



# **Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union**

## **Case Studies**

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# ALTER

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## MISSION:

ALTER is a programme of social and educational integration developed by the Balearic Islands Government in collaboration with 26 municipalities of the region in Spain. The programme targets students in secondary schools, aged 14-16 who have difficulties adapting to the school environment (absenteeism, conflict, etc.) derived from special social, personal or family conditions. The programme offers a more practical and functional training related to the professional and working world. The goal is to re-engage young people in education (secondary education or VET), or to facilitate their integration in the labour market by gaining work experience in their area of interest. ALTER has been running since 2005: 1,233 young people have participated, more than 160 training companies collaborate annually and there are 37 youth workers (social educators) involved in the programme.

## Background

Alter aims to improve the personal and social development of those secondary school students aged 14-16 who have left school, reject conventional education institutions or have difficulties to adapt and show maladjusted behaviour. These students often show interest in a more practical educational activities and Alter offers them the opportunity to be involved in a training programme from which they will receive a certificate when completed. The programme works in parallel to the academic year and it schedules the workload per week as follows: 1 day in school, 4 days in a training company (in the area of interest for the young person) and 1 day working with the social educator on transversal skills (e.g. sexuality, social abilities, training and labour orientation). The ultimate goal is to bring back students to formal education or to promote their entrance in the labour market. In order to achieve this goal, Alter offers training related to professional world, together with continuous mentoring and support from a social educator that follows up the progress of the young person in school and the site where training takes place. Through their participation in this programme, young people's self-esteem improves and they learn how to acquire positive social behaviours in the work context, such as being on time or communicating with clients.

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Education and training/social inclusion

Number of youth workers: 37

Number of young people: 247 per year (until now 1,233 have participated in the programme)

Target group: students between 14 and 16 years old who frequently reject conventional education institutions

Year activities established: 2005

Balearic Islands show one of the highest rates of early school leaving in Spain (30.7%), being above the Spanish average 26.5%<sup>1</sup>. Although in Spain compulsory education targets students up to 16 years old, absenteeism is very common and there are people out of the education system. Within this context, Alter emerged as a preventative programme for those at risk of dropping out of school, although it also does remedial intervention with those students who have already left school. One interviewee explained that for those aged 16 or over, there are many programmes (e.g. occupational education), but this is the only initiative that targets young people aged 14-16 and that is why this programme is so important, "because this is the only alternative for these potential/already early school leavers". Alter intends to prevent and tackle social exclusion and its negative consequences (low income and in some cases antisocial behaviours and involvement in judicial procedures). The programme is now well known in the region and there are waiting lists to participate. That is why those that take part feel this is an opportunity for them and just a few of them abandon the programme before completing it.

### Approach to working with young people

The target group of young people are offered the opportunity to participate in this programme by their school supervisor or by social educators working in their place of residence. Once students show their interest, they have an interview with the social educator where they are asked what they would like to do as a profession. Then, social educators try to find a local workplace where the student could work as an apprentice (3 days per week). In this way, social educators do not take decisions but students are empowered to decide by themselves what they want to do.

The sites visited for this case study were: a restaurant, a motorcycle repair shop, an animal farm and a hairdressing academy. Other training activities that have been chosen by students since 2005 are: gardening, bartender, bakery, shop assistant, shipwright, and accounting, maintenance of sports facilities, furniture restoration, graphic arts, library assistant, computer technician, painting, or digital photography. Students have a supervisor in the workplace. The youth worker visits the workplace every week. In this way, all parts involved in the programme communicate and collaborate to achieve the personal and social development of the young person. The project director and youth workers ensure the engagement of young people by showing flexibility and by listening to participants, to their fears and adapting to their needs. Social educators make sure that both supervisors and students function well together. There have been cases when participants have had problems with their supervisors and the social educator found a

#### *Key Approaches*

All stakeholders' involved (social educators, supervisors in the workplace, schools, families, and young people) collaborate and communicate in order to work in the same line and support the young person.

The programme adapts to the young people's needs. For example, if the student realises that he does not like the profession he had chosen, they have the opportunity to choose something different.

Students have an exam and receive a certificate at the end of the programme, stating the number of hours they have completed in the workplace. In this way, their work is valued and they can proof their work experience.

<sup>1</sup> National Labour Force Survey (EPA)- National Institute of Statistics (INE) (2011)

different company for them. For the project director and the youth workers, every student that decides to abandon the programme is a big failure, so they try their best to keep young people in the programme.

Young people interviewed got involved in the programme because they did not like to study and they used to fail their modules. They were informed of this programme in the school or by social educators and they loved the idea of doing what they like: in this case cooking, horse care and repairing motorcycles. They felt that for the first time, they were good at something. One of the interviewees affirmed that if he had not been involved in this programme, "he would be at home sleeping or watching TV" and the programme offered him the opportunity of doing what he likes to do and achieving a certificate at the end of it.

Youth workers felt that their role is to support young people and be a referent for them: "It is not my job to judge young people but to support them when they have done something wrong and give them a second, a third or as many chances as they can". They highlighted that this programme is characterised by its "adaptation to the young people's needs", which school education does not allow because it is not flexible enough. They are not there to judge young people, but to be a referent and listen to them. It is the objective of youth workers helping participants to feel motivated, overcome their fears and guide them personally and professionally. Within this programme, youth workers write diaries explaining the development of the young people. These diaries are sent to the project director for her to monitor and supervise their work and the participants' progress.

Youth workers receive information and a training session about the programme delivered by the project director. Youth workers interviewed felt that they have gained lots of professional experience by working with young people, so more than specific training, they have learnt by doing. They have recognised that it is very important to keep up to date; being curious and open minded when working with young people. By participating in the programme, young people gain the specific training skills learnt in the workplace, but they also learn transversal subjects through their weekly work with social educators. They also obtain a certificate at the end of the programme. Personally, their self-esteem increases because, in words of one of the youth workers interviewed: "these are highly stigmatised kids and through their involvement in this programme, for the first time their 'failure chain' breaks".

### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The programme is now well known and established in the region. There is quantitative evidence in relation to the number of students that complete the programme. In the last academic

#### *Outcomes and impacts*

Quantitative evidence: there is data on the number of students that complete the programme every year. There is some information on the number of students that find a job or continue studying after their completion of the programme.

Qualitative evidence: young people interviewed emphasised the importance of feeling valued while doing something they like. After an academic failure, they find they are good at their job and this is recognised by their supervisors. A graduation ceremony takes place at the completion of the programme to value the work done by participants.

Youth workers support young people and are a referent for them. Before students complete the programme, youth workers inform them about opportunities in formal education and the labour market. In many cases, youth workers are in touch with students after they complete the programme and they are able to follow their progress.



year (2011-2012), from the 248 users, 220 successfully completed the programme with a grade average of 8.1 (high merit) and 33 got a distinction (grades 9 and 10). At the end of each academic year, a graduation ceremony takes place and students and their families are present to collect their diplomas. The project director has found that this is an achieving for students that had been failing their modules in school. Their families are proud of them and for once they feel valued. Besides the diploma, youth workers try to orientate them before the programme ends, so that they have all the information about possible paths they can take both in formal education and the labour market (writing a CV, cover letter...).

There is no information for all of the users that completed the programme, but from last year's graduates, it is known that 35 returned to the formal education system and 20 found a job. In qualitative terms, one of the interviewees that participated in the programme seven years ago said that thanks to this programme he found a job in the same field as soon as he finished. He has not stopped working since then. He added that for the first time, when he was an apprentice, he felt valued and his supervisor was a referent for him: "he was not like a boss, but like a friend" and "people in the village stopped considering me as an oddity, but as someone nice who did a good job". Youth workers have explained that most of the participants come back to formal education but with a practical orientation, doing Initial Professional Qualification Programmes (included in the Post-Compulsory Secondary Education). These courses offer professional skills that support and enable early school leavers to access intermediate VET or to integrate in the labour market.

In terms of youth workers trajectories, being a paid job, most youth workers continue taking part in the programme (although for most of them this is not the only programme they work on). Those youth workers interviewed believe in the programme and totally support it. One interviewee mentioned that her first aim when she joined the programme was to get work experience and move to do something different. However, since the beginning she enjoyed her job and she would not change. She has felt she gains a lot from her involvement in this programme, for her this job is a continuous challenge and requires a continuous effort, but "seeing how young people develop and succeed has been very rewarding" for her. Another youth worker explained that "The success is that we adapt to the young people's expectations. They have the experience of starting and finishing something with success, which is new for them".

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

One of the youth workers interviewed explained that her working conditions have improved (from a part-time contract to a full time one). She explained that when the contracts were "part-time" some people would quit the job as soon as they found a full time job. This was negative for the participants of the programme, because a new relation with another social educator would have to be created and this would be negative for the young person's welfare.

There has been a positive change in terms of gender differences when choosing workplaces. While at the beginning, for instance, boys would be more likely to choose mechanics and girls hairdressing; this is not any more the case. Now there are many boys doing hairdressing and some girls doing mechanics or animal care, for instance. Some of the youth workers interviewed have felt an increase in the number of multi-problematic families. The profile of the young person that participates has tended to be more problematic too (e.g. the number of participants involved in judiciary processes has increased). These are more challenging profiles for the actors involved in the process, especially for social educators and supervisors.



## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Young people are not allowed to work in Spain until they are 16. This has been seen as positive by the interviewees, because although in reality this is not always the case, by law children have to stay in the education system or take part in programmes like Alter.

The slow bureaucratic process and the amount of documents that need to be filled in for each participant of Alter have been seen as problematic. In this sense, one interviewee explained that there are young people outside school education and administrations do nothing. However, when social educators manage to involve these young people in Alter, sometimes they have to wait for more than 2 or 3 months to get the authorisation from the department of education in order to be able to start their participation in the programme.

There are professions that cannot be chosen by young people for safety at work reasons (e.g. electrician). However, this has not been encountered as a limit at all, as the safety of young people is the most important thing. In fact, for all jobs, the programme pays for the appropriate clothes that children have to wear (e.g. security boots, overalls, helmets...).

## **Relationship with policy**

Effects of national policy on the work that is carried out have not been encountered. As this is a programme developed at regional level, it is more relevant to look at regional and local policies. The existence of Alter depends on political decisions, because the regional and local governments are the ones that annually sign the agreement in order to deliver the programme. This is something that worries some of the youth workers interviewed. The fact that a programme has to be renewed annually makes it a bit unstable, especially in times of economic crisis. However, since the programme started, there have been different political parties in government and all of them have supported the programme. Alter is well known by governments, companies and society; and therefore, there is hope that there the political compromise will be maintained. The project director maintains contact both with the general deputy in charge of the programme at regional and the local governments, making sure that agreements are renewed and that there is good communication and coordination. Therefore, although the programme ultimately depends of political decisions, there is communication between the people responsible for Alter and politicians.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

Networking has been considered as essential for achieving Alter's objectives. In this sense, coordination between all the actors involved (families, social educators, schools and training companies) is key for the programme's success. Youth workers interviewed meet with other youth workers in order to share their knowledge and experience, so that they can learn from each other. Furthermore, they have felt that it is fundamental to keep a good relationship with supervisors, schools and families. They also collaborate with psychologists and social workers, making sure that all the needed professionals are involved in attending the necessities of the young person. Besides these actors, collaboration with other professionals and organisations can be necessary depending on the young person's profile. For instance, collaboration with youth offenders' centres may be needed. By networking, youth workers involved in the programme make sure that all the actors work in the same direction and the young person receives support from all the parties involved.

## Supporting youth work

At national level, there have been cuts in education. This has meant less individualised support to students with academic difficulties which is negative for the purposes of Alter too. Both at national and EU levels, interviewees felt the need of economic support. With funding support, more things could be done, such as the following:

- After having created a link with the social educator for two years, it would be positive for young people to maintain that bond at least for one year (even if just with monthly meetings). This is what some social educators have called a “post-alter”, which at the moment cannot be done, because there is not enough funding for paying attention to young people involved in Alter and the ones who terminate the programme. Some social educators, especially the ones working in small villages, is easier to keep in touch informally with young people. In cities is more difficult to do this follow up.
- When their participation in Alter terminates, most participants decide to start Initial Professional Qualification Programmes. However, they may have to travel to another village or city in order to attend the course they are interested in. As already mentioned, most of the young people that take part in Alter do not have economic resources and this would mean that they would not be able to attend those courses once Alter terminates. Therefore, it would be necessary to offer them scholarships covering, for example, transport and food costs.

Although more economic support could be allocated after the termination of Alter in order to cover the needs stated above; the programme itself has received continuous institutional support from the Regional Government since it started in 2005. The current economic crisis has not meant a cut in the resources allocated to Alter. In fact, a new agreement has been signed between the regional government and Ibiza’s local government and five young people from that Island will be able to take part in the programme from September 2013. In this way, the number of young people participating in ALTER will increase from 247 to 252 young in 2013.

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- Have a socially valued programme
- Believe in young people and their capacities to progress
- Listen to young people
- Be flexible and adapt to the needs of young people
- Be patient with young people, do not give up when things go wrong
- Go step by step, as objectives cannot be reached immediately
- Spend time with young people and make them feel that youth workers are there to help them
- Be coherent and a positive referent for young people
- Coordination and collaboration of all the actors participating in the process: families, young people, schools, social educators and training companies.

# Association of Children and Youth

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## MISSION:

The National Association of Children and Youth Councils (ANACEJ) was created on 13 March 1991 in France, with two main objectives: (i) promote the participation of children and young people in public decision and the dialogue with elected officials at local level; and (ii) support regional and local authorities in setting up organisations for youth participation.

The movement of Children and Youth Councils originally started with children councils, notably the one of Schiltigheim (Lower-Rhin), set up in 1979, which is considered the first council of this kind in France. These councils constitute mechanisms for participation to local political life, for children and youth aged between 7 and 25 years old. The young councillors come from various social, cultural and ethnical backgrounds. This diversity enables the representation of the various neighbourhoods of a territory and gives the opportunity to young people to voice their interests and needs. Forty years ago, dialogue between adults and children was not conceivable; in the 1970s, the way adults perceived children changed, and they started to become involved in the decision sphere. In the 1990s, the number of councils with young adults increased tremendously, in a period when local elected officials were trying to retrieve contact with the youth of their territory.

Children and youth councils are part of a context of democratisation of local political life. They are voluntarily set up by local authorities and seek to improve territory management through the propositions and actions of young people, as well as discussions between young persons and elected officials on local issues (e.g. transport, housing, urban planning). It is also a way for young people to act as citizens and concretely experience democracy.

Methods of coordination and support provided vary according to the age groups of the councillors (i.e. children, youth or young adults). Councils with youth are often set up based on a request from the young people themselves. The principles, functioning, support provided, etc. are discussed and shared between youth and adults together. Some cities, after a few years of successful experimentation of children or youth councils, can propose the creation of a council for young majors, who do not feel well-represented in traditional associative or political structures.

## Approach to working with young people

The general approach developed by ANACEJ is based on networking and on the sharing of experiences among different councils. The national association promotes a bottom-up approach, working from what already exists at local/regional level, looking for innovative approaches and putting them forward for sharing with other councils. Through exchanges of experience and best practices, they seek to involve children and

young people, and to engage elected officials to include youth in their decision-making process. On the one hand, the objective is to help young people becoming future respectable citizens. On the other, the association aims at convincing elected officials at regional/local level of the importance of involving young people as main actors for dialogue and decision-making. In other words, to do with them and not for them.

In the selected examples (Strasbourg and Bry-sur-Marne), young people are placed at the centre of activities. Projects and activities are not decided for them but with them. Through the organisation of children and youth councils, local elected officials seek to give a voice to the young people of their territory, making them more autonomous, responsible and engaged, as any other adult citizen. The objective of these councils is to co-produce local policies with young people, by facilitating dialogue between adults and young people during organised councils. The ultimate objective of this approach is to make young people aware of their responsibilities, so that they do their best to maintain and reinforce the trust that was given to them. In the youth council of Bry-sur-Marne for instance, young people (from 14 to 17) are at the heart of decision-making, choices and initiatives. The process in which they are involved includes plenary meetings and commissions, project implementation and decisions about public projects. In this sense they are supported by youth workers, who encourage them to speak in public, provide advice and tools for decision-making, and facilitate dialogue with elected officials and professionals.

Youth workers interviewed during the case study describe their role and functions in animating and coordinating children and youth councils. Beyond a general commitment to help young people in their personal and professional development, youth workers, when linking young councillors with elected officials, must develop key social, pedagogical and human competences. Youth workers support young councillors in getting involved in decision-making processes, with the long-term objective of helping them to become active and responsible citizens. Youth workers have the responsibility to set-up, animate and manage local youth councils. The activities linked to the mission are very diverse and imply an intense investment in time and availability. The youth workers interviewed speak of their mission as motivating, enriching open-minding and rewarding.

The latest youth policy of the city of Strasbourg includes major axes in favour of the young people, including: better considering their voice and enabling them to better communicate; developing their autonomy, confidence, sense of engagement and responsibility; increasing their active participation to local democratic life and making sure they take part in decisions concerning them; supporting initiatives and creativity to enhance their openness to the world and other cultures; improving their quality of

#### *Key Facts*

Theme of activity: participation of children and youth to local political life.

Number of youth workers: 3000 - 4000 (1 or 2 per councils), but it is growing (difficult to know the exact number).

Number of young people: there are 3000 councils, hence more than 50000 young people (national level); approx. 2500 (Strasbourg), and 20 (Bry-sur-Marne).

Target group: children; youth; young adults; professionals; regional/local elected officials; municipal, local, regional and interregional authorities.

Year activities established: 1979 (1<sup>st</sup> council); 1991 (ANACEJ)

life by ensuring that they are associated to the organisation of their living environment. A steering committee has been set up in March 2012 to monitor the achievements of the municipality in implementing its youth policy. This committee is composed of technicians, elected officials as well as young people participating in youth councils. Its objectives are to prioritise public policies in the youth field; make the actions taken by the city more readable, coherent and adapted to the young; ensure the effective registration of young people in the committees, working groups, meetings and actions concerning them. The ultimate goal being the creation of a youth policy built with and for young people aged 11-25, which places young people stemming from Youth Councils at the heart of the project in the position of associated actors.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

Together with elected officials and technicians, the young councillors in the city of Strasbourg are playing a role of associated actors in designing and implementing policies that concern them, notably in the fields of childhood policy, support to student life and specific policies for housing and inclusion. Their role concerns the design, implementation and evaluation of policies concerning them. In Bry-sur-Marne, young people are given the possibility to decide, propose and criticise actions or projects based on clearly defined objectives.

Young people, when they are no longer involved in youth councils, have very diverse trajectories. There is not a single typical young people profile. Their trajectory relies much on their initial background, intentions and curricula. Few of them enter into politics or have a public policy profile afterwards. Among the young councillors of Bry-sur-Marne, only two have expressed a desire to join a political party for the coming municipal elections. From the feedback received from previous young councillors, the majority of them is still committed, but at other levels: students' association; NGOs; humanitarian projects; other associations; etc.

Notwithstanding the variety of personal and professional paths afterwards, young people who were involved in councils share a common point in the sense that they are more engaged than others in public life (e.g. as parents involved in their children school, as member of the "Service Civique", as volunteers in associations, etc.). They seem to have a better sense of general interest and a deeper commitment to act as responsible citizens, in very diverse fields of activity and engagement.

### *Main outcomes and impacts*

Young councillors are placed at the centre of activities: Children and Youth Councils are made with them and not for them

Children and youth councils have a real influence on political decisions taken by elected officials

Very diverse professional paths are observed following their involvement in youth councils

Engagement in public life and sense of general interest are stronger among formal youth councillors

Strong political will is necessary to develop innovative youth policies and integrate young people in the making of these policies

The missions of youth workers are very interesting, enriching and rewarding from a personal and professional point of view

## **Experience of trends in youth work**

One significant tendency is the increase in the age-groups. There are now councils for the 15-25 and even for the 15-30. Young adults are more involved than before. Children, youth and young adults who used to be involved in councils are all conscious of the importance of their experience.

Another tendency is the better consideration of young people by elected officials. They now consider children and youth as a resource for society, an idea that generally shared in the society now. As a result, this type of structures and tools has increased, due to a real political will to dialogue with young people. The central place given to them in local, regional, national and even European political life is one of the major changes in these last years. The rationale is no longer to convince elected officials of the importance of young people's participation, but rather to define how it can be enhanced to bring a real added-value.

Thematic (e.g. fight against delinquency, employment, health, social inclusion) and categorical (e.g. young from deprived neighbourhoods, teenagers, young in trouble, etc.) policies where young people are more considered as target object rather than associated actors are outdated because they stigmatize young people. Priority is to accompany them in their initiatives and projects, instead of imposing policies to them. Young people are further from the classical structures of participation (e.g. trade unions, political parties) but they show a real will to engage and look for an active place in society, with concrete responsibilities. In parallel, there is a real acknowledgement by elected officials that being young does not imply impossibility to commit. Young people want to be heard and understood by their representatives. They commit in non-traditional forms of participation and dialogue. They use new and innovative tools, meaning that youth workers and elected officials must adapt to their demands and needs. The fact that their needs and involvement are evolving quickly has an impact on the tools and mechanisms set up by actors working with them. They constantly need to adapt their strategies to attract young people and respond to their requests.

## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

There is no legal framework and no legal obligation to set up children and youth councils at local or regional level. It is up to each city to decide whether to develop and implement activities for young people. On the one hand, this provides opportunities to develop innovative policies but, on the other hand, these policies are fragile because they depend on political will, which is not compulsory.

In terms of working with minors, there is a legal framework regarding their supervision (1 youth worker for 14 young people) and reception (e.g. minimum standards for buildings and rooms). These regulations are defined by the regional direction for youth and sport. They are not considered as a barrier or limit.

Inclusion of young people is based on political will, and it only functions if there is a strong political determination behind it. Each city develops a particular approach to youth policy (objectives, target-groups, means, etc.), although there are similarities among all cities. In Strasbourg, the municipality is convinced by the importance of young people participation, and give them appropriate tools to commit themselves.

At international level, the International Convention for Children's Rights claims that young people must be associated to the decisions that concern them. The city of Strasbourg, according to the local democracy policy that it has set up and to its "Child-Friendly City" Charter signed in 2009, commits to involve young people when it takes decisions concerning them or binding their future and their territory.



## **Relationship with policy**

What has changed is the withdrawal of the State regarding youth policy. There is a trend towards decentralisation, implying that decisions concerning young people are more and more taken at local and regional level. Therefore, local and regional authorities are the real responsible of these policies nowadays.

The issue of who will be the leading authority in this matter is crucial. This creates coherence issues, especially because there are several tools and mechanisms at every level (European, national, regional, local, municipal) which must be coordinated and harmonised.

On the other hand, children and youth councils have a real influence on political decisions taken by elected officials. A tangible process of co-decision is put forward and implemented. Involving young people in decisions makes public policies more efficient. They really have an influence on public policies, especially on youth topics.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

ANACEJ cooperates with elected officials and movements of popular education. Thanks to ANACEJ, very different stakeholders can meet each other and share experiences. For instance, ANACEJ organised in February 2013 a meeting for cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants to discuss and exchange about youth policy. One other important partner is INJEP (National Institute for Youth and Popular Education).

At local level, they work with different youth councils and put them in network. They also organise trainings and reflexion days. They use many tools to share experience and promote both virtual (online) and physical networking (meetings, colloquia). The benefits include experience sharing, exchange of best practices, professional enrichment, but also questioning of own practices and development of critical sense.

Young people are pushed to develop European projects (e.g. visit children and youth councils in other countries; twinning of councils; recently a video has been prepared by French and Greek councils together).

## **Supporting youth work**

For the moment they receive support from the Ministry of Youth. Yet, budgetary restrictions may have critical consequences for children and youth councils. Regional and local authorities may cut budgets in the following years and that may be a threat for their activities. Financial support should be maintained since it is crucial.

At European level, youth participation should be better promoted, especially at political level. It should be a real priority for European youth, even if some actions already exist (e.g. Erasmus programme). A real valorisation should be put in place, more than just communicating about it.

Youth policy is not just icing on the cake. It is a field with vital stakes which have a real importance at European level. Youth policies could be questioned with the current socio-economic situation, but they should be preserved. They feel and fear a disengagement of the EU towards young people's participation and youth policy. European studies are very important and interesting for them; they would like to know more about what is happening in other countries. The EU should better communicate and share results on the topic.



### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Work with young people rather than for young people;
- Involve young people before and during the preparation of the projects instead of giving them ready-to-use policies;
- Take risks by involving young people because it is a win-win policy;
- In the middle- and long-term, participation of young people should be promoted as it will increase the efficiency of public policies in general;
- Involving young people is a certification of quality and effectiveness;
- Enable exchanges, dialogue and meetings between young people and elected officials to improve administration and democracy;
- Children and youth councils are effective and should be promoted further;
- Work globally to give confidence to young people and give them a real place in society;
- Financial means and political will are crucial for success;
- Adapt youth policies to territories and means, and take into consideration the concrete experiences of youth workers on the ground;
- Promote the culture and stability of youth councils on the long-term;
- Keep developing partnerships between State, regional authorities, associations, etc. to create a coherent framework.

# BeLonG To

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## MISSION:

BeLonG To Youth Services is a national organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland. The organisation provides direct youth services to LGBT young people in Dublin and develops services across the country, in partnership with local steering groups. In addition, they also work towards changing negative societal attitudes through training teachers, youth workers and other professionals who work with young people. They are also involved in running awareness campaigns in schools and youth services, advocating and working with government departments, politicians, and NGOs to make sure young people's voices are heard and that they bring about positive social change through national policy.

BeLonG To has a written mission to provide safe and fun services to LGBT young people in Ireland which:

- Facilitate them through exploration, development and growth;
- Enable them to access their rights as equal citizens;
- Empower them to participate as agents in positive social change;
- And to provide advocacy and campaigning voice so that society respects LGBT young people as full and valued members.

## Background

BeLonG To provides local, regional and national direct youth services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people aged between 14 and 23. The service provides a safe, positive and fun environment in which issues that LGBT young people experience in their lives can be addressed. The vision of the organisation is for an Ireland where LGBT young people are empowered to embrace their development and growth confidently and to participate as agents of positive social change. At the core of BeLonG To are structures of participation for the empowerment of young people which impacts on the lives of those specific young people, and also works towards change in society. The organisation began in 2003 and delivered services to young people in the Dublin area of Ireland. Since then, the services have expanded due to the need for services on a regional basis and there is now a national network of 19 youth groups

### Key Facts

- Theme of activity: Social Inclusion
- Number of youth workers: 12
- Number of young people: over 2,500
- Target group: Young LGBT people (age 14-23)
- Year activities established: 2003

outside Dublin and five in Dublin (including groups for parents of LGBT young people). In order to roll out the service in 2006 the organisation distilled its knowledge and created a starter pack which provides a best practice guide on how to run a LGBT youth group.

The direct youth service is the largest component of the work that BeLong To is involved in and utilises the largest share of the organisations resources. However, BeLong To operates in a way that when issues arise in the direct service, they are taken up by the young people together with the youth workers. Together they are involved in lobbying around these identifiable issues in order to influence National Policy in that area. Therefore, the organisation works not only in providing direct youth services, but is also involved in policy development in areas that are affecting the lives of LGBT young people in Ireland.

## Approach to working with young people

The practice of this youth service is about social change rather than social control. The service operates with the critical social education model of youth work. Within this framework, young people are involved in a peer education model and have a very clear programme emphasis, process and relationships, structures of participation and outcomes for young people and society. This particular model of youth work is based on transferring power to the young people engaged in the service. It is young people themselves who identify, explore and understand the goals of their activities and work alongside youth workers as equal partners in the process. The intended outcome of this model of youth work is to shape young people to become agents of social change and to develop their capacity to become social entrepreneurs. Through this process, these young people seek changes in existing structures (such as schools) and policies that affect them. This change is achieved through campaigns and active lobbying.

The direct youth services take the form of youth groups that meet on a weekly basis. Youth groups are a space where young people are among their peers who face similar issues to them. The youth groups plan peer-led non-formal education workshops on topics of concern or education, most often in the context of equality and empowerment. Not all the topics are specific to LGBT issues, but cover a range of inequality and human rights issues. Therefore, these youth groups can be described as being issue based rather than activity based. Each youth group plans its own programme which involves the non-formal educational discussions on issues they face as well as fun elements such as movie nights. These meetings are organised and led by the young people themselves which feeds into the goal of peer leadership.

Through this process, these young people build their confidence by speaking in a small group and developing their capacity in a range of areas. After a period of time, these young people are encouraged to go through the process of facilitators' panel which is a 12 month training beginning with facilitating skills, to understanding youth work, carrying out SWOT analysis etc. The aim of this training is to give young people the skills so that they are capable of doing their own needs assessment with their peers, identify issues that they face and develop peer-led campaigns to tackle that issue. In this way, young people themselves have ownership over the activities of the group and the organisation. When other young people come for the first time, they see that

### *Key Approaches*

Provide direct youth services for LGBT young people which are a safe, positive and fun environment where they can explore issues affecting them.

Empower young people to become agents of social change to tackle the issues they face.

Work towards changing national policy and society when tackling these issues.

it is other young people like themselves that are organising and running the group rather than a member of staff.

In this environment young people are all viewed as being equal in the decision making process. Furthermore, the service is a place where young people are free to also make mistakes. This is seen to give young people complete ownership of the service and leads to more positive outcomes than an adult-led service would.

Young people generally become aware of the service through the media attention the organisation receives, the BeLonG To website, word of mouth, the street work that one of the youth workers carried out alongside a volunteer and information produced by the youth groups for dissemination nationally. Whilst young people are primarily reached through the direct youth group work, the service also works on a one-to-one basis with those young people who have approached them with a specific issue that they are facing through involvement in the group, referring them to specific services or working with them on their self-development and self-esteem.

The youth workers role is to develop young people's capacity and understanding of themselves and society. Secondly, they facilitate that learning by being a problem poser and devil's advocate during discussions. The youth worker will also provide support for young people to self-manage the youth groups. This can be difficult for young people as it is not common for them to have such decision making power, so they can look to the youth worker to solve problems, but the role of the youth worker is only to guide them to finding the solution. In playing the role of devil's advocate, they broaden the minds of some young people who see certain issues as being black or white. The third element of being a youth worker in this organisation is that they advocate on the behalf of these young people.

On a day to day basis, there is equality between staff members, youth workers and young people themselves. Young people are not viewed as 'participants' but that they are active members within the organisation.

The youth workers involved in this service all mentioned the level of job satisfaction they feel as a result of the approach that is taken by the organisation. They feel that it is rewarding to see young people who face a variety of issues, not only their sexual orientation, but bullying, education and asylum issues. Observing these young people develop their capacity such as public speaking, advocacy and activism is very rewarding.

The youth workers within the service are all qualified youth work professionals. However, their development alongside the development of young people in the service is prioritised. There is a whole organisation approach to training. As it is a small organisation, whilst youth workers identify progression routes, funding for training can be difficult to access. Therefore, the whole organisation gets involved in identifying relevant sources of potential funding. In practice, this means emailing the whole organisation to find out if anyone is aware of a budget or source of funding that could be utilised for the specific training they are seeking. If this is not successful, youth workers can approach the board of the organisation to request funding. Funding is also allocated from upcoming fund raising campaigns and set aside to meet training needs. A further approach to securing funding is to make contact with those offering the training and agree to deliver their LGBT awareness training in exchange for the training that they are seeking.

## **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

As a result of various issues that arose amongst those involved in the direct services, the young people in cooperation with the youth workers push for social change through specific campaigns and lobbying. There are a number of examples of this in practice during the lifetime of the organisation. When the direct youth services were initially set up they were limited to the Dublin area of Ireland. They found that young people were travelling long distances, in one case over 5 hours, to visit the weekly

held group in Dublin. Secondly, they became aware that many of the young people involved in the youth group were suffering from mental health problems. In order to tackle this, the organisation began to get involved in national lobbying around mental health issues among LGBT young people. As a result of the lobbying, LGBT were specifically included in the National Suicide Prevention Strategy which resulted in the National Office for Suicide Prevention of the Health Service Executive in Ireland dedicating funding to BeLonG To. With that funding the organisation funded a piece of research on mental health and suicide among young LGBT people in order to identify what would be needed to tackle the problem. The funding was also allocated to resource the role of National Network Manager, who utilises the BeLonG To starter pack to establish new LGBT youth groups in partnership with local steering groups across the country. That was the organisations first move into national policy and there have been several additional examples of success since that time. This has included campaigns relating to homophobic bullying at school which has resulted in changes to the national school curriculum in secondary schools and specific mention in the National Anti-Bullying Action Plan. Advocacy on drugs and alcohol issues has also resulted in LGBT young people being specifically mentioned in the National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy. The organisation is also involved in supporting young LGBT asylum seekers and carries out LGBT awareness training for those working in the judiciary system.

What all these outcomes have in common is that they stem from needs identified or that arise in the direct youth services. Once these needs arise, they are authenticated through research into the issue and how it affects young LGBT people. This evidence-led approach is then brought to the national policy lobbying campaign. The key steps to being successful in reaching successful changes at national level are:

- Have evidence of the issue/problem that needs to be addressed.
- Be persistent when lobbying about what the problem is and that it needs to be addressed.
- Present solutions and options about how to tackle the problem rather than just presenting the problem.
- Position yourself as being capable of carrying out the work that needs to be done rather than adding to policy makers workload.
- Build relationships on an equal footing with policy makers and treat them as colleagues.

Therefore, the youth services have positive outcomes for the individual young people who use the service as it gives them a safe space to be themselves and to develop their own capacity to create change for themselves. It provides a space where they can grow and become active citizens.

Whilst at the same time, the peer campaigns are very clear about the impacts they intend to have on both young people and Irish society. Therefore, the organisation is very clear about having tangible outcomes and processes in place to evaluate their structures. In practice this means that young people themselves identify the programme of what they want and need to be doing and the organisation evaluates its work on a six month basis.

## **Experience of Trends in youth work**

There have been a number of identifiable trends that have affected the work that is being carried out with LGBT young people in the organisation during the last decade. The first noticeable trend was the injection of money from philanthropic organisations into youth work in Ireland. These resources were coupled with youth work organisations having to make greater investments in strategic planning and basing their services on identifiable evidence-based needs. This resulted in the organisation gaining more clarity around what they do and identifying a clear vision of their work.

Another key trend has been the professionalisation of the sector. The creation of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs who is responsible for the area of youth work has also brought visibility to the sector. The status of youth work is now more visible and as it has become more established there have been more professional higher education qualifications associated with it. This has affected the hiring of staff in the organisation. All the youth workers have a higher education qualification in youth work (or related area).

Ireland has undergone a drastic change in its economic situation which has resulted in changes in how youth work is viewed. Whilst youth work has become more visible in recent times, the role of youth work is changing. Some mainstream services have suffered as a result of budget cuts during the current recession. Therefore, youth work can be viewed as a way of tackling the problems that mainstream services once provided, especially when budgets are tight.

Although not a youth work trend, the change in the demographic of young LGBT people has also affected the work that the organisation does. Today young people are 'coming out' at a much younger age than previously which means there are greater numbers of young people who need their services. Furthermore, these greater number of LGBT young people means that schools and other settings also have to tackle issues facing these young people at younger ages meaning there is more work to do at a national level to ensure issues such as homophobic bullying at school are tackled.

### **Influence of Regulatory frameworks on practice**

In the view of the organisation, regulations such as those in place for child protection known as the Garda (police) vetting scheme are crucial to the protection of young people involved in youth work services. These regulations are needed and in place to protect young people and children and therefore are viewed in a positive light. However, there are issues regarding the implementation of such regulations. Garda vetting is mandatory for youth workers, however there can be long waiting periods for clearance which can adversely affect the work they are trying to carry out.

In terms of other regulatory frameworks, the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work<sup>2</sup> is also viewed in a positive light. The National Quality Standards Framework was introduced by the Department of Children and Youth in 2010 to establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work and to provide an evidence base of youth work activities. The framework was designed as a support and development tool for those in youth work in order for youth work organisation funded by the Department to review and assess their work and to assist them in their continuous development. The framework introduces 5 core principles which are viewed as the essential elements of youth work. As a result of engaging with the framework, the organisation is now even more reflective on its practice and more involved in evaluating the work that they do with young people.

### **Relationship with Policy**

In Ireland a specific youth policy is currently in the stages of being introduced, therefore there is not a specific youth policy that is influencing the work of youth services. The exception to this is the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work mentioned above which is mandatory for all youth services funded by the Department of Children and Youth. This has resulted in youth services having to engage in a process where their work is evidence based and evaluated in terms of

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[http://www.dcyu.gov.ie/documents/publications/NQSF\\_Publication\\_ENGLISH\\_270710.pdf](http://www.dcyu.gov.ie/documents/publications/NQSF_Publication_ENGLISH_270710.pdf)



achieving the goals they have identified. Though it should be borne in mind that this framework is in place to improve practice and the funding provided is not linked to performance measured against the framework.

In terms of the organisation influencing policy, the young people involved in BeLonG To youth services have had a major impact on various national policies as previously mentioned. Examples include influencing the curriculum in schools, the National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, and the new Anti-bullying Action Plan.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

As this youth service is not only involved in direct youth services, but also lobbying, campaigns and influencing policy that affects the lives of young LGBT people, networking is an important part of that work. Collaboration is not only carried out with other stakeholders that serve the LGBT community, but involves a variety of stakeholders who are involved in a range of issues. This includes stakeholders such as other NGOs, politicians, policy makers, teachers, businesses, health services and government departments. An example of this work was the need for sexual health services that were aware of the needs of LBT women that were identified by one of the youth groups. This group networked with partners such as Irish Family Planning Association, the Dublin Aids Alliance, and Cervical Cancer Ireland in order to make a presentation to the health services about the lack of sexual health services for LBT women.

The main benefit of networking in these cases is that there is greater strength in numbers and voices in order to bring about change at the national level. Networking has a greater impact than working on their own to tackle a particular issue. Another example is the partnership between BeLonG To and the Department of Education and Skills which has resulted in changes to the curriculum in order to tackle homophobic bullying in schools. This has had a far greater impact across the whole country. Furthermore, without collaboration with multiple partners and stakeholders the particular voice of young LGBT people would be lost.

The organisation also carried out training and development work with other services to make them more LGBT inclusive as well as with colleges and universities on contemporary issues of policy and practice. This work is seen to build these stakeholders capacity to deal with issues themselves rather than relying on referring their LGBT young people to other organisations. This puts these organisations in a better position to respond to the needs of young LGBT young people.

Networking in the organisation is not only carried out for the purposes of lobbying and policy change. Youth workers are also involved in international collaborations and exchanges, such as the European Voluntary Service. This international learning experience has influenced how they approach the work that they do and share their learning with the partners they collaborate with.

A key element of successful networking is ensuring that the aim of the collaboration is clearly identified and stated so that everyone involved understand and agrees on what they want to do and achieve together as well as recognising all the partners in the collaboration.

## **Supporting youth work**

At the National level, as previously mentioned the introduction of the National Quality Standards Framework was viewed as a very positive change to the Irish situation of youth work. This has not only been supportive of youth services carrying out their work, but has also led to the Department being fully aware of all the work that people are doing in the field of youth work.



However, the organisation would like to see a greater emphasis on the current equality principle enshrined in the framework. As it stands currently, they feel that this principle is very open to interpretation and should be more clearly related to equality and inclusiveness for particularly vulnerable groups, such as LGBT, migrants and the socio-economically disadvantaged.

Ireland will shortly introduce a National Youth Policy Framework, and again, the organisation would like to see this national level policy make excluded young people a priority, including naming particular groups that are in need of extra support.

At the EU level, support for strategic partnerships with other organisations that work on a human rights basis is particularly welcome as it is very difficult for small organisations such as BeLonG To to secure funding to transfer their learning internationally and to benefit from the mutual exchange of experience from others. The organisation also felt that it could be beneficial if youth services themselves were funded. Whilst measures such as structured dialogue are seen to have an important role, they felt that youth work can respond to many of the social exclusion issues identified. Even if the EU were to identify priority areas within social inclusion that should be funded, this would bring attention to the value of youth work in tackling these issues.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Aim to make things better for young people. Empower young people by acknowledging that the issues they face and that they are the ones that can change the structures of power.
- Have a realistic understanding of where the young people you work with are placed in society and what issues they face. This means basing your service on evidence of what is needed.
- Have a clear mission and operate out of that mission. The key objectives should be in that clear mission which creates the ethos of the work and this also attracts people with the same values and goals.
- Be motivated to change things and be persistent in bringing about change.
- Communicate with youth people and ensure that they are consulted in everything that you do. Make sure this consultation is not just listening to them but that they actually decide the process. Also give young people the opportunity to evaluate the service.
- Treat young people as equal partners in decision making and in practice.
- Believe in the power of young people, do not view them as a problem but as potential so tap into their talents.
- Be inclusive, youth work is for all young people, but prioritise those who are most vulnerable.
- Value the volunteers who work in your services.

# MijnGoesting

[WWW.MIJNLEUVEN.BE/JONGEREN/LIJST/MIJNGOESTING](http://WWW.MIJNLEUVEN.BE/JONGEREN/LIJST/MIJNGOESTING)

## MISSION:

MijnGoesting is a joint initiative of municipal youth service, the cultural centre 30CC and four secondary schools in Leuven, Belgium. The main objectives are to introduce culture to young people and to encourage them to make use of the existing cultural offer in the city.

The project is unique in the sense that it is a partnership involving multiple actors, all activities take place at school (i.e. their living environment) and are tailored to young people's interests. A youth worker and teachers together with young people design three cultural programmes based on a cultural discipline (e.g. theatre, dance, music, photography) and make it available to the whole of the student body in the form of teasers, workshops and cultural visits.

MijnGoesting attempts to bridge the gap that often exists between young people and the cultural sector. Youth workers and teachers believe that the initiative is a valuable and appropriate addition to the formal education offer. The initiative offers a fun and playful introduction to culture and allows young people to discover their artistic talents and competences.

## Background

MijnGoesting is an example of the community school concept (in Dutch "Brede School"). This concept well illustrates the saying "it takes a village to raise a child" as it involves a broad network of partners and links education with other services (i.e. youth work) that are important for young people's well-being. The community school concept is also well-known in the Netherlands and the United States.

The initiative MijnGoesting was launched in 2010 in response to the following needs:

- 1) **Cultural sector** – in the city of Leuven there is a high-quality cultural offer but the sector had difficulties in reaching young people who often perceive culture as "boring" or "unappealing".
- 2) **Formal education** – secondary schools were interested in new methods to introduce young people to culture and to support young people in developing cultural competences; complementary to formal education offer
- 3) **Municipal youth service** – the municipal youth service is part of the local administration and responsible for youth affairs,

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: creativity and culture

Number of youth workers: 1

Number of young people: 80 actively involved in the student culture groups; more students are reached through cultural programmes

Target group: 12 – 19 year olds

Year activities established: 2010

including youth work, and employs several youth workers. MijnGoesting is an instrument for youth work to better and more directly connect with young people. It also helps to reach a wider group and to be better informed of young people's needs and concerns.

The three actors decided to combine forces with the main goal to introduce and bring different cultural disciplines to young people and, in turn, motivate them to make use of the existing cultural offer in Leuven.

Many young people are generally not provided with enough opportunities to experience and be exposed to culture. Culture is made easily accessible through MijnGoesting. The initiative offers a fun and playful introduction to culture and allows young people to discover their artistic talents and competences.

### Approach to working with young people

During the 2012/2013 school year four secondary schools participated in the MijnGoesting project, among them is the Miniemeninstituut. The teachers at this school are extremely enthusiastic about the MijnGoesting approach for three reasons:

- 1) Although teachers are very well qualified to teach students about curriculum subjects, they often lack artistic and cultural skills and are in need of support when it comes to these areas
- 2) MijnGoesting is led by a youth worker who has a more informal relationship with students than teachers have. The youth worker has built a personal relationship with the teenagers and is also in contact with them out of school which creates a different type of relationship than most teachers have with their students.
- 3) The MijnGoesting approach allows schools to connect with other societal actors and to extend their network. As one teacher put it *"schools should be rooted in society thereby consciously interacting with other societal actors. Schools should definitely not be ivory towers"*. The youth service has a well-established network with cultural providers and was able to bring all the various actors together.

#### Key Approaches

Partnership approach involving multiple actors

Continuous involvement of young people themselves

Competence development and talent discovery

The MijnGoesting framework is identical for all schools yet the actual approach and implementation may vary slightly from one school to another. At the beginning of the school year the youth worker and teachers recruit students to join the "student culture group". The student culture group generally consists of approximately 20 students plus a youth worker and they design and implement three cultural themes. A cultural theme is selected on the basis of the student culture group's interest and includes cultural discipline such as theatre, dance, music, arts, photography, poetry. The three cultural themes each last two to three weeks and are spread across the school year. Over the course of these two weeks the whole of student body can take part in various activities in relation to the selected cultural theme. The main objective is to introduce student to the cultural discipline and to make them realise that "culture is not boring". The student culture group and the youth worker organise as part of each cultural theme three types of activities over the course of two weeks for the student body:

- 1) **Teaser** – all students at the school are introduced to the selected cultural discipline through a so-called teaser. The teasers take place at the school yard or assembly hall in order to reach as many students as possible (generally whole of

student body). Examples include: graffiti artist coming to spray school wall and a performance by a poetry slam artist.

- 2) **Workshop** – all students are then invited to sign up for a workshop on the cultural discipline. Generally 15 – 30 students sign up for a workshop but these are open to the whole of the student body. The workshops take place out of school hours or during lunch breaks or free periods. Generally speaking attendance rates are higher when workshops are held during lunch breaks or free periods. Examples include: workshop by photographer or graffiti street artist.
- 3) **Cultural visit** – students can undertake a visit to cultural entertainment (free of charge) selected by the culture group corresponding to the selected cultural discipline. The cultural visit takes place out of school hours. Examples include: visit to theatre or a museum.

Jasmien Buellens and Lies Defever, two high students from KA2 Ring secondary school, are both members of the student culture group at their school and they explained about their most recent project on poetry. Together with the youth worker they selected the cultural theme and came up with a teaser whereby a poetry slam<sup>3</sup> artist performed at the school yard during lunch break. The aim of the teaser was to introduce students to poetry slam and to give them a flavour of it. A week later the artist came to give workshop whereby students could participate and come up with their own poetry slam. At the end of the two-week period a group of students went to see a poetry slam performance. Students can participate voluntarily in any of these activities and the participation rate of course depends on the attractiveness of the cultural theme. The poetry slam theme reached approximately 25 students who took part in the workshop and cultural visit and 600 students attended the teaser. The youth worker commented that poetry slam was selected as this somewhat relates to young people's interests and is used as a tool to introduce young people to poetry more general.

Continuous involvement of young people in the design and implementation of Mijngoesting is a critical success factor, according to the youth worker and teachers. Young people (together with the youth worker) not only select the cultural discipline for each cultural theme but also help with selecting an appropriate teaser, workshop and cultural visit. They also undertake promotional tasks; they for instance produced a flyer to announce workshops.

Young people involved in the activities mentioned that they enjoyed being involved in the project. They were interested in culture and enjoyed working together with other young people as well as the youth worker. Although they enjoyed having the liberty to steer the cultural themes and activities, they needed and valued the support of the youth worker.

The youth worker's role is essential in the project and is much appreciated by both teachers and students. Teachers say that they value the youth worker's expertise in working with young people and their informal approach. In the main, the youth worker has less formal relationships with students than teachers. Young people enjoy this type of interaction with the youth worker. The youth worker and students work together during out of school hours and generally get to know each other really well. The youth worker pointed out that because of Mijngoesting the youth service can directly interact and engage with young people. This not only helps to build a trust relationship but also helps to identify issues and concerns among young people at an early stage.

Another important aspect is that the youth worker involves young people members of the student culture group in the selection and implementation of the cultural themes. This leads to ownership and young people enjoy being allowed to make decisions and

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<sup>3</sup> Poetry slam is a competition at which poets read or recite original work.

then implement their ideas. Jasmien Buellens and Lies Defever said that they are created their own posters and flyers about the poetry slam theme and activities. They especially enjoyed the fact that they themselves were in charge of the design of the posters and flyers which ended up all over school halls.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

MijnGoesting is a unique initiative in the sense that the youth service, formal education and the cultural sector cooperate. Anecdotal evidence suggests that young people involved in MijnGoesting indeed increase their knowledge, skills and competences. Both the youth worker and teachers explained that young people taking part in the student culture groups, workshops and cultural visits indeed develop skills: they learn to discover and recognise their talents and competences (e.g. by taking part in the workshops), widen their cultural outlooks (students come to realise that "culture is not as boring as I thought"), learn to organise, be creative and work together in a team (students part of the student culture group learn to organise and plan the activities, need to find creative ways to make culture appealing to young people thereby working together as a team).

