



Vox Pop

Tell me how it works there and I'll see how it can work here



by Matina Magkou

Images by Marlies Pöschl

When you bring together people working in the same field, it is unavoidable: plenary presentations, workshops, corridor conversations are about models, ideas, projects that are implemented in a certain location of the European geography. All this with the aim of learning from each other, right? Now, to what extent does something that is happening in another country/region / city becomes a source of inspiration for our work? Do events, like the "Symposium on the role of information and counselling in fostering young people's social inclusion and access to their rights", actually help people get new ideas by listening to what is happening elsewhere? And would they actually try to "copy-paste" or adapt these ideas to their own realities?

Matina Magkou talked to different participants at the symposium to get some answers and understand what has been an inspiring "coming-from-elsewhere" moment for them either throughout their involvement in youth information and counselling services so far, or during this event.



1. Jelena Miljanic
currently working at the UN Co-ordination Office in Montenegro, at the time working in the Forum Montenegro NGO as co-ordinator of the youth information and resource centre

Our colleagues from Slovenia (MISSS (Youth information counselling centre)) opened the doors for youth information and counselling development in Montenegro by hosting a study visit to their organisation and other youth information services in Slovenia. This fostered our partnership with EYRICA which introduced a network of professionals and organisations that has accompanied our efforts. Seeing and experiencing youth information in practice helped us plan and implement our work. Back at that time, Slovenia was the closest Balkan country with developed youth information systems and these similar realities helped by sharing experiences that could be implemented in our country.

2. Nela Sladojevic
Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport of the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina (nela.sladojevic@gmail.com)

I have seen that several youth centres in Belgium have workers to reach out to people on the street. This is an important approach because the majority of young people would not come to the youth centre themselves and it is important to reach non-organised youth, especially those that are most in need. In my country only 7% of young people are members of youth organisations or are using services of youth organisations. Also, in Belgium, they have invested in rural youth information services, which are needed in my country although not yet recognised by local governments as a priority. We are currently developing quality standards for youth centres in the Republic of Srpska, and my international experience and exposure are helping me in this work.



3. Manana Kavtaradze
Head of the International Relations Division, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia (mancho.pietila@oujka.fi)

A conversation with Jorge Orlando Queirós from the Portuguese Youth Institute has been an inspiration for me. The way they reached young people in rural areas using info buses full of information related to youth (sexual education, scholarships, mobility opportunities, etc.) was an idea that we are trying to implement in Georgia right now. In Georgia there are many rural areas where young people don't have access even to the Internet. With music, fireworks and promotional material we try to attract them and address their needs. We are still looking for creative ideas. If Coyote readers have suggestions, write to me!

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4. Antonio Saccone CEO of the International Institute for Sustainable Development Policy and Diplomacy of Sport in Slovenia (antonio.saccone@spolint.org)

I work in an association dealing with sports and social change. After coming to this symposium and listening to colleagues from other countries, I am convinced that our activity makes sense and sports and outdoor games can actually contribute to the counselling of young people. Listening to the experiences from other countries and sectors I realised that a coach or a co-ordinator of a sports club has a social and educational role and he or she has to be trained in that. I came here without a lot of awareness and now I think that our mission is compatible with youth information. It has been a learning experience and a motivation that we are on the right track!

5. Albion Zeka researcher at University of Pristina and youth expert, Kosovo (albionzeka@gmail.com)

I come from Kosovo where youth information is at level 0: there is no structure, no infrastructure, no funding. Coming to this symposium was inspiring for me to see that there are networks that help you start things and people that are offering to help. This symposium helped me to find out which people I could seek advice from. And it also raised a question: how can we ensure that we are giving the right to information to all young people and at the same time have personalised information services? At least I know the question now – the million dollar answer will come afterwards. But now I know colleagues from around Europe that I can ask!



6. Claudia Reis National Co-ordinator, Youth Information and Counselling Centres, Portuguese Sport and Youth Institute (claudia.reis@ipdj.pt)

Evaldas from Lithuania shared with us a dynamic and empowering Youth in Action project called "I know it all". This initiative promotes information on youth mobility and European opportunities through journalism. Through this project, a young person becomes a journalist in a foreign country, gathers information and resources and reports on his or her experience. This activity also enhances social inclusion because it gives access to knowledge about the society and the cultural reality that otherwise would be difficult to get. Thank you, Evaldas! I will see how we can do this in Portugal as well!



