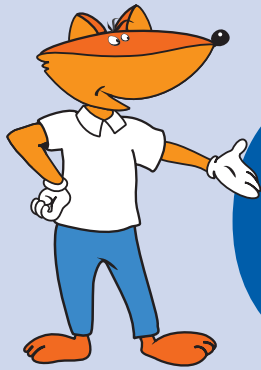


Issue 3 - Décembre 2000

3
magazine



youth - formation - europe

Coyote



Volunteering
in Transition

Formal and
Non-formal
Education in
Higher Education

Going Back
to Awareness

Training for
Euro-Mediterranean
Cooperation

Internet
in Youth Work



PARTNERSHIP

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TRAINING-YOUTH



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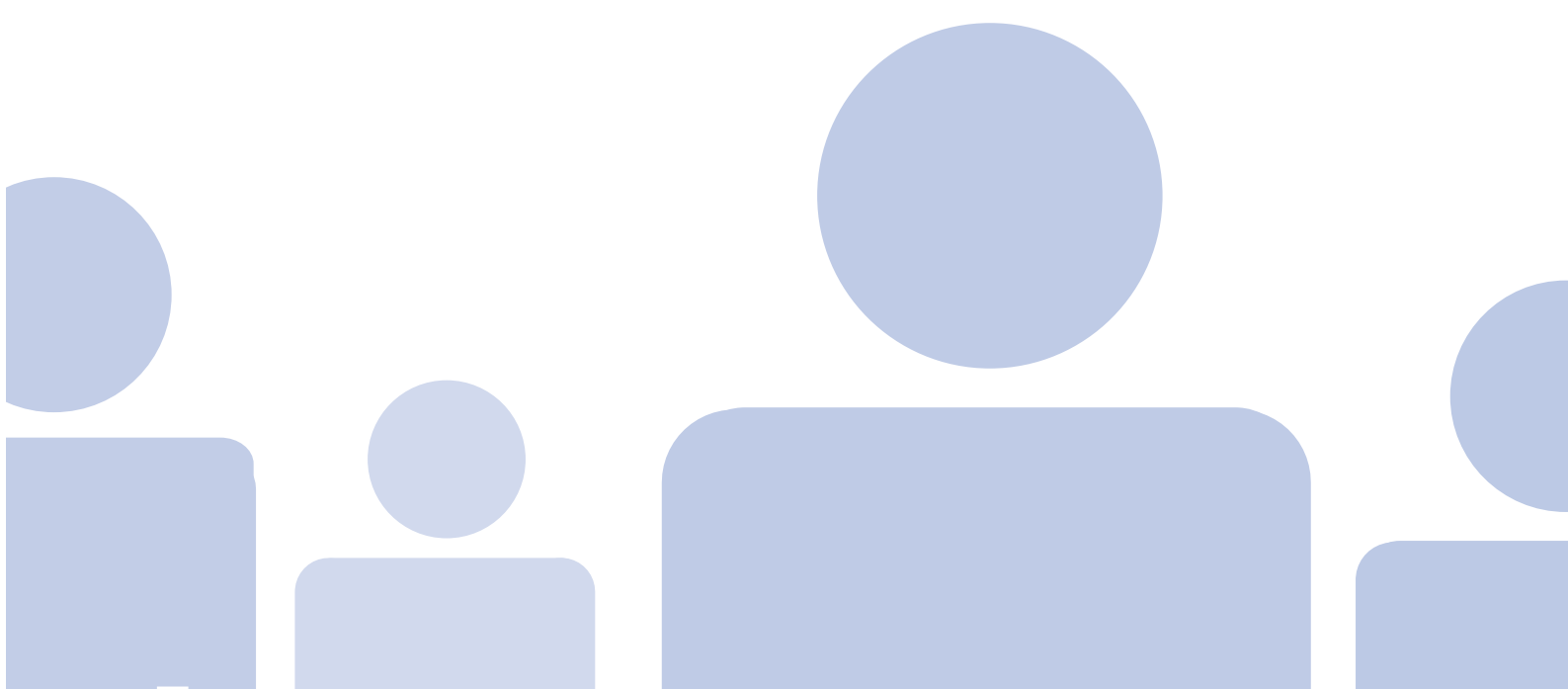
"Coyote - a resourceful animal whose blunders or successes explain the condition of life in an uncertain universe." (In: Jack Tresidder, The Hutchison Dictionary of Symbols, 1997)

Coyote is a new magazine on issues around 'youth – training – europe'. It is addressed to trainers, youth workers and all those who want to know more about the world of youth worker training in Europe.

Coyote wants to provide a forum to share and give new insights into some of the issues that trainers face in their work, issues related to the diverse training concepts, methodologies, practices and realities across this continent. It also wants to inform about current developments in this field, especially at European level.

Coyote is published by the Council of Europe and the European Commission within their partnership in the youth field, with the aim to strengthen networking among trainers involved in European youth worker training and to promote the value of European level training for youth workers. Coyote comes out twice this year: in May and December. It can be received free of charge.

Coyote is also published on the web at <http://www.training-youth.net>.





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Paper copies of Coyote are available at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg.

New Partnership contact addresses!

To receive further information about Partnership projects or subscribe to Coyote, please contact
the European Youth Centre Strasbourg by phone or fax,
or send an e-mail to info@training-youth.net. Coyote will be happy to receive your comments
and your ideas for future articles. Letters to the Editor can be sent to coyote@training-youth.net.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to Coyote!



Welcome to Coyote !

Winter has come and the days are slowly getting colder and more cloudy, in Central and Northern Europe at least, that is. Time again for the birds to fly South and for Coyote to come out. And maybe time again – if you are not on a train or plane rushing to the next European youth work training course somewhere in Europe - to sit back in a comfortable chair, with a warm cup of coffee or tea, and let your mind sink into the world – and worlds - of training and youth work.

During the period of the preparation of this issue, the Coyote editorial team had to say good-bye to one of its founding members, Leen Laconte, who represented the angle of the National Agencies for Youth in the team and is conducting the interviews for Coyote Meets Trainers. Leen left for new professional opportunities. Thank you very much, Leen, and good luck for the future! Bernard Abrignani has taken over her place. A warm welcome to our new Coyote editorial team member! (For more details about the team members, please have a look at the Notes about the Contributors.)

We have been very happy to see that more and more people have contacted us with great ideas for articles. Actually, we have received more articles during the last months than we are able to publish in this issue. We decided to make a selection, which considers, to some extent at least, the diversity of interests of our authors and readers, but which reflects as well some of the priorities for European youth worker training at the level of the European institutions. Both can go hand in hand, we hope.

Non-formal education is one of these priorities. In this issue you will find several articles expressing a major concern with the purpose and value of non-formal education through youth work experiences in today's society, and with regard to professional career perspectives. The subject has been taken up from different angles. Many volunteers participate in voluntary service projects, according to Luis Amorim, because this experience offers them a possibility for personal development while helping to develop the community in which they work. From her personal experience, Hrönn Pétursdóttir knows that certain qualifications acquired through youth work experiences, voluntary service or others, are increasingly valued by employers. So why not value them also in formal education? Nol Reverda describes a concrete example of good practice in higher education in the field of comparative social studies. Last but not least, Coyote travelled to London to meet Ginny Lun, who has carried out an impressive project to increase the self-confidence and employability of long-term unemployed young people.

The scope of training in European youth work is wide. What are, for instance, the challenges for Euro-Mediterranean co-operation? What is the potential for using the internet in youth work? Can training help new executives or staff to continue and renew the work of a youth organisation? And how do you cope with the eternal frustration that there is always too little time to deal with all the really, really important issues within a training course? Curious?

Enjoy your reading!

Sonja Mitter
Sonja Mitter

The Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe

Volunteering in Transition

Or why I don't need 1960's idealists to tell me all about it

At the end of February, the second Training Course on Transnational Voluntary Work was run within the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on European Youth Worker Training. For Luis Amorim, one of the course trainers, the course was an opportunity to reflect upon the current debate about what should be the core values of voluntary service. What should be the main purpose of volunteering? Personal development or the development of the community or society? In this article, Luis Amorim argues for a wider definition, which corresponds better to the reality of today's society.

As fan as I am of words, I could not resist looking up the meaning of 'voluntary' in the dictionary, first the Portuguese one (my beloved native tongue) and then the English one (my beloved adopted language). The word has its origin in the Latin 'voluntas', i.e. will, which explains why voluntary refers to something 'proceeding from the will or from one's own choice or consent' (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Inc. Publishers, USA, 1983). This explains why, in English, to volunteer means to offer one's services to others or to a cause, and to do so spontaneously without coercion or any legal constraint. I suppose this also serves the argument that most voluntary work should be unpaid, and derive from a genuine motivation of doing good and helping others; thus words such as altruistic, self-sacrificing, humanitarian, philanthropic and non-egotistical come to mind (surely a diverse palette of words to strike us with mighty awe for the value of volunteering). But living as I do on the threshold of a new century—and though history is all about continuation, concepts do tend to evolve into new dimensions—I cannot stop myself wondering whether this definition of volunteering still bears witness to the social context in which we find ourselves, in the Europe of the year 2000.

The current debate on volunteering

My interrogation relates to a wider debate that is taking place today amongst all those that care about and do something for volunteering, particularly with and for young people, and who try to position themselves in a conceptual spectrum that stretches between the traditional notion of volunteering as an intentional individual choice to do something for the sake of others and society in general, and the opposite view that sees in volunteering mainly a potent instrument of personal development and growth. My point in this article will not be to replace one with the other but to argue for a more encompassing definition of volunteering where both approaches are given the relevance they deserve. My wish is that this will help to create a more flexible and contemporary perspective on volunteering, and be a step further away from the intransigent stance of the original voluntary work movements in Europe, which were middle-class oriented and stemming in their overall design from the charitable and moralising work of 19th century religious groups and institutions.

My personal interest in this debate really began in the training course on Transnational Voluntary Work, which was organised within the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on European Youth Worker Training (Budapest, 27 February to 5 March, 2000); and where, as one of the trainers, I was asked to engage myself in a dramatised discussion with a representative from the National Agency of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) on the value, purpose and core ideas of volunteering. As you might have guessed by now, I chose to stand for the personal development approach and my colleague for the collective good approach. Though forced to defend opinions that were grossly exaggerated, to add some more controversy to the confrontation and keep the participants absorbed in what was going on, I remember thinking, while counter-arguing his presentation, that I was indeed close to believing what I was saying. In today's world volunteering is more about personal development than self-sacrifice and a wish to help others in need. In the heat of the debate I shouted across the room to my colleague, in the true spirit of the role-play: 'we are not in

By Luis Amorim



the 1960's anymore, we are not the flower-power generation, we want jobs! A cynical and cold assumption, you might think. Far from it, I would rather call it a realistic and actually socially engaged approach.

In 1988, for me, volunteering was still about absolute altruism

When I started as a volunteer in 1988 for AFS in Portugal at the age of 18 (AFS Intercultural Programs is a worldwide NGO that promotes in more than fifty countries intercultural academic and non-academic exchanges for young people and adults), I was motivated by the prospect of helping others like myself to go abroad; in a way, to try to repay the time, attention and love that others had given me in order to prepare me for the life-changing experience that studying in Flanders for a year was. It was only later that I realised that while helping new applicants to our year-programme to get in shape for the cultural and other shocks of leaving one's homeland and moving somewhere else in the world, I was also developing my own interpersonal skills, getting a better grip of who I was and, generally speaking, becoming better at organising people and events. Those of you who are familiar with the ins and outs of non-formal education theories are by now nodding your heads and thinking how true this is in all youth-related activities, where young people are actively involved. In my case, personal development awareness came at a later stage in the process of volunteering for the organisation I am still committed to. In 1993 I would become Secretary-General of Intercultura (AFS in Portugal) and my views on volunteering had changed little; it was still about making time to contribute to a greater need and good and, if any personal gains resulted from it, they were a side effect and something to be modest about; they were not legitimate motivations to volunteer.

Personal development does not devoid volunteering of its meaning

In 1996, when I started to work for the European Youth Forum as Education Project Officer I was given an assignment that at first I shook my head at in vehement resistance. I was asked to coordinate a Pilot project within the then incipient European Commission's programme, European Voluntary Service (EVS). What was the aim of the project? To work with a group of local organisations dealing with young people in socially excluded situations and to stimulate volunteering amongst them as a means of fighting their exclusion. My dislike for the project came from the realisation that we would be asking the participants to volunteer without them coming up with the idea themselves; this was little less than manipulation. The organisations' idea, however, was that an experience abroad as volunteers could be extremely beneficial for the youngsters in question. They had as their main expectations, more self-esteem and increased responsibility for the participants, but other things such as the development of new interpersonal and language skills were part of their objectives too. Tolerant as I have always tried to be, I was soon won over by the sheer enthusiasm of the social workers in the project. The group of 12 participants, who went for periods from three weeks to six months to different countries in Europe, came back completely

changed. While before their departure the large majority of them had not been outside their hometown, had been out of work or school, or seemed not to see much sense in doing anything consistent in life, after volunteering abroad they came back resolute, affirmative and, what was more touching to observe, with dreams and aspirations and long-term, feasible projects. It had worked; stimulating them to volunteer had yielded results far above my own poor initial expectations. I was glad to be proved wrong.

The truth is that the appearance of a publicly funded voluntary work programme at European level (the EVS) made travelling abroad and being a volunteer accessible to a whole new profile of participants, no longer limited to middle-class, well-educated individuals, who are ready to take advantage of the many opportunities that parents and national and European institutions put in their hands. The fact that the European Commission placed the inclusion of young people in difficulty at the top of the agenda of the programme is proof of that ideal and vision. It is a well documented fact that young people in situations of social exclusion, or in its 'environs', seldom take the initiative to step forward to work for the progress of their local communities, much less so of communities thousands of kilometres away. However, few of us would deny their potential to contribute if given the right chance. What social workers are doing with the help of the EVS—through multinational projects such as the "Step by Step" and the "ENVOL" networks, to give just two examples—is to use volunteering as a tool for personal development whose outcomes will be better social integration for the participants but which ultimately will be of benefit for the whole of the social webbing. Unfortunately, many of the organisations that have been working with volunteering in Europe feel that its use for this purpose is somehow voiding voluntary work of its virtues and making it more an instrument of social engineering than of community development. Well, let me tell you, they are wrong.

Volunteering is also about inclusion

By making volunteering accessible to those who would not spontaneously contribute to society's general good, social workers are presenting young people with an opportunity to help themselves and simultaneously others around them. It is a two-way process that in the end brings positive effects to all involved. Would anybody dare say that socially excluded young people do not have any contribution to make to the communities and organisations in which they volunteer? I sincerely hope not. And what can we say of the potential of these young people to become role models for others who may follow in their footsteps without any external push from a concerned social worker? Peer pressure can also have positive consequences; it all depends on its content. I concede that the burden put on the host organisations' shoulders is bigger, and that accompanying someone in or with difficulties is a greater responsibility than doing so for one of the traditional high-flyers who still make up the bulk of volunteering. However, it is less admissible to say that this kind of pedagogically reinforced support, which is needed to handle this target group, makes volunteering less significant in its nature, if what we desire is to promote a truly inclusive policy for young people at all levels.



While working at the European Youth Forum and later at the European Commission's external agency for the EVS programme—Structure for Operational Support (SOS)—I heard voluntary work NGOs complain several times that the fact that the programme was of no cost to the participants put the true spirit of volunteering at risk: if young people did not pay for anything, their willingness to do something for others would not be the main motivation, but would instead be about obtaining a cheap way to travel abroad. First of all, statements of this kind always make me wonder in how low regard these NGOs hold their main client group, young people; they seem to be saying 'if we don't make them pay we cannot make sure that they are truly altruistic.' In addition, I ask myself if it is not possible to combine both the wish to give something back to society with the possibility of travelling cheaply. They are not incompatible, are they? Furthermore I ask, what about the millions of young people with no money to pay for voluntary work programmes to 'prove' their humanitarian ideals? Should they be left out?

There is nothing wrong with personal interest

It seems that more and more young people are volunteering for personal development reasons. Voluntary work NGOs are the first ones to say that 90% of their participants are either students who have finished their secondary school education or university graduates who wish to have an experience that will enhance their skills and competencies while simultaneously helping other people. Figures for the EVS programme show that circa 30% of the participants in the programme during 1997 and 1998 decided to do so to acquire professional experience. This, together with learning a new language and personal skills, made up the vast majority of the reasons for joining the programme. It is evident from their answers that a wish to increase their professional potential (employability) played a great role in their choice of this voluntary work scheme. After all, we live in a world where much of our social recognition happens through our professional integration: life has become occupational, and it is usually those who have a job who say to the unemployed that work is not everything in life. All this may be a nice thought, but far from a practical one, when so much of our well-being is based on our ability to consume and obtain material goods. Though materialism may not be the ideal, in the western world, access to the societal self and identity construction depends on having a job and joining the 'throngs' of producers-consumers. That is why unemployment so often leads to exclusion in all its forms and why young people dread it so much. And who are we to say that they are not right?

