

Ensuring Quality in Youth Information and Counselling

Practical tips for implementing the European Youth Information Charter



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Dear Reader,

Upon my election as ERYICA President in April 2016, I asked myself what the main issues to which I wished to contribute with my experience and knowledge were. A key one was the European Youth Information Charter. I have always seen its great importance and role as **a powerful tool to promote youth information and counselling**. Thus, I was really pleased that our Members decided to establish a Working Group to renew the Charter.

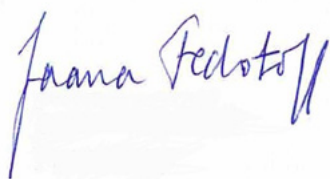
Having been involved both in the previous update of the Charter in 2004 and the creation of the Principles for Online Youth information in 2009, I was convinced that the two documents were really needed at that time. Now that online services and digital environments are fully integrated into our daily work, it is challenging to justify the existence of two documents. Indeed, our online life and behaviour are no longer separated from our offline reality.

When we started the renewing process, I was happy to see how relevant and up-to-date all the principles still were! There was nothing critical missing, but it was **time to adjust our message and guidelines**. It also gave us a great opportunity to discuss and ask ourselves some questions:

- Are we all still on the same page regarding youth information and counselling?
- How does the Charter look into the world and the lives of young people today and in the future?
- How does it address the needs of professionals, quality YI services and national or local structures?
- Do the Charter and the new Strategy of ERYICA support each other?
- Do we need to use clearer language and structure in the document?

The role of the Charter is to provide guidelines for **ethical youth information and counselling** work. It is a backbone for establishing and developing youth information services at national, regional and local level. It sets minimum professional standards and quality principles for youth information workers. The Charter is also a **tool for advocacy and lobbying!**

This brochure serves as an **explanatory memorandum** that facilitates the application of the Charter and brings its principles closer to the everyday work of our services. Together with ERYICA's quality self-assessment tool and the future European Youth Information Quality Label, they constitute the three quality pillars of youth information delivery across Europe. I believe that this brochure will contribute to the successful application of the Charter principles.



Jaana Fedotoff
ERYICA President



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Independent

Accessible

Inclusive

Needs Based

Empowering

Participative

Ethical

Professional

Proactive



What is youth information?

Youth information and counselling services provide **high quality information and guidance** to young people and help them make informed decisions to lead their lives constructively.

These services:

- provide **independent, reliable and comprehensive** information in a professional manner;
- give an overview of **options and opportunities**, based on young people's needs;
- are based on **pluralist and verified sources**, using a wide variety of communication channels to be accessible to all young people;
- assist young people in dealing with information overload and promote their **media and information literacy**;
- ensure they are aware of their rights, and are able to **critically evaluate the information** they access; and
- **empower young people** to make their own decisions, and find the best options available for them.

What is the European Youth Information Charter?

In 1993, the ERYICA General Assembly adopted the **European Youth Information Charter**, which has since become the reference professional principles and guidelines for youth information and counselling work across Europe.

The principles of the Charter are intended to apply to all forms of generalist youth information work and seek to guarantee the right of young people to complete, reliable and updated information. They constitute a basis for **minimum standards and quality measures** applicable to all countries as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated approach to youth information and counselling provision.

The 29th General Assembly of ERYICA adopted an updated version of the European Youth Information Charter in 2018.

More information about the Charter and its translations can be found on the eryica.org website.



The purpose of this guide is to:

- Provide a **broader explanation for the implementation** of the principles of the European Youth Information Charter;
- Set out a **range of functions** that are core to the delivery of quality youth information and counselling services;
- Provide assistance on how to **plan and establish new services**;
- **Support further development and assessment** of existing youth information and counselling services;
- **Guide stakeholders and policy makers involved** in the support of youth information and counselling;
- Accentuate the importance of **providing and resourcing youth information and counselling** services among funders and policy-makers.

This guide DOES NOT:

- Prescribe a single way of delivering youth information and counselling.
- Constitute a comprehensive guide on setting up and operating youth information services.

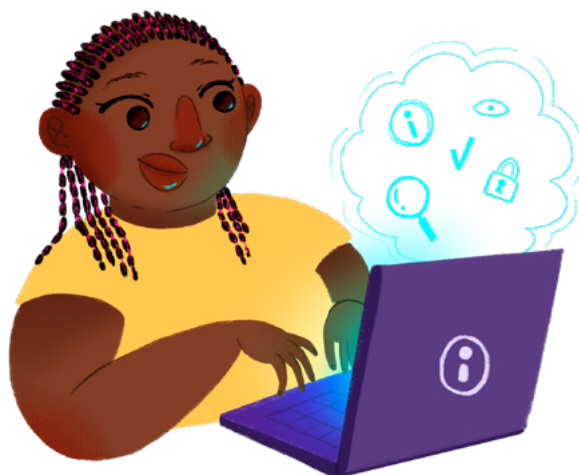
For this end, check the [Youth Information Starter Kit](#) and the [Compendium on National Youth Information and Counselling Structures](#), both available on the [eryica.org](#) website.

