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# YOUTH IN TRANSITION

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO TRAINING AND WORKING IN THE EASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS AREA

he YOUTH Programme describes the region of Eastern Europe and Caucasus (abbreviation – EECA) as consisting of the following "Partner Countries": **Azerbaijan**, **Armenia**, **Belarus**, **Georgia**, **Moldova**, **Ukraine and the Russian Federation** (all of the territory, including the Asian parts as well). If you have agoraphobia, please don't look at the map of this region! The region of Eastern Europe and Caucasus is the biggest amongst the First Priority Regions of Partner Countries (i.e. EuroMed and South East Europe), the size of which can be compared only with the Second Priority region – Latin America.

Reality in the EECA countries is very different and very similar at the same time... All these countries belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Some of them are trying to create new international structures: Belarus is still integrating with the Russian Federation into a new union state; Ukraine is trying to renew an "alternative CIS" known as GUAM from the initials of the member states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Transition of the region is clearly still going on.

Taking into account the overall political situation of EECA countries, we would say that it is a "bit" different to the situation of countries in the European Union. According to a "Freedom in the World 2005" survey, which provides annual evaluation of the state of global freedom as experienced by individuals, there are no "free" countries in the EECA region. There are several countries like Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine indicated as "partly free". This means that some changes are happening which could result in the democratization of these countries. This survey was carried out by an American foundation called "Freedom House". The researchers define "freedom" as the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and other centres of potential domination. The foundation measures freedom according to two broad categories: political rights and civil liberties. Political rights enable people to participate freely in the political process, through the right to vote, competing for public office, and electing representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and who are accountable to the electorate. Civil liberties allow for the freedoms of expression and belief, associative and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state.

# What do these results mean for trainers and youth workers who are going to cooperate with this region?

First of all, it means that people from EU countries should be very sensitive to the situation of the youth workers and the youth organisations in the EECA region.

The possibility of international co-operation for example as provided by the European YOUTH Programme is especially important for both groups of beneficiaries, those from the so-called "WEST" (Programme Countries) and from the so-called "EAST" (EECA Partner Countries). Such cooperation is not easy – we may even call it a kind of challenge. There are not only cultural differences between these two regions, there is also a kind of "civilization difference": inside the EU you expect that everywhere you will encounter the so-called "EU standards" of political, economic and social systems, in the East you should be ready to experience "Eastern" standards.

These differences may result in fears but as with everything new and unknown, they can also be very attractive and challenging... The common problems in cooperation with EECA countries are lack of information, lack of partner-finding structures, language difficulties, visa and bank transfer problems, hard local economic situation (e.g. lack of hot water and heating)...

And now about the positives: the most important is that young people from EECA are very interested and very open to international cooperation within the YOUTH Programme. They are very skill and knowledge-oriented.

In order to assist you in youth cooperation with the EECA region, the SALTO-YOUTH Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre was established in Warsaw (Poland) in October 2003, by the decision of the European Commission. If you are a project manager, youth leader, trainer or facilitator, SALTO EECA offers you expertise on Eastern Europe and Caucasus.



We can support you in finding contacts and implementing your youth project.

...and now a small test in the end:

## The aims of the EECA Resource Centre:

- To raise visibility and awareness of the YOUTH programme opportunities within the Eastern Europe and Caucasus Region
- To provide support and expertise to National Agencies of the YOUTH programme by contributing to events promoting cooperation with the EECA region
- To promote international co-operation with EECA Partner Countries
- To support project organisers in the development of contacts, partnerships and projects

# Some SALTO-EECA advice to bear in mind to make your International Cooperation with Eastern Europe and Caucasus efficient:

- People, organisations and local communities that we are cooperating with are our partners. This means they have the right to know and understand the essence of the common project.
- You should do everything to ensure that all partners in the project are self-dependent and that you are not treating them in an over-protective manner.
- The common project should be transparent and understandable in every way by all its partners. You should not transfer the burden of project financing onto partners suffering poorer financial conditions. You should also not make promises, financial or otherwise, which are not thought out thoroughly and where there is a risk that they will not be fulfilled.
- You should also take care of partners' safety (in every way). You should remember that while working with partners deriving from authoritarian regimes (e.g. from "not free" countries), local partners are the ones that will be affected by a potential risk.
- While preparing to realise an international project, you should know the culture, history and traditions, as well as the basis of the law and political systems of the coun tries which will participate in the project. You should build your training programme and exercises accordingly.

## What is the tallest peak in Europe?

Please choose one option:

- ☐ *Mount Blanc* (4807 m, the tallest peak of the Alps)
- ☐ *Elbrus* (5642 m, the tallest peak of the Caucasian mountains)

Remember, the answer you choose will define the Europe you live in...

#### **Notes and references:**



#### **SALTO-YOUTH EECA RC provides access to:**

- "Contact List" with addresses and fields of interest of organizations from Programme and EECA countries – to find a partner for your project, you can visit www.salto-youth.net/contactlist
- Network of Multipliers trained by the Resource Centre.a network of people within the EECA region, active and experienced in the promotion of the YOUTH programme For further information visit: www.salto-youth.net/eecamultipliers
- EECA manual internet links to sources about Eastern
  Europe and Caucasus, which could help you in the
  preparation of your projects.
  More on www.salto-youth.net/eecamanual
- For additional information visit: www.salto-youth.net/eeca

#### **Contact:**



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