



How to give birth to the 2nd European Youth Work Convention

Jan Vanhee, Project leader of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention

The 1st European Youth Work Convention “celebrating diversity in work” in 2010 requested, on the basis of the 1st Declaration on Youth Work in Europe, that “the European Union, the Council of Europe and their member states, and the current and next trio Presidencies of the EU should build up an agenda, an action plan and the necessary resources for its realisation. The agenda should culminate in a 2nd European Youth Work Convention”.



Not moving forward was not an option

Already at the beginning of 2011, our colleagues from Cyprus showed their interest in organising a second convention. Unfortunately our friend and very good colleague Thrasos died too early. Then Hans-Georg Wicke and his colleagues from the National Agency of Germany created opportunities, during several European seminars and conferences, to reflect on and discuss possibilities for organising a second convention. The European Youth Forum also contributed to this goal of finding a way to push forward this project by organising a breakfast meeting in Brussels.

The momentum was growing slowly. After the 9th Youth Ministers Conference of the Council of Europe in Saint Petersburg, the Flemish minister of Youth asked us to do “a feasibility study for the organisation of a second convention” in view of the upcoming Belgian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. Based on this paper we could truly start the discussions within the three communities of Belgium with the administrations, national agencies, the youth councils and some researchers.



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Building strong European co-operation

During the long process of finding European partners, I was from the beginning very pleased with the great enthusiasm of the Joint Council on Youth of the Council of Europe. Also from the two institutions behind the youth partnership, the European Youth Forum, EYCA, Eryica, Eurodesk, the European Youth Foundation, PEYR... there was more than just interest showing! Their strong commitment and contribution to the preparation in two European Steering Committee meetings were the basis for Howard Williamson’s background paper on finding common ground for youth work in Europe! This paper gave us a new state of play and formulated seven challenges for youth work in Europe. The focus for the convention was now clear!

Finding sufficient money for the convention was something else (read: a nightmare). We could say that the budget was safe and guaranteed only two months before the event. This long preparation was not at all a walk in the park. I also met also a lot of non-believers; and the times they are a’ changing, especially in view of the so-called “crises”.

Youth work development is a *Perpetuum mobile* in Europe

Nevertheless the results of the second convention, formulated in a second declaration based on the discussions, reflections and contributions of 500 youth workers, policy makers, researchers, practitioners from all over Europe, are a new milestone in the landscape of European youth work. They motivate us to work hard on a legal text that hopefully will be adopted by the Committee of Ministers within two years and brings us to the next European Youth Work Convention. (Thanks, Germany!) European youth work development needs this and youth workers deserve this!



Illustrations by Aline Rollin