I think that the personal development component of volunteering needs to be given more credit and needs to be validated by both the private and public sector institutions involved in it. If more young people are attracted to volunteering because they perceive in it a chance to increase their personal skills and find a job—and hopefully, this perception will soon be the same amongst employers too—it is our duty to make sure that the programmes on offer provide them with exactly that. Volunteers will still bring with them their freshness and enthusiasm, their various abilities and capacities and their willingness to help. Personal interest does not have to be detrimental to the

collective interest. Personal interest may be a stepping-stone to help young people to (re)discover the pleasure that lies in giving and that sometimes the best possible reward one can have is the giving itself.

More important in my view is that an inclusive approach to volunteering will allow us to tackle the issue of socially excluded young people too—who do need more incentives to participate actively in society. This alone should justify our moving away from a type of volunteering that is in so many cases elitist and a by-product of the worries of socially integrated, middle-class people and, eventually, a lot less altruistic than one might be led to believe. Like a Nigerian immigrant asked in the training course mentioned above in Budapest: 'Why do you send volunteers to help in Africa? Why don't you give us the money so that we can volunteer ourselves in our own countries? I'll tell you why, because you want to develop your own skills, to learn new things, to grow as individuals, while helping the locals. In the end you are thinking about responding more to your individual needs than to ours.' Like her, I think it is admissible to ask what comes first, the egg or the chicken? At the end of the day both are essential but there should be no embarrassment in recognising that individuals yearn for personal development through voluntary work and to accept this as their main motivation. Volunteering is not what it used to be and, after all, what good is tradition without a zest of modernity? No more than an empty box with no relevance for the future.

*Note: **Lúis Amorim** currently works as Senior Project Manager for the Structure of Operational Support for the European Voluntary Service in Brussels. The opinions stated in the article are those of the author and do not express in any way those of his employer or those of the European Commission on this topic. You can reach the author at*

amorim@freegates.be

**....It seems that more
and more people are volunteering
for personal development reasons....**

**....Personal interest does
not have to be detrimental
to the collective interest....**



Partnership News

There's a new kit in town

The European Commission and the Council of Europe are very happy to announce the newly born product of the Partnership Agreement: the T-Kits. Since March 1999, experienced trainers, writers, youth organisations' representatives, staff of the two institutions and others have been busy conceptualising, collecting materials, writing and lay-outing, and have now produced the first four publications of the T-Kit series:

1. Organisational Management
2. Methodology in Language Learning
3. Project Management
4. Intercultural Learning



Three more T-Kits should follow next year, on Voluntary Service, How to Organise a Training Course and European Citizenship.

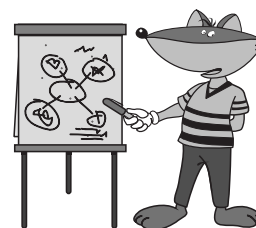
The T-Kits aim to be theoretical and practical tools for trainers and youth workers and provide basic theories, methods, illustrations and references on topics of relevance for training young people, in particular for European and intercultural youth work and training situations.

Printed versions of the T-Kits are available at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg (limited distribution). They are also published on the new Partnership web site: www.training-youth.net. For more information please contact: info@training-youth.net.

Partnership programme 2001

The planning of next year's partnership programme is under way. Concrete information about training courses, other activities and publications will be available by the beginning of 2001 from the institutions and the partnership web site (above).

flipchart



Flipchart is a forum of exchange about what is going on in Europe in the field of European Youth Worker training. Here, youth workers, trainers, youth organisations and others working in this field can announce up-coming events, new publications and reports, innovative methods or any other piece of news which they would like to make known to a larger public.

IRSH - We are looking for new partners to join us in our projects!

"IRSH", an NGO working in the area of civil society development in Northern Albania, is looking for contacts and partners.

Some examples of our work:

At the beginning of 1999, IRSH started a project called "Contributions to Civil Society, Education and Democratic Participation in Northern Albania", a project that could not be followed through because of the Kosovo crisis.

For the future, IRSH is planning more projects, e.g.:

- professional courses to support the reconstruction of the country,
- foreign language courses,
- classes against illiteracy for children aged 6 – 15 (in particular in gypsy neighbourhoods, for disabled children and children kept at home because of blood-feud phenomena).
- the organisation of a regional centre in the IRSH house (dealing with exchange of information, human rights, networking and training), for the development of civil society in North Albania.

In all of these projects, IRSH is open to the exchange of information and to collaborating with NGOs, institutions, local authorities etc., from Albania and all over the world, and to receiving advice, and material or financial contributions.

Contact address: Mr. Blendi Dibra, President of the Associations 'Intelektualet e rinj, Shprese' ('IRSH') and 'Young Intellectuals, Hope' (YIH), L: 'Qemal Stafa', RR:'Daut Boriçi', 874, Shkoder, Albania,
Tel/Fax: +355 22 41229. **E-mail: irsh@albn.net**

Peace Child International – New Grant Program

Peace Child is an international non-governmental organisation with the mission to empower young people. In partnership with Netaid and Levi Strauss we recently launched a world wide grant program called Be the Change!

We are supporting low-cost sustainable community-development projects. Anybody from around the world aged under twenty-five can apply for grants of up to \$5000.

Please contact Ingrid Heindorf at europe@peacechild.org for more information and an application form.

Tel: +44 (0)176 327 4459, Fax: +44 (0)176 327 4460, **www.peacechild.org**

Postal Address: Peace Child International, The White House, 46 High Street, Buntingford, SG9 9AH Herts, United Kingdom



To Know and To Engage: A Course in the use of interactive theatre with young people

Dates and place: 11-14 May, 2001, Parnassos Institute, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Do you work with young people (11-30)?

Are you interested in participative, stimulating and empowering ways of learning and problem-solving?

Do you feel like investing in yourself and in your own capacities

Then read on...

Engage! InterAct will be running a course on working with interactive theatre with young people. It is designed for anyone interested in working with the 11-30 age-group, and requires no previous experience of theatre. The course is limited to twenty places to maximise the mutual learning experience.

The methods are based on the interactive 'Theatre of the Oppressed' techniques, developed by the Brazilian director, educator and activist, Augusto Boal. They include Image Theatre (working with human sculptures) and Forum Theatre (interactive sketches), as well as many games and exercises to prepare for and enhance the experience.

The uniqueness of these methods lies in the way that issues are taken out of the head and laid out for all to see and engage in - with heart, body and mind. Their participative and interactive nature provides for a dynamic and honest exploration of the things your target group identify as their priorities. As Boal says, 'A Rehearsal for Reality'.

The course costs NLG 495- (E 225-), including lunch (incl. VAT).

Participation in this course will give you NLG 100- (E 45-) reduction off the advanced course, (NLG 495- (E 225-), instead of NLG 595- (E 270-)).

For more information, contact Engage! InterAct –

tel: +31 (0)30 251 3182, fax: +31 (0)30 238 7517,

interact@engage.nu or www.engage.nu

WAGGGS - EUROLEARN

If you have ever wished to take part in a fantastic thinking process, be able to look for new ideas and solutions and consider or re-consider the quality of your own experience and practices, this is the right place to come!

EUROLEARN will be a platform to find the "identity" of the Educational Programme and Leaders' Training provided in Guiding throughout Europe and relate it to the wider discussion of the subjects taking place outside of Guiding. Eurolearn aims to provide all participants with a space to exchange experiences and good practice in identifying the main challenges and perspectives in the field of leaders' training and educational programme, and to discuss and consider the impact of non-formal education and life-long learning in Guiding and Scouting and in the wider society.

A modular approach will be adopted for the event in which participants will have the opportunity to consider input and practice from representatives of National Associations as well as other youth organisations. These modules will allow discussion, sharing of experience and highlighting of new challenges to be dealt with in the future. Each module will last one day and a half. One module will focus on training, the other one on programme.

Experts in the field of formal and non-formal education will be invited to present today's realities.

Dates and venue: 14 – 18 March 2001, Rome.

Deadline for applications: 15 December 2000.

Acceptance letters will be sent by the end of January 2001.

Some places are still available for youth organisation representatives. If you can communicate in English or French and would like to take part in this event, please contact

Cecilia Grimaldi at:

cgrimaldi@iol.it

You can also contact the Europe Office WAGGGS:

38, Av de la Porte de Hal - B1060 Brussels

phone + 32 2 5410880, fax + 32 2 541 0899

More information is available on the Europe Region WAGGGS website at:

www.waggseurope.org

New !

***Flichart - only twice a year and so little space ?
Not any longer !***

From now on , you can put an announcement on our Flipchart web version at any time. No need to wait until Coyote is published. You can send your announcement to Coyote@training-youth.net or to the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, and we will add it to Coyote's Flichart at www.training-youth.net.

Participants said - More Attention Should Be Given to Gender Issues in All Kinds of Training

In February the two of us were asked to work as trainers for the 'Gender in Leadership' seminar organised by the European Youth Forum. Fulfilling the request of the editorial team we will share with our readers our ideas and experiences on gender differences.

We chose a different starting point and approach to that of Ulrika Eklund's article, published in Coyote issue # 2. We know for certain that trainers hold different and sometimes contradictory opinions on gender issues. We would like to invite you, dear colleagues, to contribute to this debate on gender in training through Coyote, in order to learn from one another and so further advance existing concepts.

by Erzsébet Kovács
and Paul Kloosterman

Gender training with or without male participation?

'The dilemma in talking about gender difference is that we might end up widening the gap instead of decreasing it. But if we do not talk about male dominance it will continue.' As Ulrika Eklund wrote in her article in Coyote, issue 2: *'This is the dilemma for feminists concerned with issues of gender and education.'*

These statements raised a lot of questions. Is this the real dilemma? Does talking about differences widen gaps? Why is male dominance the central topic when talking about gender differences? Is this a typical dilemma for a feminist or should it be an issue for every trainer working in a field where differences play an important role?

One of the main reasons for organising a training event on 'Gender in Leadership' for the European Youth Forum was also the issue of male dominance. There is gender imbalance in the participation of young women and men in leadership positions and a dominance of men on the boards of most youth organisations.

Obviously women are more involved in the discussion of gender issues than men, which can freeze the problems rather than decrease them. Men do not seem to consider this topic as their problem too.

One of the challenges of working on gender issues is how to motivate men to participate in discussions on equal opportunities. It could lead to widening the gap if men were confronted with statistics reinforcing that they talk too much, that their listening skills are very undeveloped, that they have too much power and that women suffer feelings of inferiority towards them. What can an individual man do with this picture presented to him by women? Is there any other option for him than to just shut up?

Our aim was to run a training course without this frustration, without having the female and male participants in opposing roles, to avoid their starting a fight, and going into the trenches.

Gender equality is also an intercultural learning process

Since the European Youth Forum has been working for several years to ensure that gender equality remains a high priority on its agenda and in the organisational culture of its member organisations, they wanted to go beyond the above-mentioned phenomena in order to attempt to build a longterm problem-solving strategy.

This approach to gender equality helped us to get away from the 'trainers' routine' that sometimes exists in dealing with the gender aspect in training. You are probably aware of this approach: it is one





of great empathy towards the nice and/or weak women, empowerment training for them - no attention to, or special methodology for, the men's problems apart from the fact that they are kindly asked to change their irritating behaviour in the next session. Calling this practice of trainers into question does not mean that we do not want to support and motivate participants who have problems with others, in sharing their experiences and recommendations with the group in an assertive manner. Of course trainers should pay attention to the latter as this remains an essential value of any training.

We decided to focus on the specific cultures: what are the main characteristics, especially the main values of the female and the male culture?

What kind of expectations and social roles do boys and girls acquire through their very different socialisation? Our aim was to create an atmosphere and training programme which helped the participants to understand and respect these different cultures in a way in which they could benefit from the coexistence of these differences. In other words, we believe that raising awareness of gender roles in non-formal education is part of the intercultural learning process.

It can be an integrated part of very different training activities and/o it can be a selected theme of training courses.

Challenges for trainers

Taking more advantage of existing possibilities

On a training course, in which the main subject is not the gender issue, but where there is a good chance of integrating the question of gender coherently, the task of the trainer is to plan and bring in the gender dimension in a well-balanced way.

The latter does not necessarily need extra training hours and methods. As Ulrika Eklund emphasised in her article, most of the intercultural simulation games, construction exercises and other methods of experiential learning that we use in our training courses, offer lots of possibilities to draw the participants' attention to the gender cultures. A way to do this would be for the trainers to include relevant questions on differences in the behaviour, communication and actions of men and women during the reviewing (debriefing) of these games and exercises.

Innovation and time is needed in gender issues

If gender equality or gender differences are the selected themes of a training activity, then the task of the trainer is,

in our opinion, more challenging than it seems: how to avoid repeated trivialities, one-sided approaches and superficiality? The training programme needs to be well developed and innovative and of proper duration, otherwise we cannot fulfil the high expectations participants usually have regarding the gender issue. To be aware of, and to exchange ideas on, different gender roles that manifest themselves in different cultures, countries, generations and social classes, is an essential dimension of any training in gender cultures. We prefer the personalised approach in bringing the issue to awareness, such as making a comparison of the social and family situations of e.g., a Dutch eighteen-year-old female student, and a Roma girl of the same age in Hungary, and drawing a similar parallel between the situations of their boyfriends. Such a personal focus, which people can easily relate to, can help create an improved understanding of the importance of the changes in gender identity.

Unfortunately, due to financial reasons, we only had three working days for the training course with the group from the European Youth Forum. The available time was clearly too short to go very deeply into the question and to let the participants explore the complex situations of both women and men. But, what we did was give some 'impulses', ideas and sources for a longer process, which could include further training events for the group-learning process, and new approaches for an individual informal learning process. The European Youth Forum has a plan for further training activities based on the experiences of the 'Gender in Leadership' training and we hope they can complete what we only had time to make a start on.

Encounters in changeable roles

In our training both women and men were represented, although there were more female participants (65%) than male (35%). We realised that those men who had made the decision to take part in such a seminar probably made the choice of finding new ways of understanding the gender issue and of broadening their options on how to act in social situations concerning gender. Their open-minded, attentive and active participation brought a new dimension to our training. The female participants were also very open and were motivated to look again at the actions that they had already experienced from a different angle. One of the methods which we developed for this group to approach the different perceptions of gender cultures, was role-play. Typical female and male behaviours in board meetings were addressed through a decision-making situation. This offered an opportunity to the participants to identify different priority-orientated roles and also to see the strategies of these roles, and their impact and effectiveness.



Looking back at the activity now, we share the opinion of the participants that it might have been more effective to run the role-play in different versions: to give the 'female role descriptions' not only to women but also to men and visa versa. Through this kind of exercise the participants could experience the driving values, 'comfort zones' and also the frustrations behind the known roles of the opposite sex, especially behind the dominant and non-influential roles. They could study the on-going interference of female and male cultures as well as playing or observing a role without knowing from the role description if it belongs to a man or a woman.

Responses to the social expectations: comparison of the socialisation of boys and girls

Another important element of this training was an input on the socialisation of boys, which offered an opportunity for deepening the understanding of both female and male participants, of why men behave in the way they do. Understanding this socialisation opens up new ways of dealing with 'male behaviour' and for men to explore alternative behaviour patterns. This approach was very much appreciated by the participants, but they expressed regret that there was no input on the socialisation of girls. We think they were right about this; however, due to the time limitation we only made reference to it offering a 'spotlight' comparison without a deeper analysis. Inputs on both girls' and boys' socialisation can be a good

starting-point for a training event on gender issues. It presents opportunities for reflecting on personal roles, for understanding the other and for exchanging ideas on these roles in different cultures, social classes and countries.

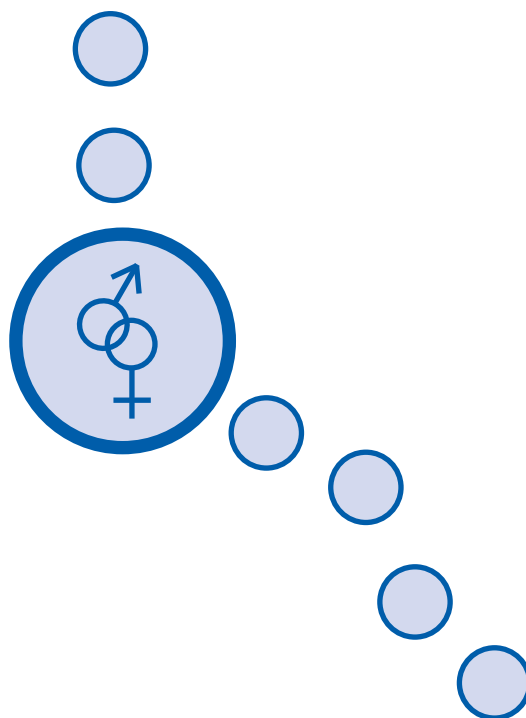
We also used statistics other than those on male dominance, such as an analysis showing that men are not doing very well in the social field. A look at the average age of men in Central and Eastern European countries and at the population of men in prisons; a comparison between the results of boys and the achievement of girls in schools, and a study of the gender characteristics of so-called 'problem groups;' all go to show that these issues are also gender-related. The fact that 95 % of the population of prisons is male tells us that there is something wrong in the way we raise boys. This also means that the gender issue is not only a topic for women but also concerns men, especially those working in the field of youth work and training.

