

# How do the regional SALTOs see youth information?

by Andriy Pavlovych, Bernard Abrignani, Federica Demicheli and Sonja Mitter. Compiled by Mark E. Taylor

*Within the Youth in Action programme, the regional SALTO resource centres have a crucial role to play in informing all actors about the opportunities available to them. Ranging from South-East Europe to the Meda region and Eastern Europe and Caucasus. Coyote asked them to consider what was specific in their different approaches to youth information. Here are their answers.*



## SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EECA)

Andriy Pavlovych

**1) What does your SALTO youth information strategy consist of? How did you develop it? Is it different from the other Regional SALTOs? How does it foresee interaction with stakeholders in the region?**

SALTO EECA's youth information strategy is based on three pillars: Internet resources (a website, e-Newsletter, Facebook, etc.), printed materials (leaflets, booklets, *Youth in 7* magazine, educational reports, etc.) and people-to-people contacts (presentations, consulting, sharing good practices, etc.).

SALTO EECA is the youngest regional resource centre (established in October 2003), therefore we were in a more comfortable situation as we could learn from the experience of our colleagues of the SALTO EuroMed and SALTO SEE. First we started to develop Internet resources and at that time it was in English only. We also started to work on printed materials and in this case, we tried to do our best to be as multilingual as possible. The EECA region is the most multilingual EU Neighbouring Partner region: seven countries, seven languages, four alphabets and four totally different linguistic families. Russian is still the most popular language in the EECA region (due to the common post-Soviet heritage), on the other hand a lot of young people in Caucasus countries do not speak Russian fluently anymore; they prefer to speak English. This is why a common solution is to have bilingual English/Russian publications.

The most ambitious task was to prepare the ambassadors – we call them multipliers – who will be ready to inform and to promote the opportunities for international youth co-operation within the EU's youth programme. The network of multipliers was established in the beginning of 2005 and is now the main structure we use for implementation of the SALTO EECA's youth information strategy in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Multipliers are our experts from the region who know how to inform and how to promote the EU's youth programme according to the reality in their countries and regions. They represent the NGOs where they have implemented activities within the EU's youth programme, so they have the proper insight. The multipliers sometimes introduce themselves as "information representatives of the YiA Programme" (because it sounds more official, in Russian the term "multipliers" has a strong association to a cartoon maker 😊) and they involve national and local youth policy stakeholders in their co-operation. We have many examples where, thanks to our multipliers, the SALTO EECA developed co-operation with national governmental institutions on youth affairs. Also, we have implemented together various educational and promotional activities (study visits, conferences, etc.) to involve more national and local stakeholders in international and pan-European co-operation.

**2) What do you consider the major challenges in your region in being a provider of youth information about the Youth in Action programme? What have been your solutions to those challenges?**

The major challenges:

**Multilingualism** and how to avoid linguistic barriers. I answered this question above. I would just like to emphasise that the best way is to organise workshops on sharing good practices when people meet other people from their countries who have already experienced international youth co-operation. It helps a lot to understand that, "Yes! We can!" 😊

**Target group.** How to identify the target groups? For example, young people from rural and deprived urban areas (the priority groups for the eastern partnership "Youth Window"). We have organised a few international educational activities for these specific target groups, but it was very difficult to approach and to recruit people from these areas. So, we decided to organise some local activities in their national languages, which we believe will prove to be more user friendly.

**Political situation of the country.** For example, Belarus, which is not even a Council of Europe member state. How do you promote European

values in such a country? Our solution was to avoid calling them European! In general, it is better to focus on social inclusion than on youth participation. The main conclusion is that the specific youth information strategy has to be decided on with the local youth policy/youth sector actors. Also, we have to remember the safety of our local partners who are involved in information and promotion activities.

**3) What have you learnt – if anything – from your colleagues' and regional stakeholders' experience in youth information from the other regional SALTOs?**

As I mentioned, we are the youngest SALTO, so we learnt a lot! First of all, we have analysed the SALTO EuroMed and SALTO SEE Internet resources and printed materials. The European Commission also organised the meeting of the regional SALTO RCs in 2005 where we had the opportunity to discuss the similarities and differences in our information strategies. From that time we started to co-operate more closely. We also learnt a lot from the local structures developed by SALTO SEE (such as contact points) and by the SALTO EuroMed (such as multipliers).

**4) If you had one thing which you could implement to improve things in the future, what would it be? (Always bearing in mind that we don't know exactly what the structure of Erasmus+ will be!)**

We should pay more attention to the development of multilingual e-tools for partnership building in the field of youth. It seems that e-materials get to a wider target group and printed materials might disappear soon.

**5) Anything else you would like to add?**

The youth information strategy has to be relevant to the capacity of the region and at the same time it should be in accordance with the capacity of the EU's programmes in the youth field for the Neighbouring Partner regions.

