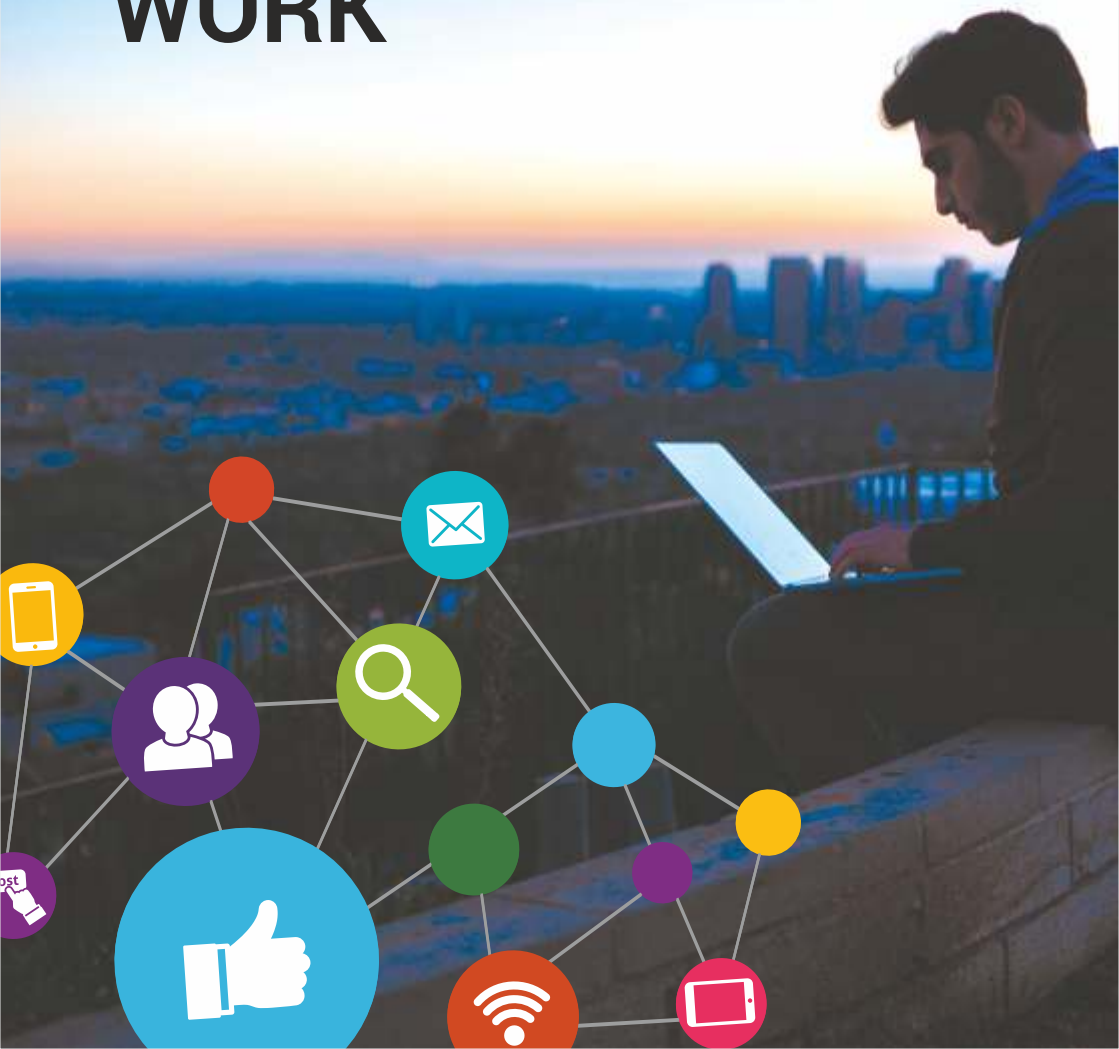




REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
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THE CONCEPT OF SMART YOUTH WORK



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THE CONCEPT OF SMART YOUTH WORK

1. Introduction

Young people are innovation-minded and the most receptive to changes. To create a better footing for young people to achieve their potential and make decisions that affect their lives, as well as to support their active participation in life in society and coping on the job market, youth work has an important role. Due to changes in society and the development of technology, the methods for youth work in Estonia and elsewhere in the world have to meet the new challenges and the needs of the youths and to offer, through contemporary solutions and suitable channels, new and attractive opportunities and alternatives to those offered solely for commercial and entertainment-oriented purposes.

