



“I am just an idea, use me or lose me forever.”

The Knot!

The Knot is a new organisation. It is a pan-European network organisation that offers trainings to both organisations and institutions related to the youth field, as well as profit aimed businesses that want to profit from the methods and techniques that are developed in the youth work in the international sphere. Through its thorough research The Knot tries to analyse the needs in various regions and various groups of young people, to be able to develop and offer trainings that empower young people within organisations and organisations within society. Our trainings are professionally developed and carried out, but underline the importance of an active role of youth and their visions on society. We call it professional ideological.

How it all started

The embryonic idea of The Knot started in 2000-2001 when Yvor Broer and Ronald Keersmaekers met for a Long Term Training Course by the Assistance programme in Ukraine. After spending some time together and sharing ideas, dreams and intentions for our future, we thought of developing a mayor development programme in Macedonia for Macedonian Youth workers.

After the training course we got several occasions to meet and to spend time together. During these meetings we analysed our working field as trainers in European Youth work. For us it came clear that there are still a lot of lacks in this work field. Several trainer pools are existing, but are not very accessible for our colleagues. For example the TC Pool of the Council of Europe where a lot of jobs are just going to those who have the good contacts with the people in Strassbourg and Budapest¹, and also the SALTO network from the European Commission where the same approach is going on.

Since we're all very excited about the work we're doing, we decided to search in our work for a different angle. The next idea in our thinking process was to establish a network of free-lance trainers, who could share ideas, and projects together.

After investigating this option in dept, looking around, checking out our idea with other colleagues, we concluded that this option was maybe valuable, but not that realistic.

Finally we came up with the solution to establish a non-profit organisation that could bring all our ideas together. A first check of the basic structure of the organisation (we had no name yet) was done in may 2002 with some ATTE colleagues at the Slovenia Seminar, and with some other colleagues in Europe.

From then on the idea of "The Knot" has been developed tremendously, but in a very conscious way.

Since March 2003 The Knot is a registered non-profit organisation under the Belgium law.

The founders of The Knot who were active from the beginning on are :

- Ronald Keersmaekers, Belgium → Secretary and Treasurer, and director
- Yvor Broer, The Netherlands → Chair, and vice-director
- Nana Saginashvili, Georgia → Vice Chair

Everybody from us has an extensive experience in international youth work, and we believe that through this and our good contacts we have, we will have a powerful kick off.

¹ This was one of the outcomes among the trainers at the Second Consultative Meeting of the DJS Trainers Pool, from December 2001 in Budapest.

Why 'The Knot'!

The acronym 'The Knot' symbolises an organisation, a project, an idea or a situation, which faces some difficulties and/or challenges at a certain moment. Through disentangling and rebuilding this knot (e.g. towards a new knot or towards an untied rope), we will together, our partners and us, create new situations, which will open up new perspectives and solutions.

The Knot found its purpose in straightening out and analysing all kinds of difficulties and challenges that occur in organisations all over Europe and beyond. By giving trainings, empowering people and organisations, doing research, spreading information, giving policy development support, etc., we want to give other organisations the chance to develop new insights into approaches to the challenges of their current situation and thereby to facilitate change. This knot of work we call The Knot.

Our vision

Stimulating initiatives and involvement of groups in society is in the opinion of The Knot **'the path to development'**. People themselves mostly know their own reality the best and therefore what is best for them. It is often said that young people are the future of society, and therefore a lot of attention has been directed towards them, and to the structures in which they are represented. Many youth organisations and youth structures have been established and have evolved, to give their input into society and to develop skills and competences to do so, through numerous projects and activities.

The lack of a clear coherence and sustainability in trainings, however, limits the span of youth work. In some organisations there are no means for specialised trainings on certain issues, since the scope of the organisation as a whole is too broad to specialise on one single issue. Sometimes good initiatives stay only within the range of one organisation or network alone, since there are no links with other networks and/or institutions. Next to that too often activities strand on the functioning of the organisation and it is a fact that networks often dissolve faster than they evolve. In many cases, youth work is troubled by a lack of vision towards the concepts of voluntary work and youth policy.

