



by Gaja Bartuseviciute
International Secretary
of the Lithuanian Youth
Council

That's the way **We** do it!

Training in the Lithuanian Youth Council

The Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT) was established in 1996 by the biggest Lithuanian youth organisations, with the aim of strengthening youth policy in the country and co-ordinating and supporting the work of youth organisations at all levels. LiJOT is an umbrella organisation covering national youth organisations and regional youth councils and currently has 51 member organisations. More information can be found at www.lijot.lt

For many years now LiJOT has been seen at the national level as a provider of quality training events and is well known for its highly qualified trainers and of course for Druskininkai (a town in the south of Lithuania, just 20km away from the border with Belarus) where the training courses are usually held.

► How did it all begin and develop and where do we stand now?

After the establishment of the Lithuanian Youth Council, training and capacity building was a top priority. This was due to the nature of changes that the country and civil society underwent after the fall of the Soviet Union and the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence. There was a huge demand for the training of youth leaders, for a new generation of the youth movement after the communist youth movement ceased to exist. Thanks to the expertise that came from other countries and resources that were available in the field, there were opportunities to run a couple of courses a year focusing on the basic skills of team building, managing organisations, project management and international youth work. Furthermore, when LiJOT successfully lobbied the government to adopt its well-known co-management system, there was a need for more training in the field of youth participation and active citizenship. Therefore

training courses were based on the natural needs identified by youth organisations. Later, after the demand for training at the national level had been met, LiJOT shifted its priority to work in the regions, with the grassroots, to facilitate the establishment of regional youth councils (round tables). Training courses were held in many municipalities and their effect was impressive. This spurred the establishment of youth organizations in the local communities, helped improve the quality of youth work and raised awareness in relation to the local authorities. It gradually gained momentum and brought us to the point where we stand now.

► So what is on offer?

Training needs are estimated in accordance with the needs of organizations. LiJOT has followed this policy ever since its establishment. Therefore training courses that are offered mostly address issues concerning the development of organisations rather than personal development. This approach has both pros and cons. Investment in the organisation is much more sustainable and it is easier to ensure dissemination of the learning experiences, while focusing on personal development ensures direct follow-up to the learning process and the training of qualified leaders to act as peer educators or trainers in the future. A little bit of everything is just the mix you need.



Three categories of courses are being developed:

- **Organisational Skills** (organisations nominate participants): organisational and project management, public relations and communication, work in international youth structures, team building, conflict management, fundraising and financial management
- **Leadership** (leaders of youth NGO's are encouraged to apply) : development- oriented. Strategic management, human resource management, quality management
- **Personal** (anyone can apply) development-oriented: Presentation skills, body language, negotiation skills

The main difference between the categories is the target group. For the organisational skills category, LiJOT encourages youngsters who have strong support from their NGO's and will later serve as disseminators of knowledge. The leadership development category is focused on the current leaders of youth NGOs. They should show commitment and willingness to invest their skills further in their work. Personal development courses are open to anyone who might wish to have a training experience.

At international level, LiJOT has developed a quite successful training scheme that was used in the "Trainstorm" programme where Lithuanian, Flemish, Dutch, Luxembourg, Latvian and Estonian youth councils have co-operated.

Trainstorm is a way to brainstorm. It encourages participants to see things from another angle and perspective and to do several things at the same time. Trainstorm is a training programme module developed by LiJOT. Training for trainers and Summer Academy are the two activities that constitute the programme.

1. Training for trainers

For young people who have proved to be group leaders and who show an interest in developing their capacities as trainers. No previous training experience is required but participants must show openness and flexibility throughout the learning process.

There should not be more than 12 participants in all, 2 or 3 from each country. Training lasts for one week. The programme includes building a strong team of people, the concept of training, understanding ways of learning, learning from each other and intercultural misunderstandings. It is important that the programme includes thorough debriefings to allow personal and group reflection. On day 3, participants work on planning for an international activity which will take place a month later. And then after one month...

2. Summer Academy

All the newly trained trainers get together to finalise their preparations one day before the participants arrive for the Academy. Once the participants have arrived, the programme organisers and trainers explain the process that is going to take place in the Academy for the entire week. The first days are led by the trainers and are focused on getting to know each other, expectations, intercultural learning, and debating experience. At a later stage the participants divide into the training courses that they wish to attend, not more than 12 people per group. This is the moment where newly trained trainers take over. In the evenings there is a moment when all participants in the different courses come back into the plenary and an activity is prepared by the pair from the T4T course. All activities are interspersed with some free time and the agenda is supervised by experienced trainers. At the end of the course there is a joint evaluation and a focused evaluation with the new trainers.

This activity was organized by LiJOT in 2004 and financed by the COE European Youth Foundation and EC Youth Programme. The trainers in this activity were Luis Pinto, Renata Kalivod and Renaldas Vaisbrodas.

The Trainstorm programme has proved to be a success. The new trainers had their best experiences; they challenged themselves and learned a great deal. Participants in the academy have said that they enjoyed being with a trainer who is learning and discovering things with the group; they felt at ease and felt that they had ownership of the training process.

LiJOT provided a wide-ranging opportunity for learning that was rich in terms of experiences and output. The model is now being reviewed to see how it can be adapted to national circumstances. In LiJOT we believe that by offering training to our members, we ensure the future of the youth council. This logic makes us convinced that learning is a key factor in the development of the organisation.

Contact :



international@lijot.lt