One of the sub-objectives of the **Youth Field Development Plan** for 2014-2020¹ is to create more opportunities for youth to explore their full potential, to increase ways of developing youth creativity, self-initiative, and to develop a **concept for smart youth work**. In addition, the objectives are: 1) to make greater use of information technology in working with youth, including raising youth digital literacy in offering ICT-related hobby activities; 2) developing youth work using new means and 3) raising the competencies of youth and youth workers.


The European Youth Work Convention adopted in 2015² **describes the increasing youth interest in technology and digital media**. Related objectives are the development of digital literacy and coping with Internet risks and the need to deal with **developing youth workers' competency, including their ability to make use of digital opportunities in carrying out high-quality youth work**.



¹ https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noortevaldkonna_arengukava_2014-2020.pdf

² <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/eywc-website-declaration>

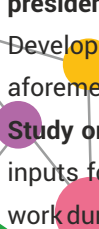




On 15 December 2015, the European Union's EYCS Council approved, by resolution, the EU **Work Plan for Youth in 2016-2018**³. One of its priorities is to contribute to meeting the challenges posed addressing the opportunities offered by the digital age in the field of youth policy, youth work and youths.

2. Background

On the basis of the Work Plan for Youth, an international expert group was convened with support from the European Commission on the topic of **"Risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy"**⁴. The objective of the work is to prepare, by December 2017 (draft to be completed by September 2017) a report and give recommendations to Member States for developing digital youth work and training for youth workers, also mapping the digital solutions for youth in Member States. In doing so, the expert group will proceed from the results of previous work groups that have tackled the quality of youth work and the challenges facing youth, and act in synergy with the EU Education and Training 2020 expert group, which deals with digital skills⁵, and the expert group for youth, which deals with becoming an active citizen and prevention of radicalisation.



Smart youth work will be **one of the priorities in the youth field during Estonia's presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2017**. Developments in Estonia and other EU Member States, this strategy, the work of the aforementioned expert group, and the results of a European Commission's planned **Study on the Impact of the Internet and Social Media on Youth Work**⁶, will be key inputs for potential Council of Ministers conclusions on the topic of smart youth work during Estonia's EU presidency.



The following can be mentioned as other related activities:

³ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ET/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ET/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215(01)&from=EN)

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/policy/documents/mandate-expert_group-digitalisation-youth_en.pdf

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-groupmandates_en.pdf

⁶ "The impact of internet and social media in youth work"





- 1) The Council of Europe symposium organised in 2015 in the framework of the European Commission's partnership programme, "**Youth participation in a digitalised world**"⁷, in which proposals were articulated in four fields: 1) communication; 2) education; 3) economic sphere and working life; 4) democracy and political participation;
- 2) the international research project "**Screenagers**"⁸ on the use of ICT and social media in youth work;
- 3) "**Europe Code Week**"⁹ for introducing and developing programming;
- 4) the seminar "**Developing Digital Youth Work**"¹⁰ for youth work practitioners in Oulu, Finland;
- 5) the conference "**Digitalisation of child services and youth work – chances and challenges**"¹¹ in Berlin;
- 6) the "**DigitalYIntro**"¹² digital youth info training courses launched by the ERYICA, the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency.

