

YOUTH IN ACTION 3 !

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

03 - spring 2006



IN THIS ISSUE,

Special issue on the **PARTICIPATION** of European youth in society, in their community, in projects of their own, in civil society... Get an European overview of what's available to help get you involved, get you inspired by projects developed by committed young people and get some support to start it all by yourself !

Participation as a political priority ... indeed !



Let's par-ti-ci-pa-te !!!

First of all,

... before getting to the heart of the matter, I would like to announce a slight restructuring of our resource centre. Our coordinator Henar Conde has recently left the ship to take up new professional challenges at the Youth Unit Executive Agency of the European Commission. I wish her of course all the best for her new job, which is luckily still in the same sector!

Henar has brought an extensive and priceless contribution to SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre since she set it up in August 2003. To put it simply, without her professional and personal commitment to the centre, the development of Youth Initiatives in Europe wouldn't be the same. A lot of training courses have been developed in cooperation with National Agencies, from Contact making Seminars (Get in Net) to project Management Training Courses (Move You / Us - Work in Net) to innovative training courses promoting peer education (Peer 2 Peer) and the system of coaching in Youth Initiatives as a whole (Coach 2 Coach). The resource centre will of course carry on the same work to an equally high standard: the Get in Net modules will now become Network training courses for Youth Initiatives just like Bi-Tri-Multi are for Group Exchanges, SOHO for the European Voluntary Service and Tic Tac for Support measures. The concept of coaching (supporting / helping and empowering) also remains at the very heart of our work, since we strongly believe that this is one of the best tools to enhance **active participation** of young people: this is precisely what we want to talk about in this new issue of "Youth In Action 3! magazine"

In a word, thank you Henar for all your hard work !!!

I'm now delighted to introduce our new SALTO colleague Fatima Laanan. Many of those in the network might know Fatima since she has been working on the YOUTH programme in the Bureau International Jeunesse (BIJ) for 9 years and is still in charge of the training and cooperation plan and cooperation with partner countries at the National Agency. Welcome on board Fatima !!!

Now let's switch to the main contents of this brand new magazine !

The question is as simple as this: are you active, involved or taking part in society, in your community, in a project ? Or do you feel like doing so ? This is just perfect: we have decided to put the spotlight on the real, active participation of young Europeans. You might have experienced or heard about youth projects where adults make decisions, speak on behalf of young people and do not leave much space to contribute, to make choices, to express oneself... This is what is sometimes called "manipulation", "decoration" or "tokenism".

This magazine aims not to stop to this low level but rather to go up the ladder of participation: so please come and climb up the ladder!

First, do you want to be consulted and informed ?

Checkout the "P3" article (Participation as a **Political Priority**) (p.5-6), read the Please do Disturb conference outcomes and its declaration (pp.5-8) and find out why young people should be given the **right** and **concrete** opportunity to participate in our system of representative societies (p.12-13).

Do you need support?

Have a look at what you can learn in innovative **training courses** about **peer** learning (from young people to young people), **coaching** (supporting) of youth projects and **active participation** (p.18-19).

Do you feel like taking the lead of your own project?

Then check out the articles written by **young beneficiaries** about their **active commitment** in collective projects in the Youth Initiatives framework, the YOUTH programme or other national programmes... (p.10-11, p.14-17). Are you still not convinced about what **you could gain** from taking part in such projects for yourself and for values you believe in ?(p.8-9).

So step inside !



Patricia Brulefert (Belgium)
SALTO Youth Initiatives Ressource
Centre Coordinator
Email: patricia@salto-youth.net

List of contents

- 2 **Editorial: Let's par-ti-ci-pa-te !!!** by Patricia Brulefert, SALTO Youth Initiatives resource Centre
- 3 **List of Contents**
- A FRAMEWORK FOR PARTICIPATION**
- 4>5 **P³ now!** Participation as a political priority... indeed ! by Patricia Brulefert, SALTO Youth Initiatives resource Centre
- 6 **Please do disturb! Conference on Youth Participation.** Towards a common European approach & understanding, by Claudius Siebel National Agency Action 3 officer (Germany)
- 7-8 **Hanover Declaration on Youth Participation.** Outcomes of the Conference
- 9-10 **A springboard for youth participation.** Youth Initiatives as a great means to step into action ! by Majo Hansotte, Participation and citizenship officer, Bureau International Jeunesse (Belgium fr)
- DIFFERENT STRANDS OF PARTICIPATION**
- > **CIVIC LIFE**
- 11>12 **Challenge Yourself! Get involved !** A Polish programme for pupils who want to take the floor, by Joanna Hoffman, trainer (Poland)
- > **REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY**
- 13>14 **Can we fully participate in our democracy ?** What has been achieved & what still needs to be improved, by Reinaldas Baisbrodas from the European Youth Forum (Belgium)
- > **LEARNING TO PARTICIPATE**
- ... through projects
- 15 **Distant realities, common topics.** When active young people look for source of inspiration abroad, by Jorge Ponce from the 'Implicados' group (Spain)
- ... in civil society
- 16>18 **Let's initiate new mechanisms of social change !** The Youth programme and the Networking action as a driving force for youth participation, by Talia Delgado from Brainstroming-Alter Eco (Romania)
- ... through training courses
- 19 **Sharing the Wealth.** Zoom on Peer 2 Peer training course, by Buzz Bury, trainer (UK)
- 20>21 **A ghostly Halloween.** Zoom on the Coach 2 Coach training course, by Nerijus Kriaucinas, trainer (Lithuania)
- QUOTATIONS**
- 22>23 **May I Help ?** When coaching matters: quotations from coaches and young people. Selection Henar Conde & Patricia Brulefert, SALTO Youth Initiatives resource Centre
- SALTO YOUTH INITIATIVES RESOURCE CENTRE**
- 24 **What you can apply for... /Supporting your projects...**



Magazine produced & published by **SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre**
Bureau International Jeunesse (BIJ) 20-22, rue du Commerce - 1000 Brussels - Belgium
Tel. : + 32 2 227 52 82 or + 32 2 227 52 75. Fax : + 32 2 548 38 89
E-mail : youthinitiatives@salto-youth.net. Website : www.salto-youth.net/youthinitiatives



Editor: Patricia Brulefert. Editorial team: Henar Conde, Patricia Brulefert. Design & layout: Veronique Balthasart (BIJ).
Pictures: project beneficiaries. Printed in Belgium. Issue 3- Spring 2006

This publication has been made possible with the support of the European Commission and the Bureau International Jeunesse in the French Community of Belgium. Many thanks to Alex Lever-Webber for the proof-reading and also to all of those individuals who kindly contributed to this magazine and provided valuable accounts of their own experiences of Youth Initiatives. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily express the official view of the European Commission or the SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre.

P³ now!

Participation as a political priority

You and I are asked to “participate”... ? There is general conception that young people are more and more passive & consumerist nowadays and therefore they are being asked to react, to take an active part in society, to shape the society they live in... But are they given any chances to do so ? Are any concrete measures being taken at the European level to give a real boost to young people’s participation? Let’s get a short overview !



A requested political framework

As was declared by young people during the Hanover declaration on Youth Participation, participation is “important and required for a progressive democratic Europe, yet it has to be supported and a framework should be provided”. The participation of young people is a policy objective and it is also one of the principles of good governance at European level: participation in the decision making process is indeed essential in the shaping of society. As you all know, the Constitutional Treaty recently failed to be ratified in some Member States. There is a real need to include citizens and young people in matters of interest to them so as to reduce the gap and misunderstanding between themselves and administrations and policymakers & to gain the commitment and support needed by young people (in the development of the youth field and also much more widely in the whole of the European project).

The concept of “European citizenship” was established by the Maastricht Treaty, which specifies that citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace National citizenship. The reality is that many citizens regard the Union as merely an economic and remote political entity. Europe’s citizens must have the opportunity to experience a feeling of belonging to the Union.

So...

What can Europe do? What does Europe do ?

Youth policy falls under the remit of Member States, however, the European Union encourages exchanges between young Europeans (Article 149 of the Treaty). In this context, the EU has primarily been focused in the development of a Youth programme which promotes youth mobility and active participation.

The first major step taken to develop a Youth cooperation at EU level was through the adoption of the White Paper “A New Impetus for European YOUTH” in 2001 (drafted after a wide consultation with young Europeans): it identified 4 priorities for the cooperation between Member States: participation, information, voluntary activities and greater knowledge of youth. The White Paper is a document where the Commission presents new initiatives, it does not create obligations upon Member States. Does this mean that Europe has no say in the Youth sector and more specifically in the field of participation for young people? Not at all! European Youth cooperation has made some major achievements and it is even the first time that Youth cooperation has featured so visibly at an EU level!