Approximately 20 students are members of the student culture group at each school. The number of students reached through the teaser is very high and generally corresponds to the whole of the student body. The teaser exposes the student body to some form of culture for a short duration (not longer than 30 minutes) to motivate them to take part in the workshops and cultural visits. It is important that generally speaking the number of students participating in the workshops and cultural visits is low (approximately 15 – 30 students).

Young people themselves pointed out that because of their involvement in MijnGoesting they meet new people, have the freedom to organise activities themselves and provide input into the programme, they learn in a fun, informal and playful way.

Both the youth worker and teachers pointed out that the reason for working at MijnGoesting is because they indeed see the added-value and importance of the project. It makes a contribution to the lives of young people and helps them to widen their cultural outlook in life and they have the opportunity to discover their talents and competences in a fun, play, informal and voluntary way. They enjoy working with young people and helping them find their way in life. Moreover, the youth service and schools pointed out that due to the project, they rapidly increased their network.

### *Key outcomes*

Young people are able to recognise and discover their talents and widen their cultural outlooks

Young people gain soft skills such as organise activities and work in teams

Due to the partnership approach the actors involved increased their networks

## Experience of trends in youth work

The main occurring trend over the past decade is that it has become more difficult to motivate young people to participate in projects that take place out of school hours. Some schools have therefore decided to organise MijnGoesting activities mostly during school hours (but not during class). Young people's participation also depends on whether their friends participate and on the teachers and youth worker involved in the project. It seems to be more difficult for young people to engage for the long-run in out of school hours projects. The youth service dealt with this development by setting up more project work whereby young people can sign up for a limited period of time.

Yet, the involvement of young people is crucial for the success of youth work projects. Young people need to be able to have their say and input in the project and take ownership.

Generally speaking students attending the lower levels (i.e. not leading to university) of secondary education are more in need of methods of introduction to culture than students of higher secondary education levels. Their cultural outlook is generally not wide and therefore they could benefit the most from projects like MijnGoesting.

### **Influence of Regulatory frameworks on practice**

Youth work and youth policy has not changed significantly in Flanders in the past decade. Flemish youth policy encouraged the youth service to work towards bringing young people and culture closer together, for instance through the MijnGoesting project. In 2010 the Flemish Government made youth culture a policy priority and made funding available to MijnGoesting for the 2010-2013 period. In that sense the regulatory frameworks helped to finance the project and address needs of the city of Leuven. The youth service pointed out that national funding schemes set certain funding criteria. These funding criteria included: the prerequisite to establish a partnership involving the schools and the cultural sector, empowerment of schools whereby schools are provided with tools to meaningfully interact with the cultural sector, and make young people aware of the cultural offer in town. One of these criteria was that the MijnGoesting project needed to address several different themes, hence why at each school three cultural themes are introduced. The MijnGoesting partners have however noticed that it would be more beneficial to address only one or two cultural themes for a longer duration (currently each theme only lasts for two weeks). Once the national funding period ends, MijnGoesting has more flexibility to amend the project as the funding criteria no longer apply. This goes to show that funding criteria define the scope of a project and sometimes leave little room for manoeuvre. The youth service pointed out that although funding schemes set criteria which may limit the scope of the project, it is because these funding schemes that projects like MijnGoesting are at all possible. Therefore funding schemes are a welcomed attribute.

### **Relationship with Policy**

National policy developments very much point to project-based funded for a limited period of time. Whilst this type of funding is of paramount importance to the funding of pilot projects, this leaves little room for sustainability. MijnGoesting was co-financed by the Flemish government and the City of Leuven for the 2010-2013 period. As the funding from the Flemish government ends at the end of 2013, the project director is currently exploring other opportunities to continue funding of the project; most likely at provincial level for the year 2014. Currently the organisation is also exploring other funding opportunities (e.g. European funding opportunities) for the future. Perhaps to team up with enterprises, like has been done in the United Kingdom. Overall, the project funding is not sustainable which leads the organisation to continuously look for funding opportunities. This can either lead to the organisation being more creative in obtaining funding (e.g. by teaming up with organisations to sponsor youth work projects or work with more volunteers) or the initiatives or projects will simply end its course.

It is important to establish continuous and on-going dialogue with policy makers at all levels. The municipal youth service has a well-established on-going dialogue with policy makers at local level in order to ensure that the policy and practical level are connected. The local policy dialogue is a two-way street whereby policy makers seek advice from the youth service and the youth service communicates young people's



needs and concerns to policy makers. The project director says that the policy dialogue in Leuven is very well-established.

It should however be noted that in times of economic downturn, the youth service notices that there are less financial means available to the City. This in turn impacts the youth service as there are less means to fund youth work projects. This impacts the sustainability of youth work projects.

Although policy developments in Flanders have not changed dramatically over the previous ten years, the youth service says that it of the utmost importance to establish policy dialogue at all levels as youth organisations are completely depend on policy level for funding their projects.

## Networking with other stakeholders

The MijnGoesting initiative is first and foremost based on a partnership between the municipal youth service, four secondary schools and the cultural sector. This is a unique concept in Flanders and has been working very well for all partners since its launch three years ago. The main reason for the success of the partnership is that MijnGoesting adds value for all of them:

- 1) **Cultural sector** – MijnGoesting allows the cultural sector to better reach young people and promote their cultural offer in the living environment of young people: at the schools. This made young people and the cultural offer less distanced.
- 2) **Formal education** – teachers are of course very well placed to train young people on a variety of subjects. However, there are many teachers not very well acquainted with culture and the local cultural offer. Through MijnGoesting schools have access to professionals (i.e. youth worker and professionals from the cultural sector) to introduce culture to young people in an informal, fun and playful way.
- 3) **Youth service** – the youth service gains direct access to young people through MijnGoesting. The youth worker visits the four participating schools very regularly and therefore establishes close relationships with young people and is better informed of any developments, needs or issues among young people.

As stated before, the municipal youth service has established a well-running policy dialogue at local level. This policy dialogue has been existing for many years and was facilitated by the fact that the youth service is part of the local administration and is responsible for youth affairs. As the youth service is well of aware of young people's needs and concerns, policy makers seek advice from the youth service when input is required on policy issues. At the same time, the close relations with policy makers also allows the youth service to inform policy makers of developments, issues or needs of young people. This two-way communication makes it a successful cooperation.

## Supporting youth work

The youth service praises the fact that the National and European government make funding available to the youth work sector; existence of the sector is dependent on government funding. As funding periods by the European and national governments are limited, the youth service continuously looks for funding opportunities elsewhere (e.g. at provincial or municipality level or by teaming up with companies to sponsor the projects). Nevertheless, it would be beneficial that the youth work sector and policy makers discuss how to make projects more sustainable in the future.



### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- ☐ It is essential that young people take ownership of the initiative and that they are involved in the design and implantation stages.
- ☐ The partnership approach has been working really well in MijnGoesting. However, the partnership approach can only be successful if the initiative generates added-value for all partners ("win-win situation").
- ☐ Removal of hindrances for the participation of young people is also essential. A critical success factor is that young people need to be reached in their own living environment. MijnGoesting not only offered most of the activities at the premises of the school but also offered all activities free of charge. The highest participation rate is achieved when activities take place during school hours.
- ☐ The combination of formal education, youth work and the culture sector worked well ("partnership approach"). Young people especially appreciate the interaction with professionals from outside the formal education sector. They feel these types of interaction are less formal than their interactions with teachers.

Professionals involved in such projects need to be aware that success is not immediate. It is difficult to motivate young people to participate in such projects. Nevertheless, the engagement of motivated professionals is

# De Realisten

[WWW.DEREALISTEN.NU](http://WWW.DEREALISTEN.NU)

## MISSION:

De Realisten (The Realists) is a project in the Netherlands that aims to empower young people who fall under the WAJONG. WAJONG is the acronym for a Dutch labour law focusing on people who are (partially) unable to work due to a disability or other reasons (eg due to an accident) since they were young. People in this group receive money from the state but are expected to work if there are able to do so. De Realisten aim to empower these young people by offering them training related to labour market skills and demonstrating to companies what these people can do. They do so using peer learning in which young people who are in the WAJONG help others who are in the same category and go to companies to give presentations about the project.

The philosophy behind the programme is that most young people that take part in the programme can find a job as long as they are realistic about their capacities (hence the programme's name) and if they are given some extra support.

## Approach to working with young people

De Realisten is a project by the youth branch of the Dutch trade union CNV (CNV Jongeren (CNV Youth)). It aims to connect young people aged 18-25 who have a disability of some sort to potential future employers. Although the programme is open for all young people who fit this criterion, most participants are not severely disabled. They do however need extra support in their path towards employment. The approach of the project is with a combination of three distinct features. In this approach, peer learning is heavily incorporated. The first aspect of the programme is the training of a number of participants as e-coaches. These coaches help other young people who are not directly involved in the programme to create a professional online presence. This is mainly done through the use of LinkedIn and with the aim of presenting the qualities someone has. Doing so makes them more visible to potential employers. Furthermore these young people have the possibility to join a LinkedIn group specially created to this purpose. The second feature is raising awareness amongst

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Employment & Entrepreneurship

Number of youth workers: 2

Number of young people: 10 directly involved, 100 indirectly involved (each year).

Target group: young people (18-25) with a WAJONG classification.

Year activities established: 2009

employers. This is done by participants visiting companies and network meetings for its target group. In these visits participants speak about employing young people with a disability. This is done to illustrate to employers the benefits of employing someone with a disability. Afterwards the organisations are asked to join the LinkedIn group to meet potential new employees. The third feature is training amongst employees of companies that were visited in supporting this group of young people in work situations. This is done so these organisations have someone who can act as a mentor for future employees as this group often needs some extra support to settle in a new job.

Although the role of young people is very important and they carry out most of the tasks the presence of youth workers is not to be neglected. In this programme youth workers are fulfilling a role of a trainer and facilitator. In practice this means in their role as a trainer they deliver the workshops to the young people who want to become e-coaches or take part in the team that visits the companies. Furthermore they train the employees of other companies that want to become a mentor. In their role as facilitator they cover the administrative part (eg financial administration of the project and organising network meetings for the project) and act as the link between both the young people themselves (eg in case someone want to participate in the project) and organisations that want to be visited by a group of young people and maintain relations with representatives from employers associations.

#### *Key Outcomes*

Participants find jobs through the programme.

Participants become more self-confident.

External (non-youth work) organisations copy parts of the programme.

### **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

The main outcome of the programme is strongly related to its aims, namely young people who are in the WAJONG finding a job or internship. However, as most of the people receive support through peer coaching (eg through e-coaching) and are only involved for a short period of time, no precise data is available on the number of people who have found a job or internship through the programme. Based on the group of participants that form the core of the programme it is known that most of them get short term contracts. It is not clear if this is because of the economic crisis or for other reasons.

Another measurement of the positive effect the programme has is an increase in confidence of young people. By looking at what this group of young people can do instead on focussing on the negative effects young people get more confident in their daily lives. According to the interviewees this effect can be clearly seen with the participants that are directly involved in the programme. The programme received extra grants in 2011 to expand the project and it has been mentioned as a good project in the field of employment of disabled young people by one of the Dutch employers' associations. Plans also exist to expand the programme even further by implementing it on a more local level in (clusters of) municipalities. An indicator of the success of the programme is the fact other commercial organisations started copying some of the methods used in the initiative. However, as they only

copy parts of the programme that are commercially interesting (the training of mentors) one of the interviewees feared that the empowerment and peer learning aspects of the programme might be lost.

Young people who leave the programme are doing so with increased self-esteem and a more realistic view of what they are capable of. Some of them also leave the programme with a job or internship. After they leave they are not actively followed to see where they end up. They are however still invited to network events in which the former participants share tips with people still participating.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

The main trend that is mentioned is the decrease of governmental support for young people with disabilities in their search for work. This is however not seen as a negative thing. There was a belief among interviewees that governmental policy might have been too helpful in the past. What is viewed negatively is that this kind of support has decreased (and continues to decrease) at a rapid rate while no real alternative support is offered. Although this is seen as something negative in itself, it is positive for De Realisten as this is an opportunity to further expand their programme. The increasing general interest of employers to hire young people with a disability is another trend that has impacted the programme. This is the result of a greater interest in corporate social responsibility. Within this responsibility the social element has become increasingly more important. For De Realisten this is positive as it means there is more interest from employers to hire people involved in the project.

### **Influence of Regulatory frameworks on practice**

The main framework that influences the work De Realisten does is the WAJONG/Participation law. This part of Dutch labour law is for young people who are (partly) unable to work due to a disability or some other reason (eg due to an accident). This framework has had a great number of changes in the last couple of years and is still the topic of hefty debate in the Netherlands. Due to these frequent changes the programme has to constantly adapt the message it is sending to employers. This can make employers confused about what they should do if they hire a young person involved in this programme. This also requires the youth workers involved in the project to have knowledge of the latest policy developments.

### **Relationship with Policy**

Policy changes that affect the work that is carried out the most is the decentralisation of tasks related to employing young people with a disability. Previously, public employment services were coordinated on a national level. Recent policy decentralises these services to the level of municipalities. For the programme this means that more networking has to be done at local level. Also this means there will be differences in the degree in which municipalities support young people with special needs. Another policy that affects the programme is a recent change in the WAJONG framework. This change results in young people with disabilities having to be more self-supporting. This allows the programme to step into the gap created by this change and provide support for this group of young people. Though the CNV Jongeren and the wider CNV network De Realisten believe they can influence policy. As CNV is taking part in all the major dialogue between government, trade unions and employer organisations the perspective of young people with a disability is taken into account when it comes to issues that are relevant for them.

## Networking with other stakeholders

The network approach is a key aspect of the programme. As the programme has the aim of bringing together young people and potential employers both need to be actively approached. Besides individual organisations, networking also takes place with employer's associations and the various branches of the national public employment service. Through CNV Jongeren and the wider CNV network the programme is connected to politicians and policymakers. On a more ad-hoc basis direct contact exists with politicians. These contacts are often taking place at times legislation relevant for the programme is on the political agenda and is initiated by both politicians and the programme.

This diverse network allows participants to engage with stakeholders and to create a more positive image of young disabled people. This has the aim of making it easier to secure employment amongst this group.

## Supporting youth work

On a national level the main support the initiative would like to see is more recognition of the value of what they are doing from national officials. In practice this could translate itself into more frequent mentioning of the programme in policy debates and incorporating it into strategies of local governments. This greater recognition and visibility of the programme would lead to the programme becoming more self-sustaining as it is currently funded on a project basis instead of more sustainable means of funding.

On an EU level the programme would like to see the development of a framework for successful youth work based on successful programmes. Using this framework the initiative can then look for improvements in their own programme.

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- Young people should be take part in further development of the programme once it has been set up.
- Communication with young people should be in line with the way they look at the world.
- Young people should have real influence in the programme.
- Young people should have an important role in the programme
- During the programme the responsibility of the delivery of the activities should move towards the young people (eg by moderating the LinkedIn group themselves).
- Programme goals should be formulated clearly.

# DÍNAMO

WWW.DINAMO.PT

## MISSION:

Dínamo is a Portuguese youth organisation that focuses on promoting and improving youth participation at the local level and on raising awareness about social issues (e.g. social inclusion, social integration, diversity, intercultural dialogue, human rights, democratic citizenship, etc.). Activities aim to empower the youth via non-formal education, encouraging them to develop their own initiatives and to gain autonomy and critical thinking. Activities include, among others: theatre workshops, thematic debates, trainings of youth workers, identification of young people needs in the region, intercultural exchanges, volunteering activities, etc.

Dínamo was born in 2006, from the will of a group of friends to do something for the community and especially for the youth. At that time, there was a lack of activities, spaces and social responses for young people in the region. The initial idea of Dínamo was to develop cultural activities for/with the youth community. However, after surveying young people, Dínamo refocused its aim on participation and non-formal education, after noting that many young people were from a poor socio-economic background.

## Approach to working with young people

Dínamo promotes the active participation of the youth in the democratic process in the region of Sintra. For this purpose, it has specifically developed a strategy for youth participation named "Sintra is also yours!" 2011-2016 (Sintra também é Tua!)"<sup>4</sup>, which was officially recommended by the Council of Europe and co-funded by the Youth in Action Programme and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The strategy focuses on three domains of action:

1. The empowerment of young people. Activities focus on: supporting young people in developing their own participation projects; thematic debates (e.g. about discrimination); 'theatre of the oppressed' workshops; national and international volunteering activities; and share of experiences between young people of different backgrounds. They are targeted at age group 14-20.
2. The enhancement of youth democratic participation at the local level: activities

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Participation

Number of youth workers: 5

Number of young people: varies between 4 and 60 young people per activity.

Target group: 14-25 age group

- Year activities established: 2006

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dinamo.pt/index.php/noticias/56-noticias/334-gulbenkian-co-financia-sintra-tambem-e-tua>

aim at gathering young people in the region of Sintra in order to raise awareness at the local level about youth needs and at improving youth participation in the local democratic process. Activities are targeted at age group 18-25.

3. Training of youth workers or future youth workers. Age group from 18 to 40 years old. Training activities follow the principles of non-formal education.

Dínamo's approach is built on non-formal education principles. Via non-formal education, it aims to develop the critical thinking of young people, enabling them to decide of their own future and enhancing their democratic participation. Dínamo works with different profiles of young people depending on the activities developed: young people with a migrant origin; young people signalled by the Commission for the Protection of Children; and young people from the neighbourhood. Depending on the activities; young people are aged between 14-20 or between 18-25.

The added value of Dínamo strongly lies on its independence from national public funding. It has secured EU funding and private funding which gives it freedom to develop its working programme. It is worth mentioning that Dínamo has a budget two times higher to manage than the municipality of Sintra has for the Youth. One factors of success is the professionalism that Dínamo develops in its work (see the 'top tips' box).

Dínamo advertises its activities online. It is via its website and via mouth-to-ear that it attracts young people. At Dínamo, young people can find a space to express themselves and to learn in an informal way. They also gain autonomy and more critical thinking from their participation to the activities.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

Dínamo's added value strongly lies on the quality of the activities developed, its professionalism and on its monitoring process. Indeed, the quality and professionalism of its activities have been recognised at the European level. For instance, the Strategy 'Sintra is also yours!' 2011-2016 (Sintra também é Tua!)<sup>5</sup> was officially recommended by the Council of Europe and co-funded by the Youth in Action Programme and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

In addition, Dínamo closely monitors the results of the activities and reflects on the outputs of the activities and methods used in order to learn from mistakes. Each year, it publishes an Annual Activity Report<sup>6</sup> where it notes the results of each activity and their impact and reflects on the work developed. It also produces a financial report describing the financial execution of the year.

The activities of Dínamo reach a great number of young people and other stakeholders. For

### *Main outcomes and impacts*

'Sintra is also yours!' 2011-2016 (Sintra também é Tua!) was officially recommended by the Council of Europe.

200 people were actively involved in the activities of Dínamo in 2011.

At least 82 other organisations/institutions were a direct beneficiary of Dínamo's activities.

A Charter of Recommendation on the participation of young people at the local level was presented at the local Assembly.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dinamo.pt/index.php/noticias/56-noticias/334-gulbenkian-co-financia-sintra-tambem-e-tua>

<sup>6</sup> Annual 2011 Activity Report of Dínamo is available at <http://dinamo.pt/index.php/component/content/article/56-noticias/381-relatorio-de-actividades-dinamo-2011-publicado>



instance in 2011, at least 200 people were actively involved in the activities of Dínamo and at least 82 other organisations/institutions were a direct beneficiary of Dínamo's activities<sup>7</sup>. Its activities not only provide new opportunities of learning to young people but also strongly contribute to raise awareness about youth participation at the local level. The Charter of Recommendation which was presented at the local Assembly is a good example of how Dínamo's activities open up the debate of youth participation and youth policies at the local level.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

No specific trends were identified. Dínamo has only been recently physically located in an office. It has been located in the territory for only one year and a half and it is thus still getting to know the territory and its population.

Nevertheless, there is a general worry about the future of the Youth in Action Programme after 2013. If the Programme is not renewed, Dínamo might not be able to develop all its activities.

### **Influence of Regulatory frameworks on practice**

The main obstacle Dínamo faces in the access to national public funding is the fact that applications for funding programmes are not designed for non-formal education. Indeed, in order to apply, youth workers must obtain the National Trainer Competences Certificate (Certificado de Competências Pedagógicas de Formador - CCP)<sup>8</sup>, which defines the competences a youth worker must have. However, the interviewee mentioned that the certificate was not designed for the competences of non-formal education and therefore he did not fit into the categories of competences and decided not to have it. The main problem is therefore the overall lack of recognition and understanding of what non-formal education is.

### **Relationship with Policy**

Lately, in the beginning of March, there was a Parliamentary Resolution that was adopted (Resolution AR 32/2013 and AR 34/2013)<sup>9</sup>: the Portuguese Parliament has officially recommended that the Government should recognise non-formal education as well as the competences acquired in non-formal education for young people through youth organisations and voluntary work. However, it is too early to say if it will have a positive impact on the work Dínamo is doing.

Dialogue with local authorities is said to be very difficult. Dínamo, within its strategy of 'Sintra is also yours' (Sintra também é Tua!)<sup>10</sup>, has supported the creation of a local youth participation network: the Rede Participação Juvenil de Sintra<sup>11</sup>. This network has gathered various youth actors in the region together (i.e. young people, youth organisations, informal young groups, and youth workers) in order to develop a common political agenda for the youth in the region and to try to influence youth

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<sup>7</sup> Annual 2011 Activity Report of Dínamo, available at <http://dinamo.pt/index.php/component/content/article/56-noticias/381-relatorio-de-actividades-dinamo-2011-publicado>

<sup>8</sup>

<http://www.iefp.pt/formacao/formadores/certificacao/CertificacaoIndividual/Paginas/PedagogicaFormador.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> <http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2013/03/05300/0163001630.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.dinamo.pt/index.php/noticias/56-noticias/334-gulbenkian-co-financia-sintra-tambem-e-tua>

<sup>11</sup> <http://rpjsintra.dinamo.pt/index.php/rede>

policy making in the region. The network published a Recommendation Charter<sup>12</sup> to the local government with the idea to present the Charter in the local Parliament and for it to be voted at the local assembly. The Recommendation Charter contains thirty-six recommendations related to 'how to improve the participation of young people in the democratic process', such as: to survey the young people in the territory in order to know what their needs are; organize regular meetings between youth organisations and local authorities in order to analyse the problems and find solutions; provide resources for youth organisations (premises, financial support, etc.), among others. The local Parliament, although it gave the Charter a public antenna time, did not want to include the Charter in its agenda of the day. This demonstrates how the dialogue with youth organisations (and therefore the democratic process) is difficult at the local level.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

Dínamo cooperates with various stakeholders at the local level, namely, with other (youth) organisations and local public institutions (such as the local police, local municipality, etc.). Cooperation is seen as a way to share experiences, optimise resources (e.g. premises, vehicles, etc.) and have a bigger impact. Dínamo has, for instance, organised joint activities (e.g. Theatre of the Oppressed, intercultural dialogue workshops, cultural activities, etc.) with other organisations that work with young people (the Holy House of Mercy - Santa Casa da Misericórdia, other youth organisations, Local Islamic organisation, the local municipality etc.)<sup>13</sup>. In addition, Dínamo cooperates with other organisations at the international level (such as the Youth for Exchange and Understanding) in order to exchange best practices and look for training opportunities for youth workers.

The square where Dínamo is located hosts various organisations that work with the youth (e.g. Local Islamic organisation, Evangelic organisation, Aga Khan Foundation, etc.). The Aga Khan Foundation, in particular, has the aim of promoting the cooperation at the local level. It thus furthers the local cooperation and synergies. It is also often the case that local organisations share their premises in case one needs a bigger room for a specific activity.

### **Supporting youth work**

At the national level, Dínamo would like to see a more inclusive youth policy where all types of organisations are considered on an equal basis. At the moment, governmental attention is focused mainly on the most visible youth organisations, such as political youth organisations, federative associations or students associations, which are the youth organisations with the biggest number of young people at the national level. In that context, it was said to be very difficult for Dínamo to contemplate support from the current national youth policies, regardless quality, impact or relevance of its initiatives.