In Estonia as well, a number of smart solutions and approaches to the topic have been initiated in the field of youth:

- 1) **Youth monitoring**¹³ makes information public on various fields related to youth life, allowing to evaluate the situation of youth, and take into account aspects pertaining to youth in developing various policies and to plan potential impacts of policy changes;
- 2) The Estonian Youth Work Centre is developing a **big data project**, meaning use of data analysis in the youth field so as to receive more information through processing and use of megadata in order to assess and predict the youth situation and plan and design new services;
- 3) An environment for describing and analyzing youths' experiences and competences has been developed: **stardiplats.ee**;



⁷ <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/digitalised-world>

⁸ <http://www.youth.ie/screenagers>


⁹ <http://codeweek.eu/>

¹⁰ <http://trainings.salto-youth.net/5692>

¹¹ <https://www.jugendhilfeportal.de/termin/digitalisierung-in-der-kinder-und-jugendhilfe-chancen-und-herausforderungen/>


¹² <http://eryica.org/page/digital-yintro>

¹³ www.noorteseire.ee

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- 4) With a database of study materials, methods and trainers for supporting youth work and informal education, the Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency is developing the environment **mitteformaalne.ee**, carried out a youth work digital lab in the framework of a training programme in the youth field and published a youth work periodical called MIHUS¹⁴ on the topic of smart youth work.
 - 5) **Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus** (Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres) is developing, as part of the Tugila programme, a logbook system that will gather data on unique visits to youth centres. The open youth work aspect and work with various groups will also be brought out separately. The idea of the logbook is for all youth centres to gather data in a uniform manner.

2.1. The study “The use and possibilities of using digital solutions in youth work” and working group

To obtain a comprehensive overview of the current status in Estonia and developments in European countries, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned in 2016 a study called “**The use and possibilities of using digital solutions in youth work**”¹⁵.



The main conclusions of the research results confirm that the participants in Estonian youth work – the youth themselves and the youth workers – expect the **organisation of youth work to be simplified by way of digital solutions**. It is desired to use contemporary digital devices and solutions as well as to develop digital competencies in general.

At the same time, results also show that the **nature of youth work, the role of youth workers and the content of the work are in large part location- and context-specific**.

¹⁴<http://mitteformaalne.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/MIHUS19.pdf>

¹⁵“Harnessing the potential of IT in youth work”, Institute of Baltic Studies, E-Governance Academy, 2016



In addition, it also changes over time. That means that expectations with regard to the digital solutions used in youth work may vary, depending where the youth worker or the young person lives (larger town vs. smaller settlement), the salience of the need (what is needed immediately vs. in a couple years), the age of the youth workers etc.

One of the main challenges in making youth work more efficacious through digital solutions is the **fear that youth spend too much time on digital devices as it stands** and an even greater use of devices in youth work will amplify this effect further. The study results also show that the fear is not always justified – youths generally do not become isolated. Youths are very active users of social media. Their goal is the desire to be in contact with others – to a greater extent, more regularly and more rapidly. It is thus important that digital solutions be seen as new opportunities in youth work and their potential skilful use by youth workers.

A second major challenge is the **digital gap prevalent in society**: the varying skills and access to information and digital possibilities among people, including specialists in the field. In addition to the study results, this is also borne out by the low level of readiness among youth workers and youth to dialogue on the topic of smart solutions in youth work.

Technology is underused in Estonian youth work, especially considering Estonia's international renown as a digital society and advocate for digital topics. Information technology is an inseparable part of everyday life for young people, as a result of which it is **important to continue developing or to introduce new digital solutions in youth work as well**. There is a need for contemporary digital devices and solutions to raise digital competency, and the improved ability to apply digital solutions,



including in cooperation with various parties. Various technological solutions allow youth workers to reach more young people more effectively and productively, including taking into account the specifics of regions where many youths lack the opportunity to visit youth work institutions. For today's "digital natives", information technology is a suitable environment, they feel at home using the devices and they can be used to offer opportunities and services in a suitable manner and "language" and based on the objectives of youth work.

In autumn 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research convened a working group in the youth field on the topic of smart youth work. The aim of the working group was to articulate the content of smart youth work and map out the challenges. Besides the Ministry of Education and Research, the working group included representatives from the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Estonia to the EU, the Estonian Youth Work Centre, the Archimedes Foundation's Youth Agency, the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres, the Association of Estonian Hobby Schools, the Estonian Council of Youth Workers and the Estonian National Youth Council. Alongside the above-mentioned research results, the input from the working group is an important basis for defining the fundamental principles, objectives and directions of the strategy. To sum up, the working group highlighted

three main focus areas in smart youth work:

- activities aimed at youths;
- development needs of youth workers for implementing smart youth work;
- developing quality of youth work and a better knowledge of youths using digital means.



