youth - training - europe

Coyote

magazine - 6

Coyote

" 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)
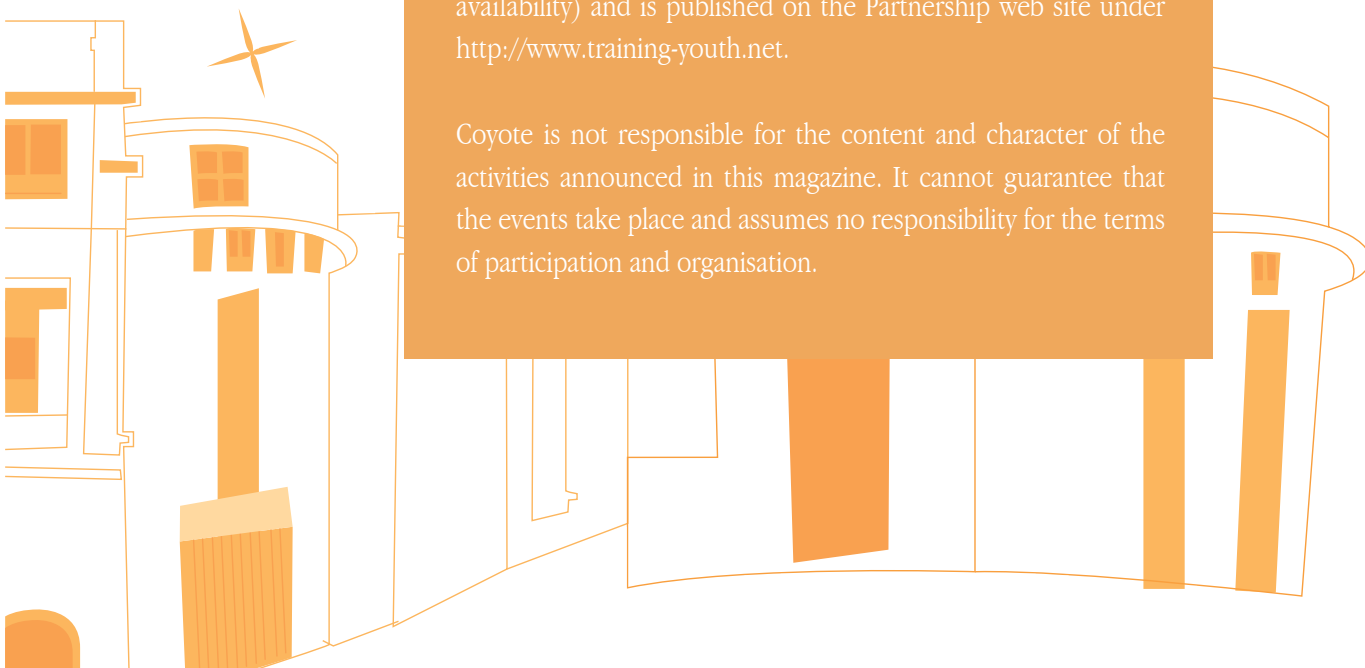
Coyote is a magazine dealing with issues around 'youth – training – europe'. It is addressed to trainers, youth workers and all those who want to know more about the world of youth worker training in Europe.

Coyote wants to provide a forum to share and give new insights into some of the issues that trainers face in their work, issues related to the diverse training concepts, methodologies, practices and realities across this continent. It also informs about current developments in this field, especially at European level.

Coyote is published by the Council of Europe and the European Commission within their Partnership in the youth field, with the aim to strengthen networking among trainers involved in European youth worker training and to promote the value of European level training for youth workers.

Coyote comes out twice every year. It can be received free of charge from the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg (subject to availability) and is published on the Partnership web site under http://www.training-youth.net.

Coyote - Issue 6

Contents

Copies of Coyote can be received upon request at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg.

To receive further information about Partnership projects or subsribe to Coyote, please contact the European Youth Centre Strasbourg by phone or fax, or send an e-mail to **info@training-youth.net**. Coyote will be happy to receive your comments and your ideas for future articles. Letters to the Editor can be sent to **coyote@training-youth.net**.

Welcome to Coyote!

Summer has passed, the leaves are turning orange and brown, and we are happy to finally present you the the new issue of Coyote, with some new features and a fresh autumn-style look.

In particular, starting with this issue, Coyote is including a new section called Coyote Theme. This change is the result of the outcomes of an overall review of the magazine, which included an analysis of the questionnaires that were sent out to Coyote readers several months ago. (For more information on the results of this evaluation have a look at the article "Coyote is Looking Ahead".)

We decided to dedicate this first Coyote Theme to the European Commission's White Paper on Youth. The White Paper is a major document to influence youth policy for the coming years. It puts emphasis on the role of non-formal education for young people and should therefore also have an impact on training in youth work. After all, actors in the youth field should focus on the political priorities and methods indicated in the White Paper. European youth training should prepare participants for such action, and it will be evaluated accordingly.

Several authors have analysed for Coyote the potential of the White Paper to create change. They come from different organisations, professions and countries and place emphasis on particular aspects of the document. We hope that their opinions and perspectives will give you food for thought and help you define your own opinion about the White Paper and its impact on non-formal education.

Training is never neutral. It is always influenced by the values and attitudes it promotes. What we do, and how we debrief or discuss a training activity or session depends on the objectives, values and policy of the organisation and those of the trainer giving the training. This is a major thought running through most articles in this Coyote issue.

Social integration and employment, also two of the White Paper's priorities, are the focus of the training described in Angela Vettraino's article about a training course of the UK employment programme New Deal. It is interesting to compare this training to those run under the European youth programmes. The title of Tim Merry's article, "Celebrating Diversity", speaks for itself, while Stanislava Vuckovic tells us about the Alphabet of Feelings, a training programme for peace that her organisation is running in Serbia.

But are we always conscious and clear about the values and concepts we are promoting as trainers? And what if our own values collide with those of the organisation we are representing? Jonathan Boywer takes a closer look at these questions in his article "Trainers – who do we represent?" A training method, described by Bryony Hoskins for Coyote, that can help trainees become more conscious about their own perspectives are observations in simulation games – a method that is rarely used to its full potential.

But maybe you are really looking for an interesting little story for your next training course. Or a song for your next training session. Then you might want to start reading by turning to Telling Tales or Marker.

We apologise for the late publication of the two Coyote issues this year! We are hoping to publish the next issue again on time.

Enjoy your reading!

Sonja Mitter

Coyote News

Coyote is Looking Ahead: assessment and plans for the future

In summer 2001, with the publication of the fifth issue and after 2 years of existence Coyote decided it was time for an in-depth evaluation of the magazine and for a fresh thought about its further development. The Coyote team sent out questionnaires to the readers asking them what they thought about the magazine. It then analysed the returned questionnaires in its team meeting in January 2002. In a parallel process, the Partnership institutions took a critical look at the magazine and formulated suggestions for future issues, which were also considered at the January meeting.

So what are the main outcomes?   *by Sonja Mitter*

What do the readers think about Coyote?

Basis for assessment

68 readers and contributors of Coyote returned the completed questionnaire to the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. Not many, considering that some 4000 copies of every issue are sent out and distributed and further articles are read through the web version of the magazine. Nevertheless it was enough to collect a sizeable number of comments and suggestions from people that had received on average 4 issues of the magazine.

Reader profile

Almost half of the readers returning the questionnaire described themselves as trainers; about 20 per cent each as participants in international and national training events. 9 per cent have a more institutional and administrative background.

How do you evaluate Coyote in general?

On average, Coyote is appreciated as a good magazine. This evaluation refers to aspects like the magazine in general, its variety of styles, quality of articles, layout and structure. Most readers find the timing of the publication of the two issues per year adequate; some would like to see a more frequent publication of 3-4 issues per year.

Which articles of the magazine do you read most?

All sections and articles were mentioned by at least some readers as those they were reading most. Overall, articles under the Training Methodology section are the most popular. They are followed by the interviews of Coyote meets Trainers, and then articles under the other main sections, which are read equally frequently.

What do you like best about Coyote?

The readers like best about Coyote: the expression of different points of view, the mixture of theory and practice, its variety; the informal spirit and fun and light-hearted approach while taking things seriously; that it brings the community together, is a forum for information and gives a voice to trainers and others directly involved in training. Many readers appreciate most the fact that Coyote exists at all.

How do you use Coyote?

Readers mostly use the information and ideas from Coyote as background knowledge for their work (50 %), but trainers are using the magazine also increasingly to prepare specific elements within training courses or seminars (26%). Moreover, some readers indicated that they were referring to Coyote articles in training events, others that they had translated articles into their mother tongue.

What are your suggestions for future issues of Coyote?

Many readers wish to see more possibilities for exchanging comments and information and a more open debate forum in the magazine. A more interactively designed web site was suggested as the most appropriate tool for this.

Several readers proposed a focus on selected major issues and to address and discuss those from different perspectives.

Further suggestions include: publish more articles about youth work at local level and overseas approaches; enlarge bibliographies and add book reviews; translate the magazine or at least summaries of articles into other languages, and give Spiffy (the coyote) a female as well as a male look.

What do the Partnership institutions suggest?

The Council of Europe and the European Commission would like to see Coyote develop into a more political tool in the future. This means that the magazine should more strongly reflect the political priorities of the institutions in the youth and training field. This should not however limit the contributors' freedom to express their views. The Partnership institutions also recommend stronger internal coherence within Coyote issues, for instance through defining one priority theme for each issue.

Underlying this interest is also the wish of the institutions to emphasise Coyote's character as a professional, rather than a youth magazine.

So how will Coyote develop in the future?

Looking at all these comments and suggestions, we, the Coyote editorial team, will be trying to create a new balance. We want to keep the informal tone of the magazine while adding a more professional outlook. Coyote should continue to raise a variety of issues and opinions, but we also intend to take up the proposal of readers and the institutions of defining priority themes in line with the political priorities of the institutions.

Starting with this issue, we will be including a new section in each Coyote issue, called Coyote Theme and focussing on one priority topic of political importance. The basic idea is to discuss one theme of larger relevance, look at it from different angles and give trainers, youth workers, policy makers, institutional representatives and other experts the possibility to express themselves, and the readers to compare different perspectives and opinions about it.

Coyote will also aim to increase its function to promote exchange and community building among different actors in the field of training youth. This means visualising on-going tendencies and developments at the level of the European institutions and organisations, but also strengthening links between the local, national and European levels of youth work and non-formal education. Moreover, Coyote wants to provide more information about related fields of training, e.g. youth research, formal education and other educational programmes at national or European level. The web site version of Coyote should be the main tool to promote exchange among readers and contributors.

To reach these objectives, the circle of Coyote contributors and readers needs to be broadened further. At the end of the day, we want to ensure that Coyote makes full use of its potential to be a major tool in European training strategy. As such it should promote the expression and development of the wide range of experiences, approaches and perspectives that exist in the field of practice and theory of training in youth work, in Europe and beyond.

What can you do to contribute to Coyote?

You can put up your comments about Coyote and about individual articles at the Training Youth Discussion Forum at www.training-youth.net, or you can contact us or the authors of articles directly at their contact address (indicated at the end of each article).

You can also write an article yourself. If you have an idea of a subject, please contact any member of the Coyote team and we will be happy to discuss it with you (for email addresses see Notes about the Contributors).

If you or your organisation have translated a Coyote article, please let us know and we can make it available to a larger group of people. Translations of Coyote articles that we know of are announced or put up on the Coyote web page.

We look forward to receiving your contributions!

Frank Marx, since 2000 administrator at the European Commission Directorate General Education and Culture, Unit D.1. – YOUTH, and, among others, responsible for the Partnership on European Youth Worker Training is leaving. Frank is taking up a new post in the Commission.

*Coyote says THANK YOU Frank,
and all the best for the future!*

At the time of finalising the editing of this Coyote issue it is not known yet who will take over responsibility for the Partnership in the European Commission. Coyote will publish this information in its next issue.

FOCUS

Celebrating

How can experiencing a creative process within a group of people encourage change? Theatre, music, painting – combined with reflection these are some of the experiential methods that Tim Merry and his colleagues use to explore issues, to look for approaches to problem-solving and to get people to consider if they should re-align their course in life. In his article, Tim tells us more about the work of Celebrating Diversity!

People today are faced with enormous amounts of information and diversity via the media and new means of communication. This diversity we're exposed to is constantly undergoing changes within itself, which can make it hard to keep up, as we try to process and reconcile the new with the old. At the heart of our ability to survive, live and work in the information society is our potential to accept change and not let it disturb us. To become comfortable with being uncomfortable. To have the courage to redirect our trust from familiar institutions such as schools, governments and businesses, to ourselves and our human networks. It is these networks that enable us to (re)connect to a sense of interdependency and interconnectedness that will support us through change. Celebrating Diversity! offers an alternative way of approaching problems using creative and life-affirming processes combining music, interactive theatre, drama therapy and circle conversation.

Do you know that 99% of a rocket's journey to the moon is off target?

It is a constant process of re-adjustment and re-alignment. (If this process did not happen it would crash!) I feel it is this way with learning. As trainers, we create situations for people to explore their route so that they can realign and re-adjust their course if they want to.

On seminars we choose our rocket ships - the activities and methods - and we name our moon - what do we want to do? I believe we are always trying to fly to the same point inside ourselves where learning takes place. It is through our own personal development that we influence the world around us and the communities we belong to. Our passion will create its own structure … if we let it.

✘ What happens between an empty canvas and a painting?

✘ What happens between an empty space and a piece of theatre?

✘ What happens when someone takes a creative process and uses it as a learning tool to explore an issue, transform a problem, structure an organisation?

Celebrating Diversity! is a project which brings groups together through creative processes. However, the groups are not asked to focus on creating a piece of theatre or music, or required to paint a masterpiece, although this may happen as a natural part of the group process. Instead we invite groups to explore the process in between: we are more interested in the route taken than the final destination.

This year Celebrating Diversity! contributed to a European youth conference on Values Beliefs and Identities in Uniting Europe. We used music to explore with the group how they were communicating cross culturally: Are we listening to each other as we play? Are we letting everyone be heard? Is communication taking place across our borders? The music sessions brought out some very clear messages of a lack of listening within the group and people finding it very hard to connect to each other on any other than a superficial level. The chaos of the music they created acted as a metaphor for the groups' communication. We then took these issues to debrief as questions for the group and explored their communication. One day later we facilitated again and the group created a piece of music in two hours then performed it live to a public audience in a shopping mall. The group were awesome, they had started to communicate and the music made it tangible. The process of creating the music together had created valuable and practical learning in terms of how they as individuals from different backgrounds could learn and grow together as a group.

by Tim Merry (left)

Through my work with groups and creativity I have found one constant thread. Truths emerge in the form of questions - questions that open our minds and hearts to further learning. Some that have inspired me recently are:

"How can we organise in such a way that people care enough to contribute?" (Cultural Youth Centre, Utrecht July 2001)
"How can we organise it so that instinctively enough people hold the bass line to let the others improvise and not lose the beat?" (Slovenia, Youth camp 2001)
"Can we trust ourselves enough to do this?"
(Slovenia, before a small performance, Youth Camp 2001)
"Why does our thinking stop us doing?"
(Utrecht, Engage! Training on performance skills August 2001)

Circle Processes

As I write this, I am working with two people: Rachel Smith, an international drama therapist, and Luke Concannon, a UK-based singer and percussionist. Both these trainers use their respective skills to enable community building within diverse groups who are often in conflict, for example prisons and low income housing projects. My own passion lies in interactive theatre balanced with circle processes and debrief sessions to capture learning. While the debrief process is often a space in which to challenge and be challenged, Circle is a space in which to share experience and listen (for more information see Calling the Circle by Christina Baldwin; Bantam 1998). In Celebrating Diversity!'s work with groups we combine these diverse methods to address a variety of different issues, from entrepreneurship and leadership to creative problem solving and citizenship.

The type of work we are called on to do varies greatly and we find the methods we use are applicable to working with many issues and in many time frames. The shortest sessions we have done to this date is one hour and the longest was four days. We create a process using creativity as the experience to learn from. This could be creating a piece of percussion or voice work working with theatre in situational contexts (role play), using theatre games to physically explore issues of trust or even using a musical soundscape to relax a group. Often many of our different skills merge together to create something we never expected, musical statues of group leadership roles for example. We then bring this into circle or debrief to gather the learning and explore next steps. Much of the skill of facilitating in this context is the ability to rest in the moment with the group and be prepared to throw the plan out and respond to the needs of the group. Always remaining the guide by the side, not the sage on the stage.