Following the proposals made by the Commission in its White Paper, Member States within the Council of Ministers adopted in 2002 a Framework of European cooperation in the Youth field. Within this Framework, a special method was established to strengthen the cooperation between Member States on Youth cooperation: this is the “Open Method of Coordination” (OMC) What is it about? The OMC encourages cooperation between Member States on the 4 priorities identified and aims to share best practices across Member States. It involves setting common objectives, and a regular monitoring and reporting process. This method is “open” as youth organisations are consulted at national and European level throughout the reporting process. This is an ongoing process and we are now at the follow up phase for the implementation of the Common Objectives set for the 4 priorities of the OMC.

Moreover, action to promote EU citizenship consists of four strands, with their respective programmes which are due to be renewed in 2007: in the field of youth (Youth In Action), culture (Culture 2007), media (Media 2007) and Citizens for Europe (Civic Participation programme).

... and recently? The European Youth Pact!

The “European Youth Pact” was recently adopted by the Heads of States and Government who met in the European Council (March 2005). The European Commission adopted a Communication on “European policies concerning youth” (30 May 2005) as a follow-up to the European Youth Pact. The Council of Ministers has adopted a resolution on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship.

Do you have more questions about European Youth Policy ?

Please write to: eac-info@cec.eu.int

Ask your EU questions at the free service Europe Direct :

• by E mail: use the electronic form at europa.eu.int/europedirect/

• dial the freephone number : 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

Where to start?

Information as the door to participation



Do you feel like participating ? Any idea where to start, where to find information ? Don't wait any longer, visit the European Youth Portal! It's made for you ! What do you need to be an active citizen ? Do you need to be informed, to be trained, to learn how to participate ? In the European Youth Portal & especially in the section "Active citizenship" you'll find loads of interesting links that will help you search for useful documents, projects and organisations that will make an active citizen of Europe of you ! Let's all get involved! Have you visited the European Youth Portal (<http://europa.eu.int/youth>) yet ?

What is the Youth Pact ?

The Youth Pact is a call by the European Council (the Head of States and government themselves) to the Member States and the European Union ("each within the limits of its own powers") to draw upon a "set of action lines" to put in place policies and measures on behalf of young people. Concretely it means that the Youth Pact sets a kind of "reference framework" for what the Member States could do within the "Lisbon Strategy" for young people; this especially includes making the policies of Member States which affect young people more consistent and developing better links between the different policy areas covered by the Pact.

The Youth Pact aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, and to facilitate the reconciliation of working life and family life. It places "Youth" within the framework of the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs (the Lisbon Strategy'), which is one of the EU's top priorities until 2010, and aims to create more and better jobs in a more dynamic, innovative and attractive Europe.

Indeed, the Lisbon Strategy is highly relevant to young people since it addresses issues which affect them directly, such as education, employment and social inclusion. The Pact will mean a more unified and coherent approach to developing a youth dimension to policies in these areas.

To put it simply...

In the EU's usual method of decision-making, the Commission makes a proposal to the Council and to Parliament who then debate it, propose amendments and eventually adopt it as EU law. Similarly within the framework of Youth cooperation, the Council adopts political decision on the basis of proposals presented by the Commission.

The Commission adopted the European White Paper on a new Impetus for Youth (2001) providing the European Union with suggestions concerning a new framework for cooperation in Youth policy.

The Council then adopted concrete political measures:

- a **framework of European cooperation** in the youth field, including the Open Method of Coordination (2002)
- **common objectives** for youth participation and youth information (2003), for voluntary activities and greater understanding and knowledge of youth (2004)
- a **revised framework** of European cooperation in the youth field addressing the concerns of young people in Europe implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship (2005)

And for young Europeans ... concretely speaking ?

There is for instance the European Youth Portal launched as a concrete result of the White Paper: it's a portal designed to better inform young people about subjects of interest to them !

The European Council also stressed that the success of the Pact depends on the involvement of all parties, especially youth organisations. Every year, when making their reports on how they are putting the Lisbon Strategy in practice, Member States should explain what they are doing for young people under the Youth Pact.

What's happening for young people ?

Young people have been widely consulted and the best European projects have been celebrated !!!

1. Online EU consultation with young people: watch out for the results !

At the initiative of DG Education and Culture, from September to mid October, young people had the chance to make their voices heard in Europe, by taking part in the online consultation: "Young people in Europe: promoting active citizenship and implementing the European Youth Pact".

The aim of the questionnaire was to find out how much young people know about EU youth policies, how they are involved and what their suggestions are regarding future policies at European level. It seems that young people need to take some concrete actions or projects in order to really feel like European citizens since to the question "What would be the most important means to develop European citizenship?" the majority of them answered: "to take part in European YOUTH projects (57,2%) - even before having a better knowledge of languages (48,3%) or having European citizenship courses at school! (46,6%)"

2.The European Youth Week 2005 - "Youth Takes the Floor" took place all around Europe 5-11 December 2005

Many events were organised in all countries focussing on the European Youth Programme and Youth Policy. More than 200 young people from all over Europe gathered in Brussels to debate the future of Europe in the "Youth takes the Floor" conference, expressing their opinions and views on current and future issues concerning Youth Policy. The European Youth Award highlighted the achievements of the 5 most outstanding youth projects supported by the EU's YOUTH Programme. Of these, 4 were Youth Initiative projects !!!

3. Online European Youth Portal Discussion Forum: about "active citizenship through participation": join now !!!

Don't wait: check out the European Youth Portal website (<http://europa.eu.int/youth/>) where you will find all the information!



Patricia Brulefert (Belgium)
SALTO Youth Initiatives
Ressource Centre Coordinator
Email: patricia@salto-youth.net

Please do disturb Conference on Youth Participation

Please do disturb ! Who ? What ? What for ? This was a call heard last April at Hanover by nearly 130 Europeans gathering professionals together with young people to interpellate politicians and help 'youth participation' have a say, be widely heard and listened to! Take a look at what happened during this European Conference on Youth Participation and enter the "disturbance process"!

Since the publication of the European White Paper "A new impetus on Youth" in 2002, participation has perhaps become the number one theme of European cooperation in the youth field (also called European Youth Policy). And nobody would doubt that through this process, the participation of young people as a theme and as a method has gained enormous impetus.

Since 2002 an increasing number of approaches and projects to strengthen and to realise youth participation has been undertaken, both at the level of official European and national politics as well as at the non governmental level. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has been implemented at a European level to set up common objectives in the field of youth participation and to exchange experiences within national politics. The OMC, as an instrument to realise the aims of the White Paper, has forced national governments to improve the participation of young people in Youth Work and Youth Policies in their countries.

Nevertheless there is still a lack of knowledge about the different national approaches and strategies in the field of youth participation. A common European strategy or a common European understanding is also missing. Because of this in the Autumn of 2004 the idea of a great European conference on Youth Participation was born. The German National Agency of the YOUTH programme took the initiative and fortunately found wonderful partners with the Dutch and Polish National Agencies, the SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre and with Profondo as the local cooperation partner and organiser. These partners together created the concept of the European Conference on Youth Participation with, as its' motto "Please do disturb !" which was held from 7 to 10 April 2005 in Hanover, Germany.

The conference was attended by nearly 130 experts from 28 European countries, each representing different spheres of youth participation. Municipal officers from Spain met social scientists from Finland, British youth workers met ministerial heads from Belgium and young people from youth organisations in Poland met officials from the National Agencies. During the three days in Hanover numerous speeches, 9 intensive workshops, a panel discussion and an Open Space with a further 30 workshops took place.



In the Open Space participants were given the opportunity to set their own agenda and to take responsibility for their interests and their method and approach to work and discussion. As a frame for all these debates a project market was created where participants could present their projects. This was also the stage for some of the European pilot projects in youth participation which have been funded by the European Commission in the last two years.

Nothing about us without us !

As an important result of all the debates and discussions the participants agreed on a "Hanover declaration on Youth Participation" which in the final session of the conference was officially presented to the youngest German Member of Parliament, Anna Lührmann (21 years old). "Not a paper for the drawer" was her reaction, giving the conference participants hope that they will be heard by official politicians.

The declaration establishes concrete political demands. It requires a binding political participation from young people in all fields which concern them. "Nothing about us without us !" said Renaldas Vaisbrodas, president of the European Youth Forum, and with that he put it in a nutshell.

The conference was a good example of what an intensive exchange at European level in such an important field as youth participation can look like. Of course in three days it was not possible to find a new common European strategy for successful and everlasting youth participation but as one participant remarked: "This is not the end but the beginning", the beginning of a long process to establish a new culture of youth participation in Europe.

On the next page please take a look at the Hanover Declaration on Youth Participation (short version) which was produced during the conference. If you would like more information about the conference, the results and the follow-up please contact me.

"This is not the end but the beginning", the beginning of a long process to establish a new culture of youth participation in Europe.



Claudius Siebel (Germany)
Project Officer - Action 3
German National Agency
for the YOUTH programme
E-mail: siebel@jfemail.de

Please do disturb!

