

THE POWER OF YOUTH WORK

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Summary

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by Mark Taylor

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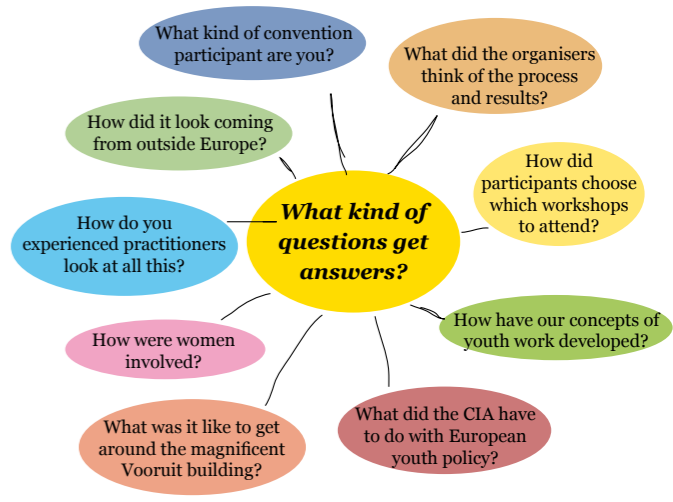
Hello readers!

These are exciting times in Coyote land. We have had a lot of positive, constructive feedback about both the new design and the contents of Coyote Extra, which has helped us in working on developments this time. We are heading for the third issue of the magazine to be produced within one year – which is a record! It is no accident that the title for this issue is THE POWER OF YOUTH WORK...

In Coyote Extra we had the task of setting out the major themes of the First European Youth Work Convention in a variety of interactive ways. This time our aim is to give you a rich set of impressions of what it was like to be in Ghent, to take part, to contribute to this event and take away some conclusions and ideas for action... A special Coyote team was put together to come and listen, discuss, interview, observe, take photos, make contact with potential authors and, at the end, to encourage the hundreds of participants to write messages on paper planes and throw them towards us as we stood on the stage during the final plenary.

We were welcomed with warmth and great efficiency by the organising team and we had access to all areas and people.

Although sometimes questions produce more questions, we also looked for answers as you can see from these examples:



Our thanks to the Belgian Presidency team for their hospitality and unflagging support at all stages of the project since the beginning of this year.

P.S. Marta Medlińska of the EU-CoE youth partnership will be on maternity leave when this Coyote is published and we send her all our best wishes for happiness with her baby and new ukulele.



Arriving at the declaration on youth work

DURING THE 1ST EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK CONVENTION

by **Karen Jacobs**

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First Things First

The 1st european youth work convention

A convention on the topic of youth work did not come ‘out of the blue’. In **November 2009, the renewed EU framework** for co-operation in the youth field highlighted the need to ‘support and develop youth work’. At the same time, the European Commission, in its Youth in Action work plan, expressed the intention to organise a conference for youth workers. (In European policy texts the commonly used language is ‘youth workers and youth leaders’). The Council of Europe from its side adopted in 2008 the ‘Agenda 2020’ concerning ‘The future of the Council of Europe youth policy’. The then upcoming Belgian EU Presidency – Youth was very motivated to tackle the topic since the three communities of Belgium have a long tradition of youth work and youth-work-related policy. The time was ripe, and so the presidency decided to make the most of the momentum to put, and keep, youth work on the EU political agenda. For the Belgian EU Presidency – Youth, the Flemish Community took the lead with regard to organising the **convention**, in close co-operation with the French and German-speaking Communities.

We had the topic, youth work, but needed to focus. As described in the renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field, youth work ‘is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature both by, with and for young people’.

To be able to do so, both JINT (the national agency for the Youth in Action Programme) and the Division for Youth of the Flemish Community sat down to figure out what this first convention could be about, and what would be its look and feel. We kind of felt like explorers, covering unknown land, or like a cat that pokes around the bed before finding the perfect spot to lie down.

We chose not to talk about everything at once, and left the eight fields of action of the renewed framework to the side for the moment. We quietly looked at other presidencies or opportunities to talk in depth about the contribution of youth work to employment and entrepreneurship, creativity and culture, education and training, for example.

We wanted to **start with the very beginning**. This meant having a talk **about youth work itself**, taking into account its diversity and enabling it to grow and reinforce itself. We did not want to indulge in navel-gazing, but to be positive and approach it in a discerning way while looking forward to the future.

The last thing we wanted to do was to reinvent the wheel, so we **started from already existing processes, using knowledge from both European and national levels**. Together with European and national experts, we went in search of a number of transversal youth-work-related themes to discuss.

We also wanted to take into consideration the different national realities in Europe, the different types of youth work, the different methods and approaches used in youth work and its different target groups.

This had to be clear and present on all levels: the content, the participants, in the way we organised workshops, etc. On top of this, all five senses needed to be stimulated. The convention could not be boring, but **needed a playful and interesting approach**.

As we elaborated on our ideas and explained our concept to different parties, everyone sensed the possibilities, but a certain fear of these untested waters was present. Nonetheless we received **green lights from our headquarters** and set sail towards the convention.

We started phoning all over Europe in order to get a full, rich and interesting programme, both in the plenary and workshop sessions. Our journey from meeting to meeting, mail to mail, phone to phone took full form.

In order to prepare the participants for the convention, an **extra edition** with a whole new look and feel of the **Coyote** magazine saw the light.

And finally, there we were, in Ghent at the beginning of July at the Vooruit building, very anxious about how everything would fall into place. We did not really know whether in real life the concept would be as thrilling as we had imagined. Not being able to estimate whether all the participants, from youth workers to politicians, would find their places and find the convention stimulating and inspiring for their current work.

For the first time, official **delegations from 50 countries from all over Europe** – the 50 countries that signed the European Cultural Convention – came together in Ghent to discuss youth work and its future in Europe. By taking the floor together, both the European Union and the Council of Europe acknowledged youth work and expressed their intention to move forward on this topic. Some interesting numbers from the convention:

- 📍 around 400 people attended, amongst whom a considerable number of youth workers, alongside researchers, policy makers, civil servants, members of national youth councils, trainers, etc.;
- 📅 25 thematic discussion workshops on nine youth-work-related topics were held;
- 📍 27 Youth Work in Action workshops (practices from all over Europe) took place;
- 📍 18 group visits to youth work practices in Ghent were organised;
- 📍 and a number of plenary sessions were given by youth workers, researchers, policy makers, etc.

We got everyone started by discovering the building, the topic and the participants. We tickled everyone’s brain, got them in the mood, had them running around in the different rooms and buildings... and they liked it, in fact they loved it. From day one we knew we had **hit the bull’s eye**. And it felt brilliant!

Declaration under construction

In preparing for the convention, we knew we needed something concrete at the end of it. We wanted **to put and keep youth work on the political agenda**. Therefore the convention was always meant to be **the start of a new process** and we wanted to **ensure a follow-up**, something **for the future**. The idea came to mind to write a declaration on the spot.

The declaration had to be based on the outcomes of the thematic discussion workshops, inspired by what was heard from either the Youth Work in Action workshops or the plenary sessions, and with the utmost respect for what the participants deemed important.

Four General Rapporteurs, coming from research, youth work organisations or a national agency, were assigned to write the declaration. Julie Godfroid, Danijela Juric, Hans-Georg Wicke and Howard Williamson knew from day one that the days would be long and the nights would be short. To help them master all the input, we set up a reporting system together with them and the facilitators, using everyone's experience.

A conference held by the NJI in Rotterdam in March 2010 gave us the contact details of facilitators that were into this topic and approach. In addition, we had an open call to complete the group. **Overall some 30 facilitators and rapporteurs** were trained in Ghent in order to find a common approach.

The facilitators were responsible for encouraging participants to express their ideas as much as possible. The rapporteurs wrote everything down, including indicating the priorities after the group came to conclusions or key messages. They then sent every report to a central mailing address which the General Rapporteurs could access.

Although some results were already ready on 8 July, the General Rapporteurs had to wait until Friday the 9th in the afternoon before they had received everything. Finally on Friday in the late afternoon they could sit down together and work their way through all the material. They started discussing, **re-arranging the available material** and developing their own process of how to get to a declaration. We, the organisers, stayed behind the scenes. We were close by to help them when they got stuck, but always kept a distance in terms of content. Our main task was to give them support, food and drinks, shelter and a safe environment in which to write. It took until late after midnight, while the participants were having a great party at Vooruit, to arrive at the final version of the declaration. Tired but satisfied, they laid the paper in our hands.

What is the declaration about??

When we received the declaration, it was a moment of truth. We did not know what the outcome would be. So we were very eager to read the messages inside. The General Rapporteurs started by **looking back at the history of youth work**, which was as diverse and complex in the past as it is today. They then focused on **contemporary youth work and youth work in the future**, as this was the scope of the convention.

Although the General Rapporteurs did not want to enter into a 'definition debate', some complementary insights on what youth work is about were added. During the convention youth work was briefly defined as the provision of 'space and opportunity for young people to shape their own future', stressing the diversity of youth work in the forms in which it engages with different young people, using different methodologies, addressing different issues and operating in different contexts. It also took into account that youth work practice continuously adapts, unfolds and develops over time.

The following is the list of the topics tackled in the declaration:

- > youth work today;
- > youth work and policy priorities;
- > position and cross-sectorial co-operation;
- > information, impact and effect;
- > youth work for all and in diversity;
- > the quality of the practice;
- > competence, training and recognition;
- > mobility and networking;
- > sustainable support and funding;
- > next steps.

Concerning **youth work and policy priorities**, it was stated that youth workers and young people should be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of youth policy. Youth work organisations and politicians still need to establish a better knowledge of each other, and specific initiatives in the youth field should take the principles and values of youth work into consideration. Current processes, such as the 'structured dialogue', need to be strengthened in the future.

Cross-sectorial co-operation takes different forms. For youth work to engage better in the processes of communication, co-ordination and co-operation, it must face the challenge of the identity of youth work and a fear of being just an instrument for other youth-policy-related purposes (otherwise known as 'instrumentalisation'). What is important is to carefully negotiate the 'rules of engagement' on an equal basis for all parties involved and from a starting point of mutual respect.

Because of the diversity of youth work, there needs to be an equivalently diverse approach to identifying the contribution it makes to young people and society. Only with better **information and knowledge on youth work** can its **impact** be better understood, disseminated and evaluated. Both quantitative and qualitative 'evidence' needs to be collected, collated and analysed. This is in order to promote the visibility of youth work, foster quality in practice and thereby enhance the credibility of youth work. It was put forward that the proclaimed 'golden triangle' of youth research, policy and practice needed to be enlarged into a square incorporating youth organisations and young people.



Arriving at the declaration on youth work

DURING THE 1ST EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK CONVENTION

During the convention, **diversity** in youth work was linked to accessibility for all. However, youth workers also need more advanced training in and commitment to universal values in order to face the rapidly changing demands of diverse populations of young people. Youth work must avoid seeing any group of young people solely as targets for inclusion and participation and more as partners in activism for the promotion of diversity in society. Adaptation to the lives of young people and current times is in order.

Furthermore, with regard to the **quality of practice**, youth work is an unusual professional practice in that it is delivered both by voluntary and paid workers. Routes to individual validation through the accreditation of prior learning must be established and respected. This can be achieved through the establishment of quality standards and the identification of generic competences. Such a framework could be developed at the European level and applied through national structures, delivered through flexible education and training systems, as well as self-regulated through a professional code of ethics governing the behaviour of youth workers in their contact with young people.

While there is no need for a homogeneous **training** system for youth workers, there is a need for a **competence**-building framework based on approaches to learning. Just as for young people themselves, youth workers need to engage in on-going, lifelong learning in order to deal effectively with the changing circumstances in which they have to work.

Necessary resources need to be attached to the provision of flexible, appropriate and incremental training and there has to be a stronger **recognition** of youth work, both within and outside youth policy structures in order to secure the virtuous circle of quality, competence and improved practice. Key questions about usage, currency and credibility of competences need to be explored in platforms for dialogue with the different actors involved.

Exchange between youth workers and young people from different cultures, backgrounds and youth work experiences is important for quality development, for learning and support, for knowledge transfer and for extending opportunities for developing and implementing youth work at the international level. To improve networking and exchange, practitioners from across Europe in all sectors of youth work should have the means and opportunities for dialogue, contact and co-operation. There was also a call for stronger international **mobility** opportunities for youth workers. The Youth in Action Programme goes some way to address these issues, but they need to be taken further.

Last but not least, there is a strong imperative to develop a legal framework for youth work that ensures a core budget which guarantees the **sustainability** of infrastructure, projects and youth work development. There should be clear and transparent criteria for the funding of youth work; both established and new youth work initiatives and organisations should have equal chances of securing these resources. In the debate, national governments were held to be primarily responsible for the funding of youth work. European funds were viewed as playing an additional role in both the development and implementation of youth work.

The declaration stresses the common and proper responsibilities of all actors involved and is **addressed to 'whom it may concern'**. **But the focus lies on** the following:

- > **Young people themselves!**
- > **The youth work field!**
- > **Ministers responsible for youth for the 50 European countries present!**
- > **Relevant European institutions!**
- > **Political structures concerned with young people and youth work at national, regional and local level!**



Although the preparation helped us to foresee important messages, it still was hard to predict the content of the declaration. We did not dare imagine that we had anticipated things correctly. Much to our surprise a lot of what we thought was important also found its place in the declaration and hence was strengthened. The diversity of youth work was underlined as well as the importance of sustainable support of youth work; the discussions with regard to recognition of the competences of youth work; the importance of a European 'youth' programme, etc. Although there was not an in-depth debate about youth work and cross-sectorial co-operation, it did rise to the surface. But there again, we made use of existing knowledge and partnerships.

All these issues also found their way into the **'Resolution on Youth Work'** of the Council of Ministers of Youth, which the Belgian Presidency wrote based on the preparations for the convention. This resolution was presented by the Belgian Presidency on 14 July to the Youth Working Party, in preparation of the Council of Ministers of Youth. We also **asked all the member states to take into consideration the messages of the convention** and to reinforce the resolution with topics that had not yet been tackled.

Has nothing new been said? That is not even a relevant question. Having certain things said at an official European convention, by many youth workers and sharing balanced insights amongst everyone active in the field were more at the heart of the matter. And as always, important issues do show themselves.

Some resources

For more information on the 1st European Youth Work Convention: see www.youth-eutrio.be (English version) and choose programme, or photos or news (to see the movies).

For more information about the extra edition of *Coyote*, the organisations that contributed to the convention and relevant policy documents: see www.youth-eutrio.be (English version) and click on 'background information' where you find all relevant documents and publications.

Have you read the whole declaration? Enter the 1st European Youth Work Convention on www.youth-eutrio.be (English version) and click on 'download the declaration'.

The future of youth work in Europe

(Policy) Action Kit

The convention recognised the **responsibility of youth workers themselves** to contribute when they can to the several topics discussed, but they also need political and financial support. At the European level, there is a range of political initiatives and actions in the youth field taking place over the next year. The content of the declaration should be taken into account in those debates. The declaration is intended to encourage continued attention to youth work and young people within the policy debates, namely the debate that will inform the design of the future EU 'youth' programme and a new generation of programmes, as well as the Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move'. The **European Union, the Council of Europe and their member states, and the current and next trio presidencies of the EU** are invited to create an **agenda** and an **action plan**, and to provide the necessary **resources** for its realisation.