Here are some of the outcomes I have witnessed in our group sessions:

Participants learn to trust themselves and trust the others in the group.
Participants learn to listen to each other and trust that others will listen to them.

By speaking the truth and being honest to ourselves in the here and now, we go in the right direction.
Participants learn they are good enough and that their way - although different - is as useful to the whole as everyone else's. The group realises that co-creation depends on diversity. There must be passion: when we care, we contribute, and from that passion a structure emerges.

Outcomes such as these alter the way people choose to live their lives on a fundamental level. If the processes that are used can encourage people to alter within themselves, that change will then extend itself to the world around them. That change starts in each of us.

There is an air of celebration to our work, but also an atmosphere of challenge. For an eclectic group of young people to come together and work effectively with creative processes, they must communicate on a profound level. And this is a challenge. A young guy said to me after having done some drumming work: "it was all our different instruments that made it sound good, and for that we had to listen to each other". What we try and do then in reflection in circle and through debrief is connect the learnings from the creative work to real life and the issues facing the group. When people communicate deeply, they awaken to a new reality. "This woman who is sitting next to me playing a drum has a completely different life to me, but still we are able to communicate in this moment." "That man who is improvising with me sees this situation in another way to me but I still reckon we sound good."

In this way our differences are our greatest unifier and our greatest divider. Artistic processes throw people into this paradox with their hearts and minds wide open. It is the chaos of division and the power of unity that allow our differences to make a difference. These concepts of chaos and unity underlie all contemporary issues. Our reality today is a constant dance between chaos and order. T.S. Elliot: "There is only the dance."

Of course no group ever reaches the moon, as it is only a temporary signpost that guides the way to the next destination. Nor do we ever find the right route – if we did, we would be in equilibrium. And, as Stuart Kauffman, a theoretical biologist, says in "At Home in the Universe" (OUP 1995): "When you reach an equilibrium in biology, you are dead".

For comment or further details on Celebrating Diversity!

please contact :
Tim Merry at tim@engage.nu

Celebrating Diversity! is offered by Engage! InterAct (www.engage.nu/interact/) in the Netherlands and Red Zebra in the UK (www.redzebra.org.uk).

Alphabet of Feelings

"An intervention – prevention programme during and after the war"

Training can play an essential role in promoting peace, social security and stability by helping people to deal with traumatic experiences of war and its aftermath.

The Alphabet of Feelings is an educational and psychological programme, developed and run by the local Belgrade NGO "Hadje da…" which helps participants to bring out and face their basic emotions of joy, fear, anger and sorrow. The author has described for Coyote how the Alphabet of Feelings works and gives an insight into this programme for peace education in Yugoslavia.

How is it here?

Life in Serbia (Yugoslavia), during the past few years, can be characterised as a continuum - with instability at one end and chaos at the other. The feelings that accompany everyday life in this context are suspense, insecurity, and, as we near the end of the above mentioned continuum, different forms of fear. Under such circumstances there are few supports one can stand on, or grab on to. One of them is the impulse to be proactive and to do something constructive for oneself and one's environment.

What do others think?

As I was conducting a workshop at Bridges for Training – A European Training Event in Brugge, 15-19 September 2001, I posed a question to trainers from various parts of Europe: " What can a trainer do in a situation that involves violence, even when the trainer himself is the victim of violence?" Although the trainers participating in this workshop didn't come from war-affected countries, most of them had been exposed to some violence previously. This workshop happened just a couple of days after the September 11th attack. The results of the brainstorming activity were: to discuss and clarify the situation, to look for support, to help himself and others, to find shelter, to be introspective, relax, escape, act it out, run away…

Some of these answers confused me in the beginning, confronted my assumption for trainers to be the ones to help the others and to protect the most vulnerable population groups. Having been involved directly in war, the team I work with reacted the same way some people in the workshop in Brugge did - look for support, help ourselves and others, discuss and clarify the situation...

Is there anything that forces us into action?

When we translate the question from the previous passage onto the field of personal and trainer responsibility, we can ask ourselves – do persons who actively work with young people, who have the knowledge and skills that make them relays for positive changes in their community, really have any choice? Are they common people, supermen or both in one?

The "Hajde da…" ("Let's…") group, a local NGO from Belgrade, that I am an active member of, chose to put together, during the war in 1999, **an intervention - prevention programme** called **"The Alphabet of Feelings"**. The explanation for the big words preceding the name of the programme lies in the fact that the programme was:

- imagined and conceived as a direct reaction to war;
- adapted to suit to needs of the treated groups;
- directed toward the prevention of greater and more serious changes in the cognitive, affective, social and emotional spheres of children and youth;
- and the members of the "Hajde da…" group sometimes felt as if they were saving the world (?!).

The programme arose at the time that schools were closed due to the bombing and the children and youth, the especially vulnerable groups, were directly exposed to traumatic experiences. The aim of the "The Alphabet of Feelings" programme was to enable the participants self-discovery, self-acceptance and self-expression of their emotions, in the safety of a group, through a game context. This was achieved, first of all, by securing a safe area for expressing emotions and for offering group support (as well as pointing out constructive ways of overcoming unpleasant emotional states). "The Alphabet of Feelings" deals with the basic emotions – joy, fear, anger and sorrow; feelings that all grown-ups and children have experienced. The purpose of the programme is to enable the participants to have basic knowledge about emotions – to become emotionally literate.

We use the workshop method. Workshops are group activities, usually prepared in advance and

by Stanislava Vučković

"Support for Kosovo refugees"

have 15-20 participants. Every workshop has a specific scenario dealing with a certain theme. The attendees and trainers form the circle. That shape enables everyone to be equally positioned, see each other, communicate non-verbally and share their opinions, insights and inner contents. The circle also means that all that happens during the workshop remains private between participants. Learning in workshops is experimental and social. Previous experiences are formed and shaped through mutual sharing. Also, a workshop is beneficial if it can "push" cognitive and personal development. In order to achieve it, workshop activities have to be one step ahead of the actual stage of development of the participant (according to the theory of Lav Vigotsky, 1983). Further aims of the "The Alphabet of Feelings" programme were emotional relief through exchange with others, supporting personal autonomy and initiative, developing the ability to hear and understand the emotional states of others, and encouraging the constructive management of conflicts. The listed features of the programme make it applicable now as well. At this time there is no direct threat of war, but aggression and conflicts still thrive in this region, although they appear in a different form.

Emotions as a workshop topic

As the trainers from our organisation are psychologists and students of psychology (some are even psychotherapists, which brings us to a dilemma: are we conducting psychotherapy séances or psychology workshops?) the programmes and contents of the training sessions were conceived to push forth the inner experiences of the participants in the workshops. Still, if we step outside the egocentric position of the psychologist, we might say that emotions are an unavoidable part of psychosocial programmes. It is important to take a structured approach to emotions, because in situations dealing with unpleasant and traumatic experiences, there is a tendency to suppress negative and difficult feelings. This may, at first, offer relief, but the long-term effect is bad, because continually avoiding dealing with the unpleasant parts of one's experiences may lead to escaping from oneself. Emotions are universal. This simplicity of the programme makes it possible to apply it during work with various groups in different surroundings: The Roma Community Centre, The Community Centre for Kosovo Refugees from collective centres, elementary school students, etc.

A closer look

When creating the workshops the "Hajde da…" team makes sure that the feelings – workshop subjects are discussed adequately during the group sessions. This is a creative, patient and 'no hurry' process and should be done without running into instant solutions, even risking the possibility of non solved tasks. At the end, we get workshops with the following structure: warming up games, introducing

activities, central activities, ending up and evaluation.

The whole programme of "The Alphabet of Feelings" consists of eight workshops: the first two are used for introduction of the project and participants, the third workshop deals with happiness, the fourth – anger, the fifth is dealing with fear and the sixth with sorrow. The seventh workshop is uniquely specific and is created according to the needs of the group discovered through previous work. The aims of the last workshop are evaluation and preparation for farewell. The duration of the programme is two months, one workshop a week.

In order to create a clearer view of the workshops I will give a few details from the specific workshops. In the Alphabet of Feeling's fifth workshop, the Fear, the participants get a piece of paper where they have to draw their fear on one half of the paper and qualities needed to fight it on the other half. With that, the participants create the "card of fear", which can be taken with themselves and use it as a sign of security in fear-provoking situations. In the workshop "Anger", there are theatrical elements. In the workshop scenario we create a conflict situation between paper dolls. Then, participants try to solve the conflict using some of the conflict management techniques - e.g. empathetic listening.

How do we know our programmes really help?

We do evaluations. We use psychological instruments that already exist (e.g. the sociometry method of Moreno for the evaluation of group cohesion, instruments for measuring the degree of traumatism of children and adults, etc.) or construct new ones by ourselves, according to the problem and the group a certain programme focuses on.

For example, the evaluation of the application of "The Alphabet of Feelings" in a Belgrade school, with refugees from Kosovo, showed that many things had changed for the better. There were marked increases in: the degree of acceptance of the children from Kosovo, the cohesion of the classes, the freedom of expressing feelings, allying the feeling of distress, developing empathy and improving communication and the application of constructive ways of dealing with one's feelings. The results from the project "Support for Kosovo refugees" (organised in the Community Center of the Serbian town Kraljevo in 2001) show the realization of one of the basic aims of our programme – creating a psychologically safe space, the first and the most important condition in the healing of war caused traumas. This is a result of the mode of work in the workshops, having far-reaching implications: identification with the group, which is seen as accepting and supportive, encourages the development of youngsters' self-confidence and feeling of safety.

Evaluations show there are more positive results working with young people than with other age groups. Reasons might lie in the fact that the ability for abstract thinking about inner contents fully develops in adolescence. Also, young people are very motivated to change themselves and the world around them. From our experience and working approach with this age group, there is a special significance in the forming of "a friendly relationship" at participant-trainer level. Answers of the participants confirm that this relation is a precondition for creating safety and trust. And with this the degree of self-confidence and possibilities for self-understanding are increased, for example, we saw youngsters who became able to perceive themselves not just as refugees. Our program succeeded in strengthening psychological powers necessary for overcoming difficult experiences and correspondent feelings.

What next?

We attempt to choose our own priorities in work, and not to be led by the demands of the market in the NGO world. We are currently developing "The Alphabet of Tolerance", which aims to offer children, through peace education, models and notions that will decrease intolerance towards members of minority populations. Also, we are continuing our work on the "Alphabet of Feelings" project. We just released the programme for the training of teachers to implement " The Alphabet of Feelings" in their schools. We see that as our contribution for the development of peace education in Yugoslavia.

Contact address:
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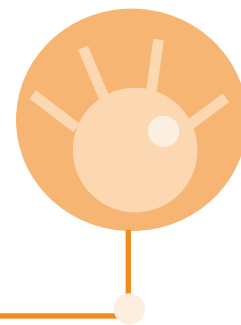**http://www.hajdeda.org.yu**

The drawing is by a 14 year-old girl from a Roma Community Center in Mali Mokri Lug near Belgrade.

"The Alphabet of Tolerance"

Gateway to Work: a look at an employment training course for young people

Once more, Coyote has taken a look at training outside the immediate world of European youth work, at the fight against unemployment. In several European countries schemes have been developed to increase the employability of especially young people and get them off state benefits. Training programmes form an important part of them. In her article, the author describes a training course which is part of the New Deal scheme of the British government.

How different is this training, with its focus on the building of confidence and competencies and personal development, from training in non-formal education and youth work? Here is an article that invites us to reflect about similarities and the specificity of different training contexts.

by Angela Vettraino

Background to Gateway to Work

In 1998, the British government launched its New Deal scheme, an intrinsic and important part of its' Welfare to Work strategy which is focussed on helping unemployed people get back into the workforce, and off of state benefits. New Deal was first targeted at young people aged 18-24 years, before the scheme was expanded to include jobseekers of all ages. The criteria for eligibility varies from age group to age group and depends on individual circumstances. Young people will automatically go onto the New Deal scheme if they are aged 18-24, have been unemployed for six months or more, and are claiming Job Seekers' Allowance (state benefit given to those who are unemployed and are looking for work).

The young person will be appointed to a 'Personal Adviser', who for the first 13 weeks (the 'Gateway' period) of their time on New Deal sees them fortnightly, on an individual basis. S/he assists the client in their search for work and can refer them onto appropriate providers should they require further assistance, for example in compiling a CV. The focus in this period of time is to help the client back into work, which could be a 'New Deal' job, where an employer receives a subsidy towards paying for the young person's training and wages. If the client is unsuccessful in gaining a job in this period New Deal then offers its clients three options: embarking on full time training or education; undertaking a work experience placement in the voluntary sector, or joining the 'Environmental Task Force', which involves undertaking practical work aimed at improving the environment in the local community.

The options are aimed at helping young people become more employable, through offering them the opportunity to develop skills which will hopefully stand them in better stead in the job market.

Course structure and content

In the year 2000, a new project was launched as part of the 18-24 year old New Deal scheme: Gateway to Work. Gateway to Work is a full-time, two-week course, which falls roughly in the middle of the young person's Gateway period. The project is aimed primarily at helping the young person find a job, and provides support and guidance for the young person, as well as training in a variety of areas. The training given can be broadly separated into two categories: specific job seeking skills, such as CV preparation, interview skills and telephone techniques, and 'soft' skills to encourage personal development generally. Areas covered here include communication skills, motivation and personal presentation. Training is mostly carried out in group sessions, but the emphasis is on individual development. Naturally, the needs of the clients are extremely varied, and the trainer must be aware of this and be flexible enough to adapt training sessions to ensure that they are relevant to all individuals in the group. This is certainly a challenge: remember, the only thing that many of the young people really have in common is that they all don't have a job.

On any given course you can have a client with a poor educational background and literacy and numeracy problems sitting next to a graduate struggling to find a suitable job after graduation. This makes for interesting group discussion, and gives clients the opportunity to share experiences and often learn from each other. Some training sessions work for all (for example, teambuilding sessions) but others (for example, writing speculative letters) need a lot of one-to-one work built into them to ensure clients' individual needs are met.

Overcoming barriers

Clients are referred to Gateway to Work by their Personal Adviser: the young person must attend.

The course, like the New Deal as a whole, is mandatory. This means that should the client fail to attend, their benefits may be affected. The result of this is that clients are often resentful about being, as they see it, 'forced' to do the course. They are frequently very distrustful of the training staff initially, and it is of vital importance to deal with the anger or resentment that the young people may be feeling, in order to clear the air and allow for a constructive relationship to be built up between staff and clients. Staff may state that they understand that the clients may not be happy to be there, and ask them to share the concerns and feelings. The recognition of these negative feelings is vital, and staff need to deal with these through pointing out potential benefits of the course and through reassuring clients that the course will not be 'like being back at school' (a very common complaint from clients on their first day!). The skills of selling and persuading are used here - ultimately you need to convince the client that their time on the course will be at best, beneficial, and at worst, bearable!

In addition, many New Deal clients face a range of social problems which are hindering them in their search for work. Some common problems are: ex-offenders feeling that their criminal records are a barrier to employment, drug or alcohol abuse, housing problems and lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills. If an individual is facing any of these issues, training staff will assist them with these, often by referring them onto an appropriate organisation to give them specialist advice. Many clients simply need encouragement; their motivation and self-confidence have dwindled and they just need someone to show belief in them, give them a push and tell them that they can succeed.

The role of the trainer and the client-trainer relationship

Gateway to Work training officers take on many roles. They can be facilitators, guidance counsellors, information givers, facilitators, motivational coaches, liaison officers, assessors and supporters all at once. They are also learners, learning from the various experiences and stories that the client shares with them. Having worked on the project from its beginning until the beginning of this year, I feel that it has helped me develop as a trainer and as an individual. Before I came into this job, I was previously an English language teacher, and clearly the differences between the two jobs were great. As a teacher, I had always had the sense that the way to make my classes work was to have clear aims, objectives and structures in place, and that a certain amount of discipline was necessary to ensure smooth running of lessons. In my new role in Gateway to Work, I found that very often I had to question approaches that I had learnt as a teacher, and that if I wanted to get the best from these young individuals, and build a meaningful relationship with them, a tight structure and any whiff of a disciplinarian approach (at least initially) would make progress very difficult, if not impossible. A far more informal approach was required, and I realised that I had to befriend the clients and thus earn their respect and trust, before they would share their problems and allow me to help them. The first two days of the course are crucial in this respect. In particular, the preparation of CVs, which is done over days one and two, allows the client-trainer relationship to develop. In one-to-one sessions, the clients and trainer have

the opportunity to discuss the kinds of things the client has done in the past and what their hopes are for the future. Through a sensitive, non-judgemental and open exchange, a relationship of trust can start to develop between the two. Assurances of confidentiality are vital, as are reassurances that despite what may have happened in the clients' past, a step forward can be made through either gaining employment or moving on to another, suitable option.