The people behind The Knot have decided to take a more structured and professional approach in 'the path to development'.

Therefore we use the following matters as basic tools in our work:

- **Support** of organisations for in depth trainings on specialised issues
- **Empowering** people inside organisations is one approach but
- **Strengthening** organisations in society is the other; we do both
- **Stimulating** the creation of networks to form a knot
- **Research** on training needs and youth policy development
- **Accumulation and dissemination** of information about programmes, institutions, etc.
- **Specific attention** and trainings for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), SEE and Euro-Med countries to become a truly pan European organisation
- **Commercial trainings** to further develop and support the non-profit sector

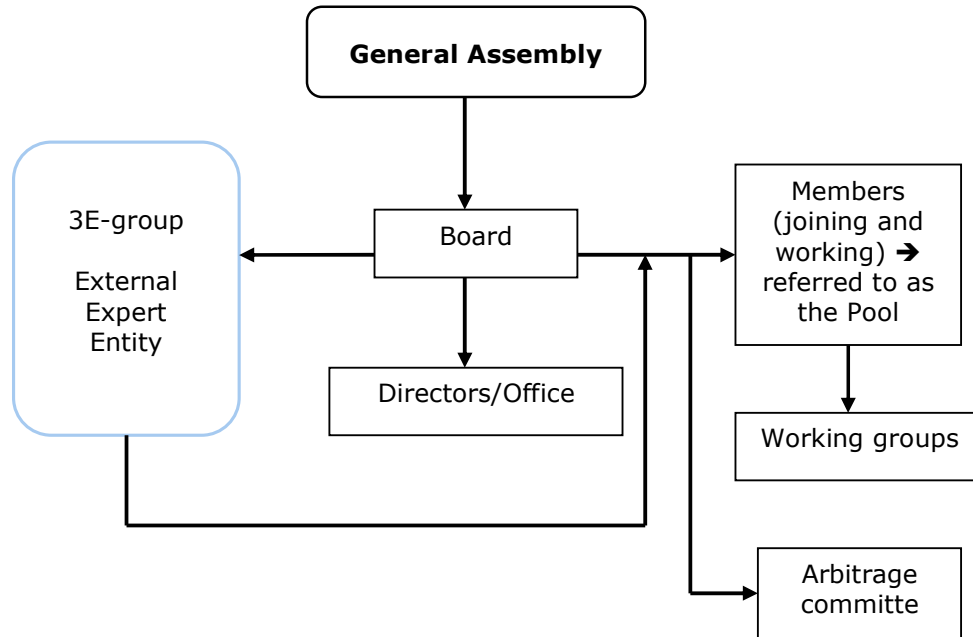
Approach in our work!

The Knot as organisation has starts from two fundamental approaches in its work :

- **Training as a concept** : To provide assistance in approaching certain issues, problems and ideas to change an existing situation, The Knot uses the concept of training. Training is not seen as a mere tool, but as our main instrument to help organisations achieve its aims and objectives. We believe strongly that training, in any kind of concept, is the best way to do this. The methodology of training or better to say training as a method, will be used in the best way to reach effective outcomes in any kind of situation. We believe that training is what makes us what we are, contrary to only publishing books and videos, and is the way to change organisations and situations, or tackle certain issues.
- **Respect for the fundamental human rights and freedoms** : The Knot will always show in its work a clear respect for the fundamental human rights and freedoms to all the partners, institutions and people with whom it is working with. The Knot will use its vision on society as an input to its activities, but we respect the conclusions that are based on the needs, culture and believes of people and organisations in the specific regions we're working in.

The structure of The Knot

The following structure forms the basis The Knot :



GENERAL ASSEMBLY : The general assembly forms the highest power within the association. It has the authority that has been assigned to it by law. It meets one time a year on invitation by or in name of the chair of the association or its replacement of the board of directors, or when the aims or interest of the association requires it.

