

Issue 0 - July 1999



youth - training - europe

Coyote

magazine

Co-operation
between the
institutions

Training -
between
Europe and my
community

Coyote meets
trainers

Experiential
learning

To walk in your
shoes ...

1945 50 1999



PARTNERSHIP

COUNCIL OF EUROPE & EUROPEAN COMMISSION

TRAINING-YOUTH



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Published in English and French by the
Council of Europe and the European
Commission, July 1999

Printed by Orthdruk Printing House
Bialystok, Poland

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Your comments about Coyote ?!

Coyote will be happy to receive your comments, ideas and suggestions for future articles. Please send
all correspondence to the Editor at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, e-mail: sonja.mitter@coe.int

Many thanks to all those that have contributed to making Coyote come alive !



Welcome to Coyote !

Across Europe in youth work a growing number of people work as trainers, for associations or services or independently. Often they work in contact with only a limited circle of colleagues. With the increasing prominence of youth worker training and the rising need for trainers, also the wish to share information, ideas and opinions about training concepts, methodologies and realities is expressed more and more often. The European Commission and the Council of Europe are concerned about this situation. Their wish to take a step in responding to it led to the production of this first issue of the magazine *Coyote*.

An exchange about training concepts and opinions becomes even more important in a European setting, where knowledge and sensitivity about vastly different realities is required. Strengthening networking among trainers is one of the initiatives promoted by the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the youth field. As one of the tools of this co-operation, *Coyote* aims to provide a forum to share some of the issues that trainers face in their work with groups of participants and within training teams. It also wants to inform about current developments in this field, especially at European level, and thus to promote the value of European level training for youth workers.

Youth worker training should make those concerned aware of what can be done better or differently within their organisations or communities. As was discussed in a recent meeting between the two institutions and their partners to develop a long-term vision of the partnership, training at European level should enable participants to integrate a European dimension into the life of the young people they work with at local or regional level and to involve them in the building of Europe.

Making the link between work at European level and the local reality is neither easy nor obvious. If the building of Europe is to succeed, however, this is what youth worker training needs to be about: enabling them to empower young people to participate as citizens in their societies and in Europe. The training should encourage participation in support of a set of democratic and social practices that together respect both similarities and differences and make today's and tomorrow's Europe.

A vast range of subjects comes to mind when thinking about issues of relevance for training understood in this sense. In this issue, the reflections, concerns and opinions expressed by the contributors focus mainly on a few questions that are essential for any European level training of youth workers: the links between European training, networking among youth workers and work in a local community; the challenges for communication and co-operation in intercultural encounters; and the use of appropriate educational methodologies. This reflects in part an explicit choice of the editorial team. In part, these accents were set by the authors alone.

Besides an introduction to the partnership, *Coyote* includes articles that are based on the first two training courses organised within it – a training course for Roma youth leaders and a training course on intercultural learning through language. While giving an impression about the possible impact of such training or the educational approach that can be taken, the issues dealt with speak for themselves, rather independently from the particular course that gave rise to the reflection. The series under the headings of 'Marker', 'Coyote meets trainers' and 'Training methodologies' will form the regular backbone of this magazine.

After this experimental issue no. 0, the next issue of *Coyote* will come out in November of this year. From next year on, it should be issued 3 – 4 times yearly. We hope that *Coyote* will give you new insights into some of the diverse realities, concepts and practices of youth worker training in Europe. We would be happy if reading the articles provoked reactions and further reflection. Wishing to develop this magazine into a forum of exchange we are aware that there are certain limits to the dynamics that a paper publication allows. Publishing *Coyote* on the internet is planned during the coming months in particular for this reason.

Enjoy your reading!

Sonja Mitter
Sonja Mitter

The Story of Coyote

by Carol-Ann Morris



Imagine the perfect training event

You awake, fresh after that **Extra** three hours of sleep you ensured. You get together your **Training notes** which are perfectly ordered in your briefcase to face the first day of training. You are ready to impart your veritable **Cornucopia** of knowledge in your given subject. You enter the meeting room as if on a gilded **Chariot**. With the first **Icebreaker** the participants melt and the session gets off to a **Dynamite** start. The **Training dialogue** flows with ease and you are like an **Octopus** effectively drawing the participants together into discussion. As the day comes to an end you tear off the last page from the **Flipchart** without one tear in the perforations and you slip on the lid of your **Marker** which hasn't dried out in years. You leave the event feeling that you have climbed the **Everest** of training!

A perfect day without a single problem.

Maybe you have had a day like the one described. However.... as we tried to choose a name for this magazine we tossed and turned between all the highlighted words above but we still felt as though we weren't pinpointing the essence of training. Often you have to adapt to the circumstances in which you find yourself and have to call upon your resources to cope with things that do not go according to plan, training can be uncertain.

And then with ink stained fingers with a final flick through a book of names the page fell open.....

" **Coyote** - a resourceful animal whose blunders or successes explain the condition of life in an uncertain universe." (In: Jack Tresidder, *The Hutchison Dictionary of Symbols*, 1997)

And so Spiffy the Coyote was born!



Council of Europe

Youth Directorate



European Commission

Education, Training and Youth

Partnership Project

The Council of Europe, with a long-standing experience in European level training of youth workers, and the European Commission, running European youth programmes for almost ten years, have given important contributions to the development of youth work in Europe. The two institutions have decided to put their expertise and financial resources together and have entered into a partnership project in the field of youth work in Europe.

In view of developing a long-term agreement under the Commission's new Youth programme starting in the year 2000, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, in the period since November 1998 until May 2000 are working together in three areas: European training courses for youth workers, training materials to be used in youth work, and the development of a network of trainers.

During this period, several training courses are being held, allowing over 150 youth workers to gain European level training in a variety of relevant areas. Existing youth work training materials are being collected and revised, they will be catalogued and new materials will be produced. Furthermore, a network of trainers will be set up that can form the backbone for providing qualified training for youth work with a European dimension. To support the development of this network, this magazine has been created. It will supply information about the partnership and its programmes and other relevant developments in the field of youth worker and youth leader training, and facilitate an exchange of ideas and reflections about training contents and methodology.

It is the wish of the Council of Europe and the European Commission that this new partnership project will benefit youth workers all over Europe and will be an important step forward for the field of youth work.

A. Tsolakis
Head of Unit
European Commission

L. Siurala
Youth Director
Council of Europe

The Partnership

between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on European Youth Worker Training

A New Framework for a Joint Development Based on Long-Standing Co-operation

The partnership – what is it?

The partnership agreement (covenant) was signed by the Directorate General XXII of the European Commission and the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe in November 1998, with the aim "to provide a framework for the joint development and funding of new European youth work training courses by the Commission and the Council."¹

The establishment of this frame for co-operation in the youth and training field is based on a simple principle: both institutions work largely towards the same basic values of human rights, pluralist democracy, the rule of law, active citizenship and European co-operation, but they have different tools at their disposal to implement these principles.

The European Commission has elaborated during the last years a series of Youth programmes, which are related to the objectives of art. 149 of the Treaty of the European Community and to those set in the text of the YFE programme, notably the objective of promoting active European citizenship. The Council of Europe has a long-standing experience in training youth workers and working with youth NGOs. The idea to pool these experiences and to encourage a coherent approach to European youth worker training is not new, but it was more systematically explored in 1998, resulting in the partnership agreement between the two institutions.

The first Covenant applies to the period from November 1998 until April 1999. A second Covenant has been developed for the following one-year period until April 2000. Negotiations take place in view of obtaining, after this initial period, a longer-term commitment from both institutions to intensified co-operation.

What are its aims?

According to the first covenant, the partnership should "ensure greater complementarity and

coherence between the work of the two institutions" and "provide a basis for an innovative approach in this field" in terms of partners, target public, contents and methods of the training offered. The programmes developed within the partnership should work to strengthen the values and main principles of both institutions, in complementarity with other actors having a specific expertise in this field.

Much and diverse experience exists in the field of youth worker training in Europe. Often, though, organisations, institutes or trainers work in contact with only a limited circle of partners. The partnership also aims at encouraging a greater exchange of experience, at spreading the results of activities and materials developed within and around the partnership, and at making better use of and further developing existing and new networks of trainers.

The training of youth workers from very diverse backgrounds provides a backbone for the development of active citizenship in our societies. It is therefore important to ensure quality standards and quality control of the activities and materials developed within the partnership. In the longer run, both institutions also search for a better recognition of this training, provided within a framework of non-formal education.

Who is it for?

The training activities are addressed to youth workers in Europe, in particular those co-operating with the institutions, the National Agencies for Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service, and the European Youth Forum. The term 'youth workers' refers in this context to professional and voluntary youth workers, youth leaders, members of youth organisations, youth information officers, youth officers from local and regional authorities, and trainers. ►►

¹ Covenant, Article 1 - Purpose, p. 1



Participants should be able to act as multipliers and to pass on the experiences and knowledge gained in an activity to others within their organisation, service or local community. Emphasis is put on reaching a diversity of target groups, and in particular under-represented categories of young people.

What are the programmes?

Some key work areas have been defined for training activities taking place or materials to be developed until April 2000. They include training for trainers, training for and with under-represented groups, intercultural learning and intercultural language learning, anti-racist work, project management and organisational management. The work should be made visible to the wide range of partners and target groups concerned.²

In a process of ongoing co-operation and negotiation between the two institutions and the statutory bodies (governmental and non-governmental) of the Youth Directorate, a programme of activities and educational materials was decided upon for the starting period. The European Youth Forum has been actively involved in the practical implementation of the activities of the programme.

Under the first Covenant (until April 1999) three training courses were held: one on intercultural language learning, one for Roma youth leaders and one on project management and transnational voluntary service. A process to produce several educational binders ('resource files') on different subjects that can form the basis for training courses has been started. Coyote has been launched. Six training courses and the finalisation of the educational binders are envisaged under the second Covenant. (For more information, please turn to the full list of partnership publications and training courses in this issue of Coyote.)

All projects are developed and implemented by teams that bring together National Agencies, educational staff from the European Youth Centres, trainers working with the institutions and trainers representing youth organisations, and in some cases, other partners with a specific knowledge.

The partnership as a process

The partnership is a framework for a joint development of the two institutions in the field of youth worker training in Europe. As such it constitutes an ongoing process of defining and

reviewing the needs, aims and objectives of the co-operation, to assess its results, and to establish the programmes that are run within this frame accordingly.

The period until April 2000 forms the starting and also experimental phase of the partnership. Until then, time will be taken to look more deeply into the needs for and interests in such a co-operation, and the added value that it represents for the institutions and their partners.

In this spirit, a "needs assessment and vision building" meeting took place at the end of April at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. Representatives of the statutory bodies of the Youth Directorate, of the European Youth Forum, from National Agencies, from pilot projects carried out under Action B.II of the Youth for Europe programme, trainers and members of the institutions worked together to explore the direction in which this partnership should further develop. The discussions focused on vision building, defining the aim and objectives of the co-operation, looking into evaluation and quality criteria, partners and target groups and establishing a programme outline. A meeting to assess the results of the first period of the partnership will take place at the end of this year.

The structures around this partnership are complex and they involve a broad range of partners. The institutions, wishing to work towards greater complementarity and coherence and to ensure innovation and quality, will take steps to involve these different partners – youth organisations, National Agencies, trainers etc. – into the on-going development and implementation of the partnership programmes and build on their experiences and knowledge. In this spirit, they want to ensure the best use of the potentials that this partnership creates to promote training for youth work as a contribution to the development of active and democratic citizenship in Europe.

