



## Imagining "Imagine"

Marlies Pöschl interviews Ivana Kuzmanic, Svjetlana Marijon and Maja Dragojevic (Zamisli, Zagreb)

Images by Marlies Pöschl

What is it like to be a teenager in need of information in Zagreb? I put on my sneakers and set out to find the answer at the Youth Info Centre Zagreb, which is a project of the association "Zamisli". This might already show you that I'm not that young at heart anymore, because as I will find out later on, most requests are actually happening online – via e-mail or Facebook. This seems understandable since the youth info centre is located in the south of the city, 20 minutes by tram from the central square. The office of Zamisli is a small but friendly space, packed with books, folders and leaflets. The six women who work there are like living books: they have lots of information and experience to share – and like in youth information, each of them joined in the conversation to give her views and expertise.

Zamisli (Imagine) could be called an octopus in the youth field: it is not only one of the four regional youth info centres in Croatia (covering Zagreb and the provinces in the north), but the organisation also provides counselling and support to teenagers with disabilities. Being a professional youth counsellor, Ivana tells me "doesn't mean that we know everything. But we do research and contact people who know the answer, so we can gather all the necessary information or connect the young people with them."

The organisation tries to react in very flexible ways to the needs of the young people that come to consult them – for example they invented a special typewriting service for deaf students, as Svjetlana Marijon (president of Zamisli) told me. "One of the deaf students told us: 'I would like to study, but I am not able to participate in class – so what can you do?' We remembered that at a conference in Innsbruck, we saw that someone was typing for a deaf participant. We thought: that's an example of good practice; we could try that."

One of their aims for the future is to spread out, says Ivana Kuzmanic: "We are hoping to have a bigger youth centre – not just a youth info centre, but a real youth centre." This is an ambitious project since youth info centres and youth clubs, for example, usually have to be in separate spaces in Croatia. "We're now in the starting phase, but eventually we have to talk to the city about the space we would like. The problem is that you need constant money if you want to maintain the quality of your work." The fact that their funding is always project based makes it difficult for Zamisli to plan for the future.

But the organisation wouldn't be called "Imagine" if they hadn't already got an idea on how to make their plan possible. Maja Dragojevic imagines the future like this: "Now that Croatia is entering the European Union, the structure fund will be open for us and we would like to apply for it. Like this we will have more chances for our ideas to be recognised."