1. More information about this structure is available at [www.saltoyouth.net/rc/eeca/eecamultipliers/](http://www.saltoyouth.net/rc/eeca/eecamultipliers/)

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### SALTO EuroMed

Bernard Abrignani and  
Federica Demicheli

**1) What does your SALTO youth information strategy consist of? How did you develop it? Is it different from the other regional SALTOs? How does it foresee interaction with stakeholders in the region?**

The information strategy is based on general and common activities with the other SALTOs such as:

- 📧 newsletters (EuroMed and Tools for Learning)
- 📖 magazines (*Meet In EuroMed* and *Tools for Learning*)
- 🌐 website

I don't know if it is specific but apart from our Facebook page and Twitter we have a Facebook page for each activity, usually managed by our participants, and we use them to inform our former participants.

We have also one specific video for each of our activities uploaded on Vimeo and on the Facebook page of each activity, for example on YouTube.

In our specific case, there is intense work done with the stakeholders in the region based on one-to-one meetings and the development of ad hoc projects on very important topics for the region (government level, national information sessions, EU Directorate Generals DEVCO and EAC, the Youth Partnership, UNESCO, etc.)

Each publication is sent to different people, mainly stakeholders, and according to the topic and language. Not all of them are sent to same people.

The fact that we publish mainly in English, French and Arabic is part of our strategy to avoid any kind of exclusion!

We have also started new training courses for the multipliers in Meda countries through RCBS but that will bring added value to the SALTO EuroMed network; approximately 30 people (youth leaders, youth workers) in already four of the eight countries.

In each of our activities we introduce the SALTO network and the Youth in Action programme, and recently the new Erasmus+ programme.



**2) What do you consider the major challenges in your region in being a provider of youth information about the Youth in Action programme? What have been your solutions to those challenges?**

The major challenges are:

- 1) an unstable political situation that does not allow for the development of an information strategy and which brings more fragility;
- 2) the turnover of people working in the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Unit or in some reference NGOs.

The idea of creating a national multipliers group is part of the new strategy based more on NGOs than on stakeholders.

One important matter also is to help participants from Meda countries by selecting them and paying their travel costs, in many cases we do this with national agencies.

**3) What have you learnt – if anything – from your colleagues' and regional stakeholders' experience in youth information from the other regional SALTOs?**

The idea and methodology of EVS accreditation, but we will need to adapt to the cultural and political situation in the region and in each country!

**4) If you had one thing which you could implement to improve things in the future, what would it be? (Always bearing in mind that we don't know exactly what the structure of Erasmus+ will be!)**

EVS strategy including accreditation for hosting, sending and training of mentors as a way to create qualitative and sustainable co-operation between NGOs from both sides; never forget that our slogan is "bringing both sides together"!

**5) Anything else you would like to add?**

Never forget that social media networks played a role in the recent Arab Spring: they were used as channel for information and a forum for exchange.

That's why we have to adapt our information strategy to the different target groups we have and to use the existing tools that are used especially by young people.

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### South-East Europe

Sonja Mitter

(Please note: Sonja wanted to tackle the last question first – for reasons which will become obvious as you read on...)

#### 5) Anything else you would like to add?

Before talking about strategy and challenges, maybe it's worth saying this.

Generally speaking, we can be proud of what has been reached throughout the past years. For a couple of years already, many good applications for Youth in Action projects have been submitted by and with partners from South-Eastern Europe; the budget is sufficient only for granting about one third of them, and there are continuously new organisations from this region using the possibilities offered by the programme. Information has found its way through the world of youth work in this part of Europe.

Our youth information strategy in SEE, built by local stakeholders, has been an essential part of promoting and supporting the Youth in Action programme in this region. While SALTO SEE manages to reach annually some 100-150 participants by directly involving them in European support activities where they can learn more about the programme and how to use it, via its local stakeholders an additional 300-600 young people, youth leaders or other interested people are directly participating in local information and training activities. An additional, higher number receives information from national information

providers via the Internet or promotional activities of a more general nature. It might be hard to define concrete outcomes, but without a doubt, SALTO SEE could not have done it alone, without an information strategy based on local/national stakeholders.

If I had one more thing to add, it would be an example of good practice. The Youth in Action information strategy has been working most successfully in Serbia, where several interlinked developments and conditions have contributed to its success. The work of the contact points (see point 1 below) has been carried out reliably for many years, with great commitment, competence and efficiency. It has been embedded in a strong and politically active youth work scene and has been able to rely on a co-ordinated and strong network of trainers and multipliers. Importantly, the process has benefitted from stable and quite substantial financial and political support from the Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sport, which has taken on board interests from the non-governmental youth sector in the formulation and implementation of national youth policy and has integrated the promotion of the Youth in Action programme into its policy. This shows that a strategy of providing information and support relies strongly on the competences and capacities of the information providers but also on the framework in which they can operate, namely interaction with other local stakeholders and social and political recognition of their work.

There have been positive developments in all other countries of the region (which I will not mention at this point), albeit to different degrees. The situation is not equally successful in all countries and there is still a lot left to be done.