The preparation of CVs is also important in a motivational / confidence building way. A professional looking document, which highlights the individual's skills and personal qualities, is a major confidence boost. Further, the trainer encouraging the clients to apply for vacancies, showing belief in their ability to achieve, is another boost to confidence. Clients also motivate each other, through building up friendships within the group and encouraging each other to express opinions, share stories and apply for jobs. It is important to bear in mind that clients may not have had any structure in their lives for very long time, and social interaction with others may also be limited, particularly with unknown others. Having a place to go everyday, and having contact with people who have undergone, or are now undergoing, similar experiences to yours, is in itself very often a big step forward for the young people.

Naturally, the course is not always smooth-running. On a couple of occasions clients have had to be dismissed from the course, and a few verbal and written warnings have had to be given out. These have mostly been for repeated minor misconduct, such as smoking repeatedly in unauthorised areas or generally being uncooperative or verbally abusive to staff or others in the group. But these have, thankfully, been a tiny minority compared to the numbers of clients that we have had on the course. In addition, young people may go on to work after or during the course, and then you hear from their advisor later on that it didn't work out for them for whatever reason, and this can be disappointing, as you know that sometimes getting a job and more money is never going to be enough to give these young people stability in their lives, and you can sometimes feel frustrated by your inability to give more long-term or in-depth support, as you can naturally become attached to clients.

Overall, though, I would say that working on the course has been fulfilling for me. I am also pleased to report that the project I worked on was also successful in helping young people back into work. In the first year it ran, over 40% of the participants gained employment (with the majority of the other clients moving on to the other options mentioned above). To see someone develop from being de-motivated and lacking in confidence, to feeling more enthusiastic and optimistic about their future is very rewarding, and is, in essence, what training young people is all about.

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Coyote Theme

The European Commission's White Paper
"A new impetus for European Youth" and Non-formal Education

One of the most important policy documents on youth to emerge from the European Commission, the White Paper sets the agenda for the coming years. It recognises the role of non-formal education for the development of young people and the making of youth policy. In the frame of lifelong learning it places special emphasis on youth. It is also an expression of the Commission's aim to promote new forms of European governance, which are more open, participatory, accountable, effective and coherent. These aims have been expressed in the unprecedented scale of consultation in the process of production of the White Paper with various actors in the field of youth, including young people, youth researchers and policy makers. They also manifest themselves in the "open method of co-ordination" and the recommendation to take youth into account in other policy areas.

Expectations towards the White Paper were high, and reactions to the final document range from satisfaction to great hope, but also to disappointment and frustration - Hope because of the emphasis that the White Paper places on non-formal education and on co-operation between different actors in the development of youth policy. Frustration because in terms of content the specific recommendations of the document are less concrete than many of the demands that were formulated by the young people and other experts involved in the consultation process.

Being a key youth policy document for the countries in Europe, the White Paper will influence, and should also figure in training in European youth work. After all, valorising non-formal education will place more emphasis on the kind of qualities and competencies that can be gained through it. Training might therefore take on another importance and be judged more strongly by the specific quality standards it stands for and the values and policies it promotes.

But do the recommendations made by the White Paper go far enough to create change? What is the potential of this document to promote e.g. youth participation in the development of youth policy and non-formal education in the different countries, and at European level? What dynamics can be created by the proposed methods: the open method of co-ordination and taking youth into account in other policy areas? And how can actors in the youth field use the White Paper and related documents, such as the lifelong learning strategy, in their own work?

For our first theme Coyote looked for ideas and comments on these questions. So we are glad that several people from different fields and expertise accepted the invitation to give us their perspective - from the European institutions, from youth work and youth research.

Hans-Joachim Schild from the European Commission provides background information about the White Paper and the related Communication on lifelong learning and looks at their contributions to non-formal education. Alicja Szpot, who works as a Youth programme trainer, looks at the potential impact of the White Paper on youth policy in Poland, while youth leader Conchi Gallego takes a rather sceptical look at how the White Paper deals with the issue of non-formal education. Roisin McCabe and Henrik Södermann put forward the perspective of the European Youth Forum on the impact of the White Paper on non-formal education. Youth researcher Lynne Chisholm analyses the potential impact of the White Paper on youth research, and, last but not least, Peter Lauritzen from the Council of Europe describes the chances he recognises in the open method of co-ordination.

We hope that these articles will give you some ideas about the potential of the White Paper and its impact on non-formal education.

And what is your opinion about it?
Start a debate or put up your comments
at the Training Youth Discussion Forum
under www.training-youth.net!

The White Paper on Youth and the lifelong learning strategy:

a new impetus for non-formal learning?

The following article tries to point out the relation of the two important initiatives at European level in the field of learning and youth: the European Commission's White Paper "A new impetus for European Youth" (COM (2001) 681 final) and the Communication "Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality" (COM (2001) 678 final). The contribution describes briefly the background and main contents of these recent initiatives, the impact that both initiatives will have, some support actions from the youth field to the lifelong learning strategies, and the role of the YOUTH programme.

I. Background: From Lisbon to Barcelona

For the last couple of years the European Union has been facing up to the "knowledge society". The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 agreed on a new strategic objective for Europe over the next decade: to become the world's most competitive and knowledge-based economy. Some of the Lisbon conclusions concern " education and training for living and working in the knowledge society " and aim at modernising education systems. The European Council invited the Commission and the Council to give high priority to lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social model.

After Lisbon a large number of initiatives have taken place in learning, in the education and training sector and beyond. These are among others the e-learning initiative, the definition on future objectives for education systems, the lifelong learning strategy, the promotion of mobility and importantly for the youth field the White Paper on Youth.

The European Council in Barcelona in March 2002 identified as a priority area, which requires specific impetus "A competitive economy based on knowledge". The synthesis report from the Commission to the European Council highlights the need to have a comprehensive strategy, based on an integrated approach under the common banner "Creating a European Area of Knowledge".

Concerning the contribution of the youth field to this aim two initiatives have a particular priority: the Lifelong learning strategy and the White Paper on Youth. They will have a strong impact on youth policy as such and on learning and especially non-formal learning in the youth context in particular.

II. The Communication "Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality"

In November 2000 the Commission issued a Memorandum on lifelong learning, followed by a large Europe-wide consultation. On this basis the Commission elaborated the Communication "Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality", which was adopted in November 2001, parallel to the White Paper on Youth.

The lifelong learning framework arches over not only the education and training sector but also important components of employment, social inclusion and youth policies. This framework should ensure coherence between actions taken at European level, support the exchange of good practice for the identification of shared problems, aim at increasing the transparency of policies and systems, enable Member States to develop their own coherent and comprehensive strategies and design and manage their own systems.

The Communication on lifelong learning does not propose or invent a new process or new instruments for implementing the proposed actions. It rather follows the strategy to use existing programmes, instruments and initiatives and to develop coherent and comprehensive strategies for the transformation of the learning systems such as the White Paper on Youth.

The key objectives of learning are promoting personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. The Communication on lifelong learning places emphasis on learning from pre-school to post-retirement, stresses that lifelong learning should encompass the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning and defines lifelong learning as *"all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective"*.

Non-formal learning is defined as " learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective."

by Hans-Joachim Schild

The six priority actions and underlying key aspects are:

1. Valuing learning: identification, assessment, recognition of non-formal and informal learning; transfer and mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas; development of new instruments at European level to support valuing all forms of learning.

2. Information, guidance and counselling: facilitating access to learning opportunities for all citizens through the availability of quality information and guidance services.

3. Investment of time and money in learning: increased investment, targeted funding and more transparency in public investment in human resources.

4. Bringing learning opportunities and learners closer together: to encourage and support learning communities, cities and regions and to enable workplaces to become learning organisations.

5. Basic skills: to ensure that the foundations of lifelong learning are accessible to all and at all stages of life, with a special attention to those with a lack of basic skills.

6. Innovative pedagogy: to take a turn from knowledge acquisition to competence development, implies a new role of teachers and trainers; Non-formal and informal learning are given prominence as priorities for research and exchange of good practice.

III. The White Paper "A new impetus for European youth"

The White paper on youth, adopted by the European Commission in November 2001 was developed through a wide-ranging consultation process. This process was organised between May 2000 and March 2001, involving young people, youth organisations, researchers, policy makers and public administrations.

The four key points emerging from this process were 'Active Citizenship for young people', 'Expanding and recognising areas of experimentation', 'Developing autonomy among young people' and 'For a European Union as the champion of values'.

One of these four key messages, "Expanding and recognising areas of experimentation" concerns the learning sector, stressing that education and training should be viewed holistically since they are not restricted to the traditional or formal types available.

Since learning lies mainly in the responsibility of the formal education and training policies this *"will require close co-ordination with the various responsible authorities, at both national and European level… The European Commission will ensure that guidelines concerning young people will be taken more into account of in these policies and forms of action wherever appropriate and whatever the instruments used."*

The White Paper underlines that *"youth associations, social workers and local authorities in many countries are invol-*

ved in in-depth work with young people. While continuing to be innovative and non-formal, and as part of the overall package of lifelong learning measures, this work would benefit from:

– a clearer definition of the concepts, of the skills acquired and of quality standards;
– a higher regard for the people who become involved in these activities;
– greater recognition of these activities;
– greater complementarity with formal education and training".

In the field of learning the White Paper does not only focus on non-formal learning. The results of the consultations also highlight other challenges concerning education, such as the quality and effectiveness of education systems, a better access to education, the renewal of the learning and teaching approaches, different kinds of knowledge and skills, a better recognition of qualifications and skills and the complementary character of formal and non-formal learning. Nevertheless the White Paper will have a particular impact on non-formal learning in the youth context.

The definition of learning in the White Paper corresponds with the definition elaborated in the Communication on lifelong learning and highlights the fact that non-formal learning in the youth context provides a wide range of good practice and experience.

IV. The contribution of the youth field to lifelong learning

The contribution of the youth sector to implementing the lifelong learning strategy and to improving skills and competencies is evident; to name a few examples:

◆ social and formal recognition and acknowledgement of the value of participating and learning in youth activities;
◆ information and guidance services from and for young people to ease access to learning but also to improve social integration and integration into the labour market;
◆ a large investment, mainly of time but also of money, by participating voluntarily and in leisure time learning activities by both, young people and (voluntary) trainers and youth workers;
◆ the close relation and attractiveness of learning opportunities in youth work to young peoples' demands and motivation of young people to take part in the different learning opportunities offered; integrating disadvantaged young people is also seen as an asset of non-formal learning.
◆ the provision of basic skills, particularly relating to personal development, to social skills, to active citizenship and democratic values, intercultural awareness and in the acquisition of useful skills for vocational integration;
◆ use of innovative pedagogy, mainly by providing a learner-centred approach and a new role of trainers and youth workers, but also by offering a wide range of activities, meeting the demands of young people. The advantage of non-formal learning in youth activities lies mainly in its voluntary and often self-organised nature, its flexibility, the broad possibilities of participation, the "right to make mistakes", the up-to-date and closer link to young people's interests and aspirations.

V. The impact of lifelong learning on non-formal learning in youth

As seen before non-formal learning in the youth context will have an important impact on the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy. But what of the possible impact the lifelong learning strategy will have – vice versa – on non-formal learning in youth activities?

◆ Regarding the aspect of valuing learning, of complementarity of all forms of learning and a better recognition of non-formal learning it must be underlined that in the youth sector mainly a better *social recognition* seems to be an appropriate strategy: the acknowledgement of the value of competencies, acquired in youth activities, by economic and social stakeholders. The value of competencies means predominantly aiming at personal fulfilment, social integration and active citizenship and only secondly to employability.

◆ The aspect of *formal recognition* of competencies in the sense of granting official status to competencies, gained in a non-formal setting, is much more difficult to discuss. The introduction of assessment, evaluation, certification procedures normally found in the formal education sector has its benefits towards giving greater employability and is targeted towards the labour market. This is not a complete guarantee of improved quality in training standards and we acknowledge that in this process non-formal training may lose flexibility and attraction to young people.

◆ Nevertheless, in today's "knowledge society" it may be necessary to certificate (and to describe) what young people learn and do in youth activities, not mainly to improve employability, but to encourage them towards citizenship, personal development and self-confidence. In this direction also formal recognition has to be promoted. The youth field will have the task to provide high quality youth work with an open access for all young people on the one hand and to provide appropriate tools by avoiding over-formalising what it offers on the other. Non-formal learning in the youth sector must keep its unconventional and innovative approaches and openness.

◆ Concerning information and guidance the youth field should insist on a holistic approach by promoting services, which are not reduced to formal aspects of learning and of integrating into the labour market. The needs of young people concerning information and guidance are manifold and not restricted to these issues. Social integration, individual support and active citizenship need a comprehensive approach.

◆ Efforts to make visible and publicise regularly the outcomes of non-formal learning that result from the activities of youth organisations will have an impact on evaluation and publication procedures in the youth field at all levels. The link to social recognition of non-formal learning is evident and all actors should take responsibility to improve the visibility of youth activities. Young people should be fully involved in the publication strategies and be part of them.

VI. Support actions from the youth field to the lifelong learning strategies

The lifelong learning strategy is the first one at European level to implement the proposed approach of the White Paper of taking youth more into account in other policies. The youth sector will contribute to the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy by following two strands: giving support and resources to the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy and – in addition and complementarily - realising actions under its own responsibility. At this initial stage the youth sector should focus upon a certain number of priorities:

(i) Valuing learning

● An exchange of experience and good practice in the field of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning will be initiated by the Commission at the end of 2002; the European Forum on the Transparency of Qualifi cations will co-ordinate this process in co-operation with the Member States, involving all relevant players in the field, including social partners, NGOs, providers of non-formal learning, etc.; parallel to action at European level Member States should develop methodologies, systems and standards for valuing non-formal and informal learning.

● The establishment of an inventory of methodologies, systems and standards for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is planned for the end of 2003; as one of the first initiatives the proposals for the 2002 joint actions of the programmes LEONARDO, SOCRATES, CULTURE and YOUTH on " Non-formal and informal learning " will contribute to the exchange of experience and to the set up of a network in order to establish the inventory.

● The development of a 'Portfolio' system to group together all acquired qualifications and competencies and the development of a 'modular' system for the accumulation of qualifications in 2003 will complete actions under this pillar.

(ii) Information, guidance and counselling

● The Internet portal on learning will provide (from the end of 2002) information on different learning opportunities in Europe, including non-formal learning in the youth area;

● The European Guidance Forum will involve representatives of all relevant players to undertake reflection on the quality standards for guidance services; the youth sector will contribute by giving inputs concerning the experience and good practice on information, counselling and guidance of young people;

● The examination of the networks and structures in the field of information, guidance and counselling for both education and training will take place by the end of 2003.
As an additional action the youth sector should make use of information channels of young people in order to become acquainted with all possibilities of lifelong learning.

(iii) Bringing together learners and learning opportunities

● It is proposed to make visible and publicise regularly the outcomes of non-formal education that result from the activities of youth organisations.

VII. The role of the YOUTH programme

The strategies to implement the lifelong learning priorities and the proposals resulting from the White Paper on Youth, the creation of a European area of knowledge needs the greatest possible involvement of different partners at all levels. At European level the youth sector will – as mentioned – mainly act under the lifelong learning umbrella.

But also the Youth programme has to be seen as a resource for a new form of co-operation. It is the aim of the programme *"to encourage young people to make an active contribution to European integration, to developing intercultural understanding, strengthening fundamental values such as human rights, and combating racism and xenophobia, developing a sense of solidarity, encouraging a spirit of enterprise, initiative and creativity, stimulating the recognition of non-formal education, and strengthening co-operation on the part of all people active in the youth field" (White Paper on Youth).*

Already now, within the existing actions of the programme, the work in the youth field benefits from the promotion of quality standards and of a higher regard for people involved in these activities, e.g. by providing training courses for trainers, like the Training courses on European citizenship, the Advanced Training of Trainers in Europe (ATTE), both within the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, the SALTO Training courses or the Youth programme staff training.