We realise that maybe we have raised more questions than we have given answers. As we said, we wanted to start a discussion through this article and we really hope you are going to respond positively to it. This new approach to gender issues is thanks to the participants in the training course, many of whom stated in their evaluation forms that there should be more attention given to gender issues in all kinds of training activities.

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Changes in the Weather

How to deal with 'handover' in youth organisations

Handing over responsibilities from one executive to the next is a critical procedure in the life of a youth organisation. But how to ensure that the new team can use all their enthusiasm and ideas and also has the skills and knowledge needed to do the job? Could training help? Based on his own experiences, György Lissauer puts forward some thought-provoking reflections.

Suddenly, or may be not so suddenly, that time of year arrived. It is exactly the same time of year as last year, except that now I am seeing it from the 'other side'. Oh, and last year I am sure it was sunny while now it's raining nonstop. It is not the first time I have come across the 'problem' and not the first time that I have seen it from both sides... but I think it is the first time that we are beginning to get it right. And I would like to share it with you.

In all non-governmental youth organisations there is a periodic personnel change in the executive. I will use 'executive' to describe the group of people who run the organisation on a day-to-day basis. The point of change is perhaps the most exciting point in the organisational cycle. Something is completed and something new is beginning. But can you really 'complete', and can you really start 'anew'? And this, I think, is the crucial question. If that 'turning point' is the most exciting, it is also probably the most important in the life of the organisation. Let us briefly look at what the excitement is all about, and why it is perhaps so important. Then we should consider how to manage both effectively.

The excitement is all about the new possibilities, the new breath, the new perspectives, the grand ideas, the new projects, the innovation, inspiration, the naivety, the belief that everything is possible and that this year we will make the world turn faster! All that is in-bedded in being 'youthful'. And I always understood the phrase 'youth' in these terms. But it

is not about age, it is about attitude. It is about our approach to the work, the reasons why we are doing it, and our belief that the sky is the limit – and oh, that we can certainly do it better than our predecessors. This is what youth organisations are all about: not only changing the world, but also continuous motivation, change and forward looking. And the reason why youth movements are able to keep going in this way, is because their executives periodically change. Just when the old lot are about to wear out, just when they are about to launch their last 'new' project, the rug is pulled from under their feet and the new lot climbs the trees and shouts 'victory!' They are about to put right everything that has gone wrong, steer the movement to where 'no movement has moved before,' excite and get more people involved than ever before, and generally find paradise.

So clearly it is the most important part of the organisational cycle: this point of turnover is the lifeline that any self-respecting organisation must have, and the one that has made youth organisations a success. We know this, and I probably have not said much that is new. What we know too, is that while what I have said is all well-and-good, with that attitude alone the new lot will go astray. We know this because we have experienced it, and because we believe we know more about the job that needs doing than anyone else at this precise moment. We know that one year, or two years, or whatever it is, is just about enough to learn all the ins and outs of the

by György Lissauer



organisation, of its relation to external bodies, and to begin to understand what the work is that we are trying to do. If the new lot is going to start 'anew', then they will have a prolonged learning period which will do little good to the organisation. The truth is that they aren't starting afresh, but they are starting in a given context. It is critical for the organisation how the transition from the old team to the new takes place. If this turning point is to be a lifeline, it can only deliver the new blood to the right place if it is injected correctly. It is okay to turn, but you can only turn from an existing position. If that position is misunderstood or ignored, and the organisation begins to float in thin air, enthusiasm quickly wears out, the organisation's fortunes begin to tumble; surprises come at the new team from every corner, projects that have been started do not get finished; it stops being sunny and it just does not stop raining.

So the question is this: how do we channel the enthusiasm that the new team brings to the office into an organisational life which is a continuum, and shape the existing context to serve as a springboard for all the thoughts and ideas that the new executive has? And I can hear your answers: the picture I have painted is inaccurate. It does not quite work like that. Those who begin to work for an NGYO on that level have been involved in its work for a number of years, and almost certainly as activists. They have been to seminars, done exchanges, sat on advisory boards and policy-making councils, represented the organisation at various events, been around the office, and generally know the 'missions' and 'strategies' of the organisation insideout. Yes, I accept that 95% of those ending up in 'executive' positions fit most of the above description. But on the basis of that, the following transmission process tends to unfold: the new executive is elected, and through their previous involvement they develop an understanding of what is done by the executive and what they would like to get done. There is a period, often a few months, when the old executive is still in office and the new one has already been elected. During this time they talk to each other, discuss decisions, have one-to-one conversations over the state of affairs. It is all very organic, very clean, very flowery. Then comes the few days when the old executive is 'moving out' and the new executive is 'moving in'. Papers are handed over, the two groups sit together and one explains to the other what is happening, what they need to know, how to treat certain people, react to certain circumstances. Then individuals sit with their counterparts and go through a similar ritual. Then desks are cleared (at least in a metaphorical sense).

The 'organic' way has worked, to some extent. But most responses I received when I sent a quick questionnaire to a sample group of NGYOs, suggested that the one thing that the 'new' group wants to do better than its predecessors is the handing over of the running of the organisation.

The 'transition', as someone called it, is beginning to be professionalised and is slowly moving away from the purely organic model. A structured and more thought-through handover period is what we, at my organisation, have moved towards. There is an underlying change in our attitude towards the process, stemming from the change of perspective we have on the incoming crowd. We do not believe that simply because they have the job (because they managed to get elected, appointed, or whatever the process is) they can jump into the water head-first and swim through it without any prior training. They may have been involved, but frankly they have not done this job before, and it is substantially different from anything they have as yet experienced. In most NGYOs the executive is made up of people who are either still studying or have just completed their degrees. They could not have run an organisation before, and if they have, they know only too well that, as far as this organisation is concerned, they know very little. So before they jump, what they need is training, so that the enthusiasm they jump with will be coupled with skills and knowledge to ensure that they are not stranded on this side of the Atlantic, but that they have the 'strength' to swim across it. By approaching handover as a training project, a context can be developed, skills can be strengthened and enthusiasm channelled.

The objectives may be summarised as follows:

- To ensure that the people to whom the 'project' is being handed over begin to feel ownership of it and the ability to bring it to fruition.
- To ensure smooth transition from one year to the next.
- To determine (operational) objectives for the coming year.
- To ensure that the new incumbents have the necessary skills to follow through objectives.

There are a number of questions and issues which are particularly relevant to the training involved in transitions or handovers. I would like to raise, for discussion, some of those which I have come across in the last month or so while I have been involved in planning our handover. I think the subject is wide open for discussion and development and, at least in the organisations I have been around, there is plenty of scope for keeping on trying to get it right. So here's my penny's worth (known as 'cent' in Euroland).

The main questions are these: who is to run the training; what are the main elements of the training; how does it act as a 'transition platform'; and, as for all other trainings, who is it for and how can it be evaluated?

Clearly the outgoing executive needs to coordinate the training. They are the ones who need to make sure that it happens. But are they the right people to run it? Part of the



challenge is to allow the new group to develop the work in its own style, to bring to the organisation that 'youth' spirit that we have talked about. Can those who have been in the job for a year or more, and in the organisation for even more time, let go, and simply set the context? If the training is a 'transition platform', is a third party not needed to assist in moving work from one executive to the next? The question is up for grabs and very much up to the individual executives, and of course there will be financial issues if an external trainer has to be paid. In my organisation we are doing it all ourselves, and still my feeling is that a third party might have been useful. But if the organisation employs some permanent staff, as does mine, then it might be easier for them to assist and perhaps oversee the transition from one set of sabbaticals to the next and then an external may not be necessary.

If handover is treated as a training project, then the questions are: 'who is it for' and 'what are the elements that it must encompass.' The 'who is it for' may be obvious, but 'who are the individuals involved'; 'what experience do they have'; and 'what jobs are they going to be doing (or leaving behind)' are some of the questions worth pondering over. As for the elements, my starting point was to think through what I wanted to pass on under two headings: 'issues' and 'responsibilities'. What are the issues that the person taking over from me needs to know about and consider? What responsibilities will he or she be taking on, what responsibilities does the job come with? Are there any ongoing projects, etc? The second part of my assessment looked at the sort of 'process' I would want the transition to take shape in. In a soapy way this is split into three parts: 'formation', 'creation' and 'completion'.

The formation begins the process and deals with expectations, group formations and building up the context into which the new executive is stepping, including roles, long-term strategy and update on where the organisation is at.

The 'creation' bit looks forward to the next year and builds a year plan on the basis of what was beginning to be 'formed'. How can the organisation and its work be taken forward, what are the wild plans, what can be realistically achieved and how does it all fit into the organisation's continuum? This is the stage where the incoming executive has to begin to feel ownership over the 'project' and the outgoing executive has to begin to let go, to understand that the same job can be done in many different ways. Nevertheless the outgoing executive still has a role to play, but not a directive one—an assisting one instead. Their knowledge and experience remain invaluable, but only as a source of information and resource.

'Completion' creates the work environment and deals with issues such as relations between the officers, work patterns and the like. But the most important part of this section is ensuring that the new team has the skills to complete the tasks they have 'created'. Their existing skills need to be assessed in relation to the work they have to do. Particular skills may need to be passed on, and some of these may include the more mundane ones like computer skills and budgeting. It is also nice to round it all off by passing on specific objects from one executive to the next, objects that signify in some way the work and symbolise the 'letting go' and 'taking over'.

It is worth bearing in mind that while this looks good on paper, the three sections can be merged or taken apart depending on the training programme that is being built. It is not necessarily rigid. There are things that can be fitted into more than one place. For example, it is almost certainly worth providing a session on 'conflict resolution in the work place', but whether it fits into 'formation' or 'completion' is not clear to me.

The above elements need to be fed into a training programme that is filled with innovative, challenging and thought-provoking sessions. The handover cannot be based purely on talking and papers. It needs to, dare I say, empower. It needs to make it possible for the next team to continue and create - to keep the organisational continuum up, but at the same time to create new possibilities and new challenges. Handover is a transition, a process and also a ritual. A ritual that needs space to develop and become central to the organisational turning point.

And now the sun has come out, and it has stopped raining, so it's time to pack up, clear my desk and move on.

Thanks to <tftsauna> for acting as a focus group.

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....By approaching handover as a training project, a context can be developed, skills can be strengthened and enthusiasm channelled....

Going Back

to Awareness

Linas Kukuraitis was a participant in the training course 'Why Not? Combining experiential learning with intercultural learning,' organised by the Social and Psychological Aid Foundation that took place in Bebrusai, Lithuania this June. Starting with four days of reflected experiential learning exercises including a 30 km hike, the course continued with activities run and reflected by participants. The course was funded by Action BII of the Youth for Europe programme and the Soros Foundation. Here Linas tells of his experience and the impact that the course had on him.



The first thing that came to my mind when I heard that the intercultural-experiential course was going to take place in Bebrusai, was the view of a very nice place surrounded by lakes and forests and then I remembered its importance as a site where lots of basic Lithuanian youth policy decisions were made. So there I was in the middle of May looking forward to going to this place at the end of June. However, on the day that I came there I realised that I didn't feel any of the beauty of the countryside around, nor did I feel that I was in one of the most famous places among the youth. That was something related to my experience before going there.

At the beginning of May my colleague left for a month and a half for Scotland and I was left alone to lead the social centre, which the two of us founded in January. Bearing in mind the fact that to start the centre really needed a great deal of hard work and the fact that I was at the same time taking my examinations at Vilnius University, I found it difficult to be any where other than next to the computer in my job. On June 19, the day of the beginning of the seminar, I had my last exam and I also found out that I didn't pass the preceding one. That meant I would have to take it again in the autumn and that my scholarship was gone. So these were the main events which led up to the course for me.

My first impressions of 'WHY NOT' were not impressions at all but rather a big attempt to rehabilitate myself. The first evening passed with lots of foreign faces surrounding me, and my first attempt at remembering the names and faces of the partici-

pants. The only thing that touched me was meeting the trainers Arturas Deltuva, Mark Taylor, Kristina Kovaite, Dirk De Vilder, Corinne Grassi and Bart Vertongen. It was easy to identify them, although they were deeply involved in the group that evening.

The goals that I had for this course were very clear to me—to learn as many methods and practical things as I could, so that I could use them in the coming youth camp of my community. Moreover, I wanted to see how intercultural experience would fit with experiential learning, having in mind the exchange which my organisation is going to initiate next year between Slovenia, Germany and Lithuania.

The second day was dedicated to the theoretical part and to building up the relationship in the group, while preparing it for the hike of the next days. Looking back to this day, I see myself putting down into the notebook all the energisers, games and methods used by the trainers and following their every step. I was trying not to go very far away from the group but not really going deeply into it. The hike was a real pleasure for me, because it was my dream to let myself get carried away by summer and to forget all the misfortunes relating to my examinations. As a rule summer for me is closely associated to the lakes of the Bebrusai region, because my family, along with friends, used to begin every summer with a big camping weekend twenty kilometres from Bebrusai. For me it was a chance for some relaxed hiking through the woods and then boating in the lakes, which was actually something I was dreaming about all winter. This was a big oppor-



by Linas Kukuraitis



tunity for me to try to get back to my feelings and refresh my relationship with the countryside. Although the group was really working hard caring for other members and co-operating in decision making, and although the surrounding environment forced us to stay closer to each other, I felt that in my inner world everything went on the surface. I could feel that after comparing the sharing of other group members. Maybe there was not enough challenge for me and I just stayed in my comfort zone, in which, according to Dirk, deep learning is not possible or maybe that was my inner problem? Maybe... It seemed that all the ways to my heart and awareness were heavily blocked and I needed to be given a strong shake to get my feelings back.

The activities in the next part of the course were very different. We went to Vilnius for group-designed activities (or 'city bound' as it is sometimes known) and some free time; then back in Bebrusai we listened to some theoretical inputs, organised our own activities, received feedback from the group and used a day of Open Space Technology to do everything we felt wasn't yet done. In Vilnius it had taken me two hours to get back to the world I had left before the course: family, friends, job, unfinished business, etc. While staying with them and talking about the course, I realised that the main idea of the course hadn't yet touched me. Somehow it was all apart from me and only on a theoretical level. It was also interesting to realise that I was missing the group. So I came back with the wish to go deeper into the group and to be more aware of the things I was being taught.

We had to create an activity within an international group which was a good opportunity to become aware of the processes going on in the group—it was all about helping the group go through different group phases. My work with the Spanish and Belgium women in one team was really helpful in discovering what gifts I had as a team member. It was a hard task working in an international team, it demanded a lot of effort, but the results were amazing. I saw that our activity was much more than the mere sum of our ideas. The feedback from the group and the trainers, who were also the participants in these activities, was another impetus to go deeper into the awareness about the group process, the theory of group development and the leader's position in the group.

The Open Space Technology day was very interesting for me. **[Editor's note: see Maria Frerichs' article about OST in Coyote 2].** I spent it watching a film about an intercultural exchange between Belgium and Latvia (which was very helpful for future plans), and joining discussion groups, which talked about the importance of reflection in the group development process and also the role of the trainer in the group. That was the time for lots of deeper insights. I realised that up until then, reflection had never been very important for me. I had seen it mostly as feedback for me as a group trainer, but it had nothing to do with helping group members to learn about themselves or trying to help the group to move forward. I also saw how shallow I had been always using different methods with groups. All the many books I had read about various methods pushed me into the constant search for new games, energisers, group leading methods etc., but I had rarely asked myself the question:

WHY DO I USE THEM? Good methods were the golden key for me in order to lead the group well. In this course I realised that there was a different way of working. The program was only half planned and the trainers were building it up during the ten days. I understood in Bebrusai that the trainers would first of all share their impressions about where the group is and what it would need in order to move a step forward, and only then would they follow discussions about the methods to use.

I came back to that on the evaluation and transfer day when I looked back at my expectations for the course which I had drawn and written on a shield, there were all my goals for the course – they were nearly all methodological things. Then I asked myself 'Did I get that?' Of course I did. I got much more. I got the inner understanding of the importance of seeing the group and also a strong wish to go forward into deeper awareness of the things happening within it and me as a trainer. So briefly I got things which I didn't even expect to get.

It was very interesting to watch how the trainers were different in their relationship with the group and how differently they led the group. It helped me to reflect on my own abilities as a trainer and to form my own style. I always watched the trainers in the group and that helped me to grow up. But the most surprising thing I found was that they were also in the learning process and they dared to talk about it.

There was another aspect which was perhaps more important for me as a person. I saw the ongoing influence the course was having on the participants. Long talks, working together and just being close to each other created something that later on, in the last circle of sharing, exploded in tears, poems and words coming from the heart. That deeply touched me and I realised that these people and the moments that we had spent together were very important. All those talks about didgeridoos, caving, magic and the different situation of women in Lithuania and Spain plus the magic of Bebrusai brought me back to my heart and awareness. Big thanks from me to the group.

When I came home and got back into my daily work I realised that there were two things for sure I had brought from the seminar: a great mass of theories, thoughts and feelings in my head, from which something should evolve, and also the realisation that from this moment on I would not be able to live the old life with the old way of seeing and thinking. Well, it is a little difficult coming back to friends, colleagues, the environment in which I grew up, all of which is so familiar to me, and where life seems so easy. Now I have just finished running a summer camp and somehow I see everything in a new light. I go back to what was written on Dirk's T-shirt: 'A mind that is stretched by a new experience will never go back to its old dimensions.'

