

ATTE Course description

Long-term training course for trainers in the field of European level youth worker training

A pilot project in the field of European training of youth workers active in European Citizenship

I. BACKGROUND & RATIONAL

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The Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of training

A major aim of the Council of Europe and of the European Union in the youth sector is the promotion of *European Citizenship and of international co-operation between young people, youth workers/leaders and youth structures in Europe*. This aim is primarily pursued through the programme of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe and the Youth Programme (2000 to 2006) of the European Union. These programmes are aimed at the support and at the development and implementation of *European youth projects* – youth meetings and exchanges, transnational voluntary service projects, youth initiative projects, study sessions and training for youth workers/leaders, networking and co-operation between youth structures in Europe, youth information projects, development of publications and materials in the field of European youth work etc. – involving all actors in the field of youth work. These projects are based on a *non-formal education* approach.

Major emphasis is put on the *quality and content* of the projects which are organised or supported within these programmes, specifically with respect to promoting European Citizenship, participation of young people in society and politics, intercultural learning, the fight against racism and involving disadvantaged youth groups. Training of all actors involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of European youth projects is of crucial importance to secure the level of quality desired to take benefit of the all the potential that European youth projects represent.

Therefore, *training* of youth workers and other actors involved in European youth projects is an integral part of the youth programmes of the Council of Europe and of the European Union. Subsequently, the two institutions decided in 1998 to take common action and established the *Partnership Programme on European Youth Worker Training*. The aim of this Partnership Programme is *"to promote active European citizenship and civil society by giving impetus to the training of youth leaders and youth workers working with a European dimension."* The co-operation between the two institutions covers a wide spectrum of activities – the development of training concepts and innovative courses, the development of training materials, of a training magazine and of tools for further networking etc.

Non-formal education in international youth work

Since non-formal education is the dominant learning feature in the youth programmes the Council of Europe and of the European Commission, special reference is made here to what is meant with this term: Non formal education has become the summary notion for what, in the past, was referred to as out of school education [1]. However, in the context of international youth work non-formal education does have a clear and significant characteristic.

European youth projects do actively *involve young people* who contribute to a project *on voluntary basis*. These projects – such as youth exchanges or voluntary services, youth initiatives or seminars – are not part of any formal educational curriculum. They are, however, characterised through a *planned programme* of personal and social education for participants and apply methods of *intercultural learning*. It is important to stress that these projects are carried out by trained and qualified actors in the youth field.

A strong *European dimension* is ensured through the involvement of partners and participants from different countries and cultural backgrounds. In addition, besides the relevant *skills* (e.g. communication and teamwork) and *knowledge* (e.g. about European societies and politics) which are necessary for giving these projects a European dimension there is a strong political notion related to it since values – such as democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity – are an inherent element of any European youth project.

It can be assumed that the chances for *participation* of young people in society are improved through their involvement in non-formal educational projects in an international context and that an important contribution towards active *European Citizenship* can be made through international activities in this context and namely those which apply the quality standards of the youth programmes of the Council of Europe and of the European Commission.

A further aspect that should not be forgotten is the thousands of personal relations resulting from participation in international youth projects which – without any doubt – do contribute substantially to the future of Europe and its "human and interpersonal sustainability".

Non-formal education is based on the intrinsic motivation of the learner, it is learner centered and non-hierarchical in nature. Generally, individual learning achievements are not judged upon. As a learning system, it is common practice in community work, youth and social work, voluntary service, NGO activity at local, regional, national and European levels. Non-formal education has highly differentiated formats in terms of time, location, numbers and composition of participants and training teams, the dimensions of learning and the application of its results. Its effectiveness can be assessed and evaluated by both educational and social research with the same degree of reliability as formal education.

A need for training in non-formal education and international youth work

Youth workers, youth leaders and other actors involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of European youth projects are confronted with big challenges, specifically in the areas of intercultural communication, project design and methodology, programme delivery and project management of European youth projects.