Given the lack of recognition of non-formal education, the EU should continue to valorise non-formal education and informal groups. Dínamo's activities were said to be sometimes wrongly perceived as 'revolutionary' and therefore public institutions seem somehow to fear the empowered youth. As non-formal education is not (yet) recognised at the national level in Portugal, the EU leverage gives meaning and

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<sup>12</sup> The Recommendation Charter is available at <http://rpjsintra.dinamo.pt/index.php/9-noticia-destaque/18-carta-de-recomendacoes-da-rede-participacao-de-sinta-de-3-de-marco-2012>

<sup>13</sup> <http://dinamo.pt/index.php/component/content/article/56-noticias/381-relatorio-de-actividades-dinamo-2011-publicado>

legitimises the work of youth organisations. Consequently, Dínamo importantly values EU financial support which enables it to develop activities for which the value is not recognised at the national level although it is at the EU level (e.g. the Recommendation Charter).

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ Develop a strategy / focus on a specific topic.
- ☐ Monitor the work you do and the results of the activities.
- ☐ Reflect on the outputs of the activities and methods used.
- ☐ Reflect on what you have personally learnt and what the association as a whole has learnt.
- ☐ Learn from mistakes/with experience.
- ☐ Ensure the quality of the processes: better to have less participants and an activity of quality rather than the opposite.
- ☐ Take reporting and management tasks seriously.

# ESCOLHAS PROGRAMME

[WWW.PROGRAMAESCOLHAS.PT](http://WWW.PROGRAMAESCOLHAS.PT)

## MISSION:

The Escolhas Programme is a Portuguese national governmental programme, created in 2001, promoted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and integrated into the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue – ACIDI. Its mission is to promote the social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts, particularly the descendants of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The Escolhas Programme is funded by the Social Security Institute, the Directorate General of Education and the European Social Fund. Since 2001, the Escolhas Programme has expanded its areas of actions and its resources. The 5th generation of the Programme was launched in January 2013 and will run until December 2015. Currently the Programme supports 110 local projects of social inclusion in vulnerable communities across the country.

## Background

The Escolhas Programme is a national governmental programme, created in 2001 by Resolution 4/2001 and updated by Resolution 68/2012<sup>14</sup>. Back in 2001, various incidents involving young people occurred in difficult neighbourhoods of Lisbon, Porto and Setúbal, which received strong media and political attention. At that time, there was a general acknowledgment that no targeted support or action was developed for young people in vulnerable contexts. For the first time, there was a political will of doing something for and with the youth.

In its origins, the Escolhas Programme was first aimed at the Prevention of Crime and youth Insertion in the most problematic neighbourhoods in the districts of Lisbon, Porto and Setúbal. Throughout the years, it refocused its aim on the promotion of social inclusion and expanded its action in all regions of the country.

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: School Inclusion and non-formal education; Vocational training and employment; Community work and citizenship; Digital inclusion; Entrepreneurship

Number of youth workers: 911 technicians that work in the field (including psychologists, youth workers, etc.); 100 young facilitators; around 25 central team coordinators.

Number of young people: 90,000

Target group: 6-24 years old

Year activities established: 2001

Budget: €9 million for the last annual period (2012).

<sup>14</sup> <http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2012/08/15400/0427904281.pdf>

The Escolhas Programme selects and funds, after an application phase, local projects that develop actions aimed at promoting the social inclusion of young people, from age 6 to 24, in vulnerable geographical and socio-economic contexts.

## Approach to working with young people

The Escolhas Programme selects and funds, after an application phase, local projects that develop actions aimed at promoting the social inclusion of young people, from age 6 to 24, in vulnerable geographical and socio-economic contexts. The goals, rules and procedures of the Escolhas Programme are regulated by law<sup>15</sup> which is updated at each new generation of the Programme. The Escolhas Programme is also annually evaluated via internal and external evaluations. It closely monitors on the field the work of each Escolhas project and via an online platform where each project site has to weekly report on the activities it undertook. Each project has to address at least one of the five strategic areas of intervention and select some key types of actions that are defined for each strategic area of intervention. Those are:

1. School Inclusion and non-formal education; which includes, among other actions: the fight against school leaving and the promotion of new (non-formal) education answers, etc.
2. Vocational training and employment; which includes, among other actions: the promotion of activities designed to encourage the transition to the labour market; creation of new vocational training answers for young people, etc.
3. Community work and citizenship; which includes, among other actions: cultural and sport activities; raising awareness activities (e.g. on racism, sexual health, intergenerational activities, etc.), etc.
4. Digital inclusion; which focuses on actions aiming at providing ICT training to the local community.
5. Entrepreneurship; which includes, among other actions: the training or other activities that promote development of entrepreneurial skills; the promotion of youth mobility and exchanges within and outside the national territory; the support of young people in the creation of their employment initiatives.

### Key Approaches

Precise and concrete rules: each role and procedures are legally defined.

Precise application process.

Close monitoring of each Escolhas project.

The sense of belonging to a family.

The positive role of the Young Community Facilitator.

Give voice to young people via the Youth Escolhas Assembly.

For instance, one of the Escolhas projects, visited by the researcher, develops activities for all the type of measures. It has supported the creation of an informal group (Kids of the Neighbourhood) which develops its own initiatives for and with the community (Measure V). It has also supported young people in their entrepreneurial initiatives to create a local child care service (to drive children to school and back home when parents are at work) or to develop their own clothes brand (Measure V). In addition, it has developed a box workshop in order to raise awareness about violence and to fight against violence (Measure III). It is often

<sup>15</sup> See resolution 68/2012 available at <http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2012/08/15400/0427904281.pdf> and Regulation 17/2012, available at <https://dre.pt/pdf2sdip/2012/08/158000000/2900629014.pdf>

the case that, for some specific youngsters that are at-risk of leaving school, permission to participate in the activities is granted as long as the youngster attends school (Measure I). Moreover, the site developed an ICT laboratory (Measure IV), with an ICT monitor in charge of giving ICT training. ICT training opportunities are opened to all (young people and the rest of the community). People participating receive an official competences certificate.

Young people usually get involved because they heard about the activities via a friend or because they know the association and were curious about it. Also, local institutions (e.g. Commission for the Protection of Children and Young people, the Social Security) identify specific at-risk children in the area and ask the local Escolhas project to intervene. In addition, when submitting the application, the Escolhas project needs to draw a social diagnosis (based on official data) of the type of youth issues present in the area where it wants to act (e.g. stating how many out-of-school children there are, how many at-risk children, etc.). The project therefore defines a target group for its actions. Activities target all ages between 6 and 24 years old.

Engagement of young people is never totally secured, especially regarding teenagers. However, through different mechanisms, the engagement and commitment of young people is encouraged. Namely, these are:

- The fact that the Escolhas Programme tries to hire youth workers that are from the same local community where the Escolhas project is implemented or from the same socio-economic context. Youth workers are therefore perceived as 'insiders' and as role models, which can have an impact on the life and participation of young people. To this purpose, one of the young interviewees who participates in the activities since he is 12, mentioned that one of his ex-counsellor was a role model for him in his life and therefore he also wanted to become a reference model in the neighbourhood. In a survey undertaken by an external evaluation, the great majority of young people also mentioned that the relation they had with their youth workers was what they valued the most about the Escolhas programme.
- The fact that there is a sense of belonging to a 'family'. Indeed, as a considerable number of Escolhas projects were implemented more than a decade ago, the great majority of young people grew up with the Escolhas Programme, generating a sense of belonging to a 'family'.
- The role of the Young Community Facilitator ('Dinamizador comunitário'): since its 4<sup>th</sup> generation, the Escolhas Programme has designated one young person per Escolhas project who is a positive reference for the youth. The young community facilitator acts as a bridge between the project and the local young people. He has the role of providing the 'good example' to other young people and of trying to engage other young people in the activities. He is also involved in the design and development of new initiatives.
- The Youth Escolhas Assembly ('Assembleia de Jovens Escolhas') recently created: in a bottom-up approach, young people have the opportunity to express themselves and to say what they think about the Escolhas project and programme. At the local level, each project needs to give a voice to the local young people via a local youth assembly. Activities are therefore better targeted to young people's needs and aspiration, which in turn can enhance their engagement. At the regional level, young people elect various representatives that will represent them in the national youth Escolhas assembly where they can express their views and suggestion about the Escolhas Programme as a whole.

Youth workers usually describe their role as polyvalent because they have to endorse a great variety of tasks/roles, i.e. administrative, managerial and reporting tasks;



coordination and project leader related tasks; counsellor for a specific activity, etc. Youth workers see their role as an human role in the sense that they build relationships with the whole community and try to have a positive impact in the life of young people as well as in the sense that they dedicate their time to the community (i.e. they don't work in regular office hours and have to adapt to the young people's schedule). All the success and impact of a project therefore relies on the type of ties that are developed between youth workers and the young people.

It is interesting to point out that school achievement is a particular transversal aim of the Escolhas Programme. Each Escolhas project works in close collaboration with the school and monitor school achievement of young people participating in the activities. Each year, the Escolhas Programmes organises a 10 days summer trip, for which it selects the best young people who presented during the year a positive pathway in terms of school achievement and who distinguished themselves at the project site (e.g. via regular attendance, positive leadership and responsible profile, etc. ) to participate.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The Escolhas Programme closely monitors the impact of each Escolhas project and the outputs of each activity. It undertakes regular internal and external evaluation and consequently redefines its objectives and methodology throughout the years.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the central team makes sure to regularly visit each Escolhas project on-site in order to ensure a smooth running of the activities and of the reporting tasks each project has to undertake. The Programme also provides continuous training for its entire staff, either for the central team coordinators or for youth worker on the site.

In its first generation (2001-2003), the Programme was focused on Prevention of Crime and youth Insertion the most problematic neighborhoods in the districts of Lisbon, Porto and Setúbal.

During this period, 50 Escolhas projects were implemented, and reached 6712 beneficiaries. Throughout the years, the Programme refocused its aim on the promotion of social inclusion and expanded its action in all regions of the country. In the third generation of the Programme (2007-2009), 81, 695 young people (between 6 and 24 years old) were reached across the country. In the fourth generation (2010-2012), about 100 Escolhas projects were implemented which reached 89, 232 young people and 500 on-site visits were undertaken. There were also 9,776 reintegration into school (56.2%), training (35.7%) or employment of young people (8.1%)<sup>17</sup>; 86,7% of school success in the school year 2011-2012 compared with 81% in the school year 2009-2010; and 13,949 ICT certificates delivered. In addition, 87% of the funding was directed to projects (on-site) with a daily cost *per capita* of 0.42 €.<sup>18</sup>

The Escolhas Programme is a unique Programme in Portugal. Not only by the number of young people it reaches across the country but also by the various stakeholders it involves on the ground. Indeed, each Escolhas project has to find at least four local partners (e.g. with schools, NGOs, municipality, local Police, etc.). Partnerships at the local level are seen as a key to the success of the programme. The rationale behind is that youth issues are the concern of all local actors and not only of one youth organisation. Consequently, each Escolhas project needs to be designed and agreed between various actors on the ground. At the moment, each Escolhas project as on average eight partnerships agreements with local institutions/organisations.

<sup>16</sup> Reports from each evaluation are available at <http://www.programaescolhas.pt/avaliacoes>

<sup>17</sup> Escolhas Programme Annual Activity Report 2012, p. 34, available at <http://www.programaescolhas.pt/avaliacoes>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.programaescolhas.pt/apresentacao>

### Main Outcomes and Impacts

During 2010-2012 there were:

100 Escolhas projects implemented

89,232 young people reached

9,776 reintegration into school (56.2%), training (35.7%) and employment of young people (8.1%)<sup>1</sup>

86,7% of school success in the school year 2011-2012 compared with 81% in the school year 2009-2010.

13,949 ICT certificates delivered

The Escolhas Programme positively impacts on the life of young people, providing them with positive role models, increasing their opportunities and self-esteem.<sup>19</sup> From their participation, young people mentioned that they gain new skills depending on the activities they enrol in (e.g. ICT skills, entrepreneurship skills, teamwork skills, leadership skills, etc.), learn new values (e.g. tolerance, respect, etc.), gain autonomy and develop their critical thinking.

The Escolhas Programme also strongly impacts on school achievement: some young people go back to school or gain motivation to pursue studying either at secondary education or at university level. For instance, the table below shows that the school achievement of the Young Community Facilitators ('Dinamizadores comunitários') improved after being involved as Young Community Facilitators. Indeed, by 2012, all of them had completed secondary education whereas previously it was not the case.

**Figure 1.1 School progress of the Young Community Facilitators**

<b>School levels attained by the Young Community Facilitators</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>
Enrollment at the University	10	26
12th year of school (Secondary education completed)	37	92
11th year of school (upper secondary education)	13	0
10th year of school (upper secondary education)	11	0
9th year of school or less (lower secondary education or less)	35	0

Source: Escolhas Programme Annual Activity Report 2012, p. 29, available at <http://www.programaescolhas.pt/avaliacoes>

Above all, young people learn that there is other ways of living their life and they can decide of their own future.

<sup>19</sup> The Escolhas Programme, for its 10 year anniversary, has interviewed various young people, families and youth workers in order to grasp what the Escolhas Programme has changed in their life: 365 Histórias de Vida, available at <https://www.box.com/s/d3b4e144a78d8a7422a3>

The Escolhas Programme is internationally recognized as one of the most effective public policy in promoting the social inclusion of children and young people at risk, particularly the descendants of immigrants and ethnic minorities. It has received various awards and distinctions<sup>20</sup>.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

The main trend over the years was the clear decrease of school drop-out of young people involved in the Escolhas activities and the increased collaboration between Escolhas projects and local stakeholders, notably the school. The increased collaboration enables a better identification of problems that young people might face at the local level and, consequently, to better tackle social intervention.

In terms of changes, the fact that technologies evolved, affected the ICT activities and training. Nowadays, young people easily acquire basic ICT skills. Therefore, ICT activities must be much more innovative than they used to be ten years ago in order to attract young people.

Moreover, interviewees noted how the Programme evolved from a top-down approach to a transversal approach where each actor involved in the programme (youth workers, central team, young people, and local partners) has its word to say. This transversal approach enabled to increase the impact of the programme.

### **Influence of Regulatory frameworks on practice**

Administrative regulations, when accessing additional funding programmes, were mentioned as the main limiting factors in some cases by youth workers. The problem seem to be on the lack of information provided to youth workers and on the burden it represents to look after all specific document needed for an application (e.g. certificate of non-debt).

Note that the Escolhas Programmes defines specific regulations that each Escolhas project must comply with (e.g. application requirements, selection phase, financing rules, evaluation, coordination tasks, reporting task, among others)<sup>21</sup>. In order to ensure that the programme is running smoothly, the central team is on constant contact with youth workers. The main issue staff on the ground faces relates to the use of the specific web-platform for reporting the weekly achievements of the project. It is sometimes difficult for project staff to understand how the web-platform functions and therefore, difficult reporting tasks.

### **Relationship with Policy**

The Escolhas Programme is a national governmental programme which directly draws from national policy – in this case, the promotion of the social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts, particularly the descendants of

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<sup>20</sup>Among other distinctions, the Escolhas Programmes was selected in 2002 by the Council of Europe as Good Practice in Combating Everyday Violence. In 2003, it was the Winner of the European Crime Prevention, awarded by European Network of Crime Prevention. In 2008, it was identified as one of the world's seven Best Practices in the first World Report on Safe Communities, awarded by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (Canada). It was also selected as good practice by the European Commission in 2007 and 2010 in the 'Handbook for Integration'; in 2011 as Good Practice in Combating early school leaving.

<sup>21</sup> Regulation of the Escolhas Programme, Despacho Normativo 17/2012, available at <https://dre.pt/pdf2sdip/2012/08/158000000/2900629014.pdf>

immigrants and ethnic minorities. The Escolhas Programme regulation is established by Law and each Escolhas project has to comply with it<sup>22</sup>.

There is a continuous dialogue between youth workers and young people on the field and the central team. Internal and external evaluations as well as the internal systems of dialogue (i.e. visits of the central team to the site, youth assembly, etc.), can influence the design of the Programme. For instance, the youth assemblies were created after young people were surveyed for an external evaluation and mentioned that they would like to give more often their opinion about the Programme. Moreover, Measure V (entrepreneurship) was developed after observing that there was a considerable number of young people – who started with Escolhas when they were about ten years old and were now on their twenties – to which activities were not sufficiently targeted. Throughout the years, the Programme has thus learned from the feedback received and adapted itself to the needs of the field.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

The particularity of the Escolhas projects is the close collaboration between the project and the local organisations and public institutions (e.g. the school, the local police, the municipality, the social security, youth organisations, etc.). Indeed, each project has to find at least four partnerships at the local level and has to develop a consortium agreement. The rationale behind is that youth issues are the concern of all local actors and not only of one youth organisation. Cooperation is seen as a way to optimise resources, partner providing additional financial and practical resources (e.g. premises, vehicles, etc.) and have a bigger impact.

Within the Escolhas Programme, there are 936 partner organisations, which include schools, NGOs, municipalities, the Commission for the Protection of children and young people, the Social Security, youth organisations, etc.

The Escolhas Programme also ensures strategic partnerships with private organisations that provide the programme with valuable resources: the Porto Editora granted free access to the projects of the Virtual School; Microsoft granted access to its Digital Literacy curriculum; CISCO to its NetAcad system; and the Barclays Bank participated in financial coaching activities.

### **Supporting youth work**

Interviewees would like to see more recognition of non-formal education at the national level. At the moment, there is no opportunity for young people to value the skills they learned in an informal way. It was mentioned that there is an excess of formalism in Portugal. The story of a Portuguese young street/graffiti artist, who had only completed six years of school, and who participated in the Escolhas project is illustrative of this excess of formalism in Portugal. Indeed, the young artist learned everything in the street and at age 18 tried to enter the Art School in Portugal. However, as he had not completed secondary education, he was not granted access to the Art School despite his impressive portfolio. Facing only closed doors in Portugal, he then presented its portfolio to the London University of Arts which granted him direct access to the second year of their Art degree. He is now a famous worldwide recognised artist. Recognition of non-formal learning is especially important for young people from vulnerable contexts who in some cases, learned valuable skills outside the formal education system. Another major problem Portugal faces, is the low employability of young people which is seen as a major problem that should be better

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<sup>22</sup> Regulation of the Escolhas Programme, Despacho Normativo 17/2012, available at <https://dre.pt/pdf2sdip/2012/08/158000000/2900629014.pdf>

tackled. This can demotivate many disadvantages young people who see no future even after considerable efforts to get an education and to leave the 'street life'. Consequently, the EU should continue its efforts to recognise non-formal education and to ensure recognition at Member states level.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ Commitment to the project.
- ☐ Monitor the work and results of the activities through internal and external evaluation.
- ☐ Learn from mistakes/experience.
- ☐ Reflect on the recommendations received from external or internal evaluation and adapt the project in consequence.
- ☐ Close monitoring with the project: the central team very often goes to the field to monitor the work that it is done and to solve possible questions.
- ☐ Close personal monitoring: each project has a close personal contact with the central team workers it is related to.
- ☐ Flexibility, capacity to constantly adapt the project to new social contexts.
- ☐ Provide training opportunities for staff.
- ☐ Be creative with scarce resources.

# Sexuality and Contraception Healthcare Youth Programme

[HTTP://WWW.FPFE.ORG](http://www.fpfe.org)

## MISSION:

This programme offers free sexual health information and counselling (face to face, by phone or online) in Youth-Friendly Centres to those under 29. It also carries out sexual education activities and workshops to promote the positive values of sexuality. The programme started in 1991 when in Spain, as well as in other EU countries (Sweden was the precursor), it was felt that young people face boundaries when using health services. Health centres may not be a friendly environment for young people; because they are asked for identification and they may see people they know (family, GPs). Within this context and recognising the rights of young people and their needs for sexual health services, the Spanish Federation of Family Planning started to implement this Sexuality and Contraception Healthcare Youth Programme establishing 4 Youth-Friendly Centres in 4 cities: A Coruña, Albacete, Barcelona and Madrid.

These centres are easy to reach and they are open at times when young people can attend. The services offered are free, anonymous and confidential. Young people do not need an appointment and youth workers are professionals with experience working with young people and studies on sexuality. The goal of the programme is to help prevent the increasing incidence of pregnancies, abortion and Sexually Transmitted Infections by empowering young people, helping them to live their sexuality in a positive and healthy way.

## Approach to working with young people

The Spanish Federation of Family Planning runs four Youth-Friendly Centres (Centros Jóvenes de Anticoncepción y Sexualidad-CJAS), which have implemented the "Sexuality and Contraception Healthcare Youth Programme" since 1991. Young people under 29 receive free sexual health information and counselling face to face, online or by telephone online. They also provide pregnancy, HIV and STIs testing assistance. Attention is characterised by confidentiality, anonymity, free and easy access. The centres are in the city centre and open at convenient hours for young people (in the evenings and weekends). Young people receive direct and

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: health and well-being

Number of youth workers: 30

Number of young people: more than 35.000 in 2012

Target group: young people under 29

Year activities established: 1991



without waiting attention. Furthermore, people working there have studies on sexology and experience working with young people; they do not show paternalism or judgement. Therefore, Youth-Friendly Centres offer a comfortable and relaxed environment. The objective is not only to solve the specific difficulties or doubts of young people, but to promote their autonomy and decision making about their sexuality, as well as promoting a positive experience and satisfactory sexuality.

Youth workers attract young people by offering information about their services through their website, social networks, sexual education workshops (these normally take place in schools), through information stands in fairs, universities or simply in the street. Although they offer services to all young people, they have tried to approach those people that are more vulnerable, for instance: immigrants, young people from low socioeconomic neighbourhoods or youth offenders. They also provide sexuality training to those groups that participate in the education process: families, teachers, social educators, social workers and health professionals.

Professionals working in the youth friendly centres (both paid workers and volunteers) receive continuous training in function of the needs detected. For example, they have received training on HIV testing and female genital mutilation.

### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

In 2012, under the scope of this programme, more than 35.900 young people have accessed the service (face to face, by phone, online or through education activities). To make sure their activities are achieving their objectives, they ask young people to complete a questionnaire of satisfaction. In many cases, young people come back to the centres after a first assistance. This shows that people feel comfortable using the service. The Spanish Federation of Family Planning is an IPPF Member Association (The International Planned Parenthood Federation-IPPF). In order to be a member of IPPF, there are rigorous requisites in the area of youth. In this sense, in 2009 an evaluation was carried out by IPPF and there will be a further one later this year (2013). These evaluations look at the number of users using the services and their profile; what services are being developed, how many people are employed, the centres' appearance (if they are appealing to young people) and they make sure that users' rights are clearly advertised in the centres. The programme participates in external evaluations conducted by different ministries in the framework of grants, to ensure the quality of the services provided.

#### *Main outcomes and impacts*

More than 35.900 young people have accessed the service

In order to assess the service, young people are asked to complete a questionnaire of satisfaction

As a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation-IPPF, evaluations have been carried out regularly and the Spanish organisation had to comply with rigorous requisites, such as the quality of services or the appearance of the centre.

The organisation is an active actor in political debates and it has worked with the Spanish government delivering expertise.

### Experience of Trends in youth work

- Ten years ago the attendants' profile was mostly heterosexual women with issues related to family planning. Today, although there are still much more women than men, men participation has increased. There are also more homosexuals seeking for assistance and they express their questions and fears with more freedom than they

used to. The issues treated in consultations have also changed; there are more “emotional questions” and not only “contraceptive-related questions” as there used to.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

The Organic Law 2/2010 on sexual and reproductive health and Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy supports the work carried out by the Spanish Federation of Family Planning, because it states that governments should provide the right conditions, such as counselling, for the decisions about sexuality and procreation to be made freely and responsibly by citizens. However, although the law establishes a positive environment, it is quite vague and it does not state, for example, the number of youth friendly services that should exist in relation to the number of Spanish young people.

-The Law 41/2002 on the autonomy of the patient also influences the work delivered by this organisation. This law regulates the refusal of treatment or teenagers being of legal age for health-related decision-making purposes. In this sense, : in the case of young people under 16, it is the health professional that has to decide if the young person is mature enough to take decisions regarding their health. This is an impediment, because, for instance, there can be a person of 14 years old that wants to get an HIV test. If the health professional does the test and parents find out, parents can denounce the professional for not having been asked and the judge would decide about this. Many times, professionals do not take risks because they are scared of backlash from parents. However, this can result in young people not going to medical centres. In the youth friendly centres they receive requests from young people that did not get attention in health centres.