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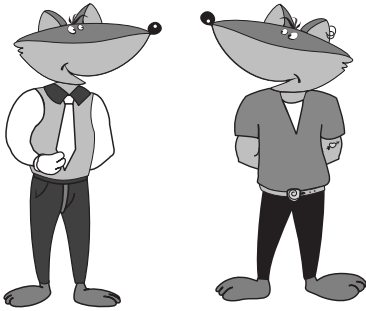
...I also saw how shallow I had been always using different methods with groups....



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ormal and Non-formal Education in Higher Education:

The MA Comparative European Social Studies (MACESS) as an example



In the modern network society, people can obtain competencies and knowledge in different ways, through formal and non-formal education. According to Nol Reverda, this reality needs to be recognised by higher education. In the field of social studies, MACESS can serve as an example of good practice.

Silicon Valley

One of the most important engines of the new economy is located in California, USA, and is called Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley consists of a concentration of highly qualified experts in the field of Information and Communication Technology. Together they are responsible for a substantial contribution to the growth of the American economy. There are about 7000 established companies, which employ 50 to 500 experts each. Although the operational systems are controlled by the big multinational enterprises, the middle and small businesses are mainly responsible for the supply of high standard innovations in the area of software programmes.

I will not go further into the technical details of hardware and software, since neither am I an expert on the matter, nor is it relevant to this article. However, from a sociological point of view there are two things about Silicon Valley which are relevant and worth some attention. First of all, Silicon Valley attracts its employees from all corners of the world: China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Australia, from West, Middle and Eastern Europe, and from Africa. They work alongside Americans of origin, who incidently, come from all over the United States. Thus, Silicon Valley rightly sees itself as representative of multicultural society, which finds its coherence in the common ICT field of interest and the shared values of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Secondly, in Silicon Valley, no company or business asks for proof of qualifications obtained; instead they ask for an extended curriculum vitae. People have to show that they are good enough in their field of expertise, and a CV offers more relevant information

on this than an officially obtained diploma. Thus, in Silicon Valley one finds a broad and varied mixture of self-taught men and women and experts with a Harvard University degree in ICT, as well as every combination in between. In short, it is a mixture of experts with both formal and non-formal educational backgrounds.

Social professional work and practice (*)

Since the 1960s, social work has been professionalised through the emergence and growth of the welfare state in Western Europe. Care and support for those in need – children, young people, the poor, elderly, sick and disabled – gradually became a profession, replacing the old charity and voluntary work. Both the quality of the social professional work and the belonging to a professional group was expressed by the receipt of a diploma: if you obtained the certificate, you could join the party – if not, you stayed outside. Volunteers were replaced by professionals, and responsibilities and salary scales in the non-profit sector were directly linked to the level and quality of the obtained diplomas. Functions were only open for those, who could prove their eligibility for the job 'objectively' by certification. Consequently, volunteers were displaced and lost their status and prestige. In short, in the growing bureaucracy of the welfare state formal education replaced non-formal education.

Despite this process of supersession in the 'market of well-being and happiness', the volunteer never disappeared completely. Firstly, those countries which could not afford the development of a welfare state due to a lack of material resources, were, and still are, dependent upon the involvement, experience



by Nol Reverda



and expertise of 'volunteers' in order to reduce the problematic consequences of the differences in material affluence, political power and legal security in society. Practice has enabled these volunteers to develop their expertise. Paolo Freire analysed the underlying principles of this type of work, and on the basis of his research, developed the concept of 'learning by experience'.

But in the affluent Western world too, the volunteer never completely disappeared. A great deal of the care for children, young people, the poor, sick, elderly and disabled was carried out by volunteers without status and prestige, and mostly women and those without registered work. Social professionals increasingly played the role of manager of projects, departments and institutes in the welfare state. They were involved in planning and finances, and volunteers were engaged to do the basic work. Although the existence of volunteers was ignored in the bureaucratic welfare state, and although their status was low, the welfare state's heyday was actually largely thanks to them.

The power and role of the welfare state bureaucracy is declining. Nation-states are decentralising, deregulating and privatising their policies and activities. State involvement is increasingly being replaced by the principles of a liberal economic market with its unlimited games of supply and demand. Traditional institutions are disappearing and being taken over by modern networks. The social professional worked within these traditional institutions mainly for the various target groups, on behalf of state policies. Nowadays, in our network society, they have to work with them, and active participation of the target groups is crucial for the quality and the results of the work. Expertise and competencies are no longer automatically granted by a certificate, but have to be developed continuously in an interactive environment: life-long learning has become one of the core characteristics of our society.

In short, from a sociological perspective, we notice a process of de-institutionalisation of our society. This de-institutionalisation creates problems – what is the future of social professional work without the ruling regulations of the state? What opportunities will arise?. The withdrawal of the state provided a renewed attention to and focus on civil society, to be rebuilt subsequently (Middle and Eastern European countries) or to be re-activated (Western European countries). Civil society needs talented people, who can function innovatively and are capable of reconstructing it. Talented people who are competent and qualified to meet these challenges are not only those with certificates and diplomas, but are also those who, through non-formal education and practical experience, have become experts in their field. Thus, our network society increasingly needs social professional workers with an extended curriculum vitae, showing the appropriate mix of formal and non-formal education. It is in this way that social professional work starts to look somewhat like Silicon Valley.

Higher education

De-institutionalisation does of course affect the traditional ivory towers of universities and colleges. For a long time higher education could work with fixed standards of student admission and quality control. Courses were delivered in a set amount of time, with set programmes and according to the established regulations the outputs were predictable. However, this cannot continue in the same way in a modern network society. Higher education is partly privatised and has thus become dependent (mainly in the field of research) on the liberal market economy, accepting the influence of non-academics on the objectives of science and research. Whether higher education likes it or not, it has to

descend from its ivory tower and open its doors. Furthermore, if people can obtain their qualifications in various ways (formal and non-formal), higher education has to differentiate its admission policies and flexibilise its curriculum. In short, pre-determined and rather static standards and regulations do not meet the needs and demands of a network society anymore. Here, the MA in Comparative European Social Studies (MACCESS) can be seen as an example of 'good practice'.

MA Comparative European Social Studies: MACCESS

MACCESS is a one year postgraduate course, validated by the University of North London, under the auspices of the Hogeschool Maastricht, and delivered by Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe. MACCESS offers the opportunity to conduct a comparative study and research in the field of social professional practice and policy. Successful completion of the course is awarded by a British masters degree (MA). MACCESS was established in 1994 and has co-operated since then with an extended network of 28 universities and colleges throughout Europe for programme delivery and development.

The course structure currently consists of four compulsory core modules and five optional modules (from which each student must choose two) and a dissertation. The core modules are:

- ▶ European institutions and policy, providing students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the main institutions, treaties and policies of Europe
- ▶ Comparative social policy, equipping students with theories and models to compare and critically analyse the provision of welfare in a European context
- ▶ Comparative social research, introducing different research traditions and methodologies in Europe and preparing the dissertation
- ▶ Social professional practice in Europe, enabling students to explore theories, methods, traditions and innovations within the social practice in different areas of Europe.

The optional modules are:

- ▶ Management of change, enabling students to understand processes of change in a dynamic Europe
- ▶ European network development, enabling students to conceptualise the complexity of linkages and networks in national and international social professional work
- ▶ Marginalisation and social exclusion, providing students with the opportunity to understand processes of social exclusion and inclusion
- ▶ Political philosophy and welfare, deepening students' theoretical knowledge of the underpinning assumptions in European welfare provision
- ▶ European welfare law, enabling students to study the impact of the European judicial systems on social professional practice.

Finally, students have to conduct comparative research, resulting in a dissertation on a topic of relevance to the social professions in a European context.

Student admission policy

MACCESS attracts students from various countries of wider Europe (not only EU), most of whom have graduated in social work, social pedagogy and youth and community work. The course resembles a traditional postgraduate programme eligible for students with an appropriate background.

From the beginning we were aware of the fact that historically, for one reason or another, not every country in Europe offers a formal qualification in social professional work. Furthermore, we realised that even in those countries where such a qualification is offered, competent applicants may have followed an alternative route to develop their competencies. Therefore we added the phrase 'or equivalent' under the criteria for pre-education in our admission policy. We are convinced that students without the more traditional educational background may also be able to perform at a high academic level. These students are normally invited to submit an extended curriculum vitae, which forms the basis of an admission interview. Reviews of students' results have shown that these students do not perform better or worse than those with a formal educational background. Thus, we have actually formalised informal education.

Let me give two examples, which seem relevant to the context of this magazine. In 1996 we accepted a student whose formal education consisted of the completion of general secondary education and of a one-year course in journalism. In addition, she had obtained some certificates in secretarial work. She spoke fluent English and French, and had a passive knowledge of Spanish and Italian. She had been active in youth work as a young person, and her extended experience included her role as European Secretary of the International Movement of Catholic Students and Vice President of the Governing Board of the European Youth Centre and the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe. She was interviewed and proved to have obtained an outstanding expertise in the development of activities and projects, in management, in writing papers, in (intercultural) debates and argumentation, and in the theoretical underpinning of her work. In short, her work experience had provided her with the sort of competencies comparable to those of a traditionally educated social worker. We accepted her on the course and at the end MACESS provided her with the concepts, theories and academic ways of thinking that she was looking for.

The second example relates to a student who after grammar school attended a faculty for economy and trade for one year. She then left university and accepted a job in the IT business to programme software and build IT networks. In the meantime she became involved in youth work, both the running of youth activities and the management of teams of international experts on youth issues and NGOs. She attended courses in management of volunteers, leadership skills, intercultural learning, team building and so on. She became President of the WAGGGS All European Task Force, and co-operated with the Council of Europe in about seven projects. Furthermore, she was involved in projects to improve the living conditions of children and young people in Middle and Eastern Europe through the strengthening of civil society. Thus, she obtained competencies which made her an excellent applicant for MACESS (and an excellent graduate) without having attended the traditional formal-educational route.

Conclusion

Clearly, the admission policy described above emerged because we are convinced that our 'modern' society needs talented and competent people to meet the challenges of social exclusion and inclusion in Europe. The recognition of competencies is the relevant point here, rather than the way people have acquired their qualifications. Learning is a process, which can be realised in various ways: inside and outside the school walls, in informal networks, in public and private environments, on the job, etc. What counts in the end is the result of this

learning process, and it is about time that not only the ICT sector but also the social professional education and practice started to realise and recognise this fact. The inspiring policy formulated within the Partnership of the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport and the European Commission to promote the recognition of non-formal education is an important step forward towards this goal, and has the full support of MACESS.

(* Social professional work and practice is a concept which refers to all practices for the support, empowerment and care of other persons, both in a formal and non-formal context. For reasons of clarity, I identify 'social professionals' with 'formal education', and 'volunteers' with 'non-formal education' in this article.

Literature:

D. Bell – The Coming of Post-industrial Society. Basic Books, New York 1999. This major book, written in the 1970's, analyses the impact of ICT on social structures, and the transformation of an industrial society into a service society.

P. Freire – Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Penguin, London 1972. A classical analysis of ideologies and the structure of learning and knowledge of oppressed groups.

S. Lawrence and N. Reverda – The Development of the MACESS Post-graduate Programme in Europe. In: Social Work in Europe, vol. 5, nr. 3 1998. A descriptive article on the various dimensions of the construction of MACESS as a European course.

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A. Zijderveld – The Institutional Imperative. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2000. A study on 'institutions' as a sociological key concept and their function nowadays in a network society.

....our network society increasingly needs social professional workers with an extended curriculum vitae....



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After European Youth Work

Will my experience in the European youth sector be valued on the labour market? Hrönn Pétursdóttir's answer is: Yes, employers increasingly look for skills and competencies that can be gained in youth work. But it is also up to us to use this chance.

Two years. To begin with, I was committed to spending two years as a professional in the European youth sector. The decision was made more out of a sense of adventure than because of an expected professional advance. In fact, relatives, friends and colleagues at work had a hard time understanding why I wanted to leave a fast-track plum management position in the broadcasting industry to become a professional Guide/Scout.

Then the two years turned to six because it was an amazing adventure. I even moved within the European youth organisations, from being the Programme Executive at the Europe Office of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to the post of Secretary General of the European Youth Forum. At the end of the six years it was time to face reality again however, and admittedly I was not sure how the job market would value my experience in the European youth field. Having decided to move back home to Iceland, and being career-minded and fairly ambitious, it was something of a concern.

It was therefore a very pleasant surprise when it turned out that my experiences were in demand. Within two weeks of starting to look for a job I had three offers, all different but all very interesting. I ended up accepting a job as General Director of EDUCATE – Iceland. My employers were the Confederation of Employers, Federation of Trade Unions and cooperation committees for universities and vocational educational institutions in Iceland. They hired me to set up and run an association providing support and cooperation actions for them in the field of education and training, at the levels of upper secondary education, university and adult education. At the beginning of 1999 I started work in

my car and with my mobile phone, having to find and set up offices, identify what the operation of the association should be all about, negotiate work-contracts and find funding for the work. Now, one and a half years later, EDUCATE has an office staff of six, more work than it can easily handle and the prospect of needing to hire further staff in the near future.

A few months ago, I discovered that I had been the youngest of the numerous applicants for the post. The reason I was selected was that the group was looking for somebody who was flexible and with learning power, had experience of networking, working with people from different backgrounds, and who possessed facilitation skills, a capacity for rapid analysis of new situations, competence in motivating others and technical skills in project and administrative management. They were also looking for someone with first-hand experience of working with the EU institutions. Most of these skills and competencies I did not acquire through my university studies or my work experience in the private sector, but through my years of being involved in youth organisations.

When looking at the skills and competencies one gains in national or European youth work, as a professional or a volunteer, they are often the ones increasingly demanded by employers but not necessarily provided by the formal educational system. The European Round Table of Industrialists did a survey among companies a few years back as to what skills they were looking for in prospective employees, but found lacking in those coming directly from the formal educational system. The skills they mentioned included communication,



by Hrönn Pétursdóttir



ability to work in teams and multicultural groups, decision-making and problem-solving, leadership, etc. I heard the list of the ERI at a European Young Entrepreneurs Conference in Brussels, and as it was read I could actually tick off most of the items as something taught and learned within the non-formal educational system, for example, in many youth organisations. It clearly showed the different but complementary roles of formal and non-formal education.

Youth organisations often provide a venue where young people can experiment with a variety of tasks and with new situations in a relatively safe environment. While some of the learning experiences may be of a topical nature, the most important ones are of a social nature. How to work with people, deal with new situations, have confidence in one's abilities and so on.

My current employers recognised that while I had an educational background in social communication, I primarily had the experience from my European youth work that fulfilled their requirements. If I had managed to go to one country after another and in a few days earn the trust of the locals, analyse situations and set up strategies for work to be done to meet their needs—then I should also be able to do so in other complex situations. If I had managed to put together motivated and active international groups of volunteers, then I should also be able to do so with people with very different interests in the educational sector.

Everybody active in the European youth field experiences the same sort of learning opportunities. These opportunities are to be found in the everyday work of most European youth workers. Running training courses or camps, writing material with an educational intention, reading documentation in different languages, motivating volunteers, giving speeches at conferences, following world affairs, lobbying policy makers, networking with people from different cultural or ideological backgrounds, all these are included. Furthermore, many youth workers are also responsible for the operation of projects or small offices. There they need to know about bookkeeping and interest rates, balancing budgets, finding funding, employment law, hiring and firing practices, setting up communication channels with numerous countries, running board meetings—and so the list goes on.

These learning opportunities are those found within the organisations we work with but also outside them. Many European youth workers participate actively in cooperation with institutions such as the Council of Europe or the European Union, or on common actions with other non-governmental organisations. This cooperation can be set up with the explicit intention of providing the youth worker with further skills or knowledge, but can also aim at providing venues where there

will be opportunities to use competence that already exists. A feature of such cooperation is that it provides a fair knowledge of complex networking, of how the institutions work and first-hand competence in how to work with the institutions.

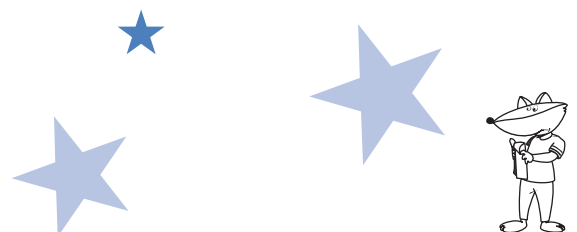
If there is one lesson to be learned from my experiences and that of others, it is that involvement in the youth sector is valuable and appreciated. However, the skills and knowledge we have gained may not always be obvious to ourselves at the time, nor to others afterwards. How we ourselves perceive and analyse how we have benefited, and how we convey that message to others is important.

In general it can be said that knowledge is never superfluous and neither is competence. What is certain is that any environment can provide as much or as little learning opportunity as we want. The question is how we use the opportunity, perceive the experience and place it.

Given the changes in the working environment, the greater awareness of the role of non-formal education and the real need for learning throughout one's life, involvement in activities such as the youth sector offers, will be of increasing value in the future. An early start at dealing with complex situations and an understanding of and confidence in one's abilities can provide advantages that may be crucial for further involvement in professional life.

