



European
Commission

YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

Focus on:

Young citizens of Europe

*European
good practice
projects*



Youth in Action
Programme

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Androulla Vassiliou

Commissioner for Education, Culture,
Multilingualism and Youth

Building a Europe of active, critical and responsible citizens

2013 has been designated the European Year of Citizens, to raise awareness of the rights and responsibilities of EU citizens and to encourage discussion at every level of society on the future of Europe. This comes at a time of global crisis, awakening old prejudices and stereotypes in contradiction to the community spirit which sustains the European project. Young people have been particularly hard hit by the crisis and, in some Member States, youth unemployment is exceeding 50%, blighting the prospects for a happy and independent life. Yet the role of young people remains crucial in preserving the shared values on which Europe has been built and in ensuring its future.

The projects presented in this brochure describe a fascinating panorama of activities undertaken by groups of young people or young individuals in all the Member States of the European Union and beyond, which reflect their active, critical and responsible citizenship. They were all supported by the Youth in Action programme, in the form of Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service projects or training and networking projects for youth workers and youth organisations.

There are projects involving young people bent on making a difference in the community or in society at large by combatting poverty, discrimination and bullying at school, by sharing their experience of living in a divided community and discussing ways of resolving conflict without resorting to violence, or by helping to protect the precious heritage of a local community. All these projects contribute to establishing the identities of the participants as active young citizens of Europe.

Other projects have been devised in response to young people taking a critical attitude to the world as they see it, displaying their commitment to the common European values of human rights, democracy and tolerance. The young people in their different projects embrace the exceptional benefits of the Internet but call for more media literacy, create a manifesto in support of feminism, produce a comic as a tool to combat violence against young women or stand up for minorities and the rights of refugees.

And still other projects showcase how young people exercise their responsibility towards society, inspired as they are by their concerns for social inclusion and for disadvantaged groups, such as the disabled, the elderly or young people in detention, as well as by their commitment to the environment.

Being involved in these projects places the participants in an intercultural setting and empowers them; it provides them with new skills and competences and raises their awareness of being European. But what unites these young citizens of Europe above all is their freely-given commitment to be of service — to each other, to their communities, to the environment — and by so doing achieve a positive change in their lives and make the world a better place for us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Vassiliou', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Androulla Vassiliou
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1

YOUTH AMBASSADORS FOR EUROPE



Young people from seven different countries who organised the Youth Ambassadors Summer Institute in Flanders, Belgium, had become firm friends at a youth event in the United States sponsored by the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship. They were so inspired by the experience that on their return home they remained in touch and set up a similar 11-day event at a European level in July 2012, inviting young participants from the countries they represented: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Luxembourg, Moldova, Norway and Poland.

The purpose of the Summer Institute was to broaden the horizons of the young participants beyond national borders and to give them a sense of being European citizens. By creating a forum for debate on a wide range of current issues that affect the lives of young people today, they encouraged the participants to think seriously about their own role and responsibility as citizens. Because of the many economic, social and cultural differences between the countries they represented there was a rich menu of topics to



‘The priority of the project was to establish a network of young people in different countries involved at a local community level as change makers and to share examples of good practice of their experience.’

discuss, such as different election procedures, contrasting attitudes towards the world of politics, the current economic crisis and the way in which the media on occasions distorts the picture of other countries and panders to prejudice and misplaced resentment.

The negative image of Greece, projected by the media following the economic crisis, was held up as an example of this distortion and led to fruitful discussions with the young participants from Greece.

The ultimate aim of the Institute was to encourage the young people to become active citizens in their home countries and to understand what it means to be an active citizen in Europe. Workshops, brainstorming sessions and simulation exercises were held on issues such as what can you do as a European citizen, what can the European Union do for you and what is the role of the European Council? And how can the new social media be used in a positive way to spread ideas and broaden people’s perception?

The young people from different cultural and social backgrounds also benefited from the bridge building exercises held throughout the exchange enabling them to respect difference and to appreciate more clearly what it is to be a European citizen.

Following an information session on the Youth in Action programme at the end of the project they were encouraged to use their initiative on returning home to continue the work of the Institute in promoting active European citizenship by creating networks of ‘change makers’ and by initiating follow-up activities, based on the ideas developed during the meeting. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium.
- Project carried out by Ryckvelde vzw, Belgium, in partnership with Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise asbl, Luxembourg; Creative Development Association Moldova; Delegation from Greece; Delegation from Poland; YASI Bosnia & Herzegovina; Young Ambassadors Leadership Program, Norway.



2

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERING



Damian, a young European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteer, from Poland worked together for 10 months in 2010/11 in the Citizen's TV centre in Magdeburg, Germany which was run by local people for the local community. His main task, with other volunteers, was to give support to the TV centre, particularly where its youth channel was concerned.

One of his first tasks was to update and improve the TV centre's homepage. He also worked on the youth magazine, 'Jugendstil',



'The volunteer gained a unique cultural experience by living and working with people from different backgrounds, but he was also able to bring about a change in the lives of local people with his projects, turning into a tangible experience the meaning of tolerance and democracy, as well as the active participation in society.'

focusing on its programme 'Europe for Beginners' in which he made a personal appearance. The channel provides an information and advice service for young people. Subsequently, he worked with a youth exchange, 'Euro Camp', and filmed a theatre project focusing on schemes for volunteering in Europe.

As a personal project, Damian made another film about volunteering aimed at Polish youngsters to support the town-twinning between Magdeburg and Radom in his native Poland. He also took part in a local project aimed at combating racism and helped to prepare activities for 'Europe Week'. He also helped to organise the 'Sprachcafé' in the One World House in the town which enabled the international community to meet local people and use their different languages.

His EVS service proved to be a very rich experience for Damian. His daily contact with volunteers from other countries and his work with local people in the TV centre broadened his outlook on Europe and his competence in foreign languages greatly improved. He followed a course in German throughout his stay. But the most precious gain for Damian was that through his work on the TV channel, which helped to empower local young people, he himself became an 'agent of change'. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Germany.
- Project carried out by Auslandsgesellschaft Sachsen-Anhalt e.V., Germany, in partnership with Bona Fides Association, Poland; Offener Kanal Magdeburg e. V., Germany.

3

STAND UP AGAINST BULLYING AT SCHOOL!



- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Iceland.
- Project carried out by the Youth Association of the Church in Reykjavík, Iceland, in partnership with the Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Inden-Langerwehe, Germany.



'Ten days of a youth exchange created a wonderful and memorable mixture of a successful project, geysers, waterfalls, new friendships, midnight sun and most of all: confident and committed young people who will keep on working against bullying and for respect!'

The youth exchange that took place in Reykjavik, Iceland in July 2012 involving 30 young people from Iceland and 30 from Germany was the second part of a project, the first one having been hosted in Germany the year before on the theme of conservation. The purpose of the exchange in Iceland was to raise awareness about bullying, particularly among teenagers, as an attack on human rights.

The young people, almost all in their teens and mainly from church-led youth organisations in Iceland and Germany, had carefully prepared their 10-day project during the preceding winter. They were clearly motivated to treat the subject very seriously and planned a number of activities, among others a parade through the streets of Reykjavik. The group included an autistic girl, a young lesbian and a boy who was gay. All three had been victims of bullying. There were also young people from a rural area without access to youth work, and two participants were unemployed.

The programme first focused on defining bullying. For this they had the help of organisations set up to combat bullying which spoke to them about their experience and how best to tackle the problem of bullying when it arose. Much of their discussion centred around human rights and active citizenship.

Workshops were organised subsequently when the young people produced posters, postcards and short films illustrating scenarios where bullying takes place. Work was also carried out in preparation for the parade which took place at the end of the week. Information about the theme of the parade was widely disseminated which attracted a number of people. There was coverage of the exchange and the parade in both Icelandic and German newspapers and TV.

With the realisation that much was still to be done, the young people returned home fully committed to continue the fight in their own schools and places of work, as well as at regional and national youth events. ■



4

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE BY ACTING IT OUT



Most of the 24 young people from Armenia, Hungary, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, who spent eight days in August 2011 on a youth exchange at the ASHA centre in the Forest of Dean, United Kingdom, were from institutional care homes, orphanages or a juvenile detention centre and many of them had missed out on a lot of their formal education. The purpose of the exchange was to take the young people out of their usual environment and, through a variety of different non-formal learning strategies, raise their self-esteem and empower them to take their place in society.

'I met people from countries I will probably never visit and learnt about their culture and language. The language barrier made the whole experience all the more enjoyable as we had to resort to other means to express ourselves. I feel like the whole experience boosted my confidence infinitely. All in all it was one of the most memorable weeks of my life.'

All forms of drama, including pantomime, role plays and improvisation, were used as a means of tackling the issues dealt with during the project. As some of the participants spoke no English, many of the activities were based on non-verbal communication which did not limit in any way the commitment and enjoyment of the participants. Most of the announcements and verbal presentations during the programme were also translated into Russian, which was the *lingua franca* for a number of the participants from Eastern Europe.

Growing up and becoming an adult looking for work and raising a family, these life issues formed the core of the exchange. In the case of young people looking for work mock interviews were set up to give the participants an idea of what to expect in such a situation. Identifying skills needed to overcome social obstacles and preparing young people to become fully independent and take responsibility as citizens were among the challenges that were discussed or enacted.

The activities allowed the young people to establish a safe and creative space for self-expression, progressing through verbal and non-verbal communication, enacting and reflecting on the themes and finally presenting their opinions and their emotions in an intercultural context. The ASHA Centre, which hosted the exchange, is housed in a large Georgian house, surrounded by five acres of gardens, in a secluded area of the Forest of Dean. For many of the young people, coming from severely disadvantaged backgrounds, the centre became their home for the duration of the project.