Hanover Declaration for Participation

The "Hanover Declaration on Youth Participation" tries to build a connection between the momentum of the different European papers and documents on youth participation (e.g. the "White paper: A new impetus for European Youth", the "Council Resolution on common objectives for participation by and information for young people" etc.) and its political sphere of origin and the level of practical youth participation work on local or national level.

In respect and appreciation of the recommendations set down in the "Council resolution of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people" (2003/C 295/04), we follow in principle the three objectives identified:

- . increase participation of young people in civic life in their community
- . increase participation of young people in the system of representative democracy
- . support for various forms of learning to participate!

Increase participation of young people in civic life in their community

Participation and active citizenship needs to be based around opportunities to influence our practical environment, daily life and to be supported at this level by those in political responsibility. Binding mechanisms are still lacking in most countries that assure the participation of young people or their representatives in issues and decisions that concerns them. We therefore recommend the following aspects concerning the four key areas:

...information:

- . That political bodies agree on the importance of youth participation
- . That guidelines on positive participation for adults and young people will be established and be given binding relevance
- . That honesty, openness and transparency will be guiding principles in the dialogue between the actors.



...skills:

- . That youth workers, teachers and politicians would improve/develop the skills to listen, empower and be open to young people participating
- . That training and coaching shall be provided and supported for young people especially on local as well as on regional and national level to build and further develop participation skills.

Binding mechanisms are still lacking in most countries that assure the participation of young people or their representatives in issues and decisions that concerns them.

...opportunities:

- . That environments, structures and strategies are required to ensure that there are opportunities for exchange and dialogue
- . That schools, voluntary and statutory youth organisations, NGO's and Youth centres should all have the resources and provision for youth participation.

...support:

- . That appropriate resources and investment are essential for the development of a sustainable youth participation infrastructure
- . That trained and experienced staff/coaches/facilitators and animators are required wherever young people want and need them
- . That specialists and youth participation workers would act as advisors and coaches to the decision makers.

Increase participation of young people in the system of representative democracy

In the European Union young people could and should have a more visible influence on politics. It is well known that the polling percentages, e.g. for the last elections on the European Parliament are down to approximately 30%, and that the number of youngsters in political parties is dwindling.

In general there is a low trust in the system by the young people, a pessimistic view on their real opportunities to influence political decisions within this system and a low self-confidence of the young people.

Young people are not consulted in most countries from the beginning; Tokenism is an often experienced answer on attempts of young people to gain an influence on political decision making processes.

There is as well a lack of transparency and central decisions in the NGO field; volunteer and youth organisations have to take care of democratic structures and bottom-up approaches need to be adopted.

The conference attendants therefore recommend the following possible solutions:

- . To increase and improve youth information
- . To improve the education in the formal sector on political topics and democracy
- . To institutionalise (where not yet established) a framework of the youth policy in terms of youth laws, pacts, forums, consulting system etc
- . To establish a culture of openness at the political level by: opening political parties to young people raising awareness of politicians about the importance and benefits of youth participation consulting young people about their views
- . To increase attractiveness of the political decision making process

In practical, this means to:

- . Establish campaigns about elections adjusted to the different age groups
- . Offer trial elections at schools and through other organisations
- . Make the existing legislation accessible
- . Institutionalise a system of youth consultation (e.g. youth advisory boards, parliamentary committee on youth, co-management bodies etc.)
- . Encourage selection guidelines in the youth councils (geographical, gender, age, diversity,...)
- . The development of education programmes on diplomacy, lobbying, active citizenship
- . Establish participation networking among NGOs



All points in the "Common Objectives..." (2003) remain important issues, especially "to further develop interaction between formal, non-formal and informal education; to promote and increase awareness of the benefits to all of the participation of committed young people and to combat prejudices against young people which prevent them from playing an effective part.

In order to address these objectives, the conference participants recommend that...:

- . Best practices in this field have to be promoted and developed further
- . Information on youth participation opportunities is essential and therefore should be improved
- . Schools should open up for a more representative youth participation as it works in most countries; it should start with the interests and motivation of young people
- . The learning process is better achieved through the involvement of the young people and this can be done through: human rights education, coaching, training and experiential learning with their peers and adults
- . Co-operation initiated between different partners, especially between formal and non-formal structures has to be intensified.

To achieve these goals, political support is not sufficient and financial commitments and resources have to be provided.

Furthermore ...

We have agreed during this conference that participation is not a self-evident value. If participation is a fake, if it is a mere representation without a realistic impact on issues that matter for young people, it makes no sense. Even more, simulations of youth participation have a dangerous impact on what is as a result known as political apathy and a decrease of trust in democratic institutions and processes among young people. We consider participation not a self functioning automatic instrument. It requests the effort bath of the political sphere, the sphere of youth work and the young people itself. To enable active and effective participation, politicians and local authorities are asked to implement "open structures of coordination", which provide relevant impact for young people on issues of their concerns. In order to have youth work being a reliable partner for the political approach, the main players (youth organisations, youth councils, youth participation structures, projects...) have to give up their competitive attitude of speaking exclusively for "the youth". None of them can alone cover the variety of youth interest and activities.



Support for various forms of learning to participate

In order to ensure the participation of young people a learning process that is accessible, inclusive of all and meaningful has to be developed. The learning process of participation aims to develop competences, attitudes, skills and knowledge. Young people learning to participate can have a variety of venues: the family, school and the formal educational system, the vocational and job sector, peers, youth organisations and projects - and may also include many other informal opportunities.

From the actions of the European Youth programme and the pilot projects for participation supported by the European Commission, a dynamic has been initiated and new initiatives been developed at the local level in the field of non-formal and informal education to promote the active participation of young people. The differences lead to a lack of cohesion, understanding and sustainability.

School is considered as the most ideal place where participation should be learned and experienced and this should start at an early age. Many schools though do not work with principles of youth participation.

**For downloads and additional information on the declaration and the conference:
www.pdd.youthinaction.de**

A Springboard for youth participation

Activities developed by Youth Initiatives enable a large number of young people to become inventive in their daily lives and to speak out on the most important world questions. The world is changing and so is the way that young people are acting. They are participating differently. Different. That's it: let's make a difference on subjects you feel close to, on a Europe you might feel far from and... on yourself !



Youth initiatives: at the heart of contemporary change

From dream to action: society as a construction site

The desire for young people to participate in the life of their district, city, town or village, as well as in worldwide questions, is certainly present in the twenty-first century. Contrary to what is often said, young people are getting involved. However, today a change in forms of involvement is observed for young people. By comparison to their elders, they are much less fond of debate, long verbose arguments and interminable exchanges of opinion. Their method of involvement is more creative and symbolic, linked to the evolution of the media and of globalisation. A particular fondness is therefore becoming apparent in young people for creative forms of involvement, with images, music, the body and theatre,... to the fore.

Among the most often used formats in the involvement of young people today, the following passions are revealed: committed documentaries, photographs soliciting reaction, urban intervention, multicultural music and urban poetry, opinion-based journalism, digital creations, shock poster campaigns, inventive and critical parades, street performances, theatre... All the above examples serve to show us that young people consider their involvement in community life through the prism of creativity.

Youth initiatives : a link for political and social Europe

From dream to European citizenship: getting to grips with a concrete Europe

Youth Initiatives represents an essential link within the YOUTH programme to ensure that young people find their place in political and social Europe, so that all young people are able to get involved in the issues of today and tomorrow. Whilst allowing young people to get involved in a joint project, they offer concrete and lively involvement, through which young people achieve something together and come to an agreement on objectives. Youth Initiatives see to it that young people try their hand at taking on responsibility, negotiating between themselves and their surroundings, planning and distribution.

Youth Initiatives is an action that links an area (that where the young people live) with an interest for the European context, that is to say that these projects are about a theme or concern common to young Europeans, in line with the values upheld in Europe and given priority consideration. In the same way, Youth Initiatives often have an intercultural dimension. Besides, by means of Youth Initiatives, young people have the chance to become actors in their own life and bearers of the future, through the suggestion of solutions and improvements at a local level and even through the creation of works or tools that are able to be of use to and arouse the interest of other young people Europe-wide.

Lastly Youth Initiatives constitute a remarkable means for providing experience of responsibility, autonomy and involvement for the benefit of a common interest, which can be attributed to political involvement in the purest and noblest sense of the word "political": getting involved in human society...

Youth initiatives : an experiential learning

From dream to education: the importance of learning

Young people represent an awesome informal and citizenship education tool, as the defining characteristic of youth initiatives is to take as a starting point the day-to-day experience of the young people who submit a project proposal.

Inasmuch as the action is followed under conditions of free and voluntary participation, young people are placed in the situation of players rather than apprentices. This position of responsible actors is essential for young people and allows them to live a multiple experience through which they gain competences by developing creative actions.



By means of Youth Initiatives, young people gain cognitive skills (gathering of information on Europe, other cultures, and European institutions, and discovering the constraints of a given procedure, the social and economic context of the action pursued,...), social and relational skills (negotiating, group debate, acting in combination with others, promoting a project, meeting people, listening, power to convince,...), ethical skills (openness to others, development of solidarity, respect of the democratic principles of human freedom and equality, etc.), pragmatic and strategic skills (planning and carrying out an action,...) and in some cases political skills in the sense evoked previously (putting oneself at the service of the common interest).

