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# Examples of youth organisations reaching out to support participation of young people

## ► Dutch National Youth Council (DNYC) - Location: the Netherlands - Target group: all young people

The activities of the DNYC are mostly project-based and directed towards 'autonomous' or 'independent' youth; meaning young people not being a member of a youth organisation and therefore not being represented through (member) organisations. The main goal of DNYC projects is to let the youth participate, and ultimately if interested, join DNYC member organisations.

### 1. Ik ben geweldig

This is a school tour for a campaign to encourage young people to engage in voluntary work. Not only schools with a higher education profile are visited but also pre-vocational secondary schools. During interactive workshops, non-profit organisations present themselves and show the young people the possibilities to volunteer at their organisation.

### 2. Youth 8 Battle

The "Youth 8 battle" was organised for young 'urban' youth (mostly without sufficient starting qualifications for the labour market). The main goal was not only to inform highly-educated youth but all youth, about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To communicate the message of the MDGs in an attractive way, MDG 6 (HIV/AIDS) was selected. The young people were challenged to show their skills during a rap battle in a local club in The Hague, the theme for the rap was HIV/AIDS.

### 3. Pimp my Block

The project title is influenced by an MTV programme («Pimp my ride») popular with young people, and it reaches out to socially and economically disadvantaged youngsters. It runs in four different cities in the Netherlands in the deprived areas. Young people between 14 and 23 years living in districts where not much is organised for them, are challenged to make plans how to 'pimp' their area. They can do this by organising a festival, a sport event or a hangout place. The best plan gets rewarded with € 5000 to execute the plan.

### 4. Youth welfare work

This project coaches and supports the youth council that represents young people within judicial institutions or young clients

dealing with other institutions due to their social, economical or psychological problems. The Dutch NYC helps these young people within the council to represent themselves in several official commissions and forums related to youth welfare.

### 5. Youth panel

This project researches the opinion of young people between 12 and 20 on current social issues. Four times a year a different subject is chosen, approximately 600 young people from 10 different schools participate by completing questionnaires. To have an adequate representation of Dutch youth 60 % of the respondents are pre-vocational "VMBO" secondary education students, which equals the same percentage of all Dutch young people participating in this form of education. Also by researching, the Dutch NYC tries to include minority and/or emancipation topics.

Website: <http://www.jeugdraad.nl/>

## ► World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) - Location: Slovakia - Target group: youth from the Roma community

Scouting in the Roma Community in Slovakia: Some Roma youth leaders founded a small independent 'Club of Right Roma Boys and Girls' in 2000, with the aim of providing Roma children with more educational opportunities. These youth leaders developed an interest in the Scout Method and decided to transform their 'Club' into Roma Scouting. They contacted the leaders of the Slovak Scout Association, who were able to welcome them and listen to their expectations. The project has contributed to the increased tolerance of Roma youth in the region.

Website: <http://www.scout.org/>

## ► Service Civil International (SCI) - Location: Belgium - Target group: disadvantaged young people/young people with lesser opportunities

SCI works on reaching out to disadvantaged youth in several ways, and one of its member organisations, VIA-Belgium has developed a step-by-step approach to working with marginalised young

people, based on the New Sheltered Placement Programme. Inclusion of disadvantaged young people in international voluntary projects is done through the following process:

**step 0:** Getting in touch;

**step 1:** teenage exchanges

(Bi-, Tri- and Multilateral Group Placements);

**step 2:** Sheltered Placement Programme (SPP);

**step 3:** BLISS – Blissful Longer Immersion Stepping Stone.

The idea is to give marginalised young people the opportunity to gain cumulative experience through non-formal education. All actors including institutional caretakers, social assistants or guardians are involved in profiling the participant's background, experience and needs. Following that, a tailor-made project is identified for the young person and constant guidance is provided throughout the entire involvement process.

Website: <http://www.sciint.org>

### ▶ **Austrian National Youth Council (ÖJV) - Location: Austria - Target group: young women**

The project's main aims/objectives are:

- To encourage and empower young women to become publicly involved
- To strengthen young women in starting positions of responsibility
- To strengthen women's networks
- To promote an inter-generational dialogue
- To develop participants', as well as the public's, awareness of women's and political equality issues.

The participants are young women («mentees») between 18 and 30 years, coming from various backgrounds and sharing an interest in politics in a broad sense. Within the project each mentee has a mentor for one year, and in total there are 20 to 25 mentoring pairs. To date, successful women from parliamentary parties, various NGOs, the administrative sector and religious denominations participated as mentors. They constitute a representative cross-section of politics in the broadest sense and reflect a wide variety of political functions. Among them were the Minister for Health and Women, the State Secretary for Youth, who was named Minister during the project, the subsequent second President of the National Council, a high-ranking UN employee, the Chairperson of the Catholic Women's Movement, a Protestant superintendent and the Press Secretary for the Muslim community.

As varied as the mentors were, so, too, were the mentees: women from different parts of Austria, involved in schools, in apprenticeships, jobs, and with or without experience in children's or youth organisations. Over the period of one year they had the opportunity to get to know a woman with political experience, to look over her shoulder, and to get a look behind the scenes.

The ÖJV organises the whole project, searches for the mentors and mentees, matches the pairs, organises five events during the year and supports the participants.

The results of an evaluation of the first round of the project made it possible for the programme to be appropriately adapted, contributing to an improvement in the quality of the programme.

The mentee peer groups in the second round were grouped according to topics, which the participants dealt with over the entire mentoring year: structural injustices; (women's and men's) education; work/life balance; career planning + women's networks / men's groups. By the end of 2006, the result of this work was a catalogue of requirements, which provided the basis for a position paper addressing the central concern of the mentoring project: the creation of a general framework of what young women need to become actively and creatively involved in the concerns of their society.

