



EXIT **burnout**

INTERNATIONAL MAPPING REPORT



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I. Introduction and definition of burnout connected to youth work

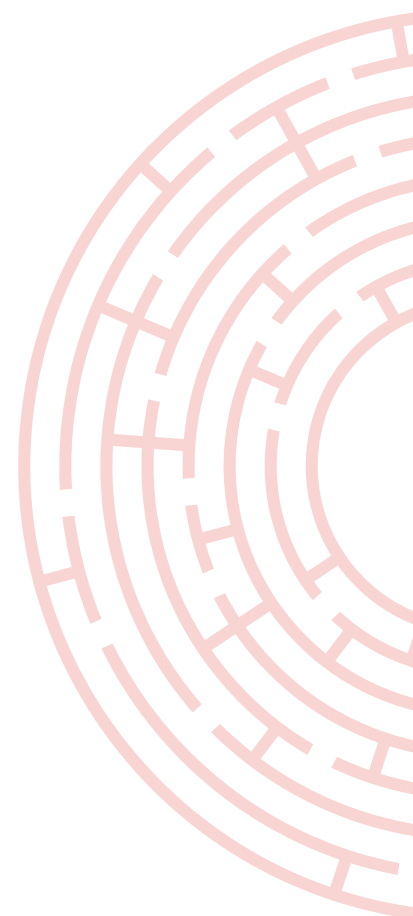
Burnout is a state of chronic stress that results from prolonged exposure to demanding situations and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a decreased sense of personal accomplishment. The World Health Organization defines it: "Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job. Although not listed by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)".

It is a significant issue in youth work, where professionals may be exposed to high-stress levels and responsibility as they work with disadvantaged or at-risk youth. Burnout can negatively affect individuals and organizations, including decreased job satisfaction and productivity, increased absenteeism, and impaired job performance. It can also lead to physical and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

The literature on burnout syndrome suggests that it can have multiple origins and evolve along various paths. These origins can be individual, relating to the sociodemographic characteristics, personality traits, and motivations of those affected by the syndrome. They can also be interpersonal, focusing on the relationship with users, which is a unique aspect of burnout. Additionally, the interpersonal dimension encompasses the relationship with colleagues and the work group, representing an intermediate level of interpretation that can be attributed in part to interpersonal origins and in part to organizational origins. Finally, the organizational dimension has gained increasing importance and it is now recognized that organizational factors, rather than personal factors and user characteristics, are predictive of burnout. The maladjustment between the person and work that leads to job burnout is a result of disequilibrium in six areas of working life: work overload, lack of control, insufficient gratification, a sense of disconnection from the community, lack of equity, and conflicting values.

According to various global surveys, burnout affects anywhere from 50% to 77% of all employees. However, burnout among youth workers is particularly concerning as it directly impacts the well-being and psychosocial health of young people. These surveys support the perception that burnout is a significant issue for youth workers, as evidenced by the fact that 41% of youth workers plan to change their current job in the coming years, with 16% seeking employment within the youth field and 25% looking for work outside of it. This highlights the unsatisfactory working conditions and raises questions about the effectiveness of current training and support systems, particularly as 50% of youth workers anticipate seeking new employment soon, 30% of which will be outside of the youth field.

In this article, we will delve into the causes and consequences of burnout in youth work and discuss strategies for prevention and intervention. In our research, which included both questionnaires and a literature review on burnout in youth work in Europe, we found out that a lack of resources and support, high levels of stress, and a lack of recognition for their efforts, were commonly cited as contributing factors to burnout among youth workers. These findings highlight the need for effective interventions to address burnout and support the well-being of youth workers.



II. Well-being and mental health aspects relating to stress and burnout

Burnout can have significant negative consequences for an individual's mental health. It is often accompanied by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a decreased sense of personal accomplishment, which can lead to negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and hopelessness. These negative emotions can, in turn, lead to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.