Furthermore the declaration can be used for **inspiration at national, regional and local level in all possible ways**: taking it to political meetings, organising discussions amongst youth workers and young people and actors involved, picking up an idea and elaborating on it by putting forward new approaches or reinforcing good practice. It would be great to have the declaration as a milestone, a touchstone for future policy and the progress that will be made, and as a frame of reference. But above all, it would be brilliant if the convention and declaration made it possible to ensure the present and future of youth work in Europe.

And as we started the 1st European Youth Work Convention, of course **we dream about a second, and a third, ...** as do the participants. This is only the beginning. And in future we would like to see a convention with many more youth workers present, enabling them to speak their mind to all actors involved, and making visible the fantastic work they do.

Dialogue on the agenda Youth mission in the trio presidency process

by Ildikó Ferencsik,

National Youth Delegate of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union,
Member of the European Steering Committee on the Structured Dialogue



Just like wisdom, the interest in politics increases with age. When their own interests are at stake, young Europeans consider participation in debates with decision makers to be the most important political action to ensure that their voice is heard.¹ Thanks to the joint initiatives of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Presidency Trio of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, European Youth Forum and national representatives of young people, the implementation of an effective dialogue between young people and decision makers is now at the centre of attention in the youth sector of the EU.

For the first time in history, in the Council Resolution on a new framework for European co-operation in the youth field adopted in November 2009, the Member States of the European Union committed themselves to launching an inclusive, long-term process that gives young people and their organisations the opportunity to participate in order to have a say in the shaping of those decisions that affect their everyday lives: the structured dialogue.²

The structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations, which serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European co-operation in the youth field, should be pursued and developed [...] The dialogue should be as inclusive as possible and developed at local, regional, national and EU level and include youth researchers and those active in youth work.

(Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field (2010-2018) Council of the European Union, 2009)

Structured dialogue from the youth perspective

The structured dialogue for the majority of young people may sound like any other EU jargon, for which you have to give an explanation. But I believe that if we take a look at it, the essence of the structured dialogue is something unique and at the same time very simple: it is an answer to a real challenge that starts with young people.

European Steering Committee, responsible body for the implementation of the process



Recent Eurostat statistics clearly show that youth unemployment has become a serious problem that we have to face in European countries. The unemployment rate for young people under the age of 25 in the 27 countries of the EU has drastically increased and by February 2010 it was more than two times higher than that of all economically active people.³ In line with other targets, the Member States therefore agreed that in the framework of the first 18-month work cycle of the structured dialogue, youth employment should be discussed between young people and the EU institutions as the overall thematic priority for the period from 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2011. In addition to this, social inclusion, youth work and participation are the national priorities of the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies, and will serve as further important topics for discussion.

To initiate the process by reaching out to young people at local, regional and national level, the Member States were invited to establish national

working groups, which are composed of diverse young people; National Youth Councils; the representatives of Ministries for Youth Affairs and youth researchers. National working groups are new components of the political arena and are entitled to carry out three rounds of national consultations with young people. The information gathered by them is channelled to the European level through the three EU Presidency Youth Conferences in a way that keeps the process youth led. The first round of national consultations identified the main challenges that young people face and the second round listed concrete measures to address these problems. The third round, which will take place during the Hungarian Presidency, is designed to lead the process to a joint political commitment of the Member States. The illustration on the next page sums up the process and is based on the 'Structured dialogue a bridge between young people and decision makers' (27th August 2010), presentation of the three national youth councils of Belgium.



Dialogue on the agenda

Structured dialogue consultation process

Phase	Activity	Period
1. Identify priorities	1st round of consultation of young people, 27 Member states	January- March 2010
	EU Youth Conference in Jerez de la Frontiera (Spain)	13-16 April 2010
Recommendations	2nd round of consultation of young people based on the outcomes of the 1st phase, 27 Member states	May - August 2010
	EU Youth Conference in Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium)	2-4 October 2010
3. Refine recommendations	3rd round of consultation of young people based on the outcomes of phases 1 and 2, 27 Member States	October 2010 – February 2011
4. Political translation and evaluation	EU Youth Conference in Hungary	March 2011
	Evaluation	April – May 2011
	Council of Ministers	May 2011

Youth voice in the process

The European Youth Forum is one of the key stakeholders involved, representing the voice of millions of young Europeans. Ms Xenia Constantinou (Vice-President of the European Youth Forum) chairs the European Steering Committee which is responsible for the co-ordination of the implementation of the entire process. I asked Xenia about the challenges of the dialogue.

Ildikó: We are in the middle of the first cycle of the structured dialogue, how would the European Youth Forum evaluate the nine months of hard work behind us?

Xenia: Structured dialogue is finally structured! This is a milestone in the history of consultation and co-decision with young people. The European Youth Forum always advocated for the need to use this tool of 'structured dialogue' in an efficient way that would engage young people in the dialogue that concerns them. We asked young people to design the dialogue, to participate in it, to evaluate it and to monitor its results. I think that after receiving the first results of the consultation, we can have a confident smile on our faces! Already, out of the 27 member states, 22 have engaged actively in the dialogue on national level and have sent their results to the European Steering Committee. This has set the bar quite high. The second phase of consultations is expected to finish by the beginning of September. We expect at this stage to collect the opinions of young people on concrete tools, methods and measures that will boost and facilitate their access to employment.

But the most challenging part is ahead of us: the third phase of the consultation under the Hungarian Presidency, where we will seek to transform the tools into policies and where we will be preparing the political outcome of the entire process. I consider the commitment of the trio on youth employment and the high level of youth participation as the two crucial factors that will push for concrete political results in this field.

Ildikó: How do you see the effectiveness of the new process when it comes to the consultation between young people and the decision makers?

Xenia: The decision makers are still a bit reluctant to discuss openly and frankly with young people on such a 'difficult' topic as youth employment. In many member states decisions makers still have the mentality that 'we decide for them' and we may be questioned by them. But we are still far away from the culture of designing new policies for young people, deciding on and monitoring them with young people on board. Concerning the involvement of young people in the debates, we

have seen various examples that show a vast gap in the practices that each national working group is using. We have seen member states that involve a few dozen young people and member states that involved several thousands young people in the discussion.

Ildikó: Taking the long-term perspective, how do you think the outcomes can have an impact on young people living all over Europe?

Xenia: We can change the perception of youth policies for young people. This is our dream. Concerning the specific issue that we are discussing, youth employment, we aspire to be able to create tools that will facilitate the access of young people in employment, that will link better education and the market, that we will be able to offer more and more quality internships for young Europeans, that we will offer the policies that will empower them to become young entrepreneurs, and lastly we envision putting an end to discrimination against young people. The European Youth Forum believes that we should invest in young people because they are the driving force of our economy, our society, our future!

Looking ahead to the Hungarian Presidency

The process set clear goals and high expectations for young Europeans who are now looking ahead to the first half of 2011 – to the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union – to place the results of the first eighteen months of the structured dialogue at the highest levels of the political agenda when the European Council of Ministers for Youth takes place.

As the Youth Delegate of Hungary, actively involved in the process, I am convinced that the structured dialogue and the presidency itself are key opportunities for young people and their organisations in my country as well as in other Member States. Holding the presidency can lead to further steps towards strengthening national partnerships and allowing cross-sectoral co-operation to emerge in the long run. The presidency is an occasion where European democracy literally visits every country, giving young people the chance, at their doorsteps, to engage in dialogue with their decision makers.

I believe that when taking advantage of the above-mentioned opportunities, young people have to respond with increased responsibility and ownership. The youth mission of ensuring the future of the process is of paramount importance for the future of Europe of all generations but most of all for young people themselves.

¹ European Commission, 2009. European Youth Report 2009. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pub/pdf/eu-youth-report_en.pdf

² Council of the European Union, 2009. Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field (2010-2018). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1648_en.pdf

³ Eurostat, February 2010. Euro area unemployment rate at 10.0% http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-31032010-BP/EN/3-31032010-BP-EN.PDF



Making the trio work

by Mark Taylor

In her incisive article 'Dialogue on the agenda', Ildikó Ferencsik describes very clearly how the new system of trio presidencies in the youth field is starting to work within the EU. Coyote managed to talk briefly with the main responsible civil servants in their respective presidencies from Belgium – Jan Vanhee – and Hungary – Kristóf Téglásy and Balázs Márton.

All concerned were very excited to be involved in this new way of ensuring continuity between presidencies – the combination of long-term planning and politics with short-term actions seemed to appeal greatly. In many ways it seems to be like a relay race, with Spain having passed the baton to Belgium and Hungary preparing to take over at the end of the year. There is a full agenda for each six-month period and each country brings their own flair to its organisation and running.

Specific fundraising over the past three years has clearly helped the Belgian presidency 'raise the bar' in terms of activities and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in support of their bid to place youth work as such at the top of the political agenda. Although starting from a more modest standpoint, the Hungarian presidency has great conviction and intends to see the youth work debate turned into action and to concentrate largely on the issue of volunteering and young people.

Poland, Denmark and Cyprus are all already actively preparing their roles, actions and responsibilities for the trio they will run after Hungary – we wish them well, there will be a lot to think about and a lot to organise!

Some resources

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Useful links:

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The look of the convention

by Gülesin Nemutlu and Marlies Pöschl

The 1st European Youth Work Convention was a fairly big step forward in terms of the content of debates about youth work practice in Europe. Through its existence, it has already contributed to the recognition of youth work. It was also considered by many as a good example of how to organise a convention in the field of youth work while keeping the spirit of it.

The bitter reality

A convention means hundreds of people gathering together. Having hundreds of people in 'the room' means bigger challenges when it comes to co-ordination. It may be preferable to keep things formal, simple, distant and clean for an easy-going process. Informality, complexity and sincerity may all be cool concepts but don't you also think that these concepts make the process more difficult and messier? That's probably the reason why all big events end up in large rooms, with speakers, almost with no interaction and loads and loads of presentations on big screens.

Confession

We have to confess! The organisers of the 1st European Youth Work Convention did everything to break with this bitter reality. The programme of the event was designed as if it was planned for a small group of 30 people where almost everything could be run smoothly. The backup logistics and support was everywhere to make the lives of participants easier.

The look

The sweet taste of the convention encouraged us to have a look at its organisation from a purely activity design point of view. This article is dedicated to all those people behind the stage, who took part in making the convention run smoothly. Let's have a closer look at the convention.



A programme for more than 350 participants!?!

The programme started with a session on getting to know each other and the venue!! Animation was everywhere in the house. Plenary sessions were only held each morning to start the day with a framework and with food for thought through keynote speeches. Throughout the programme, there were up to 15 workshops happening at the same time, in parallel, not only once or twice but four times. There were also visits to local youth work practices and to a local cultural centre. For the 'visit in town' part, good old boxed lunches were also ready. For more than 350 participants!?! Of course a farewell party was also organised.

After all these efforts to organise a large interactive event, there were still many presentations on the screens; but what can we say – basic ingredients were readily available, the taste of the soup was also a bit up to the contributors and the guests.



The look of the convention

Travel

Most of the participants could arrange their travel to and from Brussels, where there is an airport. Help desks with train tickets to Ghent were present not only at the airport but also at the two main train stations in Brussels. That was such a welcoming move. Thumbs up! 😊

THE CONVENTION BUILDING: VOORUIT (FORWARD)

Vooruit is a historic complex which was built between 1911 and 1914. The building was originally the festival and art centre of the Ghent labour movement, with a ballroom, cinema, theatre, etc. It is now mainly used for concerts and other cultural events. The corridors and rooms of Vooruit welcomed the convention with proper facilities. 😊

Accommodations and transfer

Participants of the convention were housed in three different locations. According to the rumours and gossip, all of them were decent. Buses were arranged for the participants who were staying far from Vooruit. We noticed that the buses were also always on time. Different means of transportation were also used throughout the week. Thumbs up! 😊

Internet

For some years now Internet access is one of the first services that any participant of any event requests. The venue of the convention had a computer corner with enough computers connected to the Internet. Codes for wireless access were easy to get. Connections never failed. Thumbs up! 😊

Interpretation

All participants of the convention happened to learn that interpretation is an everyday practice in Belgium. Not only the opening speeches but also the closing speeches were supported by interpretation into English, German, French and Flemish. As an inclusive measure interpretation into sign language was also provided. Thumbs up! 😊

Registration desk

Always there, always ready with an answer and a smile! Although having a registration desk was very much expected, the helpful service it provided was highly appreciated. Thumbs up! 😊



LANYARDS

Organisers arranged lanyards for each of the different roles in the convention. The organisers and the press had orange, the facilitators had green and participants had white lanyards. It was easy to identify the roles of people. Thumbs up! 😊

Badges

The only possible suggestion for improvement could be about the way badges were structured. Badges had the name of the person, the position that he/she holds in his/her organisation and the country from where he/she comes from. Such badges gave the illusion that you could meet with the president of Slovenia or head of the external relations of Turkey! It would be good to have the names of the organisations on the badges, we thought. Thumbs – somewhere in the middle! 😊

Buttons

A very nice idea indeed!

By participating in a workshop or a thematic working group, participants could get different buttons with different questions or slogans on them! The buttons were nice for accessorising clothes and they were also a good excuse to start a conversation with someone that you did not know! They were also nice presents to bring back home. Thumbs up! 😊



SAFEKEEPING

This was another brilliant yet labour-intensive idea. Considering that participants would be away all day from their rooms and would be running around in such a big convention building, organisers provided safekeeping facilities for participants' belongings. Safekeeping was open not only during the day sessions but also at nights when it was time to chill out, which made life easier for participants. Thumbs up! 😊



Helping hands

Helping hands were people who were available to help anyone in need. They were everywhere: in the corridors, at the workshops and in social spaces! It was so relaxing to know that a helping hand was just around the corner when you were lost in the labyrinth-like corridors of Vooruit. Thumbs up! 😊



Bicycle guides

Who would put visits to local practices in eighteen different places of the city in the programme of a convention with more than 350 people and plus give participants the option to go by bike or on foot? Well, the organisers of this convention certainly did! The groups that picked a visit to a destination that was further from Vooruit were picked up by helping hands in yellow vests and guided to the spot on bicycles. Thumbs up! 😊



YOUTH WORK DECORATION

Vooruit was itself a nice place to host the convention. Apparently that was not enough for our organisers. All the areas that hosted a workshop or a session were also decorated by big posters with images of youth work practices on them. We found them inspiring. Thumbs up! 😊



Social spaces

It is always a concern when organising youth work activities to identify a spot where participants can socialise freely. This was also taken care of during the convention. The social spaces were also animated, at times with concerts and at other times with a wide screen for participants to follow the football World Cup. Thumbs up! 😊



The Clash and the two Bobs

An interview with Graeme Tiffany and Howard Williamson during the Youth Work Convention

Interviewed by Tena Prelec and Darko Markovic



1. If you would pick one metaphor or an image to define youth work, what would it be?

G.T. - I would change the word 'one' in the question. Because if you try to make one image of it, you start to kill the thing itself. I believe youth work has to be fundamentally determined by young people. And I don't know if I could do it in a kind of a picture, but I am really attracted to the ideas of uncertainty and messiness. It is a good kind of uncertainty. It is a celebration of uncertainty. That's what I've started to think good youth work is.

H.W. - A stray dog. A dog that doesn't seem to have a home. A dog eager to find a home, but not sure if this home should be in relation to wider society and the government, or if its home should be with young people. Where it used to be is with young people, but the place to feed it is the government. Yet, governments increasingly want it to do just one thing, which is, as I put it, 'fetch and carry': go and find the excluded kids, go and find the challenging behaviour, anti-social behaviour, and that kind of controlling agenda, which is actually not what youth work is about.

