

YOUTH IN ACTION 3 !

SALTO YOUTH INITIATIVES MAGAZINE
produced for Action 3 of the YOUTH programme

01 - spring 2004



In this issue,
get some Action 3 professionals' views of Youth Initiatives,
read accounts written by young Europeans and
find out about European networks of young people
developing their own projects...



Welcome to YOUTH IN ACTION 3 !



All young people have dreams. All young people deserve a chance to a happy life. Participating in Action 3 of the YOUTH programme doesn't guarantee a happy life for the young beneficiaries but at least it offers them the opportunity to live a fruitful experience. Meeting people, finding new partners, discovering new feelings, new skills. Knowing more about themselves, about others, being involved in their local communities, or neighborhood. Making their dreams come true. Being themselves. Feeling that even if they are young there is a place for them in society. Feeling that they are citizens in their own right. Building a piece of Europe.

On the wider non-formal educational arena, youth initiatives play a crucial educational role in helping young people to develop at a social and personal level. To give an adequate response to the needs and interests of young people, Action 3 of the YOUTH programme remains the principal guarantor for the most important priorities: initiative, creativity and the feeling of active participation. Local projects offer young people the possibility to give an added value to their day-to-day reality and to actively participate in society by carrying out their own projects. Active citizenship is built primarily at local level through developing local projects. Networking activities ensure cooperation between local initiatives by establishing partnerships with young people and organisations in other European countries. By creating a network, young people have practical opportunities to share ideas, explore solutions to common problems, discover each other's cultural heritage, etc. Networking projects give a stronger European dimension to Action 3.

But it is equally our responsibility to share with you, dear readers, some reflections from National Agency officers working with Youth Initiatives as well as some good practices and valuable experiences of the young beneficiaries.

This magazine aims to reach some of the main objectives of SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre: information, promotion and visibility of Action 3. Furthermore, we want to enhance inter-agency cooperation and stimulate the debate about the future of Youth Initiatives. That's why we strongly encourage you to get involved in the discussions by telling us about your experiences, feelings, hopes, ideas, etc. You can express yourself by sharing your practices in your respective countries, cultures or different points of view. You may also make suggestions and/or new proposals for networks and cooperation. If you are looking for information or want to express yourself about any topic in Action 3, we hope you find this magazine a valuable tool for communication.

By contributing to this edition of the magazine you are acting and reacting on the present and future of Youth Initiatives. By writing you can guarantee long life for Action 3!!

Have a great read !

Henar Conde
Coordinator
SALTO Youth Initiatives
Resource Centre

From local to European: a new dynamic

White Paper on Youth Policy



The conclusions of the first meeting for National Agency officers working in Action 3, in September 2002, were that a SALTO Resource Centre for supporting Youth Initiatives would be a very good way of managing the resources for this Action. The centre started its work in August 2003 and is making efforts to improve the visibility of Youth Initiatives of the YOUTH programme. This magazine should become a tool for information and promotion of Youth Initiatives at European level. Therefore, I hope that this magazine will contribute to enhance communication among the different actors involved in European youth work.

Youth Initiatives are an important tool improving participation of young people in local communities and a first step to move towards international exchanges and networks. It is also a good action to include informal groups of young people who are not members of associations.

It is important to give a European dimension to youth related activities. But European dimension doesn't necessarily mean travelling or spending time abroad. Youth Initiatives are a very interesting educational action which give young people

new competences. By developing Action 3 local projects young people can acquire the experience they need to go a step further at European level. It is important to give young people the possibility to feel they are active citizens at local and national level in order to raise their European awareness.

Our purpose is to reach more young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. In the framework of the inclusion strategy of the European Commission, Youth Initiatives play a crucial role by including young people who have not yet taken part in international exchanges or EVS.

As said in the White Paper, let's go from local to European, let's create a new dynamic.

Pierre Mairesse
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Start with Action 3 !

Youth Initiatives as the beginning of an adventure with the YOUTH programme

At the last meeting of Action 3 officers, Mr. Pierre Mairesse said that Action 3 is not only interesting but also a very exciting Action of the YOUTH programme. Added to this, in most Programme countries Action 3 is the most popular Action among disadvantaged youth, which makes it a great tool of Inclusion. Why is Action 3 so popular with young people? What's their 'first' motivation to use YOUTH programme funds? How could Action 3 be helpful for other Actions of the YOUTH programme? How can we help these young people to 'reach' a European level ?



What's so magic about Youth Initiatives?

Indeed, it's hard not to agree that Action 3 is a thrilling action. All of the different activities supported under the Action 3 'umbrella' and in which young people are actively participating in their local communities, help them not only to turn their ideas into realities but also to gain some experience and skills which are so important in their adult lives. In most Programme countries, interest in Action 3 is much greater than the financial ability of the action's budget.

In Poland, Action 3 is extremely popular with young people. Our budget allows us to finance only one fifth of all submitted projects. The reason for such a great interest in this action comes not only from lack of funds for local projects at a national level but also from a very specific approach towards young people promoted by the YOUTH programme. Youth Initiatives are simply 'youth friendly' and the application procedure is quite simple and easy.

Besides this, Action 3 gives young people new definition - THEY (as youngsters) are partners for European Programmes (not teachers, local authorities etc.) and can do something good for the local community! Youth Initiatives are also changing the negative connotation of 'working for the local community'. In post-communist countries, local initiatives have strong links to obligatory 'social work initiatives' which were quite a popular tool to 'guarantee active participation' two decades ago.

Today Action 3 is promoting active participation and responsibility at local level and encouraging young people to look for ideas and solutions for their local problems among youngsters from other European countries. This fact itself makes the action extraordinary and sets it apart from any other national programmes which support youth ideas.

Who is the typical user of Action 3 ?

Most projects accepted in Poland are either prepared by or for disadvantaged young people - a very important target group for the YOUTH programme. Almost all groups are newcomers without any experience of doing such projects or using European funds. What is sad is that most groups are not using the other possibilities offered by the Programme and are simply disappearing after finishing their projects. The reason for this is simple - most of them don't speak any foreign languages and are not really aware of what's possible within the YOUTH programme. Assistance and information are the key words for helping them to develop their projects with European partners.

A typical way of becoming a beneficiary of Group Initiatives is as follows: young people see that there is some kind of problem around them and that they have to take the initiative to solve it since it directly affects them. After formulating some ideas, they start looking for funding to make their wish come true and sooner or later they learn about Action 3.

While reading about the conditions for becoming an Action 3 beneficiary they learn about the European dimension of local projects and then look at their idea through this 'special European lens' and recognize the 'added European value' of their local initiative. Most of them are not really aware that Action 3 has some 'sibling actions' also designed for young people. They succeed as young people in looking for solutions and achieve what they wanted - which is important for them in the early stages.

Later on when they are already well known in their local communities they get some support for their activities from national funding and never come back to the YOUTH programme.

Youth Initiatives are also changing the negative connotation of working for the local community. In post-communist countries, local initiatives have strong links to obligatory social work initiatives...

Almost all groups are newcomers without any experience of doing such projects or using European funds.

It's the safest action: young people are working in their natural local environment in their own peer group and doing something significant for the local community. They are learning by practice...

Why start with Action 3 ?

Action 3 is a very special tool for supporting young people who have just started being active. It is the safest action - young people are working in their natural local environment in their own peer group and doing something significant for the local community.

They are learning by practice how to manage the project, how to communicate within the group, how to deal with problems, how to divide tasks, how to communicate with local authorities etc.

They learn how to be independent, responsible and from this they have a great opportunity to gain the experience which is so useful later on in creating international projects.

For disadvantaged young people especially such a 'training possibility' is very important. The cost of failure is much lower than at international level where partners from different countries are involved.

I believe that we can promote Action 3 as a "practice field" for preparing and running projects in the YOUTH programme. For small groups which are just beginning to do something together a local project could be a first step before starting something "more sophisticated" which requires more knowledge, experience and skills to cooperate with an international partner.

During their local project they are able to get more information about the YOUTH programme, sometimes participate in some training courses or seminars and pick up some hints and advice for future development. The project itself helps them develop their activities and think about some follow up.



Why is it important for us and how can we help ?

Why? Because we like young people! Because we like to inspire them! Because we know about training courses, meetings, seminars and how to create them! Because we want to include disadvantage young people as much as possible. Because we care about newcomers.