Another example of how the YOUTH programme is involved in lifelong learning activities might be the funding of Action 5 large-scale projects in the field of non-formal learning. Those are projects are aiming at improving active citizenship and participation of young people with less opportunities in society. They also aim at combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia by facilitating a dialogue and joint activities of young people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds with special emphasis on the integration of young people from minorities, by using sports and outdoor education as a tool for social integration and non-formal education with special emphasis on the inclusion of disabled young people.

The joint actions of the programmes LEONARDO, SOCRATES, YOUTH and in the future CULTURE contribute as well to the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and in particular a better recognition of non-formal learning, in the 2001 call for proposals. They do so e.g. by funding projects which build bridges between qualifications, by improving guidance and advisory services and by creating multipurpose training centres. The 2002 call for proposals aims at the social integration of target groups, the support of active citizenship of young people, the improvement of local information and guidance services, the setting up of a network in order to establish an inventory of methods and systems in non-formal and informal learning, and the improvement of mobility, its concepts, norms, conditions, methods and recognition.

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Relevant web sites:

White Paper on Youth:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth/ywp/index.html

Lifelong Learning:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/index_en.htlm

Training courses:
http://www.salto-youth.net

Non-formal Experiment

I feel a bit like receiving a prize when talking about the White Paper on youth policy.

It is almost obligatory to start by saying "I would like to thank...", "it has been a surprise for all of us...." "it is a great pleasure for non-governmental youth organisations...","I didn't expect this..."

It has been almost a surprise that there was finally a White Paper on youth policy. It has been a pleasure to finally find in a political document of the European Union a mention and recognition of non-formal education. I didn't expect the lack of ambition that we have finally found in the contents.

In this article I will try to analyse how non-formal education issues were tackled in the process of consultation for the White Paper, and how the apparently successful outcome was reached.

by Conchi Gallego

The results of the White Paper: a new impetus for European youth have been quite far away from the demands of young people in general and, more specifically, from the proposals made by youth organisations.

During the process of consultation, many people, organisations, institutions and experts participated giving their opinions, making proposals, and contributing to the process of creating this document.

The White Paper will "rule" the youth issues at the EU level for the coming years (maybe decades) and it will influence not only the EU member states but also those other countries which are part of the different programmes and co-operate in various actions lines of the EU.

We have to make a positive evaluation of the inclusion of the value of non-formal education in this White Paper. We also have to be concerned about the fact that it has been mentioned as an "area of experimentation". It is not true that the non-formal education field is something new - yes, it is an area of continuous experimentation, that is probably one of its main values. But it is my concern that how this is described in the White Paper it seems that it is a field of work that has just started - when we know that this is not close to reality.

This shows an odd way of treating this field of work

as the Council of Europe has considered non-formal education as a priority for many years already. Even if the European Union refuses to mention this in the White Paper, in daily life it recognises this experience in different ways; the Partnership Agreement signed by both institutions is an example of this recognition. Also the "still small" amount of money of the EU allocated for International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations is an example of the support that the EU has been giving to this field in the past. We can affirm then, that non-formal education is not a new field of work for the EU.

One of the reasons why I consider that this "misunderstanding" keeps on happening is the lack of knowledge that still exists in the EU institutions about this field of work and its different aspects, values and methodologies.

It is not only a matter of the concepts and theory that young people acquire through non-formal education (which of course are also very valuable), but also the values that a young person "absorbs" when being involved in youth work and that are impossible to be gained in any other educational sphere. These are, for instance: group work, inter-cultural and communication skills, values like democracy, participation, negotiation… and I could go further but I guess that there are already plenty of researches that can show and explain in a deeper way what I just mentioned.

In order to explain what I want to say with this statement, I will just give some examples of what I have seen in the process of consultation for the elaboration of this White Paper. This process has been once more a clearly missed opportunity to involve youth organisations and non-formal education methodology effectively in the process, and practise the so long requested co-management with youth organisations.

The consultation started on the National level, and each country decided how they would reach young people, and how they would "consult" them.

Some examples of these methodologies were: internet debates and chats, a weekend on a boat, training and debate seminars of young people, questionnaires... Some of these methodologies were inappropriate in order to reach a representative group of people, to gain a valid input, or a legitimate contribution. For instance, the anonymous inputs done through a web page don't give in my opinion enough credibility to the results, on the one hand because it is impossible to check that the personal information that someone gives in order to participate in such a debate is true (it could be older people or even people from other countries giving their opinions), and on the other hand the way people give their opinions when they are "anonymous" varies from a "face to face" moment.

At the European level, the EU has "forgotten" in some specific moments of the process the role of representative bodies such as youth organisations, youth councils and of course the European Youth Forum. It is remarkable that there is not even one mention of International Youth Organisations in the whole White Paper (at least in the main body of the document where the Commission sets up the priorities and defines partners and their roles).
The Commission goal was to reach as many people as possible, not understanding the point that - at European level - consultation on different matters must be done on a qualitative basis and not on a quantitative one.

One of the mistakes of this process was to ignore what has been practised successfully by youth organisations over the last decades: non-formal methodology and experiences. This led us to quite unfruitful discussions on most of the occasions, with debates about debates and various conferences with no real objectives or aims.

This is maybe then, the reason why the EU keeps on considering non-formal education as an experimental field. It is based on the lack of knowledge among the different institutions, and the civil servants working in them (who in the end are the ones organising the different activities), the lack of co-management experience and work with young people. It is a great challenge to learn from each other and I hope that the example of co-management in the Council of Europe, mentioned so often in the process of consultation, is seriously taken by the Commission. It is maybe time to "open the doors" of our houses in order to get to know each other better.

Anyway, we have to take this opportunity to claim for better knowledge and understanding of youth issues and specifically of non-formal education. We have to give our opinions in other open debates that have a direct link with the work that we do, such as the Lifelong Learning, governance, the future of Europe.

The voice of youth organisations in these debates has to be heard in the European policy discussions.

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"It seems that this document could be an excellent tool for youth leaders and youth organisations that feel the need for a clear and coherent youth policy at national and local levels"

by Alicja Szpot

On reading the White Paper I found myself wondering how the present situation regarding Polish youth compared with the analyses presented in the White Paper. Poland has been undergoing extensive transformation for more than ten years. There have been changes in terms of not only the country's government but also its policies in many different spheres, and Poland hopes soon to be part of the European Union. In what way are the young people of Poland different from other young people in European Union Member States? They have the same values, ambitions and dreams and the same problems as other young Europeans. Like other young people, they crave more independence. Strongly in favour of European integration, they are keen to play their part in building Europe, yet their participation in public life is actually very limited. In some regions of Poland, young people are also suffering badly from the effects of poverty and unemployment.

Perhaps the most striking difference between Polish young people and young people elsewhere is that young Poles do not have their own Ministry. The Polish Ministry of Education and Sport is concerned with the education of children and young people, but its remit does not include many other sectors connected with youth matters, such as mobility, European voluntary work, young people's participation in public life, their independence, efforts to combat discrimination, etc. Other areas that have links with youth matters, such as employment and health, are managed by other ministries but, unfortunately, they do not work together. There is therefore no specific youth policy, either at national or at local level, particularly with respect to the issues identified as

priorities by the European Union. There is a very wide gulf separating young people from the authorities, with the result that they feel abandoned and forced to fend for themselves. There are a number of non-governmental associations and organisations, schools and European clubs that try to fill the vacuum formed as a result of young people's lack of power and information, and that do their best to meet their needs and expectations.

Much of the information about the work of the European Commission in relation to young people and their problems and about the proposals put forward comes from the Polish National Agency, which has been doing a great deal over the past two years to make the Youth Programme more accessible to young people in Poland. The Regional Centres set up under the Youth Programme are an attempt to bring a source of information as close as possible to young people.

This admittedly highly simplified portrayal of young people in Poland should be sufficient for understanding and imagining the role and importance of the White Paper. Regarding the question of how it can influence youth policy in Poland, it would seem that it can be an excellent tool for Polish youth organisations and their leaders, who feel the need for a clear and consistent national and regional youth policy that everyone can understand. Publication of the White Paper may be the right time to launch discussions between the political bodies and youth organisations in Poland on the subject of a new youth policy. After all, one of the White Paper's aims is that more account should be taken of youth issues when other policies are being drawn up.

My job and the White Paper

My job as trainer in the Regional Centre set up under the Youth Programme is of course to provide as much information as possible, ensure the White Paper is easily accessible (the White Paper is currently (February 2002) not available on Polish websites), suggest activities in connection with the Youth Programme and help carry them out in accordance with the proposals set out in the White Paper.

The White Paper highlights some of the problems I am likely to face in the course of my job.

For example:

How can participation in projects be extended to include young people who are not members of associations?

How can young people who lack sufficient language skills be helped to take advantage of certain measures?

How can young people be encouraged to make their needs known to national political authorities and, more importantly, local authorities?

What can be done to ensure that the "open method of co-ordination" is more than simply a dialogue between the Commission and a coordinator and becomes a real inspiration for specific activities at national and Community levels?

Teachers, youth trainers and youth leaders are very badly paid in Poland, and the education reform has left them frustrated and weary. Will they be in a position to promote the European Union's youth policy? Will they be interested in the "White Paper" and capable of putting its message across? Will they even be able to adapt? What about the associations themselves: are they prepared to adapt their programmes and working methods to cater to the new needs expressed? It would seem to be a mammoth task, and the available resources are very limited.

One of the key concepts developed in the White Paper, and reflected in all European youth measures, is that of "non-formal education". Is "non-formal education" really so important for young people? Thinking about this question made me think about my own education, which ultimately enabled me to find my job as trainer under the Youth Programme. Although my own "non-formal" education was acquired without the help of any European programmes, it has been very important and has changed my working life completely.

Valuing non-formal education

I represent the generation of Polish people who were young in the 1980s, when the Polish government was "at war" with its own people, particularly young people. As young people in Poland at that time, we never dreamed of a common Europe. The political regime used to ensure any fresh initiatives were nipped in the bud and block any moves towards citizenship and personal freedom. Freedom of expression and association were banned. My own education and that of my friends consisted for the most part in opposing the Polish government and supporting activities directed against it. The feeling that we were not free was very strong, and we had a strong urge to emigrate. It was very difficult to travel outside Poland at that time, however, and very few of us had the opportunity to do so.

I was one of the lucky ones. As a student, between the ages of 20 and 25, I used to spend the holidays travelling in Europe on the look-out for odd jobs. As I was obviously short of money, I used to hitch-hike. These travel adventures were my "non-formal education" and a period of "intercultural learning". All the different people I met on my travels, with their different living conditions and opinions, and the very strong sense of independence and freedom I acquired, or rather the sense that I was learning about freedom and mobility and responsibility were even more fascinating, I found, than the great wealth of regions and historic monuments. I used to come back after every holiday more mature, more self-confident and more fulfilled, full of enthusiasm and hope for the future.

This feeling I had of developing and progressing strengthened my desire to keep moving and keep making new discoveries. As a result, for the last ten years I have been in charge of youth exchanges at the Youth Centre in Cracow and for the past two years I have been employed as a trainer under the Youth Programme, in spite of my technical background which would not normally have marked me out for this kind of employment. And, even now, I have the feeling that I am constantly learning something new. Every activity, every exchange, every training course, and every seminar is for me a source of new and enriching discoveries. My education is therefore not yet complete, and there are still a few ideas I would like to see come to fruition.

I am therefore all in favour of developing any activities that give rise to "non-formal education", which can give such a boost to all young people, and particularly those forced to switch careers or suffering from unemployment.

With "non-formal education" there are no qualifications or certificates but what it does do is encourage young people to become adaptable, while broadening their horizons and bringing them closer to other people. It is important to make the most of such education, therefore, because in many ways it is your future.

In the course of my work with them during training courses, I have noticed that youth leaders and teachers are often not even aware of the concept of "non-formal education". Their ignorance is no doubt due partly to the general youth policy situation in Poland but possibly also to the efforts of the trainers under the European youth programmes. When presenting the Youth Programme, perhaps we have a tendency to pay too much attention to all the practical aspects involved, such as the applications, funding arrangements and deadlines, with the result that we neglect the educational aspects.

The White Paper signals to us that it is time to change our practices. "Non-formal education" must have the recognition it deserves and must be put to better use. We need better definitions of the concepts, as well as the skills acquired and quality standards.

The people involved in these activities need to know that their work is valued. With the White Paper we have a tool for drawing the attention of youth organisations and youth leaders to the importance and value of their "non-formal" work and its recognition by the European Commission. We can also make more specific suggestions. The "open coordination" method provides youth leaders with a way of ensuring that the European Commission knows about their initiatives and examples of good practices. They will also be able to take advantage of a great many initiatives, such as the establishment of a European consultation body for young people or the "information for all" project. This in turn will mean they are better able to bring their youth activities into line with the objectives regarded by the Commission as being important for European youth.

We, as trainers, can be the driving force behind moves, starting at grassroots level, to ensure that the full value of "non-formal education" is gradually realised.

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Non-references: websites where I searched (in vain) for information on Polish youth policy, but which might be worth consulting nonetheless:

Websites in Polish:

Ministry of Education and Sport:
http://www.men.waw.pl/oswiata/ar-2001-2/strateg/cz1.htm

The Polish "interclass" portal:
http://www.interklasa.pl/portal/index/strony

Websites in English:

Mission of the Republic of Poland to the European Union:
http://www.pol-mission-eu.be/

Poland's Non-Governmental Organisations:
http://www.ngo_pl/NGO_basic_statistics_KLON.rtf

Poland's Negotiation Positions:
http://www.negocjacje.gov.pl/stne/stne2.html

Polish Educational Institutions:
http://www.polska.pl/nauka_eng.html

President of the Republic of Poland-European integration:
http://www.prezydent.pl/bie/en_index.php3

The Impact

of the White Paper on Youth on Non-formal Education

by Roisin McCabe

by Henrik Söderman

1. Introduction

The European Commission White Paper 'A New Impetus for European Youth' was adopted on 21 November 2001. It was the result of an eighteen-month long consultation process that involved different groups from the EU Member States, the EEA and the Candidate Countries. On the same day, the Commission launched its Communication on Lifelong Learning 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality'. The Communication was also the result of a six-month consultation process with Member States and members of civil society. As of now, no EU policy on non-formal education exists specifically for European youth. However, these two policy documents combined together represent a step forward on the road to promoting non-formal education for young people.

The Communication on lifelong learning, on the other hand, defines non-formal learning as 'learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective' (Commission Communication on Lifelong Learning, p.33). Youth organisations are a good example of non-formal education providers. By participating in youth organisations, young people develop skills relevant to different contexts and have the opportunity to put them into immediate practice.

Non-formal education in the White Paper

The actual White Paper on youth (excluding the annexes) is merely 21 pages long. It gives an overview of the challenges for youth in Europe, identifies the key messages from the consultation process and finally makes some policy recommendations that would be implemented using the open method of co-ordination and by taking youth into account in other policy areas. The policy proposals only cover seven pages - the actual provisions on non-formal education, no more than seven lines!

In the White Paper on youth, the first annex gives a summary of the consultation process stating 'what young people want' from a European youth policy. With regard to non-formal education, the many demands are not really translated into policy recommendations: the Commission promotes non-formal education in general terms, but does not make concrete proposals to ensure recognition of it and putting it on an equal footing with formal education.

2. Proposals of young people on non-formal education

In the White Paper on youth, the first annex looks at the results of the consultation. Two clear messages relating to non-formal education were given by the young people who took part.