Research has also found that burnout is associated with an increased risk of substance abuse and other unhealthy coping mechanisms. For example, some individuals may turn to alcohol or drugs to cope with stress and exhaustion, which can further exacerbate mental health problems.

In addition to the psychological effects of burnout, it can also negatively affect an individual's physical health. Chronic stress and burnout have been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, other chronic health conditions, and a weakened immune system.

It is essential to address burnout and other mental health problems as soon as possible to prevent further negative consequences. Seeking support from a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counselor, can effectively manage burnout and promote overall well-being. Other strategies that may be helpful include finding ways to manage stress, engaging in self-care activities, seeking support from the network of affections, and using nature as a healing factor.

Burnout can also have significant negative consequences for organizations, including NGOs. Employee burnout can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, lack of motivation, and reduced job performance, negatively impacting organizational efficiency and productivity. Burnout can also contribute to high turnover, which can be costly for an organization, as it can take time and resources to hire and train new employees.

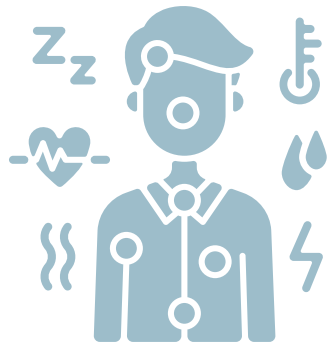
Furthermore, burnout can negatively affect the quality of services provided by the organization. When employees are exhausted, they may be less able to provide the level of care and support participants need, leading to dissatisfaction and failure to meet intended goals. This can impact the organization's reputation and lead to a decline in business, but it can also negatively impact morale among other employees.

To address the impact of burnout on the organization, it's essential to implement strategies to prevent burnout and support employee well-being. This may involve providing resources and support, promoting a positive work culture, encouraging self-care, and providing training and professional development opportunities. By tackling burnout and promoting employee well-being, organizations can create a more sustainable and efficient work environment that benefits both employees and the organization.

One question in our survey specifically examined the impact of stress factors on the overall well-being of the surveyed individuals. The responses revealed a broad spectrum of physical and psychological effects, with a variety of symptoms reported. Physical symptoms commonly reported include insomnia, stomachaches, tachycardia, headaches, and fatigue, among others. On the psychological side, the survey identified mood swings, irritability, a desire for solitude, demotivation, frustration, boredom, sadness, anxiety, and even an inability to plan for the future as potential impacts of these stressors. These symptoms demonstrate the far-reaching and detrimental impact of stress on an individual's physical and mental health.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Insomnia
- Stomachaches
- Tachycardia
- Headaches
- Fatigue



PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

- Mood swings
- Irritability
- Desire for solitude
- Demotivation
- Frustration
- Boredom
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Inability to plan for the future



III. The most common determinants of stress and burnout


Several factors contribute to burnout in youth work, including high stress and workload levels, lack of support and resources, and conflicts with coworkers or clients/participants. Youth workers may also experience burnout due to inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, or a lack of acknowledgment and appreciation for their efforts.


One of the leading causes of burnout in youth work is the emotional demands of the job. Youth workers are often faced with difficult situations, such as working with disadvantaged or at-risk youth, and may struggle to cope with the emotional toll of these experiences. Additionally, youth workers may feel overwhelmed by the high levels of responsibility and accountability that come with their roles and may feel they need help to meet their participants' needs.


Another factor contributing to burnout in youth work is a need for more support and resources. Youth workers may feel isolated or unsupported by their coworkers or superiors or need access to the resources and tools needed to perform their duties effectively. This can lead to feelings of frustration and inadequacy, which can ultimately lead to burnout.


We interviewed 186 people from Austria, Latvia, Italy, and Spain during the data collection phase. Comparing the results from the different countries, the balance between work and leisure time and the adequacy of economic rewards for the work done are common stress factors. However, internal communication within the organization and relationships with work colleagues are more commonly cited as stress factors in Austria. In contrast, concerns about the work group and the lack of definition of tasks are more widely cited in Spain. In Latvia, concerns about long-term economic stability are also a significant stress factor.

