

Countries without an ethical code of youth work answered fairly similarly. Information about ethical issues of youth work was provided often or sometimes in 62 per cent of the cases to volunteers, 46 per cent to young people, 38 per cent to the citizens of the community. Also, according to these respondents' information was never provided to citizens in 29 per cent of the cases. Although the number of these respondents does not warrant making statistical comparisons, it may be noted that having an ethical code of conduct does not increase the fact how information about ethical issues is supplied to different stakeholders. Given that youth work is often understood as a value-based practice, it may be surprising that the share of organisations who never provide information to volunteers about ethical code of youth work (24 per cent) or ethical issues of youth work (13 per cent) is rather high.

Table 5. How the information is supplied to the youth work organisations. Countries who do not have an ethical code of youth work.

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
My organization supplies information about youth work ethics to volunteers.	12%	50%	25%	13%
My organization supplies information about youth work ethics citizens in my community.	13%	25%	33%	29%
My organization supplies information about youth work ethics youth work to young people.	21%	25%	37%	17%

Open questions

In the survey four open questions were asked. 101 responses were given to the question what are some of the most common ethical dilemmas in youth work practice. 101 provided answers to question about how are situations where a youth worker or a volunteer violates professional ethics handled in your organization. 77 answer from the countries who had an ethical code were given to question what is the main benefit of having an ethical code of youth work in your country, and 73 answers to the question what are the main challenges in using the ethical code of youth work in your country. 19 answers from the countries which do not have an ethical code were given to question what would be the main benefit of having an ethical code of youth work in your country and 18 answers to the question what would be the main challenges in using the ethical code of youth work in your country.

Most common dilemmas in youth work practice

The answers to the most common youth work dilemmas were diverse and covered many topics. Many answers mentioned the dual role of the youth workers and problems it causes. Dual relationships may cause ethical problems if a youth worker has a relationship in a youth work setting, but also in some other setting. It may be difficult to draw boundaries if one is a member of a community and meets young persons in other roles as well (Sercombe, 2010:115.). Finding a way to keep a professional distance while being committed to the needs and cultures of the young was seen as a key element in the practice of youth work (Roberts, 2009:98).

The respondents mentioned a general problem of Setting a boundary - How to keep a professional relationship with young people without becoming their best friends. One aspect of this where situations were professional boundaries were not fully kept, for example, pointing out the problem of people overstepping worker boundaries to support young people in need. Handling one's personal feelings in a professional way was also mentioned. The size of the organisation was seen as causing difficulties: How a professional should be in one small organisation, without putting any emotion. The use of digital platforms in smaller communities was also mentioned as a factor which may create difficulties: small community towns and social media can blur boundaries.

There were 16 answers that mentioned boundaries. It is not possible to analyse how some of the respondents understood boundaries, since they just mentioned the concept. Some talked about professional roles, others described boundary issues in detail, talking about different responsibilities of youth workers to other adults in the lives of young people. Youth work is accountable to many stakeholders (Roberts, 2009:101) and needs to balance different expectations. Boundaries referred to other professions, or for example to some significant others in the lives of the young. Information sharing was reflected on the other answers as well, although not necessarily connected to the concept of boundaries.

Where are the boundaries between youth work and other health and social care support professions dealing with young people? Where are the areas for collaboration?

Mostly we worry about preserving boundaries, deciding which information we need to share with other significant people in their life etc.

Ethical code was mentioned nine times. Some respondents thought that the ethical code is not known well enough and due to this other youth workers might not actually respect the human rights of the young, while some reflected on how youth workers should react to the organisations who do not know about the ethical code but cooperation with them might be useful to young people. Two answers expressed concern that a code of ethics might not serve the best interests to the young.

Challenges around other services or workers not aware of ethical code of practice and therefore lack of professionalism and best practice for supporting young people.

Should we work/cooperate with institutions and organisations who don't share our ethical code, but this cooperation can still ensure the best interest of young people?

Other issues mentioned were working with young people in sensitive conditions, such as NEETs (How to include NEET young people without suggesting them they are from that specific target group); substance use and alcohol; tensions between young people; expectations of society and the wishes of the young, and management issues; and promoting participation of the young. To summarise, ethical problems included the relationships between young people (for example How to manage

the tension between youngsters with a different ethnical backgrounds), the professional relations of youth workers to the young, the role of youth workers in the multi-professional networks, youth work management, substance abuse, cultural sensitivity, dealing with institutions that were seen as harmful and/or overtly bureaucratic and working in a society that systematically excludes young people (Battling the systemic failures that happen over and over again). The answers covered a lot of topics. No single answer was dominant, which points out that most urgent ethical issues may differ according to what type of youth work is done and how the community and service networks frame the practice of youth work.