Thanks to the success of this first exercise a second exchange was planned the following year, along similar lines, entitled 'Act the Part', with the same partner countries and Poland, and with young people from the same target group. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the United Kingdom.
- Project carried out by The ASHA Foundation, the United Kingdom, in partnership with Pryvateli Ditey Ukraine, Tegyunk Egyutt az Ifjusagert Alapitvány, Hungary, Youth Initiative Center Gyumri, Armenia.



5

SHOWCASING THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH WORK



- A European Voluntary Service project funded by Youth in Action national agency in Estonia.
- Project carried out by Estonian UNESCO Youth Association, Estonia, in partnership with Inter-Acción – Acciones Socioeducativas y de Movilidad Internacional, Spain.



'The volunteer certainly improved his social and personal skills during the service and the project provided enough space to develop his creativeness and sense of self-initiative.'

Alberto from Spain spent much of his eight months as a European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteer in Estonia in 2011/12 travelling around the country. His mission was to promote youth work by interviewing and filming projects being undertaken by youth organisations in various regions of the country. The purpose was to showcase the positive contributions made by these organisations and enhance their attractiveness and accessibility for young people.

Armed with a camera, Alberto visited a number of different places talking with young people, interviewing their youth leaders and filming their projects. On returning to the office of his host in the capital Tartu he edited the films he had shot and uploaded them to Youtube. In all, Alberto made 15 videos telling the stories of different youth projects.

Alberto's work resulted in a fascinating panorama of different aspects of youth work in the country and the variety of opportunities that now exist for young people. It also catalogued the various ways in which the Youth in Action programme is being made use of to bring an experience of Europe into the lives of young people. His record not only had much to offer local youth organisations but was also of value to project partners elsewhere in Europe.

His work as a volunteer gave Alberto a comprehensive insight into the nature of youth work, its impact on young people and the methods used. He improved his interpersonal skills, his knowledge of multimedia techniques and his communication skills, including his foreign language competence. Most important, however, was that Alberto developed the self-confidence and the skills to travel the country, interviewing perfect strangers and creating a very useful multimedia promotional documentary on youth work in Estonia. ■



6

BEAT POVERTY!



The youth exchange that took place in Svendborg, Denmark, brought 41 young people together for a week in July 2012 from Denmark, the Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The purpose of the exchange was to provide a forum in which to discuss the question of poverty and the way it is afflicting the lives of people in different parts of Europe. Most of the young people were aged between 15 and 20 years and among them were a number who were themselves from disadvantaged backgrounds and ethnic minorities.



'I have learned how to cherish what I have, that you must work hard to reach good goals and that team work is vital.'

'I think «Beat Poverty» is a remarkable, innovative and valuable approach to our pressing problems of unemployment, loneliness and lack of social inclusion.'

The theme of poverty underpinned all the activities that took place in the programme which had been planned by the Danish Welfare Museum in Svendborg. Activities included creating an exhibition at the museum, making short films and producing posters and postcards for use as street art. The exchange culminated in six exhibitions in the centre of Svendborg, where local people gave generously in return for the postcards which had been produced from photos taken by the young people.

There were several gains for the young people after spending a week discussing this theme with other members of the group, not least their cultural awareness of other parts of Europe. Their communicative skills were clearly enhanced as well as their spoken English which was the language used for the exchange. Using various electronic tools and making films improved their digital skills. The overall impact of the exchange on the young people was to considerably increase their self-esteem.

By sharing views and experience on this subject and talking about how it is in their own country the young people recognised that there was a common European understanding about many of the issues discussed and that it is only by working together as European citizens that many of the problems resulting from poverty and marginalisation can be resolved. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Denmark.
- Project carried out by Svendborg Ungdomsskole, Denmark, in partnership with Ananda Cooperativa Cultural, CRL, Portugal; Asociatia Amicii Colegiului Tehnic Petru Poni, Romania; Euroteam, Czech Republic; Kirklees Council, the United Kingdom; Kulturhuset Vega, Sweden.



7

TOWARDS A MORE
PEACEFUL FUTURE

Twenty-one young people from Belgium, France, Ireland and Spain spent 10 days together in August 2009 on a youth exchange at the Téach Ben Peace Centre in County Donegal, Ireland, which focused on conflict resolution, using as a starting point for discussion the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland.

Most of the young people came from disadvantaged backgrounds and, in some cases, from areas which had been ravaged by war or community conflicts, particularly the asylum seekers in the Irish contingent from different tribal areas in Nepal, Nigeria and Rwanda.



‘They heard about peace messengers active around the world and shared the stories of people who had contributed to making their own communities more peaceful places.’

The programme was based mainly on workshops, during which simulation exercises and role plays were organised, allowing the young people to explore their own and others’ experience of conflict and their role in building peaceful communities. There were also workshops aimed at building trust between members of the group, and participants, throughout the exchange, were invited to record their impressions of peace in the world today, in writing or through art and craft or by using photography

They learned about the need for leadership skills and how to conduct non-violent communications. Being encouraged to speak their minds, considerably improved their self-confidence. On one occasion they hosted a group of young people from Derry in Northern Ireland who were able to tell them what it was like to grow up in such a divided community.

A number of individuals, who had experienced conflict in their lives and had chosen to respond to this through non-violent activism, also met and spoke with the group.

Because of their feelings of trust towards each other the young people were at ease to express themselves freely about their own experience of conflict which helped to heal psychological wounds that they had suffered. A book was produced at the end of the exchange which contained reports from the workshops written by the students and including their art work and photos. There was also coverage of the ideas they had expressed, in the various sessions of the exchange, on how to successfully resolve conflict. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Ireland.
- Project carried out by Voluntary Service International, Ireland, in partnership with Service Civil International, Région Nord, France; Service Civil International, Catalonia, Spain; VIA, Belgium.



8

BASKETBALL AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING



Eleven European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers from France, Germany, Israel, Italy and Latvia spent two months in Kursenai, Lithuania, in 2011 at a time when the European Basketball Championship was being held in Lithuania. The young volunteers were all from countries taking part and their role was to encourage an awareness of the countries, whose teams were competing, and to assist with the Basketball Fans Sport and Culture Festival which had been set up to coincide with the championship.

One of the main tasks for the volunteers at the Festival was to describe the culture of basketball in their country and where it stood compared with other sports. They also helped their own embassies and cultural institutes to organise presentations of their countries at the Festival and assisted the organisers to arrange sporting and other activities. After the Festival the volunteers continued to make presentations in schools, libraries and youth clubs as well as in the local orphanage and social care centre. Besides arranging youth basketball matches they also mobilised local young people to



'In the orphanage with the other volunteers I will never forget the joy children manifested when spending time with us. Our human presence was of such an importance to them. This experience has helped me now that I am working again with children.'

renovate three basketball courts and encouraged them to take responsibility for their local environment and to be active citizens.

The volunteers undertook a number of other tasks: some of them organised cooking workshops in the local vocational school; others arranged evening meetings at the youth centre on discovering new countries and encouraged young people to be curious and open to new ideas and different values.

The impact on the local community of the young volunteers' work was far reaching. Not only did they get to know more about the world outside, particularly about the countries of the eleven young visitors, but the young people they mobilised continued to offer their help with local projects, such as renovating sports facilities, well after the departure of the volunteers.

The young volunteers themselves greatly benefited from the experience. Delphine from France, for example, who had contacted the French team at the championship for help in presenting the basketball scene in France, found a job working in the same field on her return home. Laima from Latvia became head of the European Students Forum on returning home and Julia found a job as coordinator for local youth activities and international youth events in her native Germany.

When evaluating their experience the young volunteers all agreed that the most memorable aspect of their service had been the impact they had on young people in the local community; they were fascinated by meeting young Europeans and learning about their way of life and many of them expressed the desire some day to have a similar experience of voluntary service abroad. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Lithuania.
- Project carried out by Centre of Creative Expression, Lithuania, in partnership with Association Youth for Society, Latvia; Les Chemins de l'Europe, France; Israeli Federation of Community Centers, Israel; Landesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung Sachsen-Anhalt e.V., Germany; Xena, Centro Scambi e Dinamiche Interculturali, Italy.



9

PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE



Sixteen young people from France and Malta worked together for ten days in 2012, helping to restore a fifteenth century chapel, the Madonna tal-Hniena (Our Lady of Ransom) chapel in Qrendi, Malta. Besides making a valuable contribution to the building work in progress the project also aimed to give the young people the benefits of an inter-cultural experience and, in recognition of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the opportunity of working alongside retired local craftsmen.

After meeting with experts already working on the site and discussing with them the various approaches to restoration that needed to be taken, the young people were given a free rein to choose the task they felt most suited for, either in a leadership role or for more practical hands-on work which required technical and manual skills. They were



'The experts were invited to talk about their respective professions, how they got to where they were, what studies they had carried out and what bit of the labour market offered the best opportunities.'

also able to discuss with conservationists, architects and site managers the techniques and principles of preserving the cultural heritage and the role that volunteers can play in this urgent work.

The mutual respect between young people and the elderly was well illustrated with the willingness of retired craftsmen to share their skills and knowledge with the group. One elderly pensioner who lived near the chapel lent his tools to the young people for the duration of their stay and often visited them on site, giving advice and expressing his attachment to the tal-Hniena chapel. A sense of community among young people was built up during the working day as they shared tasks. And in the evening different members of the group volunteered to prepare dinner, usually based on their own traditional dishes.

Contact with the local community was enhanced by the group's open-door policy allowing passers-by to walk in and look around at the work they were doing. A question and answer session often ensued and the locals enjoyed telling the young people about their association with the chapel.

The young people were empowered by the trust placed in them by the experts and craftsmen to grow in self-confidence, with an increased knowledge of the techniques of project management and team building. They also returned home with better communication skills and an improved knowledge of foreign languages.

The other beneficiaries of this project were of course the local people who were invited to a reception in the chapel on the last day to witness and celebrate the improvements that had been made to their chapel, the result of European cooperation and the commitment of a younger generation to protect their cultural heritage. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Malta.
- Project carried out by Din L-Art Helwa, Malta, in partnership with REMPART, France.