Our primary duty, as youth workers, is to establish solidarity with young people. And that means we have to be the advocates of young people and we have to promote their self-advocacy. Graeme

2. In today's world, do young people need more autonomy or security?

G.T. - Young people need autonomy and security. I always remember my French colleague's joke: 'Which would you rather have - a good book of philosophy or a potato?' The answer was: 'I would rather have both' and everybody laughs. And I laugh, because this is a beautiful response to a question that tries to take you in one direction. I think the autonomy and security are two sides of a coin. And I would do both at the same time.

I talk about autonomy as a social practice. Security can mean safety, but it can also mean something quite oppressive. I learnt a lot from my French colleagues about words which make more sense in French than in English. There is a beautiful word *proximité*. In English it means only to be close and not more; in French it means something like solidarity. And when we say *la sécurité* this creates a kind of identification with this social reality that I am not happy with.

H.W. - There are different groups of young people. Kids who are already included will always ask for more autonomy. That's what they want, they want space, they want direction, and they want resources to do their own thing. But disadvantaged young people, those coming from pretty difficult backgrounds, want greater certainties in their life, about education, about employment, sometimes about their own safety.

So it's not about autonomy or security: 'discipline without freedom is tyranny, and freedom without discipline is anarchy'. It is about finding a path between the two.

'HOLD YOUR HEAD'
(WRITTEN BY A FRIEND AND AS YET UNRECORDED)
BOB MARLEY - 'REDEMPTION SONG'

It's not about autonomy or security: 'discipline without freedom is tyranny, and freedom without discipline is anarchy'. It is about finding a path between the two. Howard

3. What could be the alternative use of the mosquito box?

G.T. - This is a very good question. It has original uses already. It came originally from the test that we use to test our hearing. Now we use it against people?!

Yesterday I talked about it as one of the interventions that are made to stop 'anti-social behaviour' of young people, and I believe that these interventions are anti-social themselves, they stop people being social!

So, I like to think how we can turn this around and use it for good. I am always interested in pro-social interventions; about what makes something good and what can make people be more social.

H.W. - I would have no alternative use than destroying it.



The Clash and the two Bobs

4. There was a statement in the convention saying that 'youth work reflects the society it is in'. To what extent do you agree with this?

G.T. - Who decides what society is? Perhaps you can talk about the norms of society. Youth work should reflect the norms of society – that makes a bit more sense to me. Some people may get me wrong on this, but I have always believed that youth workers must be on the authoritarian side. You ought to be as close to the young person as possible, but still on the authoritarian side. Do you understand the difference?

So, you ought to teach young people about the norms of society as they experience them, but in a democratic tradition. You have to teach them that they have power to affect and to change those norms, just like they have the power to affect and to change those laws. And when we get that mosquito box banned that will change the law. And I want to get that done and young people will help us in that campaign.

You cannot have a good society without that kind of critical engagement. So, I actually believe that youth work should be supported precisely to facilitate people's criticisms of the state. If I was organising a good society, I want some mechanism in it to criticise it all the time. You know, for a lot of politicians that's just complete madness, but that's actually what civil society is.

H.W. - Youth work often does indeed reflect the society it lives in. Societies coming out of troubled, divided histories, they want youth work to provide the means of greater social inclusion, greater integration; whereas countries that have recent histories of democratic inclusion and democratic engagement usually want it to provide emancipation, freedom, liberation, to think differently, to do things differently, to challenge and to test. But it's rather difficult to offer this kind of philosophy to countries that had too many challenges and too many tests in recent years. So I think there is some possibility, looking at youth work, to say – well that's why it dominates in that form in a particular place and dominates in a different form in another place. Whether it should is quite a different matter.

Youth work is an act of faith and not an act of science. And we have to believe.

Howard

LE COUP DE BOULE – 'ZIDANE IL A FRAPPÉ'

5. In your presentation you addressed the issue of inclusion of young people, but the question is whether youth work itself is socially inclusive enough.

G.T. - Of course not. We have to work at cultural level and at political level. Sometimes people get confused about what I say about this, but it is absolutely unethical to live your life through young people's lives. Young people should be at the centre of your project; that's what defines it; that's its essentiality and my job is to help them think about their needs and wants and always think without lots of concepts.

I am particularly interested in breaking the idea that we should have 'youth' participation. Maybe we just need to have participation. It's the same with poverty. Why we have a 'child' poverty strategy? We should have a poverty strategy.

So, I don't like this separatism movement. And at the level of community a lot of work that I do is intergenerational.

H.W. - Something broadly called youth work can be wholly socially inclusive. However, the problem with quite a number of forms of youth work is that they are very patently exclusive. Some of the youth organisations, just by their very structures, rule out many, many people! I had many arguments with youth organisations on that front. You need open space; you need an open door where young people can feel comfortable in making the first approaches. It may be a cultural project, or a social project – and be sure that soon enough they will move on to things that are more structured, more targeted, more assessed, more accredited, more measured. But if you only have youth work that can be measured, then you don't get the young people who really need it most. It's the paradox of voluntary service.



What I would like to see in any resolution on youth work is a commitment towards a decision-making process that is as socially inclusive as possible. What we have to do is to reduce the gap between the ultimate decision makers and young people. Graeme

6. What should be the main competence of youth workers today?

G.T. - I don't use the word competence. We are talking too much about skills and methods. If we go back to the ancient Greeks, somebody could be really good at strangling people, very skilful at killing people quickly, but is it a good skill? You cannot have skills without values. For me the most essential thing is that the youth workers are clear about their values and principles. And that's what we certainly don't work enough on.

I ask my students: 'Tell me why you want to become a youth worker?' The most common answer is 'because I care about young people'. Do you know what I say? 'That's bull****!' I tell you why it is bull****, because you haven't told me what you care about. It's meaningless. You ought to say what you care about. If you cannot answer that question, you should not get involved in this, don't get involved in youth work. You ought to say what you believe in. And they hate me.

I am absolutely confident that's why there are many people who are or can be good workers with almost no training, because they have their values straight.

H.W. - LISTENING – careful listening about issues, but also understanding youth cultural language, making sure that you are tuned in properly. HUMOUR – a damn good sense of humour carries you a long way in relationships with young people. But the most critical thing is ETERNAL PATIENCE – young people will be challenging you, it's difficult, especially if you're working with the most marginalised. Even if sometimes you are inclined to say – 'right, last chance saloon mate, don't wanna ever see you anymore', but they are hard to slash, those nuts, you've got to keep cracking away.

7. How do you see the impact of the global economic crisis on youth work?

G.T. - Who are the first victims? The young people. And it's not fair! And this is the time when a good society or state should step in and protect their interests. Our primary duty, as youth workers, is to establish solidarity with young people. And that means we have to be the advocates of young people and we have to promote their self-advocacy. We have to help them advocate for themselves. We need to stop sitting around, we need to go to other places.

I talk about seeking out difficult conversations with a lot of ministries, police officers; anywhere where anybody listens to young people I'll go. Seek out difficult conversations, because at least it's a conversation. That's what we need to do.

BOB DYLAN – 'BLOWING IN THE WIND'

H.W. - I think it will have a significant effect on public resourcing of youth work. Stable, well-resourced youth work, however, has been until now a story only for some European countries. Many countries, such as Serbia, have already been working in precarious economic circumstances and great uncertainty to do youth work. I think western European youth workers will have to learn lessons from central and eastern European youth workers about how they managed to sustain youth work. And I also think that youth workers may have to look to some of those 1960s youth community models, where you engage with local people: you can't do youth work on fresh air, but you don't necessarily need to have huge public resources to make it happen. And I think that one of the problems of the recent days is that – like everything else in the last few months – people are living in a kind of delusive world: none of these cuts have happened yet, but when they do, it will be really horrible.

CHUMBAWAMBA – 'HOMOPHOBIA'
THE CLASH – LONDON CALLING

» The Clash and the two Bobs

8. What are the main challenges with regards to gaining more political recognition for youth work?

G.T. - The main challenge is, and I heard it in Ghent today, 'politics'. Because when political administrations change, political opinions change.

So, what we have to do is to make the case that the things that we contribute are of value [...] draw a political argument with politicians as well. I say 'don't hold your breath, because you'll look dead' what you have to do is to get on with it. If you are the civil society, don't hold your breath in front of politicians!

For sure, it is worth working on political recognition, but never forget that the first thing you have to do is to work with credibility, and when you work with credibility, and you get the credibility, it is not just you speaking to the politicians, it's everybody. And that's politics also. And if you go to communities where youth workers are doing a good job and the Council says 'we are going to take the youth workers out'. You know what happens? They can't do it. Because the community would kill them. And that's where you've got to be as youth worker.

H.W. - As it says in the declaration, the strength of youth work is diversity, but its weakness is the very fact that it is diverse - and it is very difficult for politicians to understand exactly what it is.

Now, politicians want youth work that delivers on the labour market, on formal education and on complementing formal education; politicians want youth work to be highly connected to wider youth policy. If you can prove that you have done that, and there are youth work projects that claim that and they keep getting funded for serving that aim, then you will get political recognition for that youth work. But some people would argue actually - it's not youth work anymore, it's doing something pretty different, it's a pre-vocational education programme, pre-employment programme or something like this.

I think that it is extremely difficult to find the kinds of criteria that politicians understand to demonstrate the value of youth work. I once said that youth work is an act of faith and not an act of science. And we have to believe. What we have to do is to take youth work to all young people, if we think that it is an important contribution to development, autonomy and maturity.

Sorted-out young adults have had a package of opportunities in their lives. And one of the more rewarding opportunities is a youth work experience of some kind.

Howard

9. One thing you would really like to see in the future EU resolution on youth work.

G.T. - I spoke yesterday about the Open Method of Co-ordination. Some people might think that I said that for political reasons. And perhaps I did but I also did it because I believe it. And what I would like to see in any resolution on youth work is a commitment towards similar kinds of process and that decision-making processes are as socially inclusive as possible, inclusive of the voices of young people, inclusive of the voices of those that work with them and the other stakeholders. And what we have to do is to reduce the gap between the ultimate decision makers and young people, that's the most important thing. So, I am less concerned about the specificity of the things that we talk about, the problems that we see and more concerned about the processes with which we work. You cannot get good outcomes without good processes.

H.W. - I have one simple view on youth policy, which has been my view my whole life and it comes from being a youth work practitioner. 'Sorted out' young adults have had a package of opportunities in their lives. One of the more rewarding is a youth work experience of some kind - an international exchange, involvement in a project, some kind of thing that we would recognise as youth work. Whereas challenging young people in poor communities, from unsupportive families, from shitty old schools, they never have any youth work experiences, they don't want to: they don't want to go somewhere else, they feel comfortable and safe in their own patch. We have to think much harder about how we take that offer to the young people that are clearly not getting very much out of this package. Because if we don't, what we do is increase the youth divide. More included, confident, educated, supported young people will join youth work organisations. Because that's what you do, you join the scouts, or you join the young liberals or you [...] but a shit bag on the street does not even know that those organisations exist!

So, the one thing I would like to see in the resolution is a notion of entitlement for all young people in Europe. What is the minimum entitlement, whether that's formal education, whether that's safety and security in family life or substitute family life, in the public care system, and it would also include youth work. It would also include access and learning about new technologies. Otherwise we will have more and more division between European societies and within European societies.

10. Top songs to include in youth worker training?

G.T. - I will never forget the experience of trying to use music to awaken political sensibility of young people and one of the songs that I used was from band called Chumbawamba and it was called 'Homophobia'. I know that band since they come from my hometown and this is the true story about one of their friends who was murdered because of homosexuality.

I am of an age where I would say there is a problem of de-politisation, so I would take political ones from history. For example, the Clash. But I have found stuff more recently and there is a band completely unheard of called the Dastards whose song about Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty which is the most powerful civil liberties organisation. The Dastards produced this song 'Shami Chakrabarti should be ruling the country' and it is absolutely fantastic. Also the French rap band, the guys who produced the song about Zinedine Zidane from the last World Cup ('Zidane il a frappé'). I am not advocating violence, but sometimes you have to go to a place which is uncomfortable and it is my belief that Zinedine Zidane made a judgment that there was something more important in that moment than winning the World Cup. I have a little bit of respect for people who are prepared to take few risks and youth workers have to get there as well.

H.W. - 'Hold your head' - most people do not know it because it was never recorded. It was written by a friend of mine who grew up in divided Northern Ireland and it is really about peace in Europe. It has three verses and the chorus is: 'watching those people die', 'watching these people die', 'watching our people die'. So it's bringing Europe together, Kosovo and lots of other places. 'Redemption song' - as a sort of symbolic song about redemption, about emancipation, about release, about freedom.

'Blowing in the wind' - it reflects my generation I suppose, but it is also a song that I played in Tallinn, in Estonia, when it was still a Soviet country. It is meant to be a symbol of freedom again.

I have to pick something somewhat happier [...] 'Wonderwall' - some years ago, I spent three months learning all those Oasis songs to impress some kids who thought that my repertoire was boring and outdated. So when we turned up for the next weekend away, they were all going like: 'Oh here is that old boring blowing-in-the-wind chap again' and I said: 'Well, I can do "Wonderwall"! I can do "Don't look back in anger", I can do "Stand by me", and I can do "She's electric"! 'Wonderwall' has this significance for that particular generation of kids.



For sure, it is worth working on political recognition, but never forget that the first thing you have to do is to work with credibility, and when you work with credibility and you get the credibility it is not just you speaking to the politicians, it's everybody.

Howard

11. What do you value the most about each other?

G.T. - I have valued his questions always and I always will. Whether we agree on the answers is another matter, but actually, especially in youth work, the questions are the most important things. And I value and respect his contribution to that enormously.

H.W. - About Graeme? That he's different. That we have different views and we can amicably battle around for hours. That we can challenge each other, question each other and disagree with each other. It's the beauty about people - would you really like to meet somebody who was exactly the same as you? You would wear the same clothes, would have the same values, like the same food... Come on I mean, what a nightmare! That would be awful!

Graeme and me have got a great and constructive tension, and that's what the human condition is about, in terms of enriching it. That's why I do the odd things, because I go into different circles of people. It's exactly one of the challenges about this convention, as always: where is the police? Why didn't we have a couple of policemen among us? Where are the bishops? Where are the businessmen? They'll tell you what they think of youth work, they don't know anything about it! We can talk to each other and we can have even violent disagreements inside the box, but we are still in the same box, and we need to talk to people who are outside of that box.





EUROBLOG: The craziest journalistic adventure in Europe-ever

Jeugdwerknet is a Flemish organisation that gathers every piece of information that is useful for youth workers on one website: www.jeugdwerknet.be. We have a young team of volunteers who write articles for our website, 'VER-kijker'; my role is to co-ordinate them and to deal with everything concerning communication. During the European Youth Work Convention in Ghent we were present for six days to report about the topics discussed as well as the convention's atmosphere on www.euroblog.be.

by Kristof D'hanens

The Euroblog adventure

Twelve days, eight cities, six journalists, one mission: making young people aware of the influence of Europe in their everyday lives.

What do young people know about Europe and the European Union? Not that much, as we found out when we asked some students at the school gates. Are there 25 countries? 30? 27? Few students could tell us how many member states the European Union counts. And when we showed them a picture of José Manuel Barosso or Catherine Ashton, most did not recognise them.