About half of the participants are involved in member organisations of the ÖJV, thereby the project helps to develop the awareness of women's and gender equality issues in the organizations.

The project was a good starting point for gender equality issues within the ÖJV. In the meantime a gender mainstreaming process is taking place, which is, for instance, affecting language use, and which has also led to a quota system for the elected board, to ensure the participation of both young women and young men.

Website: <http://www.jugendvertretung.at/>

### ▶ **Don Bosco Youth-Net - Location: Netherlands - Target group: young homeless people**

Don Bosco Jonathan is a voluntary organisation by the Salesians of Don Bosco that works to bridge the gap between homeless youth and their more mainstream peers, involving both groups of young people in a participatory process. The Salesians of Don Bosco is a Roman Catholic religious order founded in the late nineteenth century by Saint John Bosco in an attempt, through works of charity, to care for the young and poor children of the industrial revolution. Don Bosco Youth-Net is an international network of Salesian youth work offices and youth organisations which work in the style of Don Bosco. Currently, an estimated 10,000 young people are homeless in the Netherlands. A network of shelters and hostels keeps most from living literally on the street. While they may forge bonds among themselves, these young people are often stigmatised by society – left feeling isolated and alone.

Don Bosco Jonathan works to foster a deeper connection between homeless young people and a network of 45 young volunteers, eager to make a difference. The work begins with educating mainstream youth about the challenges faced by homeless youth, while underscoring their shared humanity. This is achieved through a series of publications written by volunteers and homeless youth, and through a variety of creative events. For those wishing to get involved in a more substantive, "hands on" way, Don Bosco Jonathan offers a host of volunteer opportunities. Each month, volunteers, age 17 to 30, engage in group activities – skating events, bowling, sporting, beach outings, etc. – where they interact with



their homeless peers. Those willing to get involved more, go once a week to a hostel to share time together while eating and playing games. Others serve as a buddy to a homeless youth. The buddy pairs regularly go to the movies, museums, parks, or simply socialise. The goal is to have fun together based on values of shared respect and equality.

In the recent years, Don Bosco Jonathan has been focusing on homeless pregnant girls and young mothers. Carrying this big responsibility mostly has a negative effect on their social networks. Therefore a monthly activity for young mothers and pregnant girls is organised focusing on the recreation of the mother and child. The volunteers take care of the children while the mothers can chit-chat and exchange experience. Next to this Don Bosco Jonathan organises theme-days for young mothers and pregnant girls. These are bi-monthly workshops on topics like baby massage, language stimulation or first-aid for children. The topics are suggested by the mothers.

Through the programmes, the volunteers learn and gain as much as the homeless youth. Both feel enriched by taking an interest in the others' situation. Given that many of the homeless youth suffer from poor self-esteem, the volunteers help nurture their interests and abilities. The volunteers, on the other hand, often express admiration for their homeless peers, many of whom persevere in the face of adversity, refusing to give up. Forging strong bonds among young people and fostering a sense of community is central to Don Bosco Jonathans' philosophy. It is about being there for youth, listening to them, and being sincerely interested in them.

► **Location: Slovenia - Target group: all young people**

“Never wait for the child but come to it,” is the philosophy of Skala - the Bus of Joy – a tool aimed at reaching out to young people and at lowering the barriers for young people to take part and get involved in civic projects. The bus is a mobile unit in which two different types of activity are organised for young people between the ages of 10 and 18: weekly activities in Fuzine and Nove Jarše and occasional activities for young people in different regions of Slovenia. One social worker and three volunteers regularly accompany the bus, which boasts a hot drinks machine, dartboard, table football, a table, sofa and literature on various topics.

As it is a mobile unit, the Bus of Joy can be used for various activities in response to specific demands from schools or youth organisations. It can easily access neighbourhoods that have no venues suitable to host youth events, and is the only means to provide a meeting place in the evening for young adults. The bus also serves as a tool for promoting Skala's activities and image to, among others, institutions and young people.

Website: <http://www.donboscoyouth.net/>

► **Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) - Location: Norway - Target group: all young people**

The Norwegian Youth Council (LNU) initiated the project Open and Inclusive organisations as one of the two main priorities for the mandate of 2004 to 2006. The project was built on the following premises:

- organisations will not be diverse if this is not taken seriously at the grass root level. It is at the grass root level where potential members become actual members;
- there is too little knowledge in this field. Therefore the work carried out must be well documented;
- LNU can supervise and support the work to create open and inclusive organisations – but the work has to be carried out by the member organisations themselves.

Six pilot organisations within the membership of LNU were appointed, involving at least one local club and the central body of the organisation responsible for the project. The participating organisations were diverse: scouts, school bands, queer youth, party political, cultural and religious. The project Open and Inclusive organisations looked specifically at how the member organisations of LNU could approach children and youth with a multicultural background.

The project started in 2005 and an important milestone was achieved when a representative of the Government launched the new tool kit for open and inclusive organisations in October 2006. The toolkit builds on the experiences of the 6 pilot organisations and includes concrete methods and advice on how the rest of the membership of LNU can become more diverse.

Some results include: one single employee in the school band's association started up several new branches by sitting down in the school yard and attracting the school students by playing her trumpet. Queer Youth Norway works with double discriminated groups – continuing to learn new things in the process. The Labour Party Youth has learned when and how to organise meetings to become more diverse – and in a participating local branch the majority is now the minority. There are now more members of multicultural background than ethnic Norwegians – which is a better mirror of the actual municipality.

Website: <http://www.lnu.no>

**For more projects, please consult the publication** “Report on Youth NGOs: Reaching out to more young people, and in particular, disadvantaged young people”, published by the European Youth Forum.

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