3E-GROUP : the 3E-group is our **External Expert Entity**. It is a closed pool of trainers with whom we have worked together at least one or two times before The Knot. Through this way we are gathering a group of colleagues around us with whom we can work together, develop new projects, but also we can use them and their knowledge/experience when we're approached to deliver trainings to both NGOs as business companies. The initial idea is to find a group of 12 trainers for this 3E-group by the beginning of 2004. Some people are approached, others are interested to join, and are in the process to be invited by us. Every member of this 3E-group is asked to fill out a basic competence chart, so that we know where the competences are lying and which areas they still want to develop further.

BOARD : the board of The Knot exists out of the 3 founders. In the future the board will grow according to the growth of The Knot in our society. The board is responsible for the general outlines and the strategic approach of the market. They will also look that; through all the projects which will be developed; our mission statement is followed.

MEMBERS AND PROCEDURES TO JOIN : members of The Knot are all trainers. You cannot become a member by yourself, but you are invited by the board. As soon as you are invited you become an observer member for a maximum period of 2 years. Afterwards a definitive decision will be made.

WORKING GROUPS : within our members, several working groups can be established to work around certain topics, to develop internal training projects, ... etc.

ARBITRAGE COMMITTEE : whenever a member isn't agreed with a certain taken decision, which influences him/her directly, there is the possibility to start up an arbitration procedure to revoke the decision.

At this point the board, the directors/Office and the 3E-group are already developed and working. The other 4 structural elements will be installed in the near future.

Training, areas of attention

The Knot is and will be a trainers association and has therefore defined a set of fields it will focus on. In those fields it should have a high to very high level of competence, both the organisation as those active in it. These fields, also called areas of attention, are the following eighteen:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Citizenship education | 10. Media and new media |
| 2. Communication and negotiation | 11. Organisational management |
| 3. Conflict management and mediation | 12. Outdoor education |
| 4. Fundraising | 13. Personal development |
| 5. Group dynamics and team work | 14. Project management |
| 6. Health | 15. Racism, social exclusion and gender |
| 7. Human rights education | 16. Training for trainers |
| 8. Intercultural learning | 17. Youth policy development |
| 9. Leadership training | 18. Volunteering |

Currently The Knot has decided to work out a strategy how to measure our organisational- and personal competences in each of the eighteen fields of attention.

As mentioned above, we make a distinction between our organisational and personal level of competences in writing down our strategical approach. The **organisational competence** is the sum of the history that the knot has in the area, the data it collected and the materials it developed. The **personal level** is defined by the people working in and for The Knot.

According to internal defined rules, we can value the competences of The Knot in both organisational and personal level by putting crosses in one of the 4 levels (Low, Medium, High, Very High).

Competence area	Competence level 2003							
	Organisational				Personal			
	L*	M	H	VH	L	M	H	VH
Citizenship education								
Communication and negotiation								
Conflict management and mediation								
Fundraising								
Group dynamics and team work								
Health								
Human rights education								
Intercultural learning								
Leadership training								
Media and new media								
Organisational management								
Outdoor education								
Personal development								
Project management								
Racism, social exclusion and gender								
Training for trainers								
Youth policy development								
Volunteering								

* L= Low, M= Medium, H= High, VH= Very High

The main target of this competence level plan (which is a dynamic plan that changes all the time) is to get all our organisational and personal marks classified under High and Very High at the end of 2006.

The way we measure the development in competences from low to high and very high will depend on regular evaluations (at least once a year) held where all issues will be compared according to a set of minimum standards that The Knot is using in developing his projects. Reports, number of projects we're involved in, developed material around a certain subject, strenght of partnerships we've build out, ... are part of the minimum standards.

Regions of Attention

The Knot is giving special attention in its work to the following 3 regions :

- CIS (Commonwealth of Independed States)
- SEE (South East Europe)
- Euromed-countries.

We believe as organisation, that giving extra attention to these regions, we can become a real pan-european organisation.