From Amsterdam to Helsinki, from Istanbul to London

In the spring of 2010, six volunteers (two bloggers, two cameramen, one audio editor and one webmaster) were challenged to visit eight European cities in twelve days. They had to tackle thirteen European youth issues on their tour in blog posts, videos and audio reports and publish them on www.euroblog.be. Their ultimate goal: making young people aware of the influence the European Union has in their everyday lives.

Knowing this, one of the craziest ideas ever was launched by three Flemish youth media organisations: JAVI television, REC Radio centre and Jeugdwerknet. JAVI specialises in on-line video reports about youth work, made by young volunteers. REC trains young people in radio skills. Jeugdwerknet works with a team of young people who write articles about youth work for jeugdwerknet.be. When these three organisations pulled together, Euroblog was born.

And it sure was an amazing trip! Hitchhiking from Brussels to Amsterdam by truck, blogging on the boat between Helsinki and Tallinn, couchsurfing in Istanbul, almost being arrested in London... From any point of view it was a huge journalistic adventure!



Challenged by Herman Van Rompuy

Every morning the six Eurobloggers received a challenge from a well-known Flemish person through a YouTube video: European president Herman Van Rompuy, Belgian Minister of Justice Stefaan De Clerck or the rockstar Axl Peleman.

The type of challenges? 'Go to Amsterdam using three different kinds of transportation', 'Find out why they do not use euros in London' or 'Try to find the border of Europe in Istanbul', to name only a few.

The Eurobloggers succeeded in their mission and the project was well received by young people and youth workers in Flanders. After twelve days of hard work they returned home, exhausted but satisfied and a lot more experienced as journalists.

New challenges for Euroblog

As the website was no longer used after the project, JAVI, REC and Jeugdwerknet decided to give the project a second life when the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union started in July 2010. During the 1st European Conference on the History of Youth Work and the 1st European Youth Convention, young people wrote reports about the workshops and visits; they also interviewed keynote speakers and participants. They published in Dutch, French and English in order to give all European youth workers the chance to stay in tune with everything that was going on during the conference. And Euroblog will continue to do so as long as Belgium holds the presidency and perhaps afterwards too, when Antwerp becomes the European Youth Capital in 2011.



www.euroblog.be
www.twitter.com/eurobloggers
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Empowering the powerful?

Who are the young people that join youth work organisations all over Europe? Are there really 'different youth work realities in different Europes' as one of the keynote speakers at the convention indicated?

If international mobility has an important and positive effect on the competence development of a youth worker, can we conclude that 'the best are on the move'? And if they are always on the move how far can they contribute to the development of youth work practices at national and local level?

It is said that professional and voluntary forms of youth work are, and should be, complementary just as formal and non-formal education are complementary. But for whom? Are we providing extra skills to the young people who are already being privileged through all this complementarity? Could it be the case that both professional and voluntary youth work practices are leaving out the same young people, the 'hard shells'?

Do you think the threshold of access to youth work should be lower? If so, what is the ideal level of competence of youth workers in order to keep the threshold lower and youth work accessible for all?

Gülesin Nemutlu

Professionals and volunteers in youth work

The two sides of the same coin?
Or is it really only about 'the coin'?

by Gülesin Nemutlu

During the 1st European Youth Work Convention, extensive discussion took place on the concepts of **professionalism**, **professionalisation** and **volunteerism**. Throughout the discussions, professionalisation was usually described in terms of 'efficiency and credibility'. While volunteerism was associated with the concepts of 'passions and accountability', professionalisation was related with the concepts of 'criteria and quality' regardless of whether one was contracted for the job or was doing it on a voluntary basis.

This discussion has been on the table for some years now, and it is evident that it will stay there for years to come. The following is a series of questions on the topic. What are your questions? Can you come up with some answers for yourself and for the work that you do?

The bigger picture

- > What is the real issue? Is it professionalisation or professionalism? Is it getting paid for the work that you do or doing your work with a certain level of quality?
- > Can we talk about the professionalism of volunteers?
- > Who needs quality and standards: youth workers, policy makers or young people?
- > Does professionalisation always kill the spirit of youth work?
- > Is professionalisation of the youth worker a must to describe what young people can take out of youth work for a stronger position in the labour market?
- > Is the youth work field alone when discussing professionalisation and volunteerism? Isn't it a question for civil society organisations in general? Can we learn from the experiences of other fields?

What?

- > What are the competences that youth workers need? How do they know they need them?
- > What are essential themes that are emerging from today's youth work realities for which a youth worker should be competent?
- > Which competences will be crucial for youth work in the next ten years?
- > How do we know what youth workers need to learn?
- > What is the role of youth researchers in the process of training youth workers?

How?

- > How should the competences of youth workers be developed?
- > What training and learning models will youth workers be looking for in the future?
- > What should be the duration of the training of youth workers: intensive short-term or long-term training programmes?
- > What should be the basis of learning: experiential, theoretical and academic, on-line, blended (various learning environments), based on peer learning, being trained by experts of youth work?
- > At which level should youth workers be trained: international, national or local levels?

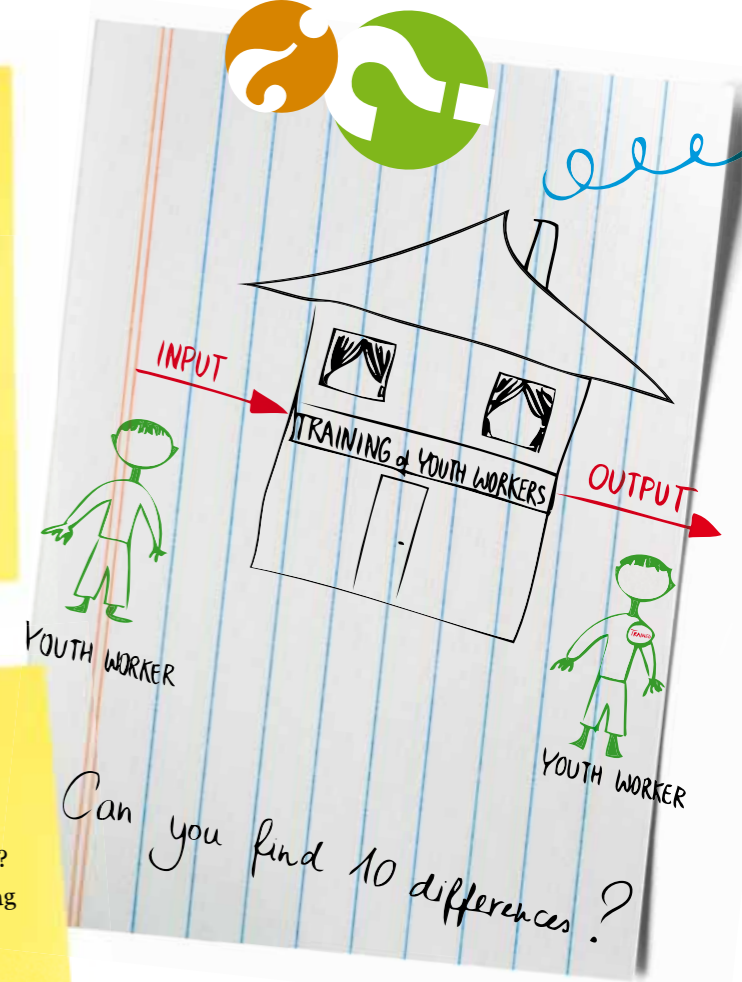
Quality in training?

- > What is needed in terms of ensuring the quality of training for youth workers?
- > What about quality standards?
- > How should quality be ensured?
- > Who should oversee training quality?
- > How is quality related to mobility (national vs. international training)?

Innovation?

- > What are the needs in terms of innovative training programmes for youth workers?
- > What kind of innovation is needed in the light of upcoming challenges such as social, economical, and environmental changes?

Thanks to: Many thanks to Üllý Enn, who contributed to this article by sharing the main discussions that took place at the thematic workshop she had facilitated on 'Training of Youth Workers'.



Geopolitics of youth policy

in post-war Western Europe (1945-1967)

by Giuseppe Porcaro

The genesis of the institutional landscape of European youth movements is a fascinating field of research which has still not been completely disclosed. It opens up interesting points of reflection in various fields: from the history of European integration to the evolution of social movements, from the rise of a transnational civil society at European and global levels to the changing notion of citizenship. The list could be even longer.

In this short article, I sketch out an approach that combines history with political geography. In particular, I outline how the emergence of a European youth policy field has been influenced by the power relations embedded in the system of international relations. At the same time, I describe how, almost paradoxically, this geopolitical situation laid the basis for the consolidation of an independent youth civil society as one of the main features of the youth policy landscape in Europe. This is only a first attempt to approach this issue from this perspective. In this regards, it constitutes mostly a seminal work that requires further intellectual and historical investigation.

(re)Construction

The initial youth organisations emerged in Germany towards the end of the 19th century as marginal social movements in reaction to the problems of Wilhelminian society but without a political agenda for reform. They gradually became, in the first half of the 20th century, under the influence of the more disciplinary British youth movements, engaged in the national politics of societal reform. As youth organisations became powerful elements of mass culture, their political importance culminated in the 1930s with their adoption by the modern state. In their efforts to influence society through the practices of hiking and camping, the youth movements in pre-World War II Europe can be understood as key elements in the project of modern governance which employed the cultural meanings of landscape and community to mobilise youth at national level, and to eventually turn them into governable subjects.

This incorporation by the modern nation state of youth movements led to political distortions and manipulations that became evident after World War II. Lessons were drawn from the most evident cases of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but also with the incorporation of youth movements in the Soviet regime and its satellites. In this context it is not surprising that most Western European governments pulled out from an active engagement in youth policy development and left the field to youth organisations themselves.



At the same time, something was happening at the international level: the use of youth organisations by the system of international relations. In London in 1945 the youth movements coming from the states signatories of the United Nations Charter formed the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). However, the dream of a unified world youth constituency suddenly collapsed with the beginning of the Cold War. Almost all Western organisations pulled out of WFDY due to its association with Soviet-aligned socialist and communist parties. In 1948 a World Assembly of Youth (WAY) was established, this time only with those movements which were outside the Soviet sphere of influence. This clearly established two sides in international youth affairs and tied them to the geopolitical reality of the time. International youth work was definitely situated in the realm of foreign policy and youth organisations became sensitive actors and forerunners in keeping channels of contact open between the two sides.



The New York Times

Campaigning for Europe

The biggest absence of this first period was Europe. Europe was under construction (and still is). To begin with, it was divided. It was also entirely immersed in the logic of the Cold War. However, the European project was about to take its first steps and from the European Movement International and the World Assembly of Youth came the first big wave of Europeanisation of youth organisations: the European Youth Campaign.

This campaign, launched in 1951, supported a series of conferences, cultural events, and youth organisations aimed to promote a European identity among youth from all over the (western) part of the continent. The campaign was funded as a part of post-war reconstruction, by the American Committee on United Europe, again in the context of the Cold War to consolidate Western European democracies and co-operation within 'free' Europe. The campaign was definitely a success, not only for the dissemination of books, events and constituting a cultural 'humus' for European co-operation but also because it allowed for the creation of the first European Youth Platform.

'The Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC) was founded on 23 March 1963 in London as a voluntary association of eleven national committees of the World Assembly of

Youth (WAY) (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom) and the National Youth Councils of France and Luxembourg. Italy and Switzerland participated at the founding meeting, but only decided later to participate in the CENYC.

The principal tasks of CENYC were to serve as a forum for the exchange of information, to collect and study material concerning youth problems, to co-operate and obtain assistance from organisations and institutions active in the field of youth work and education and to support national youth committees in activities aiming at European unification'.¹

The creation of CENYC was the bridge towards the next phase of development of European Youth Policy. If on one hand it allowed for the co-ordination among 'Western' national youth platforms in the frame of the WAY, it also crystallised two important principles. Firstly, the independence of national youth councils from their governments, which would become one of the constituting pillars of the youth sector of civil society. Secondly, the institutional dialogue towards the new European institutions: one of the first resolutions of CENYC, already in 1964, was to ask the Council of Europe for the creation of a European Youth Centre.



The young, the student and the CIA

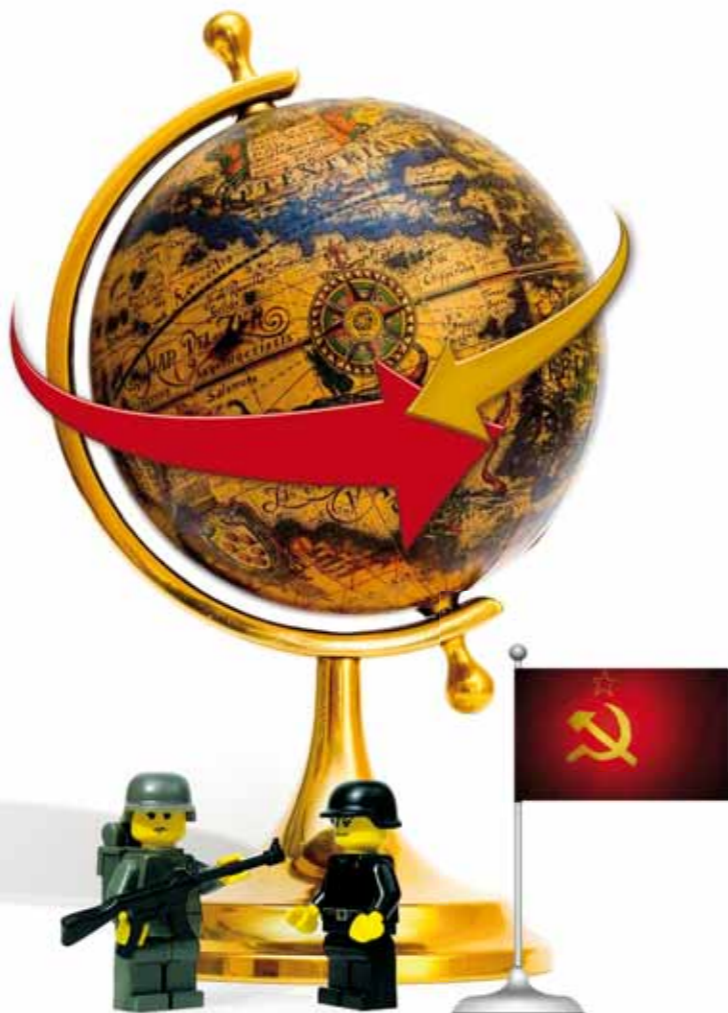
By the mid-1960s the system was quite consolidated. But soon this was shaken. On 15 February 1967, *The New York Times* published a short but explosive article with a self-explanatory title 'Foundations linked to CIA are found to subsidise 4 other youth organisations'. Nothing really new was revealed. But it was now public. In particular, the article showed how the 'Foundation for Youth and Students Affairs' was subsidising the World Assembly of Youth, the United States Youth Council and the International Student Conference (the Western counterpart of the soviet-led International Student Union).

The echo of the revelations of *The New York Times* crossed the ocean very fast. European governments and youth organisations could not stay silent on the matter.

Most youth organisations wanted to clearly create distance and emphasise their independence from CIA funding. This resulted in a first disempowerment of the WAY and the consolidation of CENYC as an independent self-funded platform.

European governments, which thus far had avoided mixing too much with international youth policy, started to play a more proactive role. Youth was suddenly re-discovered as a crucial actor. This was not only the consequence of the confrontation between East and West and the role played by youth groups. Only a few months after the CIA affair, students and young people were marching on the streets in 1968. The 'youth issue' was definitely a priority for domestic policy as well.