Because we like the idea of 'synergy'! Because we have information they are not aware of. Because so much is up to us! Assistance and information are the key words! So let's inform our beneficiaries about the other possibilities of the YOUTH programme. Let's include them in training sessions organised by other actions. Let's invite them directly without assuming that they would get this information themselves. Let's help them to reach that international level.

As an example I would like to share with you the story of a group of young people who started with Action 3 and then discovered Actions 1 and 5. The group of volunteers from the House of Social Care for handicapped boys in Krakow had the idea of creating show called "Little Prince" with handicapped boys. The house of Social Care didn't have enough money to support it and volunteers were looking for different possibilities for funding.

Finally, the project was accepted in Action 3 in 2001. When Action 1 was organising its BiTriMulti Training, we invited one of the volunteers to take part in this event. As a result of that participation, the group prepared a youth exchange with handicapped boys in Great Britain. Later on, with partners from Great Britain, they organised a conference about methods of working with disabled youth and integration in "normal society" at local, national and international level. All of this would have never happened if the group had not started with Action 3. So start with Action 3!

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Inclusion & Group Initiatives

Inclusion, and the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, is one of the priorities of the YOUTH programme. A key element in the programme is non-formal education and active participation, which is definitely very important for the Youth Initiatives of youngsters with fewer opportunities. Looking at the objectives of the YOUTH programme, the conclusion is that the spirit of Youth Initiatives is to be found in almost every objective! This article is meant to emphasize the value of action 3 for youngsters with fewer opportunities.



The core element in the definition of youngsters with fewer opportunities, handled by the National Agency of Belgium/Flanders, is as follows: there is a need for an accumulation of the different aspects of being disadvantaged, such as social, socio-economic, cultural, physical, mental, ... aspects. Being unemployed doesn't automatically mean that somebody is disadvantaged. However being unemployed and living in a poor neighbourhood in a city can mean a youngster is disadvantaged.

A second core element in our definition is that young people with fewer opportunities face a lack of access to formal education, mobility, the labour market, etc.

Using this description is not meant to ignore other valuable definitions, which might be more suitable in another country or another situation.

The most important target groups of young people with fewer opportunities currently being reached in action 3 are migrant youngsters, socially and economically disadvantaged youngsters.

Some thoughts on inclusion

Inclusion is one of the priorities of the YOUTH programme. But what exactly does it mean? Different people with different backgrounds generate different opinions and different strategies.

One could say that inclusion means to provide tools and skills to these youngsters in order to teach them how to cope with exclusion, and survive in the mainstream middle class value society. On the other hand, inclusion could also be viewed in another way i.e.: that mainstream society should open up, and even adapt itself to embrace this target group by respecting its competences and skills.

In my opinion, the YOUTH programme can be used as an excellent means of emancipation for this target group by helping them to express their own specific identity, skills, competences, values, ... through... Group Initiatives. Please do not forget these youngsters do have a lot of skills and competences, although they are not immediately recognized as such by mainstream society.

And that's where Action 3 of the YOUTH programme comes into the picture: this action provides a framework within which precisely these elements are valued and targeted. Action 3 creates, in my humble opinion, an exceptional space for these youngsters. Not to experiment or flirt with the limits and tolerance of society, but on the contrary to put across a clear and firm message about their being and the right to be like they are. They are also citizens carrying out citizenship in their own creative way. Of course, by processing a project, youngsters with fewer opportunities will gain a lot of knowledge, skills, competences, ... That's clear. A Youth Initiative should, preferably, not be a laboratory, i.e. a nice clean safe environment far from reality, in which the youngster can experiment and practice future competences in order to survive in society. Therefore the link with the local community is essential.

Now why exactly is this action so valuable for youngsters with fewer opportunities?

One of the main objectives or values of the YOUTH programme is to encourage citizenship. An in-depth study within the framework of the evaluation of the YOUTH programme, focussing on the Flemish situation and reflecting reactions of a broad field of organisations, key persons and youngsters, states that the value of European citizenship is very hard to translate into the daily reality of any kind of project, realised within the framework of the YOUTH programme.



However I would still like to point out that Action 3 creates a specific and suitable framework for translating this value in a concrete and practical way, especially when working with youngsters with fewer opportunities. This is the local impact in Group Initiatives.

Very specific for Group Initiatives in Flanders (but maybe also in other countries), initiated by socially disadvantaged youngsters, is a very strong link with the local community. This is due to the fact that most of the projects are strongly linked with or are part of an organisation working with these youngsters. The project is a way of working innovatively with the target group.

Most organisations, and as a consequence also most youngsters, are situated in very specific remote and disadvantaged areas mostly in a city. Since the work field of the organisation is focussed on the local community and the youngsters of this local community, the Group Initiative project also has very strong links with the local community.

Example:

The Jamklub, a youth club for disadvantaged youngsters in the harbour area of Ghent, an excellent example of a traditional remote area. The youngsters wanted to make a video about their daily life, tackling 'daily' subjects youngsters are dealing with: free time activities, school, parents, family, love, racism, drug abuse,

The main aim of the video is to use this as a tool to commu-



nicate with the local community which is their family, neighbours, friends, and to open up a discussion on the existing prejudices from the local community towards the participating youngsters.

To implement a European dimension in a Youth Initiative is not always easy. There is hardly any exchange between different projects and different youngsters. The habitat of a Youth Initiative is limited and framed. When facilitating a European dimension, this element is reduced to zero. Surely within the framework of projects by youngsters with fewer opportunities the local impact can be translated into a European one.

When emphasizing the importance of the link between a Youth Initiative and the local community, the European dimension automatically pops up as a key element of this action. A European dimension gives an added value and puts local reality into a global and intercultural perspective. The European dimension could lead to empowerment of small groups in remote areas, and put these people and Europe on the agenda of local governments.

Example:

This project is situated in an average and rather small city in Flanders, for which inclusion and youngsters with fewer opportunities is absolutely no priority. On the other hand, a group of these youngsters wanted to be empowered by means of a Group Initiative towards the city government. By using their creativity and expressive skills they initiated a kind of street theatre group on the basis of a local legend.

They gave a European dimension to the project by searching for inspiration in other countries and local communities with the same legend. This combination resulted in a powerful presentation with a clear message.

With the support of a local community centre (situated in a remote area) they succeed in their ideas and plans. Last but not least, the local government was charmed by their project and decided to develop an inclusion strategy for these youngsters: still very little and very small, but very alive and real!

Being unemployed doesn't automatically mean that somebody is disadvantaged. However being unemployed and living in a poor neighbourhood in a city can mean a youngster is disadvantaged.

Conclusion

Action 3 of the YOUTH programme is a tool which can be very powerful when part of the correct framework. Action 3 provides opportunities for youngsters who, in many cases, are regarded as remote, weaker, disadvantaged, ... Action 3 creates the exact framework these youngsters need to express their own identity and strengths.

Indeed, the YOUTH programme is able to empower local groups in remote areas !

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Personal Development & Group Initiatives



YES, it seems that Group Initiatives is an accessible action for young people. But have you ever wondered what young people themselves can gain from this action? Have you ever wondered if and how the personal and marketable skills acquired during a Group Initiative can be measured and put forward? Have a look at the elaborate Personal Record of Achievement that Connect Youth has set up!

In many respects Group Initiatives are the most accessible part of the European YOUTH programme for young people. They not only serve as an entry point to the programme but also as a valuable follow-up to a youth exchange, allowing young people to build upon their experiences and continue to develop their personal confidence by managing their own project. Undertaking a Group Initiative may be the first time a young person considers the question of what it is to be "European" and what issues need to be explored around this subject, such as developing links to other projects and examining new cultures. Once having undertaken an exchange this "European" theme can be developed further into a full-grown project managed by young people themselves. But Group Initiatives do not only develop the European dimension of young people's lives they can also further their personal and vocational development.

Group Initiatives are highly attractive to post 16 young people who are unemployed and without strong marketable qualifications. Some young people do not possess enough basic literacy or numeracy skills for the training on offer. Many are disenchanted with formal education in any guise, and the majority lack the belief in themselves and the motivation to undergo the pain of the training for the hope of a place in society at the end.

Through devising and managing their own projects they produce substantial gains in the general skills, aptitudes, and attitudes young people need to get a job. Their self-esteem in particular is greatly enhanced but they also learn the simple disciplines so important to keeping a job, punctuality, regularity, a sense of responsibility in their roles and the importance of the inter-dependability of the work situation.