Trough the work we already did in these regions till so far we noticed that a lot of problems occure from time to time :

- Weakness of youth sector;
- Lack of clear youth policy;
- Organisational difficulties;
- Concept of voluntary work;
- NGO's as small business;
- Discrepancy between ideas of organisation and actions;
- Lack of networks at and between all levels (non-governmental, governmental and private sector);
- Unorganised youth;
- Lack of knowledge about other couazntries and institutions and programmes of, among others, the European Union and the Council of Europe (and vice versa)
- Lack of international contacts at all levels
- Lack of domestic and regional contacts and networks

Mission Statement

The Knot is an organisation with a clear vision towards its work in society. Therefore it lays down its philosophy in a mission statement, with the next nine points:

1. The Knot is established as a **pan European non-governmental trainers association**. It focuses on offering services to both non-governmental and governmental, as well as profit guided structures. It does so to:
 - Empower people and organisations in society in the pan-European region
 - Stimulate regional, national and international cooperation
 - Build cross-cultural bridges
2. The Knot does this with a clear **view on society**. In working in so many regions of Europe, it encounters with many different social arrangements. The Knot shows a clear respect to the fundamental human rights and freedoms. These rights and freedoms create the path along which society should be organised, but do not completely determine the final outcome. The Knot thus will use its vision on society as an input to its activities, but will respect the conclusion that are based on the needs, culture and believes of people and organisations in the specific regions.
3. The Knot stands for a **professional ideological** approach. It wants to bring the level of personal and organisational development to a higher level with a clear approach. Its work is based on practical experiences and inputs from the profit and non-profit field. With its actions it wants to improve the quality of research, training, stimulate tighter networks, empower organisations and much more. All of this with a global vision on society, where people can actively participating and be heard.
4. The Knot is not just providing standard developed answers for its target groups, but it has a **flexible and dynamic approach** in facing challenges or answering needs of its partners. Starting from a basic framework and from the wishes of the organisation, it develops and creates together with them the right approach. Tailor made in contradiction to 'one size fits all'.
5. The Knot takes **experimental and experiential learning** as a fundamental attitude. Trough its thorough research and day-to-day work it is constantly looking at and searching for new methodologies and techniques that can be used to improve the work of the organisation. Using and experimenting with these new techniques is a constant process in giving the organisation the best approach of tackling the challenges in its work. Besides experimenting, experiential learning is essential in working with people and organisations. This all based on the principle that with words you experience less than with the experience itself.
6. **Equality** is a central theme in the work that The Knot is undertaking. The knowledge of the participants in its activities or the organisations it is working with is actively used as a basic resource instrument for the content of the activity or the cooperation. This philosophy is based on the **1 + 1 = 3** approach. That means that the outcome of the work from a group or team, who shares and work together towards a specific goal, is greater than the sum of the inputs of the individuals.
7. **Empowering people and organisations in society is an ongoing process** and is therefore highly valued in The Knot. Organisations, both non-profit as profit all over Europe mostly do not have the opportunity to go deeper into a certain aspects of their development, because their work is too diverse. Therefore they do not have the time and resources to tackle specific topics when it comes to change and or further development. The Knot considers it an important task to empower people and organisations on a permanent basis, by sharing knowledge trough actively working together over a long period, even when the collaboration is short, to make the effect long lasting.
8. The Knot will combine two sectors of work, namely the **profit and non-profit sector**. Transferring knowledge between the non-profit and the profit sector and the exchanging of methodologies and approaches are points that will get an ongoing attention. The outcomes and results of these interactions will be used towards the further development of the Knot to reach its aims and objectives. To do so it will offer a set of services and trainings for enterprises, based on the experience in international non-profit sector, and will use the outcomes from that vice versa.

9. Finally, The Knot will focus on the **synergy** between all the different elements in its work and for all the aims and objectives that the organisation stands for. Next to that it also works towards creating synergy of work done by other organisations, to make it stronger as a whole. The Knot should therefore not be seen as an organisation on its own, but as a strong partner in a larger network, for a stronger network.

Contact

This is the idea and presentation of The Knot. We hope you enjoyed reading it and that it clarified to you what "The Knot" is about. If there are any further questions, feel free to approach us and we will do our best to answer your questions in the most satisfying way. You can reach us at the address below.

The Knot

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