- Provide a quality assurance tool for youth information services.

For this end, check the [Quality Management in Youth Information and Counselling](#) - A Competency Development Framework on the [eryica.org](#) website. ERYICA is also preparing a European Quality Label for Youth Information, in co-operation with the Council of Europe.

- Detail good practice implementation.

For this end, check the [ERYICA Good Practice in Youth Information booklets](#) on the [eryica.org](#) website.



European Youth Information Charter

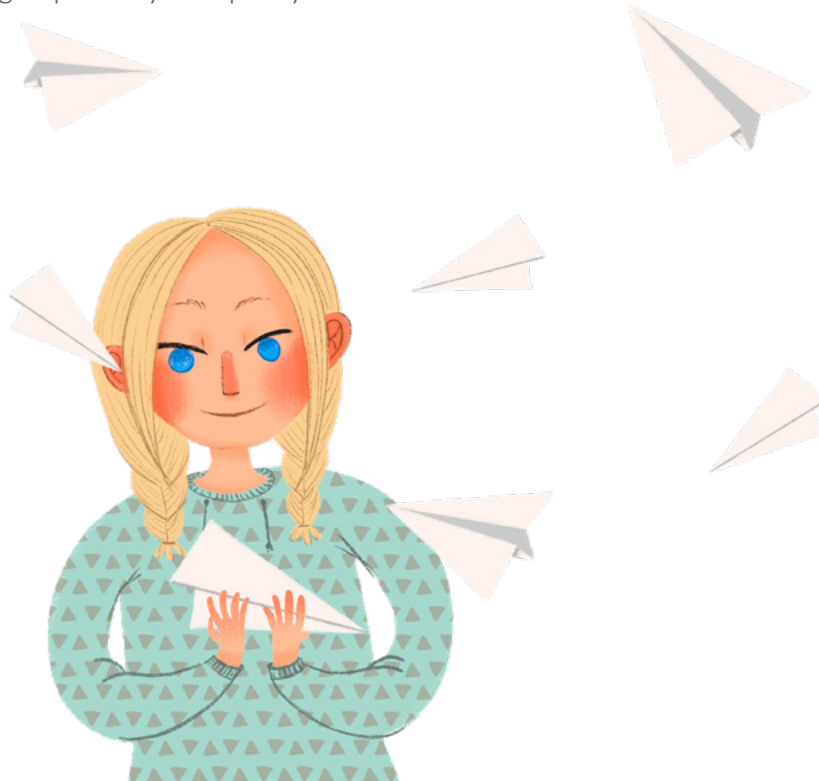
Adopted in **Cascais (Portugal) on 27 April 2018** by the **29 th General Assembly** of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)

Preamble

We live in complex, digitalised societies and in an interconnected world that offers many challenges and opportunities. Access to information and the ability to analyse and use information is increasingly important for young people in Europe and beyond. Youth information work helps them achieve their aspirations and promotes their participation as active members of society. Information should be provided in ways that enlarge the choices available to young people, and that promote their autonomy and empowerment.

Respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms implies the right of all young people to have access to comprehensive, objective, understandable and reliable information on all their questions and needs. This right to information has been recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in the Recommendations N° (90) 7, CM/Rec(2010)8 and CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people and young people's access to rights. This right is also the basis for youth information activities undertaken by the European Union.

Generalist youth information work covers all topics that interest young people, and can include a spectrum of activities: informing, counselling, supporting, coaching, training, peer-to-peer, networking, and referral to specialised services in order to engage and empower young people. These activities may be delivered by youth information centres, or through youth information services in other structures and environments. The principles of this Charter are intended to apply to all forms of generalist youth information work. They constitute a basis for minimum standards and quality measures that should be established in each country as elements of a comprehensive, resourced, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work, which is an integral part of youth policy.



The Principles of the Charter

1. INDEPENDENT

- 1.1 The information offered is comprehensive, provides an overview of different options available and is based on pluralist and verified sources.
- 1.2 The information offered is independent of any religious, political, ideological or commercial influence.
- 1.3 Sources of funding for youth information do not compromise the application of any of the principles of this Charter.

