

Health literate youth work

Health literacy is the ability to make decisions that promote health on a day-to-day basis. Health literacy includes the knowledge, the motivation and the skills to find information relevant to health, to understand it, to assess it and to use it.

With its focus on non-formal educational frameworks and information literacy, youth work provides the ideal forum for dealing with health literacy and creating health literate settings for young people. Improved health literacy is a key factor in decreasing social and health inequality among young people.

Guidelines for health literacy in the youth work setting

As part of a multi-year project, the Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in Austria (bOJA) and selected open youth work facilities and youth information centres developed nine criteria for organisational health literacy in the youth work setting. The criteria relate to the services offered, the employees, the networking and the organisational structure and also take climate justice into account as an important factor in the context of health-literate youth work.

National network and website

The “health literate youth work” network was founded by bOJA in 2016 with the aim of achieving networking, exchange and mutual learning. Experts from the field of health and youth work, from similar fields of action such as child and youth welfare, school, community work, those working on projects on labour market policy and interested people discuss various youth-related health topics with different priorities at regular meetings.

The website on healthy youth work, launched in 2019 by bOJA, is a service platform that offers youth workers knowledge, good practice, an events calendar and information on other networks and partner organisations.

Certification of health literate open youth work

Since 2018, youth centres and mobile youth work facilities have been able to apply to bOJA to be certified as a “health literate youth centre” or a “health literate mobile youth work facility”. The certification process includes an audit and takes between 3 and 6 months. Certificates can be awarded in bronze, silver or gold. The facilities carry out a comprehensive self-assessment, take part in further training and undergo an audit procedure in which their health literacy is externally examined on site at the facility. The respective municipalities play a key role as supporters and promoters of the health literate facility during the certification procedure. The Austrian Health Literacy Alliance (ÖPGK) is an important strategic partner in the further development and quality assurance of health literate open youth work.

Further information

- [Website on healthy youth work \(in German only\)](http://www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at) www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at
- [Guidelines on “health literate open youth work” \(in German only\)](http://www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/sites/default/files/downloads/2022-07/200x200_Leitfaden_Gesundheitskompetenz_2022_WEB.pdf) www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/sites/default/files/downloads/2022-07/200x200_Leitfaden_Gesundheitskompetenz_2022_WEB.pdf
- [Network of health literate youth work \(in German only\)](http://www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/netzwerk-gesundheitskompetente-jugendarbeit) www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/netzwerk-gesundheitskompetente-jugendarbeit
- [The Austrian Health Literacy Alliance](http://www.oepgk.at/english-summary) www.oepgk.at/english-summary

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The task of the Youth Competence Centre is to implement and coordinate the Austrian Youth Strategy and provide data and facts on youth policy and youth work. If you have any suggestions, please contact jugendstrategie@bka.gv.at