



Viii! Very important inspiring inputs!

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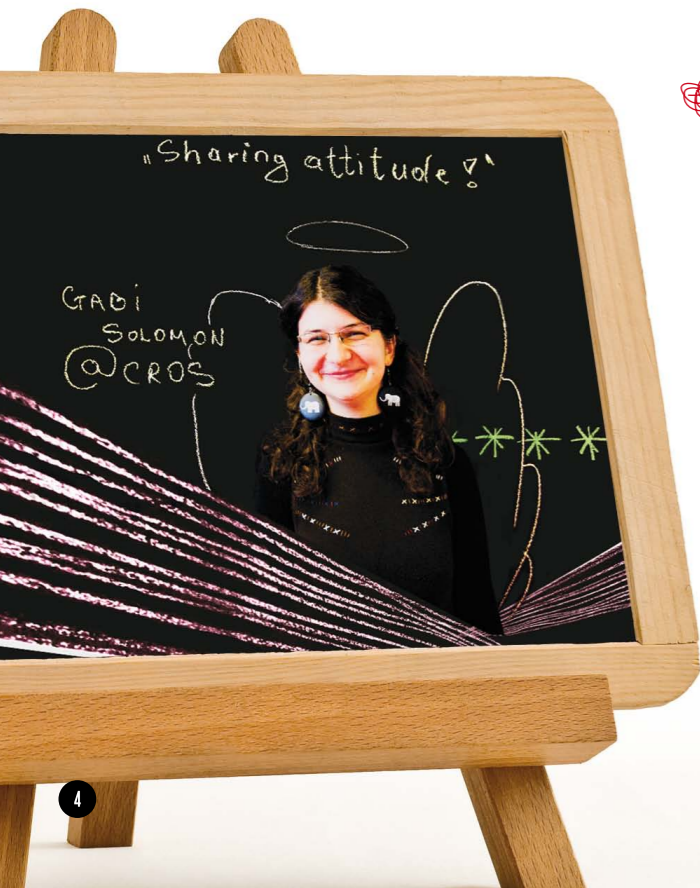
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Sometimes recognition starts with self-recognition, with our own appreciation of the value of our work and the impact non-formal learning has had on us and those around us. In the symposium, three exciting people were asked to share their Viii (very important inspiring inputs) about non-formal learning and youth work's impact on their life paths. You will find below some highlights from their stories.

