

Effectiveness of Youth Work in Social Inclusion of Youth

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Introduction. Research indicates that young people who are surrounded by a variety of opportunities for participation, encounter less risk of social exclusion and show higher rates of successful transitions into adulthood. Youth projects involve young people in intentional and constructive ways, promoting positive outcomes by providing opportunities for youth at risk of social exclusion, preventing risky behaviors to building their strengths.

Aim, Material and Methods. The aim of the study was to evaluate youth work in Latvia in the progress of social inclusion of youth risk groups on the basis of priorities defined for the EU Youth Strategy and Latvian Youth Policy Guidelines, to identify good practices on social inclusion of youth risk groups, to analyse the outcomes and to assess the projects on social inclusion. The study is based on literature review, policy analyses, secondary data analyses and interviews with project participants and, youth workers and policy makers (n = 30).

Results. Data analyses show the rates of youth in NEETs, at risk of poverty and social exclusion (35%), severely materially deprived (24%); some of those rates are higher than the EU average. It means that the problem of social inclusion is important for Latvian youth policy, and measures need to be taken. Literature review has identified the main perspectives of the importance of youth social inclusion and the need of further development of youth work to increase the youth social inclusion. The author has analysed the objectives and aims of youth work and its development in Latvia in order to improve the effectiveness of youth work. The author has identified and analysed 10 positive youth development and social inclusion projects. The interview analysis provides opportunity to assess the outcomes of the youth social inclusion projects that can serve for future development of youth programmes both on municipal and national level. On the basis of secondary data analysis, the youth policy implementation index was developed and the policy outcomes assessed.

Conclusions. The author has identified the main indicators of belonging to youth risk groups of youth social exclusion. The project outcome analysis has given an opportunity to assess the role of youth work and youth projects for the social inclusion of main four youth risk groups of social exclusion. Youth policy implementation index was assessed, where one of the evaluation dimensions is social inclusion.

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