3. Basic principles of smart youth work and strategy's objective

Smart youth work is part of the youth field, its activities are based on the principles and general objective of youth policy and youth work and supports its achievement. Smart youth work is not an activity or method itself, nor does it replace existing practices. Instead, using smart youth work, youth and youth workers are able, based on existing experiences and seeking new connections and new means, to create innovative solutions (including digital solutions) to coping with both current problems and new challenges.

Smart youth work activities are based on the youths' and youth workers' needs, take into account developments in society and technology, including globalization, networking and e-solutions, and offer alternatives to traditional approaches in youth work and possibilities for experimenting, error and learning from experience.

Smart youth work solutions are means of creating content or carrying out activities. The objective of smart solutions is to engage in youth work more effectively and productively than before, i.e. reaching more youths, increasing opportunities to develop youth creativity and self-initiative and cooperative activity, reduce the potential for exclusion of youth, increase engagement of youth and improve readiness for the job market and support their active participation in communities and decision-making.

One key possibility of smart youth work is the **use of digital media and technology**¹⁶, including in open youth work, youth info, youth participation and other youth work sub-areas and topics. The possibilities of smart youth work can be used in direct communication with youths, in online environments or in both at the same time.

The strategy sets out a general framework for planning and implementing further activities on smart youth work topics. The strategy seeks to shape common

¹⁶Digital content (text, photograph, video etc.) and means of dealing with it

understandings among different parties in the youth field, coordinated movement and planning and carrying out of activities based on described needs pursuant to the jurisdiction and level of each party.

The strategy maps the challenges and the problems and **an activity plan** will be drafted to deal with them, which describes how the challenges will be met, describing the content of the further activities, their implementers and general timeframe.

Objective of the smart youth work strategy:

to describe the basic principles for smart youth work and to create preconditions for development and adoption of smart solutions as well as for fulfilling the objectives in the youth field in cooperation between all parties involved in youth work.



4. Directions for achieving the objective

4.1. Smart youth work solutions aimed at youth


In developing new smart solutions, the actual needs of the youths must be taken into account. For example, youths must be able to obtain information and take part in youth work activities so they could make the decisions that affect their lives more effectively than in the past, regardless of their location, taking into account, among other things, specifics, and for supporting information management, communication in digital environments, security of content creation and problem solving skills¹⁷.

Related needs and challenges:

- Digital devices and communication are an important part of young people's lives, but youths' skills and knowledge in this regard are often insufficient for perceiving the related dangers or even to make multifaceted use of ICT for their development;
- youths wish to try out various new activities and opportunities to discover where their abilities lie and their potential. Unfortunately, there are no contemporary, smart youth work (online) environments that would meet their expectations and where they could put themselves to the test and try different solutions;
- youth info, including availability, content and formats of youth info, in digital form does not meet the needs of youths and does not match their information consumption habits; the existing systemic solutions do not take into account the changes taking place;
- youths' expectations and activity with regard to discussions and decision-

¹⁷ Digital competency model for learners

https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/digipadevuse_mudel_2016veebiuus.pdf



making processes are in constant change, but no new and attractive engagement practices, participation formats and solutions at different decision-making levels, have been developed for youth to take part, or they have not been introduced or promoted to the necessary degree;

- various possibilities for learning and acquiring experience in youth work (including volunteering, work camps or taking part in projects) do not make it to all youths, due to which there is a need to create new and supplementary solutions for gaining these experiences;

- young people are not aware of how to analyze and describe their competencies, even though different systems and environments have been set up (e.g. EU Youthpass, stardiplats.ee etc.);


- youth work activities and the services supplied are not universally accessible – for various economic, social, regional and other reasons – and this is particularly the case with regard to youths with special needs.