Handling situations where a youth worker or a volunteer violates professional ethics

Respondents were asked how the situations where a worker violates professional ethics were handled. The three most common groups of answers were that violation will be discussed with the youth workers without pre-set guidelines; that there is a procedure for handling these matters; and thirdly, that these types of things have not happened and therefore the question cannot be answered.

Most often mentioned examples were trying to engage in a discussion with the worker, and for example, organizing counselling, coaching or mediation. Most of the answers described that there is not a formal procedure, and that ethically sensitive issues will be tackled though discussing personally and confidentially with the youth worker involved.

We first try by talking about ethical principles, and then it is possible to include a third person or change the youth worker.

So far, we haven't had such a case, but in case something like this happens, probably we will see all sides of the story and take measures (discussion of the case with everyone involved and deciding what to do next).

Some of the respondents described having system or managerial norms for dealing with ethically challenging situations. In these cases, there were guidelines for handling these matters or a body responsible for managing the issues. In these organisations there is a transparent rule on how to go forward.

They are handled through the Committee on Ethics of Association. It is a body for managing ethical issues for employees, members and volunteers of the Association.

We have an ethical codex and protocol for what to do in those cases. For example, a youth worker violating the codex is not able to work with "his" group anymore and it is on somewhat "parole" situation.

Some of the answers pointed out that gross violations of ethics have not happened and that there is therefore no need to reflect on these issues. Two answers noted that their organisation does not have appropriate measures and does not handle them well.

Main benefit of having the ethical code

The answers to what is the main benefit of having an ethical code of youth work consisted of four categories. Firstly, ethical code provided guidelines and/or standards for youth work, and therefore contributed to common understanding within the youth work community. Secondly and connected to the first, ethical code was seen as increasing the quality of youth work by describing common standards. Thirdly, ethical code served the best interests of the young by noting how they should be treated and how their rights could be promoted. Fourthly, it secured workers as well. Interestingly enough, the standard argument that ethical code is a tool for professionalization and public recognition was very little present.

Most common answer was that the main benefit of having an ethical code is the emergence of common standards for youth work. By doing this it could solve the problem which was mentioned in the ethical dilemmas of youth work, namely, that not all the youth workers work ethically. Having a unified frame of reference was seen as a way to make sure that practical reasoning can be based on a shared set of principles.

Best Practice for Youth Workers to abide to, ensuring a unified approach.

Common understanding of values and principles of youth work. What you should or shouldn't do.

It provides a clear, reliable, and visible framework to guide decision making.

Connected to common standards and shared frame of reference which ethical code brings was the view that having an ethical code improves the quality of youth work. This meant also having a procedure which makes youth workers more accountable.

To create standards and some consistency in the quality of youth work.

It helps to hold youth workers accountable and provides something to refer back to/reflect.

Respondents also thought that young people themselves benefit from having an ethical code in youth work. These answers deepen the statistical findings described earlier that over 80 per cent of the respondents think that having an ethical code is beneficial for young people. Especially Australian answers emphasized that the rights of the young people are better ensured. Since Australian ethical code is based on human rights, and more specifically on the rights of the child, this was perhaps to be expected.

It ensures quality of youth work programmes, as well as uniformity and standardization of youth work practices. And most importantly, it serves as a guide to ensure young people's best interest is respected.

Protects the rights and safety of young people, professionals and communities.

Recognises the significance of young people in society and the need for the youth work profession.

Besides young people, the ethical code was seen as protecting the workers themselves. Some answers talked about stronger professional identity, and some talked about it helping youth workers to solve ethical

dilemmas. The benefits for the young and youth workers were often connected, too.

To protect the youth worker and operate as a framework to support youth workers navigate ethical issues.

It strengthens the identity and practice of youth workers, and it keeps young people and workers safe.

There were 19 answers from Croatia and Bulgaria on what the ethical code could bring. Like the answers above, the most common benefits were creating standards and ensuring quality. As well, there were some hesitations about youth work lacking common points of reference, and due to this some of youth workers might not do their work properly. Recognition was mentioned in four answers, meaning that it was emphasised more compared to countries which have an ethical code of conduct.

It would present a certain type of standard we all should look up to in order to be sure we are doing our work correctly. Also, people could be hold accountable if they do not adhere to it.

I think it would level out to some extend the quality of youth work being provided in Bulgaria. Since currently we have no official definition of youth work, nor a clear competence model or qualification to become youth workers, we practically have no framework that could guarantee same quality of work, same level of understanding of the principles and values of youth work.