In addition they enable young people to acquire other more specific marketable skills in IT, social tasks, the arts, and journalism.

The high input by the participants themselves and the ownership of the projects guarantees the successful outcome of the project in most cases, some take off very strongly and go on to receive more funding or into self sustainability. Individuals may move in and out of the projects but they command motivation well above other training provision for similar young people.

The young people plan and run their own projects and set out to achieve their own aims. They work on themes of their own choosing, on their own terms, and at their own pace. The young people have a vision of what they want to achieve and how to go about it. They are motivated.

Because they work in a group their personal interest and commitment converts into peer pressure that submits them all to the necessary disciplines of regularity, dependability and co-operation that are so essential to the world of work. At the end they gain the self esteem that results from achieving their own goals.

Moreover, as they embark upon their projects they encounter problems they do not have the skills to solve. They identify their own skills deficits that stand between them and the ends they are seeking. Under these circumstances their motivation to learn is very high and where they cannot train each other they seek help externally.

The type of skills emanating from projects included the following: desk-top publishing, typing, operating and writing of databases, design and layout of print, photocopying, spreadsheets, proof-reading, listening, writing, interaction with others, analytical thinking, evaluation, planning.

Undertaking a Group Initiative may be the first time a young person considers the question of what it is to be European and what issues need to be explored around this subject, such as developing links to other projects and examining new cultures.

Personal Record of Achievement

As a result we devised the Personal Record of Achievement which allows young people to record their learning outcomes from participating in a Group Initiative. It is designed to allow young people to provide evidence of the range of knowledge, skills and understanding they gained in the process. It recognises that all projects should entail participants using and developing certain skills which have been named Base Skill Areas - there are six of these. There are also eight Optional Skill areas.

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The Personal Record of Achievement allows young people to record their learning outcomes from participating in a Group Initiative.

Participants in the scheme are expected to show development in the six Base Skill areas and in a minimum of two Optional Skill areas; a total of eight skill areas.

Base Skill areas

1. Working with others
2. Self-awareness
3. Intercultural and global awareness
4. Communication skills
5. Problem solving
6. Review and evaluation

Optional skill areas

1. Citizenship
2. Equal Opportunities
3. Health & Safety
4. Political awareness
5. Analytical skills
6. Project theme skills
7. Improving learning & performance
8. Number & information technology

A similar Personal Record of Achievement exists for Youth Exchanges and a pilot scheme for European Voluntary Service has just finished. Some of the skills areas can strengthen the European dimension of Group Initiatives: Intercultural and Global awareness; Citizenship; and Political awareness.

Accreditation

Connect Youth now has an accredited scheme for both Youth Exchanges and Group Initiatives under the Open College Network. In place are vocational credits at Level 1 and Level 2 for Group Initiatives and Youth Exchanges. At present we are writing a new Personal Record of Achievement for European Voluntary Service at Level 3.

It has also been recommended by the Awarding Body that a Preliminary Level is also written for those young people who may not be able to achieve Level 1 in a Youth Exchange or Group Initiative. Participation remains entirely voluntary but it does allow young people to gain a vocational qualification recognised by educational establishments and employers through participating in a European programme. The next step will be to train at least one member of each of our 12 Committees in becoming a qualified Verifier so they can evaluate any projects within their Region/Country.

At present young people have a number of options open to them:

- participate in the Group Initiative without taking part in the Personal Record of Achievement
- participate in the activity and take part in the Personal Record of Achievement as a Certificate only
- participate in the activity and take part in the Personal Record of Achievement and have it accredited at Level 1 or Level 2.

Connect Youth has also launched a similar scheme to Group Initiatives through the British Council to operate in Zambia, South Africa, Nigeria, Cameroon, Malawi, and Senegal. In each country the scheme is operated slightly differently but the main principle of giving young people the opportunity to up-skill themselves through taking part in an activity which they feel is important to them and their local community persists. The age range is slightly different in that it is targeted towards those aged between 15-30. The maximum grant is 400 Euros per group but money goes much further than in Europe.

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They who dare, win...

Qualitative evaluation of Youth Initiatives

The experience of Youth Initiatives in French-speaking Belgium is one rich in discovery, particularly as far as the ambitions of young people, their creativity, their tenacity and their ingenuity for achieving their objectives are concerned. Focus on the personal, social & professional capital that can be gained. Essence of accounts.



Each successfully accomplished project demonstrates the desire of young people to convey a positive image, both of where they come from and who they are: university students, students following a technical or professional education, the unemployed, unknown artists, those on benefit and those with little education or in special institutions (eg. care homes and young offenders institutions). The personal skills and technical or artistic competences which they acquire are also incontestable.

The Bureau International Jeunesse BIJ (National Agency for the European Commission's YOUTH programme) has classified these qualities under the following 3 headings: Personal Capital, Social Capital and Professional Capital. Those involved in Youth Initiatives projects - young people, youth workers and trainers - expressed their opinions & feelings based on their own experience.

Personal Capital

Knowing yourself and your capabilities

- . Some of the youngsters discovered that they had hidden talents which they were keen to exploit after the project.
- . Some young people are determined to use the experience and skills they have acquired to develop local projects.

Self-confidence and the will to succeed

- . At first, I didn't really want to reveal certain things about myself but when I got started I was pleasantly surprised that I could write and speak (in a personal or imaginary way).
- . Despite some worries and important setbacks (initially, the theft of all the equipment from the youth centre, followed a little later by an arson attack), the youngsters and their group leader did not give up and were not in the least discouraged.... They resumed their activities and worked twice as hard.
- . The young people found it difficult to express their

thoughts and ideas on paper but, with help from their youth workers, they were proud to be able to read their own written work and to see their projects brought to a successful conclusion...

Satisfaction linked to the establishment of something concrete, recognition of actions taken and a sense of pride

- . The participants were so happy and proud to have worked with a well known rap group and produced their own CD with the participation of this famous group.
- . The youngsters were delighted to discover that street art (graffiti) is a discipline which now deserves respect.

A sense of responsibility

- . I felt responsible since you always put something of your self into what you write. I believe that we have to be responsible in order to give the best of ourselves.

The capacity to express yourself

- . Through dance we have found so many things, but especially a way to say something and to exist...
- . The youngsters were able to write and to discover the French language in a different way. They were able to show off their finished work, even if spelling is often a handicap for some and a challenge for others.
- . The use of video, with its clear language and structure is a tool from which youngsters can exploit the maximum potential.

The idea of exchanges between the youngsters was, for them, more enjoyable and more tangible than that of the complicated and confused idea of Europe.

Social Capital

Raising awareness of the importance of democracy, equal opportunities and a sense of responsible and thoughtful citizenship

- . Among the success stories, the assessment of the young people themselves is as follows: they consider themselves to be conscious and responsible citizens as far as safe guarding democracy is concerned.

Awareness of the dangers linked to social exclusion, racism and xenophobia.

- . Today's electronic culture has changed the relationship of a whole generation of European youngsters with the world.
- . Now there is a kind of European "contra-culture" developing based on peace, love, tolerance and harmony.

Being open-minded and having a better understanding of diversity

- . A coming together of countries with different ways of behaving but, in our case, united by a common interest: hip hop.

I felt responsible since you always put something of yourself into what you write. I believe that we have to be responsible in order to give the best of ourselves.



. *The idea of exchanges between the youngsters was, for them, more enjoyable and more tangible than that of the complicated and confused idea of Europe.*

Professional Capital

. *The final outcomes were different for each participant. Some are heading for a career in communications and used the initiative to gain practical experience. Others discovered radio for the first time. For all of them, participation in a project gave rise to many important benefits (personal involvement, self-confidence,...).*

Aside from the technical competences linked to specific features of the project -eg. use of video, street art techniques, production of web sites, dance training, voice coaching etc., the following characteristics were also notable:

- . learning how to be independent
- . the development of critical appraisal
- . the capacity for negotiating and arguing a point
- . the aptitude for compromise
- . financial management and team work

In action

- . *Working in a group encourages us to take responsibility and gives us a sense of solidarity.*
- . *Some young Turkish and Congolese girls began by playing a very passive role in many of the project activities but were gradually motivated to eventually play a leading role in the workshops.*
- . *The Kweli structure group set itself as a non-profit making organisation with a view to eventually gaining recognition from some subsidizing authorities and the professional sector.*
- . *I decided to start studying again,... to specialise in video work... My active participation in the project made me realise my potential and helped to raise my self confidence.*

Some of the youngsters discovered that they had hidden talents which they were keen to exploit after the project.