Sonja Mitter



² Report of the first meeting of the Technical Working Party, which follows the development of the partnership, its content and practical aspects, 5 - 6 November 1998.

Partnership Programme

1999

This year's partnership programme consists of training courses on the following themes:

- Project Management and Trans-national Voluntary Service (March, European Youth Centre (EYC) Strasbourg)
- Intercultural Learning and Conflict Management (June, EYC Strasbourg)
- Organisational Management, (September, EYC Strasbourg)
- Standards and Quality in Youth Information and Counselling (September, EYC Budapest)
- Training for Trainers (October, EYC Budapest)

Information about these courses was sent out at the beginning of the year. We hope that you have received it and passed it on to potential participants. The deadlines for application are now closed. Reports will be available some weeks after the training courses at the Centre (Strasbourg or Budapest) where the activity was run.

Several publications of training materials to be known as *Educational Binders* are under preparation to complement the training programme.

Training materials are being collected to produce innovative educational tools for youth workers and trainers. The aim is to promote cross fertilisation of ideas and methodologies through sharing best practices and know-how. The publications will be made available to a broad target group of youth organisations, youth trainers, National Agencies and ministries.

To begin the series, the first *Educational Binders* will cover the following themes:

- Intercultural learning
- Project management
- Organisational management
- Methodologies in language learning
- Best practices in youth work

The *Educational Binders* will be published during the first half of the year 2000.

Within the frame of these publications, the reproduction of educational materials (methods, activities, exercises, etc.) that have been developed by a youth organisation, youth worker etc. is possible (under recognition of the author). You can contact Anne Cosgrove at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg for more information

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Coyote is being issued twice this year: in July and in November.



Pools & Networks of Trainers

The need for competent trainers to run training activities or give training inputs on various issues of relevance in youth work is increasing all over Europe. There are many trainers, but information about whom to recruit for an upcoming event or programme is not always easy to find. Trainers, for their part, have to know how to find their way "through the jungle", whom to contact to make their services and fields of competence known.

Many organisations, services and institutions have therefore developed, or started to develop, their own pools of trainers. The Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe has been operating a pool of trainers for several years. It recruits trainers from its pool to run some of its educational activities and to complement the work of its own educational team. The European Commission has started to collect information about trainers working in and with the National Agencies. Also the European Youth Forum runs its own trainers' pool. These pools of trainers serve different purposes. Yet, overlaps exist and the need is perceived to come to a more coherent approach in this field in order to better respond to the needs of trainers and potential users.

Coyote wants to take a step forward and help to create some visibility about what exists in this field. Starting with the European Youth Forum, it will provide information about the trainers' pools existing at European level, whom they serve, how they function, who can join and use them and how this can be done.

The European Youth Forum Pool of Trainers: why? who? what? where?

by Carol-Ann Morris

Born in 1998, the Pool of Trainers was established by the European Youth Forum as a resource group for its 103 member organisations. At present the pool is made up of 28 experienced trainers, under the age of 35 years who originate from all over Europe.

Each trainer has different skills and fields of expertise offering a plethora of training and seminar possibilities to the European Youth Forum member organisations. To give you an idea of what the member organisation can expect, an example of the fields on offer are Intercultural learning, Conflict management, Team building and management, Project management, Organisational development, European youth structures, Youth policy, The role of a national youth council, Funding, How to run an INGYO, Minority empowerment and Equality. The members of the Pool are also active as trainers in the European Youth Forum training events.

The Pool however is not only limited to the member organisations of the European Youth Forum, the skills of the trainers are also tapped into by the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe functioning as resource people for their training courses. This indeed gives credit to the quality of this group, serves as experience building for the members of the pool themselves and indeed contributes to the success of the Youth Directorate's Training Programme.

Of course the Pool is a valuable resource for the European Youth Forum member organisations but it is also a ground where the trainers can learn and share experiences from and with each other. To ensure that the quality of the pool is maintained they meet on a two yearly basis to discuss the past 6 months and to learn from each other, to give input to the training policy of the European Youth Forum, to take part in advanced training and to plan for the future. The amount of

trainers that can be in the pool at any one time has a threshold of 30. Once it reaches 20 it is opened up for refreshment. The latter is decided upon by the European Youth Forum Bureau.

The members of the Pool come together on a twice yearly basis. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in October 1999. Keen to keep the group fresh and alive the Pool have now released a promotional leaflet, which is available from the European Youth Forum secretariat. The Pool are also planning to have further intercommunication through electronic means with an interactive e-mail and a Pool of Trainers training leaflet filled with ideas on training. The Pool aims to glean information from all sources such as varied training literature and evaluations of training courses in which they have been involved whether as participants or trainers.

Thinking of this Pool of trainers, the image of a stagnant pool is not one which immediately jumps to mind. Over the past few months, evident from the results of their last meeting there is a buzz of activity bursting from this Pool which rather paints a very alive picture! However every member has to be an active member. The members of the Pool must restate their commitment and desire to be part of the Pool on a regular basis.

If you would like to have more information on this Pool of trainers contact the responsible bureau member for training, Andreas Karsten or Carol Ann Morris at the European Youth Forum:

Rue Joseph II, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium

e-mail: carol-ann.morris@youthforum.org

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fax: +32-2 230 21 23



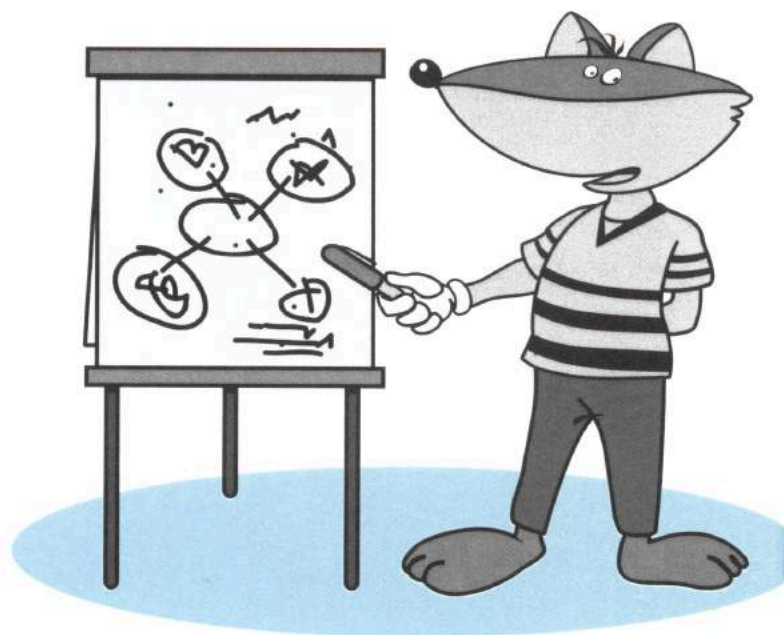
F lipchart

Are you looking for a place to let trainers, youth workers, organisations and agencies involved in training all over Europe know about:

- new training materials that your organisation or service has published?
- a new simulation game on conflict management, intercultural learning, human rights education etc. etc. that you have used with interesting outcomes and that you would like to present to other trainers?
- an upcoming training course with still some open places? etc. etc.

Are you looking for ...

- contacts to run a training on how to organise youth exchanges?
- trainers that can contribute to develop a new exercise on project management, youth policy, etc. ?



- training materials on a particular subject? Descriptions of exercises to use? Examples of how they can be used?
- getting in touch with other trainers working in a specific field?
- finding a trainer from a particular country? etc. etc. etc.

Do you know any internet links and webpages

- with information linked to "training - Europe - youth" that could be interesting for others in the field to know about?

Then 'Flipchart' is your section.

Coyote wants to encourage an exchange of information and ideas. Send us the information or request that you would like to put up under any of the above points. Coyote will include them under ' Flipchart' in its next issue.

Between Europe and my Community

Young Roma and their Communities.

Training can make a difference

by Alexandra Raykova

What does it mean to be a Roma in Europe today?

Being a Roma in Europe today means facing every day discrimination, unemployment, social problems, facing the prejudices and the negative image that the society has of you, only because you belong to a different culture, because you have different values, a different ethnic background, a different name and sometimes a darker colour of skin. This is what it means to be Roma - the largest minority group in Europe today.

It does not matter if you are a Roma from Albania or from Spain, if you are a Roma from Ukraine or from Greece. It does not matter either how you call yourself - Roma or Hitanos, Sinti or Manush - because in addition to the blood we all share the same problems, with different nuances. And if somebody tells me: "This is because Roma people are different!" then I will answer: "Yes, Roma people are different and only their culture makes them different. In all other things we are equal to the people we live with. We are born, we live, we love and we die like all of the people in the world."

I ask myself then why, at the end of the twentieth century, there are still people living without water, who face every day the challenge of how to find bread for their children, who are not able to send them to school, because the children just have no shoes to wear, and anyway - what is the sense of sending them to school when even with an education they will still not be able to get a job? I have still not found the answer, but I hope that we can fight and look for solutions to these problems together, because we all want our children to live in a better world, if not today, then at least tomorrow.

What does it mean to be a young Roma in Europe today?

Being a young Roma in Europe today means to live every day with the problems of your family, with your neighbours and with the reality of your community. To live without pocket money. To be

unable to see any opportunity in society to change your life. To have your values clashing not only with the values of society, but also with the values of the older generation in your community. To have a lower status there also, because you should respect the traditions of the community and follow the decisions of the family. The authorities and the existing associations do not care to help you to find your own way in this life, and nobody is interested in developing you as a competent and motivated person who can develop him/herself and can contribute to the development of his/her community and the larger society.

If you are living in a situation like this, what will be the easiest way for you to behave, especially if you have no positive role models from the community around you? You are going to follow the negative role models, of whom everybody knows how they reached their better status in the community. And then you can easily drop out of school, try drugs and even find yourself involved in crimes.

Of course, when we speak of the young Roma people, we should consider that not all of the young people live in the same situation, because there are also two other much smaller groups: first, the young and well educated Roma, who are part of another social class and prefer to forget the name Roma, and second, the young Roma, well and not so well educated, who are motivated and working for a better future of their community.

What are the needs of young Roma?

As every young person, and probably even more strongly so, young Roma need to have positive role models from their own community with whom they can easily identify, whom they will be willing and able to follow. They need young Roma who can improve their self-esteem, give them a positive view on life and something to work for (e.g. for themselves or for their communities), improve their motivation and, at the same time, give them the necessary social skills for this. ►►



I ask myself then why, at the end of the twentieth century, there are still people living without water, who face every day the challenge of how to find bread for their children



As a result of these trainings we have an impact on these young people as individuals, on their associations, on the community and also at a more global level.

Young Roma need somebody to show them the existing opportunities for personal or professional development that are offered by society, if there are any. They need somebody to organise their free time. They - and also their societies - need them to be active citizens and to participate at all levels and processes in their societies. Another question is if and how both sides see this as an existing opportunity and process.

We all know the necessary preconditions to participation: structure, access, competence and motivation, and I would like to look at some of these, namely structure and competence, from a different angle.

What are the existing structures that are dealing with the problems of young Roma people at different levels? And what is their role in promoting their participation and in breaking the existing exclusion of this minority group from the society, and their self-exclusion on the other side?

At what stage is the Youth Roma movement?

It was not very long ago, and it is still the reality in some communities, that no distinction was made between the problems and needs of the Roma community in general and the particular needs and problems of young Roma. Fortunately, almost five years ago the situation started to change. The NGOs working on Roma issues started to work also on issues concerning young Roma. Youth associations were established at different levels and in different countries.