### **Relationship with policy**

Although in Spain working with young people has been mainly done through public policies on youth for those between 15 and 30 years old at local, regional and national level; interviewees highlighted that the lack of national policies on youth and sexual health constitute an important problem and emphasised the need of clear legislation on youth and sexual health with clear purposes and budget for it.

However, who governs makes a huge difference. Some governments tend to limit the work done in the Youth-Friendly Centres through cuts in funds, for instance. This has negative consequences, such as limiting the hours the centres can be opened. On occasion, a possible amendment of the law on sexual and reproductive health to make it more restrictive for women to abort, for example has been discussed.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

They connect with other stakeholders working in the same area, such as the Spanish Institute for Youth, Red Cross, sexology institutes. They learn from each other by sharing working methods, documentation, materials, studies in the subject, etc. By meeting and sharing knowledge, they make sure they all work in the same line and that they have a common voice when trying to influence policies.

They also carry out advocacy with the aim of influencing health agendas and policies. They invite politicians to visit the youth friendly services. They have worked with the government as experts and they have also worked in the ministerial commission on sexual and reproductive health.

## Supporting youth work

They would like to see legislation that covers sexual and reproductive health, regulating the number of youth friendly services that should exist in the country (WHO recommends 1 by each 100.000 young people) and if possible, these centres should be part of the public administration, as organisations such as Spanish Family Planning do not have enough resources.

It would be important to receive support from media and public opinion. There is the image that young people tend to take risks, but in the experience of youth friendly services this is not accurate.

It would be necessary to have more political compromise and funding. With more funding, youth friendly services could be open for longer hours (in fact, due to cuts they have been forced to reduce their opening hours). Furthermore, more could be done. For instance, instead of mainly concentrating on assisting, there could be more sexual education workshops organised, for young people, but also for professionals. There could be also more professionals working in the centres.

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- Free, confidential and anonymous service
- Easy to reach service
- Without time limits
- Offer a comfortable environment
- Professionalism: youth workers require initial and continuous training to ensure they have the knowledge and skills they need to respond to the needs of young people.
- Give voice to young people and show interest in what they say
- Non-judgmental attention
- More than giving advice, the aim is to empower young people, promoting their autonomy to make decisions.

# Freestyle tour

WWW.FREESTYLE-CREW.LU

## MISSION:

This case-study sheds light on the Freestyle tour initiative that was launched in Luxembourg in 2008. Falling under the remit of the 'Bouger plus, manger mieux' action plan that is aimed to promote healthy eating habits and sport, its main purpose is to raise young people's awareness on 'freestyle' activities and healthy eating habits. Going beyond traditional sport disciplines, the Freestyle tour builds upon urban activities such as longboard, inline skating, freestyle soccer, breakdance, hip hop or capoeira, etc.

Designed and managed by the Service National de la Jeunesse (SNJ), it is aimed at young people aged 12-20 years old and is carried out annually within a short period (i.e. between January and mid-February). The activities take place in three different sites across the country (i.e. spaces booked for the occasion by the SNJ) and are performed by a 'Freestyle crew' (a team of youth workers trained by the SNJ to share their knowledge and experience with young people) who are 'on tour' during this period. The initiative is primarily addressed to schools having expressed interest to participate. These are invited to join the crew during one day in one of the three sites.

In early 2013, the SNJ organised the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Freestyle tour. The Freestyle tour furthermore acts complementary with two other initiatives also aimed to address the objectives of the 'Bouger plus, manger mieux' action plan. These are the 'Freestyle meets Musel' and the 'Nuit du sport', both undertaken out-of-school.

## Approach to working with young people

As noted above, the main focus of the case-study is on the Freestyle tour initiative. Where relevant, the information is complemented by additional references to the 'Freestyle meets Musel' or 'La nuit du sport' initiatives.

Regarding the approach followed to carry out the Freestyle tour, interviewees confirmed that though slight differences may be encountered in the choice of activities performed in the 3 different locations, steps leading to the practical organisation of the initiative are usually as follows:

1. The SNJ coordinating team (3 staff members) sends once a year a mailing to all schools nationally presenting/reminding them of the project and stressing its benefits (in terms of offering young people an opportunity to discover and experiment new activities, enabling them to meet with

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Health and well being

Number of youth workers: around 15

Number of young people: 1,293 (in 2013)

Target group: young people aged 12-20 years old.

Year activities established: 2008

young practitioners in these areas, etc.) for beneficiaries. This mailing includes the contact details of the project leader, the price for the visit of the Freestyle crew (150 euro) and a deadline for registration as well as an information note which outlines all the projects of the SNJ for schools. Meanwhile, the project is also indirectly promoted via the word of mouth by several youth associations including the Maisons de Jeunes (MJs). The initiative is also promoted via the Freestyle Crew's website<sup>23</sup>.

2. After the deadline for submission of applications, the SNJ fixes the number of beneficiary schools/classes for the year. The programme is designed, targeting three main geographical zones (North, South and Centre). In 2013, 20 secondary schools visited the three locations.
3. The Freestyle tour starts each year in January and is carried out over 4-5 weeks. During this period, around 80-100 pupils visited the crew at the located halls.
4. The programme delivered on site starts with a presentation of the crew and of the programme. The latter is usually structured as follows:
  - a. A breakfast is offered to all participants. During this, the crew provides information and hints about healthy and good eating habits.
  - b. Two main workshops are organised, allowing young people to discover/experiment the 'freestyle' activity of their choice among those on offer.
  - c. A show is performed 'on stage' for each type of activities chosen by the beneficiaries
  - d. The above is followed by a performance from the Freestyle crew.
  - e. Closing session: the Freestyle crew thanks all participants, invites them to practice what they have learnt during the day and circulates feedback forms (since 2012) and further leaflets.

Overall, attention is paid to make the approach flexible, open-minded and playful. The members of the Freestyle crew never force anyone to do/try something if (s)he does not want to but on the contrary try to make all participants at ease, treating them equally in a friendly atmosphere.

With regard to the learning opportunities that derive from the initiative, what is commonly appreciated by schools and individual beneficiaries is the fact that it offers the opportunity to know more but also to experiment with non-traditional types of activities whilst raising awareness on the need to have good eating habits. On the youth workers' side, the 'tour' is usually viewed as a very positive experience that helps them evolve, gain communication and organisational skills, develop empathy, tolerance, patience, awareness on good eating habits, etc. The member of the crew who was interviewed has experience with both the Freestyle tour and Freestyle meets Musel (and shortly with the 'Nuit du sport' too). Whilst the first is school based, the latter targets youth associations (MJs in particular) and offers a range of activities over the Meuse river during summertime. According to him, one of the main differences regarding young people's attitudes is found in the fact that Freestyle tour's beneficiaries (who have to be present at school when the initiative takes place) are generally less motivated and proactive when the activities start. In the case of the Freestyle meets Musel initiative (fully optional) participants often consist of young people who are really interested and motivated by the initiative. Notwithstanding this, the Freestyle tour generally ends being widely appreciated in the vast majority of cases and beneficiary schools very often re-apply for it the following year.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.freestyle-crew.lu/>

### *Key Approaches*

The Freestyle tour is organised annually during 4-5 weeks and is performed in three main sites. Its representatives brought into the 'Freestyle crew' (a small team of youth workers comprising self-employed or unemployed artists, dancers, etc.) offer activities on a daily basis during the period.

The initiative allows young people to experience 'freestyle' activities whilst getting advice on health and good eating habits.

The approach is flexible, open-minded and playful overall. Each participant is free to decide on the extent of his/her engagement.

Since 2012, participants fill in a feedback form before leaving the site.

### **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

Since being launched in 2008, the number of beneficiary schools/individual participants in the Freestyle tour has steadily grown whilst schools have often renewed their application from one year to another as noted above. This suggests that the Freestyle tour is positively perceived and that both schools and pupils/students find it overall valuable.

This said, whilst basic data (e.g. number of beneficiary schools, of participants, of Freestyle crew's members, etc.) are gathered by the SNJ, the latter has not formally monitored or assessed the outcomes and impacts of the initiative. Since 2012, the crew systematically collects individual feedback forms at the end of their visit. The content of these forms has not been analysed yet. Meanwhile, since the initiative takes place only one day/year for each beneficiary classroom, it can be assumed that its impact on individual young people is likely to be limited.

Notwithstanding the above, the same interviewee indicated that the visit of the Freestyle crew overall creates an opportunity for schools for raising pupils'/students' awareness on the added value of practicing sports and having good eating habits. In practice, most schools report to the SNJ that the visit of the crew is generally preceded and followed by information sessions on these themes. These are delivered by teachers during school time.

In terms of specific added value of the initiative, the fact that it both aims to allow young people to experience non-traditional activities with young professionals and get advice on health and good eating habits during school time was considered to be innovative by all interviewees. These claimed that no similar initiatives exist at this level. Meanwhile, the approach can be complemented outside schools through the initiatives 'Freestyle meets Musel' and 'La nuit du sport' which are both supported by the SNJ on behalf of the 'Bouger plus, manger mieux' action plan.

No evidence was found on the number (and profiles) of those young people who after having participated in the 'Freestyle tour' decide to also take part in 'Freestyle meets Musel' and/or 'La nuit du sport'. Regarding youth workers, it is common (though not compulsory) that the members of the Freestyle crew also take part in 'Freestyle meets Musel' and/or 'La nuit du sport'. Another interviewee added that the Freestyle crew has acquired a very good reputation over the years and that the number of requests from municipalities that organise 'La nuit du sport' to host one or several members of the crew is constantly growing. All these demands cannot be met though as the crew only consists of 15 members.



## **Experience of trends in youth work**

The most notable trend that can be noted for the Freestyle tour over the 2008-2013 period regards the number of beneficiary schools and participants that has steadily increased: from 10 to 20 schools and 510 to 1,293 participants respectively.

During the same period, the number of Freestyle crew's members has remained stable, varying between 10 and 15 individuals. The number and types of activities proposed has similarly remained stable. Only one activity was added to the list in 2011 (i.e. capoeira) whilst others remained unchanged.

Overall, no particular difficulties were reported by the interviewees. Even the turnover within the Freestyle crew that may be important (i.e. team members generally leave the crew once they get a formal work contract) was claimed to be manageable.

## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

As mentioned above, the Freestyle tour is one of the key initiatives specifically designed to address the objectives of the national 'Bouger plus, manger mieux' action plan that is aimed to promote healthy eating habits and sport among young people.

The actions undertaken as part of the Freestyle tour have been thus supported and promoted in this wider framework. The initiative furthermore complies with the objectives applying to young people's health and well-being that are set in the 2008 Youth Act and 2012 Youth Pact that both govern youth policy (and youth work) in Luxembourg.

## **Relationship with Policy**

In line with the above, no specific (or negative) effect of national policy on the work that is carried out in the framework of the Freestyle tour was reported. The visibility and attractiveness of the initiative have grown since 2008 and the latter has been maintained so far. Meanwhile, since the initiative is led by a national authority (i.e. the SNJ), the question of whether there is an effective policy dialogue is not applicable in this context.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

The key partners of the Freestyle tour are the beneficiary schools. Meanwhile, the team responsible for the coordination of the Freestyle tour and the members of the Freestyle crew are also led to network with other youth associations (MJs primarily) notably when supporting or taking part in the parallel 'Freestyle meets Musel initiative' or with municipalities in the framework of 'La nuit du sport'. The latter also officially targets young people aged 12-20 years old (its audience is wider though in practice) and offers a wide range of sport activities (including football, basket-ball, capoeira, zumba, slackline, etc.) during one night for free.

## **Supporting youth work**

As noted above, no particular difficulties were reported across the different interviews. Therefore, no specific areas for support were formally identified. The following can be nevertheless outlined:

An interviewee mentioned that a slight shift in the type of projects offered by the Freestyle crew is being operated in order to complement freestyle activities with more concrete actions on 'good eating'. Early this year, the SNJ created recipes of hamburgers, sandwiches, salads, etc. that are both healthy and easy to achieve. To date, 3 recipes have been created and uploaded on the Freestyle tour's website.

Though the approach has just started, the interviewee considered that this should be definitely further supported and made more visible.

Another interviewee noted that data would be more systematically collected and analysed as information on the profiles of young people/youth workers and on the impact of the initiatives (i.e. this overall applies to the three above-mentioned initiatives) remains scarce.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ Finding the right method of approach (i.e. playful but sufficiently structured) to catch young people's attention and transmit the key messages of the project.
- ☐ Getting motivated and convinced youth workers.
- ☐ Treating equally all participating young people/reassuring them on their individual strengths and weaknesses.
- ☐ Encouraging young people to try new things and overcome their fears.
- ☐ Keeping regularly in touch with beneficiary schools.
- ☐ Networking with other stakeholders to get multiplier effects: youth associations such as the MJs are a relevant channel for making the Freestyle Tour/ crew visible.
- ☐ Encouraging further collaborative approaches (for e.g. enabling young people's positions to get heard by policy makers).
- ☐ Getting more data to have a better overview of the key results of the project.

# Hi Rez Youth Centre

[HTTP://HRYOUTHCENTRE.WORDPRESS.COM/](http://hryouthcentre.wordpress.com/)

## MISSION:

The Hi Rez Youth Centre is an independent youth centre in the town of Bray around an hour south of Dublin, Ireland which provides a space for teenagers from their first year in secondary school and upwards. The centre was officially opened in May 2009 and currently has around two hundred members and thirty youth leaders.

The centre was originally the brainchild of the local community in the town of Bray as a result of the perceived need for a youth specific space that would provide mainstream youth work rather than a targeted service. Whilst there were already a number of voluntary youth clubs in the area, these did not have a designated space. Instead, they carried out their activities in other buildings such as the Church Parish Hall. Following activities in these settings, any materials or chairs etc have to be returned and in this sense these settings did not provide a dedicated space for young people. The community raised the funding in order to build the Hi Rez centre and then looked for an appropriate person to manage it who had experience in the field of youth work.

The activities of the centre depend upon the interests of the young people who are membership is open to all young people, therefore the youth work model is based on young people's leisure time interests and is not intervention based.

## Approach to working with young people

The approach taken in the Hi Rez youth centre is targeted towards the young people's growth and development, in particular their learning development opportunities. The centre offers young people to get involved in any activities that offer development and growth; it challenges young people to grow and helps them to see that they have learnt something through the process. The youth work in the youth centre is not designed around a programme; the time young people spend at the youth centre is open timetabling during the operating hours. It is young people themselves who decide the kinds of activities and interests they wish to pursue whilst there, which range from a gardening project, sports and those interested in music or DJing. The centre is viewed as a space belonging to the young people to which they have 20 hours of access a week after school hours in which they can create their own spaces and activities are grown organically. Key to the approach is sustainability; all the activities are based on volunteer leaders. Once members reach the age of 16, they undergo training as a junior leader which is the first stage of the learning pathway.

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Personal development

Number of youth workers: 1 paid, 30 volunteer youth leaders

Number of young people: 200

Target group: Universal, from age 13/14

Year activities established: 2009

Given that the youth centre is open to all young people there is no specific target group of young people. Young people are eligible to become members upon starting secondary school and there is no upper age limit. The only rule of the centre (which is written clearly on the wall) is 'Respect'. The role of the youth leaders (who are volunteers and have progressed through their membership) is to support young people in the centre to explore their interests. The main aim of the centre is that young people enjoy themselves in a natural environment and a positive space. Young people often come to the centre because their older siblings were involved. Most members could be described as being 'mainstream' often from a middle-class background, not identifiable as being involved in anti-social behaviour and are often ambitious about their future.

### **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

The youth centre has impacts on the individual members who have been involved in activities at the space. There are many personal stories and examples of personal growth and development amongst those at the centre. Some examples include a delegate at the EU Youth Conference. Initially she attended a regional consultation held in Ireland on youth issues and decided to apply to become a delegate at the EU Youth Conference (a highly competitive process). This involved her writing a piece in order to be selected which was about recognising what the centre has done for her. Other examples have included young rappers have the chance to perform in front of a live audience as well as those who were involved in the mental health project 'Be Well' during which they gave a seminar to teach young people about mental health issues. Many of the young people at the centre also take up leadership roles in their schools which is often attributed to their experiences of personal growth and development at the centre. The main thing that young people gain is that they are part of an extended family which is valuable to them and they have the opportunities to take lots of different interests and activities.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

Ireland has experienced a major economic crisis which has affected the youth work sector. The observable trend was that during the Celtic Tiger there was considerably more funding (and funding sources) and with this money there was a vast array of youth services. Youth work during that period often presented itself as being social care rather than personal development. With the reduction in funding streams and amounts, youth work is now being asked to deliver on that and youth work has become increasingly under pressure to be intervention and prevention based. This can lead to the view that young people are to be 'contained' and that young people are being 'serviced' by youth work rather than being a space for learning and development.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

The main regulation in the youth work area in Ireland is that those over 18 wishing to be involved with young people have to go through the Garda (police) vetting scheme. In this case the activities of the centre are supported with volunteer youth leaders (and one paid member of staff). As described earlier, these young leaders have come through the youth centre themselves and have progressed through a training path to become young leaders themselves. The training they receive alongside the Garda vetting is deemed to be important by the young people themselves as it confirms their status as young leaders and gives them much more understanding of their role and responsibilities.

## Relationship with Policy

In Ireland there currently is no specific youth policy, but youth work funded by the Department of Youth and Children is subject to the National Quality Standards Framework for youth work. This framework enables youth work organisations to assess their processes and make progress towards achieving the standards set out in the framework. What is particularly interesting about this case is that the Hi Rez youth centre does not receive any government funding, however they thought it would be interesting and a growing experience to map their approach and methods onto the framework. This was a very useful process as it reaffirmed for them why they do what they do and how they approach their activities. It also enabled them to take a fresh look at what's expected in terms of quality and to be honest about their work rather than fearing honesty. They found that the exercise of mapping themselves to the framework affirmed what they do and they were able to fit their values and principles onto the framework. One drawback has been the issue that they are not government funded, amongst some young people at the centre they feel frustration that they can map themselves to the framework, but are not seen as a priority for funding, in their opinion due to their non-targeted, non-intervention approach.

In terms of influencing policy, their impression was that they have to make demands to be heard, that there isn't much collaboration and that being one small youth centre does not give them enough of a power base to influence policy making.

## Networking with other stakeholders

The youth centre has made attempts to connect to other youth projects in the area, however they have felt a certain degree of protectionism among some local projects who have been reluctant to open up their projects and to have their young people involved with the Hi Rez centre for fear of 'losing' them. However, they have been successful in networking with other key partners, such as having representatives on the local area partnership, the youth local health subgroup and are represented on the Headstrong panel (an initiative for better mental health among young people). The main benefit of sitting on these panels is the opportunity to give young people opportunities to influence things that affect them directly. They also get to learn more about various topics discussed on the panels and to enable other representatives to connect with them as young people.

## Supporting youth work

This example of youth work has found the support from the EU invaluable, particularly as they do not receive government funding due to the nature of their activities (not being intervention/prevention based), therefore the EU funding is often the only funding source available. A European element has been fundamental to this example, they present their model of youth work as being that they have to develop a concept of EU citizenship. They utilise the European Voluntary Service to demonstrate this to young people in the centre as it enables the young people to explicitly develop an understanding of other European countries and cultures through their exposure to the volunteers. They suggest that the EU could do more to recognise individual projects that are doing well and support dissemination of what they do in order to be acknowledged at the EU level.

The youth centre is one local youth centre, therefore it has no real 'national' profile. Therefore, it would be helpful the Department of Youth and Children to not only be aware and recognise the projects that they fund in the youth work sector, but to recognise those outside their funding streams.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Youth work should be based on people and relationships primarily rather than 'stuff'. Young people don't come to youth work activities for 'stuff' such as computers; they come to be able to connect with other youth people in a way that relates to them.
- Connect to positive things in young people's lives rather than focusing on the problems and issues of young people, whilst at the same time being a place for problems if they need it.
- Offer diversity and diverse possibilities for young people.
- Enable young people to self-manage their own projects and to be responsible for their own space. This can result in the activities being self-sustaining rather than reliant on youth workers.
- Give young people permission to say what they want and think, it should be a space for open dialogue.



# International Citizen Service

[HTTP://WWW.VSO-ICS.ORG.UK/PAGES/ICS.ASPX](http://www.vso-ics.org.uk/pages/ics.aspx)

## MISSION:

ICS is a youth volunteering programme in the UK that aims to develop 14,000 young people as active global citizens. Experiencing the power of community-based volunteering at first-hand enables young people to build on that learning throughout their lives. Throughout the duration of this 3 ½ year programme (completing August 2015), there will be 7,000 new advocates for international development from the UK who will volunteer in some of the poorest countries in the world alongside 7,000 locally based young people. These young people, whose potential as community leaders will be enhanced, will become part of a dynamic global network of young people who will learn to understand the potential of youth work across cultural boundaries to deliver positive change.

## Background

The Department for International Development's (DFID) International Citizen Service (ICS) is a youth volunteering programme that delivers direct development impact in poor communities through volunteer placements involving UK and national volunteers living, working and learning side-by-side. Through a structured programme, ICS aims to develop the skills of young people, both in the UK and in developing countries who make a lifelong contribution as advocates for international development. The ICS Programme started as a pilot between March 2011 and November 2012. The intention of the pilot was to explore the contribution 1,250 young British Citizens could make to international development. Following the success of the pilot, a further three years of ICS funding has been confirmed. The programme is implemented by a consortium of volunteering and development organisations. It is headed by VSO and has three equal outcomes that include the personal and social development of young volunteers; development outcomes in developing countries; and, advocates for international development and agents for social change in their own communities and beyond. As part of Prime Minister, David Cameron's 'Big Society' policy agenda, ICS is based on the belief that promoting global prosperity is both a moral duty and of national interest. The idea was to give young people who could not afford otherwise the

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Youth volunteering

Number of youth workers: 72

Number of young people: 14,000

Target group: Young people between 18-22 years of age

Year activities formally established: March 2011

chance to see the world and serve others. From its conception, ICS aimed to combine youth volunteering with the idea of youth for development.

It is based on seven key principles:

1. A diverse range of young people are given the opportunity to participate.
2. Volunteers are supported through the programme to ensure optimal personal development.
3. Every ICS placement must aim to achieve some kind of development impact.
4. Shared working and learning between young people from different countries is critical.
5. ICS volunteers must be an integral part of the community.
6. Volunteer learning is supported and encouraged through all parts of the journey.
7. ICS volunteers continue their commitment to live as active global citizens after the programme is finished.

## Approach to working with young people

The ICS programme is implemented by a consortium of six agencies, each working in certain countries on specific projects alongside national volunteers in these countries. The ICS send volunteers to over 28 countries covered by the consortium. In terms of what volunteers do, this largely depends on the country and the specific project they have been assigned to. For example:

**VSO volunteers** typically work on range of issues including, HIV and AIDS, education, youth leadership, access to healthcare, climate change in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Tajikistan.

**International Service** volunteers work to protect and promote the rights of women, people with disabilities, children, young people and people living with HIV and AIDS in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and occupied Palestinian territory.

**Prograssio** volunteers work alongside local communities to promote sustainable development and to empower people in aspects that affect their lives and typically work in El Salvador, Honduras, Malawi, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe.

**Tearfund** volunteers work with young people to raise their awareness about sexual and reproductive health, support local youth, sport and education clubs and increase people's access to food and clean water in Bolivia, Burundi and Rwanda.

**Restless Development** volunteers mainly work on civil participation, livelihoods and employment, sexual and reproductive health in India, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

**Raleigh International** volunteers work on issues relating to education, health, livelihoods, and strengthening civil society in India, Nicaragua and Tanzania.

The ICS scheme takes volunteers on a journey through recruitment and selection, to placement matching and pre-departure training. On arrival in-country, volunteers undergo orientation training before starting their development projects. A key focus of the training is to enable participants to understand how and why development volunteers can and do make a difference. On return to the UK (typically three months later), they undergo de-brief training in preparation for their active citizenship in the

### Key Approaches

UK volunteers work and learn alongside host country volunteers as equals.

Training and opportunities for learning are integral to the ICS model and determine the success of the programme.

UK. Once the volunteer starts their development projects, the activities that they are involved in vary from project to project and from country to country as shown above. The main target group for the ICS programme is young people between 18-25 years old. To ensure the active and positive engagement of the volunteers, volunteers are not selected on the basis of their qualifications, skills or social background as such, but rather through their commitment and motivation towards international development - though preference is given to those with some experience in community voluntary work. Ensuring the rich diversity of the volunteers is a contractual requirement of the programme and considered key to the success of the volunteering experience.