The National Agency feels that while these apprenticeships and the skills acquired from them are very difficult to measure, they are really useful for facilitating the inclusion of young people in the social and professional aspects of life.

Whether in a formal or non-formal way, the BIJ has always brought these important aspects to the fore together with the quality of the productions and activities involved in a Group Initiative project.

Sadly, this breeding-ground of positive, active, creative young responsible citizens is not recognised at either national or community level, even though the projects which they develop are very often well promoted by the local press and regional TV and radio.

As far as the European dimension is concerned, as a National Agency, the BIJ is pleasantly surprised at how present it is, for example, in the contacts and exchanges between youngsters from the French speaking Community of Belgium and youngsters from other Programme countries.

Indeed, we are always happy to see that young people submitting documents, audio visual and artistic productions and web site material rarely forget to put the European Commission and BIJ logos on their work!

In conclusion, Youth Initiatives are:

exchanges, new partners, misunderstandings, discoveries, learning experiences, tensions, fear, stress, anxiety, difficulties, solutions, joy, pleasure, pride, laughter, courage, complicity, creativity, fun, innovation, amazement, fatigue, relief...

In short, a programme of non-stop excitement!

Bernadette Pierret

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National Agency for the YOUTH programme
French speaking Community of Belgium
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Enter the network!

Wanna know what other young people do in strange countries you would never have thought of visiting? Have you done a Group Initiative or some youth project and are now looking for the next stage? Enter the network! Start a Networking project, by working together with one or more international partners on a similar topic, exchange ideas and create something new. Meet others to join activities or to see what youth action looks like elsewhere. But how do you meet such people? Partners who fit your type of activity and most of all: partners you would like to become your networking partners ?

In 2003 several National Agencies of the YOUTH programme (Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Sweden, Germany, France & Luxembourg) provided so called Contact Making Seminars to facilitate partner finding for Youth Initiatives. The main aim of the seminars was to promote the development of A3 networking projects between former group initiatives. In other words, to "Europeanise" Action 3 of the YOUTH programme, which was, with its mainly action Group initiatives, seen as too local to be funded by an European programme.

Some concrete objectives were:

Contactmaking: to promote meetings between former Group Initiatives so that participants may exchange experiences and develop new ideas.

Project presentation: to provide participants with time and space to present their Group Initiatives projects.

Project development: to assist the participants with getting started in thinking about how to develop a Networking project.

Information about the YOUTH programme in general, and especially Action 5.

Two of the seminars, **Include yourself** were done in Sweden and in Poland for those youth projects who are active in the field of social inclusion. The third seminar **Intercultural dialogue** took place in Belgium and focused on projects related to art & culture. It was organized by SALTO Youth Initiatives RC (for further information, see supplementary article *Youth in Action: get involved in net !* p. 14-16). As the last seminar in 2003, **Enter the network !** took place in Germany as a co-operation between the National Agencies of France, Luxembourg and Germany. It was focused on participants whose Group Initiative projects were situated in the field of antiracism.



The concept of the seminars worked out very well: we saw a great motivation of the young people to get in contact, exchange experience and co-operate. A lot of these contacts are still intact and groups further work on finding good and realistic project plans and ways of working together - which isn't very easy on international level. But we will tell you more later on how we tried to get along with such "networking pitfalls" at the seminars.

Evaluations and Conclusions

In all four seminars the main aim of stimulating the cooperation process of Networking projects was successfully realized. A minimum of ten Networking projects have been applied for during the past few months as a result of the Contact Making Seminars, and some more will follow in the next months.

We were able to create a networking atmosphere by giving space for the young people to get to know each other and their projects, by working with each other and by tackling the extra problems and benefits of projects with a networking dimension, especially by using elements of Intercultural Learning.

We were able to show the different possibilities within the YOUTH programme as a high number of non-Action 3 ideas and applications from former participants of the seminars shows.

Besides that: we provided a space for learning and interacting, for getting to know each other, reflecting personal culture and character and opening the door to a wide range of "European possibilities". Judging from the evaluation and comments of the participants, they generally estimate their participation as a rare chance to widen their perspective and a unique possibility to meet such a variety of characters.

But like everywhere in life, we faced pitfalls and problems as well. Thanks to the continuity of having a team of trainers who benefited from each other and the good cooperation of NAs we were able to develop the seminars further to deal with some of the hindering aspects.

Please find below the pitfalls we faced, our explanation and how we tried to tackle them.

Not going deep enough into the framework of the topic

We failed into really go deeper into such questions as *What does being socially excluded mean in your country?* or *What is the reality of antiracism in your own community?*. In general it has to be assumed, that it is not possible to touch such big topics more than superficially in only three full working days. We would suggest having one extra day to work more profoundly here.

We provided a space for opening the door to a wide range of European possibilities.

Contact Making Seminars: an overview

1 Include Yourself: May 2003 - Stockholm, Sweden - National Agencies : Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, Malta

2 Include Yourself: August 2003 - Zakopane, Poland - National Agencies : Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, Malta

3 Intercultural dialogue: September 2003 - Brussels, Belgium - SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre

4 Enter the network: Nov 2003 - Hanover, Germany - National Agencies : France, Luxembourg, Germany.

Finding participants who meet the criteria of the seminars

Even though National Agencies were really engaged in finding participants who would fit the criteria previously established, two main problems emerged regarding the "quality of participants": language problems and incoherent profile of the participants. Our proposal would be that National Agencies should have national preparatory meetings or call the future participants and introduce the seminar idea to them and check if they really do fit the criteria.

What to do to provide a realistic setup for Networking projects ?

Before the first seminar, we spent time on the development of an educational strategy to overcome the problem that participants might be enthusiastic during the seminar but would not be able to set up realistic concepts, which would last after the seminar. One step was to introduce the so-called TRAIN-analogy to ensure that not just one single result would be realized at the end of the seminar. We also wanted to make allowances for the possibility that partner's ideas may not fit those of the other participants or his/her organisation and that it might even be the case that the right partner is not even present at this seminar. We developed that idea further and introduced "ethics of a networking process" using rules from an "open space" method to create trusting atmosphere, where people felt bold enough to change the group or define why they did not find the right partner. With those partner groups which seemed to be functional, we worked very concretely either on mind maps to answer all necessary questions of their Networking project idea, with application forms and/or with personal action plans to determine next steps and agreements with the partner/s.

What to do with participants who did not find a partner ?

It is not possible to find the right partner for each participant during such a Contact Making Seminar. To avoid it being a failure and waste of time for those participants, we gave a lot of coaching and support. We used a computer room to look for contact boards on the internet - but honestly it was a failure. Then we provided the "group of the lost ideas" which gave flexible aid and advice for each participant request, whether it be in helping to set up a profile of the partner wanted, to look together for partners from other seminars or to guide participants through support sites and material.

How to clarify what exactly a Networking project is ?

This is a good question. The whole process of granting networking projects in Action 3 still seems to be in a process of clarification and development. Due to this it was possible to introduce eligibility criteria but hardly any practical experience or examples of good practice. It was clear that it wasn't easy for the participants to differ between a Networking project and a Youth Exchange.



For the future, when first Networking projects are running, we would suggest having a good example report on such seminars, thoroughly prepared and focused on the tricky questions of the practical realization of Networking projects.

From the evaluation of the participants it can be noted that a strong need for training in project management (especially in international projects) seems to be wanted as well as having longer seminar.

The learning progress or benefit was seen by participants e.g.:

- . *I learnt a lot of things that I will pass to others in my organisation*
- . *Other people can do what we are doing in our local initiative, and we can do what other people are doing now!*
- . *Inspiration, enthusiasm, motivation, improvement of communication skills information, better English, self-confidence*
- . *The idea of networking is now a bit more clear, but still general. Good point that I gained more knowledge about YOUTH programme and of course a lot of new contacts*
- . *Knowledge about international working. Now I know what kind of tools to use, when I try to find a partner for some happening and how to organise it.*

In conclusion, the year 2003 with its four contact making seminars helped to "Europeanize" Action 3. It created a good basis for further seminars and events which should stimulate the Networking projects of former Group Initiatives and we would strongly recommend Youth Initiatives to get into Networking projects with European partners. It is certainly a lot of work - no doubt about that ! - but an excellent way of getting to know people better than exotic examples of countries you might know from TV. As well it is a great opportunity to widen your horizon, to start real exchanges, real co-operation and maybe even real friendships (even though these people might really have problems to pronounce your name properly...).

