5. After Training

5.1 Transfer and Multiplying: How to use the training results and how to pass it all on…

"So the journey is over and I am back again where I started, richer by much experience and poorer by many exploded convictions, many perished certainties. For convictions and certainties are too often the concomitants of ignorance. Those who like to feel they are always right and who attach a high importance to their own opinions should stay at home. When one is travelling, convictions are mislaid as easily as spectacles; but unlike spectacles, they are not easily replaced."

Aldous Huxley, Jesting Pilate

A major aim of European youth training programs is to motivate and equip an increasing number of young people for international co-operation by using the potential and contacts of their international organisations and networks. Another aim is to enable practitioners from national or local youth organisations, services or groups to give a European dimension to their work by building up co-operation with like-minded partners abroad. Yet another aim is to give youth workers and youth leaders tools to be better able to deal with the realities and challenges of the multicultural environments they encounter in their own communities and countries. Some training courses focus on providing participants with the skills and knowledge to implement their specific projects, while others aim more generally to enable young people to organise youth projects or issue-based work in international or intercultural settings.

Whatever the focus or theme of a particular training course, participants are expected to take action when they return home. A constant question is how to best enable participants to use and spread their learning experiences from training courses in their own working environments. Using knowledge or skills gained during a training event in the home context is often called 'transfer'. Passing knowledge and skills on to other people and projects is often named 'multiplying'. As learning experiences are made within the specific frame of a particular training activity, in a setting that can only create moments of sharing and simulating different realities, the challenge of transfer and multiplying is the greatest for international training activities, but the task is essential for every training.

The question of transfer is important in particular in view of the priority that is given in European training programmes to working with 'multipliers'. The word refers to people that work in a position that enables them to spread training experiences in their own environments – their organisation or service, their youth group or project. Training should not only benefit the person taking part in it, but also be passed on by that person to other young people.

5.2 Multiplying – what are the possibilities?

"The course has increased my motivation because I know that other people are motivated towards similar goals whereas in my organisation the focus is on local events..."

"The course greatly increased my confidence that I can fully undertake and develop an international project."

(Participants, Training Course on Euro-Mediterranean Co-operation, Strasbourg 2000)

When asked to evaluate their learning process after a training course, participants often express how much the training has increased their motivation for international youth work. Increasing participants' motivation and confidence in their own abilities is a major result of most international training events and, if channelled and supported, a strong factor in encouraging follow-up action after the training.

A stronger involvement in international youth work is certainly one major multiplying effect, but follow-up should also take place at local level to bring the benefit of the international experience back to peers, the organisation and the community. Multiplying a training experience can happen in different ways and involve different levels of activity.

Type of multiplying	Examples
Action: Take some action following the training course to use and pass on some of the training outcomes within your own environment	– Inform your own organisation about the training and its outcomes. – Use your strengthened confidence and motivation to present your new ideas to your own organisation, service, group or project. – Use some of the methods experienced during the training with your own group of young people back home. – If there is a course report, make it available and hold workshops on its use as a resource.
Actors: Enable other people to use experiences from the training course	– Organise a workshop for other youth leaders in your environment in which you run a simulation game that was run during the training and discuss with your colleagues how it could be used in your work. – Invite youth leaders or youth workers from your area to a meeting where you inform them about funding programs you have learnt about during the training. Discuss how you can spread and use this information. – Train some of your colleagues or of the young people in your group on some of the skills learnt at the training (e.g. how to prepare and manage an international youth project).
Project: Pass on the experience of the training by creating a project that is implemented after the training (with or without your involvement)	– Run a specific project that was developed during the training, possibly involving other course participants, after the training course (such as a youth exchange, a work camp, seminar, voluntary service project, etc.) – Present a project that you developed during the training to your organisation, even if you cannot follow it up, and perhaps someone else can takes it up and implement it.
Model: Organise new activities using the model of activities experienced or developed during the training	– Adapt a particular method from the training, or the training course itself, for use in your own context, possibly publish and distribute it. This method or course may in turn be used by other people. – A youth exchange, the first for the organisation, is organised following the training course. Another youth exchange is run a year later, following the same model and based on the experience and expertise acquired in the meantime.
Follow-up: Projects or actions developed, or methods acquired during a training course are implemented following the training and give rise to new ideas for new projects, actions, methods, and so forth.	– After you have organised a youth exchange following the training, the two organisations involved decide to exchange volunteers to get to know each other better and benefit more from each other's experiences. – After you have invited people in your environment to an information day about the funding programs you have learnt about during the training, some people decide to organise another such information day for another community they work with. Some people decide to apply for a project.

5.3 Preparing participants during a training course for transfer and multiplying

"The course opened up my mind to opportunities that never felt too close and reachable."

"It's quite impossible to sum up how many things have changed in these few days for me..." *(Participants, training course on Euro-Mediterranean co-operation 2000)*

One of the strong effects of international training events is that they are very intensive emotional experiences. This intensity is created by the residential setting, the group process and the contents and methodology of such activities, where a focus is put on participation, active involvement, sharing of thoughts and feelings, learning by doing, group work and intercultural learning. The creation and facilitation of an intense group dynamic is an educational approach which uses the group as a learning resource and enhances the intercultural learning process. Another element is the excitement of meeting and living with like-minded and equally motivated people from different parts of Europe for a short period, and then having to disperse again. At the end of a one-week training course, participants often find it difficult to return home and leave the others behind. Minds and hearts are filled with strong new impressions, beliefs and convictions have been challenged and shaken, and many new ideas have been encountered and absorbed. Not surprisingly, participants often wonder how to make people at home understand the experience they have lived.

