

A Training Strategy for the YOUTH Programme of the European Commission

★ *The importance of training in non-formal education has never been an issue. On the contrary - many initiatives and projects were started and implemented in the context of the Youth for Europe programme. However, this did not really constitute a strategic approach to this area. The new YOUTH programme, which combines the activities of the earlier Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service programmes, has paved the way for the further development of non-formal education. The larger budget, compared to the previous programmes, will allow more young people to take part in YOUTH projects. In addition to this quantitative progress, important as it is, qualitative progress must also be made, involving the relevant players and activities.*

To this end, the Commission presented a "Strategy Paper for Training" at the Programme Committee meeting on 18/19 April 2000. This paper met with unanimous approval. The backing of the committee has meant that, since the spring of this year, the necessary steps towards implementation have been taken.

The aim of this article is to introduce the training strategy concept, outline the current state of progress and consider possible future developments. It should be understood, however, that this is an interim report reflecting the situation at the end of 2000/ beginning of 2001, and may be subject to possible changes to the content of the programme.

I. Concept

The overall objective of the training strategy is to help youth workers, youth leaders and support staff to develop and implement high-quality youth activities that contribute to attaining the objectives of the YOUTH programme and/or its actions.

To achieve this, training activities in the area of youth/non-formal education must be further developed, drawing on the specialist knowledge of the National Agencies and the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe. To this end, various training courses geared to the political priorities of the YOUTH programme are being created and implemented:

- A basic course on European Citizenship for youth workers wanting to become involved in European youth work and develop and implement projects (developed and implemented within the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe).
- Specific courses with the aim of improving the quality of priority areas of the YOUTH programme. These courses are aimed at youth workers, youth leaders and support staff, who can act as "multipliers" and are in a position to develop and implement

high-quality international youth projects (developed and implemented by the SALTO-YOUTH training centres of the National Agencies).

- Developing and implementing a curriculum for "Training for Trainers". The trainers will be equipped to provide further training for youth workers in the area of non-formal education at European level (developed and implemented within the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe).

It is also important to concentrate on quality standards and the recognition of non-formal education, to develop educational materials based on these quality standards and encourage the exchange of good practices. It is vital to guarantee the flow of information at all levels and between the various participants in the youth field.

In the medium term, the training strategy will include the training activities of the entire YOUTH programme, as it will also influence the activities of the National Agencies through greater co-ordination within the network. The implementation of Action 5 (Support Measures) of the YOUTH programme will also serve as a source of inspiration and innovation for the training strategy, through NGOs' project applications.

By Frank Marx



II. A flexible network

The training strategy is being implemented in a network involving the following players/components: the network of National Agencies, the four SALTO-YOUTH (Bonn, German office "YOUTH for Europe"; Brussels, JINT; London, Connect Youth International; Paris, INJEP), and the partnership with the Council of Europe in the area of training. The creation of a flexible network in the training field will first of all contribute to greater transparency in an area boasting many activities at European and national levels. If possible, all activities, materials, etc. developed/performed at European, national or regional level should be publicised within the network. This strategy should lead ultimately to an accumulation of expertise, thus facilitating and improving implementation of the YOUTH programme. The participation of all players is vital to the success of such an idea, and a clear division of tasks is important for reasons of transparency.

The following bodies appear to be suitable for co-ordinating and facilitating the exchange of information between the partners: the Technical Working Party (TWP) is responsible for supervising the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe; the Steering Group is the most important focal point and guarantees the exchange of information between the partners. An annual training meeting, involving all partners and players, will create a general framework.

Technical Working Party (TWP) for collaboration with the Council of Europe

The TWP will continue to prepare management decisions for the concrete implementation of the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. A representative of SALTO-YOUTH sits on the TWP, in order to guarantee the flow of information between the partners.

Steering Group

The Steering Group - chaired by the Commission - meets regularly (about three times a year) and contributes to the further development and implementation of the training strategy. It also has an important coordination role. Members are recruited from the ranks of the National Agencies (4), SALTO-YOUTH workers (4), the European Youth Forum (1) and the Council of Europe (1). The Steering Group has the following tasks (not an exhaustive list):

- An advisory role in training in the context of the YOUTH programme; preparing the contents of an annual training event;
- Discussing and proposing priorities for the training strategy in general and for the SALTO-YOUTH training courses in particular;
- The Steering Group also plays an important role in monitoring, following up and evaluating activities performed in the field of training.

Annual training event

All the partners involved in implementing the training strategy take part in this event, which provides an opportunity to take stock and exchange views. It is also a forum for critically discussing the quality and results of work in the training field and signalling future developments.

III. Implementing the training strategy

This section gives an overview of the tools available for implementing the training strategy. Each tool has its own function and specific features. It should also be noted that the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe and the work of SALTO-YOUTH can be controlled directly, i.e. almost in real time. Greater co-ordination of the National Agency network's training activities is, however, more of a medium-term objective. This applies perhaps even more to those training activities that can be subsidised under Action 5 of the YOUTH programme.

Partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe

The signature of the third agreement gave a firm foundation to the co-operation between the Commission and the Council of Europe, operational since November 1998, for the continuation of its work until June 2003. In future the partnership will concentrate on training activities of political importance to both institutions, in addition to continuing with its current activities (in particular the "T-Kits" training manuals and Coyote). The plan is to develop training courses dealing with topics not covered by SALTO-YOUTH and the network of National Agencies.

New T-Kits for youth/non-formal education are to be added to the existing range. Last year saw the publication of T-Kits on Organisational Management, Methodology in Language Learning, Project Management and Intercultural Learning. The following are planned for 2000/2001: How to organise a training course; (European) Voluntary Service and Active European Citizenship for young people.

However, it seems almost more important that real political priorities have been set for concrete training activities with the decision to set curricula for a training course on "European Citizenship" and a long-term course on "Training for Trainers". The aim of this work is to contribute to the development and maintenance of quality standards for training. A working group (known as the Curriculum and Quality Development Group), which met in September and November 2000 and includes - in addition to educators and trainers - representatives of the National Agencies and, of course, the Council of Europe and the Commission, has set the following tasks:

- Development of a curriculum for running a training course on "Active European citizenship for young people". The idea for this course comes from the study on active citizenship in the European Union (DGXXII, 1997), which took a holistic approach to citizenship. Active citizenship is seen as a mixture of tolerant and open behaviour towards others that requires communication and social skills; knowledge of, for example, decision-making processes at different political levels and values such as democracy, human rights, environmental protection and so on. These skills are complemented by basic knowledge of project management and other relevant topics.
- Drawing up a curriculum for a long-term training course for trainers, comprising several training phases and a practical component training other participants (learning by doing). Successful participants will be awarded a certificate. These highly qualified trainers (about 20-25 will be attending the course each year) will

also be valuable resources for training courses for those involved in youth/non-formal education.

- Making recommendations for quality standards in the area of youth/non-formal education.

The results of the group's work will serve as a basis for the actual implementation of the courses.

SALTO-YOUTH

SALTO-YOUTH is a project of four National Agencies offering specialised training courses in priority areas and a range of horizontal services, such as coordination, evaluation and documentation. It has been running since September 2000. As a focal point in the network of National Agencies, it is also represented and active in the training committees and works directly with the Commission. Its tasks are to:

- develop, implement, supervise and evaluate training courses related directly to the implementation of the YOUTH programme;
- collect materials and information and provide services and information to the national agencies, as well as maintaining the flow of information between the national agencies and the Steering Group;
- SALTO-YOUTH is also involved in supervision, evaluation and follow-up to the training strategy.

For more information about the tasks and the courses offered by SALTO-YOUTH in the spring of 2001 see the article by Bernard Abrignani in this issue of *Coyote*.

Training provided by the National Agencies

The National Agencies for the YOUTH programme run many training activities themselves. It should therefore be emphasised that SALTO-YOUTH was in no way created in order to replace the existing training activities of the National Agencies. Their role in the field of training can be defined as follows:

- The National Agencies will continue to offer training opportunities, but in a more structured and coordinated way, taking into account the Steering Group's recommendations.
- Moreover, the National Agency network should make proposals (e.g. by participating in the Steering Group or making suggestions to the Steering Group or at the annual event).

Action 5 (Support measures)

The aim of Action 5 is to support projects contributing to the objectives and/or the implementation of the other actions in the programme. Activities from the field of training can also be funded. Projects can contribute to the implementation of the training strategy, in accordance with the priorities of the programme. The potential role of the training activities supported by Action 5 can be defined as follows:

- including youth organisations in the training strategy;
- creating space for innovative training activities.

Information about courses (organisation running them, date and time, innovative aspects, results, etc.) should be made available to the network, in order to facilitate contacts and the exchange of good practices.

IV. Prospects

The training strategy is being implemented swiftly. SALTO-YOUTH, in other words the four National Agencies that play a special role in the training strategy, has started work. Considerable progress has been made in the partnership with the Council of Europe, with the result that the curricula for the European Citizenship and Training for Trainers courses will be ready by May 2001.

It is still too early to evaluate and sketch the impact of the training strategy in terms of the training activities of the National Agencies. Time and energy will have to be invested in analysing it, making recommendations and coming up with concrete results. At the end of the day, the network has been running training courses and other activities for more than ten years in the context of Youth for Europe and the European Voluntary Service. The same applies - although from another perspective - to applicant training projects for Action 5 of the YOUTH programme. Involving all the many players is an objective that can only be achieved in the medium term. It is a consolation that the YOUTH programme has created a sound framework for the period 2000 to 2006, which should allow considerable qualitative and quantitative progress in this key area for the programme.

The training event planned for autumn 2001 will give a further boost to this work. The plan is for trainers and course participants, representatives from academia, politics and NGOs to participate, in addition to those parties directly involved in the strategy, such as the National Agencies, SALTO-YOUTH, the Council of Europe and the Youth Forum. Workshops, presentations, lectures and discussion forums will all be used to take stock and draw up an interim assessment of the training strategy, as well as coming up with ideas for its further development.

Author's note: The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.

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You can find more information about the YOUTH programme of the European Commission on the web at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth.html>