These years were the turning point in a new phase. A European youth policy was about to be set up (with different approaches) by the Council of Europe and, a bit later on, by the European Communities. However, the Cold War continued to play a crucial role until the end of the 1980s. East/West relations were the main focus of the pan-European youth dialogue which was developed after the Helsinki Agreement of 1975. However this time the Western European field definitely acted more independently from the US than in the earlier phase, when we saw direct intervention and support.



(partial) Conclusions

What is the sense of looking back at what happened 60 years ago? There are several lessons that we could already draw from this short introduction.

Firstly, this historical moment reminds us that investments in the youth sector of civil society (or the lack of) are strategic choices of governments and institutions. This should, in my opinion, sound as a reminder for these actors to continue giving the necessary support to youth civil society especially at a moment of increased individualisation in public life. Secondly, this episode traces the origin of a dialectic between the different stakeholders and the origins of the first independent youth organisations, which have now been, after decades, institutionalised and rebalanced. In particular it illustrates the very beginning of a story that would lead to the creation of the European Youth Forum in 1996. Last (but not least) it shows how youth policy had and still has a role in challenging the concept of the nation state, contributing to the creation of what we call in political geographical studies an International European scale.

I think these three lessons are important to plan strategically for the future of youth work and youth policy in Europe. In a period of economic crisis, young people are becoming more and more subjected to policy making. They are policy consumers, not policy producers. The recent launching of the new European Commission flagship initiative, Youth on the Move, is an example of this trend. Participatory youth work risks being challenged and investments in participation and in the youth sector of civil society might be sidelined to the advantage of other important priorities. In this situation, the delicate balance among actors can easily break to the advantage of state-oriented top-down policies. It is perhaps time for brave decisions. Besides the difference in numbers, the positive value of the contribution to European societies by independent youth organisations is definitely as strong and strategic as it was 60 years ago!

Methodological and bibliographical note

This is only a seminal contribution that would require more research on this specific historical period, but should also include more in-depth research on the past 60 years of the history of European youth movements and youth policy. I will not give an extensive bibliography but some guiding references. Concerning the role of youth movements in the building of the modern nation state it is worth reading the works on the nationalisation of the masses by George Mosse. Very little has been written so far on the European Youth Campaign, but it is traceable in many books that speak about the history of the European Movement International. A lot of information is also included in the gold mines of the archives of CENYC which are hosted at the European University Institute in Florence.



Youth work, a social practice!

by Filip Coussée

Department of social welfare studies, Ghent University, Belgium

The European Commission adopted, in 2009, a new EU strategy for youth policy for the coming decade entitled 'Youth – Investing and Empowering'. In this document, young people are seen as a resource that should be protected and in which we should invest for the future. The new strategy also emphasises the importance of youth work and the need for strong policies aimed at further professionalisation of youth work as well as increasing participation of young people. These objectives have been welcomed with open arms by most players in the youth sector. There are some arguments for that warm reception. Young people and youth work have risen on the political agenda and long-term policies have been given shape.

Yet, it is also somewhat ambiguous because the protection of young people and investing in young people for their future are not really core elements of today's youth work agenda. Most youth workers would rather emphasise youth work as providing room for experimenting and for enjoying being young together, here and now. These somewhat ambivalent objectives and the incongruent reception by the youth sector need further critical analysis. The constant references in policy documents to 'new challenges' for youth work tempted us to put our present youth (work) policy in an historical context. And then, there is also the concept of 'youth work' which does not have an unequivocal meaning across Europe. Therefore, an historical framework can show the shared roots of a very diverse field of practice. Above that, it can inspire us to critically revisit our current youth policies and youth work practices.

Defined by history, blinded by 'presentism'

In many countries youth work has been established as a 'third pedagogical environment', next to family and school. In some, it is a field entirely driven by volunteers; in others, the youth work field has been professionalised. In southern Europe youth work is less well established as an integral part of the welfare system and is also less professionalised. In most southern European countries one tends to speak about informal education or non-formal learning instead of youth work. So, in some countries, 'youth work' could be a somewhat misleading term for it is not directly connected to the situation of young people in relation to the labour market. However, in a welfare state under pressure, the other pedagogical environments increasingly fail to support young people's inclusion and give them access to education and the labour market. This means that some forms of youth work increasingly deal with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion (Lauritzen, 2008: 370). This situation forces some people, especially younger youth workers, to ask the question: 'Is this still youth work?' This is an interesting question. Not because we should identify one single concept of youth work. We did that before and history shows us that this can only work if society also defines one single concept of childhood. Luckily, we know by now that there is no such thing as 'the normal child'. So, a single concept of youth work obviously is not needed to support a diversity of young people. Still, it is an interesting question because the search for the answer helps us to identify the main characteristics of youth work. This is a quest that goes beyond defining the 'best youth work method', and moreover, asking the question makes us think and discuss. That is much more important than answering the question and closing the discussion. This fundamental discussion gives us tools and a framework to turn a critical eye to prevailing youth policies.



An instrument for empowerment and investment?

Looking at the new EU youth strategy we can easily indicate some parts which need critical analysis that investigates how far it reflects young people's actual lives and their social positions. It is said that 'young people are targeted as the main priority' and that 'youth work is recognised as an important actor to contribute to objectives', but which objectives? The strategy points out that: 'Promoting the social and professional integration of young women and men is an essential component to reach the objectives of Europe's Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, at the same time as promoting personal fulfilment, social cohesion and active citizenship.'

We can safely say that there was no period in our recent history where this ideal situation existed. Realising growth and jobs at the same time as promoting personal fulfilment, social cohesion and active citizenship? This is not as evident as it is assumed in the new EU framework. Why not? One of the reasons is possibly that there have always been nasty people who do not seem motivated to work hard for low wages in indecent working conditions. However, we tend to call that 'social inclusion'. This raises the uncomfortable question of whether 'social inclusion' is in the interest of all young people. Could it be that some young people are better off in a situation that we would define as 'social exclusion'? While people in situations labelled as 'socially excluded' may be less than happy, this does not mean that their individual inclusion into the mainstream – if this is attainable at all – is the only and final solution. Let's not pretend that 'the mainstream' is a bright and rosy place to be. As Pitts (2001) pointed out the routine, alienation, exploitation and discrimination are inherently part of the bottom of the mainstream. The argument of some all too enthusiastic adherents of social inclusion, positive youth development, prevention and many other 'positive', but ill-defined concepts and strategies often shows a very uncritical thought process, stating for instance that society has to support vulnerable young people for them to undergo a 'normal development' and to become 'gainfully employed individuals, not reliant on public funds' (Roth, 2004).

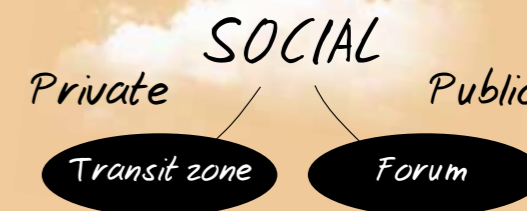
Therefore, if we take our own principles seriously, youth work is not in the first place an instrument for social inclusion. Youth work should start where young people are, and not where we want them to be. But youth work is not just about 'being happy and playing around' either. Youth workers should not run away from social problems or turn their backs to 'instrumental policies'. Youth workers may safely recognise that they really are instruments. At least then youth workers can choose the objectives for which they want to be an instrument. Youth workers should for instance help young people to develop lifestyles and cultural spaces, whether or not oppositional, that have personal meaning for them (Pitts, 2001). Moreover, youth work can also be significant in terms of societal learning processes, showing us the lived realities behind labels as social inclusion and social exclusion.

A social practice between system and lifeworld

In the Blankenberge conferences that laid the foundations for the 1st European Conference on the History of Youth Work and Policy (preceding the 1st European Youth Work Convention) youth work was identified as a social practice between the system and the lifeworld (Verschelden et al., 2009, Coussée et al., 2010). This way of approaching youth work opens up paths to accept diversity and most of all to maintain and even cherish the existing tensions in the youth work field.

Current policies tend to neglect those tensions and plead for a more structured, individualised, professionalised and outcome-focused youth work, especially with regard to vulnerable young people. So going back to the EU's 'Youth – Investing and Empowering' document, it becomes more obvious that we should turn a constructive, but critical, eye to the objectives and targets of European youth policies. How does this strategy relate to the new public management discourse that gained ground in the 1990s? In that discourse youth work is increasingly constructed as a transit zone between the lifeworld and the system, focusing on individual development and smooth integration into existing society.

Between system and lifeworld



What should we do about this? One thing is sure: a defensive withdrawal into our own private youth work island makes little sense. Youth work is and has always been a social practice. If youth workers withdraw from the social field, they help to restrict the social field to nothing more than a transit zone. In fact, they reinforce the further 'desocialisation' of society. So, it is true that youth work is not a school or an employment bureau fed by, and feeding itself, the myth of young people as young entrepreneurs taking up their own future without reference to the future of other people. This social construction of young people, which became dominant in the 1980s (see Beck, 1986), has not bridged the gap between the haves and the have-nots, on the contrary. But youth work is also more than a playground or a place to have fun with like-minded young people.

Youth work is a social forum. This is a rather uncomfortable position for youth work, in the midst of a field of tensions. Should we help young people adapt to social change? Well yes, but at the same time we should question these changes, together with young people. What are the consequences of a changed and changing society? Are they in the interest of all young people?

» Youth work, a social practice!

Celebrating tension and diversity

Should we try to eliminate those tensions? History teaches us that the 'social' will be eliminated itself if we do. Post-communist countries and post-colonial countries, but also Western neo-liberal (post-fordist) countries are all searching for a re-establishment of the social, but so far we do not seem to be getting much further than the ongoing colonisation of the private lifeworld through the public system or the other way round. There is nothing very social about 'social work' anymore. The social is a forum to negotiate power relations, to get to know and understand each other and the interest of others. It is not a transit zone to adapt to public expectations, nor is it an instrument to claim private rights.

So the 'resocialisation' of youth work shows us that the most important question is not how to lead young people into youth work, but rather how young people can and may be present in society. What counts is not so much the access to youth work, but the access through youth work. How does youth work increase the accessibility (and the usefulness!) of the educational system, the labour market, sport associations, dance halls, etc.? How does youth work support young people in their orientation in society, in their search to find their own place in society? How can we connect to processes of informal learning that are shaped in the daily conversations and relations between people? Therefore we do need that huge diversity of youth work forms and in a broader sense, all forms of 'social' work. We have to take into account a large diversity of people and the situations they live in. This is the social pedagogical task connecting all social work units to each other: youth work, community work, welfare work, street work, health work, arts, sports, cultural projects, etc.

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The power of youth work

The power of all youth work is its ability to create free spaces for young people that are characterised by safety, a sense of belonging, bonding and bridging, the art of conversation, challenges, friendship and relations. Different from schools, youth work creates places where young people want to learn. Perhaps this may not concern, in the first place, measurable skills. Most central to these learning processes are identity development and 'defining their own needs' (Miles, 2003). This is the starting point from where 'cultural action' (Freire, 1995) becomes possible. Cultural action is not focused on a static concept of education: educating young people starting from predefined realities. Cultural action is focused on questioning the obvious and takes for granted certainties that structure the lifeworld of young people. We should not limit their horizons, but broaden those horizons. And we should not forget what Freire taught us long ago: 'We make the road by walking.'

WE MAKE
THE ROAD
BY WALKING.

Paper planes

by Marlies Pöschl



» Paper planes

My new ideas are:

1 Write down our history – document more of what we do.

2 Youth work as a friendly dog.

3 Continuum in learning between formal, non-formal, vocational from a young age onwards.

4 Don't be afraid of further formalisation of non-formal education.

5 Have a better exchange between youth workers and youth: collaborate and work together!

6 I am so tired, but it was great.

My new questions are:

1 Youth work vs. volunteering. Do we need this division?

2 How will we develop diversity in the kinds of youth work (volunteer/professional, general/social) without throwing away the baby with the bathwater?

3 Why are people so scared of written values and criteria? Why are young people so scared of losing their influence – insecurity of participation structures?

4 How can we work more for youth work and not only youth workers?

6 Is Europe really able to create a canon of youth work policy? Aren't our experiences too different? Our needs? And is this convention the beginning of a close co-operation between adults and youth in other aspects?

5 If you want to co-operate with other sectors, you need to have a clear idea about your own goals. Does youth work manage to transport its objectives?

My needs for the future are:

1 to have more than an hour and a half to make recommendations;

2 to have more spaces (but real ones) where we can all sit on the same level and can build a dialogue together... share realities!!! (youth workers, ministries, researchers);

3 not to have only (really!) male keynote speakers;

6 sleep.

5 more inter-cultural competence in Europe (and in South Africa)

4 to make young people with disabilities more visible in the EU;

My suggestions for the future

1 Continue these conventions.

2 Increase the space for participation in this kind of event. It's a unique opportunity to have policy developers, researchers, youth workers, come together and this should be explored further.

3 Organise more specialised meetings for going into detail and depth.

6 Give more of a European dimension to the training of youth workers.

5 Don't exclude the Council of Europe so much from structured dialogue.

4 Have specialised international conventions that come together in the end.

Find the youth worker in you:

a competence-based approach to youth worker training

by Stijn Vlasschaert

At Jeugd en Stad (JES - 'Youth and City'), we strongly believe in a competence-based approach to youth work. Through participation in activities that fit with their interests and lifestyles, this approach consciously encourages young people to experiment and test their limits. By doing so they increase awareness of their competences and are stimulated to further develop them. This also creates opportunities for recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

An interesting example of this approach is our local youth work programme. For funding reasons we were left with one professional youth worker instead of two. The young people themselves had to take on the responsibility of keeping the youth work activities going. Our training for youth work volunteers proved to be very helpful in facilitating this transition. The role of our professional youth worker has evolved: young people are now more explicitly encouraged to develop their competences. The professional youth worker coaches the youth work volunteers, helps them to plan, gives feedback, reflects with them on their performance and settles conflicts rather than organising the activities himself.

The computer room is another good example: our youth worker used to be present all the time when it was open. Now this responsibility has been given

to a youth work volunteer. After each session our youth worker and the youth work volunteer reflect on how things went and what can be improved next time.

The shift from just 'consuming' activities to participating in activities is very important in a competence-based approach. In our youth worker training programme, we translated this into a five-phase model: in the first phase young people just consume activities. In the second phase (13 or 14 year olds) guidance is set up to prepare youth for participating in the training programme for youth workers. In the third phase, young people follow the training programme. In the fourth phase, they attend the youth leader training programme and are able to participate in organising activities. In the fifth phase, they can follow an instructor training programme and participate in organisation and management meetings. They can also organise an activity and take full responsibility for it.

Of course we do not push young people from one phase to another. Once we see someone who takes initiatives or shows interest, we try to encourage and give him or her more responsibilities. In doing so, we create a learning space where young people can test themselves, experiment freely and design their own participation and learning processes.

To support the competence identification and development process, we use a concept that links experiential learning to a very clear and comprehensive competence framework. An important criterion for this framework was accessibility for a low-skilled target group, so very simple and straightforward vocabulary was used. The competence framework we developed consists of a set of sixteen key competences selected on the basis of a small survey with employers. The selected competences are:

1. Co-operating
2. Speaking
3. Listening
4. Flexibility
5. Planning and organising
6. Learning
7. Giving feedback
8. Handling feedback
9. Self-reflection
10. Networking
11. Handling authority
12. Respecting rules
13. Handling clients
14. Taking initiative
15. Acting independently
16. Empathising

Observable performance indicators were defined and tested for these competences. The performance indicators consist of very simple and straightforward statements on the behaviour that is shown during a practical exercise and indicates the level of development of a competence. See the example below.