What we need to do now is to increase our efforts in selling that message and showing society what is gained from such involvement. A greater awareness of the role of non-formal education can be clearly seen in the emphasis that the youth sectors within the Council of Europe and the European Commission place on it. Other institutions, such as CEDEFOP (The Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training)—an institution attached to the European Union that primarily focuses on the formal educational system—is giving it increasing attention. What remains to be seen however, is whether the value of non-formal educational youth work will also be increasingly recognised. It undoubtedly should be, but it is up to us to make sure that it will be.

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Training for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation

Do we give enough attention to ensuring that international youth work is relevant for and supporting the work of youth organisations at local level? In January 2000, 25 youth leaders participated in a training course on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in Strasbourg. Looking back at this course and former experiences in this field of work, Bas Auer, one of the course trainers, raises some important concerns about the meaning and impact of Euro-Mediterranean youth work.

by Bas Auer

Aida is a volunteer in the youth programme of the Egyptian Association for Comprehensive Development. With five other young people she is developing projects aimed at youth in Egypt. The projects are in areas such as peer-education, culture, theatre, environment, and networking. In January 2000, she was one of twenty-five youth leaders who participated in the Training Course on Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation.

This training course - organised by the Council of Europe's North-South Centre and Directorate of Youth and Sport, with support from the European Commission - brought together young representatives from (youth) NGOs of Europe and the Mediterranean. The course enabled participants to further the development of 'Euro-Mediterranean youth projects and networks,' to play a more active role in international youth work, and to promote cooperation and dialogue between young people from both sides of the Mediterranean. An important part of the course was the development of the youth projects which the participants were working on in their own organisations. Through training sessions, peer-support and coaching techniques, the participants acquired and implemented skills in project development, while at the same time they were building their 'Euro-Mediterranean youth project'.

During the training course, Aida worked to build a local peer-education project: training youth volunteers to educate children in a low-income district in Cairo on children's rights through art, theatre, etc. In the last session of the course, Aida and all the other participants presented the projects they worked on to the whole group. The feedback she received on her presentation was noteworthy: one of the participants suggested that her project did not really fit into the framework of Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation, since it was only

local in scope. This participant raised an important question that is sometimes brushed over in international youth work. What do we mean when we talk about international cooperation, or in this case 'Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation?' What are 'Euro-Mediterranean Youth Projects?' Are these terms uniquely reserved for those activities that take place in the international arena, such as international exchanges, seminars, publications, and dialogues? If so, how is this relevant to those organisations in Europe and the Mediterranean area that are doing local youth work? More importantly, how is this relevant to the large majority of young people who do not participate in such events?

Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation

The programmes taking place under the banner of Euro-Mediterranean Youth Cooperation began around ten years ago under the title of the 'Euro-Arab Dialogue of Youth and Students.' Having started as a number of encounters between European political youth organisations and a small number of Arab youth networks, this dialogue was mainly political in nature, focusing on the Israeli-Arab conflict, as well as on other conflict situations in the region, such as the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara.

After this initial phase, the organisations that were behind this initiative decided it was time to broaden the dialogue to include a wider range of youth organisations. With the involvement of the three European youth platforms that existed at the time, as well as three networks of Arab youth and student organisations, two symposia entitled: 'A Euro-Arab Youth Dialogue for Mutual Understanding and Cooperation' were organised in 1994 and 1996, in Malta and Hungary. These symposia allowed a broader range of youth organisations in the two



regions to share their views on issues that young people experience in their daily lives: employment, religious concerns, xenophobia, conflict, education, etc.

In 1996, the participating organisations came to the conclusion that cooperation between youth NGOs in Europe and the Mediterranean region should not, priori, preclude any country or territory and that cooperation should move beyond dialogue. Cooperation that takes place on a sub-regional or bilateral level should be stimulated, South-South or North-South. Co-operation should move beyond an exchange of views to include an exchange of experiences, knowledge, skills and general know-how.

Following the 1996 Symposium in Budapest, a wide range of activities have been undertaken by a number of diverse youth organisations. The Mediterranean Youth Forum has been established with the support of the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. European Voluntary Service projects have been set up in the region; a peace-cruise has taken place in the Eastern Mediterranean; a variety of exchanges have taken place. Most activities have been in the fields of cultural exchange and networking.



Some participants in front of the European Parliament.

The Training course

With the concepts of 1996 in mind, the Directorate of Youth and Sport and the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe took the initiative for the Training Course on Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation. After a number of years of cooperation on a more decentralised level, this TC was to bring a wider variety of youth leaders together who were working on Euro-Mediterranean projects, in order for them to gain understanding of the need of, and the possibilities for, cooperation and dialogue; to obtain skills to develop and implement projects; to live through an intercultural experience and deal with the issues their projects would be faced with; to build networks; and to acquire knowledge and know-how. The training course concentrated on three main strands:

- (1) Project Development;
- (2) Intercultural Learning and
- (3) Networking.

Project development

All participants were selected on the basis of a project which they were working on. The project could be at any stage of development, from an initial idea to a developed project framework. These projects were the starting-point of the project development strand. Throughout the ten days of the training course, participants received concrete training inputs on project planning, management, budgeting, resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation, etc. These training inputs were immediately implemented in small project-group sessions. The participants were divided into small groups with similar projects, in which they could further develop their projects on the basis of the training sessions and with the support of their peers and the coaching of the training team. The projects were presented at the end of the course to the entire group.

Intercultural learning

In a series of thematic cafés, participants from both sides of the Mediterranean had the opportunity to grapple with content issues such as religion, human rights, gender or migration and to look deeper into the concepts that underlie Euro-Mediterranean youth work, such as intercultural learning and youth participation. Methods were varied in the different cafés using debates, simulations, games, and small group discussions. Methods were chosen to stimulate an open debate in an atmosphere of trust.

Networking

A series of activities provided the participants with the opportunity to learn about the programmes and activities of other youth organisations. They learned about successful programmes which have been implemented, and they got an opportunity to link up with funding agencies in this field.

Two types of Euro-Mediterranean youth work?

The training course seems to have succeeded in providing participants with tools for developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the areas mentioned above, particularly with regard to project development and intercultural learning.

As already mentioned in the introduction, the training course also witnessed an interesting, but sometimes disconcerting phenomenon. There seemed to be a gap between the value of the course for participants engaged in the international/cultural exchange type of projects and the participants involved in projects that are mostly local in nature. Participants engaged in international projects had no problems relating to the training course programme elements, nor to the methodology and resource persons; while participants engaged in local projects seemed to have more problems in finding their place. Besides being an exercise in project development, intercultural learning and networking, the course posed another challenge for these participants: to find out what Euro-Mediterranean cooperation means in the first place and how it relates to them. The answers they came up with were sometimes surprising, such as a comment by Aida a few months after the course: 'I think Euro-Mediterranean cooperation should be about community-based projects, where we



can benefit from an exchange of skills and experiences from other volunteers in other countries. Sometimes I got the feeling that it was merely about youth from Europe going to the Mediterranean, for the sake of the experience of going there.'

Euro-Med cooperation and local youth work

Although such feedback can be a little sobering, it should not come as a complete surprise. We could divide international youth work into three broad areas:

To strengthen local work

Work where international exchange is the means chosen to improve youth work on a local level. Exchange of techniques and experiences that have the specific objective of strengthening youth work at local level.

To encourage intercultural understanding

Work where international exchange is the goal as well as the means. The exchange has the object of fostering knowledge about other cultures and the spirit and values of internationalism.

To build an international movement

Work where international exchange is the means of gathering young people behind a goal or principle that can subsequently be used or advocated in a local setting.

We have then to conclude that international youth work as practised in the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation programmes in the past decade has been predominantly about the latter two aims. Youth organisations have engaged in numerous cultural exchanges and political dialogues. They have cooperated in an international campaign on Western Sahara; they have worked on a peace-cruise; they have organised voluntary service projects that allowed volunteers from Europe to work in the Mediterranean.

All of this is important work which brings new insights and opportunities to young people. But Euro-Mediterranean youth work seems to have been defined as such: international exchange for the purpose of intercultural understanding or movement building. In Euro-Mediterranean youth work as it is currently defined or practised, strengthening of local work seems to be excluded, or at most to be only a by-product.

A pointed example of this approach is the MEDA Youth Programme of the European Commission, the most important support mechanism of Euro-Mediterranean youth work. The programme has two main instruments to support youth work in the Euro-Mediterranean area: international exchanges and supporting activities, and an extended version of European Voluntary Service. Through study visits, training courses and even some research, the range of support activities for international exchanges is impressive. But NGOs that—on the basis of all of this exchange—come up with concrete plans for longer-term cooperation in a grass roots programme will have to look elsewhere for financial support. European Voluntary Service in the Euro-Mediterranean context does have a big potential for strengthening local community development. The current reality of the programme, however, focuses more on the learning experience of the volunteers than on that of the community project. A volunteer that in the current

MEDA Youth programme is more likely to be from Europe than from the south of the Mediterranean.

A breaking of the connection between grass roots youth work and international youth work is not without cost however. A stronger link between the two in a Euro-Mediterranean context could bring several benefits:

Enhanced perspectives:

Most youth work takes place at local level. Participation in international youth work would significantly enhance the exchange of perspectives, ideas, methods and skills.

Enhanced progress:

Effective links between local programmes in similar areas of work would bring an enriching exchange of methods, skills and viewpoints, and so provide a catalyst for the development of this work.

International and local youth work become mutually reinforcing:

When international youth work is not effectively connected with local work, it can be perceived as a 'black hole' sucking up the energies of people who were once involved in grass roots initiatives—without providing much in return from that same local perspective. An effective link between the two would enhance perspectives and encourage progress, and make clear to local organisations why they are involved in international work, and why they are sending their volunteers, staff and board members to international events.

International exchange based on these principles is far from a revolutionary concept. It is taking place all over the world in a variety of sectors. It needs increased awareness of the variety of youth initiatives that are taking place in cities and villages across Europe and the Mediterranean. It needs an increased understanding of the situations of young people in all of these different areas, and an

...the course posed another challenge to these participants: to find out what cooperation means in the first place and how it relates to them...

increased understanding of the working conditions of NGOs. It needs, dare I say, more exchange.

An exchange that dares to think small, and does not necessarily aim to bring together thirty people from twenty-five countries. Fifteen people from two villages could be fine as well. But it also needs support mechanisms that go beyond exchange, and which give organisations an actual opportunity to cooperate. After they have gone through an intense and lengthy process of getting to know each other's work, backgrounds and constituencies, they should be able to go to work together.

...When international exchange is not effectively connected with local work, it can be perceived as a 'black hole' ...

The Training Course on Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation was an enriching experience for everybody involved. It showed again how incredibly rich and empowering it can be to work together with your peers from all corners of the world. To find out how different and yet how similar we are, and to find out too how similar our causes are. And it showed again that international youth work is too important to leave to internationalists'alone.

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Participants' Impressions of the Training Course:

'An important element I learned during this course was that really thinking about our own objectives is so important that we do not necessarily have to be constrained by what our organisations normally do, or by the usual funding bodies. Instead we have the capacity to re-examine our project ideas; and if we believe they are fundamental to the objectives of our project, then we have the ability to access resources to look for support for our project, rather than to change its objectives just to conform.'

Michelle Felton, U.K., EVS volunteer in Italy at the time of the training course.

Ahlam El-Alfy of Egypt, writes:

'For a young Egyptian Muslim veiled woman, this training course was a very interesting and unique experience. It was my first time in Europe, and in a community very different from my own, where people had a different perspective on, or approach to some things I considered to be facts of life. My feelings were so contradictory, forming a confusing mixture of fear and curiosity, anxiety and joy, confidence and shyness. Despite my long experience in the development field in my own country, it was difficult for me at first to break the long chain of stereotypes streaming into my head - Europeans are cold, Europeans are distant... There were a lot of questions, based on lack of knowledge and misunderstandings:

When greeting someone, should I approach to kiss the cheek or to shake hands? Why do you wear the veil? Are you forced to do so? Where did you learn to speak French and English? Was it easy for you? Does Islam really accept terrorism? These are the kinds of questions you get when you meet a stranger whom you know nothing about except what you have heard through the media.

The reality in this training course was different. All of us had our own projects that we wanted to develop. We were young people who had nothing in common except being youth workers or volunteers in NGOs. And this was the secret of our success. There was a magic spell within the group, and communication channels were very open. It was strange for us to discover that we had some common traditions and very interesting to become aware of our differences. For us Egyptians it was difficult to imagine life in Finland, with -50°C and six months of day and six months of night. All of us suffered from problems of unemployment, arising from similar or differing causes

depending on our countries. At the end, there were no more individual projects: Each of us exchanged ideas and experiences to enrich one another's projects. Language was no longer a barrier. We all understood and explained our differences in culture and ways of thinking. It was not always easy but with effort it worked; the kind of effort people make who really want to find common ground. It was more important to discover the common ground between us than to explore our differences.

We can meet where there is no European and no Mediterranean, no North and no South. Each of us has many treasures to be proud of. We can meet where we can work together in order to know each other better, for the benefit of our community, and the world.'

The Evaluation Report of the Training Course

on Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation can be obtained from the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg.



Further information about European youth programmes relevant to Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation:

European Commission, MEDA programme:
<http://www.euromed.net>

European Commission, Youth Programme User's Guide:
<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth.html>

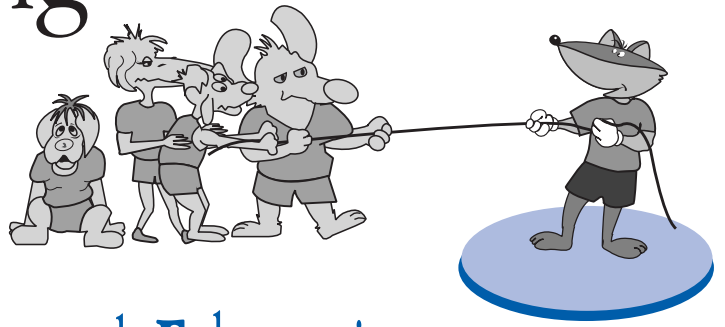
Council of Europe North-South Centre:
<http://www.nscentre.org>

European Youth Forum: User's Guide to the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Action Programme (Nov. 1998):
<http://www.youthforum.org/upto/activity/index.htm>

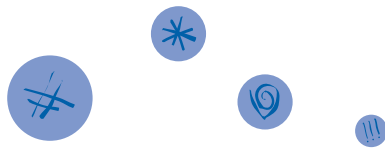
European Youth Forum, Future Steps for Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region (1997):
<http://www.youthforum.org/spb/beliefs/index.htm>



Ethics in Training



Resistance in Non-formal Education



“In working with some political and/or student organisations, I have frequently experienced resistance among participants against dealing with more personal issues at seminars”. In her article, Mette Bram gives some explanations of the psychological mechanisms which might provoke such resistance, and some tips for trainers on how to react in those situations.



by Mette Bram

In working with some political and/or student organisations I have frequently experienced resistance among participants against dealing with more personal issues at seminars. I think this is a general phenomenon that most of us experience to a certain extent.

During study sessions and training courses as trainers we often try to facilitate personal, individual awareness about issues such as roles, identity and feelings, no matter whether the title of the course is “Generation Gaps”, “Intercultural Learning” or “Organisational Management”. This focus on a more personal (both inner and social) development is one key factor which makes non-formal education radically different from formal education.

This article attempts to give some explanations of the psychological mechanisms involved when participants meet us with either passivity, irony or a very critical attitude (inspired by the work of P. Berliner). Typical reactions of participants can be:

- To focus on intellectual arguments and generalised, abstract discussions, and avoid at all costs any personal statements.
- To criticise the structure and time frame of the seminar or exercise, directly or delayed

and indirectly, during breaks (out of the relevant context and away from the relevant trainers).

- To try to escape from the learning environment, either by constantly requesting breaks or another frame for the activity (e.g. “why can’t we be outside more, the sun is shining”), or else by starting to talk while the trainer or other participants are presenting their points.

I see many of these reactions as resistance mechanisms characterised by an unwillingness to deal with potential psychological conflicts concerning personal self-confrontation and relations to others.

Most of the participants from political and/or student organisations are what we can characterise as verbally or logically intelligent (see the work of Howard Gardner/Daniel Goleman), and most of them are taking first steps on the career ladder in higher education. They are used to a certain pupil role and to being rewarded for “good arguments”.

In non-formal education it is not always the “good argument” that has a high value. In seminars some of the most gratifying moments are those when a participant really feels that

s/he learned something new about her/his culture, personal relations or attitudes. In other words people are developing their emotional intelligence that is so often totally neglected in formal education.

Many participants will automatically resist getting in touch with these feelings. So first of all, in my opinion, a lot of resistance is merely a natural defence mechanism. It is an unconscious protection of the person against involving personal emotions and life experience in the learning process. The root of this type of resistance is fear of change, which is related to the breakdown of the traditional pupil role (which typically takes place at seminars): it is fear of changing previous beliefs and identity, and fear of being manipulated. These fears are usually unconscious for the participants and the shield against them is resistance towards getting involved in certain activities.