2. ACCESSIBLE

- 2.1 Youth information services guarantee equality of access.
- 2.2 Youth information centres and services are easily accessible, attractive and visible to young people.
- 2.3 Youth information is understandable for young people.

3. INCLUSIVE

- 3.1 Youth information services are open to all young people without any form of discrimination.
- 3.2 Youth information services are free of charge for all young people.
- 3.3 Youth information centres and services strive to reach out to all young people, in ways that are effective and appropriate to different groups and needs.

4. NEEDS BASED

- 4.1 Youth information services are based on the needs of young people.
- 4.2 The information available covers all topics that matter to young people.
- 4.3 Each user is respected as an individual and the response to each question is personalised in ways that are effective and appropriate.
- 4.4 Youth information structures have enough human resources in order to guarantee personalised support and services.

5. EMPOWERING

- 5.1 Youth information services empower young people and foster their autonomy.
- 5.2 Youth information services provide young people with media and information literacy skills to act in a safe and responsible way.
- 5.3 Youth information services promote active citizenship and participation.

6. PARTICIPATIVE

- 6.1 Young people participate in the production, dissemination and evaluation of youth information, at different levels and in different forms.
- 6.2 Youth information services offer platforms for peer-to-peer activities.
- 6.3 Young people are encouraged to give feedback as an integrated part of the ongoing development of youth information services.

7. ETHICAL

- 7.1 Youth information services respect young people's right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Youth information services provide a safe environment for young people.
- 7.2 Criteria for selecting information are made public and understandable. The author and the purpose of the information are clear and visible.
- 7.3 All information produced or disseminated is accurate, complete, up-to-date and verified.

8. PROFESSIONAL

- 8.1 Youth information services are provided in a professional manner by trained staff.
- 8.2 Youth information workers have media and information literacy skills.
- 8.3 Youth information services co-operate with relevant stakeholders in order to identify needs, look for synergies, share expertise and make youth information visible.
- 8.4 Youth Information workers co-operate at local, regional, national, European and international level and share best practices and knowledge.
- 8.5 Youth information workers ensure that young people have knowledge and skills to use the digital services targeted to them.

9. PROACTIVE

- 9.1 Youth information services are innovative in their choice of strategies, methods and tools to reach out to young people.
- 9.2 Youth information workers are aware of new developments, relevant laws and keep themselves informed about trends among young people.
- 9.3 Youth information workers are proactive players in the media and information landscape to ensure quality youth information is visible.

The Principles of the Charter
-From theory to practice-



1. INDEPENDENT

Youth information providers are independent when they offer comprehensive information and remain unbiased, regardless of the source of funding.

- Provide information free of any religious, political, ideological or commercial influence.
- Avoid directing the young person in the decision-making process.
- Test facts against opinions.
- Support young people to develop critical thinking skills.
- Provide diverse and verified sources of information.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“We clarify the various options a young person has in a particular situation. We do not tell them what to do. Instead, **we encourage them to make independent and thoughtful choices** based on the information they get and on their own values. We use reliable sources and provide them with comprehensive and unbiased information on the various options available. We guide young people to additional reliable information and services, if they wish to receive more support.”*

Riina Papinaho, Information advisor @ [YI service Nuortelämä.fi](https://www.yi.fi), Finland

TESTIMONIAL

*“Have been going to the Youth Information Centre for the last 10 years, **it has benefited me in so many ways that I could probably write a book about it!** When I face different challenges in life, there’s no better place to go. The youth information workers are always unbiased and help you find solutions when you think all hope is gone!”*

Jay (24) – Letterkenny, Ireland



2. ACCESSIBLE

Youth information services and centres are easily accessible, attractive and visible to young people.

- Make services accessible for all young people including those with special needs and fewer opportunities.
- Provide information through a variety of online and offline channels.
- Use youth-friendly and understandable language and visual descriptions.
- Schedule flexible times of service provision to match the availability of young people.
- Position centres and services in easily accessible, visible and youth-friendly locations.
- Create a warm, welcoming, and youth-friendly atmosphere.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“Letterkenny Youth Information Centre aims to be a widely accessible centre in a purely physical way, as well as when it comes down to a human factor. Our team present cultural and lingual variety that allows them to break many barriers in a communication process with young people. In terms of opening hours, **YIC operates 5 days a week, including early morning hours and late evenings**, which help us reach different groups of young people aged 12-30.”*

Gareth Gibson, Youth Information Manager @ Donegal Youth Service, Ireland

TESTIMONIAL

WAT WAT made a voting test for the European and national elections in Belgium in May 2019. Each stand came with a video with a short explanation and arguments pro and contra.