Are you good at cooperating?			
Are you able to obtain a good result together with others, for example in an organisation or a team. Are you also able to do so if you don't get any personal advantages?			
	Yes	Only if they ask me to	No
I tell what I'm good at and what I would like to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I ask the others what they're good at and what they would like to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take into account what others are good at and would like to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do my work without disturbing others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do my work in such a way that others benefit from it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do what we agreed to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes	Only if they ask me to	No
I talk about my progress and the problems I meet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I ask the others how they progress and what problems they meet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I adapt my way of working if others meet problems or finish their work sooner or later	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give clues to the others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I ask clues from the others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I get a clue, I try to apply it in my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes	Only if they ask me to	No
I help the others, even if it's not my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tell what goes right or wrong to improve our cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tell the others if they did a good job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Find the youth worker in you



Construction worker
To organise
To co-operate
To work independently



Guide
To be able to take the lead
To have didactic capacities
To guide a group



Referee
To make and defend rules
To give clear instructions

To stimulate self-reflection, we also defined the 'roles' of a youth worker and the competences linked to these roles. The roles are illustrated by different characters, which make the competences very concrete and accessible.

Young people get to know these characters and their competences throughout their training and use them to reflect on their own behaviour as well as strengths and weaknesses. The characters are designed using very simple instructions at this site:

<http://www.sp-studio.de>

which is probably one of the most-used character-designing sites on the web. We found it to be really useful in making personalities which would be attractive for the young people with whom we work.



Friend
To be able to listen
To have empathy



Clown
To be able to motivate
To take initiative
To be funny

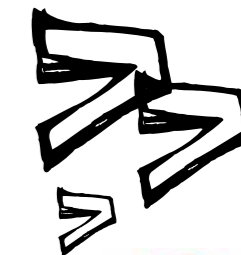


Inventor
To be creative
To experiment
To be flexible

Our competence-based approach is inspired by some important preliminaries:

- the force and talents of young people are our starting points (positive approach);
- young people participate voluntarily;
- young people are themselves instigators, directors and managers of the competence-based approach;
- we want to stimulate lifelong learning;
- the competence-based approach has to be compatible with formal learning (training, education...);
- we strive for accessible youth work, both in a psychological, financial and geographical sense. This means that everything we do has to fit with young people's lifestyles, interests and pace and does not reduce the 'fun' part of youth work.

In 2008, 185 young people followed our youth worker training programme, of whom 70% had low skill levels and 46% had migrant backgrounds. Our programme and preliminaries enable us to use a competence-based approach with these young people. Of course, many other competence-based approaches and practices exist, but few of them are appropriate for our target group. The diversity of youth work also requires a diversity of methods and practices that fit with a group's needs and learning styles.



JES is a pluralist non-profit organisation. Our mission is to create equal opportunities for urban young people to actively participate in society. We are based in three Belgian cities: Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. These cities are characterised by large populations with migrant backgrounds, many school drop outs and a lot of school delay. The level of young people's unemployment and the number of children born in a family where both parents are unemployed are also extremely high.¹ Our main activities include training and guidance, training for youth work volunteers, outreach work, support for youth clubs and youth work initiatives, youth hostels, city adventures, recording studios, multimedia lab, etc. These activities focus on young people between 6 and 30 years old, of whom many are low-skilled and have migrant backgrounds.

More information:

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1. Some facts and figures (source: JES vzw (2009). *Bouwstenen voor een geïntegreerd stedelijk jeugdbeleid*, <http://www.jes.be/expertisecentrum/docs/004.ppt#256.1>, Bouwstenen voor een geïntegreerd stedelijk jeugdbeleid. Date accessed 11/08/10):
- Non-Belgian population: 28% in Brussels, 15% in Antwerp, 9% in Ghent (Morocco, Italy, Spain, Poland, Turkey, etc.);
- 18-24 years olds without secondary degree: Brussels: 22,9%, Flanders: 10%, Belgium: 14%;
- Youngsters that lag at least one year behind in their school curriculum: Brussels: 50%, Ghent: 36%, Antwerp: 39%, Flanders: 21%;
- Under-25 year olds' unemployment: Ghent: 18%, Antwerp: 19.2%, Brussels: 31.7%;
- 0-17 year olds living in a family where both parents are unemployed: Ghent: 19%, Antwerp: 24%, Brussels: 35%, Liege: 38%, Charleroi: 40%, Belgium: 18%.



CHALLENGES TO GLOBAL YOUTH WORK

More than Europe

The 1st Youth Work Convention represented a big step towards the recognition of youth work in Europe. But is this enough? In an increasingly globalised world where any change – economic crisis sadly included – provokes a sudden and complete butterfly effect, should we be happy with only solving the issues in our own backyard, or is it time to look at the big picture?

Many youth workers have already chosen the second path, and are actively working by running exchanges and engaging in more and more complex projects with their partners overseas.

The Ghent convention reflected this objective by inviting delegations from different continents and providing space for discussion about these topics.



The butterfly effect

The crisis that began in 2008, and which is far from over, has been a deep blow for most of the world's economies. The funding invested in youth work, thus, is very likely to be significantly reconsidered. In this light, many European countries will have a lot to learn from places where youth work is carried out without big institutional funding possibilities, according to Howard Williamson (see the interview with him in this issue of *Coyote*).

There are, however, common challenges that go well beyond the economy. One just has to think about the climate change disasters that are increasingly hitting different parts of the world and – experts reckon – threaten to affect Europe as well. Advocacy for youth rights is one more field where dialogue is mutually beneficial, Christoffer from the YFJ asserts: 'Our partners in Africa and Ibero-America have succeeded in the adoption of legal instruments for the recognition of youth rights on the regional level, and we are now working on a convention on the rights of young people in Europe.'

Youth work goes global

by Tena Prelec

Global networking is already a reality. But there are still barriers to effective co-operation. It is still necessary to build a true, long-term dialogue, and the path to achieving this is long.

In Ghent, European youth workers had the opportunity to meet their counterparts from other countries, exchange precious information and pave the way to new collaborations. What they found are some good reasons to continue working with each other. And – perhaps even more importantly – they identified their mistakes and figured out the main challenges they need to tackle.

Building trust

In the workshop 'Global Networking of Youth Work', nobody questioned the necessity of co-operating for the common good and exchanging best practices. However, there are several problems youth organisations face when they engage in trans-continental exchanges. The main issues arise when youth are sent to institutions with which there is no trustworthy partnership established. Have we been relying too much on electronic media lately? 'There is nothing I experienced that compensates for face-to-face experience with young people, especially if you are working on issues as delicate as religion and migration. 'I don't think social media can make up for that: they are a great tool for keeping up something you have already built, not vice versa', says Lloyd from IFM-SEI.



Much closer than we thought

In Ghent, the South African delegation was the most sizeable among the non-European delegations. Deline from the South African Volunteer Centre strongly underlines the necessity of building long-term dialogue, instead of engaging in one-time volunteering missions: 'The main issue is to make exchanges sustainable and to leave a real effect. What you need is a quality pre-programme preparation, trustworthy partners and a good accountability system.'

When asked what the differences in youth work methods in regards to this aim were, 'There is a lot of difference in terminology' she responded. She continued, 'yet, what struck me the most when coming here is that we found out that at the end of the day, despite the terminology, everything else seems to be the same'.

Challenge #1: build bilateral agreements and political structures for young people

'We advocate for the establishment of independent and democratic national youth councils where they do not exist, both in Europe and in other regions – and are very happy that the UN at their latest General Assembly confirmed their support for this process.'

Christoffer Grønstad, European Youth Forum

'In America the process of networking among youth organisations is just at the beginning, and it is extremely interesting for us to come and see what kind of structures you have already established. We already have bilateral agreements with 13 out of 27 EU member states, and are aiming to get more.'

Beata Romanovsky, Mission of Canada to the EU

Challenge #2: foster long-term dialogue, not humanitarian tourism

'We need to avoid the risk of creating youth travel organisations: there are many cases of youth spending some time in Africa at an enormous cost to mommy and daddy, taking pictures, feeling good about themselves and going back. The key issue is collaboration and support: we need not only to invest in infrastructure, but in long-term development of young people.'

Deline Van Boom, South African Volunteer Centre

Challenge #3: transmit what you learned to your reality

Global networks are really important because they allow you to accomplish political actions you would not be able to put into practice otherwise. However, there are actually far too many of these networks already. Sometimes they even risk pushing members away. The real issue is how to transmit what you learned to your reality.



Woman-/-sing the convention

... or gendering it!

by Gülesin Nemutlu

The shift to using gender as a verb (to gender, gendered, gendering, engendered) is a reflection of changed understandings of gender as an active ongoing process, rather than as something that is ready-made and fixed. In this sense, then, something is gendered when it is, in and of itself, actively engaged in social processes that produce and reproduce distinctions between men and women.

Pilcher, J. & Whelehan, I. (2004). 50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies. London: Sage.



I am a woman.

This is a biological characteristic of mine that I become aware of at a certain moment in life, which I clearly do not remember. It was some time back then. Yet, I clearly remember many moments in which I was either stopped or encouraged to act as I was expected to, as a girl, as a sister, as a young girl, as a young woman, as a woman. Yes, I am a woman and personally, I am perfectly fine with being a woman.

There is a joke that I still remember from English language classes in primary school, one of those riddles that help make language learning a bit more fun. It goes as follows: 'What's the difference between a Miss and a Mrs?' Answer? 'A Mr!' Yes, it was an educational joke which probably helped me to learn the different abbreviations in addressing people in a rather formal way. I was not aware that it was also teaching me more in a more implicit way. It was teaching me certain norms that would be difficult to challenge.

I was invited to challenge these norms through youth work practice. I remember the first time a trainer (in a youth worker training) clearly drew the attention of the group to the fact that although men made up only one fourth of the group, during the discussions we hardly heard any women speak. This one sentence was the 'click' which was followed by many discussions, reflections, readings, observations, experiences and discussions again.

So now, as a woman, I know that 'sex' refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women whereas 'gender' refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for men and women. I am aware that concepts of men and women are also categories, and these categories are not enough to explain how complex our gender and sexual identities are.

Have a pair of gender-sensitive eyeglasses

Once you become aware of gender issues, you may develop a skill of looking at all social occasions through a pair of gender-sensitive eyeglasses; whether it's being conscious while listening to different narratives or being interested in the symbols on the doors of toilets in public spaces. But why is it important to put on gender-sensitive eyeglasses? What does it show us more than any other type of vision?

It is a pair of magical eyeglasses. It helps us to question the things we take for granted in our everyday lives while we are trying to understand how we live together in social settings. It shows a lot about power, authority and control. After all, gender is a key factor in the distribution of power, privileges and possibilities, which effects progress towards equality in societies.

Looking at the 1st European Youth Work Convention through a pair of gender-sensitive eyeglasses

A big conference room full of people. 350 people? Maybe 400?

The number of women in the room seems a bit higher than the number of men but it is difficult to say. Maybe the numbers are equal. Wondering if there is anyone else paying attention to this.

Having a seat. Programme starts.

There is quite a lot of space on the stage. That should be for the people who will do the opening speeches. Chairman arrives, welcomes the speakers. Four men and one woman on the stage. All of them were invited to give their opening speeches one by one. The only one who had a remark about his/her clothing when invited to speak was the woman. Will she also receive a compliment on her smile?

The programme flows.

Workshops are run by facilitators. In most cases there are two facilitators, one man and one woman. So there are people who are concerned about gender balance in the sessions. A moment of relief.

Good night eyeglasses.

Good morning eyeglasses.

The second day. Three keynote speakers on the stage. Two of them are women and one of them is a man. One of the speeches is addressed mainly to youth workers and it is about youth work and policy in general. The other two are about actual practices – one from youth centres and one from the streets.



» Woman-i-sing the convention ... or gendering it!



Speakers are talking about the disadvantaged youth and young people on the streets. 'Primary understanding of youth work should not be securing the community from the young people on the streets through control.' Who are these young people? Are they young men or young women? Am I the only one who is taking for granted that when we talk about young people on the streets we are actually only talking about young men? Are there no young women on the streets? If there is none (which I doubt) then where are the young women? Are they already under control? How?

The programme flows. Workshops and presentations. There is a clear dominance of male presenters. Probably the same situation could be found in many other conventions on many other different topics around the world. Why did I think that a convention on youth work would have a different scene? Am I becoming sexist? Does it really matter if the speaker is a man or a woman? Does it really matter if all speakers are from a certain sex? What does it matter?

Good night eyeglasses.

Good morning eyeglasses.

The third day. There are three keynote speakers who are all male. Jokes on the stage are all about football following the spirit of the World Cup, which is going on the other side of the planet. No comments on dresses, or smiles.

Wondering if there are other participants concerned about the male dominance on the stage. Speaking with some and asking about it. All of them have similar observations, not all of them are bothered by it. A striking comment from a male participant: 'I share the observation. But we need to understand that this is the first time such an important event is organised on such an important level. Everybody wants the best experts on the stage. 'Can we conclude here? Are all the best experts on youth work men? Or is this another representation of the unequal distribution of power in the youth work field as in many others?'

Good night eyeglasses.

Good morning eyeglasses.

The last day. The declaration of the general results of the 1st European Youth Work Convention is presented by the General Reporters group. The group consists of four people. Two men and two women. They are paying lots of attention to sharing the speaking time equally.

Now it is clearer to my eyes. Whenever group is formed (like a group of facilitators or a group of reporters) gender balance is considered. When it comes to keynote speakers, opening speeches and presentations done by youth organisations, there is not much one can do for the convention. There is a clear male dominance in these power positions outside the convention and what we see through our gender-sensitive eyeglasses is just another representation of the reality out there. I doubt if it is necessary to mention that all the closing speeches were made by men.

A remark at the closing: 'We hope that at the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, there will be more women at the front.' The crowd applauds.

Good night eyeglasses. The curtain of the stage is closed now. The convention is over.



Why is it so important to consider gender in youth work?

For now, it is nearly impossible for anyone to completely step out of the social and cultural processes that have an impact on how we see ourselves, how we see others and how we interact. Interaction is one of the bases of our youth work practice. A youth work practice without gender awareness cannot challenge power relations and if this is the case, it can hardly contribute to progress towards a society in which diversity and equality can be enjoyed by all.

How about gender roles in youth work? Can it possibly be different than most other practices in society? Would you share the observation that although a majority of the volunteers in a youth organisation are young woman it is quiet common that the president, the secretary general or the board of the organisation are mainly occupied by men? Do you also know working partners in non-governmental organisations, consisting of a man and a woman, with a clear distribution of roles in which the woman takes the work related to co-ordinating and the man takes the work of representing the outcomes? Have you ever been to the general assembly of a youth organisation with an agenda point on the use of quotas to increase the participation of women and the discussion is mainly held between men? Do you recall other similar experiences?

A pair of gender-sensitive eyeglass can be good for everyone – it can be good for young men, it can be good for young women and for all those who do not want to be referred to in any way in relation to sex or gender. The gender roles that are attributed to each of us are again coming from all of us, which means there is still room for change.