10

WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A EUROPEAN GOAL



- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the French-speaking community of Belgium.
- Project carried out by Association des Compagnons Bâisseurs asbl, Belgium, in partnership with IBG – Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten, Germany; MTÜ Noortevahetuse Arengu Ühing ESTYES, Estonia; UNA Exchange, the United Kingdom.



‘The project was all about developing solidarity between young people and valuing their contribution as citizens to a multicultural society.’

The two week youth exchange, involving 16 young people from Belgium, Estonia, Germany and the United Kingdom, took place in July/August 2010 in Marche en Famenne in French-speaking Belgium. The purpose of the exchange was to promote solidarity among the young people, an awareness and acceptance of cultural difference and a sense of European citizenship.

To achieve this objective most of the activities centred around the preparation of a street theatre performance planned for the end of the project. The young people themselves wrote the play together and carried out all the other tasks, such as making the costumes and props, erecting the stage, playing all the parts and directing the two performances they gave in the town centre. This group activity brought the young people together around a common goal and established a bond of solidarity between them where questions of nationality were forgotten. A parallel was drawn with the common objectives of the European project which had created a space in which they were all European citizens.

The street performance created a lot of local interest but was not the only occasion when the group interacted with the local community. For example, the young people insisted on only eating locally grown produce and in return for giving a helping hand in an organic garden in the town, they received free fruit and vegetables. The local youth centre made their facilities and equipment available and helped the group develop graphic posters publicising the street performance. Throughout the exchange a local arts group — Animation Théâtre Nature — made their services available in the preparation of the play.

The young people returned home to their four countries of origin as young Europeans with memories of working together. A video was made of the exchange and accounts were given of the street performance on Belgian radio and TV. ■



11

COMICS AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



The group of 18 young people and youth leaders from eight different European countries: Austria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Italy, Serbia, Spain and Sweden, who met over eight days in June 2011 in Lorca, a small Spanish town, used a method to combat gender-based violence which has a special appeal for young people. The production of comics depicting scenarios which tackle the issue of sexual violence among teenagers.

The training course was devised to provide a forum for discussion on all forms of violence, but in particular gender-based, and the opportunity to consider new ways of preventing sexual violence among young people and encouraging respect towards the opposite sex. Producing a comic to play such a role in this sensitive area of human behaviour was an imaginative way of harnessing the skills, creativity and social concern of the young people in the project as citizens. It was a method of work that later became attractive to other youth organisations.

It was important at the outset of the course to create among the participants feelings of trust towards each other so that they felt secure in talking about their own feelings related to intimate relations with the opposite sex. The group consisted of adult youth



'Drawing is a cathartic process. When we draw we take something out of our heads we give it a shape, a meaning and an emotion. Drawing stories about gender-based violence was not only an unforgettable experience for the participants, but also led to the development of a methodology to deal with it.'

leaders and young people, some as young as 16 years, who came from a mixture of backgrounds, including some who were disadvantaged and others from remote rural areas.

Case studies of all types of abusive behaviour were discussed and various role playing activities organised. Interspersed with these discussions were sessions introducing the group to the world of comics and comparing the different approaches used in the comics they had brought from their home countries. The participants were taught the techniques of putting a comic together and how to use it as a vehicle for messages raising awareness of ways to prevent sexual violence. The production of the comic was a group effort involving some of the participants in drawing and others in devising the script. Before the course ended they laid plans to develop together future projects in this field.

The result was an attractive comic with six stories for eventual distribution to schools, youth centres and specialist organisations working in this field. Since the project took place, the comic has been on display at a number of festivals in the participants' countries of origin, such as in Belgrade in Serbia, and was featured at the International Day Against Violence against Women in Lorca in Spain. The course organiser, Cazalla-Intercultural in Lorca, has also agreed with the local administration on a strategy to combat gender-based violence in the area.

All the sending youth organisations in the seven countries involved in this training course are committed to helping young people cope with the challenges of growing up in today's society and, in particular, to encouraging an awareness in them of their rights and duties as citizens. Two of them are also involved in organising artistic activities and supporting the creativity of young people which can have a cathartic effect on their attitudes towards society. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Spain.
- Project carried out by Cazalla Intercultural, Spain, in partnership with Altero – Association for personal training, education, development and empowerment, Serbia; Sozialgenerator – Verein für Sozialentwicklung, Austria; Tera-Maison de l'Europe de la Charente, France; Vicolocorto Associazione, Italy; Youth Association creACTive, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.



12

EUROPEAN CAMP OF YOUNG FEMINISTS



Forty young feminists from seven different organisations in Belgium, France, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland met together on a camping site near Toulouse in the south west of France. They spent a week there in July 2011, sharing their experience of young women's lives in Europe. They brought with them the different approaches of feminists in their countries to conduct campaigns in support of gender equality and the protection of women from sexual violence. They also shared information about their different customs where subjects such as motherhood and marriage were concerned.

Most of the participants spent the week under canvas and the camp was self-managed, involving every participant in all the daily tasks, from providing meals to mending the showers. To accomplish this form of management, daily assemblies were held when each individual had the right to contribute to decision making and where session leaders were regularly changed.

Following the first day when the ground rules and timetables were thrashed out, 26 workshops were held on a rich variety of topics led by the different organisations



'The balance between collective moments and individual talks, between activities organised by the group and informal meetings allowed for a wide range of exchanges on different topics related to young women's lives in Europe.'

represented at the camp. The list included sex education in schools, how to react to violence in public places, access to abortion in different countries, women and power, the impact of pornography and the feminist management of sexuality. The 'Manifesto of Young Feminists in Europe' was produced, collectively by all the participants. The manifesto was written in eight chapters: solidarity; discrimination; the economy; the environment; health issues; violence; sexuality and LGBTQI¹; sex education; and the promotion of feminism.

The last two days were devoted to making contact with the general public in Toulouse. A march was organised through the streets, accompanied by music, singing and the chanting of slogans in support of issues concerning women. The march took place without any incident to mar the day and the colourful good humour of the all-female marchers and the message they communicated was appreciated by the onlookers. Finally a public debate was held on the question of feminism and inclusion.

The impact on a number of participants was life-changing. Young women who had never attended a meeting of this kind before went home feeling empowered to take a stronger line in promoting the cause of women. Talking in public was easier and their knowledge about Europe vastly expanded.

Such was the success of this first European camp of its kind and such was the strength of the networks that were created in Toulouse that another camp has already taken place in Romania and a third one is planned for Portugal in 2013. ■

¹ LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and Intersex.

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in France.
- Project carried out by Coordination française de la Marche Mondiale des Femmes, France, in partnership with Asociación CNG Marcha Mundial des Mujeres, Spain; Kofe(m)ina association, Poland; la Marche Mondiale des Femmes, Switzerland; Umar Uniao de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta, Portugal; Vie féminine, Belgium; World March of Women, Greece.



13

**TRAINING FOR
EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP**

European citizenship was the theme of the training course for 24 youth workers, youth leaders, young volunteers and NGO representatives from six different countries which met for one week in April 2011 at Sázava in the Czech Republic. The course members were from the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland and Turkey. All the participants were multipliers; they disseminated the information and ideas they received on the course to the hundreds of young people in the youth organisations they represented.

For many young people the European Union is a remote idea in spite of the fact that their lives are increasingly influenced by



'The European Union is an abstract topic for young people; we support discussions about integrated Europe and enable young people to shape their own opinions.'

decisions made at a European level. Much of this problem is due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the history and processes that have led to EU adopted laws. It was to contribute to a lessening of this deficit that this training course was set up.

The course was led by an international team of trainers who used non-formal learning methods to animate discussion in plenary and workshop sessions. Games were used as a tool, particularly attractive to young people, to illustrate points and to make the themes covered less dry and more accessible. Discussions were held on subjects such as common European values, respect for cultures other than one's own, European Union institutions and the philosophy and operation of the Youth in Action programme. Participants also shared experience of good practice and planned follow-up activities promoting European citizenship to young people.

Participants benefited in many ways from the course. They received both theoretical knowledge about European citizenship and concrete methodologies for youth activities in this field; the international group extended their intercultural understanding and their debating and leadership skills; they became acquainted with non-formal training methods and gained valuable experience in communicating with others in a foreign language. They also established a network of organisations dealing with this topic for future partnerships and projects under Youth in Action.

The local community also benefited from their discussions with course members on issues relating to European citizenship. Many of the topics covered in the course were raised with members of the general public. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Czech Republic.
- Project carried out by Together, the Czech Republic, in partnership with Europejskie Forum Młodzieży, Poland; Gazientep, Turkey; Together Estonia; Together France; Work in Progress, Italy.



14

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS



Twenty-eight young people from Armenia, Georgia, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom were brought together for a week, in August 2012, on a youth exchange in Tvush Marz, Armenia, to learn about the role the media, especially the new social media, can play in the democratic process. Participants were invited to exchange information on the status of the media in their countries and to discuss to what extent they felt empowered, as young people, to take a full part in political life.

Non-formal learning tools were used in plenary sessions and workshops building up an atmosphere of trust in which the young people felt at ease to express themselves



'The exchange opened the eyes of the young people to the way in which the responsible use of the new media can empower them to take a fuller part in civic life and the political process.'

freely. Sensitive questions relating to press censorship in some countries were raised and examples were given of how the social media can now play a major role in protest movements. The participants generally pointed to the enhanced role of the social media which, particularly for young people, were a more important source of information than the mainstream media.

Presentations were made by professionals who led discussions on topics such as 'Facebook — media without competition', 'Conflict resolution through mass media', 'Public cyber defence', 'Civic journalism and privacy' and 'Ethics and free media'.

A number of outdoor activities and social events were organised to encourage intercultural learning and informal bonds between the participants.

For all the participants the exchange provided an informative intercultural experience and helped to consolidate links already established between the youth parliament in Emmen, Switzerland and countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus region. They all learned more about how young people can find a voice in the political process through an intelligent use of the social media.