4.2. Smart youth work digital solution development needs related to youth workers' competencies and work methods

Youth workers play a central role in the adoption of smart solutions, digital resources and new methods in youth work and creating change for youths. This means that youth workers have different expectations when it comes to youth work and digital solutions to be used for youth work¹⁸. With regard to smart solutions, the emphasis should be on new opportunities in youth work that youth workers could make use of through skilful action.

Related needs and challenges:

- both for more effectively carrying out their own work processes and for



¹⁸ "Harnessing the potential of IT in youth work", Institute of Baltic Studies, E-Governance Academy, 2016



supporting and mapping the learning and developing process in working with youth, youth workers need contemporary methods, solutions and means as well as trainings and materials that would support this;

- to disseminate the methods, ideas and work results used in youth work as well as for supporting one another, the existing methods and platforms are not enough, due to which youth workers need additional, contemporary solutions for networking and exchanging experiences between youth workers;

- it is complicated to document everyday activity in youth work, evaluate the impact of activities and render it visible, and youth workers lack means to better the situation and thus raise the quality of their work, prove the value and necessity of the work in their community more broadly;

- even though creativity and smart solutions are part of the everyday skillset of youth workers, they still need a more systemic approach in developing it;

- youth workers need broader possibilities for creating and adopting smart solutions, among other things in cooperation with fields that already have a specific knowledge or experience as with regard to various methods and smart and digital solutions (formal education, enterprise, IT etc);

4.3. Developing the quality, functioning and efficacy of youth work and gaining better knowledge of youth

The youth field is characterised by a low amount of regulation and standardisation and great flexibility for implementing activities and methods. This is necessary for responding to various youth needs and changes in society. It also makes carrying out youth work more complicated, but it also offers various challenges and makes it more exciting. Youth work organisers can thus be creators of innovative solutions in youth work so that the field would operate in a more effective and smart manner and offer systemic support for all parties involved in youth work. To do this, it is important to possess quality data about the situation facing youth, youth workers and youth work activities in all youth work sub-areas and levels, cooperation between specialists working with youth in different areas, and a nationwide, strategic vision and support in analysing trends and needs for intervention.

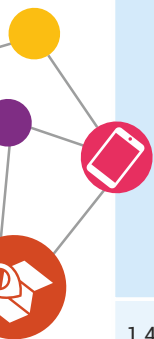
Related needs and challenges:

- cooperation between youth workers and other specialists who work with youth requires development, and there is a lack of synergy in developing and adopting smart solutions that are based on youth needs;
- there needs to be more of a systemic approach in the youth field for the gathering, disseminating and testing of smart knowledge, innovative solutions and methods, and experiences;
- it is necessary to get more various data and information regarding youth and the youth field. Unfortunately they are currently not sufficiently available, and they have not been analyzed sufficiently and not being shared enough;
- it is necessary to develop smart youth work in a faster and more targeted manner in all areas where youth policy is in action (above all, education, culture and the social sphere), because the cooperation to date has been more problem-centred rather than opportunity or target group-based and the youth principles, methods and practices in youth work are not sufficiently widespread or known;
- it is essential that the smart youth work strategy meet the needs of the target group – it must be possible to modify it where necessary and keep it up to date.



Strategy activity plan 2017-2018

	Activity	Responsible person, partners	Deadline
1. Smart youth work solutions aimed at youth			
1.1	Consolidating information related to digital safety and disseminating it among youths, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developing the youth information system and youth information gateway - developing trainings and study materials aimed at youth workers ANK competition priority topic 2018	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017, 2018
1.2	Developing smart youth work solutions aimed at youth in cooperation with digital sector partners, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating technology groups - carrying out common hackathons, Sept. 2017 - the Varait competition for hobby schools 2017 - activity plans for local government unit groups 2018 increasing availability of youth work activities through digital solutions (open youth work, robotics education, hobby education etc). digital solutions fund starting in 2018	Estonian Youth Work Centre, Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency	2017, 2018
1.3	Developing digital youth info solution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in harmony with education gateway development work - in cooperation with youth work institutions, partners and youth info specialists increasing the availability and awareness of information about youth work opportunities	Estonian Youth Work Centre, Ministry of Education and Research Youth Affairs Department, Ministry of Education and Research E-services Department, Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency	2017, 2018
1.4	Adopting use of existing digital participation formats and involvement of youths in development of new e-participation forms Possible EMP activities	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2018