Can you think of ways to tackle gender issues within your organisation? Can this be a topic for one of the next meetings? If the main objective of youth work is to provide space and opportunities for young people to shape their own futures, do you think it should be the responsibility of the youth worker to encourage young people to challenge gender roles? Personal reflection sounds like a good point to start. If you take on the adventure I send you my best wishes. You are heading for a life changing experience!

Some resources

Gender Matters – A manual on addressing gender-based violence affecting young people

<http://www.eycb.coe.int/gendermatters/default.htm>

Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

UNWOMEN

<http://www.unwomen.org>





The Opinion Wall

by Gülesin Nemutlu

On the last day of the 1st European conference on the history of youth work and youth policy, we were invited to comment on the key statements that had shaped the discussions throughout the conference.

The statements were presented on a large 'Opinion Wall'. Papers and pens were provided and there was a clear invitation to write and stick comments on the wall – the method chosen was pretty much similar to what is usually called the 'Silent Floor Discussion'. Except for the silence!

Have a look at the statements. What is your opinion? Agree? Disagree? Why? Why not? Do you think the statements are relevant to the discussion of the history and the development of youth work? Do you think they are relevant for youth work policy today in your context?

Feel free to create your own Opinion Wall and invite your youth worker colleagues, participants, policy makers and researchers to put an opinion on it. The exercise is not to just place and leave 'another brick in the wall' but to let ideas happen and shape the future of youth work through discussions. Following the motto of the conference, 'No future without a past' – let's do something today!



LAW
Laws are there to make things possible, not to act as restrictions.

Does youth work need to be addressed to only working with girls, or is it both boys and girls?

CORE BUSINESS
The core business of youth work is not to reduce teen pregnancies, but to help adolescents make conscious decisions.

The brains of adolescents are asking for youth work.

Is youth information something of the past?

Youth work is control and emancipation.

MOBILITY
Mobility is too much for the middle class.

Statements on the



Social inclusion cannot be restricted to the individual level.
SOCIAL INCLUSION

By looking to the needs of the past, the needs of young people today are sometimes forgotten.
YOUNG PEOPLE

Just because you are on the streets, doesn't make you a detached youth worker.
YOUTH WORKER

There are no better experts on youth than youth themselves.

Organisational professionalisation is undermining occupational professionalism.

There is no such thing as the good society.

Youth work is more than being young together.
TOGETHER

The task of youth work is to connect young people to other young people.
CONNECT

Youth research should be a resource for youth work.
Are European youth platforms forerunners or after-runners?
RESEARCH
EUROPEAN

Youth work is a place where young people can find resources.

Youth work needs to make alliances with other social professions for social and political change.
ALLIANCES

Pathways through the convention

by Tena Prelec and Darko Markovic

Sanja Živoder

Croatian National Agency for the Youth in Action (YiA) Programme

19 *The position of youth work in cross-sectorial co-operation*

'For improved employability of young people we need a cross-sectorial approach.'



Jenny Nilsson

Swedish Youth Council

36 *Human rights and youth work*

'The Belarusian NGO, 'New Faces', made a presentation about their work. It's fascinating how they work with human rights in such a difficult environment.'



Luis Manuel Pinto

European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO)

60 *Youth work and culture/arts*

'Because I am interested in arts and in riding bikes.'



Marianne Milmeister

Researcher University of Luxembourg

68 *Youth work and children's rights*

'There is now a tendency in Luxembourg to merge children's rights and youth rights, and since I was not very well informed about the topic of children's rights I decided to join this workshop.'



Balász Márton

Ministry of National Resources of Hungary – Youth Department

37 *European tools for information of youth workers*

'I wanted to go to this one because I was very much involved in these processes for a long time.'



Miroslaw Krzanik

European Students' Forum (AEGEE)

12 *European tools for funding of youth work*

'The downside in this workshop was that there were huge differences in the level of knowledge of the topic among the participants – I found this disturbing.'



Pathways through the convention

Sanja Živoder

Croatian National Agency for the Youth in Action (YiA) Programme

3 Employment, entrepreneurship and youth work

I chose employment and entrepreneurship because in the new Youth in Action guidelines there is a much bigger emphasis on these topics – and since I am working in the national agency it is essential for me to have a sound knowledge of them. There were great examples; I enjoyed the workshop very much. Still, in my national reality they are not at all easy to put in practice.

38 Youth work and information for young people

Number 38 was too full, so I had to go to number 33, to which I initially subscribed. Still, after staying a while I tried my luck again and went back to 38 – and got lucky this time, so I stayed there. I chose ‘Youth work and information for young people’ because in Croatia there are many islands and it’s very difficult to distribute youth information on them. I really enjoyed the workshop: the example from the Balearic islands was fascinating and extremely useful – I would like to try and make it work in Croatia as well.

Professionalism of youth workers

For me this workshop confirmed the fact that the issue is not at all solved: everybody wants youth work to be organised but there is no agreement, there are two factions. Plus, there are very different realities in different countries.

Youth work and culture/arts

The project we were presented dealt with community work in the poorest neighbourhood of Ghent: they use innovative techniques to involve young people, such as hot air balloons. It was amazingly interesting to me, especially because I used to live in a very poor neighbourhood with a lot of people from minority groups.

Marianne Milmeister

Researcher – University of Luxembourg

11 Social media and youth work

I chose this because we have a project starting about new media and young people. We had a long discussion about what you should and should not do through social networks. It was really useful!

15 The impacts and the effects of youth work

It was interesting to me to explore what youth work can achieve and how it can be measured. As research in the social sciences is always less well funded than other sectors, it is all the more important to assess such questions. It is very difficult also to measure the impact of research – but unfortunately we did not discuss this very much.

31 The socio-economic scope of youth work in Europe

I chose this because I thought it would be about funding, but it turned out to be different from my expectations. The research focused on the value of youth work, socially and economically. To be honest, the topic was confusing; we did not manage to discuss it well because we did not quite understand our task.

The focus message of the workshop seemed to be: if all the volunteering done by youth had to be paid by the government we would need enormous sums of money. The speaker thus stressed the economic worth of youth work.

51 Sustainable support and funding for youth work

I skipped this workshop as I had to solve a problem at my work.

GETTING LOST

*I was not lost in the conference (programme) but I was a bit lost in the building!
I liked very much the Upside Down-Inside Out part – it was a great idea to have these interactive workshops that helped us to find our way through the convention as it took me a lot of time at the beginning to find my way through the whole building!*

Balász Márton

Ministry of National Resources of Hungary – Youth Department

It was difficult for me to take part in every session: since Hungary will take the next presidency, my delegation had to participate in a lot of talks and negotiations throughout the convention. The opening was already very powerful and created great expectations: to me it showed how many people were present, and it was also a pleasant way of recognising several faces I had met during the years I was active as a youth worker.

1 Impact of youth work: international youth work as a tool to involve young people of the immigrant community?

For me, the importance of this convention is that it deals with international youth work, that’s why I was particularly interested in this topic.

The impact and the effects of youth work

At all levels of youth work, there is always the question: how much of an impact can we have? It’s really difficult to give a straight-forward (immediate/precise) answer to this, because youth work has a long-term effect. It was really interesting.

We were divided into three groups, and I chose ‘Development of evidence-based youth work’. This is especially interesting in the case of Hungary, which has a National Youth Strategy, adopted fifteen years ago. Within it, there are two-year

action plans. These are good because after this period we can assess what we need to change for the next time.

45 Professionalism of youth workers

Professionalism of youth work is an extremely important topic. In Hungary there is a two-year higher level certificate that you can earn in 40 universities throughout the country. Still, it is not yet equal to an official degree.

56 Youth work in leisure time, for all and in diversity

I chose ‘youth work in leisure time’ because I needed to relax after all this!

We visited an LGBT youth centre. It is not common in Hungary to have a club like this; it was good to see how they do it here. And it was definitely a lot of fun!

Jenny Nilsson

Swedish Youth Council

My choices were mostly related to the topic of social inclusion, as I work with people with disabilities.

7 Social inclusion and youth work

People with disabilities are very often left out of society.

There was a lot of talk about accessibility. This is a really important topic. People think that accessibility means just physical accessibility, but it actually means a lot of other things as well. Accessibility can be accessibility to information, or expression, or many other different things. For instance in my case – I am deaf and for me this represents a big barrier.

53 Recognition and visibility of youth work

We discussed how we can be visible – this is a crucial topic as well. The discussion was really good and productive.

68 Children’s rights

I chose this topic because it’s essential to human rights. It is important to speak about them.

LOST??

Indeed, the building is really cool but it is tricky to find your way in it.

Pathways through the convention

Luis Manuel Pinto

European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO)

Impact of youth work: international youth work as a tool to involve young people of the immigrant community?

1 We have been wondering for a long time if it's really helping in creating a new society. A very interesting example was presented here.

Training of youth workers and innovation of methods

26 I thought that EPTO had a lot to say about this topic and I wanted to give our perspective.

Our organisation is made up of youth working for youth. There has been a lot of internal discussion about the issue of ageing activists. We solved it by having them stay on as support and a source of expertise, but they cannot take any official position or have voting rights.

39 Fundraising in youth work

For obvious reasons.

43 Professionalism of youth workers

In this case as well, I thought that EPTO had a lot to add to the discussion.

We (EPTO) have been thinking about the life cycle of the volunteer experience and how can you transfer those competences into professional skills. We developed a project about it.

LOST??

I felt lost many times, both physically and intellectually. Sometimes what I was hearing were just empty words.

Miroslaw Krzanik

European Students' Forum (AEGEE)

28 Sustainable support and funding for youth work

It is hard to get to a common point of view on this topic. It also emerged that funding of youth work outside the EU is even harder than inside.

People mostly focused on their national realities, not thinking in a European framework – this creates differences in approach. In my opinion, the more funding is centred at European level (EU/CoE), the better effects we will have in terms of European integration.

39 Fundraising in youth work

The focus was very much on national methods of funding, whereas I would have preferred to hear about European-level funding.

A Belgian representative of AEISEC gave us good examples of how youth work, when truly implemented by young people, can survive in terms of funding. We were shown that the work done by youth is also interesting to companies, and does not need to depend completely on institutional funding. It was a good incentive to be proactive and search for new sources of funding.

53 Recognition and visibility of youth work

I always had the feeling that youth work is not really recognised. Especially in eastern Europe, where I come from, it is seen as just having fun; nobody sees the work we are doing. It is important to challenge this misconception.

59 Youth work in leisure time, for all and in diversity

I think that the easiest way to approach young people (and get them interested in further activism) is to support them in their free time.

We visited a youth centre where professional volunteers were working with children, especially during the summertime, when the youngest are often left alone. I liked it very much: something like this should be supported in every country in Europe. Here in Flanders you can really see and feel the support that the government is giving, it is really different from Poland.

LOST??

I definitely got lost at the beginning, when I saw hundreds of people around me, many of whom were much older than I.

Tips for surviving the YOUTH WORK CONVENTION

- Drink lots of water!
- Be in good shape!
- Prepare for intense networking.
- Be open-minded!
- Just be there and enjoy it!
- Don't make pre-assumptions about it.
- Have fun! Enjoy yourself when meeting people.
- Approach it with hope and you'll always get something interesting out of it.
- If you drink a lot of coffee, bring magnesium pills to avoid shaky hands!





Face check

Which convention type are you?

by Marlies Pöschl

The 1st European Youth Work Convention was not just a conference but an event with many different faces. What did they look like? Were they serious, cool or even sexy? How did you fit in there? And what accessories did you need? You'll find out which 'convention type' you were and – if you didn't attend – what you might have got out of the convention by reading through this experience-based test.



C) THE PERFECT MIXER

Every time the lights go on, you hurry to the next coffee table, which is luckily never very far. You find the breaks between speeches and workshops way too short, because everybody knows the most important things happen in the coffee break. You get to meet the 'President of Belgium', the 'Ambassador of Turkey' or even a 'Convention Tourist'. During the excursion where you visit youth work practices in Ghent by bike, you'd just love to stay longer and philosophise with the organisers of 'Neboboot'. The charming bicycle guide has to prevent you from falling off your bike laughing and/or from picnicking out of your lunch bag under every second tree.

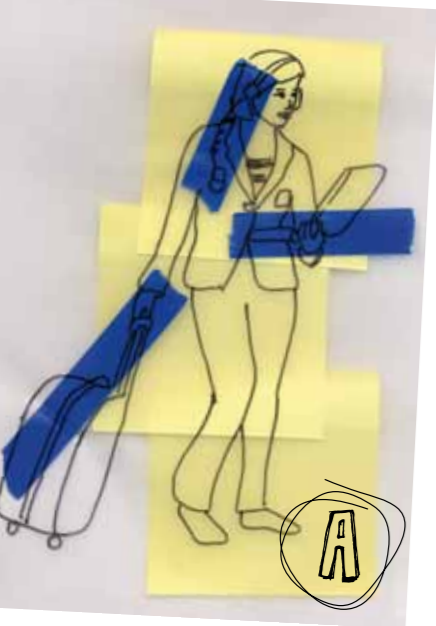
While other people might get grouchy, for you there is nothing more sociable than queues in front of dinner buffets: after five minutes you know everything about the people around you, from their opinions on youth policy to the colour of their socks. Well nothing except for watching soccer games on a big screen with other participants, maybe. The big couches on the stage in the café are your second home and the shuttle bus has to blow its horn five times until you finally say goodbye to your new best friend who gives you a purple badge that says 'all inclusive' as a present.



A) THE BUSY BEE

You jumped onto a plane five minutes after your last conference ended and you arrive at the train station in Brussels in a rush. The smiling people at the help desk set up by the organisers of the convention make sure you have a ticket and arrive just in time for the opening. After entering the convention venue 'Vooruit' another helping hand assists you to check in your flight bag at the safekeeping area. You can now fully concentrate on the real issues of youth work and don't have to worry about your documents until you want to take one of the huge shuttle buses straight to your hotel. Don't forget to grab one of the headsets so that you understand every single word that is spoken on stage!

You quickly write a report at one of the working stations put up in the café, then hurry to the entrance of the theatre hall, slip into a seat and look at the stage where the first speaker appears and next to him is a sign language interpreter. The colour of your lanyard tells you how important you are: white is for participants, green for organisers and orange for press. So does your badge: it says your name, function and the country where you're from. You might finally turn out to be 'President of Belgium' this way!



B) THE CULTURE VULTURE

After arriving at the Vooruit building, you spend half an hour walking around, looking at it from every possible angle. On entering, you are fascinated by the colourful tiles on the walls and the well-crafted ornaments on the windows in this former palace of workers' culture. You are blown away by the aura of this place which is now soaked through with theatre, contemporary art, music and dance. In your head, you still hear the concert of Flip Kowlier that took place here a month before. On the first evening the whole building becomes a youth work theme park and you just can't get enough of it: you answer difficult questions in the assessment centre, meet your youth worker soul mate at the speed dating session, hold a speech in the French revolution room and finally end up putting all your wishes for youth work on one bill in what looks like the casino.

During the workshops, you sometimes find it hard to concentrate on the real issues, because every single detail is so beautiful: the lighting, the red velvet couches, the big posters with images of youth work practice. Still you visit as many workshops as possible, because this way you might end up having a complete set of the fancy buttons with slogans and questions about youth work on them. At the guided tour of S.M.A.K., Ghent's municipal museum for contemporary art, you realise that being at this convention is like putting your head into a huge, shiny black bubble. Will all those impressions fit in the white convention bag designed by Belgian artist Roger Raveel?