The issues raised on the exchange were of particular interest to the young people from Armenia, Georgia and Poland which had become democracies after many years under totalitarian regimes. The young people from countries not belonging to the EU welcomed the open-minded approach adopted by the leaders and shared with all the participants the European spirit of collaboration that this exchange had engendered. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Switzerland.
- Project carried out by Meliora, Armenia, in partnership with Internews, Georgia; Jugend Parlament EMMEN, Switzerland; former students at Sobieskiego School, Olawa, Poland.



15

A EUROPEAN FAIRY TALE



The youth exchange involving eight young people from the Czech Republic and eight young Italians took place over the period of a month in June/July 2012 in Barra, a disadvantaged district of Naples, Italy. The organisers, Il Tappeto di Iqbal, made use of the exchange to enhance their work with children and young people growing up in an environment considered to be 'at risk' due to the high level of crime and illegality in the neighbourhood.

Il Tappeto di Iqbal, a well-established social cooperative working together with the local authorities in Naples, uses the arts, such as story telling, street theatre and circus activities, to address the problems faced by the children and young people. By being involved, both physically and emotionally in the make-believe world created by these activities, the young people were able to experiment with a different way of living. They could also develop an awareness of what it is to be citizens with a more positive attitude



'The exchange proved to be a fascinating exercise in imagining a better world together and helping young people in a city with major problems of crime and poverty to develop a more positive attitude towards society and the self-confidence to break with the cycle of deprivation.'

towards society and greater self-esteem. Through story telling they learn how to listen and develop empathy towards others.

Workshops were held during the exchange in which participants were invited to create a European fairy tale as a vehicle for telling their own stories based on their personal experience. There were also opportunities for street theatre and performing juggling acts in public.

At the end of the exchange the group put on a performance of the fairy tale at a local primary school in Barra in front of school children and their parents and other members of the community. It proved a most effective way of involving local people who responded by joining in with the performance.

The exchange benefited all the young people in different ways. The young Italians in the group learned from their new Czech friends about a way of life which was not dominated by criminal influences. The young Czechs were able to reflect on their own safe situation compared to the hard reality of growing up in the difficult environment of the young Italians. As the main language of communication during the exchange was English, the whole group benefited from improved language skills. The young Italians who normally speak in dialect with each other also improved their standard Italian skills.

In fact the exchange was an exciting experience for the whole community, including the teachers at the primary school who were enthusiastic about the project. Plans were being laid to hold further encounters of this kind with young people from different countries. Their presence in Barra promoted a sense of belonging to a wider community from which they could learn and make lifelong friendships. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Italy.
- Project carried out by Cooperativa Sociale Onlus il Tappeto di Iqbal, Italy, in partnership with Stroom, the Czech Republic.



16

**LEARNING FROM THE
HISTORY OF BUCHENWALD**

Adina from Lichtenstein, 23 years old, worked as a volunteer for nine months in 2008/09, in the memorial centre of the former concentration camp at Buchenwald, Germany. A student of history she wished to learn more about how and why this camp was set up by the Nazi regime. She also helped to set up an exhibition of the work of Franz Ehrlich, a former inmate of the camp and famous architect and designer. Franz Ehrlich had been a student of the Bauhaus in Germany and the exhibition traced

'The project broadened the volunteer's notions about European citizenship and the responsibility of her generation to learn from history and to help build a Europe based on cultural tolerance, without discrimination and racism'.

his opposition to the Nazis during the '30s and his eventual arrest and incarceration in the concentration camp.

Adina was a member of the exhibition team and gained an insight into the daily life of the memorial centre. She carried out research and was invited to contribute to the design of the exhibition. Every other week she spent the day working in the visitors' information centre and helped out in the teaching department. This consolidated her knowledge about the history of National Socialism and the mass murder of European Jews, and Sinti and Roma people, thousands of whom had died at Buchenwald.

The months that Adina carried out her voluntary service in the former concentration camp were very formative; it was a remarkable lesson in European history for her and the time she spent working on the exhibition taught her many things about the history of art and architecture. During her service she was also able to visit other places in Eastern Germany which gave her an idea of life under a totalitarian communist regime in the former German Democratic Republic (DDR).

Her voluntary service also broadened her notions about European citizenship and the responsibility of her generation to learn from history and to help build a Europe based on cultural tolerance, without discrimination and racism. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Liechtenstein.
- Project carried out by Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, Germany, in partnership with Verein für Betreutes Wohnen (VBW), Liechtenstein.



17

COMBATING SEXUAL STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA



The week-long training course ‘Loud and Visible: Queering up the media’, held in October 2011 in Stockholm, Sweden, was organised by SFQ, a member of the Association of Nordic and Pol-Balt LGBTQ¹ Student Organisations (ANSO). With other member associations of ANSO in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania and Poland, 34 young student activists were invited to join the course to develop their skills in media, information, social inclusion and the visibility of LGBTQ issues.

A central focus of the course was to empower young activists to counteract the negative depiction of LGBTQ in the media and various aspects of this theme were covered in a series of workshops, organised by the participants themselves. In a presentation to inform these workshops the group was introduced to ‘Ten Tactics: How

¹ LGBTQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning.



'The course and ANSO have opened so many doors for me and given me perspectives I didn't know even existed. What started as an exciting conference opportunity in a foreign country turned into a mind blowing experience of getting to know the real diverse world in its true colours. Conferences may end, people may part, life will go on, but it will not be the same any more.'

to turn information into practice', an effective tool which covered different approaches and strategies used around the world by various groups working for human rights.

The training course employed non-formal learning principles and a lot of attention was given to making the sessions accessible to all participants. This careful approach did not only apply to physical access — and one of the participants was indeed a wheelchair-user — but also took into account the different learning styles of participants and choice of language and even colour used to present material in each of the sessions. Care was also taken about the food on offer in the catering arrangements made for the course.

The participants benefited from the experience in several ways, not least from having to design and run the workshops themselves. They also improved their knowledge of how to use media technology in setting up a campaign, writing press releases, developing media tools to enhance gender equality and non-discrimination and using mobile phones for information sharing and recording human rights violations. Their self-confidence was enhanced and they learned to listen to each other and to work in a team.

On the initiative of the young activists a video was made as a contribution to the worldwide campaign 'It gets better' in support of the LGBTQ community. At the end of the course the students commented on the family nature of the group where they felt safe and understood. Before they separated, plans had been made for a number of follow-up projects. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Sweden.
- Project carried out by ANSO (Association of Nordic and Pol-Balt LGBTQ Student Organisations), Sweden, in partnership with BLUS, Denmark; Campaign against Homophobia KPH, Poland; Homogloibiini, Finland; Homogloibiini, Opiskelijavainokkaat Ovi ry, Finland; Mittetulundusühing Eesti Gei Noored, Estonia; Q Félág hinegin stúdentia/Q queer students, Iceland; Queer Aalto, Finland; Sveriges Förenade HBTQ-studenter, SFQ, Sweden; Tolerant Youth Organisation (TYA), Lithuania; Tolerant Youth Association and Lithuanian Gay League (LGL), Lithuania; Transfuzja Foundation, Poland.



18

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP



The youth exchange took place in September 2012 in Zemplínska Šírava in Slovakia between 36 young people from Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey. The theme that brought them together was human rights and their implication in the lives of young people. The purpose of the exchange was to inform participants of their rights and responsibilities as individuals and members of society and to promote respect and tolerance towards others, as well as fighting against all forms of discrimination and prejudice. Connected to this theme was the question of citizenship and the common European approach towards the environment and other issues of concern to all.

The programme was based on a series of thematic workshops covering a wide number of topics. Each day started with an ice-breaker activity to focus the minds of participants on the programme organised for that day and to build up team spirit in the group,



'Young people learnt about their rights and responsibilities as individuals and members of society and how to show respect and tolerance towards others as well as fighting all forms of discrimination and prejudice.'

essential to the success of the workshops. Each working group included members of all four nationalities in the exchange.

Topics discussed in the workshops and plenary sessions included the role of the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe, the future of human rights in Europe and how some rights might be lost and new ones added. Each day concluded with an evaluation when all participants were invited to express an opinion on progress so far and make proposals regarding the programme. A role play entitled 'Court for the rights of our exchange' operated throughout the duration of the exchange and provided another means of registering complaints and suggestions from participants.

A variety of other activities took place to ensure the maximum involvement of all members of the group. Particularly successful was the activity known as 'the monument' where participants were invited to draw their vision of what they would like to achieve on paper which was then stuck on a poster to form a collage along with contributions from other participants. Another example was the preparation of a 'human rights calendar' in a group effort, which was printed after the end of the exchange and sent to partner organisations.

There were also a number of intercultural events, such as the national evenings when the traditions of each of the countries represented in the exchange were showcased and an evening walk-around in the city to give a taste of life in Slovakia.

The exchange concluded with a brainstorming session when plans were laid for future cooperation under Youth in Action. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovakia.
- Project carried out by Lad'áci, Slovakia, in partnership with Jables, Spain; Uluslararası Mesleki ve Teknik Eğitim Derneği, Turkey; Varzalin, Romania.



19

**TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE
IN MEDIA LITERACY**

The training course held in Sophia, Bulgaria, in October 2012, was aimed at providing youth workers, trainers and youth leaders from five different countries with the information and strategies needed to explain to young people back home how to make an informed use of the new technologies and of the Internet. Participants on the course were from Bulgaria, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom.

The three basic principles of media literacy established by the course organisers were: firstly how to search the Internet for information; secondly how to evaluate this information; and thirdly how to recognise the way in which modern techniques can be



'The course centre was open to the general public who benefited from the many media presentations in the workshops and received advice on educational e-games from members of the course.'

used to manipulate the information. It was emphasised that these ground rules were essential to ensure that young people had sufficient media literacy to benefit from the very positive attributes of the technology at the same time avoiding its pitfalls.