Resistance among participants, whether it appears as passivity or maybe anger, can start a vicious circle. For instance, some participants might express their dissatisfaction by stating that “there is not enough time for the discussion” and “we are wasting our time in the “family/tree/focus groups” (the moments set aside during seminars for process evaluation in smaller groups that typically demands personal statements). The trainer(s) might then start to argue that “we have a time schedule we have to stick to”, and this then results in a process whereby the participants will not thoroughly engage themselves in the assignments as an indirect form of protest. This might end up with group inputs in plenary sessions that are of low quality or simply make fun of the subject matter. The trainers can then complain among themselves that the participants are “a bad group” or “difficult and blocking all the good things we have to offer”. This attitude will of course be reflected in the continued work: general dissatisfaction rumbles through the rooms.

As a trainer you can get really annoyed if you feel that some participants are not taking the exercises seriously, so everybody gets caught up in a web of unspoken and unfulfilled expectations towards each other. Participants expecting a different kind of “teacher” and trainers expecting a different kind of (read: more emotionally capable) participant.

It is too easy to blame such difficulties on the participants. As a trainer you have the responsibility of understanding these mechanisms - and resistance is to be expected. When met with complaints many trainers make the

mistake of arguing with the participants. This usually takes up a lot of time and frees the participants from actually dealing with how an exercise may affect them personally and emotionally.

Of course, resistance, distance and more or less aggressive criticism are not always a matter of participants’ unconscious transformation of repressed fear. In some cases trainers should definitely be criticised. For instance when an attempt to stay in control causes the trainer to be so out of touch with the needs and wishes of the participants that good learning options are disrupted. Here are some tips about methods that I have used to prevent resistance and the potential aggression from evolving into major conflict and loss of the always limited and thus valuable time:

- Speak openly and directly about what you see happening and analyse the process.
- Use small theory-inputs (e.g. from communication or conflict theory) explaining why a situation is difficult to handle. It can calm people to connect an intellectual explanation with the emotional experience of the situation. The feelings are then “normalised” - we have them in common.
- Use yourself as an example. Explain and visualise how you have learned to tackle a similar situation. In this way you make the participants understand that you have understood and accepted the situation.
- Agree with the criticism and clear the air. Form working groups to free participants from the pressure and powerlessness of some plenaries (you can also ask them to come up with 2-3 solutions to the alleged problem).
- Ask participants to make their own estimate of how much time they need for group work. Often they sense this better than do you and your plan.
- Stop focusing on the disappointed and resisting participants and base examples on the quiet and positive people.
- Be a dynamo and try pumping initiatives into the group when you sense resistance and fear of change (but be aware of your limitations, because this can be exhausting).

Finally, I would like to refer to the classic advice mentioned by Rui Gomes in his article in the previous issue of Coyote: Never ever forget to deal with expectations - both your own and the participants’ - in the ever-prevailing “management of frustration” that we face as trainers...



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Training Methodologies

The Role of the Internet in Youth Work

Internet can be a great help for project work. If you know which services to use and how to use them. Referring to a youth project that he has organised himself, Enzo Kultus describes an example of a training session for a group of young people on the use of Internet as a tool for developing youth projects.

The Internet: everyone talks about it nowadays - even people who have no real idea what it is and how it works, let alone how it is evolving. Internet has become the buzz-word in international youth work. This is chiefly because it seems limitless - in its impact, features and potential. But, in reality, what is the "Internet"?

When you hear people talking about the Internet, you get a bit of everything: truths and rumours, ideas and experiences, breathless enthusiasm, and dire warnings about viruses and hackers. But the main focus is always the world-wide-web (or web, for short) and communication by e-mail. The sceptics get some surprises, but they still go home and try out the things they have heard. The fascination is contagious. And this also holds good when you talk to young people about the Internet, no matter where they come from, or what language they speak.

What gives the Internet its interest?

Everyone talks about the Internet, but they talk in general terms without taking any real interest in the services it offers and the things it can do. What gives the Internet its interest? Web-surfing is the main attraction. One click of the mouse takes you from one town, country or information source to another - fascinating, you have to admit. As multicoloured images spill across our screens, we are treated to an ongoing feast of music, colour and design. The sheer variety is dazzling - even if the quality varies as well. But what makes all of this so special?

First of all, the Internet is different because it cannot be consumed passively, like television or radio. You

have to do something: decide where you want to start and keep going to the end (sometimes even further), or move on and find new paths. To get something from the web, you must have at least a few wishes and ideas of your own. For example, if I like classical music I can tune to a "classical" music station on the radio or watch a TV concert - but am stuck with the programme. If Mozart is being played, then I cannot get Satie. Things are different on the web: if I want to hear some Satie, I look for "Satie" sites, and get pictures, texts, scores and of course Satie's music pumped into my home. But I have to set priorities, track down the things I want and (this is where the web differs from radio and TV) download files before I can listen to them (the normal home computer's capacity limits real-time listening to extracts). The web demands initiative, enquiring minds and interaction. Of course, I'll find things I didn't expect and perhaps be lured off my track, but I can't be a mere consumer (quite apart from the fact that I need certain skills to use the web at all).

Secondly, the Internet is different because it is a multimedia instrument, and gives you pictures, sound and colour all at once. No matter where you are, a mouse-click is all it takes. No other medium works so well; even the CD-ROMs now massively available on every possible subject have their limits - they merely reproduce the data recorded on them, but the web is updated from one second to the next.

The main difference, though, is that everyone can join in and contribute. And the literary, musical and scientific "experts" aren't always the ones who know most. Real "fans", who are willing to pass on their knowledge, can often put them right.



by Enzo Kultus

Their enthusiasms are not merely cerebral, but deeply-felt sources of joy and disappointment – and they can make others feel them too.

Several questions need answering here: is this welter of services and data just too much? Can we trust this flood of information, images and reports? Does the web deal in knowledge or half-truths? There are no easy answers. In the real world, too, we are overwhelmed by the huge range of products on offer (e.g. at a Virgin Megastore). For a long time, we have all had to decide for ourselves whether the things we read in papers or books or see on TV are true. So far, we have always managed to do this - so why should things be any different with the web? In fact, cross-checking on the web is even easier. One click, and you get another opinion or viewpoint. And if that is not enough, you can ask the whole world by contacting a newsgroup.

This brings us to another aspect of the Internet - on-line communication with other inhabitants of the web's "global village". The Internet pioneers started out by exchanging instant messages over huge distances, and E-mail (or electronic mail) caught on long before the web itself existed. Its only rival for speed was the telephone. You typed a few lines, pressed the "send" button and your message arrived, a few minutes later, on the other side of the world. And the reply was just as fast.

E-mail is still the most popular Internet service. Countless people use it daily - even those who remain sceptical about the vast range of other services on offer. It not only offers really fast intercontinental communication, but costs immeasurably less than all the alternatives. It is user-friendly and informal. On the Internet, the same data (images, text, documents) can be sent simultaneously to numerous recipients.

What if you don't have anyone to e-mail? You simply get to know someone. IRC (InternetRelayChat) or "chat" opens the way to live communication with others, and one-to-one dialogue as well. You can find answers to any question you can think of by contacting a newsgroup (of which there are over 80,000 postings) and reading what others have to say or (better still) joining in the discussion yourself.

The Internet really is a big help with many projects: an example

It will be clear by now that, for me, the Internet's positive aspects outweigh the negative. Of course,

I have criticisms too, but the Internet really is a big help with many projects. For example, when we set out to build a solar car with young people from four countries, we started by collecting all the relevant information we could find in the four languages. Solar technology, materials, brakes, steering and safety were some of the things we looked into, and a few hours on the Internet gave us more information than three weeks' research in libraries and workshops. After that, we took all the unanswered questions to the newsgroups. In no time, we had all the data we needed to build a solar car (and were even offered technical back-up and equipment). In fact, making contacts, getting to know people, and picking up new communication and information techniques proved more important than collecting information and materials.

Sticking to this example, let us look more closely at what we did. Our work on the Internet was divided into five stages:

1. Basic familiarisation with the Internet;
2. Access to the necessary hardware;
3. Practical exercises on computers;
4. Collecting and storing information;
5. Communication.

Basic familiarisation

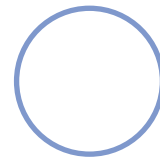
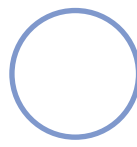
Everyone knows that young people are not strong on theory. And so we chose simply to explain what the Internet could do, leaving the participants to decide for themselves which services they needed. We focused solely on the web (ease of use, language choice, multimedia dimension and anonymity of surfing), e-mail (fast, direct communication in all languages) and newsgroups (wide range of topics and languages and answer to the problem of having no e-mail correspondents). For us, theory also meant filling in the historical background, telling people about the various services and explaining how to use them. At the same time, we introduced the various types of hardware and software, and explained how to use them.

Hardware and software

No particular type of hardware is needed to access the Internet. We ourselves had just a few old 486 computers with Windows 95 – although they did have a 32MB memory and a fast graphic card. For the Internet, we used an ISDN card and an old computer equipped with LINUX, which meant that all the computers could access the web simultaneously. (Since LINUX comes free and includes software for the ISDN card and router, this internal network cost

...The main difference is that everyone can join in and contribute....





relatively little. All we needed to be up and running was a few network cards, a hub and the network itself. Want to know how it works? Just look it up on the Internet. That is what we did for our project and that was how we set up the LINUX router).

We used the software provided with Windows - Internet Explorer for the web and Outlook Express for e-mail and newsgroups.

Practical exercises

For our purposes, this meant using and configuring the software. Internet Explorer needs next to no adapting. We explained and practised using "favourites" (for the web), saving pages and pictures, and downloading files. We created e-mail addresses for all the participants, so that they could use the Outlook Express e-mail function. We practised sending and answering mails on Internet, and attaching documents and images. We also configured access to a news-server and subscribed to the relevant newsgroups. The news was read and recovered daily from the server.

Collecting and storing information

This, with communication, was the main focus of our work. We saved web pages using Internet Explorer and authorised access to the server. We marked important e-mails and items of information for copying into a text document, which we mailed to all the project participants. This allowed everyone to keep abreast of the information we had gathered.

Communication

This is the most interesting part of working with the Internet. Our first question - who were we to communicate with? - more or less answered itself. Every web page we looked at carried an e-mail address, and so we simply mailed them. Getting no reply was really unusual. The participants were amazed: total strangers not only answered our e-mails, but even sent us pictures, documents and other Internet addresses to help us with our project. We found the same with the discussion groups, though the answers were a bit slower in coming. (These delays are inherent in the "bulletin board" system, as the server takes a few days to put all the postings on the boards).

Thanks to the information and assistance we got from our new Internet "pals", we quickly had all the basic data we needed to build our solar car. And, because some of our contacts were particularly kind and offered us equipment and materials as well, we were soon able to start work.

What does this example show us?

This example shows two things: i) a very basic computer set-up is enough to get you on the Internet; ii) it is best to stick to two services - web and e-mail - to start with.

To plan training in group use of the Internet, you do not necessarily have to be a real computer expert. The emphasis should be on the basics of the Internet and on using software: this makes web-surfing child's play.

The following is a check-list for training on using the web with a browser:

1. Computer: 486 minimum, 32 MB RAM, Windows 95 or a more recent version, a modem or an ISDN card, and a phone line;
2. Internet access (a dial-up provider should suffice);
3. Programmes: Internet Explorer 5.0 or a later version (Netscape is better with a Mac);
4. For training with browser: correct keying-in of Internet addresses (URLs) (no spaces, lower-case, etc.). It is best to concentrate on the BACK, FORWARD, STOP and REFRESH buttons to start with.
5. Explain links and remember - the left-hand button on the mouse is enough for surfing.
6. For more advanced participants: using search engines; using the right-hand button on the mouse (e.g. to open an item in another window); setting up favourites; saving web pages on the hard disk for off-line reading.



...To plan training in group use of the Internet, you do not necessarily have to be a real computer expert....

Check-list for e-mail training

1. Beginners

Using e-mail addresses on the web (GMX, WEB.de, Hotmail, Yahoo). Advantage: can be used easily with a web-browser, which is already familiar. Drawback: often incompatible with e-mail software. Using e-mail addresses with specific software (e.g. Outlook Express or Netscape equivalent): writing, sending, reading and replying to e-mails.

2. Advanced:

Configuring an e-mail account, sending documents and/or pictures, sending e-mails to several recipients, using mailing lists.

Training lasts three days:

Day 1: Introduction to the Internet, Internet access, using a browser, surfing;

Day 2: Search engines, setting up favourites, saving pages;

Day 3: Writing, sending, reading and replying to e-mails.

Ideally, a simple project should be planned for day 4, giving participants a chance to use the things they have learned (e.g. using servers to retrieve information for geography exercises and classroom presentations). Once they feel at home with the Internet, they can contact other groups and exchange e-mail addresses, details of interesting Internet sites, etc.

There is one golden rule, however: at least one person should be a real expert on the use of access and Internet software. That person should know enough sites (and their URLs) to help others access them, and should know how to use search engines (we are there to guide participants). It goes without saying that the hardware and software needed for Internet access should be freely available. Finally, separate computers for all the participants are not necessary – two sharing works perfectly.

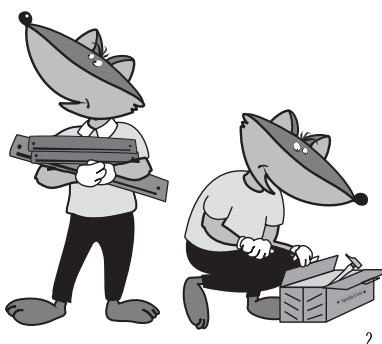
If all of this sounds interesting and you work in a Franco-German context, you are cordially invited to contact the Franco-German Youth Office for details of seminars on use of the Internet for intercultural education, the preparation and implementation of youth exchanges, and language seminars. Perhaps, some day, we shall work on a project together. I hope so.



Contact address: enzo@knuut.de.



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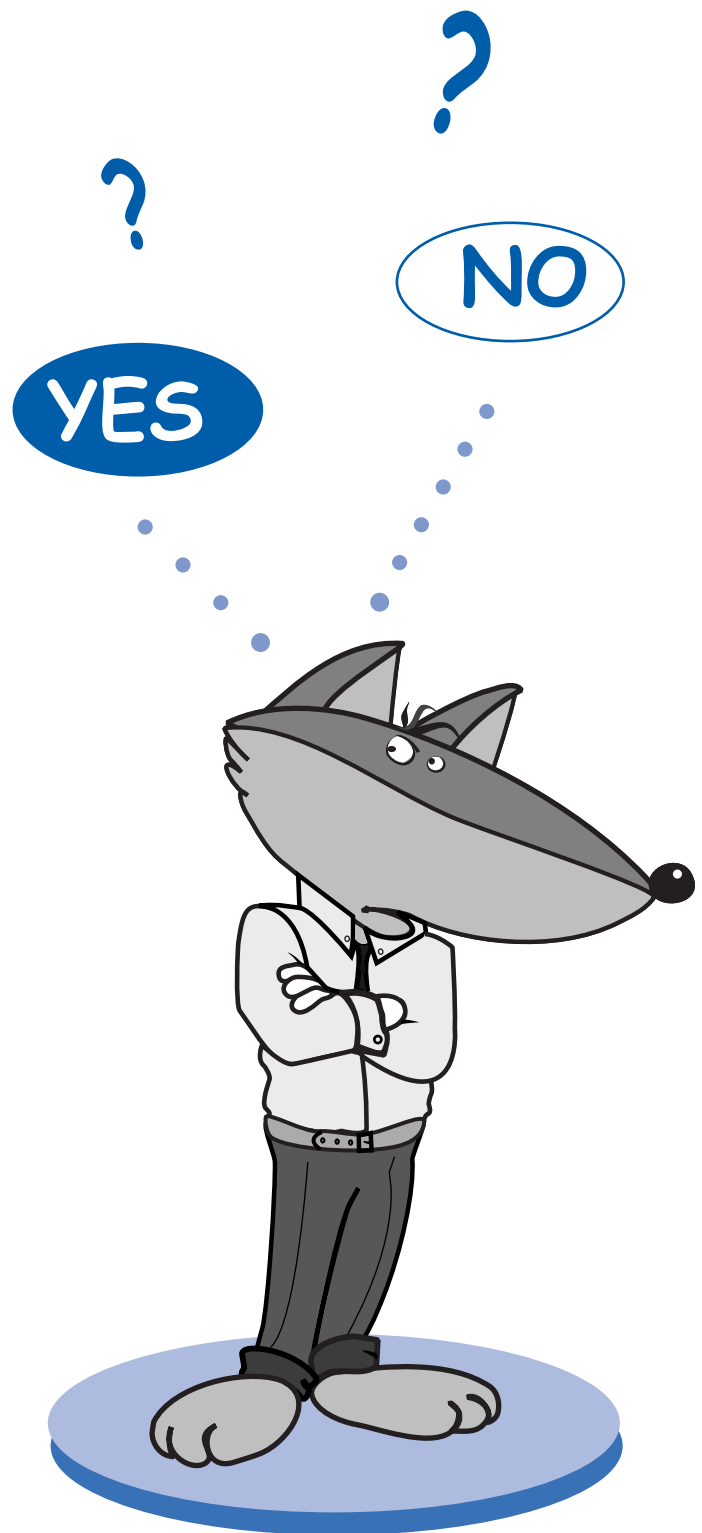
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Where do You stand ?