D) THE NIGHT OWL

During the day, you might be type A, B or C, but as soon as the shadows get longer and the sun sets, the real you no longer needs to be hidden. When disco lights go on, name tags and business cards get blurry, because at night all cats look grey, but it's a shiny, funny and cheerful shade of grey. Whether at the Welcome Concert, the party on the square in front of S.M.A.K. or at the final Gala alongside the river at the back of Vooruit, you chat, laugh, sing, hug and dance. Missing the shuttle bus is no problem because you stroll around in Ghent until you fall into your bed and still appear at the convention at 9 a.m. in perfect shape. You're back to a type A.





The 1st European Youth Work Conference A view from abroad

by David M. Hansen (PhD),

Assistant Professor, University of Kansas, Department of Psychology and Research in Education



I was invited to provide a perspective on the events of the conference from a 'view from abroad.' I had an ideal role: observe, react, learn! I also had a tactical advantage in some ways because I was able to say some things with a degree of impunity – people seem to tolerate such feedback because if my comments are not accurate or applicable they chalk it up to ignorance on my part or political/cultural insensitivity. As an American, I think others find it even easier to tolerate because we have a history of such blunders and insensitivities (I have learned to laugh at some of the peculiarities of being 'American'). So, what follows is one American's impressions on the events of the conference.

One of the first, and not so profound, impressions is how popular music from the United States is interwoven into the cultural fabric of Belgium (and I suspect most EU countries). Given the pervasiveness of music, I will leverage it to both test your 'youth' knowledge and to convey my impressions. Here is how it will work: I will give you a phrase from a song (in the conference I had the luxury of playing the song) and see if you can identify the singer or musical group. The answers are given at the end.

Let's start with an easy song: 'Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try...' Along this theme, imagine with me if youth did not extend well into the 20s or 30s; what if it ended abruptly at age 18 or 16? I am constantly surprised by the broad definition of youth across many European states. In the United States, there is a tendency to draw a distinct line between youth (typically ending with graduation from High School, approximately aged 17-18) and young adulthood. But at the conference, as I forced my mind to accept a view of youth extending beyond 18 and even into the 30s, I wondered about the risks to the youth and to American society if that were the case. Here is one that occurred to me: it would require expending tremendous amounts of energy and resources to create 'youth spaces', a term that I heard repeated at the conference. And if we create uniquely youth spaces, does this create conditions for committing intergenerational marginalisation or, at worst, intergenerational racism? Where in present society can youth and adults engage in interactive citizenship? Besides the family in the US, organised youth activities are one place where youth can experience healthy relationships with adults (equal power). I leave you with a question from this impression: What would be the risks and benefits to EU countries if youth ended at age 18 instead of spending long periods getting ready for adulthood?

Here is the second phrase from a popular song: 'Well I'm packin' up my game, and I'm a headin' out west ... I wanna be a cowboy, baby' (if you guessed the artist for this song you are probably a youth under the age of 30). The cowboy image and lure is one of being on the edge of society, a loner, independent, behaving by his own set of rules. How does this relate to my impressions from the conference you ask? Youth workers are 'edgy', they push the limits, reaching youth often outside of cultural norms – it's okay, I was a youth worker for ten years and think this is a positive quality. The importance of the 'work' of youth work, however, is now receiving greater recognition by many in society and that could threaten the cowboy-like status of youth work, which brings me to the third song and a related point.

This last song is a little challenging: 'Can't take the effect, And make it the cause' (if you guess this one, your musical repertoire is impressive). It seems that the push to professionalise youth work stems, at least in part, from the 'effect' (real and perceived) of youth workers. By professionalising youth work it helps to publicly legitimise and solidify its effect, but it also has the potential to weaken the effectiveness of the work. In the US, there is a strong push by some agencies funding youth work to create professional standards youth workers must meet, such as best practices, ethics standards, minimum requirements, etc. While this may sound positive on the surface, the 'dark side' of such a system of requirements and accountability becomes evident in a controversial policy to improve the performance of schools: the No Child Left Behind act (NCLB). Part of the intention of the NCLB act was to push schools and teachers to improve what they do. The NCLB act is a 'high stakes' policy – schools in which students under-perform on standardised achievement tests over several years are in jeopardy of losing funding. While NCLB was intended to increase the quality of education across the US, especially among schools serving marginalised youth, it can be blamed, at least partially, for a decrease in the quality of teaching and education! Why?

There is a phenomenon called 'Campbell's Law'. It basically states that when quantitative indicators of a practice or other standard are used to make social decisions (namely funding), there is a strong tendency for the indicators to lose their value/meaning and actually degrade the practice or standard it was intended to evaluate (Campbell, 1971). In the US, teachers comment they feel they have to 'teach to the test' – spend time teaching students how to score well on tests instead of teaching them content, practice, and application. Part of the problem with NCLB is that any one student's achievement is the result of many, many factors, teachers being one factor, socio-economic status another. Youth workers face the same dilemma: demonstrate a direct effect of the work. In reality, the effect is a result of a complex relationship between youth, youth worker and society. So let me end with a final, short comment on my time at the Ghent conference.

The field of youth work has changed and needs to change; staying the same is not an option. An intent of the conference was to push youth workers to champion that change instead of letting outside forces determine what youth work is and how it should be done. In the US, researchers are part of the championing process – policy is shaped by empirical research (but only to a certain degree). The methods of championing in the EU countries need to come from those within it, including youth. In the coming years the field of youth work will 'face the music' and it will change. It is my hope that future conferences will continue to put youth workers (and youth) to the forefront of this change.



About the Campbell's Law:

Citation: Amrein, A.L. & Berliner, D.C. (2002, March 28). High-stakes testing, uncertainty, and student learning Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10(18). Retrieved 6 October 2010 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/>.

MARKER

Sometimes we find a nice answer to some nice questions, but not always...

by Mark Taylor

'Marker' is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate, questions and a fusion between straight and curly. It may also inspire thaumaturges. Little quotes dotted around were (over)heard by myself in Ghent.

We wonder: can we get flat sticky notes?

To those who wonder if they will ever find a use for anything in Marker articles, read on...



Sometimes we have the chance to learn something which is **clever**, **fairly simple**, and **immediately useful**

A great experiential learning trainer — Luk Peeters — told recently of the frustration of using an otherwise wonderful training tool: sticky notes (or to use the name of the most popular trade mark 'Post-Its'). Too often we are faced with a host of these notes, curling upwards and therefore mainly unreadable unless you stand right next to them.

Luk asked us if we knew what he had learnt from a colleague called Jacopo Nicelli? Surprisingly, none of us had a clue what he was talking about. It appears that we have all been taking the sticky notes the wrong way off their friends and this increases the tendency to curl upwards! We need to take them off horizontally, placing our fingers as close as possible to the sticky part.

It is not completely easy as you have to unlearn your previous practice of grasping one of the free corners and just pulling. But it is admirably possible and, yes, you too can have flat sticky notes in your sessions!

Are you a digital native or immigrant?



Youth should be conquered by youth!

Who says who is a trainer?

It may not have escaped your notice in this edition of *Coyote* that there were many spirited discussions during the convention about the developing concepts of 'youth worker' — for me, this is great, as long as we don't get stuck in a downward spiral of definitions without end. We find much the same dynamic surrounding the concept of 'trainer' and we are still working on finding agreements about it in the context of the youth work field. When people who call themselves 'trainers' meet, then there is often a discussion which includes professional exchange about others and how they are to work with, (or you could call this 'gossip'). 'So what about X? what was he like?' I asked a colleague, totally unprepared for the venom which came back in the reply: 'Oh him, personally I don't regard him as a TRAINER... He's more an Organiser of Activities'. Have you heard any better descriptions lately?

And what to do with people who can't describe themselves?

What advice to give here? 'Personally, I don't look at myself as a TRAINER... I prefer concentrating on all the preparations in a team and thinking about the educational logic and what kind of things fit for this particular group of participants and then I would much rather sit in the corner and watch what happens when a colleague delivers what we have agreed on. I don't need to be in the spotlight or run a session. So what do you call me then???'

How to live without an ukulele?

Until recently I was a shadow of a trainer, without rhyme or reason, although I did have a beautiful guitar which did help. Then I was persuaded to get this →

And I find it difficult to imagine life without it. Will ukuleles influence the new generation of key competences for trainers? Who knows? Try one!

And lastly

Thank you for writing and poking me, although I continue to worry about the consequences of facebooking. Next time we look more closely into the pataphysics of endless prevarication.

What a great job this is!

Being a platform of youth workers ourselves...

If we don't promote youth work, who will?!

Childhood is a time of anxiety; during adulthood we are not happy; there is a prospect of youth being happy!

Invest in the young!



Sounds, words, inspirations

Gordon Burn (2008)
born yesterday — the news as novel,
faber & faber

The Books (2010)
The Way Out,
Temporary Resident

John Hegley (1990)
Glad to wear Glasses,
Andre Deutsch, Ltd

'Palin returns to Alaska to feed',
headline, The Onion,
www.theonion.com

Rosamund Stone Zander,
Benjamin Sander (2000)
The Art of Possibility, Penguin





Notes on contributors

Kristof D'hanens is responsible for communication and new media at Jeugdwerknet, a Flemish youth work organisation that gathers useful information for youth workers on one website: www.jeugdwerknet.be. Every two years he and his colleagues organise a huge conference about youth and new media for youth workers in Flanders. He also coordinates 'VER-kijker' (which means 'binoculars' in Dutch); a team of young volunteers who write articles about Flemish youth work.

Filip Coussée is a researcher at Ghent University. His focus is on social pedagogy as a perspective on social work and youth and community work. He studied the history of youth work in Flanders and its connections to developments in the other social professions and in other European countries.

Ildikó Ferencsik is an economist and full-time student, currently working on her two masters degrees, in Hungary and Belgium, in the field of business management. She is the National Youth Delegate of the Hungarian EU Presidency and represents Hungarian Youth Organisations in several forums including the European Steering Committee of the Structured Dialogue. She has a volunteer background in AEGEE-Europe (European Students' Forum) where she co-ordinated a great variety of projects.

David M. Hansen is currently a researcher focused on adolescent learning and development, particularly in settings that support "real-world" learning. He is an Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas. Before moving into academia, he helped found a non-profit organisation committed to 'youth work' (American style) in a low income neighborhood of Chicago's west side, so issues of youth work and of youth in general are a part of his passion. Among other things, he is on the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition (a diverse group of national leaders in the youth work field) that is working to develop the youth worker workforce in the United States.

Karen Jacobs has a brilliant background in local youth work, archaeology and museums, arts, culture and heritage education. In 2001, she was part of the Belgian EU Presidency Youth. Ever since, she has worked for the Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media. Thanks to job rotation in the Division of Youth she gained a wide range of experience in local and national youth (work) policy, funding of projects and organisations, publishing a magazine, etc. In 2009 she happily joined the project team of the Belgian EU Presidency Youth and has been active in drafting policy papers and co-organising presidency events.

Darko Markovic comes from Belgrade, Serbia. He is a trainer, psychologist and psychodrama therapist, one of the founders of Grupa "Hajde da..." (www.hajdeda.org.rs) and owner of Inn.Side – people and training. His main areas

of interest are training of trainers, emotional intelligence, European Voluntary Service and developing strategies for better recognition of non-formal education/learning at national and European level. His training motto is: Training with passion - Learning with smile. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Gülesin Nemutlu Ünal is a freelance trainer and consultant currently working from her learning-design office called tekne based in Istanbul. She has worked for a variety of organisations, institutions and enterprises throughout Europe and Turkey. Major areas of work include: training of trainers, human rights education, volunteerism, civil society development and youth work. Her recent work involves educational game design. She is passionate about pirate stories. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Giuseppe Porcaro has been the Secretary-General of the European Youth Forum since June 2009 and he has been involved in youth policy development both as a young volunteer and as a professional. Giuseppe has a PhD in Political Geography and likes indie music.

Marlies Pöschl is a visual artist currently based in Vienna. Just having completed her studies in Art and Communicative Practices and German in Vienna and Utrecht, she is now looking forward to realise a collaborative video project on processes of education in different historical and contemporary formats. She also works as freelance media designer and film operator. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Tena Prelec is a freelance journalist and interpreter. She is currently finishing her MA in European Studies at University College London, after having graduated *cum laude* in translation and interpreting from the University of Trieste. During her YNGO activity, she has been member of the European Board of AEGEE – European Students' Forum, and is currently a correspondent for the European Youth Forum. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Mark Taylor is a trainer and writer and is grateful to be part of both the Unique network and via Experientia (the International Academy of Experiential Education) as they make life challenging and even a joy. He is a recent convert to the ukulele and intends to make his own thick cut marmalade in the years ahead. A founding member of the *Coyote* editorial team, he has yet to meet Spiffy. A *Coyote* editorial team member.

Stijn Vlasschaert lives in Brussels and has been working for JES vzw for almost ten years. He fell madly in love with big cities and their urban culture. For the last four years, Stijn has been responsible for youth work training in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. He is a proud dad with two kids and passionate about every vehicle with at least two wheels under it!



The Adventures of Spiffy

Mark Taylor • The Big Family

N° XXI
[sic]

Spiffy gets "conventional"

How do you feel, Spiffy?

KERPLUNK
KNOCK KNOCK

Great! Double strength!
Now I'm off to discover who I really am!

Spiffy arrives in Ghent...

Vooruit is ready for Spiffy, but is the opposite true?

VOORUIT

What an amazing building! What a place to construct my new identity!

Spiffy gets buttoned up!

Aaagh!
The choice is so massive!
What am I?

ahaha!!!

Haha haha!!!

Hahahaha!!!

For sale!

Ex-convention lunch bags! Ideal for storing used metaphors about youth work.

Warning:
may contain closed pistachio nuts, damp dogs and angels with spotty faces.

You are a sociocultural facilitating animator, Spiffy!

NO! You have a wider range of key competences, don't limit yourself!

Make things easier for yourself, become a youth leader!

Advice is not always so easy to take...

Spiffy Pro-Dialogue partners offer new service:

automatic working groups, buzz groups, question sessions, etc. to be inserted into research presentations. No need for undiplomatic facilitation!

Spiffy, relax! We have the answer! We are ALL youth workers here!! Youth workers! Youth workers! Youth workers!

Convinced?

Oh look, I'm a "youth worker", but can I still be a trainer too? Do I have to be a bit more specific?

Aha! The journey continues...



'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 magazine addressed to trainers, youth workers, researchers, policymakers and all those who want to know more about the youth field in Europe.

Coyote wants to provide a forum to share and give new insights into some of the issues facing those who work with young people. Issues relating to diverse training methodologies and concepts; youth policy and research; and realities across this continent. It also informs about current developments relating to young people at the European level.

Coyote is published by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth. The main activities of the partnership are training courses, seminars, and network meetings involving youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, researchers, policy-makers, experts and practitioners. Their results are disseminated through different channels including this magazine.

Coyote can be received free of charge (subject to availability; please contact: youth-partnership@partnership-eu.coe.int) and is available in an electronic format at: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/publications/Coyote/Coyote>

Coyote is not responsible for the content and character of the activities announced in this magazine. It cannot guarantee that the events take place and assumes no responsibility for the terms of participation and organisation.

Coyote aims to use a form of English that is accessible to all. We aim to be grammatically correct without losing the individuality or authenticity of the original text. Our aim is that the language used in the magazine reflects that used in the activities described.

Some articles are offered by contribution and others are commissioned specifically by the editorial team in order to achieve a balance of style and content. If you have an idea for an article then please feel free to contact the editor.

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