The main tools used on the course to reinforce this code of good practice were e-games. They were specially devised for this purpose to learn more about using the Internet which would prove particularly motivating for the young people they would be training on their return home. The course members were also taught in lectures given by experts how to use what is known as Boolean logic and critical thinking in carrying out searches on the Internet.

The participants on the course were involved at every stage in its planning which ensured that the programme was relevant to their needs. Through a Web page that they devised the strategies developed on the course were made available to a larger audience and a description of techniques for using e-games was sent out to more than 100 youth organisations and centres.

During the many discussions, held informally and during the workshops, participants were able to create a network through which they have remained in contact since the course. Their exchanges with each other have strongly enhanced their cultural awareness and the possibilities of continuing to share good practice and jointly solve problems.

The course was also accessible to the general public who were able to visit the centre and learn more about e-games and Internet strategies from course members. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Bulgaria.
- Project carried out by the Student Computer Art Society, Bulgaria, in partnership with the Associazione Orientare, Italy; the MANKO Association, Poland; La Tierra Verde, Spain.



20

LEARNING ABOUT DEMOCRACY



The one-week training course held in Nevşehir, Turkey, in September 2010 was addressed to 24 youth workers from Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Turkey. Most of the participants were university students working in youth organisations in their own countries. The purpose of the course was to compare different models of democracy and to understand their origins. The role of the students on this course was to subsequently ensure that learning about democracy was incorporated into their regular work with young people.

‘Through non-formal education methods the youth workers learned about democracy and active citizenship and how to integrate that knowledge into their regular work with young people.’

Non-formal education methods were used on the course in plenary and workshop sessions. These included simulation exercises, short presentations, forum theatre, role-play and drama. Workshops covered topics such as: ‘me and democracy’ and how people become active in democracy in my city.

Through sharing examples from their countries of origin the participants broadened their awareness of the many different interpretations of democracy and the cultural and historical influences on its development.

One simulation exercise involved participants in enacting the life of an imaginary village and how the democratic process worked or failed to work. A meeting with associations caring for the disabled gave them the opportunity of looking at minority rights and how they have sometimes to be protected against the uncaring rule of the majority. In this context they debated the statement by Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790): ‘Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote.’

An effective network was created between the participants on the course and plans were made for future projects under the Youth in Action programme. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Turkey.
- Project carried out by Avanos Gençlik Grubu, Turkey, in partnership with Asociația de Tineret Culturală și Educație ‘Speranța Râmnicăneană’, Romania; CEIPES-Centro Internazionale per la Promozione dell’Educazione e lo Sviluppo, Italy; European Multicultural Association – Slivan, Bulgaria; European and Mediterranean Youth Association, France; Experimental Technology Education Sports Tes-Henet, Greece; International Relations Committee of Students Representative Body, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania.



21

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION
THROUGH DIALOGUE**

The training course that took place at Knin, an area of ‘special state concern’ in Croatia, in March/April 2012, brought 31 young people together from 10 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the UK. All of these countries had faced the challenge of divided communities and six of them had suffered serious conflicts following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. The purpose of the course was to create a secure space for youth workers from these various countries to meet and exchange information about the reality in their countries and ideas on how best to bring reconciliation through peaceful dialogue.

The participants in the week-long course were all volunteers from youth organisations active in the field of conflict resolution. The course addressed the problems of xenophobia and encouraged the young volunteers to play an active role in fostering mutual understanding in their communities and to think critically about their own personal position on these issues and their potential prejudices towards the ‘other’.



‘Diversity in Europe is a bonus, not a threat, and bringing reconciliation through peaceful dialogue was the central focus of this training course for youth workers active in divided communities.’

Team-building activities created bonds between participants who felt confident and free to express themselves and learn from others. The multicultural group provided ample opportunity to try out the peace-building strategies developed during the course and the Council of Europe’s simulation game ‘Compass’ and teaching methods developed by the European Peer Training Organisation were used to this effect. Role playing and simulation exercises were also organised and there were film showings and talks by visiting experts. Furthermore, participants were invited to carry out an analysis of human rights across Europe, starting with the situation in their own countries.

The course had been carefully prepared through a number of Skype conferences between the participating organisations and the experts and the participants were carefully selected according to strict criteria. A similar careful approach was taken in evaluating the course and making follow-up arrangements for future initiatives under the Youth in Action programme. The painstaking attitude of the organisers reflected the sensitivity of the theme of the course with its far reaching potential to create solidarity among young people in a more cohesive and tolerant Europe.

On the last evening the course concluded with a joyful celebration of the many cultural traditions that had been brought together when participants made presentations of their countries and communities through the preparation of national dishes and traditional music and dance. For them diversity was a bonus not a threat and they returned home hopeful that their work together would bring about a more peaceful future. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Croatia.
- Project carried out by HUK, Udruga za promoviranje humanosti i urbane kulture, Croatia, in partnership with Asocijacija Graditelji Mira, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Beyond barriers association, Albania; Detski parlament na Makedonija, Veles, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Fundación Paz e Solidariedade, Spain; Klub za osnaživanje mladih 018, Serbia; Kocaeli Higher Education Group, Turkey; Spark Pro, Israel; Tree of Life Charity, United Kingdom; Znanstveno raziskovalno združenje za umetnost, kulturno-izobraževalne programe in tehnologijo EP, Slovenia.



22

HELPING REFUGEES TO FEEL AT HOME



The refugee centre in Czerwony Bór, in the Polish region of Podlaskie, set up mainly for asylum seekers from Chechnya, is located in a secluded area surrounded by forests which makes integration with the local population very difficult. Fortunately their situation has been greatly improved, thanks in large part to the work of volunteers.

Four young women from France, Italy, Latvia and Spain spent eight months in 2010/11 helping out in the centre. It was the



'The project gave me huge faith in the power of the European Voluntary Service. Although this is difficult work here at the centre for refugees, the volunteers find it a great experience. Until recently, the focus was on getting to host volunteers from different countries here. Now the plan is to inform and assist in arranging volunteering abroad for young Poles'.

fourth group of European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers to work with refugees here and they were able to continue the progress made by their predecessors.

Their first task was to organise free time activities for the children and young people living in the centre. They worked with the staff of the kindergarten to set up a series of art workshops, dance and cookery classes, film showings and sports tournaments. They also decorated the walls of the kindergarten with paintings and photos and collected a large number of books in Polish and Russian for the library that they had set up for children and adults. They also organised various events including an excursion to a nearby city and a celebration of International Children's Day and the World Refugee Day.

Their second important task was to support the development of links between the refugees and the local community. It was important to help create more positive attitudes among the local population towards their new neighbours. As part of this work the volunteers set up workshops with local people with the help of the Foundation for Education and Creativity in Białystok and other local organisations and a number of articles and reports on local TV helped to inform the general public about the refugees in a positive light.

Another welcome result of the work of the volunteers was that schemes, such as EVS, are now far better known and understood than before and this has led to a growing number of young Poles expressing interest in volunteering their services. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Poland.
- Project carried out by Fundacja Edukacji i Twórczości, Poland, in partnership with ADICE, France; Associazione Interculturale NUR, Italy; NGO Svetionik, Montenegro; Ośrodek Czerwony Bór, Poland; YWCA, Latvia.



23

FACING THE CONSEQUENCES OF HUMAN ACTIONS



'Footprints' was the topic of this project that brought 15 young people and their youth leaders together for eight days in September 2012 on a youth exchange in Bad Ischl, a small city in Austria. They discussed footprints on the ground and footprints in cyberspace and the consequences they both have on the natural environment and in cyberspace.

On the one hand, how we choose to live, what we choose to eat and what means of transport we choose to use all have an impact on the world we live in. On the other hand, all the digital tools now available, such as the Internet, Facebook and other social media, if used without caution can seriously damage our privacy and can make us vulnerable to manipulation. But at the same time they offer huge advantages in terms of access to information and new ways of participating in political and social activities. These considerations were at the heart of the project which emphasised the need for media literacy and social and environmental responsibility.

As part of the programme, the young people from Austria, Italy and Turkey spent two days under canvas in the countryside far from any town and without the luxuries and



'Everything we do leaves a footprint in the natural environment and in cyber space. Learning to tread more lightly on the earth was how the aim of this exchange was described.'

mod cons of modern living, such as running water, electricity and without access to the Internet and a signal for mobile telephones. They worked on their personal footprints and discovered how much land and other resources were needed to maintain their present way of life.

Discussions were held in workshops on topics such as the European Union's role in passing legislation in support of environmental protection, as well as raising the question of whether the EU has the power to control some of the potential threats of the Internet. Games were used as ice-breakers so as to encourage discussion and the free flow of information about the cultural differences in the background of the young people. Participants from Turkey, who now lived in Austria, were proud to act when necessary as interpreters for the Turkish group.

The group also visited an exhibition at the Ars Electronica Centre in Linz, also known as the 'Museum of the Future', which specialises in the new technologies and which gave the young people an insight into the opportunities and challenges they offer. The exhibition, entitled 'Out of control — What the Web knows about you', highlighted the need for caution to protect one's privacy and illustrated how easy it is to falsify information on the Web.

Using film, photography, sculpture and a theatre performance, the lessons learned from this experience were summed up in a presentation for local people held at the end of the exchange. The young people took away with them the message: 'Think before you act, because all your actions have consequences and you cannot retrace your steps.' ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Austria.
- Project carried out by Jugend- und Kulturverein Bad Ischl, Austria, in partnership with Izmit Municipality, Youth Information and Counselling Center, Turkey; Mistral Società Cooperativa Sociale – Onlus, Italy; Take Off Youth, Portugal.



24

‘HUMAN LIBRARIES’ FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION



Becoming a ‘book’, telling your own story and being ‘read’ by other people to help to dispel prejudice and intolerance, that is the principle behind the development of ‘human libraries’ which were initiated in Denmark in 2001 and have been set up in different countries throughout the world to combat social exclusion. The 16 young people who gathered for six days in October 2011 in Nicosia, from Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Spain, followed a training course which introduced the ‘human library’ technique, aimed at enhancing participants’ awareness of how certain minorities or individuals are socially excluded on the basis of their status, life choices or beliefs.