Certainly, not all what was mentioned here in a very brief way can replace personal comments - as much as the best advertisement for Networking projects can not replace personal contact for young people from all over Europe to get into networking. For any further questions or comments, you may contact the author of this article or the SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre.

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Youth in Action : get involved in net !

SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre welcomed 28 young Europeans in a Contact Making Seminar for Networking of Youth Initiatives. The event took place in Brussels, from 23rd September to 1st October 2003. Through this project, SALTO- YOUTH aimed to encourage initiative, creativity, innovation & expression in young people who practice & have a passion for artistic disciplines in order to create Networking projects under Action 3 of the YOUTH programme.

On the 23rd of September 2003, a group of young people from all over Europe arrived in Brussels.

I went with one of the trainers to pick up the group at the airport. We were both excited about their arrival! Since the group arrived at different times during the day, it took some time to gather everybody together... They looked tired but also eager to start their future experience: they were very enthusiastic about the idea of meeting new people from different horizons and cultures.

The first intercultural experience took place at the airport. One of the girls was called Ola so she presented herself: 'Ola', she said. The word 'Ola' in Spanish means 'hello' so I answered 'Ola!' Of course she was not expecting me to repeat her name but to introduce myself!

The first misunderstanding was born but so was the beginning of an adventure of cultural understanding: it was the beginning of a 10 day experience of intercultural dialogue between youth and cultures...



Context & aims of the seminar

This seminar was prepared within the framework of the first European Youth Week - Youth in Action, organised by the European Commission from 29th September to 5th October 2003. The idea of this youth week was to recognize the projects created and developed by European youngsters between 2000-2003 as well as to increase the visibility of the YOUTH programme. In short: a tremendous event to promote INitiative, INtercultural dialogue & INclusion through the slogan Youth IN Action!

The main aim of the seminar was to provide young Europeans with the opportunity to prepare Networking projects on artistic themes: music, dance, theatre, media & communication.

All of them had already developed a local project in their own towns or cities and now felt ready to go one step further to European level. Some of them wanted to develop their previous local projects at international level, others wanted to find new ideas to set up a common project.

But, all of them wanted to learn more about YOUTH programme and about European projects, all of them wanted to learn about European people, all of them wanted to learn about European cultures.

In all, the youngsters attending the seminar represented 13 European countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain. What a great mix of cultures !



The theme of the seminar

The theme of the seminar was intercultural dialogue in Europe through working in mixed artistic disciplines. Music, dance, theatre etc. are artistic experiences common to European youth.

These are areas that all young people around Europe have an interest in and a view about. They are a strong aspect of the European youth culture. The idea was to allow young people interested in these themes to meet each other and to exchange their experiences and their ideas for developing Networking projects within Action 3 of the YOUTH programme. This was the main aim but they were also invited to work on an intercultural common project by mixing disciplines and skills to create 'something' together: a common artistic performance, especially conceived for the Award Ceremony of the European Commission.

Main steps of the project

On the first day, participants presented their former Group Initiatives and talked about the artistic skills they acquired during their experiences with Action 3 local projects.

On the second day, they received information about the YOUTH programme, the concept of networking in Action 3, and some concrete examples of intercultural networks. The idea was to create a common understanding of what networking projects are and what they are not.

During the following days, the young participants had the opportunity to exchange networking ideas related to their previous local projects.

After some days sharing, exchanging, discussing... some concrete projects materialised: an on-line youth newspaper, a travelling theatre around Europe, and a project aimed at developing the social awareness of children in different European local communities.

During the seminar, time was provided for developing their networking ideas but the preparation for the performance took far longer than we expected leaving very little time to work on future projects and to prepare a detailed action plan for the following months...

Some concrete networking projects came up: a youth newspaper on-line, a travelling theatre around Europe, and a project aimed to develop the social awareness of children in different European local communities.

... the participants were invited to make groups in mixing disciplines and nationalities to think of proposals for a common performance. The idea was to create a common project which highlighted the intercultural dialogue and their specific abilities...

PHEW!!! It was not easy to share experiences, to agree on common ideas, to plan the network activities or to prepare a common show in just a few days! Many questions followed during the next few days: could we have a second part to this seminar? Could it be longer, something like two weeks to get to know each other better? We really want to develop this project together!" At that moment I realised that the first objective of the seminar - that is to say, to trigger among this group of youngsters enthusiasm and motivation for developing European projects - was reached...

And now... comes the show!

With regard to the artistic performance, the young participants were invited to work in groups mixing disciplines and nationalities to come up with proposals for a show.

The idea was to create a common project which highlighted intercultural dialogue and the specific abilities which allow each of them to get into the project and the collective work in a quick and easy way. After a few days of collective work, the group presented the results on stage as part of the Award Ceremony of the European Commission and for a live audience of 150 young people from all over Europe !

After all the emotions during the show, some time was left for sharing feelings: fear, tensions, stress... but also laughter, complicity, teamwork...

Yet the most important thing was not the show but the process of working jointly on a common idea !

The trainer's viewpoint



I have to say, that this seminar was a very special event even for me as a trainer. We had a wonderful group of motivated youngsters from many European countries. There was a joyful atmosphere within the group and really good results from concentrated work - not only in the mentioned networking projects, but also in the rehearsals for the final show in the Youth Award Ceremony. Many participants have found new friends from all over Europe and last but not least, we shared the common experience that together people can do amazing things, so said a participant in the evaluation questionnaire about the seminar.

Frank Schmitz
Profondo (Hanover, Germany)
E-mail: profonde@t-online.de

What's more?

Besides the performances, part of the group worked as a communication team during the seminar. They created a newspaper about the 10 day event and a great job was carried out by young journalists: "Action 3 and the city". Their motto: to be or not to be ... involved in Networking projects! In order to have a visual idea of the whole seminar, two young people were involved in the group in professional activities eg: as camera men. They produced a video of the seminar. Just good memories...

Conclusions & Evaluation

A lot of work (teamwork) was needed in just a few days, but the motivation and energy of the group made it much easier, much more dynamic, much more creative...

As far as I was concerned, even though I was a bit tired (well, very tired... exhausted, knackered... hardly breathing any more I should say!) this seminar was really an experience that gave me a lot of new ideas of how to develop Networking projects and also a new enthusiasm from all those dynamic and creative young people. The possibility to be in touch with the ones we are working for and to know that they also believe in our work is very stimulating, don't you think ?



What's next?

Some networking ideas were set up during the seminar but other projects were created afterwards.

- . *European Youth Newspaper Online* applied in Poland for a Networking project (A3).
Partners: Sweden, Latvia, Poland
E-mail: olaszmit@epi.kielce.com
- . *Brainstorming* applied in Romania for a Networking project (A3).
Partners: England, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria
E-mail: arsis@infodesk.ro.
- . *Travelling Theater* applied in Finland for a feasibility visit (A5) to prepare a Networking project
Partners: Denmark, Italy, Finland, France, Norway, Poland, Lithuania & Romania
E-mail: jfalberghi@yahoo.com
- . *Play Culture* applied in Italy & Romania for a Youth Exchange (A1)
- . *Street Community* applied in Belgium for a Group Initiative (A3)
E-mail: swimming_peter_pan@hotmail.com
They are already planning a Networking project.
Partners: Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Spain.
- . Two more projects (one in Lithuania, one in Spain) are under construction. The groups may apply in the next deadlines.
- . Four participants of the seminar applied for a European Voluntary Service (A2) and are waiting for final decision.

It sounds like we managed to get people involved in all the actions of the YOUTH programme!

Thanks to Mette, Jens, Aiste, Arturas, Misha, Sofia, Nestoras, Francesco, Giovanni, Irene, Annamaria, Julia, Blanca, Sverre, Jeff, Jimmy, Ola, Cristina, Catalin, Tina, Nusa, André, Guilherme, Richard, Ludivine, Mohamed, Anouar, Ismael, Manu, Julius... who participated in such a great experience and shared with us some elements of their cultures.

Let's go for European projects together.
Let's go for net !