At about that time, the Council of Europe organised the first activity with young Roma from different European countries, the "training course for Roma Youth Leaders", held under the Campaign against Racism, Anti-semitism, Xenophobia and Intolerance. I had the pleasure to participate in it, and it gave me a lot of motivation and self-confidence. At this course, the idea for the establishment of a Roma IYNGO was born. Today, the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) is a reality. And I should point out the fact that this is not the only Roma INGYO in Europe.

So, the structure, even if only in child status, is existing presently at local and also at European level. Now what is the major need that should be addressed to deal with the problems of the Roma community in general, and in particular of young Roma people? Competence, I think, to develop those structures and to be able to carry out the programmes and projects of these associations and, moreover, support, be it purely technical, including money, or moral support.

Back to competence - One of the greatest opportunities in getting training that young Roma were able to gain was participation in the training activities that were organised by the Council of Europe and this year within the partnership with the European Commission. They received serious training on how to plan and carry out, within the framework of their association, effective projects and programmes of relevance for the Roma community. And on how to involve other young Roma in their work. They had the opportunity to share their experiences and motivation with other young Roma or other minority young people, to obtain information about institutions and structures relevant to their work, to discuss a number of political issues which are concerning their everyday lives, to reflect upon their own culture and on the relations between Roma and non-Roma people and, finally, on what is our perception about Europe and our place in it.

As a result of these trainings we have an impact on these young people as individuals, on their associations, on the community and also at a more global level.

How? These trainings are widening the participants' horizons. Well trained, competent young Roma leaders and workers who come back to their local level can be a very important resource for the development and concrete work of their organisation. They are able to plan and implement relevant projects and activities, they are self-confident, motivated and also able to be role models and leaders for the other young Roma around them. They are able to multiply their experience and to pass on their knowledge and skills. They are able to work for a better tomorrow of the Roma youth, the Roma community, their society and hopefully also the world in which we live.

The questions remain

How can we provide opportunities for more young Roma people to be trained? And what are the other ways to support and promote their participation in society? Have you got the answer? What you are going to do?



The Patchwork of *Roma* Culture

Exploring a World of Diversity

by Demetrio Gomez-Avila

Before I started attending the courses and international meetings arranged at the European Youth Centres, the world I knew, that of the gypsies, was very limited.

In Spain, there has never been very much contact with Roma from other areas. Contact with Roma from former Yugoslavia, Romania, and so on was restricted to hearsay, and some Spanish Kale always said that they were not real Roma. There has, however, been limited contact with Sinti (French Roma, some of whom live in caravans: they are also known as Manouches). People in Spain have never truly been aware of the evil inflicted by the Nazi holocaust on the Roma population, and there is no real political awareness of the idea of respect. The Romani language was banned for centuries and has thus been reduced to a vocabulary of about a hundred words, intermingled with Castilian, so that it can no longer, strictly speaking, be regarded as a separate dialect.

Despite their lack of reference points, the Kale have stuck together; they proudly defend their status as a separate people and have retained the key elements of their identity: a family, social and economic structure which has helped them to survive while preserving the traditions and customs that mark them out clearly from the majority, reinforce their attachment to a very particular feeling, way and concept of living, and make them the equals of their Roma brothers. This isolation has meant that we have lost sight of the extraordinary diversity of the patchwork of Roma culture. It is surprising to see how the same spirit can give rise to so many different perfumes which only serve to enhance the delicacy and splendour of something very special, as a culture can be.

The first time I was able to immerse myself in that something very special was in 1996, when I

attended my first meeting with Roma from other countries. At first, I was very keen to get to know these other Roma, who, although I was one of their kind, seemed so different. Once I had met with them, however, I felt somewhat disconcerted. I must admit that it was not easy to break through the barrier. Until then, it had been so easy for me to say what it meant to be a Rom! Now, I found myself challenging many of the statements and beliefs I had held to be absolute from an early stage in my childhood.

Little by little, as we slowly began to overcome our initial fears, we became aware of something amazing, something we could not explain but which was gradually taking us over. There was a kind of synchronisation, a kind of harmony which made us feel as though we were becoming part of a vast world which we were beginning to appreciate beyond our little differences. The feeling of brotherhood, sharing, joy and laughter at certain situations, understanding the world and human relationships... something very deep was helping us to see, to discover more clearly and closely the imperceptible yet solid link that made us all equal as individuals within our particular group.

This discovery, this feeling of growing and learning about something you have been denied, was so great that I felt the impulse to learn more and to take part in other activities: I now have a more comprehensive knowledge and a fighting spirit which, in a sense, drives me to carry on working towards a goal which I believe in. Being now a youth leader myself, I have been fortunate enough to have been part of a team of trainers at a variety of training courses for young Roma. I only hope that the other young Roma with whom I am working will be able to enjoy and experience the same feeling that I experienced myself.



Training courses at **European** level

A **springboard** for locally-based European projects...

by Pascal Chaumette

Every European is a citizen...

The recent Treaty of Amsterdam improved the status of individuals within Europe by acknowledging their place in civil society. At the latest informal meeting of heads of government in Austria, there were clear indications of support for the notion that European citizens had been kept on the sidelines for long enough and should now be given a political role within a citizen-orientated Europe. Today, Europe seems to have arrived at the crossroads, as we face the Euro, enlargement to the east, a policy of openness towards the rest of the world and, above all, an increased political role, starting with more intervention by states - for the most part socialist - and a central role for civic and social issues in the challenges posed by European integration.

Jean Monnet, one of the fathers of European integration, was fond of saying that if it had to be started all over again, he would take a cultural rather than an economic approach, adding: "*We are not uniting states, we are uniting people!*" As Edgar Morin asserts, Europe should drop the pretence of mere co-operation between independent nation states and should call on citizens and key local figures to take part. In other words, the European project should not be confined to the limited circle of experts of the Brussels jargon; "*European citizenship results from the active participation of individuals in their shared society*", according to Proudhon, a great supporter of European federalism (even then!). Europeans should now re-appropriate their political role as citizens.¹

As founder members of a European network, we consider this idea to be essential and one of the basic principles underlying European integration. We need to know what kind of Europe we want, and how to take part in it. How can we make our views count and campaign for more justice, for an

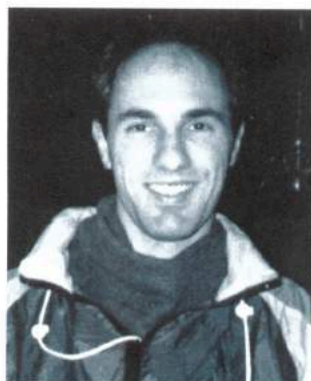
end to war in the countries of former Yugoslavia, for greater respect and tolerance towards minorities and for greater involvement of citizens? Central to my approach is the profound impression that everyone has a role to play in Europe, where if we go back 500 years we find that peace was the exception.

Today, whether in Kosovo or Roubaix, suffering is caused by ethnic conflict or social exclusion; suddenly, this vision of Europe seems so distant, and yet so logical.

Youth participation in Europe: a widening gap

Numerous studies have revealed young people's lack of involvement in civil society. Throughout Europe, this phenomenon can be explained by such factors as individualism, consumerism, all forms of exclusion, and the negative image of the state (particularly in some east European countries).² There are more consumers than agents of change!

Fortunately, youth participation is central to a considerable number of policies at national and European level, because society is constantly changing and participation encourages young people to take responsibility in a way that prepares them for active citizenship and its development. These are the aspirations voiced by associations, which may genuinely encourage European citizenship and promote youth participation, yet may also act as a brake on young people's activities. Owing to factors such as their lack of resources, the precarious nature of their voluntary status and staff contracts, and their lack of recognition by the authorities, these associations are running short on raw materials and, unless they join a federation, can easily be excluded from the European voluntary scene.



¹ See Edgar Morin, *Penser l'Europe*, Folio Actuel, 1990. The other references (Monnet, Proudhon) were noted during speeches and colloquies on European integration.

² See *Young people and associations in Europe*, various authors, Council of Europe Publishing.

One of the aims of the association for which I work in Roubaix is to promote the involvement of young people in civil society by providing them with the means to carry out a project, for example *Ide & Co* in Copenhagen, *Contact* in Chisinau and *Direction Project* in Laed. This objective, which, culturally speaking, is achieved in different ways by each group, becomes much more ambitious when seen in a European context. After all, when we speak of "Europe", we mean more than a continent: we mean a whole project to develop a society, exchanges, co-operation, tolerance and understanding. In attempting to set up a European network of youth associations, we hoped to pool our skills together to boost the impact of our own activities at local level, and to allow their full intellectual implications to be felt at European level.

Organising a transnational project: a skill that can be acquired

The European Commission and the Council of Europe are increasingly trying to interest associations in their youth programmes. Although the idea of working on a European scale may be appealing, you need to equip yourself with the right tools before embarking on such a project. By ensuring that your organisation has the structural capacity to carry out a project at European level, checking that the activities involved will be beneficial in European terms and grasping the essential concepts involved in a transnational approach, you will lay the foundations for success. However, when you are alone in trying to get your own colleagues to support a European project, it is easy to feel abandoned, to lose hope and to entertain the thought that international-scale projects are definitely not your scene!

Association leaders, social workers and active members of civil society do not see the methodology for such a project as an unknown quantity; on the contrary, European association representatives have sometimes carried on where the politicians left off, and generally have plenty of practical experience. However, there remains a sense of fear or apprehension, or quite simply a lack of information, when it comes to organising European youth programmes. The most suitable way of countering this is through training. By taking part in two training courses run by the Council of Europe's Youth Directorate, we gained an idea of the "essentials" and

were thus able to fine-tune the development of our project. Setting up a European network for promoting youth participation by means of international co-operation requires specific skills, among them the ability to cope with cultural diversity.

When you find yourself living for about ten days and for 24 hours a day with people from all over Europe, you cannot fail to be confronted with cultural differences: by this I mean the wealth of different opinions, attitudes, backgrounds and experiences that cannot adequately be conveyed by any book or television report. During the training courses, the practices used by all participants come under scrutiny; this makes them more open-minded, while the concept of intercultural learning, which underlies the whole course content, fosters exchanges and group interaction. The intercultural approach runs through all Council of Europe training courses and can be said to be their cornerstone, since accepting others with all their differences is a skill which can be acquired! Nowadays, intercultural learning, with its emphasis on difference and diversity, is essential for all citizens wishing to play their part in European integration; it is an approach promoted by all programmes at European level, and should be "practiced" just as much in the local community as in the corridors of Brussels!

When I attended a training course for trainers at the European Youth Centre in Budapest, I met my future partners from Moldova and Belarus, who were on the steering committee of the network project I mentioned above. We decided that the setting up of the network should be a collective undertaking, as a mark of respect for the intercultural dimension of the project.

Working together has sometimes been complicated but never difficult, as I feel we pooled together our knowledge during the training courses, where we were able to use the most effective methods of communication. As a result, we now understand one another much better. For example, we needed to establish a set of common definitions, because the meaning of the English terms used in project methodology varied from one culture to the next. During the meeting between 13 youth organisations in Roubaix, I was not surprised at the intensity of discussions, particularly when the network's statutes

When you find yourself living for about ten days and for 24 hours a day with people from all over Europe, you cannot fail to be confronted with cultural differences



were being drawn up. We had planned various ways of increasing group interaction through games and "physical contact", which provide an excellent opportunity to let off steam when discussions appear to have reached a standstill, and allow participants to get to know one another better and to arrive at different perceptions of others from those gained through normal verbal contact. In my view, this helped end the deadlock in some situations; all problems which arose were the result of intercultural misunderstandings and mix-ups.