Youth initiatives : a step-by-step adventure

From dream to action: a human journey

The value of Youth Initiatives experience does not lie solely in the quality or performance of the project; it lies first and foremost in the wealth of processes preceding project completion. The main priority is the encouragement of encounters and negotiation within a group framework.



We are able to formalise the human journey of Youth Initiatives in terms of a progression from co-existence to active commitment and entrepreneurship.

The suggested progression in four stages at the bottom of this page is merely intended for indicative purposes and is open to adaptation. Each project may enter at the desired stage depending on the audience concerned and the context in question.

This progression is not rigid; it is open to change. It allows young beneficiaries or coaches to ascertain at what point their project group is (to "photograph" the group), so as to identify what has to be worked on in order to facilitate access to full participation. This tool also enables the programming of actions: identification of the steps that will require some time.

In short, this journey helps to establish at what level action is required and with what intensity; for example, a group of young people lacking in social skills will take time to communicate and co-exist, and the project will have to give priority to this starting point in the choice of procedures.

On the other hand, other young people may already be very much at ease with negotiation, assumption of responsibility, respect of others, and understanding of common rules; they may also already be very creative. In such cases, instructors may push them more towards the demands of an original production or already contemplate the prospect of a cultural enterprise and the commitment to a local or worldwide cause...



Majo Hansotte

Participation and citizenship officer
Bureau International Jeunesse
Belgium fr
E-mail: majo.hansotte@cfwb.be

Youth Initiatives : a step-by-step adventure ...

STEP 4:
Take initiatives, commit and act

STEP 3:
Carry out a common production and distribute it

STEP 2:
Express yourself, develop your creativity

STEP 1:
Communicate, gather information, co-exist -----

Challenge yourself: get involved !



Young people are constantly asked to participate, to take an active role in society as responsible citizen ... but what is designed for them to truly facilitate their participation? Let's have a look at a Polish programme that is very successful among those young people willing to make their ideas and projects come true: follow the MOD...

What is the MOD? It's a programme addressed to young people who would like to do something for their local area. MOD is an abbreviation from the Polish name for the programme Young People's Civic Action (Młodzi Obywatele Działaja) run by the Centre for Citizenship Education Foundation in Warsaw, Poland.

Young People's Civic Action

MOD is an efficient tool for getting youngsters involved in civic life, and offering them some experience in trying to achieve specific goals and in working for the benefit of others. The programme also empowers pupils both to work and to cooperate in a group and within the local environment. In such a way, young people realise that they can have an influence on their local environment and gain support from their peers.

Light Brings Safety

Pupils from a high school in Lublin identified the lack of lighting on one main street near the school as a safety problem for pedestrians. They decided to take on this problem as a MOD project. Eventually their thorough research and conviction convinced local authorities to rebuild the pedestrian walkway and to install lampposts.

It is the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) Foundation that designed the programme MOD for middle school and secondary school pupils as well as for youth-organised groups.

The programme encourages young people to become actively involved in the public life of their school and local community. Over 500 schools have taken part in the programme, and over 6000 young people have developed their own projects since 1998 when the programme started !

Aggression in Schools

Youngsters from high schools in Poznan agreed that one of the biggest problems in their school community is aggression. After running many interviews and thorough research, the pupils decided that renovating the school courtyard and improving the school radio station could help decrease the incidence of aggression by offering pupils a safe space where they could spend their free periods. Spending time outside and listening to music can help relieve the stress of school and boredom during free time.

A step by step approach

All MOD groups register for CCE through their schools. MOD projects can be organised by pupils self-government, school European Clubs, classes or any groups of young people interested in working for the good of their local community. All projects are originally created and run by active young people.

MOD makes young people work together and think about the possible projects they would like to work on. First they have to focus on one specific problematic issue they feel concerned about and they would like to address. If no specific case to work on can be identified (either because they could not think of a special project or because they cannot agree on one sole problem), they can then resort to surveys or other opinion polls to isolate an issue or divide into different sub-groups to deal with all the problems identified.

The second step is about collecting all available information on the issue that was chosen (through the Internet, interviews, local authorities, etc.).

Afterwards, the young participants develop their own solution to the problem. It is then time to discuss how to convince the appropriate authorities to consider their propositions if such structures need to be involved.

Let's Read Together

This project encourages youngsters from middle and secondary schools to carry out some reading workshops among their younger peers from kindergarten and primary schools. In the middle school from Radziki Duze, young volunteers read to their peers in primary school during afternoon-school day-care hours. They also organise games and activities for their younger peers. The volunteers plan to organise "fairytale afternoons" in each of the four elementary schools in the district. The pupils' activities have also increased the parents' interest and involvement in their children's reading.

How to actively support youth groups in their projects?

Each group taking part in the MOD gets its own Internet site: young people can therefore publish their project description, news, pictures or presentation. On the main MOD site we publish materials and all project examples from previous years. We keep in touch with all the 'MOD groups' by sending MOD newsletters, e-mails and also through telephone chats to highlight successes and difficulties met. We want them to feel our support and encouragement in their activism. We are currently designing an e-learning course for young leaders about their everyday project management.



CCE has designed workshops meant for youth groups participating in the MOD about problems identification and solving. The workshops address issues such as: group work, project planning and management, conflict resolutions, decision-making, communication skills, public relations (media and local authorities).

Every year CCE trains both youth groups and their teachers. Indeed CCE provides training courses for teachers, as they are the youth groups' first supporters in their projects. The teachers are trained to supervise and to coach but not to take over duties and responsibilities: this is about keeping the youth group motivated, helping them to work efficiently as a group and in providing adult support whenever needed. What matters above all is to make young people aware they can achieve their goals.

How to valorise/evaluate A MOD project?

CCE organizes an Annual National Showcase of Students' Portfolios at the end of each school year. Youngsters from all over Poland present their projects results during this fair: a description of the problem identified and suggested solutions they have worked upon.

This is also the chance to meet other pupils, to exchange ideas but also to be confronted by 'guest experts'. The experts are here to discuss the projects with the youth group, share their opinions about them during the closing ceremony and offer diplomas to all the participating groups.

Our Lake

Pupils from an elementary school in Czeplach were responsible for taking care of a wild swimming area near a local lake. Moreover they also organised regular testing of the water to promote a clean environment. As a result of the project's samples, the local authorities had to regularly clean the lake-side since despite the bi-annual cleaning from the youth group, the rough plant-life continued to pose a safety threat.

From a local to a European project ?

MOD is also a first step and a very good start to gaining some experience in applying for a Group Initiative project of the YOUTH programme on a wider scale. This experience may also lead young people to develop an international project with partners from anywhere in Europe and spread their good practices and ideas... It is a good way to make young people believe in their ideas, those ideas that may come true after having been treated very seriously! These project beneficiaries have a lot of influence on their peers and bring real value to the local community or their school.



Joanna Hoffman (Poland)
MOD trainer
E-mail: joanna@ceo.org.pl

The Programme MOD is inspired by the Project Citizen originally designed by the Centre for Civic Education from Calabasas, http://www.civiced.org/project_citizen.php

Can we fully participate in our democracy ?

"Participation, participation, participation..." they say. Indeed "participation" is on every politicians' lips. But what for? Who should participate and be given the chance to do so ? What has been developed so far ? How can we participate ? Why is it so crucial in strengthening real democracy ? How can politicians concretely ensure young people's effective participation ? In this article, Renaldas VAISBRODAS, President of the European Youth Forum concretely presents major benefits, achievements and necessary improvements concerning the participation of young people in society.

Young People and the Right to Participation

The right to take part in government and the right to express an opinion are enshrined as basic universal human rights and are most often realised through the notion of civic participation, a practice that has become increasingly popular to the discourse of citizenship and human rights in the past century. The notion of participation itself is tied to efforts to progress from representative to participatory democracy, so as to facilitate people's direct involvement in political processes and matters which affect them. Traditionally however, young people have often remained invisible in the realm of representative democracy. This is despite the fact that there has been a creeping realisation over the past century of the value of young people's involvement in matters that affect them. In more recent years though, concrete measures have been undertaken to promote and encourage the active participation of young people in representative democracies across Europe.

The benefits of Youth Participation

The European Youth Forum believes that the active participation of young people in society is a prerequisite for learning about democracy and is instrumental in ensuring

***"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek to receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers",
Art 19 – 1948 Declaration of Human Rights.***

***"Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives..."
Art 21 - 1948 Declaration of Human rights.***



their continuing involvement in the democratic process throughout their lives, as well as helping to prevent political alienation. The European Youth Forum aims to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and the society in which they live, nationally, regionally and locally. In addition to participation being a key to representative democracy, participation is in itself a process which brings together young people from a variety of backgrounds in co-operation, supporting social inclusion and the building of community life. It promotes mutual understanding among young people and contributes to a more multicultural and diverse society.