Various other non-formal learning methods were used on the course, such as different forms of theatre, brainstorming and group building games. The training sessions contained a balance between learning through experience and theory with experts invited to make



'I discovered «human libraries» and non-formal education and was amazed to see how effective they can be to get rid of prejudice and intolerance which lead to the social exclusion of minorities.'

inputs on specific subjects. This encouraged the young people to take a stand against racism and all forms of social exclusion.

The staging of a 'human library' was a central achievement of the course where young people taking the role of 'books' were able to tell their own stories and talk about growing up in their cultures of origin. Other young people were the 'readers' and clearly benefited from the stories they 'read'. Members of the local community were also invited to take part both as 'books' and as 'readers'. This first attempt at creating a 'human library' proved to be a very successful tool for removing prejudice and creating tolerance and solidarity among all of those who took part.

Although the programme of the course was scrupulously prepared well in advance it was not set in stone and was adapted throughout its duration following suggestions from the daily evaluations carried out by participants. According to the final evaluation and a questionnaire completed by all the participants, the course not only extended the intercultural knowledge and skills range of the young people but also proved to be a most successful exercise in personal development. All the groups returned home firmly committed to setting up their own 'human libraries' and remaining in touch so as to continue learning from each others' experience.

The course was presented with the national Charlemagne Youth Prize in 2012 in the European contest jointly organised by the European Parliament and the International Prize Foundation in Aachen, Germany, for projects undertaken by young people which offer practical examples of Europeans living together as one community. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Cyprus.
- Project carried out by the Cyprus Youth Council, Cyprus, in partnership with AEGEE-Coruña, Spain; Associação Operação Vida, Portugal; Servizio Civile Internazionale, Italy.



25

SUSTAINABLE URBAN LIFE STYLE



Finding ways to to make the best use of old plastic bags, making jewellery from paper, creating an office garden in the middle of the city and making teddy bears from old gloves. These are some of the ways two European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers spent their year in 2010/11 in the Green Home Academy in Budapest which was founded to promote a sustainable urban lifestyle by following environmentally friendly ways of living.

The Academy ran workshops for the general public covering a very wide range of subjects. They aimed at helping city dwellers to live more healthily, at the same time



‘Whatever you do with it, chucking it out onto the street with the rest of your trash is the worst option imaginable.’

teaching them techniques which bring about least damage to the environment. Topics of the workshops included home-made cheese and other dairy product making, home-made cosmetics and soaps using natural materials and reviving traditional handicrafts made of recycled materials. These were practices very well known to an older generation. The volunteers assisted with the workshops which were very popular and, instead of the six sessions that were planned, 18 were held to meet demand. Learning by doing proved far more successful than simply distributing leaflets or giving lectures on the subject.

One of the principles of the Academy is to avoid waste and a number of recycling activities were organised. The young volunteers described in their blog the many ways in which used clothes and bottles and other objects can be recycled.

Promoting local produce and home-made foodstuffs was another principal activity of the Academy. The volunteers helped a local food cooperative to make weekly deliveries of locally grown vegetables to reduce the negative effect of transportation on climate change and to support employment and the local economy. To be ‘local’ the produce would have to be grown within a limit of 50 kilometres.

The young volunteers supported the general educational mission of the Academy which aimed to radically change peoples’ habits as consumers. Their approach was based on sound science but put over in a humorous and colourful way: their blog helped to spread their ideas to an international readership and volunteers on similar projects abroad have taken up their suggestions and followed their example. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Hungary.
- Project carried out by Messzelátó Egyesület, Hungary, in partnership with Allianssi Youth Exchange, Finland; Norsk eksvolontor organisasjon, Norway.



26

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR INCLUSION



Twenty-nine young people from Belgium, Czech Republic, Ireland and the Slovak Republic spent a week together in August 2010 at the sports and leisure facility at Worriken in the German-speaking region of Belgium. Each national group included one or two mentally handicapped young people among the able-bodied. This exercise was set out to establish that if the programme of an exchange is suitably adapted such a mixed group of young people can have a successful experience together.



'The experience of working with different cultures and making allowance for those with a mental disability, founded on mutual respect and understanding, was a life-changing experience for the whole group.'

Central to the programme of this exchange were sport and outdoor activities in a safe environment. After some initial problems the group got to know each other and, with skillful animation by the youth leaders, soon developed a genuine sense of mutual respect and solidarity. By avoiding activities with a strong competitive nature or over-reliant on the use of language or other specific skills, and putting an emphasis on team spirit, all the young people, including those with mental disabilities, could learn more about themselves and about each other and come away with higher self-esteem.

The guiding theme of the exchange was 'time travel' and in between the sporting activities workshops were held when the young people had the opportunity to learn more about the different cultures represented among the participants. By using non-formal learning methods they were able to overcome the language barriers and problems faced by those with a mental disability. The latter were able to discover other strengths that they had and which they could make use of in the future.

The experience of working with different cultures and making allowances for those with a mental disability made a profound effect on the participants and confirmed for some their intention to continue working in this field. Three of the teenagers in the group have embarked on a course of social studies since the exchange and two others have joined a project set up to combat bullying and discrimination. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the German-speaking community of Belgium.
- Project carried out by Jugendheim Kettenis, Belgium, in partnership with Land of Harmony Foundation, Slovakia; «Rytmus», the Czech Republic; Youth Work Ireland – Galway, Tuam Youth Club, Ireland.



27

CROSS-BORDER ACTION TO SAVE OUR FORESTS



Environmental protection knows no frontiers and protection of the unique biodiversity of European forests and other natural resources is the collective responsibility of the many nations where these resources are to be found. Such was the approach taken by the two-day seminar held at Petrozavodsk in North-West Russia in October 2008 which brought together 19 non-governmental organisations from Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Russia and Sweden.

In spite of its short duration, the seminar acted as a starting point for collaboration between the participants in this crucial cross-border work of nature conservation. Most of the participants were young people working with the NGOs, many of whom had already taken part in a European Voluntary Service (EVS) project in this field. The seminar gave the opportunity to promote EVS and to discuss its cross-border management, with a particular focus on east-west cooperation.



'The seminar was successful in sharing methods and ways of youth involvement in different organisations as well as in sharing understanding of the roles young people have in environmental work in different countries.'

In more general terms the seminar emphasised the importance of finding common ground between different organisations in the methods they chose to carry out environmental work in different countries. Workshops also considered the matter of the rights of local people and questions affecting climate change.

The dates of the seminar coincided with the biennial conference of the Taiga Rescue Network, the international network of more than 200 NGOs and individuals working to defend the world's boreal forests, which extend in broad bands across the northern latitudes of North America, Europe and Asia. The Taiga conference, which also took place in Petrozavodsk, gave the young participants at the seminar an idea of the importance of their work as well as providing high profile experts to address and take part in the seminar.

The seminar provided a rare opportunity for all the stakeholders in EVS projects — volunteers, hosts and trainers — to meet together and share their experience. They were also able to carry out some preliminary evaluation and to begin creating partnerships for future projects. Another special event of the seminar was the input made by an EVS volunteer about the work of Baikal Environmental Wave, an NGO based in Irkutsk in Siberia which has been working to save Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake in the world, from the ravages of pollution.

The connection between environmental protection and citizenship was firmly established at the seminar which clearly underlined the crucial role of young people and the special contribution that EVS volunteers have already made in this field. Participants returned home full of ideas for future cooperation. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Finland.
- Project carried out by Suomen Luonnonsuojeluliitto (FANC), Finland, in partnership with APB-BirdLife Belarus; Baikal Environmental Wave, Russia; Regional public nature conservation organization of Karelia, Russia; Swedish Nature and Youth, Sweden.



28

INCLUSION OF DISABLED IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING



When including the young disabled in mainstream education, some negative attitudes towards them can change and more opportunities are open to them than was previously thought. This was how a young man from Austria, who spends his life in a wheelchair, felt after working two months in 2012 as an European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteer in the Vaivara primary school in Jumala, Latvia, where 10% of the children are disabled.



'The young disabled volunteer took part in a number of activities in the school and set a good example for pupils with disabilities themselves who could see how to manage and to live a full life.'

The young volunteer took part in a number of activities in the school, along with other EVS volunteers on the project, organised by the hosting organisation 'Modulis C' to demonstrate that his disability was no barrier to taking an active role in the life of the school. He spent much time preparing a visual library of activities that had taken place at the school over the years and in so doing had lots of contact with pupils, staff and parents at the school. He also organised a video exchange in which he conducted a dialogue with parents on creating more opportunities for all the pupils in an inclusive school such as their's.

During the afternoon he often took part in games with pupils which taught them how to make allowances for the disabled as well as developing in them respect and tolerance for each other. With the help of other volunteers he also set up an exhibition displaying the drawings and texts of the pupils about how inclusion worked in their school. The controversies surrounding this recent change in the way the young disabled are educated, through inclusion rather than in special schools, was not absent from their discussions and one of the other young volunteers opened up the debate in a video film entitled 'Inclusion or Illusion'.

The background of the volunteer from Austria was very often the subject of his talks with the children and on one occasion he gave a presentation to the whole school about his family and schooling and how the systems were different in the two countries. He was able in this way to bring Europe closer into the school community and to make the pupils aware of possibilities for them to carry out similar projects abroad. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Latvia.
- Project carried out by Nodibinajums «Modulis C», Latvia, in partnership with Grenzenlos – Interkultureller Austausch, Austria.



29

GAINING CONFIDENCE THROUGH PLAYING CHESS



This youth exchange, organised by the Euro-Chess Foundation in the Netherlands, brought together 60 young people at a centre in Valkenburg aan de Geul in May 2012 to take part in the 2012 Euro-Chess tournament. The young people were from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia and they were all actively involved in preparing the event some four months in advance. Seventy-five per cent of the young participants were disabled with various forms of physical disability.