Although the following two examples may appear simplistic, they nevertheless demonstrate that international exchanges need to be suitably equipped to avoid pitfalls, from the preparation to the evaluation stage. Throughout the preparation of the meeting, the steering committee - Aliona, Antonia, Sergei and myself - were mindful of the urgent need to "cope with diversity", as I put it, thanks to our different international experiences and backgrounds.

On a more practical level, the training courses at the European Youth Centre made us more aware of the specific features of transnational co-operation activities, which need to be conducted in a particular way. This applies to the clarity of the agenda, the level of organisation, methods for conducting discussions, logistical arrangements for meetings, ways of resolving conflicts, the transparency of the budget, etc.

Training courses are much more than simply a means of acquiring skills; using active educational methods in a multicultural environment makes it easier to put theory into practice. They also provide an opportunity to exchange views on issues relating to exclusion, human rights, etc.

Courses of this kind are always open to the accusation of dealing with certain issues on a superficial level only. Of course, it is difficult to look at every aspect of, say, the intercultural approach in 10 days. Nor is it easy to satisfy the expectations of 25 different nationalities; participants have sometimes felt somewhat disappointed by the irrelevance, or limited relevance, of the course content to their own

situation. It may sometimes be difficult to put the methods learned during the course into practice, depending on the local context. In my opinion, courses sometimes suffer from their global approach, transcending the specific cultural features of particular areas and leaving no room for participants to make connections with individual situations.

However, I also think that it is up to the participants themselves to give further consideration to the issues discussed during the course to ensure that their full implications are taken on board.

Training courses at European level allow participants to become more aware of social issues and to look at them in a new light once they return to their own country. For my part, I have now realised that to make international meetings a success or to work in a multicultural environment, you need a "set of tools" which, when used properly, help people to understand, accept and respect others.

A European network to encourage participation

The aim of the network we have set up is to "promote the involvement of young people in the development of civil society through international co-operation" (a phrase which was agreed, after much discussion, by all the members of the network). Thirteen medium-sized, if not small, youth organisations, most of which have never worked at European level before, are convinced that international action is a great way of assisting "local" matters. Finding solutions to common social problems is no longer the prerogative of any one country, but of all countries, each having its own say in the matter.

We chose to set up an informal network. There are no rules governing the operation of such a network; Youth Opportunities Network is therefore unique and is, above all, the result of co-operation. At the meeting in Roubaix, we launched various activities in keeping with our aims for 1999: a website is currently under construction and will provide an excellent resource for all youth organisations and young people wishing to set up a project at local or European level. It will be possible to search for partners in a specific field (for example, a youth

Picture: Espace
Ressources Jeunes,
Roubaix, France



The aim of the network we have set up is to "promote the involvement of young people in the development of civil society through international co-operation"

exchange project on the environment), to access up to 3 000 project files and to enter into direct contact with a potential partner. For youth projects, we shall be setting up links with business wishing to help fund European-scale projects. The site will also act as our virtual office and will allow people to become familiar with our network.

We consider it important for businesses to take part in our project to help us achieve our objectives. A large-scale information campaign and search for sponsors will be launched, with a view to increasing the involvement of the business sector in civil society.

Within the network itself, a study carried out by two young sociologists will identify the practices used to support youth work.

Finally, the network is organising a training course in September in Santander (Spain), to develop intercultural learning skills and to make the network more efficient.

One of the essential aspects of the project is the "local" impact brought by each member. We are not, after all, working with an imaginary European public, but with young, mostly disadvantaged, young people, who are wholly unaware of the issues of European integration. By taking part in the network project, each group is able to take the benefits of a transnational partnership of this kind and apply them at regional level. The impact of this on the associations themselves will lead to their own development, because the mini-revolution thus caused may alter the way in which their work is organised or the types of service they offer; their members have been away and now have new responsibilities, and their association is now part of a European network. Other consequences concern the association's surroundings, and in particular its partners; the network provides a means of making these partners more aware of Europe and gives the association a new image.

Finally, by enhancing their own practices through training courses and projects of this kind, associations will be able to share their experience with others, thus benefiting the local sphere, ie social workers and target population groups. The impact on these groups will be felt indirectly, with services being improved as a result of transnational co-operation; as the title of this article indicates, the effects of an

international-scale project are felt first of all at local level, since the new skills acquired through contact with other cultures are assets that can be put to practical use in the field, a fact that some employers have trouble grasping.

The effects of this project can therefore be felt on a variety of levels, including the scale and location of the associations' activities, the everyday services they provide, their practices and their partners. These results will also have long-term consequences, whether expected or unexpected. Such changes will result in the complete internal transformation of associations, making their impact at local level even more considerable. Of course, it is too early to speak of radical change, but the beginnings of a new outlook are already becoming evident, heralding changes that will undoubtedly help associations achieve the goals they have set themselves.

Developing a project in conjunction with others is an extraordinary and exciting adventure. Our network is now another addition to the European scene, and I am eager to hear of any other organisations establishing links to carry out activities in partnership and setting up other networks. Thirteen organisations are members of the Youth Opportunities Network; we have much to learn if we are to work together and achieve our objectives. Some members have already applied to take part in European level training courses.

For more information contact Pascal Chaumette at:

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This could be written by **you** !

Is there a subject, a question or an issue that you find relevant for youth worker training in Europe and about which you would like to write an article?

Contact us, we will be happy to discuss it with you!

Did an article that you have read in this issue of Coyote really make you think?
Make you reflect further?

Did you have different experiences and disagree with the arguments?

We would be happy to receive your reflection!

Trainers' Realities

Coyote Meets Trainers

Coyote is a curious little creature and is fond of wandering around across Europe to meet trainers in the field. Are you interested to get a picture on how your colleagues in the field of training think and feel? Then this is your section.

In addition to theory, philosophy and discussing training models and concepts, some effort needs to be done to explore the emotions, hopes, dreams and fears of the cowboys and -girls in the Wild West (!?) of European Training.

Coyote is aware of the solitude of the European Trainer and wants to refine even more its sensitivity for the heart and soul of trainers. Kristina Kovaite, being tired but thrilled about her involvement in the prep-meeting of Cocktail, a multilateral training on international exchanges and an on-the-job training for trainers running at the same time, was Coyote's first guest.¹

Kristina was born in Kaunas, is 26 and works and lives in Vilnius, Lithuania. While working on her Masters in Business Administration, she enjoyed her involvement in the International Association for Students in Economics and Management (AIESEC), where she experienced for the first time the power of international exchanges. Currently working for the Baltic Partners for Change Management, she is training in the fields of learning by doing, organisational development and management, training of trainers, intercultural communication and learning and youth work. Being a former member of the Advisory Committee at the Youth Directorate² in Strasbourg, she was able to explore the field of training at national and international level. So she is active in the youth field and the business world.



Interview

Coyote:

The world of business and the youth field....talk about culture shock and intercultural learning?!!

Kristina:

Yes, but as every strange combination of people and views, it delivers at the same time frustrating and funny but always interesting situations. For example a seminar on strategic business management for top and middle management with loads of work experience, and there you have me... a 20 year old girl who could have been

their daughter. They looked at me like at a giraffe in the zoo. It took them half a day to accept me. The world of business administration focuses mainly on the manipulation of people. The result they want to get is profit, and only this. There is not a lot of space for human factors. Training in that field I see that people act differently because of their roots and I do see the richness of that, but the participants remain too profit-focused. Companies do not look at societies, only at companies and that is an obstacle for training. ►►

¹ The "Cocktail - Project" is organised by the Heinrich Pesch Haus (an educational centre in Ludwigshafen, Germany) in cooperation with National Agencies from the Youth for Europe programme. Funded under Action BII, the project has two main aims: to train participants to run exchanges and to train the trainers who are organising the training courses. So far, two courses have been organised in Germany and Flanders - it is hoped to run a third course in Portugal this autumn.

² The Advisory Committee of the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation was composed of representatives of National Youth Councils and International Youth Organisations and a part of the decision making structures in the Youth Directorate. It has this year been replaced by an Advisory Council, which is composed of representatives of NYCs and INGYOs and some other structures working in the youth field.





Coyote:

Every horse in the Wild West (!?) has its name...Jolly Jumper for example gives a pretty clear view of the personality we are looking at. Trying to see you a bit clearer: what horoscope sign would you find to fit you best as a trainer?

Kristina:

Aquarius looks fine to me. It is a sign which doesn't go to total extremes. I always try to find a common way to do things. Tolerance and respect are his tools. And the water-element takes away the sharpness and destructiveness which can sometimes be harmful in communication between people.

Coyote:

Aquarius is as well the sign of the age we are pretty close to. But there is still a millennium bug to deal with. What can be unexpected pitfalls in training others in international fields? The Seven Deadly Sins in Training, let's say...

Kristina:

I would like to start with gluttony. 'Give me, give me, give me'... being more a danger for participants than for trainers. European training is perceived as a resource centre and the trainer as the one who gives. Participants' needs are often very high and there are not enough training opportunities.

Pride strikes when you consider participants as disturbing and your training course as good in itself, a bit like the tradition of formal education where a teacher considers himself to be on a higher level than the participants, the 'I know I am the trainer' attitude.

If you spread around the message 'I am the best', than you leave no space for people to improve themselves. On the contrary, participants will create a common enemy, because you leave no space for active participation. This, I would consider to be vanity.

I see people in this field who are more respected than me. And this makes me look at what I would like to achieve. The feeling of envy is normal but you need the courage to deal with this need for improvement, achievement and acknowledgement - because that is what envy really is - in a constructive way.

It is very easy to be lazy as a trainer and the copy-paste temptation for example is very much there. The risk is that your creative thinking and development stops. When you're trapped in sloth, you should ask yourself what motivates you to be a trainer.

Coyote:

What about lust ?

Kristina:

That is a difficult one. Hmm, I am human, not a god.

Coyote:

Being a human, you must experience training needs yourself?

Kristina:

A lot...it is difficult to make a list. This is a good exercise by the way. I still want to improve my communication skills in intercultural environments. I do believe I need more knowledge and a structured way of thinking and reflecting about my experiences as a trainer.

Coyote:

Imagine that once a year all trainers involved in European training could meet. What would you put on the agenda for this meeting?

Kristina:

I can imagine that there is so much richness in this group that I would keep the agenda as flexible as possible. For me the main questions would be the trends, changes and innovations in the different countries. I would like to see how informal education is developing throughout Europe. It would be interesting to exchange methodologies, tackle new areas of intercultural learning and to get information on the different training projects which are running.

Coyote:

What are your dadas as a trainer?

Kristina:

I can not, simply not at all, keep my mouth shut about long term exchanges: I consider living abroad for a longer period as a main tool for self improvement.

Coyote:

What are your taboos as a trainer?

Kristina:

Religion, politics and sexual orientation: Topics that are so personal and potential areas of conflict. I believe we have enough conflicts as it is. I do not mind confrontation, but in discussions without a perspective of solution or no willingness to compromise, then you had better avoid the subject.

Coyote:

What is the main challenge in the training that you are involved in at the moment?

Kristina:

I am involved in the Cocktail Project, which is partly

about training youth workers for international exchanges but at the same time training the trainers. Our work as trainers in a multinational team is used as a learning process for ourselves and this is dealt with explicitly during prep-meetings, the training and in evaluation meetings. We put lots of efforts in that aspect, but I can see already now that it is very useful.

Coyote:

Our cultural backgrounds influence us in the way we think and behave. Looking at Lithuania, can you state explicitly how your background influences you as a trainer?