Developing Youth Participation in Europe

One of the most important steps taken by the European Union in increasing young people's participation was through the creation of its 2001 White Paper – A new Impetus for European Youth. Following the White Paper, the Council of the European Union adopted a resolution identifying four priorities as common objectives in the youth field.

The first common objective is that of participation and since this time Member States have been working towards its implementation. The first evaluation of the two year cycle on implementation was completed by the end of 2005. However, the full and effective participation of young people remains far from realised. Likewise, the Council of Europe's (CoE) Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted on 21 May 2003 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, provides guiding principles on how best to get young people involved in their community life, thereby influencing matters that affect them. The European Youth Forum has itself advocated greater involvement of young people in representative democracy for a long time. In doing so it supports the instruments of the CoE and the Commission in trying to promote young people's active participation in society, while realising that much more needs to be done to make meaningful participation a reality.

One of the primary objectives of the European Youth Forum is to increase the participation of young people and youth organisations in society as well as in the decision-making process.

Established by national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations which are federations in themselves, the European Youth Forum brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe. Gathering young people who wish to participate in a representative structure, the European Youth Forum works towards forwarding the interests of young people from all over Europe. One of the primary functions of the European Youth Forum is to represent youth organisations in international institutions and to serve as a channel through which the flow of opinions between young people and decision-makers can be harnessed. In this way young people play their part in influencing the democratic process of national and international institutions and stakeholders. Youth organisations are seen by the European Youth Forum as a crucial mechanism through which young people can play their role in civil society and influence the democratic process.

Active participation through youth organisations

The European Youth Forum fully encourages young people to engage with youth organisations and associations at the local, regional, national and European levels as a way of participating in civil society and democratic processes. This engagement can be realised through involvement in a variety of youth organisations, for instance, through youth branches of political parties, or equally through non-politically aligned youth structures, such as scouting movements, student associations and so forth.

Youth organisations often provide young people with their first experience of the democratic process and electoral politics, whether this be at a local, regional, or national level. Youth structures help to provide young people with a sense of association, but more importantly, they promote young people's views and opinions.

To ensure that these organisations accurately represent the views of young people, they should remain non-governmental and independent in nature. Moreover, they should embody a democratic process, including the right to elect its own leadership and representatives. The European Youth Forum highlights the following principles as key to the maintenance of the democratic nature of all youth structures:

- Youth structures should be led by young people themselves
- Youth organisations should be recognised as vehicles for promoting young people's involvement as active citizens
- Youth policy should be developed in co-operation with young people and in accordance with their needs
- Consulting young people should be based on institutional provisions that guarantee their efficient involvement in the decision making process
- The voting right and the right to be elected should be reduced to the age of 16 in order for young people to fully participate in the political debate



The European Youth Forum is an international organisation established by national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations to represent the interests of young people from all over Europe. It is the youth platform in Europe representing youth organisations in international institutions - mainly the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. More information? www.youthforum.org !

Key principles to ensuring young people's effective participation in representative democracy

- Youth policies should be developed in **co-decision** with young people, thereby recognising them as full citizens.
- Policies affecting young people implemented by different administrations should be coherent and based on the **understanding of youth** as a part of the citizenry in a specific socio-cultural situation due to their age, rather than being measures just responding to problems.
- Participation should be meaningful and concrete; young people and youth organisations should be involved and **have influence** in the development, implementation and assessment of policies in all **areas relevant to them**, not only in youth policy.
- Structures and systems should be put in place at European and national levels in order to ensure both the proper and full **implementation** of the Common Objectives of the **White Paper on Youth** and a structured **dialogue** between authorities and youth structures, such as the European Youth Forum and national, regional and local youth councils.
- Young people "make a difference" and have possibilities for real influence by creating assessment mechanisms, taking into account that a precondition for young people's participation is that their participation is **taken seriously**.
- Public bodies at all levels should recognise:
 - that our democracy depends on greater participation of citizens in **social movements and NGOs**
 - that they are suitable channels for participation
 - and that involvement in youth NGOs promotes such participation from an early age.
- The possibility for young people to fully participate in the political debate is facilitated by giving the voting right and the right to be elected at **16**.
- Measures are taken to minimise technical and logistical obstacles and to make registration, voting procedures, etc. more accessible and **youth friendly**.
- Sufficient channels for participation are provided with the aim of strengthening representative democracy by drawing on models of **participatory democracy**, bearing in mind that participation is an **ongoing social process** rather than merely the provision of information and consultation.

Promoting Participation in Representative Democracy

As a result of involvement in youth structures, governments, local and regional authorities and politicians are encouraged to take better account of the views of young people in all matters that affect them. Only when young people are fully engaged in the democratic process through active participation can the system of representative democracy said to be truly representative. As long as the views and opinions of young people are neglected by decision makers and representatives, and as long as young people's non-participation is accepted, then so called 'representative democracies' can never truly claim to be fully representative of all their citizenry.



Renaldas Vaisbrodas
 President of the European Youth Forum
 E-mail:
renaldas.vaisbrodas@youthforum.org
 or www.youthforum.org

Distant realities, common topics

Participation... How could this word be defined ? Does it refer to our involvement at a local level ? Should we start with a more global/European approach ? Is the concept / process of participating the same for any youngster and in any country ? Is it accessible to anyone ? Let's take a look at the project Youth Participation in images which was developed by the Informal Group Implicados in Galicia (Spain). This is a comparative study about the active life of young people in three distant realities: Spain, Greece and Romania. Are we so different ?

When you have a quick look at the past you start to think that the world has changed drastically. In the 20th Century conformism shaped our environment and our way of life. Step by step, frontiers are getting closer and resources are increasing to reach a kind of 'union'. All these changes also bring together new opportunities for those who want to take them. The group Implicados is made up of four people interested in youth policy and any subjects that affect them as youngsters. Being active and having taken part in the most popular events in our local and social environment, our group decided to carry out a comparative study to gather new ideas abroad and take them back home. The main aim was to try to motivate people around us to be active and more and more involved in devising new activities, that is to create an active local community. In a few words the original idea was to create an audiovisual project where all the important events and activities of the local community combined with interviews with youth and social workers should be recorded to make a film to be shown to the local community. But suddenly a crazy idea crossed our minds...Why shouldn't we do the same activities in Spain and in other countries to mutually enrich our work ?

Many new thoughts started to flow and our group was very much excited by the new direction the project was taking... A new methodology was rising up: a step ahead...from the local to the European level and vice versa!

Let's make a net !

Thanks to the Youth programme and the actions it offers, such as Contact Making Seminars and Training Courses, the contacts between us were easy to make ! The partners' research was done thoroughly and had to take into account many requirements. The groups from distant countries that fitted our group came from Greece and Romania. One of the most exciting and decisive moments was the first face to face meeting: Brussels 30 November 2004 in the Move You/Us Training Course on networking project management. Viorel Proteasa (Romania) and Giorgos Petridis (Greece) are the young leaders of our partner groups: this was the beginning of a very nice friendship... United as we were by a common interest, it was time to move things forwards. Our Spanish group - being the co-ordinator of the partnership - applied for a Networking project (Action 3 of the YOUTH programme), on behalf of the network Spain/Romania/Greece. Once the project was accepted by the Spanish National Agency (INJUVE), the type of audiovisual production and the technical arrangements for its diffusion had to be defined.

All of us knew what we wanted to say about our own situation and our country. All of us had something we wanted to say. Then, time for visiting our partner communities. Time for listening (and recording !) what they had to say...



Athens, February 2005

First stop: Greece. The association Friendship among Nations welcomed the group in an environment where ancient values and love of culture could be breathed. Sirtaki, lovely and above all, great stories were shared there. This organisation has been working for the spread of their deepest customs and the Greek youngsters involved in these activities were certainly not forgetting their roots. Our partner then connected us with the University of Athens: we were taken to a Spanish Language class where all the students could express in front of the camera their ideas and opinions about what it meant to be an active citizen in their country. The worries and points of view they expressed were so personal that our group Implicados felt very close to them. We had so many topics and thoughts in common: job, active life, Europe... But, what about our Romanian partner ?

Romania, April 2005

An event not to be missed for any reason: Student Fest in Timisoara ! This is the oldest Youth Festival in the country where groups from all over Europe get together for the same reason: Art as the expression of freedom. Youngsters are the creators and coordinators of this event, trying to show the world their vision of subjects they feel concerned about and their strong will to be active citizens. Timis Youth Foundation, our Romanian partner, provided us with the opportunity to get interviews from the people responsible for the Festival management and from participants explaining the objectives of this cultural project: this festival aims to be a powerful tool to help break stereotypes ! In conclusion, this experience was amazing. It provided us with a precious chance to face distant realities ...but also common topics that could be shared together: all of them were captured in a short film which has been freshly released. So now what about you ? It's your turn !!!