7. Ibai Guirles France Bénévolat. International projects co-ordinator (l.guirles@francebenevolat.org)

Even though I am active around Europe participating in a number of youth projects, I was impressed to see how young people were involved, engaged and supported in a *Jugend Hausen* in a small rural area in Germany (Bühl, Tübingen) a few years ago. It showed me that this structure was responding to the needs of the local population and the municipality. The young people that were there had the opportunity to share; there were moments where a youth worker was with them but also moments when they were alone to take decisions and express themselves in their own way. I use this experience in different moments in assessments I do for municipalities and stakeholders regarding youth information and counselling.

8. Pepe Moreno Youth Information Network, Directorate General for Employment and Youth in Castilla La Mancha, Spain (jmoreno@spolint.org)

Considering the framework in which I work, a local government in a country that has very high unemployment rates, I was impressed by the project presented by Estonia. The information they were giving, the experiences that they had, showed me how much can be achieved through a local centre and that can be transported to a youth centre. In the formal education system all this cannot be achieved; that's why we need to find ways of collaboration to help young people in their professional development.



9. Evaldas Rupkus Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT) (evaldas@eurodesk.it)

Listening to the keynote speech of Fiona McIntyre from Scotland, I was inspired by the co-design approach in information and counselling services. This means that youngsters should not only be the recipients of information and counselling services, but they have a big role to play in the planning and evaluation stages and should be fully integrated. I also think that Jan from Bosnia and Herzegovina made a good point: the role of Eurodesk in the South-Eastern Europe region should be further explored to provide more information opportunities to young people from the region. Why start all over again if we already have a lot to build on?



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10. Lana Gorianzky
BREZA youth NGO, Croatia
(lana.gorianzky@gmail.com)

I liked the project BYSTRÖM that was put in place in Finland and it is a good example of how institutions should be connected. I hope that one day we'll have something similar in Croatia because it is a very useful and needed system for youth.

The European youth portal (http://europa.eu/youth/EU_en) got my attention because I think that most young people in Croatia don't know about it and it has excellent information that is very useful. I hope my opinion helped you and I want to congratulate you for being so wonderful in this symposium. You were so open and everybody could talk to you and find out all the information they needed. Well done! Keep up the good work!

11. Andres Lokk
Youth Work Centre, Estonia
(andres.lokk@entk.ee)

Every time I travel to a meeting or to visit colleagues in other countries, this works as a time for "reflection" for me. I see what other people are doing, what the realities are in the different countries and I feel proud that in Estonia we have good structures and good support from the government side. Still the issue that arises when we discuss with colleagues is that we still have a lot of work to do in order to achieve social inclusion of all young people through information and counselling. I like the Finnish idea that in the same space young people can find different services for what they need.



12. Margarita Kotenko
Projects co-ordinator in the
National Youth Council of Moldova
(margarita.kotenko@cntm.md)

I remember some years ago, when I started to be active in the youth field, many participants at the seminars, workshops and training courses were bragging about how many international activities they had attended.

During this symposium I was glad to observe that many youth NGOs and services are focusing on the "hard-to-reach" youngsters. The idea of involving the vulnerable groups is in the air and hopefully with combined efforts we will succeed in empowering the isolated and include the excluded youngsters.



13. Ivona Separovic
ZAMISLI association for promoting
quality education for youth with disabilities

In Austria, they have a fabulous system and as a young person with disabilities you can get all the information that you need. In Croatia, when you want to ask something which is connected to health conditions or education or something else, you cannot get the right answers easily. Awareness is the key point: if you know what you need to know, then you can ask it! This should also be the role of information and counselling services, because if you don't know how to express your needs, then you are stuck in a box.



14. Robiu Salisu
Clic Online, Wales Youth Ambassador
(chatwithrobinson@hotmail.co.uk)

One of this things I've learnt at this symposium is about the two projects currently taking place in Estonia. The projects are called "switch on" and "getting started" and their aim is to get young people back into employment. I look forward to sharing this idea with my organisation and seeing if there is a way we can use a similar method to face youth unemployment in Wales.