

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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References:

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

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

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

Useful links:

European Youth Forum, 'Structured dialogue: a bridge between young people and decision makers'. Available at: http://www.youthforum.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=836&lang=en&Itemid=30

European Commission, 'Structured dialogue'. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc1707_en.htm



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! 😊