Therefore, the Partnership Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission set out a long-term training strategy in the youth field which aimed at achieving:

- more coherence in training approaches and activities;
- more continuity, a long-term strategy and a systematic approach in training trainers;
- quality standards for European level youth worker training;
- minimum standards for qualifications and competencies of trainers;
- assessment and recognition of the qualifications and competencies of trainers;
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of training activities.

A long term "Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe"

As a result of the evaluation of the first two years of Partnership Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission it was decided to focus on training related to European Citizenship and Training for Trainers. A "Curriculum and Quality Development Group" [pdf] with experts on these topics was established which developed a curriculum for training on European Citizenship, a curriculum for a training course for trainers and quality standards for European level training in the youth field.

The training course *"Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe"* was designed on the basis of the respective curriculum in order to meet the increasing need for qualified trainers in this field and to enlarge and further develop the European networks of trainers who have the competence and the motivation to develop and implement European level training activities in the youth field. This course was set within this context and philosophy of non-formal education as described above and sort to extend and deepen the European practice of training in non-formal education. It was new and innovative in its approach, long-term perspective and intensity and, as a pilot project; it was a step further towards quality European level training of youth workers and youth leaders and towards the recognition and certification of training for trainers in the field of non-formal education.

The aims of this training course were:

- To improve and deepen the specific training competencies of the course participants ("participant trainers") for them to be able to competently design, implement and evaluate European level youth worker training activities, specifically with respect to integrating European Citizenship into the projects and practice of youth leaders and youth workers in Europe.
- To improve the quality of European level youth worker training activities and to establish minimum standards and requirements for them.
- To develop a network of trainers on a European level in the youth field which will contribute to the quality of training activities in international youth work based on the acquired advanced skills and competencies.
- To set the basis for the future recognition, certification and accreditation of training for trainers at European level in the youth/non-formal education field.

The concrete objectives of this training course were to further develop and improve the following competencies of the participant trainers:

- The competence to understand, use and adapt existing training concepts as well as to develop new training concepts;
- The competence to analyse the needs of the target group of a training activity and to design a quality training programme with appropriate methodologies;
- The competence to design and implement the methods necessary for European level training activities in the youth/non-formal education field;
- The competence to create an appropriate learning environment;
- The competence to train and facilitate international groups of youth workers and youth leaders in a foreign language; the competence to guide and facilitate (intercultural) group processes; presentation competencies;
- Intercultural competence;
- The competence to deal effectively with ambiguity and crisis;
- The competence to co-operate and work effectively in international teams of trainers (team competence);
- Social competencies (e.g., empathy, communication, conflict management, self criticism etc.);
- The competence to manage a training project.

Furthermore, the participant trainers were expected to enlarge their knowledge on Europe and the realities of youth work in Europe;

It should be stressed that the above list of competencies can – on the one hand – not be exhaustive, on the other hand all participants needed to have made relevant experience as trainers and thus do have knowledge with regard to the above items. The *"Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe"* did, thus, not aim at providing basic skills and competencies but aimed at achieving an advanced level of quality first of all of the participants trainers but in the longer term of European youth projects.

1 - Non-formal education is often confused with informal or non-formal learning. Non-formal learning can be a common feature in training in companies and non-profit organisations. In informal learning what happens is an individual experience which enriches personal development that takes place throughout all walks of life and in peer relations, within the family, through the media and other factors of influence in the lives of young people. However, there is no curricular responsibility. No institutionalised body stands behind the learning that takes place concerning values,

content, good practice or social qualification. There are no learning standards, there is no structure and no evaluation. Non-formal education provides all these elements. The choice to participate is free and voluntary. Once that choice is made, there is a structured educational offer that follows standards established in learning theories, which can be evaluated and represents recognised quality standards.

II. COURSE STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

The course was organised over a period of 2 years. The first year provided a common structure for all participants and the second year an individualised structure for each participant.

The starting activity was an **introductory seminar** which aimed at an initial assessment of the competencies and experience of the invited course applicants in the field of youth work and training as well as of their further training needs. This allowed the course team to better design the course in a needs oriented way. Furthermore, this meeting aimed at developing a common understanding of the course content, objectives, programme and methodology and the implications with respect to the commitment and involvement expected from the course participants. This also allowed the participants to better prepare for the first seminar of the course. Finally, it intended to allow for a final selection of the course participants as well as final decision of course participants on their commitment to the course.