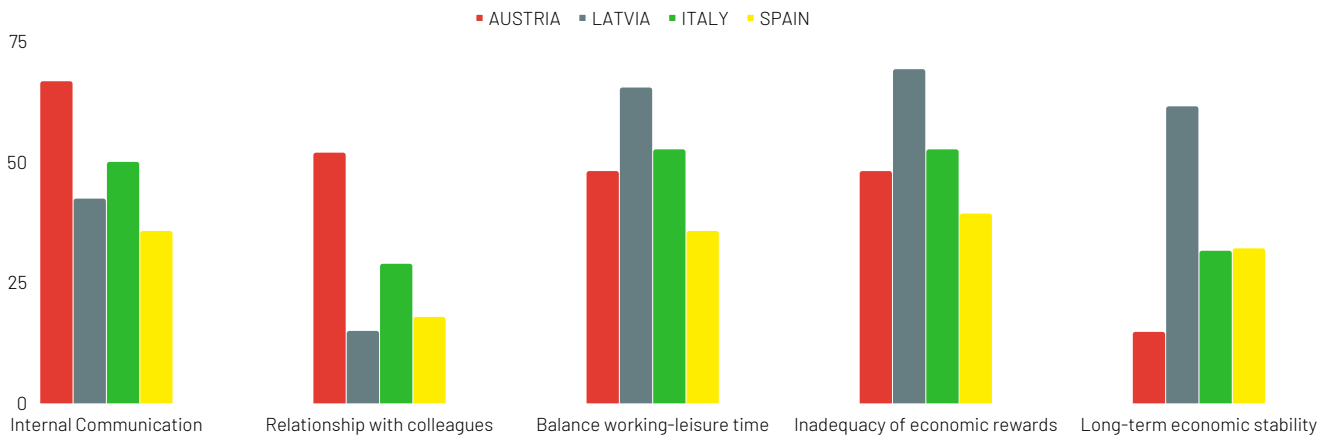
Each participant could choose more than one stressor. Listing the most common stressor per country according to our survey, we have:

 In Austria, 66.7% of the people interviewed indicated internal communication within the organization as a stress factor, while 51.9% highlighted difficulties in relationships with work colleagues. 48.1% also highlighted the balance between work and leisure time and the inadequacy of economic rewards for the type of work done as stress factors.

 In Latvia, 69.2% of the people interviewed indicated the inadequacy of economic rewards for the type of work done as a stress factor, while 65.4% highlighted the balance between work and leisure time. 61.5% also reported concerns about long-term economic stability.

 In Italy, 52.6% of the people interviewed indicated the balance between work and leisure time as a stress factor, while 52.6% highlighted the inadequacy of economic rewards for the type of work done (taking into account responsibilities and working hours). 50% also reported problems with internal communication within the organization.

 In Spain, 53.6% of the people interviewed indicated the work group with which they work as a source of stress, while 39.3% highlighted the inadequacy of economic rewards for the type of work done. 35.7% also reported the balance between work and leisure time, problems with internal communication within the organization, and the lack of definition of tasks as stress factors.



IV. Needs analysis

When it comes to addressing the issue of burnout and supporting individuals, literature on the subject often refers to general practices and strategies that can be implemented. However, it's essential to recognize that each person's needs may be unique, and it's valuable to consider what specific practices or tools might be most helpful for each individual. With this in mind, our survey aimed to gather insights on this topic by asking participants to identify practices or tools that would most effectively meet their personal needs. By doing so, we hoped to understand better how to tailor support to the specific needs of each individual.

The survey results indicate that several factors could help individuals deal with stressors in their work environment. Respondents noted that clear and consistent communication within the staff and a more formal approach to programming and management would be beneficial. Additionally, respondents mentioned that greater stability and less precariousness would allow them to have a defined design capacity and not always have to improvise at the last minute.