	Activity	Responsible person, partners	Deadline
1.5	Prioritising digital solutions throughout state youth work programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Varaaik competition- ANK competition	Ministry of Education and Research Youth Affairs Department, Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017, 2018
1.6	Developing the existing means and environments for analysing and describing competencies to be more youth-friendly and in a smarter direction <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update of Stardiplats	Estonian Youth Work Centre Work Centre	2017
1.7	Analysis of accessibility and availability of special-needs youths and possible e-solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Description of terms of reference- Describing solutions on the basis of existing analyses	Ministry of Education and Research Youth Affairs Department, Ministry of Education and Research Analysis Department	2018

2. Smart youth work digital solution development needs related to youth workers' competencies and work methods

2.1	Carrying out trainings for youth workers for increasing their digital literacy, including <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Involving additional knowledge and means, e.g. on the basis of general education, HITSA, the economic sphere and other experiences and trainings	Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency	2018
2.2	Carrying out trainings for youth workers for increasing work process and working with youth using digital means, including <ul style="list-style-type: none">- continuation of the ESF smart youth work lab, 2018- ESF trainings on the topic of smart youth work solutions	Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency	2017, 2018
2.3	Continued development of the mitteformaalne.ee environment serving as a clearinghouse for youth work methods, including <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consolidating good practice and teaching methods- Compiling and making available a collection of the digital solutions used by youth workers in their work	Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency	2017, 2018

	Activity	Responsible person, partners	Deadline
2.4	Developing an e-portfolio for gathering, describing and self-evaluation of youth workers' competencies, including - carrying out user trainings the mitteformaalne.ee development part that we wish to proceed on in 2017	Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency, Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017, 2018
2.5	Creating a unified platform for mapping, documenting and substantiating the results and necessity of participation in youth work, including - creating an integral solution for obtaining an overview of the situation in local governments in 2017	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2018
2.6	Creating a youth work digital fund and supporting smart youth work activities, for carrying out new digital initiatives in the youth field, including through existing programmes	Ministry of Education and Research Youth Affairs Department, Estonian Youth Work Centre, Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency	2018
2.7	Translating the ERYICA youth info online training into Estonian	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017

3. Developing the quality, functioning and efficacy of youth work and gaining better knowledge of youth

3.1	Creating a standing cooperation group for digital solutions in youth work and the youth field -Developing and implementing the engagement plan	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017
3.2	Developing cooperation with other sectors for co-use of digital solutions in working with youth	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2018
3.3	Developing cooperation with institutions of higher education and entrepreneurs for analysing youths' digital possibilities and needs and for developing solutions - Developing cooperation with entrepreneurs	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017

	Activity	Responsible person, partners	Deadline
3.4	<p>Creating and adopting big data, predictive analysis and other new digital method prototypes for learning more about youths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of activities in the ESF activity plan - Cooperation agreement to be concluded between Estonian Youth Work Centre and the Tallinn University of Technology 	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017, 2018
3.5	<p>Supplementing and updating the youth monitoring digital database</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating indicators and studies, including cooperation with Statistics Estonia 	Estonian Youth Work Centre	2017
3.6	<p>Carrying out a training to develop cooperation in the field of youth policy between the main partners of youth policy areas</p>	Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency, NO	2017
3.7	<p>Preparing a notification plan for the strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introducing the strategy in the framework of youth work week - Meetings in local government units' cooperation districts <p>Distributing information in the youth field and more broadly in youth policy areas</p>	Ministry of Education and Research Youth Affairs Department	2017
3.8	<p>Reviewing and, if necessary supplementing the relevance of the strategy and its activity plan in cooperation between youth field stakeholders at least once a year</p>	Ministry of Education and Research Youth Affairs Department	2017, 2018