The **first year** consisted of *three residential seminars plus a practical training activity* designed, implemented and evaluated by the participant trainers as a part of the programme ("Practice I") between the seminars. If the participant trainers acted as a trainer in more than one training activity during this period one specific training activity was defined as the "practice" for the purpose of this programme. The third seminar included an interim assessment of the learning process and professional development as well as a look at the further training needs of the participants trainers. Based on this assessment individual objectives and individual training plans for the second year was negotiated and agreed between the participant trainers and the course team.

The **second year** was a "*practice period*" for the participant trainers during which they were "learning-on-the-job" as trainers in European level training activities in the youth field ("Practice II"). This allows the participant trainers to apply the competencies and skills acquired during the first programme year. The second year could also involve *other training activities in which the trainees are involved in as participants* as well as distance learning on the issue of training and non-formal education. While the participant trainers follow an individual learning process, they could, of course, work together with other course participants during this phase and they were encouraged to exchange their experiences and their professional development with their colleagues. At the end of the second year there was a final evaluation seminar including a final assessment of the competencies and professional qualifications acquired by the participant trainers through the course. This assessment included a description of the strengths of the participant trainers in the field of training as well as of areas where further development was recommended.

The course was designed to give participant trainers the opportunity to experience, and reflect upon, being a trainee and a trainer. The course was designed as a mutual learning situation where participant trainers could learn from and with each other and from the experiences they encountered during the course. Much of the work was done in multicultural groups. The training projects organised by the participant trainers serve as learning tools and at the same time as concrete actions with direct impact on the programmes of the Council of Europe and of the European Union in the youth field.

The participant trainers were also encouraged to develop a **Personal Development Plan** as a basis for planning and evaluating their individual learning processes with respect to the competencies they wanted to develop further while at the same time following a group learning process being part of an intercultural group of participant trainers.

The following other course elements were envisaged:

Tutoring/mentoring: Each participant trainer has a tutor/mentor who is a member of the course team. The tutor supervises the learning process during the full duration of the programme and is involved in consulting with the participant trainers specifically with respect to the training activities designed, implemented and evaluated in the practice periods.

Reflection groups: Mixed groups of participant trainers are established in order to reflect on the process of the seminars at the end of each seminar day. Their composition can also serve for other purposes, e.g. within specific activities of the programme. The reflection groups could also establish an internal conference in the web-site of the training programme or arrange meetings between the residential seminars.

Peer groups : The participant trainers was encouraged to establish peer groups for the duration of the programme. These peer groups allow participant trainers to support and consult each other and to share ideas, concerns, experiences and good practice. Peer groups can have the same composition as the reflection groups.

"Virtual Community": It was planned to establish a web-site for this training programme. This should have a part which can be accessed publicly and an internal section for the use of the participant trainers and the persons in charge of the supervision and implementation of the programme (course team, course secretariat etc.). The internal web-site could also be used for communicating everything related to the course – organisational issues, feedback, reflection, ideas, practice projects of the participant trainers, personal portfolios etc.

In summary, the methodology included the following elements:

- Individual and group learning processes.
- The course was practice oriented and included that participants practice the competencies and skills acquired as part of the course.
- Intercultural learning was a main feature of the course – with respect to developing the intercultural competence of the participant trainers in general, with respect to developing intercultural training competence and with respect to understanding how training concepts are culturally determined.
- The course used a variety of learning for and settings: residential seminars, assignments and practice between the seminars, a web-site for the course, portfolios, working in "pairs" and peer groups between the seminars etc.
- The course provided a support structure in terms of ongoing tutoring and mentoring of participants
- Ongoing evaluation during the full duration of the course.
- Assessment of the training competencies and skills of the participants at the beginning, after one year and at the end of the course including a course certificate.

It should be noted that this was a pilot course which implies that it was partly being developed during the process of implementation.