Young people as volunteers and team leaders participating in the ICS programme choose to do so for very different reasons – mostly for altruistic reasons but perhaps also to defer longer-term career decisions. Some young people started volunteering during previous studies and are keen to continue doing so before making concrete career decisions. Some young volunteers have an innate, deep rooted passion/interest for international development work through studies or previous life experiences; others just need and look for a chance to do something different.

Youth workers participating in the ICS see their role as having three main strands. The first concerns the pastoral nature of their role as essentially supporting the volunteers get the best out of their placement. The second concerns the more logistical/organisational aspect of their role, such as coordinating the volunteers and managing the impact of international development. The third role is in relation to their own personal development and opportunity to learn new skills.

Both the volunteers and the youth workers are required to undergo pre-placement training, in-country training and post-placement training as part of their de-briefing.

### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The ICS programme has three equal and interdependent outcomes:

- 1) Personal and social development of young volunteers.
- 2) Development outcomes in developing countries.
- 3) Advocates for international development and agents for social change in their own communities and beyond.

#### *Main outcomes and impacts*

Personal development of young people

Young people become lifelong advocates for international development and agents of social change

Local community involvement and clear development outcomes in developing countries

An evaluation of the pilot programme provides evidence to demonstrate the positive impact of the ICS programme in relation to each of the three outcomes listed above. Overall the evaluation found that the pilot programme has made progress towards its overall purpose of generating knowledge about youth volunteering and demonstrating the contribution that young British volunteers from a variety of backgrounds can make to international development and poverty reduction. The evaluation also reported that the personal development of the ICS volunteers has created the biggest impact as it has been the most visible, immediate and easy to assess. Increased skills, knowledge and confidence of ICS volunteers feed directly into the second and third areas of impact: development outcomes (through placements) and local/international development (through longer-term active citizenship). Following the pilot it was noted that the extent to which the programme contributes to poverty reduction will become more explicit.

Integral to each project are a number of structured methods at different levels that are used to capture the kind of impact the ICS programme has had. For example, local communities through partner organisations are involved in setting objectives and

defining activities to be undertaken during the timeframe of the programme. Being placed alongside in-country volunteers lends itself to reciprocal skills share allowing for the transfer of skills between volunteers and the local community who in turn are invited to provide feedback on the impact of the development activity at the end of the project. Volunteers and team leaders are also required to undertake an 'action at home' activity. This allows individual volunteers the opportunity to translate their experiences to galvanise their communities at home when they return. This serves to raise awareness of the development activity they were involved in and provides demonstrated evidence of the impact of their involvement in the ICS programme and contribution to international development.

ICS volunteers are only eligible to participate in projects at the request of the local community and their contribution is seen as complementing the work and skills of the local community, in-country volunteers and locally based stakeholders – namely the NGOs. Concrete examples of the added value of what is being achieved as part of the ICS programme include designing a gravity water feed system in a small village called El Rodeo in Nicaragua. Re-opening a sports centre for disabled people in Burkina Faso in West Africa that led to organised advocacy for disabled basketball teams and a large event broadcasted on TV in five countries across West Africa. As a result, disabled basketball was for the first time incorporated into the national basketball league. A further example includes the 'education for all campaign' in Palestine.

In terms of what youth workers gain out of their experience, some powerful reactions were provided. For example: to see young people make their way through the world; to have a role in helping young people grow and define who they are and develop the skills they need to understand their own principles and live by them and have faith in them; to encourage and support young people in becoming more courageous and developing self-esteem; to watch young people overcome their fears and to understand that confidence is built by doing something you are afraid of. In addition, to see young people develop skills, a passion for volunteering and to be involved in an experience that will shape them for life. Added benefits that are more related to their own professional development were also highlighted, for example in terms of developing leadership, problem-solving and communication skills in real and challenging environments.

In terms of what the young people gain from their involvement with ICS activities, young people see poverty at first hand and this changes the way they view the world. Young people also experience and value a sense of community, looking out for other people and respecting other cultures. Young people also develop skills to help prepare them for the labour market together with greater political awareness and sense of direction in terms of future career choices.

In terms of the trajectories of youth workers and young people, many develop an everlasting passion for international development and/or volunteering. Generally speaking, jobs in this field are hugely competitive and not always highly paid. Many return to education and typically take up further studies either in education, development or politics. Many have also been known to move into public policy roles or into politics.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

In recent years the type, characteristics and diversity of youth workers and volunteers has become more varied and in policy terms (as discussed below) the focus is now very much on engaging young people and providing them with the tools and support to become active citizens.

More broadly, the value of youth work has become more prominent now than it was in the last 5-10 years. For example, a number of employers now actively encourage and

allow for volunteering within a youth work context as part of their corporate social responsibility agenda, though this is typically UK based rather than in relation to youth volunteering within international development. PriceWaterhouseCoopers provides an interesting example of how employees are incentivised to participate in volunteering activities as an integral feature/criteria within formal HR review processes.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

The ICS programme is not governed by a regulatory framework as such but is guided by its seven principles (as provided above). Regulatory frameworks in host countries must however be adhered to and all ICS participants must abide by the law of the country where they are volunteering. The seven principles provide a framework for which the ICS programme is designed, developed and implemented and serves as a tool to manage and ensure the quality of the programme. Within this, the ICS has a duty of care to protect all of its volunteers and to provide clear guidelines/instruction on health, safety and well-being that in turn determines the success of the project. For example, in many countries homosexuality is forbidden and as such volunteers are informed and advised to practice safely. Where political unrest is prevalent in neighbouring countries, again volunteers are informed and advised to be mindful of the broader and extended political environment e.g. kidnapping of British persons in Mali. All ICS volunteers and team leaders are required to undergo a CRB check.

### **Relationship with policy**

Over the past 10-15 years or so there has been a number of policy shifts at national level that have led to an increased focus on youth work in the UK. This can be reflected in attempts made by previous political parties to support the needs of young people identified as 'at risk', to address social exclusion, and to support young people identified as NEETs through the use of youth work approaches as part of New Labour's respect agenda<sup>24</sup>. In continued vein, the Coalition Government announced its 'Big Society' initiative in 2010 which was to be a restructuring of the relationship between the central state and civil society, envisaging community groups becoming empowered by a culture of volunteering. A key focus of the 'Big Society' was the economic and social inclusion of young people through youth work approaches that aimed to engage and develop young people as active citizens. With an increased focus on young people there was also a view that young people need to feel responsible for their own actions. Whilst international development volunteering opportunities were seen as a viable policy option to improve the employability skills of young people, provide them with a sense of community responsibility and empower them to build their own futures, there were concerns about what the government was perceived to be funding. This is largely because there are a large number of UK based organisations operating within the international development sector. At one end of the spectrum were those that were primarily offering one year gap/holiday/activity opportunities, to the other end that focused primarily on development/employment opportunities. As continues to be the case today, there is a clear and strong policy message that youth work and volunteering opportunities within an international development context must be treated with upmost caution. It also continues to be the case that within the policy context, young people who have been exposed to effective volunteering at a young age go on to be active citizens for the rest of their lives.

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<sup>24</sup> NYA interview

In the context of the ICS programme, there is an interesting debate about where political interest is most focused and directed in terms of the three main outcomes of the programme which are:

- 1) Personal and social development of young volunteers.
- 2) Development outcomes in developing countries.
- 3) Advocates for international development and agents for social change in their own communities and beyond.

Whilst it is thought that DIFD has a particular focus and interest in the second outcome, there is a broader political interest in the impact the ICS programme and its activities have on young people in UK and how it shapes them as agents for social change in the future. Though a three month development programme may be viewed by some as a costly gap/activity opportunity funded by the state, the value of reciprocal sharing of skills between volunteers and the local community is critical – not only in meeting the three main outcomes of the project but in relation to sustainable international development more broadly.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

As the ICS is based on a consortium approach, networking and partnership is a distinct and integral component of the model. The structure of the programme is such that the UK based team leader together with a group of volunteers' team up with an in-country team leader and a group of volunteers. This collective group is assigned to an in-country office who typically works with locally based NGOs who are well established amongst the local community in which it serves. The level of investment made by the in-country office and the NGO in developing respect and gaining the trust of the local community is extensive and extremely powerful. Once established, this manifests itself in the local community agreeing to accept help and support from the in-country office and the NGO in the form of a specific type of structured development project. It is important not to underestimate the level of investment, networking and expertise that is behind projects being created and volunteers working with and for the local community. Being connected with the local community enables the volunteers to feel part of the community they are aiming to serve, to better understand their needs and make a contribution that is of real, visible and sustained value.

Each member of the consortium has an alumni network in place. Returning volunteers and team leaders are encouraged to maintain contact with each other and through the alumni are supported in their continued journey as active citizens. Many continue to maintain strong affiliations with the country in which they volunteered. For example Liam Conlon volunteered as a team leader in Burkina Faso with International Service and worked with a number of paraplegics who later became members of the Burkina Faso London Paralympic team. After returning to the UK after his volunteering experience, Liam was invited to meet the Burkina Faso Paralympic team at Heathrow airport. On arrival the team had limited funds and sports equipment that failed to meet the requirements of the Paralympic standards. Liam set about housing the team, finding training facilities and securing funds to purchase new sports equipment. This tells a remarkable story of the strength and value of ICS networking at its best.

A number of returning volunteers/team leaders are known to have moved into the civil service, many taking up political posts later in their career – for example Tony Cunningham MP joined the labour party after returning from VSO later to become the Shadow Minister for International Development (in 2011). To date he continues to be patron for VSO.



## Supporting youth work

Following the success of the ICS pilot, DIFD has confirmed funding for the programme for 3.5 years until the end of August 2015. This represents strong political support for the ICS and in what it is trying to achieve. Initiatives, programmes and organisations that attempt to do youth work and youth volunteering within a development context need to approach and treat their involvement/contribution with due care. Development work that is not structured and designed within a clearly defined framework can be more harmful and damaging for the volunteers involved and the local communities in which they are based. As such, it is important that government funding is sufficient enough to ensure programmes are designed and developed in a way that is supported within very clear and robust framework/guidelines.

Whilst the ICS programme is part of a broader portfolio of youth work initiatives available to young people across the UK, it is distinct in that its focus is on international development. The Youth in Action Programme that is currently being delivered through the British Council in the UK primarily engages young people in European volunteering opportunities. As such ICS has little involvement with the programme and is not directly influenced by European policies. However in terms of supporting the professional and personal development of young people as active citizens, greater recognition of the value and impact of youth work is required –

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- ☐ Diversity of volunteers.
- ☐ Framework to measure and manage the impact of international development.
- ☐ Framework to demonstrate value in terms of making a difference.
- ☐ Youth workers with the right skills and attitude.
- ☐ Structured learning opportunities.
- ☐ Training and support to empower youth workers and volunteers.
- ☐ Recognition of the value, impact and contribution of youth work.
- ☐ Partnership and networking

though it is recognised that measuring the value and impact of youth work is complex and challenging – particularly within a development context.

# JUSTAment

[WWW.VIJ-FRANKFURT.DE/SCHUELERPROJEKT-JUSTAMENT.HTML](http://WWW.VIJ-FRANKFURT.DE/SCHUELERPROJEKT-JUSTAMENT.HTML)

## Approach to working with young people

### MISSION:

JUSTAment is a project of the Frankfurt regional branch of the Verein f. Internationale Jugendarbeit – an association of civil society groups belonging to the Diakonie, social branch of the German Evangelical Church. The project's goal is to support school students in the last years of Hauptschule and Realschule (two lower educational tracks in the German educational system) through career counselling and other relevant learning experiences provided by Senior Partners – volunteers of retirement or pre-retirement age, mostly of academic background, who lead workshops and other activities for students in the three selected schools in the Frankfurt region, within the framework of the formal school curriculum.

Given the socially stratified character of the German education system, with early tracking presenting a hurdle for students whose parents have only reached lower education levels, by the time a student in lower educational tracks reaches the end of lower secondary cycle, the options for them are to continue their studies at the next higher level of the education ladder, to go into vocational education and training or to become an unqualified worker. Most of the school students targeted by the project come from Hauptschule and Realschule – the two school tracks that lead to vocational education. Only up to 10% of students in the three schools involved in the project go into upper secondary school and have a chance of entering university. The majority of students, in order to obtain a professional qualification, have to go through the VET system, which in Germany means dual education, with a strong emphasis on workplace learning. In order to obtain vocational qualifications, it is essential for a student to find a place of vocational practice (Praktikum), which presents a significant difficulty in the current labour market situation and requires social skills and confidence (given that candidates have to pass an interview).

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Career counselling and support for young people from socially vulnerable groups.

Number of employees: 3

Number of voluntary Senior Partners: 57

Number of young people: currently 220

Target group: Lower secondary school students, 14-18.

Year activities established: 2008

The JUSTAment project is designed to provide necessary support and encouragement for school students from socially vulnerable backgrounds at this crucial stage in their lives, by sourcing the knowledge, experience and energy of volunteers who have been successful in their own careers (Senior Partners). The idea came from a survey of relevant projects that Verein f. Internationale Jugendarbeit Frankfurt carried out before embarking on this project. The project StartKlar, implemented by the City of Stuttgart, was selected as a model for this project, and further developed by the project team. The key factors that led them to select the approach already practiced by StartKlar was the inter-generational concept and the integrated nature of project activities as part of the official school curriculum, ensuring mandatory attendance by students. Making project workshops part of the formal school curriculum was chosen due to general lack of motivation, before trust-based relationship between students and Senior Partners is established.

Senior Partners are engaged on the basis of individual interest and through networking activities (in the recent years, project alumni from among former students are invited to take part in these networking activities). Approximately 60% of Senior Partners are academics, others are former managers, experts, a costume designer, an engineer and representatives of other professions. The project team maintains gender balance among Senior Partners. The inter-generational aspect of the approach means that elderly people also benefit from the project by being involved in activities together with youngsters, learning new things (e.g. about mobile apps) and feeling needed.

### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The main achievement of the project so far is the successful passage of most young people involved from lower secondary school to education and training leading to professional qualifications.

The added value of JUSTAment is evident from the fact that for several years, every student involved in the project (except one) has been successful when time came for them to find a placement for Praktikum, which allowed them to join the German VET system successfully, with a good chance of obtaining qualifications. This is above the usual success rate for Hauptschule graduates in Germany.

According to the project leader, this was achieved by encouragement, career counselling and support given by the Senior Partners through JUSTAment project activities. While the impact of the project has not been (mainly) in bringing more young people of migration and working-class background to tertiary education (and this has also never been its declared goal), it still provides young people who do not get support for their studies and career orientation at home with a base of confidence and knowledge about the professional world, allowing them to make a safe and confident start in professional life.

#### *Outcomes and impacts*

Most young people involved in the project have successfully passed from lower secondary school to education and training leading to professional qualifications.

Students involved in the project almost always managed to find an apprenticeship placement, which is not easy in the competitive VET system.

Contact with Senior Partners provides young people from socially fragile backgrounds with a base of knowledge about the professional world, helping them to make a confident start in adult life.

In 2011 the project received the Alterspreis – an award for projects that support the integration of elderly people into community.

Young people who were reached by the project in 2008-2010 are now in vocational training or working, some still maintain contact with Senior Partners who were responsible for them.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

The project has not been around long enough to experience significant new trends. However, project team finds that with the expansion of their base (now including three schools), they need to make more effort to address cultural diversity (in one of the schools, students are mostly from migration background, and many have traumatic experiences in their past – e.g. families from Afghanistan). Given the strong orientation of their target group towards vocational education and training, they are also seeking to recruit Senior Partners from hand workers' professions.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

The inclusion of JUSTament workshops in the formal school curriculum in the three schools where the project is currently implemented had to be approved by the Ministry responsible for education in the Federal Land of Hessen – Hessisches Kultusministerium. The permission to include workshops in the curriculum was granted easily, without any difficulties.

### **Relationship with Policy**

The project has not been going on long enough to experience a change in national policy that has affected it directly. The main concern of project implementers regarding national policy is the lack of public funding for initiatives such as theirs. They have had to fundraise for the last few years, in order to ensure the continuation of the project. While JUSTament project team would like a change in policy that would bring public funding to projects like theirs, so far they have not undertaken any activities to influence federal or local policy in this respect.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

In their work, the team of JUSTament maintain close contact with schools where the project is operating. They also cooperate with businesses – workshops acquainting young people with work and working conditions in enterprises have been sponsored by a number of big firms in the region. For fundraising purposes, they cooperate with charities and entrepreneurs' clubs, and with the German Stock Exchange. They publicise their activities and work with the media in order to maintain a visible profile and to be able to fundraise successfully.

### **Supporting youth work**

The main type of support that project team of JUSTament would like to receive is public funding: from the federal government, but also from the European Social Fund. In their opinion, conditions for applying for project funding to European Social Fund are far too complicated and demanding for small organisations that do not have a special staff member responsible for EU projects. They believe the EU could support organisations like theirs by making application process for European Social Fund more accessible for small organisations.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Including activities for at-risk youth in the official school curriculum is seen by the team of JUSTAment as a crucial requirement for the project to reach the target group at initial stages, before establishing the trust-based relationship between volunteers (Senior Partners) and the young people.
- Encouraging discussions and exchange of opinions among students, but not imposing any decisions that may be seen as right by adults, was mentioned by a Senior Partner of JUSTAment as key to success when older people and young people come together in one project.
- The idea of involving two generations (elderly and youth) in one project works better if the project is constructed as a 'two-way road', ensuring that intergenerational exchange brings benefits to both sides.

# Keys for life – Developing key competences in leisure and non-formal education (CZ)

[WWW.KLICEPROZIVOT.CZ](http://WWW.KLICEPROZIVOT.CZ)

## MISSION:

Keys for Life (Klíče pro život) was a large-scale multi-annual project of the National Institute for Children and Youth (NIDM). It had for objective to strengthen continuous training of persons working in this sector and thus to improve the quality of leisure education and non-formal learning opportunities for children and young people in the Czech Republic. The project had several strands of activities ranging from research about the state of play of non-formal education and leisure education, through delivery of training, recognition of non-formal learning, to development of quality standards for organisations.

This case study describes in particular the training activities delivered by NGOs based on standards designed by NIDM.

The case study is based on interviews with NIDM but also with three organisations that piloted the approach described. These organisations are:

**Atmosfera** - local association working with schools to provide experiential learning to children and young people

**Brontosaurus** - a youth NGO which integrates non-formal/ experiential education with the objectives of nature preservation, cultural monument conservation and sustainable development.

**Junak** - is the Czech association of scouts and guides

## Background

In the Czech Republic leisure education for children and young people is considered an element of the education system and as such falls under the Education Act. This form of learning is publicly funded and delivered by a range of organisations. The fact that it falls under the Education Act implies, among other things, certain requirements when it comes to qualifications and continuing training of staff. However leisure education represents only a segment of work with children and young people. There are many non-formal education activities delivered by other types of organisations – associations and movements. The activities of these organisations are in general very similar to those of leisure education centres.

The idea behind the national project Keys for Life was to strengthen the quality of work with children and young people in general, independent of the type of organisation which delivers this form of work. Therefore the activities were open to publicly funded organisations in the field of leisure education as well as NGOs.

The aim of the project Keys for Life was to strengthen the quality of non-formal education by improving the training opportunities for people active in this sector (be it employees or volunteers). Another aim of the project was to improve the visibility and recognition of competences of these people and to enhance their employability. This was to be achieved through use of common competence standards as well as procedures for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The underpinning idea was that people would be trained or recognised against the same general standard which would improve their mobility within the sector but also beyond, for example in the private sector.

The project had different components of which only some

are discussed in this case study. The project was led by the National Institute for Children and Youth which is a government agency that provides support (including training) to the sector of work with children and youth.

### Approach to working with young people

The project delivered the following:

- The project identified 24 professional profiles that are recurrent in organisations working with children and young people. These profiles are in different areas such as management of organisations and administration, pedagogics and psychology, environmental education, health protection.
- A set of minimum competence standards was described for each professional profile. For each profile the standard describes: the typical working tasks, professional skills, and professional knowledge. These profiles were designed in close cooperation with representatives of organisations working with children and youth. They were improved based on feedback received from those who used them as basis for design of programmes. The standards were designed taking into account the national qualifications framework requirements for qualification definition and description;
- Examples of training programmes for each of the professional profiles. NIDM tested the professional standards by publishing a call for tenders to design and deliver a training programme for each of the profiles. The tenders were aimed at organisations working with children and youth. The organisations that won the

#### *Key Facts:*

Theme of activity: Training for people working with children and youth

Number of youth workers: The whole project reached to approximately 12,000 persons but this includes all project activities

Number of organisations reached: over 1000 organisations were involved of which 28% were leisure education centres, 34% were organisations active next to schools and 38% were NGOs and associations (again all activities)

Target group: all organisations working with children and young people

Year activities established: The project was ran in the period 2009-2013

#### *Key Approaches*

Definition of professional profiles and competence standards

Design of training based on common competence standards

Use of self-assessment to make skills and competences gained visible and to ensure their recognition



tender were required to use the profiles as basis to design (or re-design) a training programme for people active in their organisation but possibly also for others. They were also required to deliver the training and provide feedback to NIDM about the professional profile. Examples of training programmes were published;

- In terms of methodology, the training delivery was required to use participants' self-assessment at the beginning of the training as well as on completion. Examples of tools for self-assessment were provided. Participants' awareness of their skills and competences and how the training contributes to these was seen as a crucial element of the training methodology.

#### Examples from organisations interviewed

**Junak** (Scout movement) was working with several competence profiles of which one was the profile of leader of youth work. This profile concerns the people who autonomously manage, implement and evaluate the work of a group of children and young people. Junak already has its own definition of people having these roles and like the profile from Keys for Life the Junak profile for a leader is described in terms of competences. However the fact that the Junak profile is competence based is relatively new and many people on the ground are still learning to work with this approach. Similarly there already was a training programme for people becoming leaders. When working with the profile developed by NIDM, Junak compared its own competence standards with those from Keys for Life. To a large extent these are compatible though the ones from Junak are more detailed and contain also aspects about values and attitudes which are shared within the organisation. The main innovation for Junak was the use of self-assessment. This was considered as a valuable contribution to the learning and development process as it makes aspiring leaders become more aware of where they are, what their objectives are and how they are developing. The self-assessment approach is now mainstreamed into the core training programme of Junak.

**Brontosaurus** was working with the profile in the field of environmental education as this is close to their core mission. Brontosaurus delivers training in this field for its members but also for the wider public. As part of the project Keys for Life they have developed and delivered a new five day module based on the NIDM competence profile. Like for the example from Junak the main innovation for them was also the use of self-assessment. In the past they asked training participants to define their expectations but the use of self-assessment is seen as a better approach to motivate participants and contribute to their personal development.

**Atmosfera** developed a course on how to motivate persons working with children and young people and how to motivate 'oneself'. The course was delivered to people in the association Atmosfera (which is a small local NGO) but mainly to people from other organisations in the geographical area such as local scout groups, leisure education facilities or people from other NGOs. This was the first time they delivered a course for participants from other organisations.

#### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The evaluation of the project Keys for Life concluded, when it comes to activities described above, that:

- The project contributed to harmonisation of terminology in organisations working with children and young people. Some organisations were working with competence descriptions prior to Keys for Life but others were not. Those that did

were not using standardised terminology and not all had detailed competence profile descriptions such as those brought in by the project;

- In particular small organisations did not have clearly defined professional positions, for these the contribution of Keys for Life was in providing a standard framework;
- The project also enabled participating organisations to become aware of the contribution of non-formal education to the development of more 'soft' competences. In particular the organisations learnt how to work with these competences and how to systematically work with people to develop them.

Another outcome cited by one of the interviewees was the cooperation and hopefully convergence (in terms of shared understanding) between different types of organisations. As said above, the sector of work with young people in the Czech Republic is quite segmented due to different funding approaches and the extent to which some aspects of it are regulated and others are not (see country report for CZ). One of the strengths of this project was to consider the whole field of work with children and youth as one sector.