Jorge Ponce (Spain)
Informal Group: Implicados
E-mail: xurxi2000@yahoo.es

Let's initiate new mechanisms of social change !



In this section, Talia focuses on the impact the YOUTH programme has had in terms of the development that the youth participative movement has enjoyed recently. Through her own experience, she shows how you can progressively and increasingly get involved in projects and participate in society. Let's see how Networking projects - setting up networks of active youth groups - might offer updated responses to the needs of today's European realities.

Young people's participation in society has been a topic of discussion for more than a decade. Concretely in the European Union this process has been one of the main worries of governments. The concern of governments about the lack of participation of their young people, propitiates all kinds of theories and speculation. Young people have been accused of being passive or being detached from the traditional institutions such as education or politics. All over Europe there were debates about what to do in order to promote 'young people's participation in their communities', in their societies and at a higher, European level.

Meanwhile it seemed that young people were becoming more dissatisfied with the evolution of society in general and were disappointed by the lack of an effective channel of communication with the institutions. This prompted some young people to look for alternatives; they organized themselves or took over an active role in order to approach the new social changes around them.

Many young people turned to socially participative ways offered by youth associations, NGOs or informal groups and started to take part in several projects at local, national and later at the international level. Yet it does not seem that society paid enough attention to this new social order bringing new ways of action; namely actions lead by young people looking for their own way to be part of society: by creating self organized groups, youth local initiatives, movements against globalization etc.

The common point was self management. First it includes the active participative needs they felt governments were not able to provide them with (or not in an attractive way). Secondly, it refers to the social needs appearing within this new social context created by phenomena such as immigration, an increase in poverty and in the number of disfavoured social groups (groups not properly sustained by the traditional social care system and institutions). They felt some institutions were not attentive enough to this new wave of youth participation.

The YOUTH programme was one of the key tool that prompted the quick expansion of the "youth participative movement". It equipped these young people with a set of tools that helped them to define themselves both as individuals and as a part of a bigger entity beyond their own local or national communities.

The YOUTH programme also provided them with the possibility to gain a wide range of knowledge and competences: for instance to improve their personal and organizational skills by doing and participating in the different actions designed by the Programme.

A journey through the YOUTH programme, stopping at each action

So just like myself, many young people started in the YOUTH programme with Youth Exchanges (Action 1). Yet once you have realised what those exchanges have brought to you, you feel the necessity to go further and to gain more knowledge about other countries, about how you can interact with each other...

This is the time to organize or take part in some seminars or training courses (Action 5). What would be the next step then? It might be to involve yourself in other people's realities: the European Voluntary Service ("EVS" or Action 2) indeed pushes you one step further, allowing you to get involved concretely in a long term project in a different socio-cultural environment, in a different cultural setting, in a different country. In between, or even in parallel, come Youth Initiatives which respond to a concrete need you may identify in the local community (Action 3). Youth Initiative projects, like the one I carried out entitled "Brainstorming" (an electronic and multimedia publication that gives to young people the opportunity to freely express ideas and analyze the social issues concerning their countries) can also help to set up and test a "product", an initiative that can be sustainable afterwards. You can experiment, learn and at the same time get involved concretely in the local community by the action you're taking.

In the final stage after you have gained personal experience of the situation in other European countries and found common points and differences as well as having followed some training to improve your personal and organizational skills, might come the time when you need to build up something with other countries in order to reach a common purpose. Most of the time, this step takes the form of a Networking project (Action 3 or 5).

Let's keep in mind that you can combine involvement in a project abroad and carry on your local project for your community. This is exactly what happened with our 'Brainstorming' project. It started during my EVS as a local Group Initiative and then took an international dimension: from a local Group Initiative project it became an international Group Initiative - namely a "Networking" project. But it is still creating benefits for the local community. Indeed, young journalists from the area where the project started are still involved in the magazine and a bilingual edition (Romanian-English) has been created.

More concrete actions are being taken

The Networking action uses differences (background, working styles, cultural differences) to build something together that will benefit not only the participants but also their local communities. In the last two years there has been a change in the conception of Networking: initially projects developed aimed mainly at unifying people and at exploring methods, tools or organisations among and from different countries.

Recently a qualitative change can be noticed. Projects are more focused on concrete actions in order to make social problems known or to bring together people from different countries in order to design mechanism and find solutions to current problems which are not being solved by the system.



Networking is not just a tool helping to improve young people's skills and making them aware of the possibility of gaining some experience to get better jobs or offering them opportunities to enter non formal education by becoming youth workers or trainers,...

Networking is also becoming a solution in itself to the problems of young people's participation and general youth needs such as non formal education, self-employment and citizenship awareness. This is also building the foundation for some structural solutions to social problems that are present throughout Europe and sometimes even solving concrete problems within local communities. For instance, Brainstorming allowed us a better understanding of the Romanian Media's concrete needs and also of the youth needs regarding media.

Our Association Alter Eco: from a project to a sustainable organisation

While using Brainstorming as a base for our job and youth opportunities, we also created a Media Association (Alter Eco) giving coverage to concrete needs detected during the development of our project in the last two years such as :

- . Creation of independent media formats (publications, bulletins, documentaries, radio)
- . Development of regional, international networking projects in the field of social matters, media and communication
- . Providing resources in consulting and advising within the communication field
- . Training of young professionals in the social and communication field

This organisation offers internship programmes for young journalists who can participate in international networking project such as Brainstorming and attend training courses, increasing their possibilities to gain experience and work in the media field.

Cooperation with NGOs is also developed increasing their visibility and promoting civil dialogue among institutions involving the three main actors: institutions, NGOs and journalists.

The organisation provides us with a way to earn our living and therefore transcends a sole voluntary youth participation project, having gained a real socio-professional dimension.

It can be argued that Networking projects are somehow a "micro Europe on a small scale" more focused on social matters that are not so much developed in a larger scale: youth movements should even be taken as examples of good practices for an increased and wider cooperation at the European scale !



The organisation responds to some concrete needs identified in society and contributes to building a structure in the civil society sector which benefits the local community, addresses the need that young people have for dialogue and interaction and helps to increase cooperation within institutions.

As an example I can point out the Youth Media Centres in Moldavia and Ukraine, both working towards freedom of expression and independent media. In Romania, a group of young people is working towards better democratic practises and asking for transparency processes. They have created a legal proposal regarding certain issues that occurred in Romania and have created a strong network of support and social presence explaining their democratic right to the citizens.

Networking as a mechanism for social change

Therefore the main concerns highlighted in the White Paper about youth participation and youth problems have been partially answered by young people themselves who take part in the Youth programme. Indeed, structures have been explored and built to allow them to take an active part in society by doing and by offering potential solutions to social issues, especially towards young people. It can be argued that Networking projects are somehow a 'micro Europe on a small scale' more focused on social matters that are not so much developed in a larger scale: youth movements should even be taken as examples of good practices for an increased and wider cooperation at the European scale!

The main problem as far as some young people are still concerned is linked to a lack of dialogue with the institutions. It seems that even when the results are convincing, youth work tends to be considered as an experiment or even leisure activities. If there is a need and demand for young people to be active and participative citizens, bringing something to society, they should then be taken seriously in an overall institutional approach to do the best "for young people" but "with young people".

Group Initiatives and Networking projects come out of everyday reality and identified needs come out of this interaction with society. Therefore Youth Initiatives and Networking projects should be more considered and taken as a way of mutual cooperation, sometimes filling the gap left by Governments.

So when the moment comes for youngsters to act and show what is working for them, it will be more useful to keep those structures already created by young people and support those mechanisms (without changing them) so as to make them sustainable.

To my mind, the Networking action is becoming the strongest and most effective tool of social participation for youngsters outside of institutionalised ways of participation such as Youth Councils. The main difference between the youth institutional methods of participation and Group Initiatives or Networking projects is based, first of all on the different nature of purposes and structure.

As I see it, on the one hand, Youth Councils tend to represent just a part of the Youth sector and can be sometimes more in touch with politics than with social opportunities for youngsters. On the other hand, Group Initiatives and Networking projects come out of everyday reality and identified needs come out of this interaction with society.

ALTER ECO An Investigative International View is a non governmental organisation created by a group of professionals in the media and social field. ALTER ECO is promoting activities which concern young professionals in the social, media and communication area aimed at informing and sensitising public opinion and civil society about the social problems derivated from human rights abuses, social exclusion and xenophobia, corruption and disrespect to any democratic practices.

MISSION

The main purpose of ALTER ECO An Investigative International View is to give a voice to social issues through media resources and non formal education actions. ALTER ECO is using media formats as a tool to effectively approach social problems and reinforce media involvement in social realities as a civil actor.

Therefore Youth Initiatives and Networking projects should be more considered and taken as a way of mutual cooperation, sometimes filling the gap left by Governments.