Participants often express at the end of training courses that they expect to encounter difficulties at home:

"It is a question for me how to share the information with other members of my organisation and pass on successfully the skills, knowledge, motivation and enthusiasm to co-workers in my organisation."

"How can I identify the motivated people among my partners?"

"Convincing the director of my organisation to accept the changes in my project and get real support for the project from my superiors will be difficult."

"I need to know how to persuade my co-workers that the changes made in the project are beneficial and necessary."

"I'm afraid of feeling isolated in my organisation."

"I will need technical help to implement the project, the help of the trainers."

(Participants, training course on Euro-Mediterranean Co-operation, 2000)

The question for trainers, given their awareness of the emotional challenges of such training situations, is how to manage closure so that the distance or even rupture between participants' realities and the reality of the training situation is softened. An important aspect is to maintain a constant focus on the participants' home environment during the different phases of the training. Designing concrete links to the participants' working situation and environment is an important element of the preparation phase, as well as during the implementation, evaluation and follow-up phases of the training.

Suggestions for reflection

Preparation phase

• Consider the participants during the preparation: what are their needs, motivations, interests, expectations and fears regarding the training? How do they expect to use the experiences of the training? You could include questions relating to these aspects in the application form or deal with them at the beginning of the seminar. *(see 3.4.5 on participant's profiles, and section 3.5 on program planning in general)*

• Involve the participants' organisations in the preparation: make sure that the organisation or service knows about the participant's participation in the training and is willing to support her. You could ask for a support letter from the organisation specifying its expectations and interest in sending the participant to the training.

Implementation phase

Design the programme in a way that takes into account the participants' expectations and needs. Create possibilities for participants to link experiences during the training to their home environment, for instance by:

Using active methods that encourage participants to try out actions by themselves.

Creating regular spaces for feedback from the participants to see if they find the training useful in view of their own work. *(see 4.4.2 on feedback from participants)*

Asking participants to develop possibilities for follow-up during the training, by developing a project, creating or adapting a method, developing an action-plan etc. *(See 3.5.6 on program elements)*

Providing spaces for personal or small group consultancy, where participants can reflect upon and discuss possibilities for using and spreading the results of the training at home and the difficulties they might face.

Evaluation and follow-up phase

• Evaluate the usefulness of the training for the participant, if possible also some time after the training. See how you can involve the participants' organisations. You could send an evaluation form to the participants and to their organisations several months after the training asking how training results have been implemented until then and how the organisation has benefited from the training.

• Create a support system for participants during the experimentation phase after the training, for instance by:

  – Creating an email network where participants can easily contact each other and the trainers, or an email hotline for specific questions. Could each trainer act as a contact person for some of the participants? In relation to this, bear in mind the possible differences in access which may exist in the group.

  – Creating a long-term training course with a follow-up or evaluation phase that brings people together again after several months to discuss and evaluate the process following the first course phase.

(Adapted from Comelli, pp. 176-177)

Which possibilities could you integrate in your training course to create spaces for dealing with transfer and multiplying?

Creating support structures for participants after a training course is certainly one of the most difficult and limited aspects of especially international training courses, partly because of the nature of short-term activities and partly because of the high costs involved for communication at international level. Nevertheless there are possibilities to work in a way that makes it easier for participants to face reality back home and that enhances the effectiveness of the training. Transfer and multiplication are essential aspects in ensuring that young people can use and make others benefit from their strengthened confidence and motivation, their acquired skills and knowledge, and their new awareness and ideas for international and intercultural youth work.

5.4 The impact of training: some participants' experiences after a long-term training course about intercultural and international project development

Dear friends,

"…Going back in my mind to the days of the training course, I really think it has been for me the most exciting experience I have ever had. I discovered realities, issues, and places which I didn't even know existed. On some aspects, the course opened my eyes, giving me new topics for reflection, but at the same time new interests and new ideas for projects have grown in me. But if I close my eyes, the best memory I have, without any doubt, is the great intercultural atmosphere I breathed in those days. Coming back home and starting again my work has not been easy, the main difficulty I have is how to make available all the knowledge I got, but for sure my work and in particular the quality of my projects has benefited from it…" (Multiplier 1999, p.28)

"…After leaving Strasbourg it was quite strange for me to start work back home, because as soon as I had arrived I realised that I was not the same person as before the training course. People around found me challenged and improved. I was so enthusiastic about my project and when I talked with my colleagues about my new ideas, I got full support from them, and that made me much more willing to establish that Youth Information Centre, because I saw the same excitement in their eyes. But unfortunately there were a lot of other things to do, and I couldn't find the time to deal with my project. As the time passed, things cooled down and I have decided to look for financial support without losing more time…" (Multiplier 1999, p. 32)

"…It was hard to understand, during the time after the training course, that my project didn't work. I had to cancel it, I really felt like a fool – having got such a lot of training and not even being able to set up my small project. Well, in March I completely unexpectedly met a group of animators who tried to organise a European youth camp, but they had no European partners and nobody who had ever experienced a multilateral project. So we decided to work together, and this work has become a very fruitful co-operation…" (Multiplier 1999, p. 33)