The purpose behind the exchange, besides promoting chess as a worthwhile sport for all, was to combat the social exclusion often suffered by the disabled and to broaden the horizons of all participants through the contact they made with other young people from different parts of Europe. Throughout much of the eight days



'The project's motto was «Friends beyond borders» meaning national borders as well as cultural, religious and physical borders.'

of the exchange the young people, both the disabled and the physically able, took part in the chess tournament.

Although playing chess was the main activity, the young people were also able to set up a market where each of them presented their own country and took part in workshops providing opportunities for getting to know each other and to appreciate each other's cultural background. The workshops enabled them to learn about music and folk-dancing traditions and to try out different traditional ways of cooking.

The tournament's organiser, the Euro-Chess Foundation, gave prominent coverage to the event by disseminating the chess results to the local, regional and national media. It also invited high-profile politicians and other well-known personalities in the chess world to visit the project and publicised the event to partners throughout Europe.

With the same thoroughness applied in the preparation of the event, the partner organisations carried out an evaluation of the impact on the young participants after the event was all over. A majority of them replied that that they had not only improved their chess playing but also their communication skills had been enhanced by the experience and they now knew a lot more about different aspects of European culture. They agreed that the boost to their self-confidence and self-esteem which they derived from taking part in the tournament would serve them well in their future lives. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Netherlands.
- Project carried out by Euro-Chess Foundation, the Netherlands, in partnership with Euro-Chess, Młodzieżowy Dom Kultury, Poland; Humanitarni sdruzeni 'Pro Tebe', the Czech Republic; Spojena Skola, Slovakia; Sport en Handicap vzw, Belgium; Sport-und Athletenverein Torgelow, Germany; Vakok óvodája, Általános Iskolája, Speciális Szakiskolája, Diákotthona, Gyermekotthona és Peadagógiai Szakszol, Hungary.



30

EUROPEAN PROJECT OF FRIENDSHIP AND SOLIDARITY



Helping others in need has been central to the work of the Caritas movement since it was first set up in Germany in 1897, and following the Balkan wars in the '90s its Luxembourg branch has been working with the poorer areas of Montenegro, many of whose citizens had fled to Luxembourg during the conflict and had then been sent back to their home country.

In this spirit of solidarity Young Caritas Luxembourg organised a youth exchange centred on three towns in the north-east region of Montenegro: Berane, Biogradska Gora and Petnjica. Twelve young people from Luxembourg were invited to spend eight days in August 2012 working with people in need in this deprived area together with 26 young

'This group of 38 young people from such contrasting countries was united around a common goal: to make Europe a space for peace and to build a future together based on friendship and solidarity.'

Montenegriens. Their work included arranging a whole day of games for disabled children, giving a hand to elderly people by helping with the housework and simply listening to their stories and organising games for Roma children.

Besides the contribution they made to the lives of people in the region, the other purpose of the exchange was to enable the young people from two very different countries, one a founder Member State of the European Union, the other a candidate for membership, to meet and share ideas and aspirations about the European Union, both of today and tomorrow. Ample time was reserved for informal discussions and leisure activities, such as boating on one of the beautiful lakes in the area and singing and dancing together. A visit to the famous mosque at Petnjica gave all of them the opportunity to reflect on the diversity of religious beliefs represented in the group. The young Luxembourgers also visited the families of their Montenegrin counterparts and were able to appreciate the cultural and social context in which they had grown up.

The overall impact of the exchange was to give the young people a sense that the European Union is not just a political and economic entity, built around the interests of governments, but a project which brings people together in a spirit of friendship and solidarity. The experience in Montenegro put a human face on the young people's image of Europe. In fact, as they stated in the name they gave to their project 'YOUropean', they felt themselves personally involved in this great historical development. They returned home intending to set up a second project along the same lines in Luxembourg which they will call 'YOUropean reloaded'. ■

- A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Luxembourg.
- Project carried out by Fondation Caritas Luxembourg, in partnership with Fondation Caritas Luxembourg, regional office Berane – Montenegro.



31

**MEDIA LITERACY FOR
CRITICAL THINKING**

Anna, from Belarus, spent a year in 2011/12 on a European Voluntary Service (EVS) project in Krsko, Slovenia. Along with other EVS volunteers she worked with a youth TV magazine. This involved her in planning and producing up to two videos a month on a variety of topics and organising educational workshops, using different media, for school children and young people and helping them to carry out their own media projects.

Building on her previous course in visual and cultural studies in Belarus, Anna attended several training sessions led by local and visiting professionals in the field of media literacy. She learned about lighting and editing film and how to use a camera. She also



‘Being a young Belarusian, who supports values of democracy and active citizenship, I realise the special role and importance of European Voluntary Service as a unique experience and big privilege. I have learned how to think critically about society, and to make my ideas understandable to other people. That was a great opportunity and experience to gain and bring back to my own country and integrate into my future plans and ideas.’

learned how to create scenarios and direct her own short films. Her work was regularly monitored and evaluated and by the end of the year she had become competent and creative in her filming.

A highlight of the year for Anna was working with the Roma people and regularly visiting their settlements. She organised workshops for them and introduced them to the media world, taking great delight in the enthusiastic way in which they responded to her tuition. She filmed several Roma cultural events and presented their way of life in videos. This helped to dispelling some of the myths about Roma people and made a contribution to their acceptance by the local community.

She also helped to organise the International Roma Day which had been celebrated since 1971 when the Roma people adopted a flag and an anthem which gave them an identity wherever they were located. For Anna the contact with the Roma people was one of the most interesting and influential intercultural experiences she had ever known.

Anna acquired many new skills during her year as a volunteer; not only technical skills connected with various media tools, but also the ability to interact with people having different cultural backgrounds. In fact she finished her volunteering project being able to speak Slovene and improved her English. She understood a lot more about social issues, particularly relating to young people, and learned to work in a team and take decisions. The year clearly made a unique contribution to her education and convinced her that she would look for work in the NGO sector on her return home to Belarus. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action National Agency in Slovenia.
- Project carried out by Društvo zaveznikov mehkega pristanka, Slovenia, in partnership with the Youth Education Centre Fialta, Belarus.



32

**VOLUNTEERING IN
COMMUNITY LIFE**

Twenty-four youth workers and youth leaders from 24 different organisations in Europe and in the EuroMed area were invited by Solidarity Tracks to pool their experience of volunteering at Lefkas in Greece and to produce together a guidebook with advice for organisations and young volunteers. They came from Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Morocco, Palestinian Territory, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

Most of the participants on the 10-day training course in September/October 2011 had already taken part in EurMed and European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects. The themes discussed coincided closely with the objectives of the 2011 European Year of Volunteering, and included creating a framework for future cooperation in volunteering projects and other activities under the Youth in Action programme.



‘The youth workers returned home from the course convinced of the value of volunteering as part of a major force for good in a troubled world and that young people are the main actors for change and development, as illustrated by their role in overturning dictatorships in Greece in the ‘70s and more recently in the ‘Arab Spring’.’

A number of visits were made during the course, including to a nearby island where young volunteers were involved in cleaning the beach, and to an elderly care centre where other young volunteers were working at that time. An exhibition was set up for the local community to showcase the volunteer projects already carried out by the organisations represented on the course.

Most time was spent, however, on the production of a guide to good practice. Five members of the group with previous experience of writing such texts were invited to lead five groups of participants, each with a separate but connected task to complete. The book was presented at the end of the course and has since been published. It can be viewed on: <http://prezi.com/9r7dzzvqrh0/volunteering-helps-your-community-a-guide/>.

Also running through the course was the development of ideas for future volunteer projects. Following the presentation of these concepts in a plenary session partners were called for and 10 of these will go ahead in the future. At the close of the course youth workers highlighted the importance of volunteering as part of a major force for good in a troubled world, as borne out by the role of young people in overturning dictatorships in Greece in the ‘70s and more recently in the ‘Arab Spring’.

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Greece.
- Project carried out by Solidarity Tracks, Greece, in partnership with Al-hayat center for civil society development, Jordan; Association A.D.P.A.L, Algeria; Association des Amis de la maison des jeunes et de la culture de metline, Tunisia; Association Attadamoun pour le développement et le partenariat, Morocco; Association des jeunes méditerranéens pour les échanges culturels «AJMEC», Tunisia; Association scientifique les petit débrouillards de Tizi-ouzou, Algeria; Association Tadamoun, Morocco; Association for Youth and Student in Partium (PIHE), Romania; Aventura Marao de Amarante Clube, Portugal; Azahra for Thought and Humanistic Science, Palestine; Club Culturel Sli Belhouane Tunis, Tunisia; Development No Borders, Egypt; Grupo de Desarrollo Rural Valle del Guadalhorce, Spain; Instituto Dei Ciechi «Florio e Salmone», Italy; Jaunatne par iesaistisanos, Latvia; Land and Human to Advocate Progress, Jordan; MCD Youth Club MCD Gençlik Kulübü, Turkey; Service civil international Hellas , Greece; Together, France; non-formal group of Thasos «Forward it», Greece; Univerisi skupaj z mladimi za mlade, Slovenia; Youth Association from Carpathian Basin, Hungary; Youth Activity Foundation Alternative, Poland.



33

**OUTREACH WORK WITH
YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK**

The training course organised in Oslo, Norway by Landsforingen for Utekontakter, in September 2007, brought together 28 youth workers from 10 different countries: Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Also in the group were two Norwegian facilitators and an expert from Quebec. They met on four occasions to pool their experience of outreach work with young people at risk with the aim of producing a guide to good practice on the prevention of urban violence. The guide was intended to provide a start-up tool for individuals and organisations embarking on social work with young people caught up in practices leading to their social exclusion.



‘There is now a free and widely available guidebook with a wide cross-section of different approaches to working with young people at risk, for any group or organisation that wants to go out there in the street to make life less miserable for the young and less fortunate.’