Kristina:

Yes, for sure. We were quite a conservative Catholic country and this made us very value-oriented. Our conscience is well developed, let's say. And it is rooted and very deep and thus present in daily communications. Somehow I believe this orientation on values like tolerance makes it easier to involve people in training. But you should be aware of the fact that participants look at how a trainer is behaving. He creates ground rules for communication and he is a model at the same time. On the other hand, stressing tolerance all the time...It could be good to be more proactive sometimes. I don't know if it is good or bad. But I see it.

Coyote:

Are young people in Lithuania interested to participate in training and why?

Kristina:

Looking at youth organisations, we need training in systematic thinking, organisational development, the philosophy of the organisation and activities. Not only the how but the whys. There is a need of experience of other countries. They have always been interested in what is happening. They need to be sure that the ideas are realistic, that you can implement them, that they have results. The how, we can deal with. Lithuanian young people have the feeling that they have something to offer taking part in European training but they have difficulties to express themselves. There are a lot of unexploited ideas in Lithuania because for lots of years there was no possibility to implement the ideas they had. Now they have a space. The ideas come like a waterfall but they need the space to verbalise them. The culture itself used to be closed, there was no international communication, looking how civilisations develop in other countries.

Coyote:

How do they experience the methodology in training?

Kristina:

There is not a lot of tradition in our country thus it is new and interesting. Participants from our kind of background are more active than those who have a long tradition in active participation. The main reason probably is that it was forbidden for a long time, so people are really interested because it is new and challenging... Young people are always the first ones that get what is new. Other youngsters take it as a normal thing to be promoted to participate. They have been doing it since childhood. For Lithuanian young people it is still a challenge.

Participation and the possibility to learn through your and others' experience makes training different from other kinds of education. Training is a more informal way which makes people more relaxed, more secure. They know that nobody is going to get punished, there is no exam. There is no possibility not to pass. People are more safe, more open, more willing to learn new things. And this is a big and an extra value. The main result is that people can learn and absorb as much as possible. In formal education there is a top down structure: others decide for you what you should learn.

Coyote:

What would you consider to be the role of the trainer?

Kristina:

I try to achieve that there is no big difference between us and the participants. The only thing is that we play a different role. We are here to give them possibilities to learn. They come with their experiences. You can create the situation that you don't learn from them, but I try to avoid this. We can learn from each other but we have different roles and it is necessary to understand why we are here. I spend a lot of time to make people understand what they can expect from me as a trainer. That makes training people so attractive, each time you are learning quite a lot.

Coyote:

Thank you very much, Kristina.

The interview was conducted by Leen Laconte.





Aliens on the Balkans

Trainer?!! What on earth is that!

by Lucija Popovska



"What do you do?"

"I am a trainer."

"A trainer?!!! What on earth is that! You don't look exactly sporty, excuse me for saying..."



A transcript of a very typical conversation, practically a daily conversation, whenever I get asked about my job. Apart from the non-diplomatic referring to my... well, rounded figure, it also refers to a state of almost complete ignorance about the line of work that "a few good people" and myself are conducting on the sunny side of the Balkans. In an era of private businessmen and "gray" trade specialists, it does make one feel like an alien from time to time.

"Over the last decade in development circles a common view has taken shape which perceives the question of development in terms of launching a training process. The key terms in this are the adaptation and transfer of technology, and its assimilation and application by the target population concerned.

In our view, development can not proceed if individuals, however confident and well-motivated, lack either the knowledge or the appropriate skills and attitudes needed to do their jobs better, and subsequently to serve as multipliers in the development process.

The chief objective for an organisation carrying out a programme of integrated staff training is to ensure the best utilisation of existing human resources..." (*Training, Management for*

Development Foundations, Netherlands, 1999).

Training, the key word in the fragments and the title of the above quoted article. And the one who prepares and delivers it, the trainer... Would anyone care to know about this?

Living in the Balkans at this time (perhaps at any time?) is a challenge in itself. And a big one. Long-term thinking and sustainable strategies are imaginary terms or a luxury in general, just as peace and good-will are in some parts of this region. Therefore the minds are focused on very short-term, pragmatic goals. Life, money, safety...

Still, somewhere in that circle, there are people who struggle for more than bare existence, bare life. Those who speak a strange language, the language of civilisation, and mention words such as: civil society, human rights, equal participation, sustainability, development, integration. And transfer of know-how. Learning how to do it. Those have a very difficult but certainly challenging task.

The first thing a trainer, or to generalise, a promoter of the idea of development (of society) has to face and to struggle to overcome in an "exotic" country in this region, is the set-up of people's minds. The long years of communist brain discipline have left a heavy burden to lift - the centralisation of the system in people's minds.

The expectation that "someone" should take care of the problems. The state, the government, God, Lenin, Tito... whoever but me, I mean, why me?

This is perhaps the most demanding barrier, the highest mountain to climb. Convincing people to ACT, to take responsibility, to care and to express care and concern, to PARTICIPATE. For development without true participation is as impossible as constructing a perpetual mobile. And as ridiculous. The barriers that follow are maybe less abstract to grasp but nevertheless challenging. The resistance to ideas and practices "imported from the West" (we like the design of their cigarettes and shoes, but do not let them sell us brains!), the typical inertia of the Balkans (what you can leave to be done until tomorrow, never bother with doing today), the fear of the unknown (do we really need this?!)... An endless list of smaller or bigger obstacles.

One of the biggest challenges is the multicultural reality that all of us in this region (in this world?) face, burdened excessively with the inter-ethnic and, sometimes, inter-religious tensions. Delivering a training course on health education for women or organising a youth event to raise awareness about AIDS could turn one not only into an alien, but into an outcast in some areas of the country. The valuable experience gathered in the Council of Europe's trainings or in some of the excellent Western European training institutions often confronts a wall of fear, resistance and even hostility. Overcoming this wall demands not only a vast expertise and knowledge of the subject itself but also an armful of good facilitation, negotiation and communication skills and techniques.

To win people's trust and relate to their potentials and capacities for self-development often turn out to be the key instruments. And to be able not only to level with one's participants but also to enter fully their reality and cultural identity. One develops many

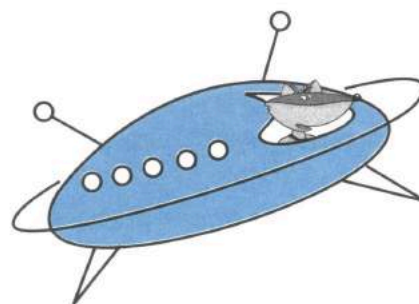
of these skills intuitively and on the spot. The capacity to adjust, and this quickly, becomes essential in a trainer's daily life in the Balkans.

Therefore, a person who is determined to do his or her job, to train people, to transfer knowledge, skills and attitudes, to assist the development process and promote certain ideas, values and beliefs has to prepare him- or herself for a very long journey. For this is what it is. A journey through areas that have never been explored before. As some of the South American and some of the Balkans' forests.

Loads of patience, good-will, positive energy and empathy along with very few days off, lots of circling around before getting to the job, negotiation, convincing... and some good results once in a while, comprise the regular life of the professionals in development. Still there are results in the end, and they even start to show.

Being an alien in the Balkans these days is not such a bad thing after all. Perhaps not much worse than being an alien anywhere on this little, green, silly planet that, for some reason keeps spinning around the sun and makes us all search for our little place on it

To win people's trust and relate to their potentials and capacities for self-development often turn out to be the key instruments



Marker

"Marker" is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training. Feedback from you will be really welcome.



The Albatross Dilemma

As with most experiential exercises, the main value lies in sharing and evaluating reactions and feelings

"During these pauses, which should be prolonged for effect, the Albatrossian man gently pushes the woman's head from time to time downward as she kneels." - quoted from "Albatross" in Donald Batchelder & Elisabeth Warner's *Beyond Experience*: the experimental approach to cross-cultural education, Experiment Press, 1979.

"Albatross" first came into my life in 1990 when I worked for the first time on a training course in the European Youth Centre. One of the team members said that this simulation game was a standard part of the two days on intercultural learning. She said it was really good for introducing the idea that we all judge situations using our own cultural values and norms. At the time I enjoyed playing it and the participants seemed to get quite a lot out of the discussions afterwards. It worked then, but does it work now?

Perhaps you have used this simulation too - if so, skip this paragraph - if not, here is a summary. Participants are told that they are going to visit a new culture and they will be greeted by representatives of this "Albatrossian culture". They enter a room where (usually) two team members are dressed in sheets, incense may be

burning and a circle of chairs awaits them. Men wear shoes and sit on the chairs, women are bare foot and kneel by their side. The Albatrossians don't speak; they click, hiss and hum. Food and drink are offered to the visitors by the Albatrossian woman: she places food in the men's mouths and indicates that the women should take their own food. Everything is done serenely and with great dignity and the pauses (and head pushing) referred to above heighten tension in the room. At the end, the Albatrossians choose the female visitor with the largest feet and leave with her.

As with most experiential exercises, the main value lies in sharing and evaluating reactions and feelings (see Dirk De Vilder's article in this issue of Coyote). Then the facilitator of the discussion reveals that, contrary to most of the participants' conclusions, the Albatrossian society values women above men. The reasoning being that the Earth is sacred; all fruitfulness is blessed and women are one with the Earth. Therefore they are the only ones allowed to have direct contact with the ground, therefore the man pushes her head to the ground to remind her of her sacredness, therefore the man eats first to protect her from harm, etc etc.



You get the picture? Nine years ago, most participants were surprised by these revelations but, generally, they took them in "good spirit" and challenged each other's perceptions. In the intervening years I have not used this simulation very much - others appealed to me more.

Sometimes it seemed to me to lack real possibilities for participants to act and there was the danger that the revelations at the end could leave participants feeling stupid. Some trainers claimed that this exercise should not be used in a "European" context as it contains too many "exotic" cultural references... Still, recently, I've seen Albatross used in one Youth for Europe training course and chose to use it in another. Both times with pretty explosive "results". A sizeable minority of both sexes left the Albatross room in a state of considerable anger:

"this is disgusting!"

"the women are totally oppressed!"

"how could the men follow the Albatrossian example and push down the heads of the women next to them?"

"I feel like I want to leave this course now!"

"how dare you put us through something like that?"

"why didn't we react more physically to this injustice?"

After the revelations about the Albatross culture, these participants expressed their feelings powerfully:

"is that supposed to be a joke?"

"I don't care about your explanations - this was just too horrible."

"Look, I was sitting next to someone with whom I had a really intense discussion at lunchtime and then you put me in a situation where I'm under pressure to treat her badly and push her head down - I can't talk about cultural perceptions after that!"

These reactions resulted in many many discussions - also in the informal parts of the programme - about how to introduce issues of cultural perception. Where are the moral limits? What happens if the trainers' aims for a particular method produce reactions which are extremely different to those they expect? Is that a disaster, or is it wonderful precisely because it is so different? Society changes and our methodologies have to change with it. I think we are seeing much stricter limit-setting these days, with people being much more open about what they can and cannot accept about other cultural value systems. This must affect the ways we are approaching intercultural learning.

Discussing with a couple of trainers the other week, I found I was not alone in seeing major problems in using Albatross these days.

How about you?

**Men wear shoes
and sit on the
chairs, women
are bare foot
and kneel by
their side.**

**Albatrossians
don't speak;
they click, hiss
and hum**



Training Methodologies

Some thoughts about **Experiential Learning**

by Dirk de Vilder

*"A mind that is stretched by a new experience will
never go back to its old dimension"*

(Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound)



Experiential learning as an approach to education and therapy has grown in popularity over the past 20 years. In spite of its relative popularity, experiential learning remains a concept that is easier to experience than explain and it encompasses many different viewpoints (Nadler and Luckner).