Henar Conde

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Youngsters' evaluation of what they learnt in this 10 day seminar

I Learnt about:

the European YOUTH programme, life, people, other languages

new working methods, Networking projects

cooperation, working together is possible

working with people that you don't know, people from other countries

differences, tolerance and understanding, ways of making things happen

how to plan the work and how to work in a huge group of people

how to express myself in different ways, how to develop things together and to respect differences

I learnt that flexibility, positive thinking and listening to others is very important

I learnt that no one has the correct idea; it is the product of many small ideas

I especially learnt to know Europe and also that together people can make amazing things happen.

What young people think about Action 3

Youth Initiatives is an action which takes place in the local community & is part of a wider programme within the European scene. When Action 3 was evaluated in Lithuania, those concerned were invited to express themselves ... Young people had their say in a questionnaire about Action 3 aimed especially at them.

Some time ago discussions about Action 3 and its suitability for the spirit of the YOUTH programme made us think about how young people as well as others may benefit from creating and implementing small local scale Youth Initiatives projects. To get "the right picture" we've decided to ask young people themselves. In November 2002 a short questionnaire about Action 3, its role and suitability for the general philosophy of the YOUTH programme was distributed among youth groups implementing Group Initiatives projects in Lithuania. Young people filling in the questionnaires mostly mentioned its impact on their personal development.

Personal development

Youth Initiatives projects help young people to discover themselves, their own skills and abilities, work for the community. By implementing Youth Initiatives projects young people gain more knowledge, experience, awareness, responsibility, participation and organisational skills that can be shared with others. This action is a very important tool of non-formal learning for young people and helps the development of their creativity, self-expression and participation. Other skills and knowledge that have been gained through participation in Youth Initiatives projects are tolerance, teamwork, project management, communication, personal motivation, deeper self-awareness, self-esteem... Personal development is a very individual process. Only young people themselves, by observing and comparing their situation during the different stages of the learning process, are able to assess and discover their achievements: *realizing our project I've got basics that are essential for creation of better society: I've changed myself. When you change yourself, you may start changing the world.*

Action 3 has become a space to do something valuable for themselves and surprise their community.

Local community

Youth Initiatives projects do not take place in a separate or isolated space. The efforts of young people are noticed, seen and followed by their peers, parents, teachers and local community members. According to project implementers, the activities of Action 3 have become "a space to do something valuable for themselves and surprise their community". Young people have also mentioned that Youth Initiatives projects helped them to make their local communities aware of young peoples' needs and problems, made their leisure time more interesting. The projects also raised levels of motivation and tolerance within the local community and its attitude towards young people and youth organisations became more positive.



European dimension

There are often doubts about whether the group will be able to promote the European dimension, given the orientation of its projects towards local needs. What criteria could be used to measure the European level of the project? The mission of the YOUTH programme is to contribute to the growth and development of a young personality. To get to know yourself better - this is the first step towards European awareness. The active participation of young people who are generating and implementing their own ideas encourages them to think in a broader and more global way, take responsibility for their own actions, to react to the problems and challenges surrounding them - in other words, strengthens their citizenship. It is obvious that each, even the smallest, Youth Initiative project has a European dimension that just needs... to be discovered. It is simply a question of our own attitude and awareness.

Active learning from experience

Implementation of Group Initiatives is often the very first experience for young people. The framework of the YOUTH programme creates a safe space for them to experiment, try, discover, make mistakes and actively learn from their experience. This is how young people grow and develop.

Chance for the future

The YOUTH programme strives to ensure that the knowledge and skills acquired by young people as well as their values and attitudes may be adapted and help them in other personal, social or professional activities. The Group Initiatives, specific to the active participation of each young person, is the right tool to ensure his/her correct preparation for further life challenges.

Young people have no doubts about it: what's about us? *Young people will again get a chance for new impressions, new possibilities to realize their dreams... May there be anything more great? Thank you for a possibility to realize our dreams!* (Aiste, Druskininkai, Lithuania). In four years of YOUTH programme activity there were 68 youth Group Initiatives projects granted and implemented in Lithuania.

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Brainstorming and ... what if the voice of young people in Europe did matter ?

Everyone has had, at least once, a good idea to develop, but most of the time we discard it thinking that it will be impossible to achieve, filling our minds with doubts (how, who, which resources?). All these questions make people give up. It looks difficult, doesn't it? But it is not. Programmes like the YOUTH programme and especially Youth Initiatives help those people who have a good idea to share.

This is exactly what happened to us, Arsis, our organisation located in Romania. One day, during an exchange programme with young people from Italy, Spain and Romania, while talking in one of the breaks, we realized that in all our countries we had more or less the same kind of problems. Later, sharing some beers with the Spanish participants who were journalists for an independent publication for young people, we came up with the idea. Why not create a bigger magazine, in which young people from all over Europe could share, talk and even find common solutions to the problems or realities that affect them?



Thus started the development of this project. Arsis at the time had just finished creating INFOdesk Center, one of the Action 3 Activities-Youth Initiatives, a project to share information about European Programmes among young people. We decided to link our project to INFOdesk and with the EVS and the Action 3 project, which consists of a small local publication. Our Spanish volunteer, one of the journalists working on the draft in Spain, came to Romania to develop this project on a larger scale.

In this way we started the Brainstorming project. Its novelty is that it will be a free medium, where all young people and journalists will have the opportunity to express and analyze the reality of their countries, particularly within the new European context.



They will ultimately express their opinions in the hope of initiating positive changes within their communities. The project will also create a dynamic and free environment that will generate and support the real voice of young people..

In September 2003 the SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Center in Brussels organised a seminar called *Intercultural Dialogue in Europe-Networking of Youth Initiatives*. This was a great opportunity to present our idea and to find new partners.

In conjunction with this, we are now starting a round of contacts with Journalism Universities, Free and Independent Associations of Young Journalists and NGOs working in similar initiatives or fields in Eastern and Western European countries, who want and are able to share and send ideas, articles or agreements for working together. This is a not closed initiative, because this project is now becoming a networking project and we are still in the phase of looking for new partner NGOs around Europe.

We are in the process of attracting a crowd of young people. Specifically, we intend to work with young journalists, or just young people who believe that they have interesting ideas to share. Our last step was to apply this spring to the Romanian National YOUTH Agency for a Networking Youth Initiative project, in order to realize this publication within Action 3 of the YOUTH Programme and our project was... granted !

*Hopefully,
our idea will get bigger and bigger,
so that our small publication would become,
some day,
the voice of young people in Europe.*

Cristina Maxim and Talia Delgado Culebras

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Beyond the sound... barrier

Story of a rock band off the beaten tracks !

Hello, we are Onirici or The dreamers if you prefer, a very original and colorful Italian rock band: 11 guys of different ages, experiences and abilities, as varied as the pathways that joined us together in Parma from all over Italy...

Five years have passed since two of us started this adventure from the rooms of a Psychiatric Residence, only armed with a guitar and a handful of dreams. Today we are 11 on the stage, giving our songs to everybody like a message of hope, to remind that everyone of us is a little treasure that can shine. A lot of circumstances like mental disease, solitude and marginalisation, can usually deny the expression of our deep soul, so some of us have looked for shelter in the wrong places: alcohol, drugs or depression. For this reason society tries to cut us off and segregate us so as not to disturb the quietness of "common people". But now we have found in the music what we were looking for, and we are ready to scream with our songs that there is always the possibility to start a new game! Mental disease cannot be completely defeated, but we can be the winners every time we keep a place in our lives for all those people who feel worse than us, perhaps with a nice song too! You have to be crazy to believe in dreams, but it's probably for this reason that we are able to realize them!

These past 5 years we have called upon the generosity of many friends, ransacked in our empty student pockets, knocked at the doors of Mental Homes, but only in 2003 did we attain to every rock band's aim: the production of a CD with 8 self-made songs completely written and arranged in lyrics and music, and a Video clip which tells our history. Just like in a fairy tale, we recorded it in one of the best Italian recording studios where a lot of our "musical heroes" have worked. Everybody individually recorded his track, like a true professional artist, and even if somewhere on the CD there are some bum notes, these remind us that we are not electronic elements of a computer, but 11 living hearts beating in different rhythm, but in the same way, proud to be who we are.

It would all have been only a dream if the EU hadn't enabled us to realize it by means of finance from the Action 3 of the YOUTH programme which covered half of the huge production expenses and the tour in many Italian cities.

We were not only happy but astonished at the unexpected gift Europe gave us!

"Unexpected" not because of a lack of confidence in our own powers, but because we really know our limitations and how we are "tiny" compared to the great Europe of politicians.