You may know this exercise. All participants are asked to come to the middle of the room. On two walls opposite each other are two posters. One says "yes", one says "no". A trainer or facilitator shows the participants a statement dealing with an aspect of a specific subject and then asks them to decide, spontaneously, - do you agree or disagree with this statement? Participants then move towards the poster that best expresses their opinion. Once two groups have formed, they explain to each other why they chose to agree with "yes" or "no" and discuss the issue until the trainer stops the discussion and presents another statement.

Finding arguments to explain their opinions to each other is a way for participants to start reflecting about a subject and the different arguments presented. This exercise is also about listening to one another, learning more about oneself and taking a stand.

'Where do you stand' is an exercise which, like many, can be played in different ways, with different objectives and on a variety of issues.



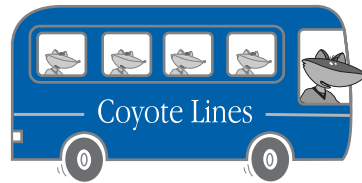
Internet: Where do you stand?

1. Internet is a new, dangerous form of social exclusion.
2. Without a modem you can never be well-informed.
3. A virtual relationship is not a real relationship.
4. Finnish people love Internet because it keeps them apart.
5. Researching in a library is much better than using the Internet.
6. Nazis should have the right to make web sites - like everyone else.
7. Using Internet is a cultural skill, like reading and writing.
8. Internet connections make international youth work much more effective.
9. An e-mail can be just as personal as a letter.
10. Internet cafés are not needed in Ethiopia.
11. I would love to have a webcam in my kitchen.
12. The more Internet access you have, the less social life you have.
13. School children must learn to use the Internet.
14. Youth workers must be able to use the Internet to remain in contact with young people.

Slogans by Mark Taylor



Leen Laconte



Coyote Meets Trainers



Ginny Lun

Coyote is a curious little creature and is fond of wandering around Europe to meet trainers in the field. Are you interested in getting a picture on how your colleagues in the field of training think and feel? Then this is your section.

Ginny Lun taught in a school for children with special needs in Leeds, then moved on to Dublin where she worked in a project for early school leavers. Living abroad herself at that time, she realised very well the power and possible impact that an international experience could have specifically for disadvantaged youngsters. She introduced youth exchanges and voluntary service projects at her workplace and developed a large number of European activities and training. She then moved to London, where she has just finished the coordination of Breaking Barriers, a demonstration project to enhance the employability of young people at risk of exclusion from the labour market through transnational work placements, a project run by the Prince's Trust. Ginny is a member of the Youth Express Network, a European network of grass roots organisations working with disadvantaged young people. She has also participated in meetings of trainers and other experts in the youth field of the Council of Europe. At this moment Ginny Lun works and lives in London and enjoys being home and tired.

Interview

Coyote:

Tired and happy?

Ginny:

We are undertaking a full project evaluation at the moment, but thanks to intensive monitoring throughout the project, we have collected some data on what the outcomes are.

Looking at hard figures, Breaking Barriers is a very convincing project, even more so than any other work I have done in the field of European activities. The project is making more or less the same positive impact in Sweden, Italy and the U.K. And we hope that the positive effects will still increase as we continue to monitor the young people.

34% of the young participants have jobs and a lot of them have gone on to further study. The young people themselves state that the project has given them more confidence in their abilities; that their communication skills improved and that it has given them real work experience and motivation. Even if not all of them are getting into jobs, a lot will go into further training, and will travel more than they have ever done before.

Young people at the margins of employment are sent to interviews but feel that they don't have a lot to talk about. Now they can say: 'I lived in Sweden for six weeks and I have work experience.' It is having something to tell, which gives

them more confidence to talk to people.

We believe that the residential aspect accelerates change in people. It means taking young people away for a short time from everything they are used to, from how they are perceived by their peers. Suddenly they can become whatever they really want because nobody knows them.

Coyote:

What was Breaking Barriers all about?

Ginny:

The aim of the Prince's Trust European Programme is very simply to offer opportunities to participate in European activities to young people who would not easily find access on their own. We provide funding and support for ideas they come up with themselves like taking part in a seminar, studying or voluntary work abroad.

We also organise special projects like Breaking Barriers, aiming specifically at long-term unemployed young people. The key objective was to develop the skills and employability of long-term unemployed young people through the provision of structured transnational work placements. We also wanted to work in partnership with the private sector to develop the support systems required to assist the young people to re-enter/enter the labour market. At the same time,



we wanted use this project to evaluate the added value of a European dimension in work experience, identify best practices and examine the feasibility of incorporating transnational work placements into mainstream provisions.

A total of 384 young people aged eighteen to twenty-five from the United Kingdom, Italy and Sweden participated in an intensive training of three weeks before taking up a four-week work placement in one of the partner countries. All of them were long-term unemployed and 61% had no formal qualifications above level one of the National Framework. They were all at risk of social exclusion through long-term unemployment, academic underachievement, lack of parental support or because they lived in areas of urban decline or rural isolation.

The young people were offered a wide range of work-placements: from charity shops to schools, TV stations, Internet retailers, theatres, dentists, football clubs and accountancy firms. Even London Zoo was on the list of possibilities.

Coyote:

Do you see any need for improvement now that the project has finished?

Ginny:

If we run this project again, we need to develop a way of maintaining the link after the experience, perhaps by using ex-participants as a support for new participants.

It is like when you have had a mind-blowing trip during your holidays: When you get back from your holidays, this is what you would like to talk about, but nobody understands. This is even more so when you have never before left your village or region. You get so excited and need an experienced listener, or you fall flat and the experience gets lost. The young people we work with need that somebody, the volunteer or another particular person whom they can talk to before, during and after their experience.

To summarise, it is essential to link your experience abroad to your local situation. The relation is necessary because it allows you to talk about your experiences, to become aware of the benefits and of how to use them in your daily life.

To me, the value of a European activity really lies in what happens when you get back. It is crucial to organise the European activity in such a way that this local link, this transfer is actually central and aimed for. A lot of organisations do European activities in isolation.

Coyote:

What kind of training did you provide for within Breaking Barriers?

Ginny:

First of all, to me, the word training refers to technical skills-oriented professions like carpentry or mechanics. I would use the word facilitation, others call it education. Whatever word you use, it should not sound like doing something to somebody else because it is not. It is about facilitating change, supporting people's development, motivating people to do it for themselves. Whatever word you pick, if it means something official, formal or obligatory to one person, you'd better use another word.

We developed an international training pack for pre-departure training supposed to be consistent throughout the U.K., Italy and Sweden. It was important that all the participants were getting the same message and were being prepared in a similar way, because we wanted to deliver all of them the same kind of certificate at the end.

Throughout the project it has become clear how much and what kind of support participants really need. The training needs to deal with language skills, practical details, knowledge and information, about the culture and the country. But underlying all of that, the most important need is learning how to deal with new situations, the unexpected, change. This became the absolute focus in our training. It doesn't matter how much knowledge and information the participants have, how well developed their language skills are. It is about going to have to deal with a situation which will not be what you expect.

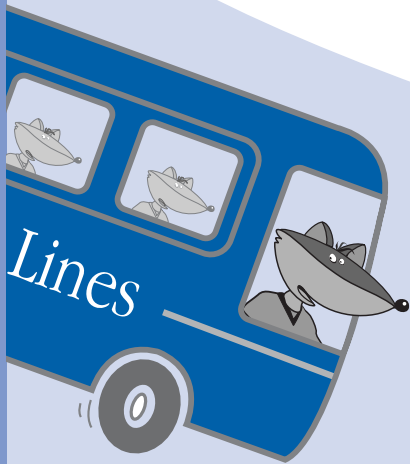
The young people were often horrified at what they found on arrival. We thought we had prepared them so well, but things can be so different from what they are at home. That is why we changed our whole way of working. We gave them less specific information and more training on the skills you need to be ready to deal with what you do not expect.

Coyote:

How on earth do you train people for the unexpected?

Ginny:

You can tell people about winter in the North of Sweden, the darkness, the solitude, the freezing cold... nobody outside their homes after eight o'clock at night. But it is amazing how much it doesn't mean anything until you are actually in that situation. It is far more interesting to use other young people who have been in that



situation, because they share their personal experience rather than stating meaningless facts.

It took us quite a lot of time to find a good way to train the young people on this topic. It is difficult. We tried practical situations, role-plays... When you first start as a participant in a training situation, you are in an entirely new situation. In the end we used that fact a lot as something to work with.

Coyote:

Why not to let them go and allow them a fresh authentic experience even though it is a frustrating one?

Ginny:

Some of them are so vulnerable. Or, yes, maybe it is our own need as trainers to see participants as vulnerable, to be protected and prepared. Before they leave, young people are focused on getting information. I am always surprised by how specifically they want their information delivered. What are the names of the people who are going to meet us at the other end? Where is the check-in at the airport? Through my personal international experiences, I think, I got used to a lot of change and I forgot how difficult it is having to start to adapt, but in the end it becomes normal to experience the unexpected.

Coyote:

Is this something we did not learn at school?

Ginny:

School meant absolutely nothing to me. I left as soon as I could and spent a year travelling, and this meant more to me than all my years at school. It was the first time I started to learn a language. It was the first time I started to read about the history of where I was and loved it. For me, it changed my life and from then on I did loads of other things.

I was in a very unimaginative school. For me, it was just so uncreative. It left me with a lack of confidence and a feeling that learning was a battle I could never win. It did something though; it gave me the ability to organise and structure myself, to be disciplined, to behave, to do what I was told... social education: how and what to do in certain situations.

I have worked in a school system because strangely enough I trained to be a teacher. So I know what formal education does. My plan was to change all that. I was in a group called alternative teachers: fighting for smaller class sizes and more support for young people and I gave up and decided to work outside the

system. It was also the time when the national curriculum was coming in; things were being imposed nationally and I was bringing in puppets. More and more, the time for that was being squeezed out. Basically I decided to take a break from it. But I didn't go back.

Coyote:

What are your ambitions as a trainer?

Ginny:

Being a trainer means always being away from home. It is residential and means living a very exciting and intense situation all the time. I love the intercultural environment but it is tiring. I have been looking at people who have done it for years and been wondering if I could do it for such a long period.

What is it that draws people to do this kind of travelling work, this nomadic existence? It is exotic to see all these exciting places. I always get something out of it. But I fear that people who do this all the time, lose contact with their friends and with what is happening around them. You lose touch with your home environment.

There is the whole thing of knowing people who have known you for years, those old friends. How important are they in your life? There was a time when I thought that wasn't so important. I just moved on, lived in Ireland, made new friends, adapted to new situations, met new people. This is all very exciting. Now, for the first time, I really appreciate living here. I actually fly back here and think: 'I'm home.' My sister is in London, my brother is near. I enjoy seeing my parents. Maybe it's age, I don't know. One of my best and oldest friends happens to live down the road. To me this is so important. I suppose it is normality—something which I would always avoid. At the moment I feel like I want normality, even though I have always questioned what it is. My life is not so normal.

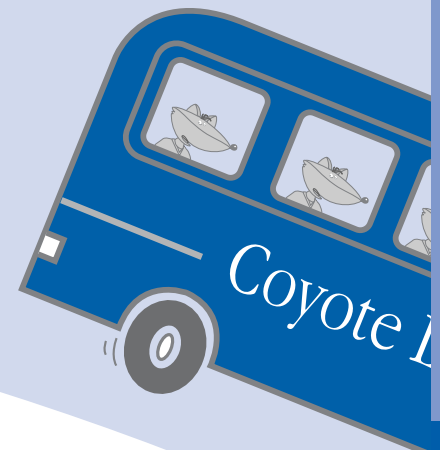
Coyote:

Why is it necessary that trainers meet?

Ginny:

Europe has created this need for European trainers that did not exist before, and it is always useful to exchange methods and learn from the way others are doing it.

It is necessary for trainers to meet and to get people together who work in a similar field, to have an understanding and a belief in what they are doing because training can be very isolating. It is very useful to have a platform to discuss the effects of training.



A nice thing to put on the agenda of the next trainers' meeting would be some research on these effects. The general feeling is that a lot of participants in European training events have as a result left their organisation and moved on to something else. I certainly know it accelerated my own work. What training does for young people on a personal level it does for youth workers on the professional level. Maybe we should be better informed about these effects.

Coyote:

What characteristics do you consider typical for yourself as a trainer?

Ginny:

Humour: I like to think that I don't take myself too seriously. That's very important. And openness. For some reason, young people talk to me very easily. That is what I aim to do: To come with this openness. Yes, I am approachable, with certain limits of course and I have a genuine liking for young people actually. I like being around them.

Coyote:

And what is typical for them?

Ginny:

There is something about this generation, no matter from which country, which surprises me. They all have very high expectations of what they should have. In Breaking Barriers they knew exactly what kind of work they wanted, regardless of their skills or of what they had done before. They wanted to be designing web sites or D.J.-ing in a real club, which was not easy to find in Northern Sweden. They had dreams. They believed firmly that you could have a lot quite quickly if you were noticed. They have heard about the Spice Girls or Boyzone, people coming from the inner-city who found fame, stardom. In Italy, they offered the participants work placements in tourist farming communities in absolutely gorgeous accommodation. But for the young people it was: 'No way I am going to plough a field or pick grapes, absolutely no way.' They rang up screaming at me the whole time. When I was young, I picked stones from a beach in Turkey for three weeks and thought it was fantastic.

It has of course to do with self-esteem, the confidence to be able to pick up stones or plough a field without feeling that you are not worth anything. They did not mind working if it was a company with a name. They would do anything as long as it was something with a label. At one point, we put some of them in a charity shop. We had to take them out. It referred too much to the situation they wanted to escape from. We had to change the type of work to make sure it had a sort of glamour to it. Young people want to be noticed. They want to live in 'clubland'.

Coyote:

Is there any hypocrisy in European Training Land?

Ginny:

A lot of people in our field think that they are open-minded, but when it comes to sexuality, then sometimes you might be surprised. A lot of people might not know that I am a lesbian.

I am not waving the flag. I would not announce it; I prefer dealing with it naturally. I prefer it if people just know and maybe it would come out through a discussion perhaps. I do not have any mission to educate people on this topic. I do not need nor want them to accept everything I am and everything I do. It is the same as being English. The fact that I was English was a problem in Ireland only the moment I said it. It changed the way people perceived me. Funnily enough, I have never seen myself as English. People would think that I was Irish, which I like because to me it was so much more charming to be Irish than to be English. But now I am generalising myself.

Coyote:

And that is what a lot of my fellow countrymen in Belgium do as well in reaction to the violent British Hooligans during the European football championship.

Ginny:

It is scary to see that the instigators are middle-aged. Something needs to be done before young people are drawn into that. There is a need to link the image which football supporters are getting and the way young people get into it. On the other hand, it sometimes scares me that young people consider drinking and fighting in general as a kind of normal behaviour when they go to another country. It is not only related to football. But now Europe is sending our lovely children back to us together with a bill probably for damage done. It is not going to do the European image a lot of good.

A lot of people here laugh at anything European anyway. In Ireland Europe is valued. Here in England, it is much harder to get people see the value. I don't know if it is particularly the English way of thinking they are better than the rest of Europe. There is a lot of Euro-scepticism: The structures cost a lot of money. And nothing is coming back. People feel we should focus on local situations: There are plenty of problems, and the local level is where change can and should happen. What's the point of spending all that money?

Coyote:

Do you feel related to your star sign as a trainer?

Ginny:

I am Aquarius, the carrier of ideas, visions and dreams. I like to make things happen. I need to believe in what I do. At the start of Breaking Barriers, people said it would not work, but decision-makers always say that because their attitude towards young people at risk is quite negative. They are not worth trying to do this for them. This project was one of the most challenging things for me. It took about eighteen months of my life, as they say. It was my sole mission to make it work. I did nothing else but make it work. And it did. And now I am tired and happy.

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This interview was conducted by Leen Laconte.



marker



It's about Time

Marker is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate.

Feedback from you will be really welcome, today, tomorrow or if you just have the time one day...



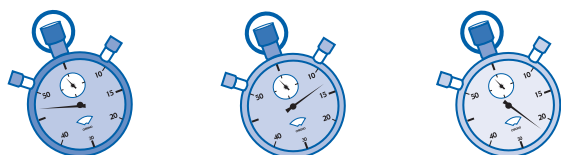
One of my favourite little activities is called 60 seconds equals 1 minute, or does it? In essence, you ask participants to stand up, close their eyes, count up to a minute in their heads and then sit down silently. Results can be fairly spectacular and I've seen people sit down after 19 seconds and after 160 seconds. We all know that time can be a very personal thing, the activity just illustrates this in a direct way. What is more important is the kind of discussion you can have afterwards about how time (and our perception of it) affects so much of what we do. For a training course team, this issue can be worth spending some time on.