*“I watched all the videos from the beginning till the end. **They really helped me to form my opinion.** I did other voting tests, but those questions were never as clear. In this test all the questions came with explanations. That was really good!”*

Noa (16) – Antwerp area, Belgium



3. INCLUSIVE

Inclusive youth information services do not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, social or geographical origin, disability, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other status as established by human rights standards.

- Strive to be sensitive to differences and inclusive to all young people.
- Ensure free and not-for-profit youth information services.
- Listen and support young people to identify their needs and concerns at initial contact, and refer on to another service if needed.
- Use a multi-faceted approach by ensuring innovative services and age appropriate dissemination channels.
- Reach out to all young people where they are at, and especially those with fewer opportunities, those at risk of social exclusion and disengaged youth.
- Establish appropriate information sharing and cross-referral with other internal and external services.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“Our Youth Information Centres (YIC) network participates, supports and promotes projects and actions at local and regional levels aiming to **integrate young people from the Roma communities**. We also work with young migrants, refugees and youth from other disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, the YIC in Lisbon supported the 3rd edition of the international training Young Migrant Voices, which aimed at capacity-building and knowledge sharing on how to reduce the gap between youth from migrant backgrounds and the local institutions.”*

Margarida Saco, Youth information worker and trainer @ Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, Portugal

TESTIMONIAL

*“Living in a small village in a rural area of Cyprus, the Youth Information Centre of Agros was the place that provided me with all the necessary information. **Their services helped me in my personal, educational and professional life**. The same applies to several other young people living in the rural area of Troodos who I know.”*

Stelios (24) – Agros, Cyprus



4. NEEDS BASED

Youth information services are built around young people’s needs. Youth information providers research the needs of young people and, together with them, identify the best tools and channels to meet those needs.

- Engage and support young people to identify and clarify their needs.
- Adapt the information provided to the specific needs of the young person in front of you.
- Collect data on young people’s needs, concerns and interests.
- Work with the young person to ensure the information provided is what they need. If it is not, find an alternative.
- Be empathetic with young people.
- Hold information on diverse topics, relevant to young people’s needs.
- Deploy available human resources to address the needs of young people.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“Today, the needs of young people are very diversified and develop with the evolution of society. As a youth information worker, it is very important to keep myself constantly updated with news concerning young people. A youth information worker must be ready to welcome and inform young people with different needs, questions and expectations. The answer/information provided should be personalised and adapted to the request of each user. **My job is not only to provide the obvious expected answer, but also to offer a set of answers that are likely to meet their needs.**”*

Caroline Grethen, Youth information worker @ ANIJ, Luxembourg

TESTIMONIAL

*“By joining Mladiinfo’s EUROASIA project, I had the amazing opportunity to live and volunteer in Vietnam for 2 months and experience a completely different culture. This contributed significantly to my personal growth and helped me rediscover myself and appreciate diversity even more! **Youth information services always provided information according to my needs and interests.**”*

Sanja (22)- Skopje, North Macedonia



5. EMPOWERING

Youth information enables young people to realise their full potential by helping them identify their own aspirations and make informed life choices.

- Do not influence young people but empower them to make their own decisions.
- Provide support mechanisms for young people to be informed and active citizens.
- Facilitate young people's engagement with decision-making processes at different levels.
- Promote media and information literacy to enable young people to make informed choices and develop positive online behaviour.
- Inform young people of other services provided and of opportunities open to them.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“Qualified youth information workers are permanently available to young people in order to **encourage them to find the right solutions and monitor their progress**. Special attention is given to immigrant youth in seeking relevant information, especially in the field of cultural, social and political integration. This enables children's sustained educational performance and continuing education, major employment opportunities, greater social cohesion, acceptance of local communities, better information provision and networking.”*

Matjaž Medvešek, Youth information worker and advisor @ MISSS, Slovenia

TESTIMONIAL

*“I want to thank the Facebook group BORSA DE FEINA - INFOJOVE; thanks to your publications **I found a job! Today I start, and I am very happy**. For those who keep looking do not give up! There is a place waiting for each one of us.”*

Laura (27)- Balearic Islands, Spain



6. PARTICIPATIVE

Participative youth information services involve young people in the design and delivery of the service.