We filled in the application form almost as a joke (not without difficulties), but with the conviction of one who is resolutely persuaded to believe in dreams. Our amazement turned to joy when two of our group were selected to participate in a 10 day international meeting in Brussels with 30 other people from many different European countries. These wonderful people showed us how Europe needs European Citizens; to build this conscience is more difficult than minting a united currency: ink, paper and metal are not enough!



Thanks to SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre, who organized this excellent seminar, we have understood how differences are such an important value, both to deepen and preserve! We are not all the same, and everyone in Europe has his own character: Unity needs this difference, otherwise it would be Conforming, Uniformity, and we don't want to build a Uniform Europe, we want a United Europe!

In this seminar we also realized how Europe is made by little men like us, rolling up their shirt sleeves every day and working hard to demolish and knock down frontiers and borders between State and State, People and People, Sane and Insane people, between Culture and Prejudice. Some people call us volunteers to the service of mental unease: no, we are only friends, and as friends our duty is to plunge, even if the sea looks dark, deep and insidious to fish out the treasure inside everyone of us!

When we are able to destroy that hard-shell, sharp and impenetrable, the brightness of that precious pearl will repay more than 1000 times the sacrifices and discouragement of those who, like us, are only pearl-fishers.

But often, at the first light of dawn, dreams can fade into reality, and so we think to the future: will our ways separate as mysteriously as they came together? What will happen when we finish studying in this city? Where will we be tomorrow?

In our opinion this positive experience is more than strokes of luck, we believe that the Love that comes from a true and deep relationship is like the full wind in a sail and will lead us in the right direction: we are only the brushes used to paint the beautiful picture that we can see every time we look back at our history. Times will change, the music will go out of fashion, the faces will fade from the mind, but the true friendship will remain forever between us and inside those who have "bet all on the losing horse".

Francesco Benassi and Giovanni Pigno

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A step into Europe

From an international experience up to ... a local awareness !



Like many youngsters, Ilse was a young graduate, she was unemployed. She was eager to experience something new. In this account she invites us to discover her European involvement within a local setting : from an Erasmus student, she became an EVS (European Volunteer), she then took part in an Action 3 - Networking project after having attended a Contact Making Seminar... This is the story of her commitment to youngsters to spread the word about the YOUTH programme.

Ready for a new experience, I, young and unemployed, visited the college in Antwerp where I am on the list of graduate students. I had already participated in the Erasmus project earlier during my studies. By chance, I came across a brochure about EVS - European Voluntary Service. Before long I went to an information evening about this Programme organised by JINT, the YOUTH programme National Agency of Flanders.

It seemed too good to be true: a return trip, board and lodging organised and paid for by the European Commission and I would even receive a monthly allowance for personal expenses !

I then spent many hours looking for projects, possible so-called sending organisations who could help me and contacting the person responsible for hosting new volunteers...



It didn't always turn out to be easy but then out of the blue I received a phone call from the project "Youth Information and Counselling Centre NAPA" in Finland which was looking for two volunteers. With my sending organisation in Belgium I prepared my application form and was granted the money a month and a half later.

Suomi, here I come ...!

This wonderful, unforgettable year as a European volunteer in Kokkola was at the same time my first contact with the YOUTH programme of which EVS is one "Action".

Through my work in the Youth Information centre NAPA, I soon discovered many more possibilities to build our European citizenship. Five different "Actions" providing the opportunity for either individuals or groups, to have international experiences in different European countries or to meet young people with the same interests in their local community.

"Internationalisation" and "open-mindedness" are the co-words within the YOUTH programme. Therefore, to reduce the imaginary barriers that youngsters have between their country of residence and the rest of Europe and even the wider world, the European Commission has created four "Actions" with mainly international activities. Their main aim is for young people to become more acquainted with the diversity of cultures and discover the values of European citizenship. That leaves us somehow with one "Action 3" which is more, though not totally, concentrated on activities at national level.

The more I worked at an international level, the more I noticed that great project ideas within the local community were not paid enough attention. Becoming a more open-minded person actually already starts at home, in your local youth centre, with your friends, learning how to work in a team. Action 3: Youth Group Initiatives supports young people's initiative and creativity and gives them the chance to turn their ideas into reality.



Youth Information Centre already explains a lot about my daily tasks as a volunteer, providing youngsters with all kinds of information. I took every opportunity I had to learn more about the different Actions of the YOUTH programme. I was really amazed by the advantages of being a European citizen and I wanted to spread the word about the YOUTH programme to other young people. My Spanish colleague-volunteer and I had the idea - through info-workshops, intercultural learning, country presentations, etc. - to inform youngsters about the YOUTH programme and encourage them to live an international experience.

Wouldn't it be great to be able to combine activities with the local community and still learn more through international contacts? Through our mentor we came into contact with "Young Team Europe" in Vorarlberg, Austria, a group of young people that had already been active in this field for one year. In this way we could share tools, knowledge and methods to get our information across to the youngsters.

A new idea was born and it didn't take very long before CIMO, the Finnish National Agency, was well informed about it. In August 2003 I participated in a Networking Seminar in Zakopane, Poland. I became more acquainted with the idea of what a Networking project is; how to create, organise and realise one; how to give the project a European dimension,... International cooperation shouldn't be taken for granted: cultural differences, language barriers which can lead to misunderstandings, different expectations, etc. are all possible difficulties within the process of teamwork.

Intercultural learning, creation of partnerships, project management, recognition and appreciation of diversity, personal development, etc. are all benefits for collaboration and thus other people are included in a project. With the practical knowledge that I gained about budget planning and how to fill in the application form, this important part of the procedure didn't scare me anymore.

Filling in the application form before the 1st of September deadline and working out the project idea were the first steps which required many hours of work.

A first draft of the application was forwarded to our partner group in Austria to bring together our ideas and continue further preparation. The content was then discussed and fixed together.

The Finnish steering group of the EU YOUTH programme decided on the 16th of October 2003 to support *Young Team Europe*, the Networking project between Finland and Austria. The actual activities of Young Team Europe started at the beginning of December 2003. Besides general meetings with the Finnish group, four participants organised info-workshops at the local high school in Utsjoki, Northern Finland. The proposed duration for the realisation of the *Young Team Europe project* last seven months until the end of June 2004.

Preparation meetings are held in both Finland and Austria with their groups. Also two networking meetings - one in Finland and one in Austria - will take place, so that the participants can physically meet, share their knowledge, discuss what needs to be further developed and create a common tool to bring the information across from young people to young people.

A mid-term report, written by the Finnish and the Austrian team, will be delivered to CIMO. The first half of the project will then be evaluated and possible changes will be made to get the most out of our activities. The final report and evaluation will be made available on the Internet (http://nuorisotoimi.kokkola.fi/young_team_europe.html).

In the future we hope to enlarge the network with other European countries, especially in view of the new European Union members. The idea is to transfer our knowledge and a youth information tool to the new members of the network and to incorporate new ideas and initiatives from them.

Building a Networking project is not to be taken for granted, especially because there are two or more partners involved at an international level. Having regular contacts between the different teams takes a lot of time and requires planning. It is of significant importance that the tasks are well divided and that each group takes it seriously and continues to work with enthusiasm. It is difficult to know in advance if you can count on your partner or not, but you learn by doing and you need to encourage each other to continue working well. Good team spirit means a lot.

Slowly but surely our networking project is developing. It is still also very new to us, but by trial and error we are learning.

Ilse Volders
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Natural born European



Being European for me just started two and a half years ago and nothing has been the same since ... A young German's story about his ups and downs in the film industry: a motivating account of a motivated young man. From Youth Initiatives to Contact Making Seminar and European Voluntary Service, Willie has several European experiences to relate: an insight into projects where European fundings do make a difference.

With some friends I applied for a Youth Initiative Action 3, we had the idea of making a series of short comic movies, that involved foreigners and supported the idea of multicultural life through the simple medium of laughter. And to our surprise, the money was actually granted, which was probably due to the freshness of the idea. With "Die Jagd nach dem goldenen Boerek " (the chase after the golden kebab), the movie's title, we did not want to raise eye brows or be boring. We wanted to approach young people with our message, so it had to be a wicked, high-paced funny motion-picture, like what you see on MTV.