Greater recognition of non-formal education

According to the White Paper, young people seem to be very enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by non-formal education as an attractive counterpart to a formal education system that they often consider as inefficient. The consultation process highlighted the fact that there is a lack of understanding of the benefits of non-formal learning in general and that there is a need to strengthen the awareness of key persons and institutions in society in order to promote non-formal education as an integral part of learning and education. However, they believe that 'effective ways must be found for recognising skills acquired through formal and non-formal learning methods. The role of non-formal learning and the need for a better understanding and recognition of non-formally acquired skills through youth work should be emphasised'. (p.34) They ask that the 'relevance of non-formal education and the complementary character of formal and non-formal learning should be made more visible' and that 'dialogue between the relevant actors in the field, as well as social partners, researchers and policy makers will be needed with a view to improving the recognition of non-formal learning' (p.36) They ask that youth organisations should regularly publicise the wide range of non-formal learning opportunities and the outcomes of non-formal learning projects.' (p.37)

Greater links between formal and non-formal education

According to the White Paper, young people who took part in the consultation believe that 'non-formal learning should not lose its open character and turn into a formal structure by imitating the formal education system'. (p.35) but that both are complementary. Non-formal and informal learning are essential in developing the skills that young people need today.

They believe that 'joint strategies on the part of the various organisations providing education (schools, training centres, enterprises, communities, youth work) would seem to be appropriate if we are to improve our understanding of what new basic skills are and how they can be taught and learnt'. (p.33) They ask that joint projects should be created to build bridges between non-formal and formal systems. They also ask that mobility and voluntary service be incorporated into the formal education system.

3. Policy recommendations of the Commission

While the aspirations of young people as highlighted by the annex on the consultation process seem to be reasonable and practically grounded, the actual policy recommendations made are limited compared to young people's expectations. The White Paper proposes two methods of driving youth policy forward; that greater account be taken of youth in other policy areas and secondly, by using the open method of co-ordination in youth policy. However, sufficient account is already taken of youth in education policy and the open method of co-ordination is already used here. Therefore, in terms of non-formal education, the methods proposed are far from revolutionary.

Taking youth into account in education, lifelong learning and mobility

The White Paper feels that greater consideration should be given to youth in education, lifelong learning and mobility policies. It recognises the work that youth associations are doing in non-formal education and believes that this should be promoted as part of their lifelong learning strategy. The Commission rightly states that the work of youth associations would benefit from 'a clearer definition of the concepts, of the skills acquired and of quality standards', 'a higher regard for the people who become involved in these activities', 'greater recognition of these activities' and 'greater complementarity with formal education and training systems'. Policy measures as to how these aims could be achieved in practice are unfortunately left open in the White Paper.

As a first concrete example of how youth could be taken into account in other policy areas, it is interesting to observe the Commission's Communication on lifelong learning. While the Communication mentions youth organisations, no specific provisions are made for youth. The Commission states that it will establish 'an inventory of methodologies, systems and standards for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.' It encourages the Member States to 'provide the legal framework to implement more widely the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning'.(p.17). Under the section on 'valuing learning', the Commission states that it will 'initiate by the end of 2002 a systematic exchange of experience and good practice in the field of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning.' (p.16) However, it is the 'European Forum on the Transparency of Qualifications' who should co-ordinate this'. This Forum is managed by the Commission and Cedefop, the European Agency for Vocational Education and Training. So far the Forum has solely concentrated on the recognition of non-formal vocational qualifications, but not on non-formal qualifications acquired in settings outside the workplace.

Clearly, stronger links need to be established between the work of the European Union in the field of youth and the field of lifelong learning. In this sense it is very positive that the Spanish presiden-
cy has recently proposed to look at lifelong learning as one of the first policy areas where greater account should be taken of youth.

Open method of co-ordination in voluntary service

In the White Paper on youth, the Commission recognises voluntary service as a form of non-formal education, and proposes to make voluntary service one of the themes to be dealt with under the "Open Method of Co-ordination" in the youth field. It states that at European level, 'it is important to ensure that voluntary service is recognised as an educational experience and a period of non-formal learning.' It states that 'it may be necessary to reflect on the situation of young volunteers in terms of legal and social protection'. This is a step in the right direction that should lead to concrete proposals to overcome the many difficulties volunteers are facing in this regard.

The White Paper suggests using the open method of co-ordination to 'develop voluntary service significantly at national, regional and local levels". To do so, it would be necessary to define the strategic objectives in the context of a timeframe such as those for the European Employment Strategy or the Social Inclusion Process. The Open Method of Co-ordination has typically been used to co-ordinate national policies where the policy area remains the competence of the Member State. In the White Paper mention is made – ambitiously - of 'national, regional and local levels'. In the next steps, it would be necessary to clarify which measures are directed at which level and how they can be implemented.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the recommendations made by young people in the consultation process for the White Paper concerning non-formal education have been far-reaching, the actual policy recommendations made by the Commission are much less concrete. In order to take steps forward to promote non-formal education, more work needs to be done based on the White Paper. Therefore, the impact that the White Paper will have on non-formal education for young people will depend on the national governments: what level of priority will be given to the issue in the next steps of the process?

The Communication on Lifelong Learning with its concrete recommendations and clear division of responsibilities, even though it is not specifically addressed to youth, would seem to present a great opportunity for promoting non-formal education for young people.

Together, these two policy documents combined represent a step forward on the road to promoting non-formal education for young people. In this sense, the Spanish initiative to make the Lifelong learning a policy area where the youth dimension is taken into account is very promising.

The youth organisations, the national youth councils and the Youth Forum are working for a better recognition of non-formal education. Thanks to the White Paper, in the coming months we will have a chance to promote it. To get to the desired result, it is up to the youth sector to make the most of this opportunity!

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A new
impetus for youth research in Europe?

The Commission's White Paper in relation to seeking and using information and knowledge about young people's lives

by Lynne Chisholm

Having worked in both research and policy contexts, I frequently find myself mediating between what remain two quite distinct communities of practice. Not long ago, I was describing and interpreting the European Commission's recent policy developments in lifelong learning to a largely academic and sceptical audience. I argued that whilst the scientific world is certainly a political world, scientific practice differs from political practice. Researchers seek feasible truths through systematic questioning of different accounts, usually but not always supported by empirical data of one kind or another. Politicians and their executors, the policymakers, seek a workable consensus amongst a range of different and usually divergent interests. Policymaking processes are also a bit like teaching and learning processes – both have to be satisfied with small and incremental steps forward, steps that are frequently only visible as part of a longer-term process which always remains partly unknown and hidden from everyone's view. Research is always on the lookout for big leaps forward that tear down all the veils and show how things really are, brushing aside all previous or alternative accounts of the world. We might say (see here Frank Coffield's forthcoming article on training policy in the Journal of Education Policy) that researchers and policymakers inhabit two separate 'normative worlds' with different goals, constraints and sensitivities, and with different timescales, agendas and audiences for their work. While researchers are able to think and argue for the unthinkable, policymakers have to work within the parameters set by others. Moreover, there exist so many serious gaps in our knowledge that it is frequently not possible for researchers to offer cast-iron advice to policymakers.

When we look at the Commission's White Paper on youth issues from a research-based perspective, the first thing to remember is that this is a policy document and not an intellectual or scientific account of what it means to be young in today's Europe. In the policy context, the world according to research-based knowledge is just one source of information, argument and interpretation. It ought to be a significant source, since at its best it offers a solid basis for rational judgements, decisions and actions. More usually, research-based knowledge offers several plausible accounts and delivers few certainties. Frequently, it provides awkward findings that, even if rock-solid, are political non-starters. This is the case with other sources of information, too, as the young people who participated in the White Paper consultation process were disappointed to discover. It is little consolation for them to know that researchers, too, get frustrated and annoyed with the policymaking process, since they also believe that they possess valid and reliable knowledge that should be taken more seriously. This is one reason why many researchers keep as much distance from policymakers as possible – just like many young people, they distrust 'politics' and fear that they will be used to legitimate decisions and policy measures after the event instead of helping to shape these before the event. The researchers who took part in this White Paper consultation process are positively committed to building mutually productive relations between research and policy – and with the practice of youth work, non-formal youth education and related fields of social and political action. At the same time, it would be disingenuous to claim that they were fully satisfied with the consultation process or that they think the outcome does full justice to what research-based knowledge could offer to developing European-level youth policy and action.

How were researchers involved in the White Paper consultation process?

Following the Conference on Youth Research and Policy under the Portuguese EU-Presidency in May 2000, the European Commission asked a small group of European youth research experts to take part in the White Paper consultation process. (Short accounts of the outcomes are included in the reports of the Umeå Swedish Presidency Conference in March 2001 and the Ghent Belgian Presidency Conference launching the White Paper in November 2001.)

The Commission deserves sincere praise for having engaged in a consultation process with a variety of interest groups, of which the research community was just one small element. The White Paper on youth issues and the Lifelong Learning Communication (COM (2001) 678 final, Brussels, 21 November 2001) which undertook a similar process during the same period, are the first European policy documents underpinned by this kind of broad consultation exercise that explicitly seeks the views of civil society and the public at large. The very fact of having done so is a step forward in all respects.

Those who represented the European youth research community in this process appreciate the opportunity and the recognition. However, the process might have been more systematically carried through and could certainly have made better use of the knowledge base, the networking resources and the purely technical skills of the research community. The Commission might have asked for quick-fire background reviews and reports on selected key themes as these gradually emerged from the consultation process as a whole. This would have demanded more forward planning and a higher level of resources, but it would have been possible to deliver – even if those familiar with Commission procedures understand the practical difficulties this can involve.

It would also have been profitable to involve researchers in the planning and the analysis of the 2001 Youth Eurobarometer *(for further details, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/youthpolicy)* which itself should have been more effectively dovetailed with the preparation of the White Paper. We can recoup some of this after the event, working with the data that the survey has now produced. But – for example – would it not have been beneficial to know and to publicise in the White Paper that the gender and regional differences in access to and use of new information and communication technologies remain as marked as they were four years ago, when the last Youth Eurobarometer was conducted? And this despite significant rises in absolute levels of access and use? And all the more so given the political priority attached to the eLearning initiative? Would this not have made some difference to the scope of the White Paper's recommendations on its priority theme 'youth information', which focus above all on the need to develop electronic information portals?

Finally, the decision to keep the different 'consultation pillars' separate from each other was, in my view, an error. This simply served to underline the existing distance between research, policy and practice and between the research community and young people themselves. It left room for the quite misplaced view in some quarters, for example, that the research consultation pillar enjoyed some sort of privileged status vis-à-vis the other pillars. It also misjudged the realities of the inter-milieu networks that have built up over the past fifteen years or so – communication takes place regardless of the official position on the question! Most importantly, perhaps, this decision relinquished the opportunity for systematic, constructive dialogue and exchange between the different interest groups involved, which would have been a source of enrichment in the preparation of the White Paper.

How might researchers judge the White Paper?

The Umeå researchers' report argued that the pace and nature of contemporary economic and social change affects young people in particular ways – but not that they are those automatically 'primarily' affected, as the White Paper baldly states. Concepts – words and their precise meanings – are crucial in the world of social research. Everyone familiar with the European policy world knows that we have to be flexible and tolerant with respect to language and translation. But unless readers of the English-language version can mentally translate the phrase "our various life roles are becoming confused" (p. 4) back into French (the original language of this part of the text), researchers are likely to conclude that the White Paper reflects simple confusion rather than clear-sighted understanding of contemporary European life. This example serves, above all, to illustrate the fact that policy documents at European level habitually suffer from a mad rush at the last moment to get the text ready on time – and this does not serve the Commission's legitimate interest to present itself as a serious political actor beyond the corridors of the European institutions.

The Umeå report also draws attention to the wide-raging potential effects of the sharp demographic transition to ageing societies in most of Europe over the coming decades – and this is a message that the White Paper does pick up well. This is particularly important, given that the youth research community has been slow to take up the theme of intergenerational relations, despite the growing interest in youth within the social life-course as well as a life phase with its own rationale, concerns and problems. The White Paper's explicit attention to such questions could and should send a signal to youth researchers about the need to respond more rapidly to the changing socio-political context.

However, the White Paper does not sufficiently reflect the well-substantiated view that social polarisation processes are deepening in Europe, so that the gaps between the profiles of chances and risks in young people's life chances are widening rather than narrowing. Whilst the text clearly acknowledges the difficulties today's young people experience in transition to adult life and full citizenship, it does not adequately differentiate between young people's circumstances. Here, the Ghent experts' workshop report makes the point that adopting a holistic or integrated approach to youth affairs should not lead to over-generalisation. By no means all young people enjoy or suffer (depending on their situation and aspirations) an extended youth phase. Rather, we can observe a multiplicity of trajectories, amongst which vulnerable transitions or pathways into marginalisation and exclusion play a significant role. The impression of over-generalisation is partly a consequence of a forcibly condensed text – Commission guidelines stipulate that Communications should be no longer than 20 pages (in formal terms, all Commission policy documents are Communications from the Commission, including White Papers).

Nevertheless, the White Paper has not grasped the essential point about the relationships between similarities and differences in young people's circumstances and orientations. The simplistic formula of "despite highly divergent situations, young people largely share the same values and the same ambitions, but also the same difficulties" (p. 4) cannot encompass the complex and multi-dimensional patterns that more accurately describe European social and individual realities. Macro-level changes may be relatively similar everywhere, but they impact very differently across specific context, groups and individuals.

Furthermore, it is less a question of similarities vs. differences between young people, or alternatively, of whether the 'young European' is more than a figment of Euro-political imagination. It is more a question of discovering the interrelationships between similarities and differences. This does not mean – as many like to imagine – that generalisations are impossible and always illegitimate, but rather that the generalisations should be situated at the right kind of level and scope. In this case, the fact is that all European youth is increasingly affected by the same broad societal trends. Just as clearly, the effects take hold in differentiated and differentiating ways.

On this count, the White Paper fails to provide any evidence of any kind, whether for or against such a hypothesis or whether in support of another position altogether. However, discussions over similarity vs. difference characteristically raise uncomfortable tensions in European policy discourse. Whilst the White Paper includes the "EU as a champion of values" as one of its key messages, research unequivocally confirms that this perspective does not resonate with the majority of European citizens. Young citizens value European integration above all for the quite pragmatic advantages it may bring for expanding life-planning horizons in studies, training and employment. Those of us who engage with EU policy processes, whether we are young people active in youth associations or whether we are European youth researchers, are on the whole convinced of and committed to the 'European project' – but we are not a representative sample of the European population, whether younger or older. Not for nothing, then, is there a continuing lack of clarity around the concept of active citizenship, which is all too often genuinely confused with the notion of European citizenship. The core of active citizenship is social and political participation, which can be exercised at different levels of the polity. Active citizenship, however, does not have in itself a specific European dimension, except insofar as one might want to denote it as a principle to which the European Union adheres as a desirable and worthwhile aspiration for those who live within its borders. European citizenship, on the other hand, refers both to a complex of embryonic legal rights/responsibilities and to an intrinsic identification with a given community, here the 'EU family' of nations, states and cultures. There is indeed a certain level at which evidence exists to show that young people in Europe share certain basic values, but whether these are specifically European or not is another question. The White Paper contributes little to clarifying the basis for further debate on such questions, although there is sufficient information on which to do so. On a positive note, the text does place the

issues of participation and autonomy not only at the forefront of discussion but also side by side. This certainly acknowledges the interdependency of these two dimensions of young people's lives, and it recognises that youth policies must address and redress their lack of access to full and active citizenship in all its dimensions.

What might the research community like to see in follow-up to the White Paper?

Overall, the White Paper adopts the strategy of focusing on method rather than content. This might disappoint many, not least the youth research community, but in a relatively weak policy domain the joint proposals to establish an open method of coordination (which is based on closer links between the Commission and the Council) and to promote mainstreaming (linking youth issues more closely with related policy domains) are evident ways forward.

Researchers will be most interested, though, in the priority attached to gaining "greater understanding of youth" (p. 18). The White Paper makes four proposals: to take stock of existing structures, studies and research in progress and network these; to focus discussion on the right approach at European level; to draw up a research programme based primarily on work carried out at national level; and to make optimum use of the European Statistical System. All these proposals are worthwhile and welcome. They just do not take us far enough forward, given the existing progress made, largely on its own initiative, by the European research community in the past decade or so. The reasons for the modest ambition of the White Paper proposals are likely to be due to lack of close familiarity with the research field rather than the exercise of politically judicious caution, at least in the first instance.

Research is an important part of the sharing of experience in Europe. It can serve the function of organising experience in a rational and transparent way; furthermore, research can bring hidden and illuminating experiences into the open. Research may provide systematic rational knowledge, but it also has a wider social role, not least by voicing the experience of young people who are not present in the current channels of representation and debate. However, the information about young people that we typically produce in Europe reinforces national boundaries. We learn about the differences between (for example) Greek youth and Dutch youth – but less about what they share, and less about more focused kinds of comparisons. More varied approaches would yield richer information. One very simple example might be comparing the experiences of rural youth in Nordic countries with the experiences of rural youth in the Mediterranean countries (on which the YOUTH programme has in fact produced a study report).