There has been a big step regarding youth movements and their active participation from experimental projects to organised and well prepared young people who demand to develop their social role based on models and experiences gained during the creation of their projects and networks. A movement of young people that want to be part of the decision making process in order to improve their societies and to find solutions to current problem. A huge network of young people that goes beyond borders and has a global dimension and whose experience and results have already been shown.



Talia Delgado (Romania)
Director of Brainstorming & Alter Eco
E mail: talia_delgado@yahoo.com
Website: www.brain-storming.info

Sharing the Wealth

Zoom on the Peer 2 Peer training course

It is clear that young people participating in Youth Initiatives projects arrive and leave the experience with a variety of important skills, knowledge and inspiration. In June 2005 in Konstancin, Poland, 21 participants took part in Peer 2 Peer - a training course exploring how to continue the motivation for Youth Initiatives through participation, peer education and coaching. Peer at the Peer 2 Peer !



The Motivation for Peer 2 Peer

One of the main challenges of YOUTH National Agencies as well as of SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre is to develop a European strategy to support the quality of youth projects, and in particular Youth Initiatives. For the past years, during several discussions with different stakeholders active in Action 3, the idea of promoting "coaching" for Youth Initiatives was identified as a main issue. As the concept of "coaching" was being researched and developed two main target groups have been identified for training courses, these were professional youth workers already supporting Youth Initiatives and young people themselves: the concepts of "Coach 2 Coach" and "Peer 2 Peer" respectively were born. The ideas, direction and concept for Peer 2 Peer was developed further on by the Action 3 officer in Poland and the SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre coordinator.

Aims and Objectives

Our aims were:

- . To contribute to high quality Action 3 projects by developing a peer to peer system of supporting Youth Initiatives.
- . To develop a tool for potential supporters and coaches ready to motivate, initiate and offer support to groups of young people wanting to develop a local project.

Our objectives were:

- . To train participants with empowerment skills, to share their knowledge and competences with their peers.
- . To give participants the opportunity to adapt and enhance their existing competences and knowledge based on youth initiatives.
- . To create space for exchanging local project experiences and to explore the skills and competences gained during the realisation of the projects.
- . To bring together representatives of organisations or informal groups who have completed a Youth Initiative project.

Furthermore, as with many training courses, an additional objective was to encourage cooperation between individuals and organisations to create and establish new projects within the Youth programme actions.

The Programme

Most importantly what mattered according to the training team was to encourage participants to reflect on their own previous experiences. This included personal and professional self reflection which enabled participants to be able to begin to identify their own strengths and areas for development as well as becoming aware of the competencies required to become a positive peer coach. This self reflection was a powerful part of the training course and set the scene for the rest of the week.

As with most training courses, the different participants' profiles proved to be a small obstacle. It was clear that most of them were motivated to become coaches and some were enthusiastic to find partners for future projects. Maintaining the balance between the course programme and the different participants' needs was a challenge. However encouraging those having a greater knowledge and experience to be more active in the course in supporting the other participants proved to be fruitful and allowed us to elaborate further on the concept of peer coaching.

The programme followed a structured exploration of peer education, coaching styles and then the coaching cycle that coaches are likely to go through while coaching, this includes: motivation, getting to know the group, building the relationship, identifying needs and competences, supporting project management, supporting teamwork, facilitating communication, conflict management, evaluating the project, evaluating the coaching process, evaluating the group dynamics and finally, coaching in practice.

The Impact

A clear progression in the understanding of the term 'coaching' and particularly "peer coaching" in Youth Initiatives could be observed as well as an improved awareness of the limits between coaching and autonomy within Youth Initiatives. Evaluations highlighted the success of the training and an appreciation for the creativity and concept of the programme. The most precious outcome of this training course was enabling participants to become more aware of how they are powerful and important resources in supporting and encouraging others in realising their dreams.

The Trainers

The team was myself Buzz Bury (UK), Florin Cristian Predescu (Romania), Milena Posnik (Poland) and Henar Conde (Belgium). Edukacja I Kultura Młodzież and SALTO-YOUTH Youth Initiatives Resource Centre staff were coordinators of the course as well as providing the required resources. A big thank you must also go to Amudena Rutkowska from the Polish National Agency for her logistical assistance.



Buzz Bury (UK)
Youth Trainer
E-mail: mail@buzzbury.co.uk

A ghostly Halloween

Zoom on the Coach 2 Coach training course



Don't be scared, don't run away... it is not time for some obscure stories! Let me relate the story of the friendly "ghosts of coaching"... or how to spend Halloween in an interesting way ! You'll find in this article an overview of the "Coach 2 Coach" training course bringing together professionals actively supporting young people. The aim was to share coaching practices and to come to a common understanding on how to support young people in setting up their Youth Initiative projects.

How did it all start ?

Everything began when I was involved in the editorial team of the "Coaching Guide" (soon available) – a guide book for people who are supporting groups of young people and helping them to implement their initiatives locally or internationally.

By deciding to launch a pilot training course on coaching Youth Initiative projects, SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre aimed on the one hand at contributing to the empowerment of those individuals actively willing to support Youth Initiatives and on the other hand at prompting the development of national coaching strategies.

What was it all about ?

The "Coach 2 Coach" training course took place in Italy, in a little town called Sante Cesarea Terme from 31 October to 6 November 2005.

It was an ideal time and ideal place to call for coaching "ghosts". Most of them had already showed up on the first evening: I called the participants "friendly ghosts" after one of them said that for him coaching implies "...to be a support like a "good ghost" for the youngsters".

In the course we had 30 people with different levels of experience in supporting youth groups. Some of them worked as youth workers in local youth centres and organisations or were trainers working internationally or were Youth Initiative officers within National Agencies of the YOUTH programme. This diversity was both challenging and enriching for the team as well for the participants: first to identify and then to learn how to deal with the different participants' backgrounds, roles and experiences.

Looking at the pictures, one might wonder if this course was not a good long-lasting international "Halloween" party with a lot of fun. To tell the truth, yes of course ... about the fun! It was so lively mainly because of the intensive and interactive way of working.

The objectives to achieve were as follows:

- . to reflect and share "coaching" experience,
- . to work towards a common understanding of coaching,
- . to identify and improve knowledge, competences and attitudes of coaching,
- . to prepare for transfer of learning experience back home,
- . to identify available resources and support,
- . to experience methods and tools used in coaching.

And here we go with a programme and methodology... Let's try to quickly run through the main elements of the programme we had:

Day 1: we began with a getting to know Other, And, Each evening in a "Dark Bar" followed by some name games.

Day 2: many introductory sessions, a bit heavy but necessary: presentations of the course, of the YOUTH programme on "Coach TV", of organisations during the "Wine Convention", of Youth Initiatives and of quality criteria in an "Experts' Panel". The day ended up with the "Intercultural horror night" or how to have fun and interact with people from everywhere!

Day 3: a "Coaching mirror" session was proposed putting forward some reflections on personal experiences and skills. Filling in the "Coaching Ghost Inventory" the participants identified their own coaching styles. Building a "Coaching Map" they identified different skills, abilities, capacities, difficulties, obstacles, tools, resources etc. related to coaching. Then time was dedicated to exploring our different understandings of youth participation and of the coaching process; this session was concluded with the "Coaching Cycle" - developed by the editorial team of "Coaching Guide"-identifying coaching steps and practical tools to optimise the support given to young people through their Youth Initiative journey. To tell the truth it was not so easy to stand in front of such a diverse group coming from different countries and having such varied experiences and roles... A choice had to be made. We decided to follow one common reference model instead of getting lost in too many directions. The participants were then free to develop the model that would best fit their own experience.



Evaluation was mostly on a day to day basis since almost every day, self-managed "Re-groups" gathered to reflect on the daily learning experience, share the good/bad moments of the day and give suggestions for improvements. One person from each group then had dinner with the training team in the "Evening News" so as to feedback. Each following morning a feedback with comments and reactions from the trainers was given in the "Morning news" so as to improve the training course in a realistic, creative and funny way.

The programme description provides just an overview of what happened during this most enriching Halloween. Are you curious, do you feel like knowing a bit more about the methods used ? Please have a look at the Coach 2 Coach Toolbox of methods used available under www.salto-youth.net/a3toolbox.



Days 4, 5 and 6: these days were devoted to the different phases of the coaching process as it is defined in the "Coaching Guide": phases focused on "motivation", on "getting to know" each other, on "building relationships", on "identifying needs and competences" and on "supporting"... Within the "supporting" phase some time was spent on reflecting on experiences and clarifying some concepts such as "informing", "suggesting", "training", "facilitating", and others. The coaching cycle concluded with the "evaluating" phase. A broadcast about "coaching for quality" was shown on Coaching TV.

Day 7: was mostly about preparing commitments back home with the "Action Wheel" for personal action planning and for common plans. This is how we came up with the ideas of an international training course for advanced coaches, an international conference to exchange coaching practices in different countries and develop new strategies, a couple of youth exchanges and networking projects. A final evaluation was made.

And what about the results and follow-up?