Experiential learning, sometimes called 'learning by doing', is a method that is often used in international training courses, most of the time to work on group dynamics and intercultural learning. However, experiential learning is more than only learning by doing or using active methods.

In this short article, I will try to give some basic information on this method. I do not intend to be complete, and like the name of the method says, it is better to experience than to talk or write about it.

The inspiration for this article I found in one of the best books at the moment on this topic, *"Processing the Experience, strategies to enhance and generalise learning"* by Luckner and Nadler.

Those of you who like to surf on the internet can also have a look at a website which was made by Mark Taylor after an Action D training course on experiential learning in Lithuania. There you will find some theory, activities and links to other educational sites.

This is the address :

<http://www.angelfire.com/mt/Roofonfire/index.html>

A general view

"Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you"

(Aldous Huxley)

Experiential learning is learning through doing. It is a process through which individuals construct knowledge, acquire skills and values from direct experience. (Association of Experiential Education, 1995). Experiential learning occurs when individuals engage in some activity, reflect upon the activity critically, derive some useful insight from the analysis and incorporate the result through a change in understanding and/or behaviour.

"Experiential learning is based on the assumption that all knowing must begin with the individual's relationship to the topic. The effectiveness of experiential learning is derived from the idea that nothing is more relevant to us than ourselves. What experiential learning does best is to install a sense of ownership over what is learned. It adds to the interest and involvement of participants but, most importantly, it contributes significantly to the transfer of learning. *The ultimate result is that individuals accept responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, rather than assigning that responsibility to someone else*" (Nadler and Luckner, italics added by writer).

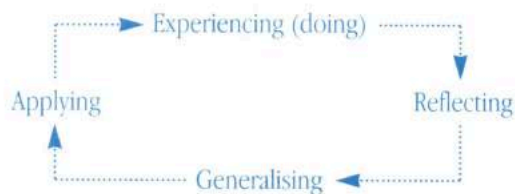
The experiential learning cycle

"Our lives are comprised of billions of experiences. What is most important though is not just the quantity and quality of these experiences but what we learn from each experience."

(Cousins, 1981)

The basis of experiential learning is the idea that only doing (experiences) is not enough. It is the reflecting upon the experience and the learning from this experience that can lead to better understanding and/or change. The experiential learning cycle makes this basis clear.

Diagram of the experiential learning cycle:



Experiencing

Learning experiences are generated naturally in one's daily life, but they can also be arranged to provide opportunities for specific learning (group dynamics, intercultural learning etc.). Once specific learning objectives are identified many types of learning can be selected to facilitate their achievement. This structured experience is the stage in which participants participate in a specific activity, with a specific objective (e.g. to make people aware of the differences in a multicultural group). These activities can be co-operation and communication activities but also simulation games, role-plays etc.

If the process stops after this stage, all learning is left to chance and the trainers have not fulfilled their responsibilities for facilitating

participants' learning. (It would be like doing the Albatross exercise without a reflection afterwards. See also "The Albatross Dilemma" in this issue of Coyote.)

Reflecting

The reflection process turns experience into experiential learning. People have experienced an activity and time needs to be allocated for participants to look back and examine what they have seen, felt and thought during the activity (e.g. how did we experience the differences in our multicultural group?).

Reflection may be an introspective act in which the learner alone integrates the new experience with the old, or it may be a group process where the experience gains a sense through discussion. Feedback of other participants can help to better see and feel these experiences and emotions.

Generalising

If learning should be transferred from the structured experience to other situations and settings, it is essential for individuals to be able to make links from this specific experience to everyday life. An essential aspect of experiential learning is the search for patterns. Patterns unite the previously isolated incidents. This search for patterns is undertaken to explore whether emotions, thoughts, behaviours or observations occur with some regularity. Is this something I recognise in myself? (e.g. Did I experience this before? Did I react in the same way in previous experiences in multicultural groups? Etc.)

When these emotions, thoughts, behaviours or observations can be understood in one situation, this understanding can be generalised and applied to other situations. Thus the generalisations are to be made about 'what tends to happen', not about what specifically happened in this particular experience. >>



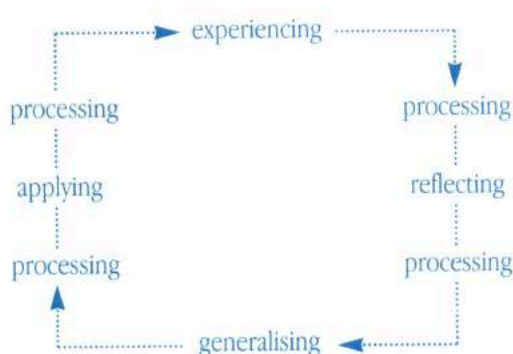
Applying

For experiential learning to be effective, it is necessary for participants to use the learning that they acquired through participation in the structured experience and to make a link to the outside world.

At this point, participants are encouraged to plan ways to put in action the generalisations that they identified in the previous stage. This procedure of shifting the attention from the structured experience to actual situations and settings in participants' daily life makes experiential learning practical and meaningful. (e.g. What did I learn from this experience and...what will I do with it?)

As indicated in the diagram above, there is an arrow from applying to experiencing. This arrow indicates the belief that the application of learning becomes part of the background knowledge for the next experience. Participants can experiment with their new knowledge in the next activity, reflect on it, generalise and apply it, and the circle goes on...

Processing the experience



The task of the trainer in this learning cycle is to facilitate the participants' learning, to help the participant to go through the different steps of the process. This is called 'processing'. Processing is best viewed as an activity that is structured to encourage participants to plan, reflect, describe, analyse and communicate about experiences and to learn from them. As shown in the diagram, processing leads participants through the different steps.

Processing activities can be used:

- to help participants to focus or increase their awareness on issues before the activity, or on the entire experience;
- to facilitate awareness or promote change while an experience (activity) is occurring;
- to reflect, analyse, describe or discuss an experience after it is completed;
- to help participants to give feedback to their colleagues;
- to reinforce perceptions of change and promote their integration in participants' lives after the experience is completed.

Some intercultural issues

I strongly believe that the experiential learning method is very useful in an international context to work on issues of intercultural communication, group dynamics, self-development or teamwork, because this method makes a link between the head and the belly, between learning through feelings and emotions and an abstract learning process.

When facilitating experiential learning in a multicultural setting, it is important to be aware of cultural and ethnic backgrounds in order to provide an optimal learning environment. Ideally, experiential learning activities can encourage people to experience different cultures as a source of learning. These activities can provide a structure to foster understanding, acceptance and constructive relations among people from different backgrounds.

Conclusions

It is important to know that -

- experiential learning is not only offering participants, young people, structured experiences but also reflection upon these experiences in order to learn from them, to link them to their own lives and to experiment with this new knowledge in the following activities and in their daily life.
- these activities or experiences have to be organised according to your objectives and according to the dynamics of the group and need to be adapted to the level of your group.

It is not you as the trainer or leader who decides on what participants have to learn. Rather, the participants learn from themselves and from the group. The leader's task is to see what is going on in the group and build activities upon these observations and reflections.

It is easy to write about experiential learning but not always so easy to do it. Again, experience will help to become a good experiential learning trainer/youth worker.



Where do You stand ?

On the one side of the room, a paper saying 'No'. On the other side, a paper saying 'Yes'. Standing in an open space, participants are shown a 'black and white' statement about a particular subject. They are asked if they agree or disagree with it. Then, to move to the appropriate side of the room. Spontaneously. Once thus split up in two sub-groups, the aim is to find arguments to convince each other. And, by doing so, to start to reflect about the subject, the arguments presented, the way people behave in such a situation etc. etc.

An exercise that, like many, can be played in different ways and with different objectives. And on a variety of issues. Here is one:

The role of the trainer

Looking at the following statements, where do you stand?

- ▶ The trainer should direct the training so that the conclusion of an activity will be what s/he wants.
- ▶ The trainer should always control his/her emotions and reactions.
- ▶ Activities should always be under the control of the trainer.
- ▶ The trainer should always keep in mind the needs of the group over the needs of the individual.
- ▶ The trainer is a moral example for the participants.
- ▶ The trainer should provoke participants' reactions.
- ▶ The trainer should experiment with people.
- ▶ The trainer should always be honest about the aims of the methods used.



Intercultural Learning

The Council of Europe and the European Commission decided to organise a training course on intercultural learning and conflict management within this year's partnership programme. A reason for looking back to the training course on intercultural learning that was run last year at the European Youth Centre. How did it feel to participate in this course? Claudia Schachinger describes her experience and what it meant for her.

To walk in your shoes...

Training Course on Intercultural Learning

by Claudia Schachinger



Have you ever thought about yourself as an iceberg, where a good part is hidden beneath the water surface? The Training Course on Intercultural Learning (June 1998, Strasbourg) was full of metaphors like this: Flowers and onions, blindfolded and leg-tied travels, cakes and fishes and all types of drawings tried to discern and approach this mysterious term of Intercultural Learning. A difficult exercise. We seemed to move in concentric circles around our topic, coming sometimes closer, sometimes even farther away. It was a learning process, a never-ending one - and to discover this, that's maybe what it is about.

¹ Milton J. Bennett, "A Developmental Approach to Training for Intercultural Sensitivity" in: *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 10, pp. 179 - 196, 1986.

² See footnote 1, article by Milton J. Bennet, p. 186.

Intercultural Learning - one of these up-to-date terms in international youth work. And like all terms, too often used, they might lose meaning. One reason why the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe had a Consultative Meeting in spring 1998 in order to evaluate and plan its work in this area. The Training Course "Intercultural Learning" was one consequence and a pilot project, aiming to bring approaches from different organisations together and to develop new ideas.

The "theory" of intercultural learning seemed simple to work on: The common elaboration of terms like "culture", "identity" and "stereotypes" in plenary discussions, exercises and group work. A deepening on pedagogy, intercultural learning-competencies or communication models. New knowledge to digest, in an attempt to integrate it, complementary to previous experiences.

East-West dialogue?

But - unfolding our theoretical knowledge and experience in plenary - we did not realise at all the differences in our own participation and ways of expression, neither did we ask for the reasons. Nobody thought that using the same words, we might have had different meanings in mind. Or that it pointed right at the heart of our subject, when always the same people were intervening in plenary as they were used to. And even very clear articulations (one participant from Eastern Europe: "We learnt for 40 years to keep silent.") did not lead us to address these issues.

There was a working group that wanted to develop a project on East-West dialogue. Was it by chance that nobody from the West participated? And as it came to present their contribution, some jokes seemed enough to provoke hurt feelings. Has anybody asked how hurt other people - the more silent ones - might have been at other moments? I at least asked myself once again how thin and sensible the layers are with which Europe has covered its wounds.

Not visible and hardly explicable

There was this wonderful symbol already mentioned, the iceberg, which hides all our cultural values and attitudes, the not visible and hardly explicable elements of our identity, the conceptions and notions we have, the ideals and patterns we feel adherent to. Yes, we liked this comparison a lot. But did it really bring us to reflect upon our own behaviours? And why did some of us react so defensive when asked if one

or the other comment made might have been linked to our roots and backgrounds?

We touched important issues. But why do I still have the feeling we remained in a silent agreement on the surface of discussions? Nobody asked seriously to discern what might have been behind one or the other conclusions of our games and exercises. We preferred the models and the methods (which are easily considered as answers) to the personal doubts and confrontations (which could imply open questions).

I see the chance to learn from this experience. And I recognised moments and elements in this training course which happen everywhere and despite all good intentions, in probably a lot of our organisations, institutions, bodies and meetings so concerned with "Intercultural Learning".

