

# The Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe

## Training of *Youth Workers* in the New Youth Programme of the European Commission

*The new Youth programme of the European Commission is coming into force this year. The youth worker training component of the programme is aimed at ensuring a high quality of youth exchanges, voluntary service projects and youth initiatives funded under the programme. The Commission aims at the establishment of a coherent training programme for youth workers as well as a system of support activities.*

by Vegard Hølaas

At the core of the new Youth programme is recognition of the need to stimulate all young people's active participation in the building of Europe and to promote active European citizenship. The programme also recognises the need to develop young people's understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe as well as its fundamental common values, to step up the fight for human rights and against exclusion in all its forms, to remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities for women and men.

Youth exchanges and voluntary service projects are identified as activities that, in particular, can contribute to meet these needs, by contributing to mutual trust, the strengthening of democracy, tolerance, a willingness to co-operate and solidarity among young people. Furthermore, they include a non-formal educational process, which should lead to new knowledge, competencies and skills. They will also encourage young people's initiative, enterprise and creativity. Moreover, the actions undertaken under the programme should aim at encouraging the participation of those young people who would otherwise find it difficult to participate in Community actions.

These elements are essential aspects of the youth activities taking place under the Youth programme. They are also essential in the training component, which will have to empower youth workers, youth leaders and support persons (trainers, advisors, mentors, administrators, etc.) to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the programme through high quality youth activities.

### Aims and objectives

The training component of Youth aims "... to empower youth workers, youth leaders and support persons to develop high quality youth activities contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the programme". More specifically, the following objectives will be pursued:

- ... To train youth workers, youth leaders and support persons through training activities at both national and European level to act as multipliers and to develop high quality youth projects with a European dimension;
- ... To establish a system of activities to support the implementation of the training component, especially information activities, networking activities and the development of training material;
- ... To develop the area of non-formal education activities in the field of youth work, and especially focus on quality standards and recognition of non-formal education.

### Activity areas

The following main areas of activity have been defined:

- ... The establishment of a three-step model for youth worker training, providing a training offer at national level, and basic as well as specialised training at European level;
- ... The setting up of support systems to ensure better information, co-ordination, planning, implementation and follow-up of activities relating to training;
- ... Development of the area of non-formal education, especially related to youth worker training.



### **Training of youth workers, youth leaders and support persons**

Training activities under Action 5 will address youth workers, youth leaders and support persons. A variety of activities will take place at national and European level. This will allow those involved in youth work at different levels to find suitable training offers, and it will also open up possibilities for continuous training and development of youth workers e.g. by going from less to more advanced training in one field. However, this requires a coherent training programme and co-ordination between different actors offering training.

The profile of training activities at national level will depend on national priorities. Efforts will be made, however, to ensure more co-ordination and co-operation between the actors involved at national and European level.

The training offer at European level will be organised in basic and more specialised training activities. Basic training will be provided as an introduction to European youth work and the European training offer. It will focus on the aims and objectives of the Youth programme, such as the role of young people in Europe, active citizenship and the possibilities and working methods of the Youth programme. The aim is to give participants a possibility to further develop their understanding of Europe, its cultures, values and democratic tools and the possibilities of the Youth programme; to set standards for European training of youth leaders; and to provide a common starting point for further European level training.

Further development of knowledge, competencies and skills will take place in more specialised training activities, e.g. focusing on project management or intercultural learning. The training offer will be based on a needs analysis as well as an evaluation of existing training offers.

The concrete composition of each year's offer will be decided after consultations with the National Agencies of the Youth programme and other actors in the training field. It will also be co-ordinated with training activities provided by the Council of Europe.

The European training offer will be implemented by the Commission, in co-operation with the National Agencies and institutions and organisations such as the Council of Europe, and Youth NGOs. A network of training resource centres will be established. This network will play an active role as co-ordinator of European level training and of transnational activities by National Agencies, in the dissemination of information, etc. The Commission intends to continue the co-operation with the Council of Europe on training activities, hereafter focusing more on areas where the highest added value of joint projects can be found. NGOs, training institutions and other structures could also be invited to provide training on specific items. In addition, youth organisations and others would be eligible for receiving grants for their internal European level training supporting the Youth programme.

#### **Support activities**

The work of surveying the situation and of exploring existing materials, as well as developing new materials, will continue. So far,

the following areas have been given priority: intercultural learning, project management, organisational management, methodologies in language learning and best practices in youth work. The aim is to cover a wide spectrum of activities relevant to work in youth projects and youth organisations.

The pool of trainers will be continuously updated and further developed as a tool for those organising European level training. The establishment of a forum for trainers will be considered, giving trainers and others involved in training activities, a meeting point and a possibility to exchange and compare practice and theory.

Internal communication between different involved actors and external communication with users, institutions, etc. will be of utmost importance. Tools will be e.g. this magazine Coyote, a web site and reports. A special focus will be on exploring the possibilities of using the Internet in communication with, and between, youth workers.

#### **Development of the area of non-formal education**

The field of non-formal education plays an important role for the integration of young people into society, but there is a need for recognition and development of the field. In the area of youth worker training, focus will be on the development of non-formal education activities with an emphasis on quality standards, recognition of non-formal education and promotion of non-formal education practices.

#### **Conclusion**

The Commission has chosen a more proactive approach to training of youth workers, wishing to be more able to meet the needs often expressed by those involved in youth work from local to European level. The hope is that the training component of the new Youth programme will benefit youth workers all over Europe and, by doing so, will also benefit young people involved in youth activities.

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