We report the main needs that emerged in the framework of our survey:

- Awareness of stressors -> Understanding and recognizing the sources of stress in one's life.
- Expressing and satisfying needs -> Clearly communicating and addressing one's needs to feel fulfilled and satisfied.
- Setting clear boundaries -> Establishing and maintaining clear and healthy limits in personal and professional relationships.
- Having social support -> Having a network of individuals to turn to for emotional and practical support.
- Work-life balance -> Finding a balance between work and personal life to maintain overall well-being.
- Internal communication -> Effective communication within an organization or group.
- Adapting to changes -> Being able to adjust and cope with changes in one's environment.



V. Currently available support and learning activities

There are various supports to prevent burnout in Europe, although they are not uniformly available across all countries. In some countries, state-provided counseling and psychological support services are available. In other countries, awareness campaigns may help youth workers recognize the signs of burnout and use appropriate strategies to manage it. It is worth noting that using internal support programs within organizations is a little-shared but highly effective practice. Some organizations provide long-term counseling and psychological support services to employees to help them prevent burnout.

Many strategies can be used to prevent and intervene in burnout in youth work. Some of these strategies include:

- **Providing support and resources:** Ensuring that youth workers have access to the resources and support they need can help to alleviate feelings of isolation and frustration and can help to prevent burnout.
- **Promoting a positive work culture:** Creating a positive and supportive work culture can help to reduce stress and increase job satisfaction, which can, in turn, help to prevent burnout.
- **Encouraging self-care:** Encouraging youth workers to prioritize self-care, such as by taking breaks, engaging in stress-reducing activities, and seeking support when needed, can help to prevent burnout.
- **Providing training and professional development:** Providing training and professional development opportunities can help youth workers to manage the demands of their jobs better and can help to prevent burnout.

At an individual level, the focus on preventing and managing stressors should be on the following:

- **Identifying and addressing the sources of stress in leisure life.** This may involve changing your work environment, setting boundaries, or finding ways to manage time more effectively.
- **Practicing relaxation techniques** such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga. These techniques can help calm the mind and reduce stress and anxiety.
- **Exercise and physical activity** can help reduce stress and improve mental health.
- **Maintaining a healthy lifestyle.**
- **Seeking support from friends, family, or a mental health professional** can also be helpful.

The prevention of burnout also includes various strategies that organizations can implement to help their employees:

- **Encourage a healthy work-life balance:** This should involve setting clear boundaries between work and personal time, offering flexible work arrangements, and encouraging employees to take time off when needed.

- Foster a positive work environment: A supportive and collaborative work culture can help employees feel more engaged and motivated and reduce the risk of burnout.
- Promote work-related stress management: Organizations can provide resources and support for employees to manage stress, such as access to mental health resources, stress management training, or relaxation techniques.
- Provide opportunities for professional development: Offering employees learning and growth can help prevent the raising of stressors by keeping them engaged and motivated.
- Address workload concerns: Overload or an imbalance of work can contribute to burnout. Organizations can assess workloads and adjust to ensure that employees are calm.
- Encourage open communication: Encouraging employees to speak up about their concerns can help prevent burnout by addressing issues before they become overwhelming.

Organizations need to recognize the potential for burnout and take proactive steps to prevent it. This should involve a combination of individual and organizational strategies and a focus on creating a healthy and supportive work environment.

Regarding the realities included in the survey, we asked the participants to identify those actions they carry out individually or that the organization they work for makes available to deal with the most disabling stress factors.

The results of this survey suggest that individuals have identified various strategies for coping with burnout in their work environment.

At the individual level, respondents emphasized the importance of seeking advice from those with more experience and planning and organizing one's personal and work spheres to find a balance. Respondents also mentioned the importance of self-care practices such as meditation and relaxation and simplifying and optimizing tasks to find satisfaction in their role. Additionally, some respondents mentioned trying to persevere despite difficulties.