Every encounter at European or international level implies intercultural learning. It is not just any subject, it is at the heart of every interaction. Maybe it is therefore just a logical consequence that we are stepping every time again automatically in already well-known traps: The longing for harmony and the search for security. The survival of the fittest. The desire for self-representation and affirmation. The misunderstandings of terms. The search for easy answers. The mechanism of auto-defence and the game of power...

Through the encounter of difference

Intercultural learning is a sensitive process. And the person who deals with it is part of this process. We cannot pretend to develop wonderful theories without questioning our own behaviours, our own patterns. And - especially if we want to be trainers and specialists in this field, as many engaged in youth organisations do - we need to develop the courage to put the questions to ourselves, to confront our own "icebergs" first. And to believe that our own learning process never ends. That we can learn from everybody we meet, everywhere, once we are ready to listen, open to change. In this sense, I'd like to share a model with you I came to know in the training course (despite my former speech, there is a lot to learn from models if you do not take them for granted).

It is from Milton Bennett¹, and he describes the intercultural learning process in six steps: From ethnocentrism to ethno-

relativism (denial - defence - minimisation - acceptance - adaptation - integration). It is a permanent process that we move in, a never-ending effort to undertake.

Bennett tackles a number of points we often tend to forget, but which are important to consider. For example, that meaning can just be created through the encounter of difference. Or that we are easily seduced to bury differences under the weight of similarities. That a real intercultural dialogue preconditions the ability to distance us from the idea that everybody should have the same universal values and principles. And that adaptation would really mean a temporary shift of our frame of references, to "walk in the shoes of somebody else", if you want.

He finally mentions a sentence I really like: A multicultural person would not be simply a person sensitive to other cultures, but a person "who is always in the process of becoming a part of and apart from a given cultural context."² Not just such sentences made this training course deserve its name.

The capacity to question and to doubt

A lot of discussion in our so diverse and colourful group enabled new meaning and new considerations. Despite all difficulties and limitations (which are a realistic part of this subject and a part of all learning processes), the course enriched the understanding of intercultural learning and showed the enormous potentials and working fields behind this expression. And it indicated clearly the direction and sensibilities we have to take serious in our work and our encounters at European level: never to lose the capacity to question and to doubt, first of all our own perceptions and reactions. Never to give up the efforts to review the patterns of thinking and behaviour we are used to. To believe in the capacity of development and constructive changes. To be humble, sensitive and curious in our approach.

To appreciate differences and to remain in permanent search for a constructive "conflict culture". To trust in our roots and to see the other as a chance to discover, develop and complement our being. And many, many other things...



Intercultural Learning in European youth work

Perspectives on the east-west interface

Juliana Roth, Munich



I.

Intercultural learning between theory and practice

Intercultural learning is fashionable at present. Talking about integration and tolerance is the done thing for speakers before European audiences, and intercultural modules are part of every self-respecting further training programme. This applies just as much in big companies or banks that have recently merged as in government youth work, development aid, the diplomatic service and European training programmes. The reasons given for this trend are usually external political and economic factors, the most well known of which are globalisation, refugee movements, crisis prevention, the expansion of information technologies and the growth of supranational structures. However, internal factors such as knowledge accumulation and a demand for physical and intellectual mobility also appear to be contributing to the development of new "rules of etiquette" for dealing with cultural diversity.

What is intercultural learning? The term conceals various ranges of content, didactic concepts and pedagogical approaches that come from different disciplines but have one common feature: before being established as the subject of academic research and study, they were largely developed on a practical level in relation to contemporary socio-political debate. Education for foreigners, development didactics and exchange research all try to offer solutions to concrete social problems from the angle of their discipline. The constant changes in the theoretical concepts of intercultural learning are the result of the close relationship between theory and practice: depending on the prevailing geopolitical and sociocultural parameters, the problem regarded as most important has to be redefined and

fundamental questions about the subjects, objectives, content and methods of learning ("Who learns what, why and how?") have to be reformulated.

In Germany, for example, the educational concepts of the discipline *Ausländerpädagogik* (education of foreigners) introduced in the 1970s were a response to the positioning of the non-German migrant workers ("guest workers") at that time and an attempt to develop approaches for educating these "guests". As the status of the "guest workers" changed to that of ethnic groups who were permanently resident in the country the relevant approaches were subjected to increasing criticism, which led to the discipline being opened up - under the name of "*intercultural education*" - to the new task of preparing people for life in a multicultural society.

Similarly, the approaches of *Austauschforschung* (research in international exchange) and the closely related area of European youth work were based on the political and programmatic goal of international understanding. The concept of "international understanding" stems from the post-war era in Europe and served as an effective model for cross-border co-operation for several decades. Until the start of the nineties, it therefore shaped all areas of intercultural educational practice - both implicitly and explicitly. Its core principles were the ideas of equality ("*all people are equal*") and universalism of values ("*all people essentially have the same fundamental values*"). This meant that problems of understanding between people from different cultures could be solved or prevented simply by dealing with each other sensitively and in a spirit

of unprejudiced goodwill. The methodological implementation of this approach placed great emphasis on cultural similarities and the development of unprejudiced minds. Teachers did not need to learn any specific methods for cultural education and neither they nor learners had to bother with knowledge about other cultures. Instead, cultural differences were a taboo subject - a situation that still shapes the thinking of many teachers and educators today, albeit often subconsciously and unintentionally.

II.

A new model: cultural differences as a resource for intercultural learning

The environment in which intercultural encounters now take place has shown that educational theory and practice also need to adopt new approaches. Compared with the past, the daily challenges of intercultural living are now vastly more diverse and can no longer be tackled with the simple model of "international understanding". The growth in the number of contacts between cultures and in the presence of otherness in our daily lives has changed the fundamentals of how we deal with the latter. Encountering otherness is always accompanied by a heightened awareness of the significance of culture as a determining factor, this being reflected, among other things, in:

- a greater sense of the similarities and differences between cultures;
- a clearer awareness of the features of people's own cultures and lifestyles;
- decreasing willingness on the part of cultural minorities to accept the parameters set by the majority;
- and emphasis on people's pride in their own (ethnic or national) cultures.

Moreover, while acceptance of western values and cultures as attractive models (belief in modernity, progress, technology, emancipation of the individual, etc) went unquestioned as the way ahead for large sections of the world's population until only recently, we can now see people in many different regions turning back to their own cultural roots. The causes of this cultural emancipation and increasing confrontation with the "west" are very complex; one of them may lie in the existential crisis in western societies that has been accompanied by economic downturns and upsets in political and social systems. This factor is certainly of great importance to the shaping of relations between eastern and western Europe.

This general increase in the relevance of cultural differences means a change of paradigm for *intercultural learning*, as it necessarily involves having to face up to the challenges of education for dealing with cultural difference. This produces an extremely difficult situation for practical educational work. Although cultural

differences are accepted, they cannot be defined in concrete terms and remain vague and difficult to grasp for teachers and learners alike (apart from cultural anthropologists and ethnologists). At the same time, the continuing effect of the international understanding approach means that the educational process is often weighed down by a morally based desire to "improve the world", which has an impeding and counterproductive effect on professional intercultural learning.

It is learners from the social pedagogy and youth work sectors that are most affected by this change in paradigm. Their professional backgrounds mean that they are more likely than others to wish to avoid discrimination and accordingly to stress similarities in their relations with people from other cultures, placing emphasis on "tolerance" and "respect". The organisational structure and orientation of youth work also strengthen this desire to "improve the world" and at the same time unintentionally trigger resistance to intercultural learning of a kind that is based on cultural differences.

All of these factors prove in turn that intercultural learning cannot be carried out independently of social reality. Every theoretical unit (such as formulating educational objectives, defining educational content, generating motivation and determining educational methods) must be based on practical application and prove itself there. The experiences of today's intercultural environment suggest that we should adopt an educational process that teaches people to recognise differences and make sensible use of the knowledge acquired. Even when perceived and described in stereotypical form, cultural differences are not negative in themselves. What matters more is learning to deal with them constructively and in an ethically responsible manner.

In this way, cultural differences can become a valuable resource if approached correctly. In intercultural learning, it is best to approach them from the angle of one's own culture, which means that it is best for each intercultural learning module to begin by raising awareness of the learners' own cultures.

Intercultural learning is thus understood as a developmental process which is centred on the individual and whose aim is to bring about a change in individuals' understanding and acceptance of foreign cultural practices. The focus of the learning process is therefore placed explicitly on the subjective experience of cultural differences. The key role is played by the individual concerned, ie cultural differences are regarded as aspects of the perception and interpretation ("cultural lenses"), feeling, thinking and behaviour ("cultural character") of the individual. The learning process is seen as a continuum of several phases through which learners progress. ➡ ➡



The phases are determined in accordance with the learners' attitudes to the differences that exist between their culture and the other culture. The process begins with the state of ethnocentrism (on the part of the learners) and ends at the point where the learners have acquired a "*stereophonic cultural perspective*", meaning that they have incorporated the cultural differences into their own behaviour patterns and simultaneously possess the knowledge and skills of their own and the other culture. It is obvious that this is an ideal situation, which no doubt is achieved only rarely in practice. Acting according to the "rules" of two or more cultures at the same time causes stress and is perceived as an emotional burden. Nevertheless, educational models based on this fundamental principle have proved to be very useful in practice - even if they do not produce ideal results, their usefulness in giving a structure to educational modules is demonstrated every time a course in intercultural learning is held.

III. Intercultural learning for the integration of eastern and western Europe

What are the implications of the above for intercultural learning at the interface between eastern and western Europe?

In this section, I should like briefly to present some key aspects of my experience from relevant training work. I will use "east" and "west" as terms that transcend geography and refer to the pre-1990 political and ideological division of the continent. This somewhat imprecise definition ties in not only with common usage but also with the political and organisational activities of many European organisations. All former communist countries including the successor states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia thus belong to the 'east', with the consequence that "east Europeans" at European integration seminars include participants from such diverse countries as, for instance, Poland, Croatia, Russia, Armenia, and even Kirgizstan.

The first dilemma of intercultural learning in mixed east-west groups is to be found in this generalised and simplified view of the "east". The problems are compounded still further by the unambiguous value judgments expressed, for instance, in the comparative forms of the adjectives: "more western" almost always means a positive comparison, while "more eastern" has negative connotations.

Between the two lies the boundary between "west" and "east", which is by no means new. Its origins date back to the 18th century, when the relations between the two parts of the continent were defined in pairs of opposites (*civilised versus barbaric, rational versus emotional, factual versus mythologising, individual versus collective, past versus future oriented, progressive versus*

backward), with the west increasingly perceiving them as a west-east divide. New dimensions were added to the historic divide following the collapse of communism. Inspired by popular evolutionary theories, west Europeans were soon saying that their eastern neighbours "had not caught up yet" and encouraging them to keep on working "to join Europe". In many cases, east Europeans felt that this was a "colonialist" attitude and retreated into positions of refusal.

The east-west interface is usually perceived as being highly asymmetric. The stronger this perception, however, the likelier the partners are to hide behind ethnocentric barriers and block the progress of the learning process. Although the asymmetry mostly remains invisible, it has a lasting impact on every joint event and supplies criteria according to which the actions of the respective partners are assessed, with one side often thinking "*They know everything anyway and do not want to learn anything about us*" and the other taking the view that "*They are passive and contribute nothing at all*". This hinders communication and results in higher rather than lower "psychological barriers".