The City of Oslo’s Alcohol and Drug Addiction Service Competence Centre added a further dimension to the project by making available data concerning the city’s experiment with surveillance by closed circuit television in their ‘Open Space’ project, set up to combat substance abuse.

In between the training course activities a team of editors met to draft the content of the guide based on the findings of the group discussions. The resulting guide book was then made available on the Internet in English, French and Spanish.

Although the main purpose of the training course was to produce the guide book, another very important outcome was the cross-fertilisation of ideas that took place among the various members of the group which represented such a wide cross-section of different approaches to working with young people at risk. There was general agreement of the urgent need for international efforts in the prevention of social exclusion among these young people.

Another positive result was the network that had been created between members of the course which would enable the group to continue to share examples of good practice and to set up opportunities for future projects under the EU’s Youth in Action programme.

The exchange of experience enriched the knowledge of all members of the group and the example of so many dedicated efforts to improve the lot of young people at risk was an inspiration for all. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Norway.
- Project carried out by Landsforeningen for utekontakter, Norway, in partnership with Arsis, Greece; Centro Accoglienza La Rupe, Italy; Conversas de Rua, Portugal; GPAS, France; GRPAS, Poland; Hezizerb Etrusk, Spain; Riksforbundet for feltarbeid, Sweden; SSP-samrådet, Denmark; Tallinn Centre for Children at Risk, Estonia.



34

HELPING YOUNG IMMIGRANTS IN LISBON



Before her nine-month European Voluntary Service (EVS) in Lisbon 2007/08, spent with the Portuguese organisation, the Association for the Defence of the Rights of Immigrants, Valentina from Modena in Italy was already interested in issues concerning multiculturalism, the role of civil society and social inclusion.

The Association in Lisbon was set up to help young people cope with some of the urban problems they face by means of a number of different activities which include putting on concerts and exhibitions, holding debates and running video sessions in different neighbourhoods and in schools and universities. The purpose of these activities is to promote an intercultural dialogue between the various communities in

‘Helping young immigrants to help themselves was how Valentina spent nine months as a European Voluntary Service volunteer in Portugal, gaining as a consequence an appreciation of cultural difference and her own autonomy which led her to study European Immigration Law on her return home.’

the city. The Association also runs a small restaurant with food from around the world as a meeting place for local Portuguese people and immigrants.

Central to the work of the Association is their effort to promote young people’s active citizenship. The Association also helps homeless young people to find accommodation and young immigrants to sort out all the papers needed to legalise their situation so as to benefit from the various social services.

Valentina was able to take part in all of these activities as a volunteer and the sort of work she became involved in gave her a lot more confidence in herself and a sense of her own autonomy. She helped to run a number of events and developed her project management skills. She also learned a considerable amount about the problems besetting immigrant groups and how they were constantly the target of racism and intolerance. She encouraged young immigrants to initiate and ensure the sustainability of their own cultural activities.

The experience has proved invaluable for Valentina at several levels. Her work with so many different communities in Lisbon has greatly widened her cultural awareness and the frequent contact with them has vastly improved her communication skills in foreign languages. She has been able to take part with other volunteers in events such as *Lisboa Intercultural* and the *Festa Diversarte do Mundo* which commemorated the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. Such was the impression made on her by this experience that she decided on her return home to embark on a course of study on European Immigration Law. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Portugal.
- Project carried out by Solidariedade Imigrante, Associação para a defesa dos direitos dos imigrantes, Portugal, in partnership with Associazione Culturale Marasma, Italy; Europe Direct, Info Point Europa of Comune di Modena, Italy.



35

NON-FORMAL LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN DETENTION



Eighteen experienced youth workers from Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Turkey were invited to a week-long training course held in Târgu Ocna, Romania, in October 2010, on how best to combat discrimination experienced by young people in detention. In the group were psychologists, social workers, performing artists, students from the National School for Correctional Officers in Romania and prison educators who worked with disadvantaged or delinquent youth. One of the trainers, a former detainee, was now a member of the association 'Onestini', the course organiser, and he had already taken part in educational projects at the rehabilitation centre and in local schools.

The course was held in the National School for Correctional Officers attached to the Târgu Ocna detention and rehabilitation centre. The venue enhanced the learning experience for the participants as they were also obliged to follow restrictions imposed by penitentiary regulations. For the purposes of the course an adult prisoner from the penitentiary and 20 young detainees from the rehabilitation centre took part in course activities. The latter included Roma youth and young people from dysfunctional and marginalised backgrounds who were prone to violent behaviour. Some of them had

‘Immediately after release from prison one of the most active participants on the course managed to find employment as an engineer at one of the largest telecommunications companies in Romania.’

already spent considerable time in rehabilitation and their social reintegration was particularly problematic.

Various non-formal education methods were used on the course involving the young detainees in simulations of cultural conflicts, debates and team sports. They were invited to voice their difficulties in reintegrating and revealed a perceived sense of injustice. A puppet theatre was used to animate these sessions. More formal presentations were also made and the youth workers pooled their experience to produce a guide to good practice on dealing with young people in prison.

Not only did the course provide the youth workers with a number of new non-formal education techniques but also gave them a more positive attitude towards detainees and enhanced their communication skills. The young detainees, who had taken part in the course, also benefited by developing a more positive outlook on the choices they would have when starting a new life after leaving prison.

The guide to good practice and the non-formal education tools developed during the course are now regularly used by prison educators in the rehabilitation centres in Romania and have influenced the approach to young detainees in the other countries represented at the course. Among the young detainees who took part in the course three of them, who have since been released, have jobs or have continued with their studies.

Before the conclusion of the course the participants laid plans for further projects under the Youth in Action programme. ■

- A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Romania.
- Project carried out by Asociația de Tineret Onestini, Romania, in partnership with A.R.T. Fusion Association, Romania; Associação Mais Cidadania, Portugal; Fundacja Inicjatyw Nieformalnej Edukacji, Poland; Gaziantep Eğitim ve Gençlik Derneği, Turkey; Joint Associazione di promozione sociale, Italy.



36

VOLUNTEERING FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION



The project involved 12 different organisations working in cooperation to arrange short term European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects for 58 young people. Forty seven young volunteers from France were hosted in Belgium, Italy, Germany, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Vietnam. The remaining 11 young volunteers from Belgium, Canada, Italy, Moldova, Poland and the United Kingdom were hosted in France.

The volunteers were mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds and the project's principal aim was to promote the social inclusion of such young people, for whom mobility can make a really positive contribution, not only to their social and civic development and



'Given their disadvantaged backgrounds it was a big challenge for all of them to go abroad, to adapt to the local culture and get involved in a volunteering project. But mobility made a really positive contribution to their social and civic development and cultural awareness as well as to their self-esteem and future career prospects.'

cultural awareness but also to their self-esteem and future career prospects. Many of the young people had never been abroad before and the experience of adapting to a new culture helped to give them more self-confidence in coping with the new global challenges facing young people today.

The activities undertaken by the young volunteers were mainly in the area of the social services, environmental protection, education and leisure. One young man, for example, helped lay the spawning beds in a canal in Belgium and was complimented by his host for his curiosity and enthusiasm and the way in which he easily fitted into the team. Other young people carried out their voluntary service in the community, working in old peoples' care homes and with the disabled. They also worked with children, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Another important aim of this multiple project, which involved so many young people and organisations, both sending and hosting, was to create an on-line tool for assessing the effect of the voluntary service experience on the skills' acquisition and future employability of the young people. The Mobility Management System which resulted from this project was an on-line questionnaire completed by volunteers six months after finishing their voluntary service. It provided organisations working in this field with a valuable database on the overall impact of the European Voluntary Service projects. ■

- A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels, Belgium.
- Project carried out by ADICE – Association for the Development of Citizen and European Initiatives, France, in partnership with ADVIT/ ICYE Moldova; Associação Juvenil de Peniche, Portugal; Associazione culturale «Link», Italy; Cemea del Mezzogiorno, Italy; CreACTIVE Youth Association, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; EFM Europejskie Forum Młodzieży, Poland; Everything's Possible, the United Kingdom; Fédération des Jeunes Francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick, Canada; Fundacja «Rodowo», Poland; The Polish Robert Schuman Foundation, Poland; SJ Vietnam, Vietnam.



YOUTH IN ACTION

Youth in Action is the European Union programme for all young people aged 15 to 28 (or in some cases 13 to 30). It currently enables more than 200 000 young people and youth workers per year to exercise non-formal learning mobility across the EU and in 140 countries beyond by getting involved in educational activities outside schools. With a budget of EUR 885 million for the period 2007-13, the programme helps young people to develop skills and fosters their active participation in society. It particularly promotes the inclusion of young people facing obstacles in their lives.

To achieve its objectives, the programme funds a wide variety of activities through five actions. The activities include exchanges, initiatives, democracy projects and a voluntary service. It also supports youth workers and youth organisations through training and networking, and promotes European cooperation in the youth field.

PROGRAMME ACTIONS

■ Action 1: Youth for Europe

Encourages young people's active citizenship, participation and entrepreneurship by supporting exchanges, initiatives, and democracy projects.

■ Action 2: European Voluntary Service

Fosters young people's sense of solidarity and tolerance by voluntary activities abroad carried out for the benefit of local communities.

■ Action 3: Youth in the World

Promotes mutual understanding through exchanges and partnerships among young people and youth organisations across the world.

■ Action 4: Youth Support Systems

Helps youth workers and youth organisations improve the quality of their work.

■ Action 5: European cooperation in the youth field

Supports youth policy cooperation at European level, and facilitates dialogue between young people and policy-makers.

YOUTH IN ACTION: 2007-11

■ more than 725 000 participants: 541 000 young people and 184 000 youth workers;

■ 40 000 projects were selected to receive grants out of 82 000 applications submitted;

■ 27 000 project promoters a year: non-governmental organisations, informal groups of young people, municipalities.

Youth in Action: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

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