We have the opportunity in Europe to go well beyond aggregate, additive descriptions of differences and similarities between nation-states. Doing so requires a lot of effort and commitment, though, because intellectual traditions and the structures of research funding and research careers are still very largely organised within national borders. This works against the collaborative development of innovative perspectives and more integrative intercultural-comparative research. If the White Paper's

proposal "to focus discussion on the right approach at European level" (p. 18) can be interpreted as the intention to tackle this problem more energetically in future, then those who have been working to establish the basis for doing so over the past decade will warmly applaud and will gladly contribute to making further progress. Closer co-operation with the Community's Research Framework programme will rightly be a significant element of the strategy.

However, developing a European youth research programme that is "based primarily on work carried out at national level" (writer's own emphasis) will not be adequate for the purpose at hand. The YOUTH programme, using its own resources and in co-operation as appropriate with the Community's education, vocational training and research programmes, could well choose to become an example of innovative good practice in this respect.

At the Ghent White Paper launch conference, the experts' workshop welcomed the proposal to lend more European-level support to existing structures and networks. These continue to rely heavily on voluntary personal and professional commitment, and they remain institutionally weak. Greater continuity in research on the European level is important, not only through securing more consistent overviews of what is already known and underway, but also through systematic consultation with the research community itself on where priorities for relevant research and related activities should best be placed in the future. The Ghent report therefore made a strong claim for the active and independent participation of the professional research community in these processes. This implies opening access beyond officially designated youth affairs coordinators for each Member State. Expert advisory panels, whose members draw their legitimacy from their recognition by the scientific community and not as representatives of governments and their agencies, should complement and enrich such channels. This will contribute not only to impartiality of judgement, but equally to innovative thinking, to constructively critical debate and to more dynamic policymaking all round. Finally, yet importantly, taking the research community seriously provides access to the appropriate professional resources for consistent and independent monitoring and evaluation of policy measures.

Furthermore, it is essential to support a broad-based view about the kind of research-based information and knowledge to which European policymaking can profitably refer. Modern social research uses both quantitative (numbers based) and qualitative (interpretive description and analysis based) methods. Individual researchers may prefer, in their own work, to use particular kinds of methods rather than others, but all agree that there are issues and questions that are better suited to some methods of inquiry rather than others. Put crudely, statistics are essential to the enterprise, but there are many things they do not describe well or cannot describe at all. Alternatively, rich textual analyses of youth cultures are highly illuminating, but they are not very useful for finding out what is typical for young people as a whole. This is all self-evident for researchers, but in the everyday world, many people are inclined to believe that

information and knowledge is only valid and reliable if it comes in the form of numbers. Politicians and policymakers are no exception, even more so given that the ability to fire off a few quick and impressive figures has become a strong currency of public debate and persuasion. These points are not an argument against quantitative research and the use of surveys and statistics. They rather underline the need for the research community to intervene more actively in the interests of bringing about more balanced views on these questions and to demonstrate more effectively how other kinds of information and knowledge can be just as useful and relevant. Therefore, whilst there is every good reason to optimise the use of the European Statistical Service (ESS), there is equally every good reason not to restrict the search for more and better information and knowledge about young people to this kind of material. The ESS can provide good quality and essential data in a number of important areas, such as social demography, family and household patterns, and especially for tracing transitions between education, training and employment. It would also be the first to point out that it does not and perhaps cannot produce useful material on a whole range of relevant issues for social, educational and youth policymaking.

Finally, good quality European youth research demands high quality human resources – in other words, researchers with well-honed cultural, linguistic and social skills as well as the technical skills to deal with very complex empirical material. All those who work in this field know that such researchers remain quite rare and that in the research community at large a significant skills gap in these respects is very much a European reality. Twenty years and more of contraction and flexibilisation in the academic labour market across much of Europe have also meant the loss of large numbers of promising young researchers to other kinds of employment. Those familiar with the current situation in Central and Eastern European countries are well aware of the dramatic effects of economic and political transformation on their research communities. The vast majority of young youth researchers from these countries are in highly vulnerable employment circumstances and have few prospects for developing stable and secure research careers in the coming years. The White Paper has nothing to say on the question of securing the supply and raising the quality of European youth researchers, although this was something that the researchers' group repeatedly stressed during the consultation process. Notwithstanding the broader responsibilities of Community policy and action in the research domain proper, the youth policy domain has both a salient interest in and a particular responsibility for addressing and helping to improve this situation. This would be a more than judicious investment to improve the knowledge base in the youth field, and it would, indeed, lend a much-needed positive impetus for youth research in Europe.
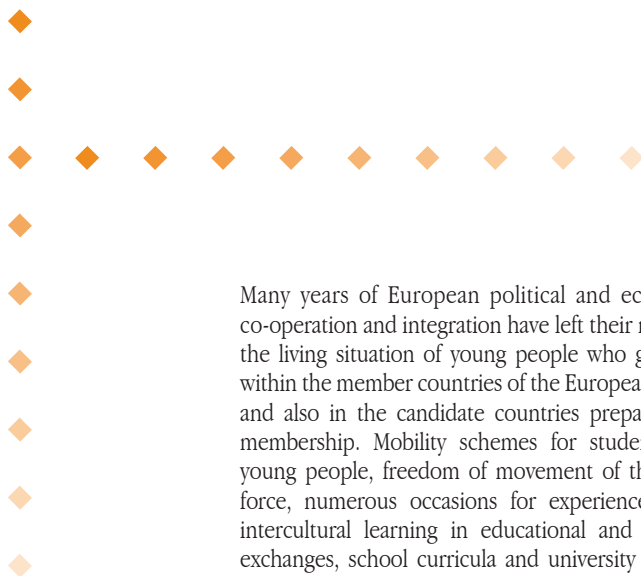
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The White Paper on youth and the open method of co-ordination
– challenges for education, training, research and youth policy construction in Europe

by Peter Lauritzen

Many years of European political and economic co-operation and integration have left their mark on the living situation of young people who grow up within the member countries of the European Union and also in the candidate countries preparing for membership. Mobility schemes for students and young people, freedom of movement of the work force, numerous occasions for experience based intercultural learning in educational and cultural exchanges, school curricula and university courses on Euro-knowledge and a growing media coverage on European matters have prepared a process of overcoming the old divisions of 'foreign' and 'domestic' policy. The European Union in the first place, but also the economic reality of globalisation and the presence of other European and international organisations are at the origin of new shifts in the understanding of citizenship and an enlargement of the concept of community beyond the nation state.

However, all this also means a kind of "banalisation" of the concept of Europe. Most young people, when hearing that this is a rather unique and new historic situation and a model for peace in the world and that this Europe is a 'champion of values' (White paper) will not be too impressed – for them this reality has always been around, so why bother? This form of non-committed acceptance of European realities invites people almost to take a distance to what is felt to be 'European bureaucracy' and to deny, in fact, that citizens may have any influence on developments. The situation is potentially destructive and it is not for nothing that through the creation of the convention and a new approach on governance the European institutions have given a signal that democracy is at the heart of their concerns and that a 'citizens' Europe' badly needs to see the light of day.

It is probably not wrong to see the White Paper in this context. Of course, European co-operation on youth matters is not a new thing and there is a reality of European youth work in Europe today, which literally stands on the shoulders of many years of successful programme and training activity within the youth programmes of the Commission, the activities of the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation and the European Youth Forum. As a consequence, there are whole tribes of hundreds of NGO representatives, government experts, youth agency staff, youth researchers and trainers and youth workers around, who are working regularly on trans-national youth and childhood issues. And these are followed closely by quite a few European and UN officials working for the youth field in Brussels, Strasbourg, Budapest, Paris, Geneva and New York. Of course, all of these international youth actors have their own agendas, their own professional profile, speak their own language and pursue their own sets of interests and all this despite an 'official' language, which constantly underlines synergies and an everlasting spirit of co-operation. The reality presents quite a different picture, sometimes: rupture of information flows for the sake of keeping information monopolies and controlling access, tough competition within the 'youth market' and political differences and personal and institutional jealousies of all kind. This is not the rule, of course, but only too real for comfort nevertheless. Tribes behave tribally and territories have to be defended, that is all there is behind it.

So, a new impetus for European youth is quite timely and my thesis in this short contribution is that the White Paper will make the difference; it is a decisive contribution to overcome fragmentation whilst being respectful of differences. In saying this I do not judge the content; I can fully understand that many young people might be disappointed in the outcome after the long rounds of consultation. I read the paper differently, like a register on what commands consensus within the Union and well beyond, and I rely on the very existence of the paper and the working method of open co-ordination which goes with its further development and the implementation of its proposals. Undeniably, the youth page in Europe is very much 'under construction' and it needs a real common effort of youth workers and trainers, researchers and experts, civil servants and agency workers and young people themselves to at least arrive at laying some foundations to the often quoted construction of Europe.

To do this successfully some answers are needed with regard to:

◆ the enlargement process of the European Union, the emergence of a pan-European dimension in Community policies and the reorganisation of the club – who may join, who has to stay out?
◆ the necessary reform of the education system in view of making young people fit for the reality of a global world, communication and co-operation within the information society, life-long learning from a very young age, a new balance of formal, informal and non-formal education and a knowledge-based economy
◆ new shifts in the anchorage of loyalty, bonds and a sense of belonging in the local community and the nation state toward multiple bonding and an ever growing dimension of European citizenship
◆ Europe's place in a world of global civil wars with her particular place within the anti-terrorism agenda, responsibility in crisis regions also outside the continent, military commitments and humanitarian duties on a global scale
◆ the future of the 'employment for all concept' and equity and fairness with regard to access to the labour market, to quality vocational training and to second chance opportunities
◆ the promotion of gender equality, minority rights, a culture of Human Rights and the respect of human dignity.

Nobody says, that the White Paper contains the answers to the complex problems outlined, but with its dimensions of participation, values, education, employment and autonomy it opens doors to the 'future-lab' Europe will have to become again, if it wants to live up to its ambitions. The White Paper also recognises the end of the traditional youth trajectories and the reality of a risk society; it is a relatively open document and the best way to respond to its 'participation' chapter would certainly be to participate in its further development.

To do this, 'tribes' will have to leave their territories. One can hear ever so often that trainers and youth workers badly need results of good youth research and would like to strengthen the link to research. Researchers again willingly accept to work within educational projects; within the Council of Europe they run training activities themselves, accompany training the trainers courses (ATTE) and the citizenship course within the partnership agreement on European level youth worker training and long term evaluations of specific training courses like the 'Participation and citizenship' course. There are growing needs of governments to work with comparable data on youth policy development and to get an idea of the effectiveness of European level trainings. To be in a position to give competent advice on youth policy, European organisations rely on the close co-operation of all relevant youth actors. Hence, within the Task Force Education and Youth of the Stability Pact in South East Europe, such forms of co-operation between researchers (PRONI), NGOs (European Youth Forum, Save the Children, Scouts, Care International), governments (Hungary, Romania, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro amongst others) and European and international organisations (European Commission, Council of Europe, UNICEF, World Bank) have been quite successful in the construction of youth policy, national action plans, training policies and youth project development. Similarly, the Curriculum and Quality Development Group on European level youth worker training brought together trainers,

researchers, youth workers, NGO representatives, Youth for Europe National Agencies and was chaired by both the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

These are real, productive synergies and they inspire hope for an improved climate of co-operation. If the open method of coordination on the White Paper becomes a reality, certain requirements will have to be fulfilled: the partners in the process will have to agree on indicators of youth policy development, they will have to agree on areas where they will promote benchmarking and they will need some monitoring mechanism. For the non-formal educational vocation of the youth field they will have to work on setting standards, defining quality, validate success and achieve a greater recognition of the field within the education system. And they will have to define the place of employment in their youth policies, not to speak of 'neighbouring' policies like the promotion of healthy life-styles, housing, sport and leisure and cultural creation.

This is what the White Paper can kick off; its potential is considerable. When arguing for co-operation and underlining the strong need of incorporating the trainers and the researchers community in working on the European youth construction, I am nowhere inviting for something like pro-European propaganda or so, far from it. But education is never apolitical and social research is not neutral. At a time of seemingly very heavy insecurity of citizens in Europe with regard to their future one can witness a surprising success of populist and nationalist attitudes; often also accompanied by hatred and racism. This might be the historically unavoidable backlash to the European reality of today and thus, paradoxically, almost proof for the rationale of European unity. But without some clear commitment of all actors involved to find their own way into making Europe a democratic community, these ghosts of the past could take more space than any of us would like. The White Paper on youth should, therefore, figure in the agenda of European trainings, be used to trigger off discussions and its further process should be closely followed by the research community and civil society at large.

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Ethics in Training ☀

Trainers – Who Do You Represent?

Training changes people's lives, and as trainers we are responsible for the direction in which this change goes. When working with participants in a training situation our work is always guided – consciously or unconsciously - by our values and beliefs and by the information and concepts we choose to use. But also the policies and values of the organisation we are representing form the framework of the training. So, can training ever be neutral? What if there is a conflict between our own values and those of the organisation we are working for as a trainer? These are some of the questions of relevance for trainers in all training contexts that the author raises in this article.

by Jonathan Bowyer

I often sit in discussions and meetings and use the phrase 'wearing my trainers hat…', or 'wearing my director's hat…'. I then go on to explain something from a particular viewpoint, sometimes that of the trainer, sometimes that of the director or participant. By referring to a hat, I am making clear which point of view I am representing and it is quite normal for me to represent more than one. I use the phrase in particular when referring to different organisations I am involved in.

Thinking Hats

Dr. Edward de Bono is one of the world's foremost thinkers about 'thinking', which he defines as "the operating skill through which intelligence acts upon experience". In 1985 he published his book 'Six thinking Hats" (1) in which he described six metaphorical hats which people take on or off to indicate which type of thinking they are using. The white hat indicates factual objectivity, red indicates emotions and feelings, black indicates judgement and caution, yellow indicates positive, logical thinking, green indicates creativity and blue indicates overview and process control thinking. The blue hat is particularly interesting for the trainer because its role is to identify and coordinate the other different thinking roles. Thinking with the blue hat on involves summing up, solving problems and getting to conclusions. As trainers we often fulfil that role.

When I worked in a training centre with unemployed young people, there was often conflict between the needs of the group of young trainees and demands of the government programme, which had paid for them to come on the course. Likewise when working with managers, there is a common mismatch between the training needs of the individual managers and the demands of the employer who has arranged the course. It often puts the Trainer in a difficult position: Do we look to meet the needs of individuals or do we continue to deliver what has been paid for?

The enlightened organisation will of course recognise personal needs and allow for flexibility where they are not fully in tune with what was planned at the start. Enlightened organisations will work with their people to assess training need and find the right training or development opportunity to meet it. The need for careful selection of course participants can't be stressed enough, but sometimes it is not possible to control who turns up and what baggage they bring with them. My training as a trainer always emphasised the belief that all situations have potential for all involved to learn. So, if I represent the training profession it is easier to mould the course to meet the needs of the participants. If I am more a representative of the organisation that arranged the course then do I feel compromised or pressured to work in a particular way?

If we put on our blue thinking hats, does that mean that we represent anyone or anything? Can we claim neutrality as a trainer? Is it possible to be totally objective in the training situation, or are we always in some way representing someone? If a participant joins a course does she automatically assume that the trainers views are those of the organisation who sent her? Does the Centre or training organisation check on the views of trainers before employing them?

It seems to me that the answers to these questions are not 'yes' or 'no', but 'it depends'. It depends more on how we train rather than on the subject matter. Where the training role is mainly about facilitating a learning process, then we are wearing a blue thinking hat; we are asking questions without giving an opinion, and we are able, most of the time, to remain neutral. The time inevitably comes however when the facilitator has to arbitrate, to give an opinion and to express a view. When working with young people, the chances of them looking to the trainer for an opinion is higher than for older groups, and we need to be even more careful. It is possible to be a representative of a particular view or approach unintentionally.

We can look at representation on two levels; one of values, policies and quality, and the other of information, theories and models.