#### 1) What does your SALTO youth information strategy consist of? How did you develop it? Is it different from the other regional SALTOs? How does it foresee interaction with stakeholders in the region?

Our youth information strategy in SEE is based on several **basic assumptions**:

1. Any strategy regarding information about Youth in Action in SEE aims to reach potential project organisers and enable them to use the programme. It needs to include promotion (creating a need for information), information (general + target-specific), advice/counselling and training.
2. There is a lack of existing youth information structures that can be used for the purpose of providing information about YiA.
3. Information should be provided by locals who have a good understanding of the local (youth work) reality, speak the local language and are close to the target group.
4. Information providers should be structures (organisations) rather than individuals, in order to ensure higher sustainability. However, the experience of individuals in charge of providing the information is essential.

Our **information strategy** is based on organisations that are nominated by SALTO SEE as "Contact Points for the Youth in Action programme" (since 2005) in (if possible) every country of SEE, which are partially supported by the national governments (Serbia). In addition, in the field of EVS there are accreditors (information to EVS sending and host organisations, since 2006) and trainers of EVS volunteers (information to volunteers, since 2007); SALTO SEE has

also been directly co-ordinating and organising support activities in SEE countries (based on perceived needs and interests) as well as co-organised European support activities (partially targeted, partially general according to requests). Since 2010, SALTO has organised annual working meetings with national ministries in charge of youth issues from SEE, recognising the important role they play in supporting and giving recognition to YiA information strategy and information providers in their countries. While accreditors come from SEE countries and other European countries to ensure a European dimension in the accreditation process, trainers and contact points are, with some exceptions, from SEE countries.

Exchange of information between the different pools and actors and development of jointly agreed principles and standards have been found to be essential. There are regular (annual or bi-annual) working meetings of pools of contact points, accreditors and trainers, separately as well as all multipliers together. Meetings serve to share information, experiences, challenges and realities, and to review aims and objectives for further information and support in the region. Regular public calls serve to renew pools and assess interest in the region. Integration of new members into the pools and training of new multipliers on the job aim to develop multipliers and information providers based in all countries of SEE.

The information strategy was developed taking into account demands made by the programme, and needs and possibilities perceived in the region (what worked, what didn't, trial and error method); it was based originally on a formal needs assessment process in 2004 and 2005 (contact points), since then there has been constant discussion with stakeholders. Roles and activities provided should reflect stability and continuity as well as development and change.

## How do the regional SALTOs see youth information?

### 2) What do you consider the major challenges in your region in being a provider of youth information about the Youth in Action programme? What have been your solutions to those challenges?

#### Challenges NOT in order of priority:

- ☛ lack of existing youth information structures that could take up this role, at least partially;
- ☛ lack of capacities and/or competences of potential information providers in this specific field;
- ☛ the situation is becoming increasingly different in every country, thus demanding a specific approach;
- ☛ lack of motivation of organisations to take up this demanding role, very limited financial support; (need for additional financial support from other/national sources, mostly missing), sustainability of contact point role/work is a challenge;
- ☛ spirit of competition over resources, sharing of information within established informal (politically influenced) networks rather than via official structures;
- ☛ lack of social and political recognition of youth work and non-formal learning.

#### Some attempted solutions:

- ☛ adapting the role and tasks of contact points over time, defining specific tasks of an organisation rather than an overall role to fulfil;
- ☛ efforts to reach out to national authorities in charge of youth to increase recognition;
- ☛ defining more flexible approaches where needed (organising additional activities involving other actors, especially in countries where developed strategies meet the most challenges);
- ☛ using resources from one country to support youth information strategy in another, using examples of good practice;
- ☛ we are still searching for the perfect solution!



### 3) What have you learnt – if anything – from your colleagues' and regional stakeholders' experience in youth information from the other regional SALTOs?

There are different realities that are not immediately comparable in regard to the recognition of the Youth in Action programme and SALTO in the region, youth work and youth policy, existing youth information structures, etc. Different realities demand different solutions.

Approaches taken by each SALTO are quite different but have some similarities. Sustainability of efforts is a challenge for all SALTOs in their region. There are differences within each region which demand specific approaches.

### 4) If you had one thing which you could implement to improve things in the future, what would it be? (Always bearing in mind that we don't know exactly what the structure of Erasmus+ will be!)

At this point we do not know yet if we will be free to select our Youth in Action information strategy in the future European youth programme. Possibly, all information about the different programmes will be dealt with jointly via existing (or to be created??) EU structures in the partner regions. If we had one wish, it would be to keep the possibility to define our approach, using specific multipliers/information providers and the developed capacities and competences. Ideally, they could be linked to, or co-operating with, established EU offices in the region.

Our key words in any future youth information strategy should be **SUSTAINABILITY** and **FLEXIBILITY** (to respond to different and changing needs in a changing region). Last but not least, we need to use the existing resources that we have in the region even better, across the different countries.