- Offer young people opportunities and means to participate in service design and delivery.
- Involve young people in producing, co-designing and disseminating information.
- Consider young people as multipliers and partners to reach out to their peers.
- Promote opportunities for young people to be active citizens and to get involved in their communities.
- Encourage young people to provide feedback and suggestions about ways to improve the services offered and take their input into account.
- Integrate youth representatives and advisory committees in decision-making processes.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“The podcast series “Teeviit tulevikku” (sign to future) offers information for youth aged 13-26. **Young people participate in the design phase.** There is an expert on the topic at each show, who gives valuable information and explanations. Young people are invited to share their own experiences combined with ethical and reliable info on various topics. The podcast team (experts, youth workers and young people) ensures that all the topics and shows are non-judgemental, transparent and accountable to young people.”*

Kaie Pranno, Chief Expert @ Estonian Youth Work Centre, Estonia

TESTIMONIAL

*“I joined TheSprout Editorial Team when I was 17. I was passionate but less confident. Over the following 12 months, **I became TheSprout’s Music Editor, publishing over a dozen live music reviews.** One of them was picked up by one of the UK’s most prestigious newspapers, The Guardian, leading me to gaining paid work as a reporter. With renewed confidence, I was accepted on a journalism course at a university in Canada.”*

Sophie (18) – Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom



7. ETHICAL

Youth information services are underpinned by a whole range of rights identified in international law (e.g. the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child). At the heart of the service is respect for the young person.

- Offer a safe and confidential environment for young people to openly explore and express their needs, aspirations and experiences.
- Provide a service that respects the privacy and anonymity of young people.
- Establish a verifiability checklist and transparency criteria for selecting information.
- Be non-judgemental, transparent and accountable to young people.
- Explain to young people their rights and obligations as citizens.
- Comply with all relevant legislation and public policy.
- When you don't know, accept that you don't know and refer to other services.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“The Youth Information One stop Shop within Agenzija Zghazagh receives a number of referrals since it networks with many entities that work with and for young people. Following the referral, the youth information worker provides reliable and tailor-made assistance according to young people’s needs. **We provide ethical and personalised support** and makes sure that the information shared is protected according to the privacy policies and procedures set by the service.”*

Sarah Spiteri, Youth Information Officer @ Agenzija Zghazagh, Malta

TESTIMONIAL

*“I am proud to say that the workers in the Youth Information Centre played a big part of me feeling comfortable in Ireland. From day one **there was always someone I could talk to about my feelings** and everyday problems.”*

Lea (16) – Germany, au pair in Ireland



8. PROFESSIONAL

Youth information services are provided by trained personnel, in a professional and respectful manner. Quality assurance is of high priority with regard to all information produced and disseminated.

- Incorporate training and capacity-building plans in the service strategy.
- Ensure that youth information providers possess advanced media and information literacy skills.
- Develop a set of youth-centred operational procedures.
- Ensure that key strategic partnerships are developed locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Work in a coordinated and networked manner with other services and stakeholders.

GOOD PRACTICE

*“For our youth information website watwat.be **we work with more than 70 experts on more than 100 subjects**. Each expert has a personal login to the website. After the expert has written something on the website, an editor from De Ambrassade checks if the content is youth-friendly. De Ambrassade gives feedback to the experts. In that way the experts learn how to make their own content more youth-friendly. After the content is published the expert can also see how many times his or her article has been read and how the content has been rated.”*

Marian Michielsens, Youth Information Officer @ [De Ambrassade](https://www.deambrassade.be/), Belgium

TESTIMONIAL

*“I was totally lost when I heard about CIDJ. I didn’t really know what I was doing or what I wanted to do, and they helped me to draw a horizon of possibilities. **With simply professional support and attention from them, I could take the best decision of my life.**”*

Jérôme (23)- Île-de-France, France



9. PROACTIVE

Proactive youth information providers seek to be creative, innovative and open to experiment in how they work with young people.

- Develop a strategy to follow trends and to understand youth culture, backgrounds and preferences.
- Seek to constantly upgrade skills and to acquire new competences.
- Get familiar with innovative digital tools and be an active player in the new media landscape.
- Ensure that youth information services are visible and attractive to young people.
- Monitor and inform about relevant changes in legislation that affect young people.
- Map youth outreach spaces, environments and stakeholders.
- Collaborate with stakeholders and build new partnerships at different levels.

GOOD PRACTICE

“I follow the news and actively monitor study and work opportunities. I also discover new jobs by going to meet the people who create or occupy them. I take part in panel discussions, collaborative works and good practice workshops. All this in order to better advise and respond to youth’s needs and expectations. I strive to ensure that the information I deliver to young people is reliable and up-to-date so that they get the right information to make their own choice.”

Valérie Deflandre, Youth Advisor @ CIDJ, France

TESTIMONIAL

“The „Infomobil Tirol - MobilisierBar“ is a fun and interesting offer. The van comes to different events that me and my friends attend, it is a meeting place and it provides interesting information. It’s important to know about your rights as a young person.”

Simon (17) – Tirol, Austria





—
european **youth information**
and counselling agency

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