Values, policies and quality

On the first level, we represent ourselves – our cultures, our beliefs, our politics. When we agree with the values, culture, beliefs and politics of what we might call the 'provider stakeholders' then it is fairly straightforward. By provider stakeholders I mean those people who have in some way contributed to the provision of the training event and have an interest in its success. They include the training organisation, the funders and the commissioning organisation. We can present views and 'be ourselves' with the confidence that we are backed up by the organisation. The organisation too can be confident that we will represent their position accurately. It is when our views differ that conflict can arise. How do I represent the views of the 'provider stakeholders' and maintain my own integrity?

One dictionary definition of the verb 'to represent' suggests that as representatives we are the embodiment of something, a symbol or portrayal of something or someone. In political terms, representatives do more than portray the views of their constituents; they fight for them with energy and commitment. In this sense the need for unity of values and purpose between 'provider stakeholders' and the trainer is essential – or do we believe that a person from one political or religious persuasion can truly represent the views or values or policies of someone from another? The lawyer in court has to represent their client and do the best for them – he relies on the judicial system and puts his trust in the information and plea given by his client. But how does a defence lawyer represent a client she believes is guilty?

It is interesting to consider further the political element of our role as trainers in Europe. There is a lot of training in Europe that is provided by organisations like the Council of Europe and the Youth Forum, with strong political agendas. There are many people who are politically active and if they do not take on a training role, they certainly take on an influencing role in the arena of European youth work. A significant question here is, can we be both trainers and politicians. Is there a conflict between the two? Is it OK for trainers to use their position in the training room to further a political campaign or viewpoint?

There may be other conflicts too, when we switch allegiances. Perhaps we start training as part of an organisation, or we are trained as trainers within a not-for-profit or NGO context but then go on to work for a commercial organisation or as freelancers. Does this have an effect on what or how you represent the provider stakeholders? Do you promote yourself as a trainer or do you promote the organisation that is paying you?

We are often required to represent the professional values of 'provider stakeholders' without even discussing what they actually are. Some place great weight on 'political correctness' as a measure of this, where others might be more concerned with a genuine demonstrable care for the learners and the ability to create a 'nice' environment. Much of this can be summed up in the word 'quality', and I would assume that we would all want to be known as high quality trainers. All provider stakeholders would want that to be a description of their provision too, so there is one piece of common ground for us to start from.

The recent SALTO training courses run by the European Commission through its SALTO-YOUTH centres (2) have been developed with the specific objective of improving quality in European youth projects. Quality here is about safety, learning, inclusiveness, planning, preparation – and the list goes on. So do we have clear views about what makes a high quality trainer? Do you think you are one? And if so, how do you make sure you are working for a high-quality training provider? If you are not sure about that then do you really want to be representing them in the training room? How, also, do you ensure that you are (and that you continue to be) a quality trainer? How do you get the necessary experience and feedback and how do you keep up to date?

Information and ideas

We represent training providers at the level of values, policies and purpose, whatever the approach and whatever the material. But there is a second level: When we present the work of others we have some further considerations: How accurate are we being with their ideas? How much credit are we giving to the originator? Do we endorse a view simply by presenting it or can we remain neutral and simply suggest that the learners think about it and make their own judgement?

Much of the material we present is developed by the process of presenting it and gaining feedback from our participants. Theories and models in particular, but simulations, games and exercises too, are usually 'works-in-progress'. It seems that ideas have to be published before they are attributed to one person, but the reality is that they will usually have had the input of many people before and will be adapted and developed by many people after publication. We need to be sure that we are not presenting material as something new when in fact we are re-presenting the work of others. Again, the integrity with which we use the work of others reflects on the organisation we are working for.

Another consideration is that some of us earn part of our living from presenting particular material in a particular way. Training games are the most common example here.

There are always variations but somewhere someone took the time to organise things into a useable format and make it available for others to use – most often perhaps through being a course participant! A colleague of mine has packaged a number of outdoor training exercises in such a well organised and attractive way that I no longer want to spend time collecting the various pieces of equipment together myself. When I do it, the exercises look like I have used bits of old junk but when I use his they look purpose-made, clean and effective. The exercises are not new to me at all but he has taken the time to make them easy to use and professional to look at – he has developed the quality of the experience for his learners and I want to make use of that.

But do we automatically assume that we can use the work of others? That they have freely given their work to the collective body of knowledge and methods and that it is now open for us to use it? If that is the case then what are our responsibilities to our other colleagues in the field? As we stand up in the training room are we representing them too? Are we representing the formal or informal pool of trainers who each contribute a part of their thinking every time they run an exercise or present a model?

Summing up

In this article I have asked lots of questions and maybe not answered very many. It is clearly not a simple issue but there some key conclusions we can make about trainers as representatives.

✔ First we represent ourselves – our personal integrity is an asset and we need to be sure that we promote it - rather than compromise it - by our own behaviour or that of colleagues or employers.
✔ Second we represent our profession and a huge range of thinkers, researchers and other stakeholders who allow their ideas to be freely used and developed.
✔ Third we represent those who trust us to contribute to the development of their staff, volunteers or organisations.

Training is a diverse activity. It means different things to different people but common to all trainers is their involvement in a process of learning and development. Training changes people's lives and as trainers we have a big influence on what form that change takes. We choose the values and principles we represent; the ideas and the concepts; the information and the data. It's a big responsibility – but then it's a great job!

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Reference 1:
Edward de Bono (1985) Six Thinking Hats, Little, Brown and Company

Reference 2:
SALTO YOUTH is short for the Support for Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for the YOUTH programme of the European Commission. More details can be found at www.salto-youth.net

Are you interested in the issue of ownership of training concepts and methods? Then have a look at Marker, "Where do methods come from?" in Coyote issue n° 5.

Telling Tales

by Mark Taylor

In the Coyote editorial team, we felt it could be inspiring to look at telling tales and stories which help us reach the parts that other activities in training never do. Tales generate images in our heads and appeal to emotions, often leaving things open to several interpretations – great stuff to start discussions and introduce themes. If you have tales you would like to share in this section, please let us know!

This time we look at learning and creativity, with two tales from Alfredo Garcia of Youth Action for Peace. Thanks Alfredo!

The Dog

Once upon a time there was a dog and his owner ... The dog was a little ill, and the owner had to give the dog his medicine twice a day.... In the morning and in the afternoon the owner held the dog roughly and forced a spoon into the dog's mouth... In this way the owner repeated the process for a month... Right from the first time the animal hated the medicine... One day the bottle of medicine fell and broke and the liquid spread across the floor... Then the dog began to lick the medicine from the floor.
At that moment the owner discovered that what the dog hated wasn't the medicine, it was only the way in which the owner gave the medicine.

The Yellow Flower With the Green Stem

Once upon a time, a boy was going to school for the first time. He arrived in the classroom, sat down with the other pupils and waited for the words of the teacher.

What will we do in the school? Will we draw today? the boy asked the teacher.
We will draw a flower.

Then the boy took out his coloured pencils pack and began to draw a beautiful flower with petals of several colours.
The teacher looked at what he was doing and said: No, wait! We will draw a flower with yellow petals and a green stem.
So the boy deleted his drawing and drew a flower with yellow petals and a green stem.
Next week the teacher asked the pupils to draw a dog. The boy began to draw an orange dog with five legs and it was as big as a tree. When the teacher saw the drawing she said to the boy: No, not in that way, you must draw a brown dog, with only four legs and it must be smaller than the tree.

During his first years in the school the boy did a lot of drawings in the school. Landscapes, houses, animals, plants, persons, … He used to begin drawing what he wanted but afterwards he learned to draw what the teacher asked for.

After some years his family moved house and then he began to study in another school, with new colleagues and a new teacher.

> The boy was excited about the first day at his new school.
> He came into the classroom and put his coloured pencils in his desk.
> What we will do today? he asked the teacher.
> Today we will draw.
> What colours will we use?
> Choose the colours you wish.
> But what must we draw? asked the boy.
> Whatever you want said the teacher.
> The boy hesitated for a few seconds.
> Then slowly he took his pencils and began to draw a flower with yellow petals and green stem.

How to do Observations:

borrowing techniques from the social sciences to help participants do observations in simulation exercises

When doing simulation exercises in training courses trainers often decide to ask some participants to be observers of the behaviour of the other participants during the exercise. In the debriefing of the exercise the observers are then asked to add their observations, from their different perspective, to the comments of the others about how they interacted during the exercise. More rarely time is taken to take a closer look at the observers and at what they see and notice might say about themselves. For Coyote, Bryony Hoskins explores how the role of observers in simulation exercises can be developed and demonstrates how observations can help us challenge our own assumptions and beliefs and reflect on each individual assumption about the social world.

by Bryony Hoskins

Observations are an established research technique in the social sciences, which is based on human capacities used in everyday life but requiring a systematic approach and a set of life skills, largely learned through practice itself. Knowledge within a qualitative research tradition is understood to be socially and historically constructed within the context in which it is developed (Burr 1998). This means that all knowledge even that, which is developed through scientific techniques, is not producing an exact truth but producing an account from a particular perspective. Validity in qualitative research is judged through the persuasiveness of argument, use of data from the field and reflective discussion of the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Potter 1996). This understanding of knowledge enables observations to play a pivotal role in constructing accounts of social interaction.

In this article I will explore briefly how social science has used qualitative research and in particular observations. I will discuss the possibilities that participants in training programmes can perform similar observations to produce accounts of social interaction that they can exchange with each other and learn about different understandings of the social world. I will demonstrate how observations can help us notice what we take for granted and see different values in action. I will emphasise four areas to observe: language, power, environment and personal reflections. I will then discuss the possibilities of what to do with these observations once they have been collected.

1. Observation research

First, I will explore two different topics within social science research that will give an understanding of what observations enable researchers to do from the sociology of scientific knowledge and feminist/identity research.

Research in the area of the sociology of scientific knowledge developed the understanding of socially produced knowledge through observations of scientific research in action (Woolgar 1986). In this field sociologists took part in observations in scientific laboratories. They watched how scientists interact with each other, select different uses of technology and debate the meanings of results. They observed how science was produced within a particular cultural context. Scientific knowledge was therefore observed as embedded in power relationships between the scientists, the values of the scientists, the language that they used and environment that they worked in. They noted that scientific knowledge is often given to the public as fact rather than acknowledging the cultural aspects. This is why when sociologists in this field produce research they understand their knowledge as accounts or stories that are judged on the basis of argument and values. By giving this example of observations in the sociology of scientific knowledge it is possible to see how observations can help us learn more about what is often taken for granted. For more information on this type of research look at these research centre web sites:

http://www.brunel.ac.uk/depts/crict/
http://virtualsociety.sbs.ox.ac.uk

Feminist and other identity politics research has played an equally important role in demonstrating that the 'truth' is not value free (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1995). Their research showed how knowledge was constructed in such a way by privileged white middle class heterosexual men. What is normal and healthy was based upon research carried out on people who fit these categories. Those who do not fit these categories, for example working class women from ethnic minorities, were either invisible in research or described in accounts of madness, lacking in intelligence or criminal. To move away from producing knowledge influenced by these particular values when feminists carry out research, much attention is paid to trying to uncover the researchers' own assumptions in the research process (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996). These self-reflections help to maintain an ethical balance between the researcher/ the observer and the participant/ the observed. It is this process of reflection upon assumption through observations that can be of use to trainers using this technique in simulation exercises. For more information on this type of research there is an article by Millen (1997) online:

I often liken observing in simulation exercises to the work of anthropologists. In old anthropological texts it is very easy to spot the common values and assumptions of the day. For example, when reading famous texts such as Malinowski's (1922) anthropology of the Trobin Islanders, these accounts discuss trips to foreign lands to study 'savages' with their 'primitive' methods.

Having looked briefly at how observations have been used within social science research I will now explore how observations can be used in practice in simulation exercises in youth work. I will suggest a method for collecting observation data and then discuss how to use the observations to develop our understanding of social interaction and reflect on our own assumptions of the social world.

2. How to do observations

Having observed a number of simulation exercises, I have noticed that the people who are chosen to be observers are often quite disheartened by this task. They often display disappointment at not being given a participatory role. This is understandable as defining a role as an observer is complex and hard work and their observations are often under-used in plenary discussions of the exercise. If the participants at the start are given an explanation as to the importance of observations and their role in giving feedback at the end this may help them feel that their job is of importance. Another difficulty for the observer is not being able to actively influence events happening in front of them. The observers should be encouraged to explore their frustrations in the notes they take and to ask themselves what they would have done differently.

Writing good observations comes only really through experience. It is about writing an account of what you see, questioning what you are observing and writing down your thoughts and feelings connected to what you see. What is very important is to note down as much as you can - it is very easy to forget what someone said or what action they took. Mundane discussions or events such as an interruption to the exercise can be important. When you return to your notes you can make connections from these events to action, which occurred later. Do not expect to make profound observations all the time or during the process. Points of interest may not be apparent until returning to your notes after the exercise. It is also important to emphasise that there are no correct answers or correct writing styles for note taking but to choose a method that the observer feels comfortable with such as writing in the first person like a diary or like a journalist in a newspaper article. I would not recommend giving many detailed hints for observations before the exercise. Instead let the observers decide what they think is important to note down. This may provide interesting accounts on areas not thought of by the trainers.

3. After completing the exercise

Each observer will finish their exercise with a record of their field notes. My suggestion is that they are given time to reread their accounts and fill in the colour and the richness to the brief notes that they have written.

At this point I would suggest giving the observers some topics to explore. I have described four areas below that are useful topics in developing an understanding of observations: language, power, environment and personal reflections. These are not distinct categories and some inter-linking of the topics is desirable. Under the topic headings I have given a suggestion for possible questions that relate to each area.

3.1. Language
Language is important within observations as actions can be performed through speech. The creation of a group name is an example of this. The action of creating a name has consequences towards people both in and not in this group. Language in this example becomes part of a step to a common identity. The international dimension in youth training courses also emphasises the importance of language. Those with a greater capacity to use the common language may, often unwittingly, use their skills to dominate discussions and develop their own interests. Different definitions and cultural uses of language can also cause misunderstandings. All these examples demonstrate how language is inter-linked with issues of power in group dynamics.

Questions:
Are groups of people developing their own language, own identities, sets of rules, use of symbols?
What are the arguments, justifications and values used in interaction?
What is the tone of the discussion: calm, heated, lethargic or energetic?
What is not spoken about that you would expect?
What surprises you about their discussions or actions?

3.2. Power and Resistance

By observing who is doing the talking and the arguments used in the decision-making process it is possible to observe the process of power. Power can be obvious in terms of enforcing rules or physical violence and subtle in terms of being embedded within arguments i.e. 'some of my best friends are black, but I don't think they should all be allowed to move over here.'

Questions:

Who is doing the talking and who makes the decisions? This refers to identities such as female, male, nationality etc..
Those who dominate the discussion, how do they dominate?
What are their roles in the exercise?
How are decisions made?
How do groups interact with each other?
Is everybody participating in the exercise?
What are those people doing that are not participating?
Are some people trying to disrupt the flow? Why is this?

3.3. Environment

The use of space is interesting as decisions can relate to how they make sense of their environment.

Questions:

How do the participants engage with the surroundings?
Do they actively use them to their benefit or do they see the surroundings as a constraint? How do they change their environment during the exercise?

3.4. Personal Reflections

Personal reflections are important as they help to develop a link between the observations and our own experiences. This helps develop a critical understanding of our own actions as well as those being observed.

Questions:

How do you feel about what is going on?
What would you do differently?
Does this situation remind you of one that you have been in before?
How did you feel about doing the observations?
In what way have your observations changed the way you interact with other people in the future?

4. Back in Plenary

After the observers have had time to consider these topics and develop their own accounts, I would suggest that the observers take turns to describe back to plenary events that took place in the exercise.

Challenging assumptions

The participants and other observers should be encouraged to challenge the observer about what she/he saw.
The participants who took the action described may well have different justifications and interpretations for their action to those observed. Participants or insiders in the action will often produce a more limited picture to events and conversations they were involved in, whereas the observers have the chance to recount the wider story. Trainers should also challenge the different accounts and highlight assumptions made by the observers by suggesting other ways that the events could be understood. The challenges and the differences between the accounts and the questions about the account can be used to reflect on each individual assumption about the social world.