At the organizational level, respondents called for a greater focus on the psychophysical well-being of employees, including increased break time and attention to the well-being of operators. Other respondents mentioned the importance of adequate remuneration and contractual stability, the need for moments of supervision and sharing, and the challenge of some work practices and better-defined working time management. Additionally, some respondents mentioned the need for flexibility in allocating cases, the importance of training and further education, and team supervision and individual supervision. Respondents also highlighted the importance of open communication culture, sufficient open communication, and reflective exploration of what support services are available.

Tips for good practices

SHARING MOMENTS

Here is an activity for long-term monitoring of the organization's executive staff with an external facilitator.

With a total immersion of at least two days, the facilitator uses various facilitation techniques depending on the need, such as solo moments, feedback, and visioning, to understand what is going well or poorly within the organizational work.

This activity aims to resolve internal differences, lower stress levels, raise individual and group motivation, and use group awareness for long-term individual support and mutual aid.

To carry out this activity, the external facilitator will start by collecting feedback from the administrative staff through a series of open and closed questions to understand the problems and opportunities present within the organization. Afterward, they will use the facilitation techniques mentioned above to work with the group on problem resolution and developing an action plan for the future. In addition, the external facilitator may organize group moments to discuss the results and actions taken to ensure that the monitoring process is continuous in the long term and that the group can support each other.

AUTOCUI-DADO

Once a month, the whole team will have 1 hour of self-care time. The activity for the following week will be chosen by rolling a dice. The activity can take longer than 1 hour if needed.

1 - Microadventure challenge -> Go to a nearby street. Roll a dice or coin to decide where you'll go. Create small challenges along the way. Two team members can handle the preparation.

2 - Take the trash out -> Use some time to vent any negative feelings and share them with the team or in small groups/with relevant individuals

3 - Peer feedback -> Use techniques such as the "sandwich" method or start by expressing appreciation for the person, then making a request and offering assistance

4 - Try something new -> Use this time to try out new resources with the team.

5 - Relaxation time -> Meditation, yoga, group/pair massage, drinking a beer/coffee together.

6 - Creativity time -> Engage in collective art, decorate the office/home, or use this time for creativity.

VI. Conclusions and suggestions

Burnout is a significant issue in youth work, potentially impacting individuals and organizations. By understanding the causes and consequences of burnout and implementing strategies for prevention and intervention, we can work to mitigate its adverse effects and create a more supportive and sustainable work environment for youth workers.

It is worth noting that research on burnout in youth work is relatively limited, and further research is needed to fully understand the prevalence and impact of burnout in this field. However, these studies suggest that burnout is a significant issue for youth workers in Europe and that interventions to address burnout and support the well-being of youth workers are needed.

In conclusion, burnout syndrome is a serious issue that affects many youth workers. It is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. To address this issue, institutions and organizations should take a proactive approach to promote the well-being of their youth workers.

First, they should provide regular training and education on burnout, including recognizing the signs and symptoms and how to prevent them. Additionally, they should create an open communication and support culture where youth workers feel comfortable discussing their mental health and seeking help when needed. This can be achieved through employee assistance programs, counseling services, and mentoring programs.

Second, they should focus on creating a healthy work-life balance for their youth workers. This can be done by implementing flexible schedules, providing paid time off, and encouraging the use of vacation time.

Lastly, organizations should focus on promoting employee engagement and fostering a sense of purpose among their youth workers. This can be achieved through regular team-building activities and by promoting professional development and advancement opportunities. By fostering a positive work environment and providing support for mental health and well-being, institutions and organizations can help prevent burnout among youth workers, ensuring they are better equipped to support the next generation.

VII. Bibliography

In order to fully delve into the topic presented in this report, we refer readers to the individual national reports published throughout the course of this project and their accompanying reference bibliographies. The foundation of this text was established through the aforementioned reports and survey responses; in addition, reference is made to the following texts for further elaboration and added insight.

American Psychiatric Association; The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR); American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.; 2022

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