Programming time

Around 300 BC, the Greek philosopher Theophrastus came out with the statement "Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend". When you are designing course programmes, how do you organise how time will be spent, how do you work out timings? Do you recognise a day that starts something like this:

9:15	Energiser
9:25	Programme of the day
9:30	Divide up into groups for activity facilitated by trainers (based on the objectives of the activity)
10:05	Debriefing in the groups
10:35	Report backs from the groups in plenary
10:55	Coffee break
11:15	Presentation by an expert
12:00	Discussion
12:30	Lunch

Yes, it is a little exaggerated. But not much. Every minute counts. Little space is left for unplanned reactions, for late arrivals or for errors. Facilitating groups in such a case means: get them back into the big group at the agreed time so they can share their results. What some trainers I have worked with call "the dictatorship of the kitchen" has even more



impact on the running of the programme than the invited expert. Even the coffee breaks are so short they feel more like work.

Contrast the above with this (again slightly exaggerated) approach:

After breakfast, clear up and wash the dishes.

Meet together and divide into groups

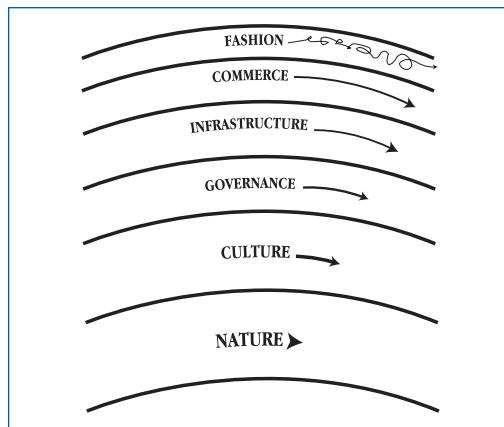
Activities and debriefing facilitated by trainers (based on perceived needs of the group)

Lunch is made by the first group to finish

Sounds perhaps a little bit loose, this morning, doesn't it? Until fairly recently I would have agreed with that statement. I was sure that I had it all sorted out in my head: our job as trainers was to create an environment for learning and this environment was also based on quite a strict respect for time and timing. This was only natural, seeing that we were organising courses which only lasted for a week or two. Working in multicultural teams with multicultural groups I had realised that, of course, one had to be reasonably flexible with time. But there were limits, and if a team had agreed that they would bring sub-groups back together at a specific time, then I would do my utmost to respect that and would expect my colleagues to do the same. We know when we start and when we finish. For me, these were "quality indicators" for the course and for the team. Now I am not so sure.

Step back into time

Within the limits of this column, as usual, there will be things I leave untouched. Within the limits of a training course, there will be things which are left untouched. That's the way it is. Outside the training field, there are some crucial developments which have recently caught my eye. One of these is the concept of "The Long Now": a concept which fights for a different way of looking at time, arguing that we should be taking a much wider view, taking responsibility for the fact that our actions will have consequences for the generations to come. The following graphic illustrates perceptions of time and change, ranging from the slowest (nature, at the centre) to the fastest (fashion, at the outside). Where do you think "training" should be placed?



(Illustration by Stewart Brand and Brian Eno, from <http://www.longnow.org/about/speedlayers.htm>)

Do you remember all the publicity there was in the last couple of years about the "Millennium Bug", or "Y2K" – the Year 2000? We were told that all our computers would stop working because they had only been programmed to recognise the years from 1901 to 1999 and once they reached the year 2000 would "think" that we were back in 1900. Look at us today: have we really learnt anything substantial from that episode? If we were really living in a "Long Now", we would be worried about the fact that our computers do not show this year as "02000" – yes, we would already be preparing for Y10K! Jem Finer's musical composition Longplayer has started being performed at the beginning of this year and will continue without repetitions until 31 December 02999. None of us, including the composer, will ever be able to hear more than a part of it. One of the Long Now thinkers used to be a rock musician: Brian Eno. His article, The Big Here and Long Now, says something which could be important for trainers to think about:

"Since the beginning of the 20th century, artists have been moving away from an idea of art as something finished, perfect, definitive and unchanging towards a view of artworks as processes or the seeds for processes – things that exist and change in time, things that are never finished. [...] Artworks in general are increasingly regarded as seeds – seeds for processes that need a viewer's (or a whole culture's) active mind in which to develop. Increasingly working with time, culture-makers see themselves as people who start things, not finish them."

What could well be vital for us as trainers is to look at whether or not we see ourselves as part of Eno's "culture-makers". If so, then we need to analyse the programmes we construct and ask ourselves a further question: how far are we taking the time necessary to start things well and not deluding ourselves into thinking that we can ever finish something in a packed short-term course?

The great French Marshall, Louis-Hubert-Gonzalve Lyautey, once asked his gardener to plant a tree. The gardener objected that the tree was slow growing and would not reach maturity for 100 years. The Marshall replied, 'In that case, there is no time to lose; plant it this afternoon!'

Sources

The Long Now Foundation: <http://www.longnow.org>

Jem Finer: <http://www.longplayer.org/>

Brian Eno's article:

<http://www.longnow.org/about/articles/BrianEnoLongNow.html>

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brazav@yahoo.com

about the Contributors

Luis Amorim is Portuguese, of mixed Angolan origin, and lives in Brussels with his Swedish partner. He works in Brussels as Senior Project Manager for the external agency of the European Commission (SOS for EVS), responsible for supporting the management and implementation of the European Voluntary Service (EVS). In his current job he is responsible for research & development, conflict mediation, as well as social inclusion policies in relation to the EVS programme. Before that, he worked as Project Officer for Education and Mobility for the European Youth Forum. He started his professional career in Portugal as Secretary General of Intercultura-AFS Portugal. He also works as a trainer on issues such as: crisis management, conflict mediation, intercultural learning and organisational management. He has an academic background in Sociology, Human Resources Management and Education.

Bas Auer was part of the leadership team of the training course on Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation for youth organisations, which was run at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg at the beginning of 2000. He currently lives and works in Egypt, where he is engaged in activities to develop and strengthen community youth development work. Next to his work as co-ordinator of programs supporting small & informal businesses in Egypt, Bas is a freelance writer and trainer on issues of youth development. Before working in Egypt, he worked as Secretary General of YDC (Youth for Development and Cooperation), a network of youth organisations that aims to strengthen the role of young people in North-South cooperation.

Mette Bram teaches group dynamics at the Common Communications Courses at Copenhagen University and communication and psychology at the Youth Pedagogue College/Denmark. She has been working as a freelance trainer and self-employed consultant since 1993, and is mainly occupied with training courses, lecturing and design of organisational development projects, locally as well as internationally. She is the director of Training Consult, a network of trainers in Europe. Fields of expertise include training of trainers in participant-centred training approaches and experiential learning, counselling, difficult interviews, mediation and conflict management, leadership, and personal and organisational management including Total Quality Management, intercultural learning, supervision and reflective processes, team-building and group dynamics plus evaluation and gender related issues like assertiveness.

Paul Kloosterman has been working in the field of youth work and training since 1976. During the last few years he has worked as a free-lance trainer, consultant and writer, partly in the Netherlands and partly in European projects and training courses. His major areas of work are intercultural learning, disadvantaged youngsters, conflict management, international youth projects, gender issues, and participation projects.

Erzsébet Kovács lives in Budapest and works as a trainer and consultant in the fields of human resource development and the EU-accession process of Hungary. She has a background in adult education. She worked at different levels of Hungarian youth structures for several years, from local youth work up to the governmental youth department. Since 1992 she has been invited to be part of educational teams for long-term training courses and study sessions run by the European Youth Centres and European youth organisations. She has also been involved in in-service teacher training activities and training for trainers courses at European level. Her main interest is quality assurance of non-formal education.

Enzo Kultus lives in Berlin and has been active in Europe as a trainer for 20 years, and for 10 years also as a director of 4 enterprises that provide computer training, material and software, Internet servers and home page design for organisations, institutions, small and middle-sized enterprises. For him, Internet is a working tool, which is essential to remain in touch with "the world". Nevertheless, and even though technology is the centre of his life, he has remained an educationalist at heart.

Linas Kukuraitis (22 years old) is co-founder and project co-ordinator of the Pal. J. Matulaitis Social Centre in Vilnius, Lithuania. He first came in contact with youth work seven years ago when he joined a very active Catholic parish in Vilnius. Since then he has become deeply involved in the youth community organising projects, and is now responsible for children, youth activities and the training of young volunteers.

Leen Laconte studied Comparative Cultural Studies in Gent. She developed The Imagination, a national project on youth-(sub)culture, the arts and multicultural society. After that she was a lecturer and tutor in a school for social workers (Sociale Hogeschool). Until the beginning of this year she worked as Project Officer for the Flemish Youth for Europe Agency in Belgium. Leen now works for Villanella, an arts centre focussing on contemporary art, children and young people in Antwerp, Belgium.



György Lissauer has been living in the UK for 12 years. He was introduced to international youth work through his involvement in the European Union of Jewish Students and as a Member of Presidium was involved in the preparation of study sessions and participated in Youth Forum conferences. He graduated from the University of Kent with a law degree in 1999 and has spent the last 13 months working as Students' Activities Co-ordinator for the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. In March of this year he participated in the training course 'Training for Trainers' at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. In October, György returned to university to follow a Masters course in law at the University of Oxford ... however, he hopes to remain active in international training!

Hrönn Pétursdóttir is still active in the youth sector as a national board member of the Icelandic Boy and Girl Scout Association. She is furthermore involved in initiatives to increase the awareness of the non-formal educational aspect of youth associations. At the time of the publication of this article, she is changing professional positions and taking up a post in management education at Gallup.

Nol Reverda is a sociologist and lives in Maastricht, the Netherlands. He is the course director of the MA comparative European Social Studies and has co-operated intensively with the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport since 1993.

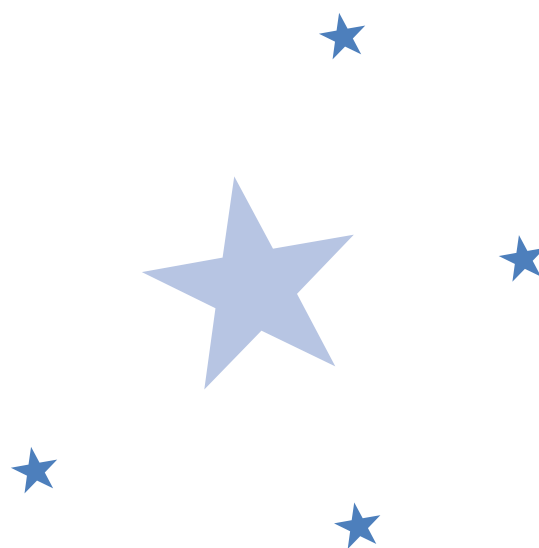
Coyote Editorial Team

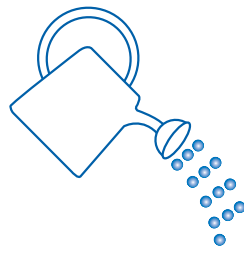
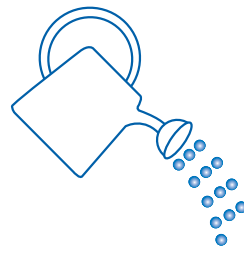
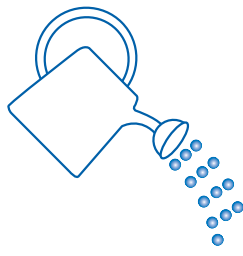
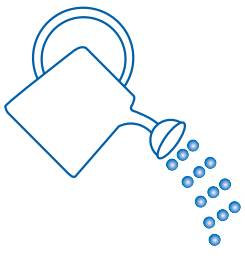
Bernard Abrignani works as a civil servant at the French Ministry of Youth and Sports and as Project Officer at the National Institute for Youth and Community Education (INJEP). He is specialised in youth participation, community development, education, prevention of delinquency, intercultural learning and international youth work.

Sonja Mitter worked at the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 1995 until September of this year. As a member of the educational team she assisted youth organisations in running study sessions at the European Youth Centres and was a trainer on training teams for international training courses organised by or co-operation with the Council of Europe. Her main areas of work are intercultural learning, intercultural team work, project management, training for trainers, Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation and youth work in and with South East Europe. Her background is in history with a focus on migration issues. At the time of the publication of this Coyote issue, she is moving to Slovenia.

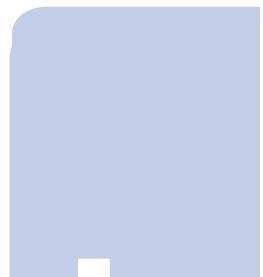
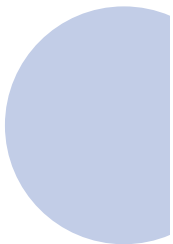
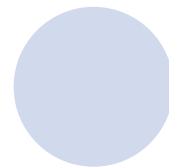
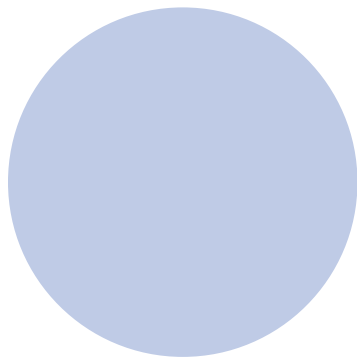
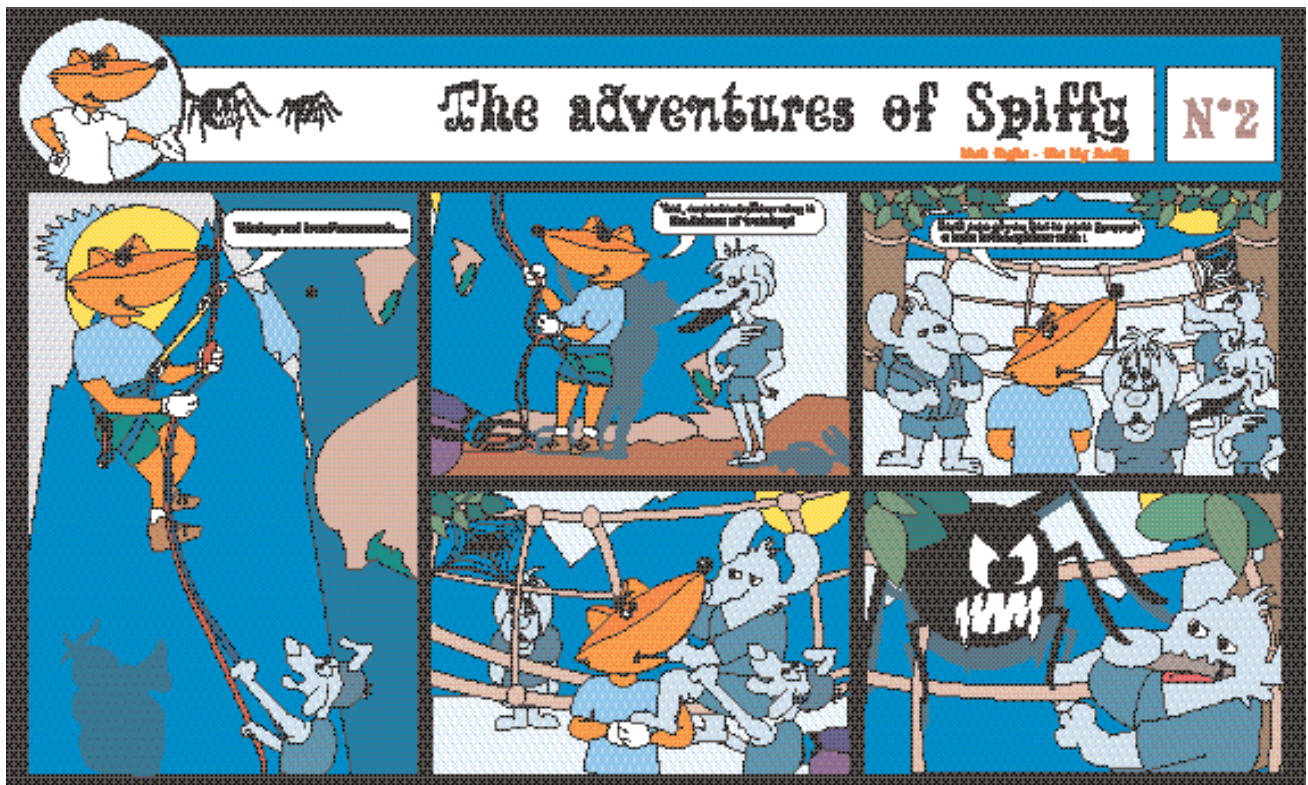
Carol Ann Morris is the Project Officer for Training and Membership Services at the European Youth Forum. She is responsible for the co-ordination of its Pool of Trainers and the training programme. She deals with membership applications and as an information service to the 88 members. Other responsibilities include liaison with the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport concerning training courses and the ADACS programme; working on the Coyote and T-Kit editorial teams; working with the European Commission in the selection of projects for funding through the YOUTH programme. With a background in counselling psychology, she used the latter as a basis for her training and project work with international and local development organisations in India and the UK.

Mark Taylor works as a freelance trainer and writer. Until 1993, he worked for four years (1986-89) at the Youth Exchange Centre, London, as development and training officer, and then three years (1990-92) at the European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, as a tutor. Since then he has worked throughout Europe for a wide range of organisations, institutions, agencies and businesses, acting as co-ordinator, trainer, supervisor of teams, or general rapporteur. He has long experience in writing publications for an international public. Major areas of work: intercultural learning, international team work, human rights education, training for trainers, constructive internet use, international youth projects.





The adventures of Spiffy





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