I tried to commit myself a great deal to the project. At this time I had just failed an important entry-exam to a big design-university by just one sissy point. So I thought, "what the heck, forget about design, from now on I'll just do movies." To support this vague vision, I started working for a private regional TV-Station in Berlin to gain some knowledge that could be helpful for shooting a movie. A great idea, I thought. And indeed it was, because I really started to like the job and quickly gained know-how and a reputation in the station. But eventually it became obvious that my 12 hour-working days did not leave too much time for the main objective: our European project. It took us another year to deliver some decent results because movies are a complicated thing to do.

You're not only depending on the right weather-conditions, but you need to have a relatively big staff with equipment and of course actors, who knows what they are doing.

At the last seminar, I met Sergio, a French filmmaker. We do not speak each others' language at all, which gives a funny picture while communicating, but as a matter of fact we share the very same visions of movie-making, if I understood him correctly ;)

And all of that has to be organised for the same day of production. Quite a task! There is a reason why movie-companies never give the exact date for the release of a film. The group itself changed several times because some potential contributors lost interest and I had to move to a different part of Germany. I was lucky enough to get a trainee-education for TV-journalists meanwhile at two major private channels. These spots are rare and you have to compete with hundreds for them. Even if this is hard to say, I reckon that journalism is the profession I'd love to do in my life.

I think it's good that the functions in a Youth Initiative have to be certain, not everybody can do everything and you should stick to the job you love doing and know something about. Then you all have the responsibility as well as reputation on your side and there are fewer struggles. We were quite a harmonious team, we knew each other from the TV-work or friends and everybody knew what to do. Still, time was our major problem. We have had to decrease the project for the moment and just made one episode of around 8 minutes. But the good thing is we can come back to it whenever we want. Because of the great support of the Union, we bought the equipment, which we could never have afforded. The project still involves more than 10 people but movies are great: everyone who sees it gets involved automatically. We will think about great ways of showing the film to young people. One good possibility is seminars.

Because of my involvement in the Youth Initiatives I have twice been invited to international seminars held up in Hanover and I loved them very much, which was majorly connected to the characters, who happened to be there, too. I'm honestly glad that there is still funding for such meetings because just by meeting European people, who come from abroad but at the same time are so similar to you, you deeply understand how many things we have in common. This is a very true European dimension.

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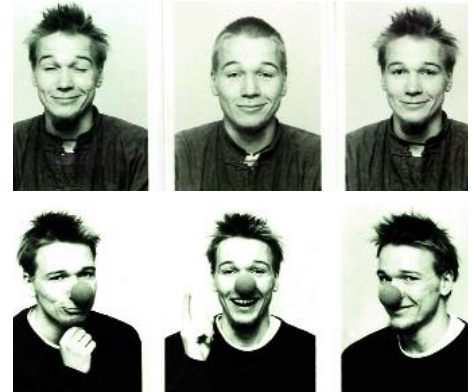


This year we will start a network-project - a movie about an immigrant, depicting his struggles and his great moments in both Germany and France. It's gonna be shot in cinemascope and will combine Fiction, Documentary and Animation. Again, quite a task, but if you don't think big, you won't achieve big. Maybe in the process I'll be able to engage friends of mine who were nominated for an Oscar last year. Having them aboard would add great value, but I will have to get different scholarships and funding for this. I will have to go through many doors but I think it will be worth the effort.

Europe hopefully comes even closer to me this May. I want to do an European Voluntary Service in Italy, writing for an European magazine. I think that's the next natural step in my development. It would support my skills for further scriptwriting and a little dolce vita wouldn't be too bad either! It will be decided soon but one thing is already certain, over the past 3 years I have become my very own European project!

Willie Schumann

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Action 3 supported by private companies ?

IMPACT+: companies are investing to support European young people...

YOUTH INITIATIVES OUT & ABOUT



Mission Locale de Roubaix is an association whose objective is the advancement of the social integration and the qualifications of young people.

It launched a European network in 98, Yonet (Youth Opportunities Network) bringing together 14 organisations across Europe to promote the involvement of young people through international cooperation.

With IMPACT+ we are looking to mobilise the key elements of society to act together in the heart of the suburbs. This will take a concrete form through the creation of a European Club of socially concerned companies, providing support for the projects of young people as a complement to European financing (Action 3).

The target public

Groups of European young people aged 15 to 25 living in disadvantaged urban areas. Those involved and who want to set up a project and submit a description of the Youth Initiative to the Yonet website. We then check the eligibility criteria of the project and forward details to the private companies.

The projects are:

- . initiated, managed and implemented by young people
- . innovative and creative
- . local project rooted in a local authority
- . local impact: local dynamics generated by the project
- . social utility: helping to strengthen neighbouring social relations.

We have faced several difficulties in involving private companies in this project. It is difficult to convince private companies that the added value of the YOUTH programme can (in a way) affect them.

Now this project only covers the Nord-Pas de Calais as a pilot scheme. Our dream is to cover all Europe and launch a kind of network that would support Networking project as well.

No dream, no hopes...

Pascal Chaumette

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SALTO YOUTH INITIATIVES

Resource Centre

provides

Support, Information, Training courses,
Partner finding for Networking projects

Main activities in 2004

WHAT YOU CAN APPLY FOR...

Training Course: Youth in Action 3 through Sports!

WHAT? Training Course on the topic Youth Initiatives and sports, to encourage the creation and development of Action 3 local or Networking projects focusing on sports, by using them as a non-formal educational tool. WHO? SALTO Youth Initiatives RC, within the framework of the European Year of Education through Sports. WHO FOR? Youth workers, social workers, sports educators... directly working with young people in the field of sports. WHEN & WHERE? 25 June - 30 June 2004 in Brussels (Belgium). APPLICATIONS? Deadline - 31 May 2004. MORE DETAILS? www.salto-youth.net/TC-A3sports

Training Course: Get in Net! Networking project management

WHAT? Two Training Courses on project management to contribute to the development of high quality networking projects within the framework of Action 3 of the YOUTH programme. WHO? YOUTH National Agencies in Poland & Estonia and SALTO Youth Initiatives RC. WHO FOR? Ex-beneficiaries of Group Initiatives who have partners and a concrete idea for developing a networking project. WHEN & WHERE? The course will take place twice in 2004: 21-26 September 2004 in Szczawnica (Poland) & 30 November - 5 December 2004 in Brussels (Belgium). APPLICATIONS? Will soon be available on the SALTO-YOUTH website. MORE DETAILS? www.salto-youth.net/TC-GetinNet

Contact Making Seminars for Networking of Youth Initiatives

WHAT? Contact-making seminars gather together young people who want to find partners to develop networking projects - particularly between former beneficiaries of Group Initiatives. WHO? Seminars organised by the YOUTH National Agencies with the support of SALTO Youth Initiatives RC. WHO FOR? Young people between 18-25 interested in developing a networking project with European partners. WHEN & WHERE? During 2004, seminars in Belgium (April), Romania (July), Italy (October), Spain (October), Finland (December). APPLICATIONS? Please ask the National Agencies where the seminars will take place. MORE DETAILS ? www.salto-youth.net/A3courses

SUPPORTING YOUR PROJECTS...

Partner finding for Networking projects

SALTO Youth Initiatives helps find partner groups to develop local initiatives into Networking projects. If you are interested, please contact us! You will find some partner requests under <http://www.salto-youth.net/partner-requests>

Share your experiences in Group Initiatives & Networking projects

SALTO Youth Initiatives is collecting good practices of local & Networking projects around Europe. If you have developed a Group Initiative or a Networking project within the YOUTH programme you are invited to tell us about your experience... Some examples are already available under www.salto-youth.net/GI and under: www.salto-youth.net/NP

have Compendium of Group Initiative projects

A collection of local Group Initiatives realized during 2003 in Europe is being produced by SALTO Youth Initiatives. It will help young people to find groups who developed local projects in the same fields of interest. The compendium will be finished by summer 2004 and available at SALTO-YOUTH and in the YOUTH National Agencies in your countries. A contact list of National Agencies can be found at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/contact.pdf>

Want to know more about the European dimension of local projects ?

The European dimension is particularly important in the case of locally or regionally based Youth Initiatives. Group Initiatives projects should contain a European dimension. But it is not always easy to incorporate into or highlight the European dimension of a local project, that is to say into participants' daily activities. The European dimension can be interpreted in different ways depending on different cultures across Europe. Some tips may help to give a European dimension to your local projects, either a Group Initiative or a Future Capital project. Please take a look at the website: www.salto-youth.net/european-dimension

Please visit
www.salto-youth.net/A3courses
for more details