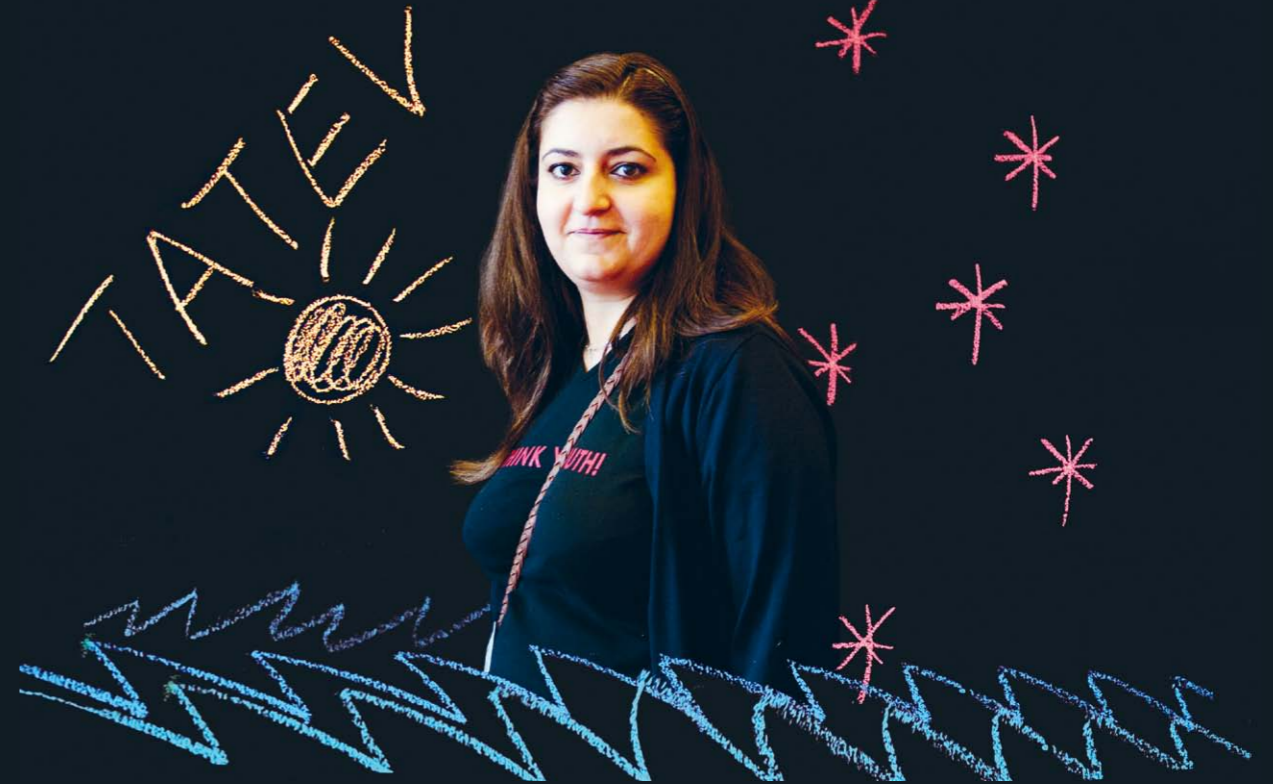


GABRIELA SOLOMON

Centrul de Resurse pentru Organizatii Studentesti (CROS)

Ten years ago, I started a youth project to prove to my parents that beautiful things are possible in Romania. It changed the way I understood reality; it gave me self-confidence and the possibility to meet other young people who are as passionate about education as I am.

Today, the alternative model of higher education that we are piloting at CROS (Centre for Resources for Student NGOs) combines the best of the non-formal and formal education worlds. We want to have a holistic approach to education and to train young people so that they are capable of living happy and fulfilled lives while discovering their talent and passions.



TATEVIK MARGARYAN

Freelance trainer

My involvement in non-formal education has certainly had a tremendous impact on me and the young people I work with. But this impact was multiplied and spread also to other people around me, first of all to my family. There was always evidence of this, however I really realised it after one of my projects when I arrived home and told my parents that I was going to marry an Egyptian Muslim. To understand the level of shock that my parents would experience, one should know that for an Armenian any Muslim is associated with the genocide. So it was very surprising for me that the first reaction of my father was that he was surprised I first mentioned religion and nationality to present this person! I was ready to marry an Egyptian and move to Egypt. And here again, I could not just live calmly in my comfort zone and decided I had to get to know the culture by living with my mother-in-law. And you know what? My everyday life is a process of intercultural learning and daily communication. I experience what

I teach as a trainer. And as my mother-in-law was also an indirect beneficiary of the work that my husband was doing (he is also active in the youth field), we have managed to build a relationship that makes me believe that intercultural dialogue is exactly what we have.

The last story in this frame happened just a week ago, when my mother-in-law wanted to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca but could not find an airplane ticket. She was very disappointed and was speaking with my mom about it. The next day, my mother-in-law got the call that there was a ticket for her. The same evening, when my mom called, I told her the news, but she proudly said that she was sure about it since she had been to church to pray for my mother-in-law to be able to do her pilgrimage. I started to laugh as it sounded so funny that a Christian prayed for a Muslim to go on the Hajj. But now I think that this is the inter-religious harmony that I would like to see for the whole society.

»»» Uiiii! Very important inspiring inputs!



TAREK AMRAOUI

Euro-Arab Long-term Training Course, participant

I was born in France and my roots are Moroccan. I met with lots of difficulties in my life, for example I was always fighting with people when I was confronted with racism. A lot of my friends are in jail or in a bad situation because they didn't find their path. I've done a lot of bad things because I was angry, with lots of hatred inside me. Why hatred? You know, in France it's difficult for "French" people like us to succeed. For a long time I had an identity crisis. It was due to the fact that you have to choose between your French and Moroccan sides, but I could not! Today if someone asks me: "Do you feel French or Arab?", my answer is: "I am the two sides, and I have two cultures." It's like asking me to choose between my mom and my dad and that's impossible. Today I believe my double culture is more of an asset than a handicap and I am proud of it.

In terms of the impact of non-formal learning and youth work on my career, currently I am taking part in a long-term training course organised by the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States. In this context, I am developing a project that aims at working with young people who have fewer opportunities. Our goal is to enhance young people's awareness and involvement as citizens in civil society. This project is important for me because I'm from the same social environment as the young people who are targeted by this project. My goal is to defend and promote young people with fewer opportunities and migrant backgrounds. This intervention is dedicated to them!

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