Recognition of youth work in Croatia and a step towards professionalization. Also, it would be a strong statement on what a youth worker should or should not do. I'm not sure if that's clear to all people doing youth work in Croatia at the moment.

Main challenges in using ethical code

Statistical findings and open questions point out that staff or other youth workers are not always familiar with ethical principles. There were 24 per cent of the respondents who disagreed that the other youth workers are aware of the ethical code. Also, less than half of the respondents thought that other youth workers refer to ethical code when handling ethically challenging situations. The open questions which state that ethical code is not well known shed more light to these remarks which shows that not all the youth workers and/or organisations utilise the code or even know about it.

I feel like it isn't wildly discussed within my workplace, we may need to visit it in a team meeting to make it more solidified.

The main challenge may be the fact that staff in public institutions are not familiar with ethical principles and that there are violations on the part of staff.

Another barrier for using the ethical code is about the public reception of youth work. Other professions do not know about the code, and maybe not even about the youth work in general. These answers note that using the code is difficult because other professions do not know about youth work or about the ethical code of youth work. These remarks point out that youth work has not managed to gain professional status from the partners, and that, as a consequence, the nature of youth work remains unclear.

Insufficient recognition of youth work and system for its implementation.

That most of the institutions and social workers are not familiar with it, nor the existence of youth work in general.

Some of the barriers mentioned are that in Australia "There isn't a national code of ethics" and "not every state has a code of ethics". Similarly in Serbia it is said that the code is not universally accepted, since "it's not recognised by institutions and it belongs to youth work association, so technically it doesn't concern you, if your organisation is not a member".

In countries who do not have the ethical code the main challenge perceived relates to youth workers getting familiar with the code and if they would give their consent to the code. Also, out-dated methods were mentioned, and the question if everybody would want to change was posed. The variation within the youth field was mentioned as a possible barrier.

> *The main challenge I recognize is related to making this code of ethics universal and having all the people considered officially or non-officially as youth workers applying the same principles. The reason for this is the lack of official definition, the lack of clear qualification needed.*

Conclusion and points of development

This paper has analysed the results of the survey sent for youth workers, managers and youth leaders in spring 2022. The paper examined three set of questions: Are youth workers aware of the code and does it inform their practices? How do the organisations inform about the ethical code? What ethical problems are there in youth work? How are youth workers trained to tackle these? What does an ethical code of youth work do for the youth work? What type of organisational support there is to ethical reflection?

According to the results, the respondents themselves are well aware of the ethical code, and use it often in their practice to inform ethical decisions. They understand the code. However, they are less sure if other youth workers are aware of the code. According to the results, 38 per cent of the organisations provide information to the volunteer seldom or never, and over 60 per cent provide information to the citizens of their community seldom or never. Additionally, in the open questions, lack of knowledge about the ethical code was a problem some of the youth workers had.

Respondents provided many answers to most important ethical problems in youth work. Compared to the other open questions, the list of ethical problems was more varied. Perhaps this goes to show that practical ethical thinking may tackle many things depending on with whom and where one works. There were 25 per cent of the respondents who disagreed that they themselves have had enough training on youth work, and 40 per cent disagreed that the other youth workers are well trained to discuss ethical issues. Also, some of the organisations had procedures for handling ethically challenging situations, while others relied on ad hoc reactions.

Having an ethical code was seen as being beneficial for youth work and young people. This came up in the quantitative sections and in the open questions. Ethical code was seen as providing standards for youth work, increasing quality, and securing the rights of the young and the workers. Some open answers were critical towards ethical code, but in general respondents favoured having a code. Respondents from those countries which did not have an ethical code saw many benefits, as well. However, the ethical code is not always known by other fields working with youth.

One may note that this study shows that majority of the respondents see the ethical code as being beneficial to youth work. However, there are points of criticism as well. According to the theory of professionalization of Forsyth and Daniesewicz (1985), any profession needs to be able to show to the society that it is beneficial, that its services are exclusive and not properly done by other professions, and that the task at hand is complex. Successful public recognition is needed to ensure professional autonomy. This study shows that youth work has not succeeded fully in making all the youth workers aware of the ethical code, and even less the general public or other actors in the lives of the young. Based on the results, three questions for further research can be asked:

1. Not every youth worker is well trained to handle ethical situations, and not every volunteer is instructed in ethics. What could and should be done to ensure that every youth worker has a chance to learn about ethics? This is especially important if the value-based nature of youth work is emphasized.

2. According to the results, not every youth worker knows about the ethical code or follows it. What can be done within the youth work community to increase awareness about the code?

3. According to the results, youth work organisations could do more to inform general public and other people working with the young about the ethical code. What could and should be done on the national, regional and local level?

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