The course was said to be "creative" and "fun"! From the questionnaires (in two parts: before and after the course) it is clear that a lot was learned in different fields of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to coaching Youth Initiatives. In evaluating the course, it could be noticed that objectives related to improving coaching competences, identifying resources, support, learning methods and tools were reached to a great extent!

As for the objectives related to reflecting and sharing experiences, developing common understanding and transferring learning to practice, they were widely met as well. As a whole, it can be acknowledged that the course was really successful ! And you know what ? I've heard that another Coach 2 Coach training course might take place soon... in Austria 7-14 May 2006 they whispered... Interested? Check out SALTO Youth Initiatives training course pages regularly (www.salto-youth.net/A3courses) or SALTO calendar for all the offers available (www.salto-youth.net/training)!



Nerijus Kriaucinas (Lithuania)
Youth trainer
E mail: nercas@email.lt

The coaching ghost inventory is a fun and enriching test to identify your own coaching style and to identify your own possible learning areas: do it yourself ! Available on SALTO website at www.salto-youth.net/a3tools

May I help?

What does coaching mean for you ?

For me coaching is mostly about supporting, helping others to realize that they can manage to do things, through "learning by doing". Bengt, Sweden

At team level, the coach should take the role of a "shadow" co-ordinator. Barbora, Czech Republic.

Coaching is providing an adequate amount of guidance and consultancy with the aim of empowering young people. This is done by raising their awareness of their current skills/knowledge and then by directing them in ways which result in using their skills to their full potential. Christine, Malta.

Coaching is about motivating activities, informing about possibilities of activities. Leading and stimulating the work of young people. Monitoring of the project realization. Informing of best practice and best project ideas as well as encouraging partnership cooperation. Joanna, Poland.

Coaching is the skill to help young groups of participants to reach the objective of their project in a good degree of autonomy in a general context of individual and collective growth. Luca, Italy.

Coaching means to be a support like a "good ghost" for the youngsters. Marcin, Poland.

Before I became a coach I thought a bit like emergency help. Now I see it means a much more active role for the coach - creating a good space for possible activities and inspiration. Coaching is a bit like opening their eyes, helping them to see different pictures and perspectives. Wojtek, Poland.

You should not forget that...

A coach should do everything WITH young people NOT FOR young people. Wojciech Sychala, Poland.

Coaching means leading in the way that leaves space for growing. You should guide others instead of dictating and give different impulses for motivation. Terje, Estonia.

A coach should be able to give good advice, which means - raise good questions rather than provide answers. Agnieszka, Poland.

Motivation is very important, in the beginning everyone jumps easily into a new thing, but to keep everyone up till the end, is hard to do. Krito, Estonia.

It's not easy to resist temptation of doing a project for young people and deciding for them. Zbyszek, Poland.

... the coach can also learn from the group that is being coached !!!! Estefania, Spain.

Coaches' points of view

Youth Initiative projects are carried out by young people themselves; no adults, no teachers, no parents lead their activities. Free expression. Yet, more and more projects are now being coached by an external resource person. Why? Is it really necessary? Just listen to the coaches' points of view & to those who've been "coached"! Does it make any difference ?

A coach what for ?

What I think is difficult is just to start a project. When starting a project, I think that advice from professionals is very important. Mari (18), Estonia.

I would describe the role of the coach in our project as... giving advice and practical hints, giving contacts, sharing difficulties and mistakes, having good humour, positive thinking... Sonia (28), Portugal.

The best coach should allow me and all the group to find our own way to reach our goal. The coach should be the map, not the driver ! Anna (23), Poland.

The most difficult can be to start together and to finish together. Ilja (24), Estonia.

I wouldn't like the coach to give me ready ideas but rather to mobilise me to think by myself, to develop my own skills. Not to force his/her solutions, to ask how I see the things... Maria (20), Poland.

A coach should come up with constructive criticism. I wouldn't like him/her to express criticism without having any suggestion for improvement. Palmir (23), Denmark.

So for me the perfect coach is...

Palmir (23), Denmark: ... somebody that has enough empathy to understand the different personalities etc. One that finds the perfect balance between authority and neutrality, between observation and participation.

Jacek (24), Poland: ... someone who has a clear vision of how he/she can help me, motivates me, is easy to make contact with.

Marcin(26), Poland: ... a person who helps needs and feelings to materialize, and helps with project planning and management, and who is always near in order to give support, advice...

Andy (27), Malta: ... a guiding light in the middle of the dark forest !



SALTO YOUTH INITIATIVES

Resource Centre

provides

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

Main activities in 2006

WHAT YOU CAN APPLY FOR...

Training Courses on Networking projects: **GET IN NET !** about contact making & project management

WHAT ? The GET IN NET training courses are becoming Network Training Courses for Youth Initiatives just like Bi-tri-Multi are for Group Exchanges, SOHO for the European Voluntary Service and Tic Tac for Support measures. By bringing together representatives from organisations or informal groups from different European countries, GET IN NET aims to help young people involved in local activities to develop their local projects into networking activities. Every GET IN NET focuses on a specific theme, for example art and culture, youth information, new technologies, media and communication, social inclusion, environment etc. **WHO ?** National Agencies of the YOUTH programme hosting the course in cooperation with SALTO Youth Initiatives RC. **WHO FOR ?** Young project beneficiaries (15-25) who are looking for partners and project management support to set up their first networking project within Youth Initiatives. **WHEN & WHERE ?** All over Europe ! 29 March – 2 April in Denmark, in May in Malta, in July in Turkey, in August in the UK and other Get in Net to come... **APPLICATIONS ?** Available on SALTO Youth Initiatives website & SALTO Training Calendar (salto-youth.net/training/). **MORE DETAILS ?** www.salto-youth.net/TC-GetinNet .

Training course: **COACH 2 COACH** on coaching Youth Initiative projects

WHAT ? To support anyone active or interested in coaching, supporting Youth Initiative projects, in recognising and developing knowledge and skills to work as youth project 'coaches'. **WHO?** National Agencies of the YOUTH programme hosting the course in cooperation with SALTO Youth Initiatives RC **WHO FOR?** Youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, educators or Action 3 officers. **WHEN & WHERE ?** In Austria, 7-13 May 2006. **MORE DETAILS ?** www.salto-youth.net/coach2coach/.

Seminar: **FEEDBACK** on Youth Initiatives

WHAT ? Big evaluation and 'live' seminar to evaluate Youth Initiative projects and their impacts in order to increase recognition and contribute to the development of quality Youth Initiatives. **WHO ?** SALTO Youth Initiatives RC in cooperation with National Agencies from Belgium (French Speaking Community), Poland, the UK, France and Germany. **WHO FOR ?** Young Europeans (from 18 to 30 years old) who have carried out a Youth Initiative project, coaches experienced in Youth Initiatives and Youth Initiatives officers from National Agencies. **WHEN & WHERE ?** Brussels, Belgium 24-29 June 2006. **MORE DETAILS ?** www.salto-youth.net/a3feedback .

SUPPORTING YOUR PROJECTS...

Database of Group Initiative projects (compendium)

WHAT ? An online database that displays a wide range of Youth Initiatives and Networking projects carried out all over Europe. **WHO FOR ?** Young Europeans wanting to develop a local project, looking for ideas / inspiration or willing to set up a Networking project and looking for partners from other parts of Europe. **INTERESTED ?** Take a look at www.salto-youth.net/a3compendium. **MORE DETAILS ?** If you are looking for partners for Networking projects you can also publish your partner request on SALTO website and check out offers already published: www.salto-youth.net/partner-requests/

Coaching Youth Initiatives: Guide for Supporting Youth Participation and Coaching Ghost Inventory: test yourself !

The guide, produced by SALTO and entitled 'Coaching Youth Initiatives – Guide for Supporting Youth Participation' (soon to be available) aims to come to a common understanding on how to provide support and advice to groups of young people running Youth Initiative projects. It has been developed by a team of eight European youth work professionals. **INTERESTED ?** Please contact us for a free copy (patricia@salto-youth.net). What kind of coach are you? You are supporting, 'coaching' youth projects - do you feel that your role is 'directive', 'involved', 'guiding' or 'participative'? How can you improve as a coach? The Coaching Ghost Inventory is a fun and enriching test to identify your own coaching style and to identify your own possible learning areas: test yourself ! Available at www.salto-youth.net/a3tools.

Toolbox materials available for your own training courses !

Are you looking for methods, tools, good practices for setting up training courses ? SALTO has produced an extensive series of toolbox materials which comprise most of the exercises, activities and materials used at the International Training Courses developed. Already available are the toolbox reports dealing with Youth Initiatives and : networking project management (2 modules of 'Work In Net'/Move you/us), peer education ('Peer 2 Peer') and coaching, supporting, counselling young beneficiaries of Youth Initiative projects ('Coach 2 Coach') and based on the courses that took place in the last 2 years between Poland, Italy and Estonia. **INTERESTED ?** Download all these toolbox materials and much more for free on www.salto-youth.net/a3toolbox.

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