What is so interesting and rich about working in a European dimension is the number of differences of identities and local and wider histories that people have. These differences will help to increase the diversity of the accounts that the participants produce. The particular perspective may come from wider identities of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, country of residence, class or from more local histories. The understanding of knowledge as socially constructed from our own cultural background is very important for observations because every person will produce a different account of the events that they observed or participated within. All of these "knowledges" are valuable towards helping us reflect on our understanding of the social world.

In the process of completing observations you actually learn more about yourself and your own culture than the specific issue of the exercise. By being forced to watch often the mundane in human interactions you begin to question how to participate in interaction. This means that adjusting from the role of the observer back into 'regular' participation is as equally uncomfortable as stepping into it. Some discussion with the observers about their changing roles would probably help them here.

Conclusion

In this article I have demonstrated how youth workers can draw on the techniques of social sciences to develop the role of the observer in simulation exercises. The aims of identity research (feminist, black, lesbian and gay research) and youth work are similar: to develop understandings of the social world in order to make it a better and more equal place and to complete this through reflecting back and challenging our own assumptions and beliefs. I hope that this article has given a reasonable guide of how to achieve this. Rather than write too much, as I mentioned at the beginning, the only way to learn to do good observations is through practice. The next step of learning about observations is therefore to go out and do it. You can observe people in everyday life - in restaurants, banks or markets (just be careful not to be arrested!).

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marker

Noise annoys, music can be amusing and silence is a rhythm too

"Marker" is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate. Feedback from you will be really welcome, whether as a noise artist, participant, violinist, trainer, observer, tabla player, scratcher, nose scratcher or something completely different.

[Instead of reading this article, you could decide to just sit still for four minutes and thirty three seconds].

What do you call the space where training takes place? Your choices could include:

❚ the conference centre
❚ the plenary
❚ the working room
❚ a room called Arvo Pärt, Ludwig van B, Don Van Vliet,
❚ Debussy or some other classical composer
❚ the BIG room
❚ the subterranean concrete bunker
❚ molim jedno pivo
❚ the forest
❚ the mind
❚ our super creative circle

Wherever it is and whatever it is called: what do your ears tell you when you open the door? how does it sound inside? what are the sounds that can be heard inside that space? do you bother about it?

"That is my goal: time and timelessness are connected.
This instant and eternity are struggling within us.
And this is the cause of all our contradictions...."
- Arvo Pärt

August 29 1952, the place is a concert hall in Woodstock (yes, that one near New York), the occasion a benefit concert for an artists welfare fund. A young pianist called David Tudor places the handwritten score by composer John Cage and a stopwatch on the piano and sits down. He marks the beginning of the world premiere by lowering the keyboard lid and then sits motionless until 30 seconds have passed and then raises the keyboard lid and turns the page of the score. He repeats the process for 2' 23" and for 1'40", making a total of 4'33". At the end of the performance the audience are in uproar; one of them stands up and says "Good people of Woodstock, let's run these people out of town". For those who had bothered to listen, the wind in the trees could be heard in the first movement, the rain on the roof in the second. Some people felt that Cage had been trying to create silence, meaning "an absence of noise". No. But he did want to give people an opportunity to open themselves up to the sounds around them and to rethink maybe their ideas about "what is music". It is important to stress that every "note" of the piece had been composed by Cage.

Perplexingly, over the last period, I keep coming back to the notion of "silence". What is it? Does it exist and could it help us in our training?

Perhaps one of the most often cited theorists on silence, Bernard Dauenhauer posits silence as a complex, positive phenomenon that is not simply the absence of something else. Joddy Murray sums this up seeing Dauenhauer build a well-developed account of both the phenomenon of silence and its ontological significance by assuming that silence is always connected with discourse. **The ontological issue is not whether silence makes sense, but just what sense does it make.**

Maybe its possible to see here a kind of plea for meditation breaks in training courses. No; not really. But maybe it could help, in our packed course programmes to just stop for a little while and not make any intentional noises; and just think about what we are trying to achieve....

[You might want to allow yourself a little pause here].

Always, if I am working alone, and nearly always when I am working as part of a team there is this at the top of the list of technical requirements for a course: CD/cassette player (or "ghetto blaster"). Oh, this is so useful! And I am still surprised by some people asking me "what do you want that for? you're supposed to be doing a serious job of work here, not organising a disco..." It is nothing revolutionary. But it can help so much in changing an atmosphere, in switching a mood, massage reflections, brighten up the day, positively annoy some people, or quite simply give them something to listen to....

▌ How about these as a kind of top twelve?
▌ Gorillaz: "Clint Eastwood"
▌ Caesaria Evora: "Miss Perfumado"
▌ Pascale Comelade: "Trafic d'abstractions"
▌ Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band: "Big eyed beans from Venus"
▌ Vlado Kreslin: "Marko Skace"
▌ Agnes Buen Garnås & Jan Gabarek: "Twelve Moons"
▌ Brigitte Bardot: "Harley Davidson"
▌ T-Rex: "Get it on"
▌ The Offspring: "Pretty Fly"
▌ Miles Davies: "Tutu"
▌ Tom Waits: just about anything
▌ The Fall: "Bill is dead" or "Repetition"
▌ A participant: their favourite right now!

What are these pieces? They are the absence of a dead feeling in your training space.

You got any good ones to share with others?

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Notes about *the* C●ntribut●rs

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Prof. Dr. Lynne CHISHOLM, sociologist of education and youth, has recently moved to work at the University of Newcastle Department of Education as visiting professor and at CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Thessaloniki) as scientific advisor on lifelong learning, following five years working at the European Commission's DG for Education and Culture in Brussels on prospective policy development. Before working at the Commission, she spent twenty years as a university lecturer and professor at universities in Northern Ireland, England, Canada and Germany. She is a widely published specialist in education, training and youth transitions in the comparative and intercultural research and policy context. She is currently leading the evaluation of the ATTE advanced long-term training for youth trainers course.

Conchi GALLEGO was responsible for the international affairs of the Spanish Youth Council from 1999 until March 2002 and took care of the work related to European Affairs and Development and Co-operation work. Currently Conchi is the Secretary of the Regional Youth Council of Madrid, where she is responsible for the management and for the internal co-ordination of the board. Her background organisation is AFS-Intercultura, where she has been working as a volunteer for 9 years. She is also the Secretary of the Association for Community Colleges (ACC), a young organisation that has been working for 3 years now promoting dialogue and understanding among young people in Europe.

Bryony HOSKINS is currently conducting field observations in the framework of evaluating the Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe (ATTE) course. She has recently completed her PhD in Youth Research on young people's sexual practice but she is not a traditional academic. She has recently completed an internship/stage in the Youth Unit in the Commission working on the Youth Programme, particularly Action 5. What is most important to her is empowering young people's voices particularly within youth policy and academic youth research.

Peter LAURITZEN , born in 1942 in Flensburg, Germany has worked for 30 years for the Council in Europe in changing areas of responsibility: During the seventies he was responsible for training and intercultural learning, during the eighties he worked with research and inter-governmental co-operation, during the nineties he led the anti-racism campaign and worked to build and run in the European Youth Centre in Budapest. Presently, he is Head of the Department of Education, Training, Research and Communication. He follows the development of international youth policy reviews and co-operation with the European Union. Mr Lauritzen is also Co-ordinator of the Working Group on Young People, Working Table 1 in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. He has published various articles on youth policy, NGOs and intercultural learning.

Roisin MC CABE is Irish and works as the Policy Officer for Citizenship and Lifewide Learning at the European Youth Forum in Brussels. She is a specialist in the field of European education policy and wrote her Master Thesis on this subject at the College of Europe. She subsequently worked at the College as a Teaching Assistant for the Director of the Department of Human Resource Development. She also worked as a consultant on the European Commission's consultation on the Memorandum on lifelong learning.

Tim MERRY is trainer and partner in Engage! InterAct in the Netherlands. He works in the youth, NGO, governmental and commercial sectors working with interactive methods. He also is managing an international project to bring together and connect trainers who are using visual and music based arts as a method. He would love to hear from people with similar passions!

Hans-Joachim ("Hanjo") SCHILD is German and works as a National Expert at the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture. He is a member of the policy making team in the Youth unit, which elaborated the White Paper "A new impetus for European Youth" and which is now responsible for its implementation. He studied social pedagogy, social work and social sciences. Before his detachment to the European Commission he worked as a manager, trainer and consultant in the field of social inclusion, youth work, labour market and education and training policy.

Henrik SÖDERMAN was active in the NYC of Finland and then as a board member of the European Youth Forum (1998-2000) and now serves as the elected President of the European Youth Forum, the 91 member strong European platform of national youth councils and international youth organisations. He is also active in scouting both nationally and in the World Organisation of Scout Movement (WOSM). Having studied economics and banking studies in Switzerland he is now writing his master's thesis. He speaks Finnish, Swedish, French, English and Italian.

Alicja SZPOT is 39. She is an engineer specialising in civil engineering. Since 1990 she has been in charge of youth exchanges and international co-operation at the Youth Centre in Cracow. She also works as a trainer at the Regional Centre set up under the Youth Programme and is a member of the governing body of an association for the development and integration of young people (STRIM). She has two children. Her hobbies include Latin American dancing.

Angela VETTRAINO is a Training and Development Officer and lives and works in Dundee, on the east coast of Scotland. She works for an organisation called the Claverhouse Group, which works with unemployed people of all ages and from various backgrounds, helping them get back into work. Until the beginning of this year Angela worked with young people on a project called Gateway to Work. She now works with New Deal clients aged 25 plus.

Stanislava VUČKOVIĆ is an active member of local NGO group "Hajde da…" ("Let`s…") from Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The frame of the group's work is non-formal peace education, support for culture of non-violence and psychosocial support. During the past three years Stanislava has been involved as a trainer and co-ordinator in the implementation of various projects. At the moment she is co-ordinating the implementation of the project "Training for psychosocial work for volunteers". She has gained a theoretical background through psychology studies.

Coyote editorial team

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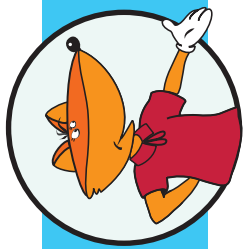
Sonja MITTER is German and lives in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she works as co-ordinator of the South East Europe YOUTH Resource Centre of the National YOUTH Agencies of the European Commission. Besides, she works as a freelance trainer, editor and consultant in the field of European youth work and non-formal education. Her main areas of interest include intercultural learning, intercultural teamwork, project development and management, Euro-Mediterranean co-operation and youth work in and with South East Europe. From 1995 until 2000, she worked as a member of the educational team at the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. She has a university background in history with a focus on migration issues. *(sonjamitter@aol.com)*

Carol Ann MORRIS is the Project Officer for Training and Membership Services at the European Youth Forum She is responsible for the co-ordination of its Pool of Trainers and the training programme. She deals with membership applications and as an information service to the 88 members. Other responsibilities include liaison with the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport concerning training courses and the ADACS programme; working on the Coyote and T-Kit editorial teams; working with the European Commission in the selection of projects for funding through the YOUTH programme. With a background in counselling psychology, she used the latter as a basis for her training and project work with international and local development organisations in India and the UK. *(carol-ann.morris@youthforum.org)*

Mark TAYLOR is a freelance trainer and consultant currently based in Belgrade and Strasbourg. He has worked on projects throughout Europe for a wide range of organisations, institutions, agencies and businesses. In addition to training and consulting activities, he has long experience of writing publications for an international public. Major areas of work include: intercultural learning, international team work, human rights education and campaigning, and training for trainers. A founding member of the Coyote editorial team, he is still waiting to meet Spiffy. *(brazav@yahoo.com)*

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Balázs HIDVÉGHI (31) has worked as the Educational Advisor for the Partnership Programme at the Council of Europe since January 2001. He is Hungarian, and has a background in education and international relations. He studied at ELTE University in Budapest and at Leeds University in the UK. Balázs worked previously as a teacher and NGO leader. Since 1997 he has been living in Strasbourg, France.
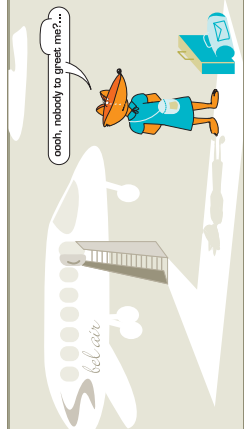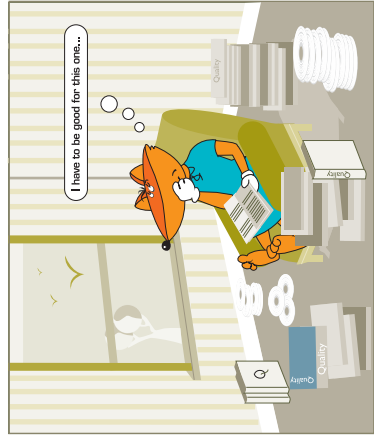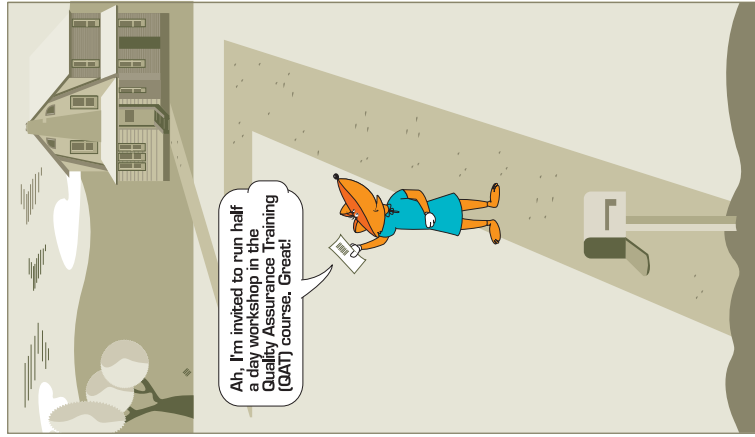
# Spiffy BD

The Adventures of Spiffy N°5

Mark Taylor - The Big Family

Spiffy is invited to run a workshop for someone else!

What is the common thread here? Or what some of you call "the red line"? What do you expect me to do?

"the red line"?

oooh, nobody to greet me?...

Hot off the press!

Glow in the dark edition of the "White Paper". Just the thing for reading in bed when the lights are out. Impress your friends and neighbours.

I have to be good for this one...
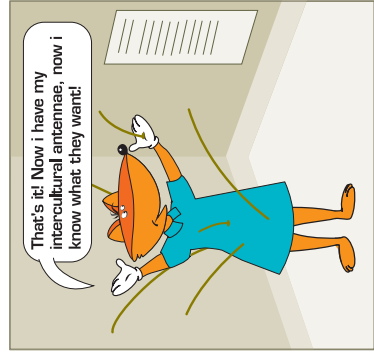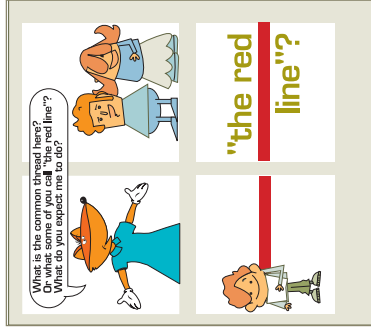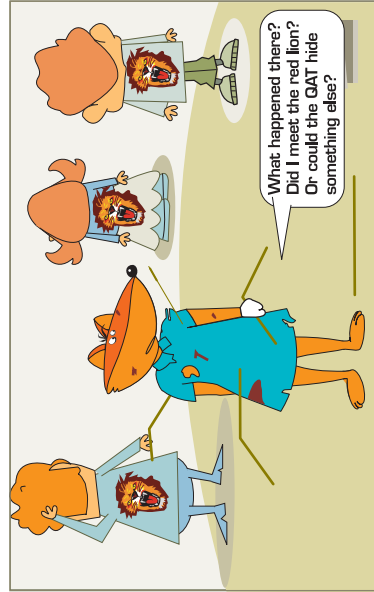
Corrections:

The "define Advance" competition **deadline** has been extended to take account of increased **participation.**

What happened there? Did I meet the red lion? Or could the QAT hide something else?

LATER

That's it! Now i have my intercultural antennae, now i know what they want!

Ah, I'm invited to run half a day workshop in the Quality Assurance Training (QAT) course. Great!

magazine - 6

Coyote

In the next issue of Coyote:

Coyote Theme:
European Citizenship

Coyote meets Trainers:
an interwiew with
Besium Nebiu (Macedo-
nia) and Alexandra Vida-
novic (Serbia)

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