Practical experience of training also shows that the participants register and deal with the asymmetry in east-west relations in different ways. While west European participants mainly adhere to the international understanding approach without much further thought and focus on similarities with their east European counterparts (eg in the fields of information technology, youth culture, media consumption and sport), the east Europeans feel that they are being passed over and their cultural features are being ignored. They have the impression of being confronted with western cultural dominance, which is subliminal and perhaps unintended and cannot be openly criticised for reasons of politeness, but which does ultimately come down to the imposition of the more powerful culture.

The different assessment of the asymmetry of east-west relations by east and west Europeans suggests that the two groups do not have the same approach to cultural differences. Support for this argument can easily be found in the many theoretical studies of intercultural communication, as they provide sufficient evidence of the culturally specific approaches to otherness in individualistic/universalistic and collectivistic/particularistic societies. The individualistic belief that the same value standards should apply to everyone comes up against the view - which is equally valid from the collectivist perspective - that value standards for people's own groups and for other groups should be different. It is clear that these culturally specific approaches have an effect on the ways cultural differences are perceived and dealt with.

So what is the adequate didactic approach to seminars and workshops with east and west European participants? What is the

best learning environment, how should learning situations be organised, what educational content should be provided for and what methods should be employed? Practical experience of intercultural encounters and research on the matter point clearly in one direction: only adopting an open approach to cultural differences and learning how to deal with them constructively can provide a stable basis for intercultural learning. This solution is not culturally neutral - it is closer to the profile of the more or less collectivist east Europeans. West Europeans have some difficulties with this approach, as it runs counter to their "cultural profile". However, if they are genuinely interested in the integration of eastern and western Europe, they should take up this challenge.



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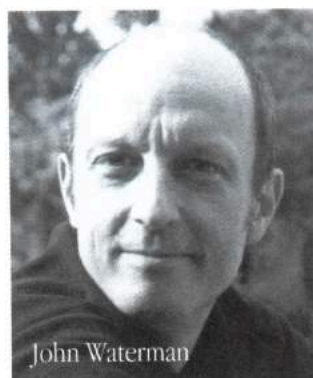
Methodological developments in intercultural learning through *language*

by John O'Regan and John Waterman



¹ The ideas on ethnography and culture expressed here owe a lot to the work of Celia Roberts.

² We say through language because for us the most important aspect of the courses of the European Youth Centres is intercultural learning. Language, whether it is French, German, English or Russian is the vehicle by which this occurs.



The idea for this article grew out of work being done on the language courses of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. There are six languages taught on this programme, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, and each course is delivered in its host country. Some countries have more than one course each year. The courses are four weeks long and are aimed at youth leaders and young workers in INGYOs and NGOs. Depending on the course, they have 20-30 participants on them at a time. One of these courses takes place at Thames Valley University, London.

The courses have a history going back over 30 years. Since 1989 the major theme of these courses has been intercultural learning based on the following objectives:

- ▶ To offer a different way of learning a language.
- ▶ To enable members of INGYOs to become more active in international youth work in an increasingly multicultural world.
- ▶ To enable participants to learn a language while learning from each other and working together in an international group in order to develop intercultural awareness and communication.
- ▶ To enable participants to experience different realities of youth, youth work and (international) youth organisations and also to exchange ideas and views.
- ▶ To enable participants to experience the political economic, social and cultural realities of the host country, region and town.
- ▶ To foster intercultural attitudes which will break down barriers of prejudice and intolerance in greater Europe and the world. (1996 Programme Documentation; doc. CEJ/G (95) 8).

The intercultural learning dimension of the language courses is now very well established and

considerable experience of applying an Intercultural Learning methodology has been built up. In order to exploit this knowledge and to exchange ideas about the future of Intercultural Learning, the EYC decided to convene a training course in intercultural learning through language. This took place in 1998 in Strasbourg from 10-15 November.

The course was aimed at people involved in youth training programmes at a European level (trainers, language teachers, language course directors, youth work professionals). It was also attended by members of the European Voluntary Service. They made a very positive contribution to the course. This training course was also the first in a new partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. In all the course was attended by 36 people. This included three guest speakers and five facilitators.

On the following pages we will briefly describe what the training course was like and then move on to explain what intercultural learning means for us. We will then suggest how it might be introduced on a language course. As part of this we will be introducing the concept of ethnography.¹

The training course

The 1998 training course started with some theoretical background to intercultural learning through language.² The underlying ethos of the work of the European Youth Centre, which is laid down in the objectives of the language courses, set the scene. Interactive workshops were organised to exchange ideas in the areas of methodologies and materials. Participants also went through a number of simulations which led to discussions on attitude, integration, communication, language and social constructs. This was followed by working groups that were

given the job of producing materials. These "Production Units" worked on five key areas: programme and course preparation, materials development, communication, teaching and learning styles, and preparation of participants for the European Voluntary Service.

Intercultural learning

The methodological organisation of a course on intercultural learning through language has four basic parameters. The first of these are the professional needs and interests of the participants, all of whom are either youth leaders or youth workers. From these come the topics to be covered on the course and these in turn provide the basis for the tasks on the course. The fourth and final parameter permeates the other three. It is intercultural learning.

Intercultural learning is not easy to define. We, the authors of this article, take a view of intercultural learning which is premised on the belief that culture is not monolithic. What we mean by this is that it is not something which is lying out there in society waiting to be dissected and examined. Rather it is a set of largely unwritten rules which are constantly and subtly changing. From the time they are born people learn how these rules operate through a long and complex process of socialisation. These rules shape our view of the world in terms of our attitudes, beliefs and the meanings we give to things.

The key point in all this is that in our view the building blocks which make up a person's cultural reality are socially constructed. They are not innate. If cultural norms are socially constructed, then what we as individuals take to be normal and appropriate behaviour in a particular context is in reality just one of several equally normal and appropriate modes of behaviour depending on the cultural context in question.

Because we have been socialised to behave in ways which are considered normal and appropriate, it is very easy to assume that our way of doing something is better, more sensible or logical than the way people from other cultures or social groups do the same thing. A good example is eating. Is it better to eat with a knife and fork or with your hands? We, the writers, would argue that it is neither better nor worse, it is just different.

Intercultural learning for us operates on a number of levels. It means learning about similarities and differences in the way individuals from different backgrounds operate. It means participating in the multicultural group. It also means focusing on the particular rather than the general. That is why in our approach we look at the everyday life of participants. This might include things like morning washing rituals, having dinner with the family, eating in a restaurant, smoking a cigarette, buying a stamp, standing on a crowded train, buying a round of drinks in a bar or asking the time.

The experience of the individual is valued because it avoids the cultural reductionism which results in unhelpful generalisations and stereotyping. Effective intercultural learning depends on participants being willing to entertain the notion that cultural reality is socially constructed, i.e. that their norms are very possibly other people's peculiarities. If they can accept this idea, they immediately move away from the tendency to make comparisons using their own culture as a yardstick. This tendency on some language and culture courses can give rise to unhelpful and misleading generalisations about races of people.

- ▶ English people are cold.
- ▶ Italians eat a lot of pasta.
- ▶ Spaniards are hot-blooded.
- ▶ Russians are very serious.

These are stereotypes because they generalise about reality and oversimplify it. Not all English people are cold and even those who may be described this way are not like this all of the time.

Implementing intercultural learning through language on a language course

If you want to introduce intercultural learning through language on a language course it is worth considering that intercultural learning can happen in two main ways. The first is not so effective and is known as incidental intercultural learning. The second is very effective and is known as systematic intercultural learning. Our goal is to make intercultural learning as systematic as possible.

Incidental intercultural learning occurs via the intercultural dynamic of the multinational group. In other words it occurs because of the fact of the multinational character of the group where people are living and working together.

One aspect of this is that participants working with other participants employ communication strategies which they view as normal and appropriate for the purposes of successful communication. In doing so, each participant is involved in a process of negotiation with the communication strategies of the other participants. This process raises their awareness of how other group members operate and is integral to the communicative exchange. But although it is integral, intercultural learning is not an explicit part of it. No one is explicitly saying "Hey, let's look at what is happening here". Because of this, incidental intercultural learning can lead to misunderstandings and possibly reinforce or create negative stereotyping. This will not always be the case, but it is worth being aware of it all the same.

A concrete example of how this might happen would be two participants from different countries discussing a topic like youth unemployment. Let's call them Juana and Mircea.



Juana notices that Mircea dominates the conversation and never lets her finish what she wants to say. He interrupts a lot. For his part, Mircea thinks that Juana does not have much to say and so carries on talking. He also wonders why she sometimes seems to run out of things to say.

What may be happening is that where Mircea comes from the signal, usually a pause, that you have finished what you have to say and are ready for someone else to interject is much shorter than it is in the social environment that Juana is accustomed to. So when he stops talking and Juana does not say anything, he thinks he has paused long enough, decides that she has got nothing to say and just carries on.

Neither Juana nor Mircea are focusing on this aspect of their exchange, but they are aware that there is something intercultural happening. It is incidental intercultural learning. But what are they learning? Juana and Mircea may go away with negative impressions of one another. Juana thinking that Mircea is rude and he thinking that she is boring.

Systematic intercultural learning, on the other hand, aims to avoid the pitfalls of incidental intercultural learning by making explicit what is happening in such social events. It involves things like simulation games and discussion groups, reflection and analysis. It means stopping and asking yourself why something is happening in the way it is. It could be as simple as observing someone smoking a cigarette and asking yourself why the smoker is holding the cigarette in a particular way, or just thinking about the expression on his or her face.

When conflicts arise, and they often do in the complex dynamic of a multicultural group, it is worth stopping and saying "OK, what is happening here? What is stopping us from organising this thing? Why is communication breaking down?" Such conflicts are often the result of different expectations of what is normal in particular situations. It could be a discussion, a conversation, a group activity or the election of a group representative.

In systematic intercultural learning we are trying to make participants more aware of:

- ▶ themselves
- ▶ the personal socio-cultural backgrounds (social realities) of the other participants
- ▶ the differences between their social realities and the social realities of other participants
- ▶ the differences between their social realities and the social realities of the members of the local community where the course takes place.

To encourage participants to look at life in terms of social realities and to see how these realities are socially constructed to seem

normal it is useful to try to get them to imagine an every day occurrence like a family dinner or travelling to work by bus and to analyse it in detail from the perspective of an outsider. This can be very revealing of social attitudes and social rituals in the participant's own social environment.

On a course on intercultural learning through language, participants are already outsiders, but if they can accept how their own realities can be viewed as strange, then the realities they experience in the group and in the local community where the course is taking place can be investigated from a very different perspective to that common to many language and cultural studies courses. This investigative perspective is known as ethnography and is a form of intercultural awareness raising.

Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of how people operate in their everyday lives and an ethnographer is a participant-observer in different social realities.

The participant-observer leaves his or her own social environment to become a participant and an observer of a different social environment with its attendant social realities. By participating and observing in these real social contexts the ethnographer tries to make sense of what is experienced and also to understand why it makes sense to the participants being observed.

The participant-observer as ethnographer involves trying to find out how all the different perspectives within a given social setting make sense. He/She should try to discover what people do in a given social setting, why people do this thing and how it makes sense in a broader social context. This can form the basis for a series of tasks and projects which investigate the life of the multicultural group and of the local community where the course takes place. The foreign language of the course is the vehicle by which happens.

These findings can then be examined within wider conceptual frameworks such as gender, power, food rituals, social distance, the family, national identity, group identity and so on. These can lead to discussions which raise intercultural awareness. We believe that this kind of ethnographic awareness raising is very useful for investigating the dynamic of the multicultural group and many of the social aspects of the community where the course takes place. We hope you will too.



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You can send them to Sonja Mitter at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg

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