More concretely the following results were cited by the organisations interviewed:

- This was the first time that Atmosfera association delivered training to people from other organisations. However, there is a funding issue for continuing delivery of the training to external people. Atmosfera was considering getting the course accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in order to continue delivering the training (for a fee) but due to time constraints this has not yet been done;
- Junak integrated the self-assessment approach to its training programmes for leaders. This has now become an inherent part of the approach. Through the project Keys for Life they were also able to combine two programmes into one – the training for leaders with that for people managing water-sport activities;
- Brontosaurus continues the delivery of the programme delivered even though it is broken down into smaller components. The full five days course is quite heavy and though it will probably be repeated as a whole again this is likely to be only once every two years.

Though the project is now concluded, there continues to be public funding for training activities in the field of work with children and youth. It is expected that organisations will be applying for this funding using the professional profiles and examples of training programmes.

## Experience of trends in youth work

The following trends were discussed by the interviewees:

### External trends (not linked specifically to youth work)

- Short-term visibility – young people are used to subscribing to activities at last moment. This makes it more difficult for youth organisations to plan ahead. They have to adjust to a much quicker way of working;
- Linked to the above children and young people with whom youth organisations work have less time because they have many different activities. This is also sometimes reflected in the commitment of voluntary youth leaders or workers. One interviewee noted that: *the best leaders have many activities and it is hard to make them fully commit and dedicate substantial time to one thing*;
- Visibility online and on social media is a must to keep in contact with the target group;

- Recognition of the contribution of youth work is not always what it should be – even among parents they sometimes see their children’s participation in youth organisations/ movements as a leisure activity not as a personal development and learning process. One interviewee noted: *Sometimes we have the feeling that parents see us as after-school leisure centre (i.e. on Monday the kid plays piano and on Wednesday s/he goes to scouts). They focus on the experience while we are trying to emphasise the educational aspect of our work.*
- Thematic preferences of young people evolve – one interviewee noted that for example some time ago the theme of nature was not very popular and seen as somewhat boring while today there is new audience of parents (and through them children ) and youth interested in this theme.

### **Systemic aspects**

- Youth work activities used to be funded from different sources – for example the ministry of environment used to fund environmental non-formal education, ministry of justice used to fund preventive activities. Increasingly the funding for youth work of other ministries dries out while those allocated by the Ministry of education, youth and sport stagnate;
- Funding activities – there is interest from the side of young people and they are willing to pay in order to take part in youth activities, however, it is impossible for youth organisations to offer activities at a price that is accessible to all without subsidies or sponsorship;
- Project-based funding requires a lot of administration which means that increasingly more resources are actually spent on the administration than on the activities as such. Furthermore, there is a requirement of sustainability but this is often difficult to meet once the grant is spent;

### **Trends linked to the work of organisations**

- Youth organisations want to focus more on young people aged 18-26. Traditionally in the Czech Republic they work a lot with the younger segment of youth but they see the need as well as the opportunities to work with those who are older;
- At the same time some organisations are starting to focus on children in very early age and others are developing work with families;
- Innovation of activities- youth organisations are really trying to keep pace with what young people are interested in doing. This is reflected in the methods they use – for example one interviewee cited the use of flash-mobs as a current trend;
- Growing understanding of the need to focus on young people who are not members or any organisation. In the past a lot of organisations worked on the principle of membership and offering activities to members. Today young people are less willing to commit to be a member for a long time. There is a need to work with them without the principle of membership.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Some activities of the project Keys for Life were clearly influenced by the regulatory framework in place, notably:

- The education act sets requirements for people working in leisure education centres in terms of their qualifications and continuous training;
- Similarly the positions of summer camp leaders have to comply with certain requirements;

- There are other positions in organisations working with young people that necessitate specific knowledge and skills for example when it comes to management and accounting or health and safety.

The objective of the project Keys for Life was among other things to ensure that there are good-quality training opportunities available for people in these functions. The regulations alone do not bring quality into the system of work with children and young people. For the regulations to make any real difference to the practice there have to be good quality learning opportunities in place.

These regulations also brought on the table the issue of recognition. When people move across organisations it is important to have certain track or evidence of their competence. That is why the project also focused on the development of competence portfolio and tools to support recognition.

### **Relationship with policy**

The project Keys for Life was a result of willingness of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to further strengthen the quality of work with children and young people and to recognise that this work is of added value to the society, young people individually as well as those working with them.

The project was developed in parallel to other national initiatives, in particular the development of a national approach to recognition of non-formal and informal learning leading to the achievement of professional qualifications. The development of national qualifications framework is accompanied by a movement towards use of competence-based standards for qualifications and training programmes. The project Keys for Life used a very similar terminology and approach to define professional profiles as the qualifications framework.

In this context the influence of European policies on recognition of non-formal and informal learning, shift to learning outcomes and tools such as YouthPass were noted by some interviewees – in particular those active at national level.

### **Supporting youth work**

The bullet points below present the needs of the youth sector cited by the interviewees. It should be noted upfront that there was not a clear agreement on this point among the six persons interviewed and the below presents a sum of the different points mentioned rather than a consensus.

- There is a need to simplify and rationalise the way in which youth work is publicly (co-)funded. It is currently different for different types of organisations even though they do very similar work and activities as others which receive much less public funding. Public funding should be allocated according to clear policy goals and priorities, taking into account outcomes and it should not necessarily prioritise certain types of organisations compared to others.
- At the same time there needs to be a balance between the level of public (co-)funding and what is expected in return from organisations working with children and youth. For example if there are State-led requirements for qualifications or training of people working with children and young people there should also be publicly funded training offer for these profiles;
- It is currently quite difficult to get funding for the organisation and management aspects of work with children and youth. It is not so difficult to find the funding to actually carry out the activities themselves. These activities do not have to be expensive in terms of material needed etc. But there is an increasing need for organisations to be very professional when it comes to planning, communication

and information as well as evaluation and assessment. Such work should be somehow rewarded (not necessarily as a full job but there should be some financial reward) and this is difficult to get funding for.

- Strategies, priorities and funding programmes in the field of youth work should be based on real understanding of the needs of the sector. At the moment there is still fairly little evidence of what the sector needs. The project Keys for Life filled certain gaps in this area but it is not yet sufficient.

## Networking with other stakeholders

The project Keys for Life in itself was a step towards better networking of organisations working with children and youth. There are already networks of NGOs and those of leisure education centres. This project tried to bring together different types of organisations.

However, there are important differences in the ways in which organisations are networked:

- Most large organisations are connected within the country as well as internationally;
- Some small organisations are also relatively well connected – be it within a region or even internationally;
- But some small grassroots organisations do not have the capacity (in terms of time and resources) to develop contacts with other organisations.

## Sources

Web-site of the project Keys for Life:

[www.kliceprozivot.cz](http://www.kliceprozivot.cz)

Publications (available on above web-site):

NIDM (2012) *Sada vzdelavacich programu a prikladu dobre praxe*

NIDM (2012) *Cesty k uznvani*

NIDM (2012) *Sebeevaluacni nástroje*

Bocan et al. (2013) *Zpráva z evaluace projektu Klíče pro život – rozvoj klíčových kompetencí v zájmovém a neformálním vzdělávání*

NIDM (2012) *Sada minimalnich kompetencnich profilu pro pozice v NNO v oblasti prace s detmi a mladezi*

Organisations interviewed:

Association Atmosfera <http://www.os-atmosfera.net/>

Junak <http://www.skaut.cz/>

Brontosaurus <http://www.brontosaurus.cz/>

### Top Tips:

- Activities offered by youth organizations have to be **attractive** to young people. At the same time it should not become a pure consumption product/service.
- People active in these organisations have to show **empathy** to enable children and young people develop themselves.
- Youth work activities should combine **local and global themes** to on one hand create a concrete hook for young people but at the same time broaden their horizons;
- Youth work should **activate** young people. They should not be passive participants but they should have responsibility and initiative;
- It should pursue clear objectives that are **meaningful** for young people. The activities as such are just a method that the person in a leading position chooses. There is a difference between the methods and the aims.
- Organisations should provide **safe environment** where everyone can find his/her place despite their differences;
- People doing youth work have to find it meaningful themselves and find **satisfaction** in doing this work. Otherwise they are unlikely to create positive experience for others;
- Organisations providing youth work should issue young people with **meaningful certificates** which document the competences the person has developed. The documentation should be useful for the young person to realise his/her capabilities but also as a proof of achievement for others.

# KRAS

[WWW.GLOBELINK.BE/KRAS](http://WWW.GLOBELINK.BE/KRAS)

## MISSION:

KRAS (previously known as “Student Parliament”) is a long-running national initiative led by the Flemish youth service Globelink in Belgium. Young people between 16 and 19 years of age from secondary schools across Flanders discuss and debate global themes (e.g. children’s rights, climate, nutrition) through a simulation exercise of parliamentary debates and tabling legislative bills throughout the school year. Doing so will enhance negotiating skills as they take the part of different governmental and non-governmental players.

KRAS has been running for over 30 years and – as all Globelink’s projects – it foremost aims to *“support young people in developing competences to enable them to independently make decisions in life”*. KRAS teaches young people – through simulation exercises and role playing games – to formulate their own opinion and make their own decisions, whilst taking into account the points of views and interests of others. KRAS also aims to engage young people in global themes thereby enabling them to reflect on how global issues impact the world and place their own living environment in a wider perspective.

## Approach to working with young people

KRAS is led by youth service Globelink - a non-profit organisation offering activities for young people on global issues (e.g. human rights, climate, nutrition, democracy, employment, media) - and implemented in partnership with secondary schools in the Flemish speaking community of Belgium. All across Flanders there exist so-called “KRAS Groups” in 23 towns comprising of local secondary schools. A KRAS Group is co-led by a youth worker (from Globelink) and teachers from the schools. The students can voluntarily sign up to the local KRAS Group. Both teachers and students participate on a voluntary basis and activities take place in their leisure time.

Globelink, in cooperation with a few young people, selects a global theme for all KRAS Groups for the duration of the school year. The annual global theme for 2012/2013 is children’s rights and the theme for the next school year is nutrition. The KRAS approach is identical for all KRAS Groups: students are divided into sub-groups and each takes the part of different players (e.g. political party, enterprise, NGO, government, media, interest group) in the content of the global theme.

Throughout the academic year, students take part in approximately three (this

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: youth and the world

Number of youth workers: 4 (part-time)

Number of young people: 600 – 650

Target group: 16-19 age range

Year activities established: since 1980s



number may vary across KRAS Groups) simulation exercises whereby they simulate tabling legislative proposals and amendments. Then, two other sessions are organised whereby young people no longer take the part of an actor. At this stage, young people need to express their own views on the topic and debate among themselves. They also enter into debate with local actors and policy makers on the topic.

At the end of the school year – at the end of May - Globelink organises the final conference whereby young people from all KRAS Groups get together at the Flemish Parliament in Brussels for a final day of debating and tabling policy recommendations (exclusively based on the KRAS participants' positions) for policy makers, which are afterwards disseminated at national level by Globelink. The recommendations for policy makers from KRAS Group 2013 are available<sup>25</sup>.

The entire process is led by youth workers who also offer pedagogical support to the KRAS Groups; youth workers – sometimes with the help of young people – design the programme and thematic focus of the year. Youth workers ensure that the initiative is designed to develop and equip young people with competences to independently make decisions in life. Interestingly, young people willing to get more involved in the initiative are able to work together with youth workers in the design and implementation of the initiative; for instance young people help with the organisation of the final conference (e.g. welcoming politicians/policy makers, chairing sessions, writing policy recommendations). Youth workers (pedagogically) support young people and ensure they receive appropriate training (e.g. basic writing, facilitation skills). With the youth worker support, young people are able to undertake their work to a great extent independently.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

Anecdotal evidence suggests that KRAS helps young people to increase their ability to critically reflect upon issues, independently formulate an opinion, speak in public and debate with their peers, and work in teams. Young people that help youth workers with the organisation of KRAS also increase their organisational skills by assisting youth workers with, for instance, the organisation of the final conference. Due to the lack of evidence it is not possible to make any evidenced statements on the outcomes and impacts of KRAS.

Teachers pointed out that KRAS is a valuable addition to the formal education offer. KRAS distinguishes itself from formal education as its approach is based on "learning by doing" and "playful learning" whereby the KRAS methods are grounded on interactivity and competition between students. These elements are lacking and not strongly present in the formal education system. Moreover, a global approach to contemporary issues is often not applied in formal education to the extent that KRAS does. Teachers pointed out that teaching hours are taken up by teaching core curriculum subjects which leaves little time to spend on global issues. Another element that distinguishes KRAS from formal education is that students have a high degree of autonomy; they can steer the debates and discussions and make decisions on amendments and proposals without interference from teachers.

### *Key outcomes*

Young people are able to critically reflect upon issues and independently formulate an opinion

Young people gain soft skills such as public speaking and debating skills

Learning is made fun by integrating theory in simulation exercises and adding competitive elements

<sup>25</sup> <http://krasblogt.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/resultaten-slotzitting-kras-3-mei-2013.pdf>

Students not only appreciate the high level of autonomy but also enjoy debating and interacting with their peers. Overall, KRAS is a valuable experience for young people. Anecdotal evidence further suggests that the initiative is indeed successful as the number of participants remained stable. Teachers however pointed out that they feel they need to put more efforts into the recruitment of young people who now have many options available for spending leisure time. Nevertheless, the overall number of KRAS participants has remained stable over recent years. An essential part of the successful recruitment of young people depends on the enthusiasm of the teachers and their ability to motivate and engage students, said a youth worker.

### Experience of trends in youth work

The basic concept of KRAS remained largely the same over the past 30 years. The main trends identified are the following:

- 1) **Engagement of young people** – young people's lives have become increasingly busier and there are more options available to them to spend their leisure time than in the past. The teachers – responsible for the recruitment of the students – need to put in much effort to motivate young people to engage in projects that take place out of school hours.
- 2) **Funding** – return on investment has become an increasingly more important concept. Funding sources set more requirements to demonstrate the profit or outcome/impact of initiatives. Although this was identified as a trend, the KRAS initiative has not been directly impacted by it.

### Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice

Over the past decade youth work and youth work policy has not changed significantly in Flanders. The renewed Flemish policy on youth and children's rights of 2012 replaced the previous decree of 2008. The essentials of youth work remained the same and anecdotal evidence suggests that the KRAS initiative was not influenced in any way by regulatory frameworks.

These decrees lay down a number of requirements (qualitative) for the allocation of funding to youth work organisations. Youth service Globelink is funded by the Flemish government and funding criteria include: geographical scope of activities (i.e. target at least four provinces), activities need to be locally-oriented, pedagogical approach needs to be applied). As Globelink and the KRAS initiative have proven to comply with the governmental criteria and demonstrated the project relevance, funding has not been an issue.

### Relationship with policy

National policy has not influenced the project in any way over the past decade. In terms of policy influence, youth workers always try to ensure the involvement of local and national policy makers in the activity. Policy makers are also invited to the final conference but interviewees suggested that it is a challenging exercise to have the involvement of policy makers and politicians in such activities. Globelink is trying to find out why it is difficult to ensure their involvement. Interviewees suggested that policy makers and politicians are of course under extreme time constraints. Youth workers believe that a potentially more successful manner to engage policy makers and politicians is to involve them on the basis of matching portfolio responsibilities with the annual global KRAS theme. Therefore a more "targeted approach" should be applied during the 2013/2014 school year to ensure more involvement of policy

makers and politicians. The policy recommendations that are produced at the final conference by the young people are disseminated to national policy makers. There is generally however little evidence to suggest that national policy makers take these recommendations into account or policy is influenced by the KRAS project. Interestingly enough though, the Flemish Youth Council produced a policy note last year and several policy recommendations of the KRAS 2011/2012 Final Conference were incorporated into this note. This note was disseminated to national policy makers.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

Over the course of the school year KRAS participants not only enter into role plays and simulation exercises among themselves, but also politicians, policy makers and experts get involved. This not only livens up the debates but also allows young people to interact with professionals well aware of the theme at either grassroots or policy level. Social workers and teachers pointed out that students really enjoy interacting with experts and policy makers and students say that "it makes learning more interesting". These actors have been involved in the KRAS project over the past 30 years and this enriches the learning of young people.

### **Supporting youth work**

The policy recommendations that are formulated by the KRAS Groups at the final conference at the end of the school year are disseminated to national level policy makers by Globelink. It is not always evident in which ways the recommendations are being used or taken forward by policy makers. Therefore Globelink intends to set up a monitoring exercise to better follow-up in which ways the policy recommendations are used by national level actors.

As it is, of course, important for young people's voices to be heard and for them to know that their input is genuinely taken into consideration, Globelink would like to see more involvement of national level policy makers with regards to the follow-up and possible way to take forward the recommendations. Their involvement would demonstrate to young people that their voices are being heard and taken seriously and their efforts are not in vain. Moreover, if young people know that their inputs in the KRAS project are taken forward at national level, this will surely stimulate their learning.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ Involvement of young people in the design and implementation of the initiative
- ☐ Topic and method of the activity should be appealing to young people and be contemporary
- ☐ Youth workers and teachers and their ability to motivate and engage students is essential
- ☐ Involvement of local and national level actors
- ☐ Competitive element motivates young people
- ☐ Trust relationships between youth workers and young people
- ☐ Youth workers (and teachers) should only steer the process and let young people be the driver of their own learning and development processes ("ownership")

# 'Local missions' for youth – CIVIS

[WWW.EMPLOI.GOUV.FR/ACTEURS/MISSIONS-LOCALES](http://WWW.EMPLOI.GOUV.FR/ACTEURS/MISSIONS-LOCALES)

## MISSION:

In France, local missions were launched in 1982 upon the recommendation of the Schwartz report on the social and professional insertion of young people. Local missions are public-funded structures that offer services to young people who need support during their transitions to ensure their social and professional insertion. This includes information services, guidance, support to access to education and training opportunities, coaching and intermediation with employers (complementing the offer of Public Employment Services).

Currently, there are about 450 local missions and PAIO (permanences d'accueil, d'information et d'orientation - smaller structures fulfilling similar roles) all across the country. In addition to offering their services to young people, local missions help strengthening partnerships at the local level between stakeholders active in the field of youth insertion and support the design and implementation of well-informed youth policies.

The activities of local missions can be considered as youth work as participation of young people is always voluntary, support is provided by youth workers (advisers) and covers, in addition to employment, many other issues affecting young people (health, well-being, accommodation, mobility, etc.). Some recent activities such as the CIVIS contract (contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale), a nation-wide scheme launched in April 2005 and whose implementation has been delegated to the State to the network of local missions, focus more specifically on providing support to young jobseekers and labour market insertion.

## Approach to working with young people

Youth advisers working at local missions offer various types and levels of support to young people ('one-stop-shop approach'), depending on individual needs and always on a voluntary basis. Young people who are strongly motivated to find stable employment can be offered the possibility to sign a contract for a temporary period (called CIVIS) to formalise their rights and duties as beneficiaries of support. The CIVIS is not a work contract; its purpose is to help young people and access stable employment and to state the conditions for the delivery of reinforced support. As participation remains entirely voluntary, the CIVIS is only used for those young people who are willing to engage in individual

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Employment

Number of youth workers:  
11.000 advisers across local missions

Number of young people: about 950,000 (200,000 for CIVIS alone)

Target group: Young people aged 16 to 25 (young unemployed for the CIVIS)

Year activities established: 1982 (2005 for the CIVIS)

mentoring/coaching (CIVIS beneficiaries are expected to meet their adviser very regularly), training activities as well as work placement/internships and other intermediation activities to facilitate matching with employers. There are two types of CIVIS contracts corresponding to different levels of support: standard CIVIS (one year, renewable once) and strengthened CIVIS for very low qualified young people (one year, renewable as many times as needed until the 26th birthday). In the latter case, the first months are devoted to the identification of any obstacles and barriers (e.g. personal and family issues, economic problems, etc.) which need to be solved by the young person in cooperation with the youth adviser, prior to the elaboration of a professional project. An important aspect in this regard is to work on the basic social skills ('soft skills') and attitudes of young people. In addition, if required, support can also focus on functional literacy. Youth advisers also carry out administrative tasks on behalf of the young person (e.g. identifying and applying for training subsidies).

### **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

A large number of young people receive support from local missions. Across the country, close to 950,000 young people were in contact with local missions in the first semester of 2012, including 205,000 CIVIS beneficiaries (of which 109,000 were young women). The monitoring of the results of the CIVIS is based on the status of beneficiaries when leaving the scheme: during the first semester of 2012, 38% of CIVIS beneficiaries were inserted into employment (22% in stable employment) while 11% of beneficiaries engaged in further training. However, it is important to stress that there are also significant qualitative benefits associated with the CIVIS not captured by these indicators. For young people, participation in the CIVIS and interaction with their adviser is found to have a positive impact on motivation, self-esteem and soft skills. In addition, the main advantage of the CIVIS, compared to less structured and formal type of support provided by local missions is that it contributes to stabilize the relationship between the youth adviser and the young person, who is strongly implied in the construction of his/her own project.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

The number of young people contacting local missions for support tends to increase in times of economic recession. However, concerning the CIVIS, the number of participants in the first semester of 2012 (latest data available) has decreased by 15% compared to the number of participants in the first semester of 2011. The numbers of CIVIS participants inserted into employment reduced even further (-21%), due to the deterioration of the economic context. Other trends noted due to the impact of the economic crisis are that more young men are more likely to require support and that overall, more CIVIS beneficiaries are likely to request ad-hoc economic support (e.g. to reimburse specific transport costs linked to their job search).

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Local missions have the legal status of associations created by municipalities (or groups of municipalities). The regulatory framework in place supports the activities of local missions and of the CIVIS in particular; indeed, the role of local missions and their contribution to the delivery of public employment services is defined in the law (articles L5314-1 to 4 of the Labour Code). Since 2005, the Labour Code recognises the right for every young people who face obstacles to their social and professional insertion to benefit from specific support, which is provided by local missions.

## **Relationship with policy**

The remit and tasks of local missions, who are financed by public authorities, are strongly influenced by policy developments at different levels such as the growing emphasis on policies to improve youth employment prospects, to a certain extent at the expense of other policies areas. Local missions are expected to contribute to a tangible improvement of youth employment prospects, which requires all youth advisers working in local missions to develop close links with the labour market and the local business community. At the national level, the network of local missions has been tasked with the implementation of various youth employment measures with a country-wide coverage, such as the CIVIS (2000 additional advisers were hired, and quantitative objectives in terms of results and number of young people placed in employment were set) or more recently other schemes such as the 'service civique' (volunteering scheme) and 'emplois d'avenir' (subsidised work contracts in services of general interest). At the same time, regions are expecting local missions to mobilise young people to engage in vocational training, while at the sub regional level ('départements'), local elected bodies advocate for targeting support towards young people receiving social benefits.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

Thanks to their comprehensive approach, local missions aim to be the 'focal point' of local youth insertion strategies. As such, they actively cooperate with the following stakeholders:

- Local public authorities (including structures created by associations of municipalities)
- Local public administrations in charge of employment and social affairs
- Local offices of public employment services
- Education and training providers
- Guidance centres
- Youth information services
- Services in charge of youth protection
- Social partners
- Other representatives of employers (e.g. chambers of commerce)

Local missions themselves are organised in a network of regional associations, which are tasked to foster intra and interregional cooperation and are represented in the national council of local missions (CNML).



### Supporting youth work

Ensuring adequate financial support and staffing is an important pre-requisite for the success of youth advisers' interventions. Currently, local missions are financed by various public authorities, mostly the State (47%), regions (17%) and local level authorities including municipalities (24%) – the rest is provided by other public and private bodies (11%) and by the European Social Fund (2%).

The current level of policy pressure (from different levels) on local missions is very strong, while their budget remains constant. This raises concerns about the ability for youth advisers in local missions to meet both their quantitative and qualitative objectives.

#### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- Offering a one-stop-shop approach, i.e. offering different services in the same place.
- Ensuring that each young person has a single contact point (adviser).
- Ensuring that all young people benefiting from support are engaging voluntarily in the activities, without any coercion.
- Offering services that are geographical close to young people.
- Ensuring that the services are tailored to the context and address needs of young people in the area (instead of applying standard approaches).
- Creating close relationships between youth advisers and young people with a room for exchange and dialogue, so that young person's concerns and personal stories are taken into account.

# Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart

[WWW.MOBILE-JUGENDARBEIT-STUTTGART.DE/ORGANIGRAMM.HTML](http://WWW.MOBILE-JUGENDARBEIT-STUTTGART.DE/ORGANIGRAMM.HTML)

## MISSION:

Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart (Mobile Youth Work Stuttgart) is one of the oldest street work initiatives in Europe, founded in 1967 and working to prevent social marginalization and crime among young people. Its target group are at-risk youth, for the most part young people living in precarious social conditions, with limited access to education, often because of the social vulnerability or migration background of their families.

Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart is a founding member of ISMO – international organization for Mobile Youth Work, promoting outreach and work with at-risk youth in many parts of the world.

One of the basic concepts of Mobile Youth Work is 'aufsuchende Hilfe' – outreach help, or finding and helping, as opposed to public institutions dealing with youth work, which expect young people to come to them.

## Background

Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart (MJS) has existed since the Evangelical Society of Stuttgart came up with the project following US examples of mobile youth work (1967). The main goal has been to support marginalised youth through street work, providing active offer of help and counselling, and to promote social peace through empowering young people to find their inner resources and to deal with complicated life situations. Mobile Youth Work is a concept designed to reach difficult-to-reach young people who are more likely to suffer from marginalisation and can eventually be drawn into crime, or otherwise suffer from social exclusion. This target group is not reached by so-called 'open youth work', e.g. Houses of Youth that exist in German cities – due to behaviour problems, these young people

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Prevention of social exclusion, work with at-risk youth.

Number of youth workers: 61

Number of young people: 4387

Target group: young people in vulnerable circumstances (coming mostly from poorer families, less educated parents, mostly migration background, missing school, having difficulties with school-to work transition).

Year activities established: 1967

are often excluded from the traditional youth activities. In essence, mobile youth work is a method of prevention. As pointed out by the author of the concept behind Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart, Professor Walther Specht, 'mobile youth work is more human, more effective and more cost-saving than deterrence, punishment and prisons.' Currently MJS has 61 professional social workers working with more than 4000 young people in almost all neighbourhoods of Stuttgart.

## Approach to working with young people

Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart is a joint initiative of Caritas and Evangelische Gesellschaft (Catholic and Evangelical charities), operating through a network of local Evangelical and Catholic charities in the neighbourhoods of Stuttgart, which was organised in the 1970s and is based on the principles of Mobile Youth Work.

Mobile Youth Work is a social work concept, based on four 'pillars':

- Street work
- Group meetings
- Individual help
- Project work (earlier the term Community Improvement was also used)

The hallmark activity is street work, which is based on approaching youth cliques, including gangs, and working with them, seeing the clique as a resource for mutual support for marginalised young people, not as a problem in itself. One of the key principles is 'low threshold'.

Parallel to mobile youth work, Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart delivers school-based social work. Earlier the only type of school for this type of activity was the Hauptschule – the lowest educational track of the German school system. However, since a new Bundesland government came into office in Baden-Württemberg, the decision to extend social work to other types of schools was made, with adequate funding attached. Mobile Jugendarbeit is currently considering restructuring its school-based activities in order to meet new demands.

Almost every neighbourhood outside the centre of Stuttgart (Stadtteil) has its on-site office of Mobile Jugendarbeit, where young people served by the project can meet with social workers, have their leisure activities and which can be used for group meetings and project work. The types of activities at each site are more or less identical, except that while in most neighbourhoods the Mobile Youth Work is combined with School-based Social Work, in some neighbourhoods there are no school-based activities.

### Key Approaches

Four elements of Mobile Youth Work:

- Street work
- Group meetings
- Individual help
- Project work

The principles of work with young people include:

Voluntary approach (young people choose themselves, whether to get involved).

Low threshold (not excluding young people because of problematic behaviour).

Accessibility and flexibility (finding young people where they are – in the street, at school, and delivering help where it is relevant and in the form in which it is relevant).

The target group of Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart includes young people roughly between 12 and 20, who find themselves in social, emotional, academic or legal difficulties due to a number of factors, including social background, lack of parental support, aggression, cultural difference (migration background) and other issues.

- 74% of young people reached by Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart are of migration background.
- About 60% of young people are in the Hauptschule (lowest educational track), only about 12% of all young people involved are in school tracks that lead to upper secondary VET and to tertiary education.
- 12% of young people reached are NEETs.

Young people get involved in the provided activities because of a non-judgemental approach adopted by social workers, their willingness to be accessible and to help in every kind of difficult circumstances (from helping with finding a placement for apprenticeship to accompanying to case hearings in court, to help in family conflicts). Young people who have already been helped by Mobile Jugendarbeit, have continued studies or found work and are feeling more secure in life, sometimes get involved as helpers in neighbourhoods.

Youth workers describe their work with young people in terms of building relationships, being flexible and accessible, accompanying them where necessary (e.g. to youth welfare and other offices), giving individual support, providing meaningful activities, striving for trust. They are cautious about setting high goals for the young people they work with – sometimes, surviving an addiction or staying in school is an achievement in itself. At the same time, they do encourage young people to set themselves new goals and to make steps to achieve them.

One of the focal areas of work of MJS is social work at school – supporting young people through difficulties they may have with teachers and school administration, helping to resolve conflicts, supporting young people's efforts to complete lower secondary education and to find practice place for VET or to integrate successfully in an upper secondary school. Project work often includes learning opportunities for young people – e.g. workshops on peaceful conflict resolution, small group projects focusing on achieving some goal together (e.g. fundraising to cover the cost of group trip to Brasil to meet famous footballer who set up football schools for street children).

### **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

The impact of Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart has been recently addressed in an evaluation study by researchers from the University of Tübingen (2009). The study found that there are significant differences between Mobile Youth Work and forms of public support available to young people (e.g. social work provided by the commune, open youth work).<sup>26</sup> Mobile Youth Work is oriented towards the life/world of young people, it is a reliable part of local infrastructure in the neighbourhood, it is based on building long-term relationships of trust between young people and youth workers, and it is more accessible to young people because of 'low threshold' approach – there are no special demands made on young people before they can use the support provided by MJS, either in terms of behaviour or in terms of 'social desirability'.

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<sup>26</sup> G. Stumpp, D. Üstünsoz – Beurer, S. Walter, F. Beulich & Eberhard Bolay (2009) Wirkungseffekte Mobiler Jugemdatbeit in Stuttgart. University of Tübingen.

The majority of young people who have had MJS support, according to a survey conducted for the 2009 evaluation have found their profession and passed necessary qualifications, 76% believe they have better chances in the labour market, and 89% have said they feel stronger and more capable.<sup>27</sup>

Young people interviewed for this study have indicated that they gained unconditional support and guidance from the social workers of Mobile Youth Work, they could trust them in issues where they would not have approached teachers or parents. Youth workers have noted that while before schools tended to try and get rid of 'difficult' students, since MJS has established its school-based social work function (around 2000), some schools have gradually come to understand that they need to work with all students.

MJS youth workers are professionals. They have social worker qualifications and their involvement with mobile youth work is a paid professional activity, which allows them to develop and upgrade professional skills, to remain flexible and to meet the needs of young people. They find the job interesting and rewarding, largely due to its flexibility.

Young people who were in the past supported by MJS for the most part complete their education and training and find a job. Many of them maintain a relationship with MJS youth workers for years after they have stopped being active users of their support.

### *Outcomes and impacts*

Success in building long-term relationships with young people allows Mobile Jugendarbeit to have a lasting impact on young people's access to education and work, and empowers them to take control of their lives.

Young people who were in the past supported by MJS for the most part complete their education and training and find a job. Many of them maintain a relationship with MJS youth workers.

76% of young people who have been counselled by Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart believe they have better chances in the labour market because of it.

## **Experience of trends in youth work**

### **Street work in the Internet**

Withdrawal of young people from public spaces into social networks has led Mobile Youth Work to develop new methods, such as "Street work in the Internet": social workers have their Facebook accounts and communicate with young people whom the counsel and who take part in their projects. Facebook is used for planning individual meetings, informal get-togethers, etc. It is also a way to monitor the current interests and concerns of young people.

### **Expansion of school-based social work**

Since the change of government in Baden-Württemberg, the decision to expand school-based social work to ALL types of schools, not only to the lowest educational track, has been made by public authorities. For Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart, as a chartered provider (Träger) of school-based social work in Stuttgart, this means expanding their work to unfamiliar types of schools. MJS is currently considering hiring

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

more social workers and possibly restructuring its operations to meet the demand for school-based social work.

Youth recruitment into criminal gangs has become a relevant phenomenon. Where earlier there were ethnic or neighbourhood-based cliques, now there are uniformed groups with links to criminal gangs. These are usually multi-ethnic and can have members from different neighbourhoods.

#### Scene-oriented mobile youth work

In the past, MJS has always based its street work in neighbourhoods. However, with the growing number of various 'scene events' (such as rock and other festivals), drawing large numbers of young people from the area around Stuttgart, the need to introduce 'scene-oriented mobile youth work' has been identified. This implies social workers going to places where many young people belonging to the same 'scene' usually gather, in the city centre, and identifying where help is needed.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Mobile Youth Work is not a legal entitlement (like counselling provided by public services) – it is provided by the two societies, Caritas Stuttgart and Evangelische Gesellschaft Stuttgart, as a voluntary offer to young people. It is, nevertheless, funded by the Federal Land Baden-Württemberg and by the commune of Stuttgart within the regulatory framework of several funding programmes (for social work with youth, for school-based social work, support to young people in transition from school to the labour market, etc.). It is subject to regulation related to the activities of registered societies implementing social work on behalf of federal and local entities.

### **Relationship with Policy**

One aspect of federal and local policy that impacts the work of Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart is the policy towards social work/ youth work and funding policy attached to it. In Germany, funding for social policy implementation is often allocated to civil society actors and other entities on the basis of competitive tenders. Federal funding (e.g. allocated from the programme for integrating young people in the world of work) is conditional on the price and quality of offers proposed by the willing chartered providers of social work (Träger). As noted by MJS representatives, the selection of service providers for federal programmes is not conditional on their being from the place where services are provided (e.g. Stuttgart).

Federal policy to guarantee traineeships to young people wishing to go into VET (*Ausbildungsplatzgarantie*) is also relevant for the target group of MJS and they find it a good policy.

At the level of the Federal Land, policies concerning schools affect the work of MJS. Since the decision made by the new Left-Green government in Baden-Württemberg that parents (and not teachers) can decide, in which school their children will continue their secondary education, the need for social work in schools of higher educational tracks has increased, students with *Hauptschule* background having to live up to high academic demands in their new upper-secondary schools if their parents have chosen to send them there. Local government has announced its intention to expand school-based social work to all schools. MJS as chartered providers of school-based social work will now have to adapt to these changes and to expand their base from *Hauptschule*-type schools to *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*.

MJS are an active partner of local authorities and political parties in Baden-Württemberg in all debates on topical issues related to implementation of youth policy.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

The primary locus of networking for Mobile Jugendarbeit Stuttgart is the neighbourhood. In many neighbourhoods, there is a parish and an Evangelical Society which is part of the network of Evangelische Gesellschaft Stuttgart (one of the founding organisations of MJS). Volunteers on the local parish committees act as liaison persons for MJS in the neighbourhood when it comes to contact with political parties and other external stakeholders. Youth workers themselves liaise with social services, local community and schools.

At the level of project management, networking with police and city authorities is also important for the successful functioning of the project.

### **Supporting youth work**

In the opinion of project management, the support accorded to youth work and work with children by the Federal land of Baden-Württemberg and by the commune of Stuttgart is very generous. However, for chartered providers of social work, only the salaries are funded, and not management costs. Changing these rules would help MJS to do their work.

At the federal level, more quality criteria should be introduced for service providers tendering to do youth work and other social work – so far, there are no requirements regarding staff salaries, and a cheaper offer may well win the tender, whereas MJS management has doubts that services provided at a cheap cost can involve professional social workers.

The EU could support Mobile Youth Work by supporting exchange and development of best practices in gang crime prevention among young people.

#### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- To be successful in Mobile Youth Work, one has to look for strengths and resources, not for weaknesses in the young people one works with.
- Commitment to fighting poverty by helping young people to get education and find work is essential.
- Accessibility ('low threshold') is key when striving to reach marginalized and at-risk youth.
- Mobile Youth Work should always be targeted and operate with a good knowledge of the target group and local context.
- In order to have access to young people as a target group, it is important to have access to school and to work with schools, however, it is good to have available space for meetings with young people outside school.



# Social reintegration project 'My Guru'

[WWW.MANOGURU.LT](http://WWW.MANOGURU.LT)

## MISSION:

The social integration project 'My Guru' assists young former drug addicts to blend into society through work rehabilitation, giving these individuals the opportunity to obtain training in the practical skills and job experience needed in the restaurant trade. During the six-month program, participants are also provided with consultations by social workers and psychologists, participate in community building activities in order to gain social skills, develop self-confidence and organise themselves into self-help groups. From the very beginning of the project in 2004, almost 400 project participants have used this possibility for a second start in life and 90 percent of them successfully integrated into the labour market and society.

## Background

The social reintegration project 'My Guru' rests on the idea of work rehabilitation for young former drug addicts as a response to the lack of these initiatives in Lithuania. Work rehabilitation is a logical continuation of the rehabilitation process, through which people dependent on drugs receive a complete range of social services (medical, psychological, social and employment) enabling them to blend into society. Such work rehabilitation is needed as the next step after health rehabilitation programs, because the absence of proper professional skills, a patchy work history and the negative attitude of employers and society in general towards ex-addicts frequently causes relapsing problems. Reintegrating ex-addicts into society thus requires further help through the use of a complicated mix of psychological stabilisation, motivation, training and providing work experience.

The overall goal of the project is to create the opportunity for rehabilitating and integrating young former drug addicts into society and the labour market. In order to achieve this goal, the Vilnius City Council, Vilnius Centre for Addictive Disorders and 'Virsupis' Ltd. established the NGO 'Social Support Projects' in 2002. The founders of this NGO also provided the necessary conditions for opening the stylish 'My Guru' alcohol- and tobacco-free bar in the downtown area of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. The Vilnius City Council provided premises in the city centre, 'Virsupis' Ltd. (and later "MG Baltic Investment" Ltd.) as well as financial support, and the Centre for Addictive

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: work rehabilitation for young former drug addicts.

Number of youth workers: 5

Number of young people: 20-22 per 6 months programme.

Target group: Young people between 18-30 years of age.

Year activities established: 2004

Disorders contributes its expertise in rehabilitation. The first activities of the project were financed from the EQUAL initiative of the European Social Fund, and ran from 2004 till 2007. During this stage of the project the model of work rehabilitation and tools were created and tested. Since this time the continuity of the project activities has been ensured by profits from the salad bar and from the additional support for new initiatives of the European Social Fund. Thanks to its mix of grant and trading income, the enterprise is already showing a profit and is establishing a new social business model that other towns in Lithuania and other European countries are keen to copy.

## Approach to working with young people

The work rehabilitation methodology for young former drug addicts is based on a holistic approach, as training and providing work experience without additional social and psychological therapy are not enough for successful integration of this target group into society and the labour market. Therefore, this methodology combines therapy sessions along with training in the practical skills needed for the salad bar – bartending, cooking and waiting at table.

The work rehabilitation programme is designed for six months, during which participants are:

- Provided with professional training and work experience.
- Supported in managing documents, social security benefits and other questions.
- Provided with accommodation, a stipend, feed-in and public transport tickets.
- Provided with free consultations by social workers and psychologists.
- Motivated to receive a legal income.
- Encouraged to develop self-confidence.
- Ensured an active life through various social, sport and cultural activities necessary to their personal development.
- Facilitated in developing a young former drug addicts community and self-help groups.
- Encouraged to fight negative stereotypes about former drug addicts' capabilities and abilities.
- Supported and mediated in finding further jobs.

### *Key Approaches*

Profession training and providing of work experience for young former drug addicts ensure more opportunities to find permanent work.

Parallel social and psychological therapy to ensure higher self-confidence and development of social skills along with a positive world view.

Providing accommodation and a stipend for participation time in the project significantly raises the success of reintegration into society as ensure supportive and secure environment.

The main target group for the social reintegration project 'My Guru' consists of young former drug addicts after health rehabilitation programmes or after leaving prison where they had forced abstinence<sup>28</sup>. The majority of them are dropouts from the education system, have no work experience, social skills, legal incomes or place to live. Project personnel cooperate closely with drug-addict health rehabilitation centres, communities of former drug addicts and probation offices to obtain information about work rehabilitation possibilities for the target group. The participants in the project learned about the possibility of taking part in the project from the personnel of these rehabilitation centres and probation offices, directly from presentations made by the project personnel, or from former successful participants in the project. The main motivating factors for joining the project are: a wish to change one's own life, visible examples of successful results after finishing the programme as well as the provision of accommodation and a stipend during participation in the project.

The youth workers within the service are volunteers or qualified youth work professionals: social workers, psychologists, trainers for professions. Their role is to work individually with every participant in the project, helping them to know themselves, show their abilities, their best qualities and how to use them. The main success factors in working with this target group are: not to be indifferent, to hear and understand every participant, to provide a safe and supportive environment for personal development, to work as a strong team, to create a self-supportive community and to show positive life opportunities. A distinctive feature of this project is that the majority of youth work professionals are themselves former drug addicts and have experience of integration into the work environment and society. They join the project because they wish to share their positive experience, to support and help young people to understand and live with their addictive disorders. All of them express a high level of satisfaction and self-realisation in this kind of work as they feel rewarded by the progress of the project participants and experience their own personal development.

From the very beginning of the project, great attention was paid to training and learning issues, which are specific both for the social workers and project participants. A special training methodology was therefore created for the social workers and for the other personnel working with former drug addicts in this project. This methodology includes theoretical sections on medical as well as psychological and social issues as well as practical exercises for individual and group work. All new social workers who join the project receive this training; moreover, personnel who work with former drug addicts in many other rehabilitation centres and communities also use it in their work. Another methodology was created for trainers for professions, who provide this training for project participants. This methodology accentuates the practical side of professional training and includes a major section on the training of practical skills through practice in the salad bar 'My Guru'. After completing this professional training, project participants are tested and, if successful, they are given the City and Guilds International Vocational Qualification (IVQ) in Food and Beverage Service. This qualification, their work experience, as well as an employer's reference, should equip them to find a permanent job.

In order to improve the employability of project participants, measures are taken for mutual communication with other employers in the restaurant business, as negative stereotypes about former drug addicts' capabilities and abilities are still widespread and cause unwillingness to hire them. For this reason, regular round tables with other

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<sup>28</sup> In Lithuania there are still no available health rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts in prison.

employers are organised to discuss these issues and to present project participants. After such meetings, the majority of project participants succeed in finding a permanent job. Further participation in former drug addict communities and the possibility of communicating with personnel and colleagues in 'My Guru' help them to solve any problems which arise and retain the jobs they have found.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The complex range of services provided by the social reintegration project 'My Guru' ensures the success of this project. According to the monitoring conducted by project personnel, 90 percent of project participants successfully integrated into the labour market and society: 70 percent of participants who successfully finished the programme continue to work in other bars and restaurants, some look for other types of work elsewhere (e.g. as volunteers or social workers in other social projects), some took up their school or higher education studies again (e.g. law, sociology, administration, accountancy, social work, etc.). Every year this project successfully integrates about 50 former drug addicts into the labour market and society.

A low level of relapse can be also observed among project participants. The main precondition for this is the gradual change of their world view when participants experience the fact that their life can be different, that they can be a full-fledged human being, recognized by society and having some aspirations for self-realization. Recovery can best be achieved during work and employment. Work in the service area also helps to create relationships with clients, to receive a positive evaluation and smiles. Project participants start to feel that they are not condemned. They stop living in the past, feeling despair and blaming others, the environment, etc. They start to develop a more active participatory way of life, learn how to communicate and how to behave in public, to be responsible, to have duties, to find friends, and to find themselves. They break the vicious circle of continual criminal activities and convictions. They start to work, pay taxes and refuse the philosophy of dependence. They manage personal relationships with relatives, create their own families and are able to provide positive socialization experiences for their children.

Some former project participants establish former drug addicts' communities and help other drug addicts by working in various nongovernmental organizations (e.g. in social taxis for disabled people). Concrete examples of the added value of what is being achieved are the establishment of new rehabilitation communities in other regions of Lithuania and the social activities of the 'My Guru' bar, a social enterprise model for new social entrepreneurship initiatives (e.g. The Karpovo agricultural farm for the rehabilitation of alcohol addicts)<sup>29</sup>. Another example of added value from project activities is the establishment by a social worker of a

### *Main outcomes and impacts*

90 percent of project participants successfully integrate into the labour market and society

A low level of relapse among project participants – young former drug addicts

Youth workers improve their knowledge about addictive disorders and effective ways to overcome them

<sup>29</sup> Two years after the salad bar opened, it started to be profitable. So the model of social enterprise relies on a subtle mix of financial support and empowerment to become profitable, meaning that it is not just a restaurant like others, but a place for rehabilitation.

project for a homeless people's football team, in which some project participants who have experience in participating in sports activities (ex-sportsmen) are involved. This initiative has already been functioning for 3-4 years and the team participated in various world-class championships; e.g. in Mexico it took 8<sup>th</sup> place. This activity provides the participants with the motivation to live and explore the future: it allows them to engage in society, to find meaningful activity and to realize their potential.

Youth workers in the project, along with project participants, also gain from their involvement with activities concerning self-realisation and the development of their personality. They improve their knowledge about addictive disorders and their own social and psychological roots, as well as finding effective ways to overcome them. Knowledge of these issues is a valuable resource for youth workers in order to increase their competences and qualifications. All of them express great satisfaction with the work they do, as it is rewarding to observe how young people change and to feel that they are contributing to something positive. Therefore, youth workers in the project enjoy working in social support projects because of their value system and rewarding results and, even if they are no longer involved in project activities, they stay in this area of work and contribute to other social projects or establish new rehabilitation communities or self-support groups.

Two years after the salad bar 'My Guru' opened, it started to be profitable – which is one measure of success. So the social enterprise model relies on a subtle mix of financial support and empowerment to become profitable, meaning that it is not just a restaurant like others, but a place for rehabilitation. In 2005, the social reintegration project 'My Guru' won first prize in the Lithuanian Social Services championship. In 2009 and 2010 it was recognised as the most hospitable café in Vilnius. It has also been nominated for RegioStars 2010 Award category "City Star: the integration of migrants or marginalized groups in urban areas". Finally, 'My Guru' was nominated for a European Enterprise Award for Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship in 2011 and won 2nd place<sup>30</sup>. The awards it has won demonstrate the project's success and also help project managers receive recognition for their work, raise funds, make the integration problems of former drug addicts and the results of work rehabilitation visible, and encourage replication of the social enterprise model.

### Experience of trends in youth work

The most expressed trend in the area of work rehabilitation emphasises the spread of the social enterprise model and new work rehabilitation initiatives during the last 5 years. A metal products company in the city of Kedainiai was established to provide training and employment for people with addictive disorders. Another work rehabilitation initiative has been implemented in the city of Akmenė specialising in the construction sector. There are intentions to open similar bars to 'My Guru' in two other big cities – Kaunas and Klaipėda. Expressed negative trends are related to financial support from municipalities, ministries and social funds, as support budgets are cut off due to the financial recession. Because of this, it is nowadays difficult to provide stipends and accommodation for project participants. This situation has a negative impact on the possibility of a project being able to create a safe and financially stable situation for its participants, especially for participants from other cities and under a probation program. The result is higher relapsing levels among current project participants.

<sup>30</sup> A restaurant for rehabilitation, <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=485&langId=en&featuresId=301&furtherFeatures=yes>

## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

In general, regulatory frameworks are evaluated positively, for example, the Professional Training Law (2007), which legitimizes the concept of apprenticeship or the new Probation Law (2012), which allows alternative ways to imprisonment for serving a sentence and participation in social integration initiatives. The only limiting factor expressed concerns the Law on Social Enterprises (2012), some provisions of which (e.g. the requirement to employ four disabled persons in the enterprise for one year prior to the registration of the social enterprise, etc.) limit the project's possibility to register the 'My Guru' bar as a social enterprise and consequently to receive state subsidies for the activities and salaries of employed former drug addicts. There is in addition one more limitation in the regulatory framework of banks restricting the provision of needed loans for socially oriented enterprises as they do not own property. This restriction prevents the replication of the 'My Guru' social enterprise in other cities.

## **Relationship with Policy**

The development of youth policy during the last 5 years has had a positive impact on the project area because of high attention being paid to the social integration of socially disadvantaged youth groups. The latest policy priority given to increasing employability also helps to develop their work rehabilitation activities. From the project side, representatives actively participate in policy formation through advice, consultation and participation in working groups for preparing youth, rehabilitation and other related policy strategies and implementation measures.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

The activities of the social integration project 'My Guru' are based on partnership and widespread networking. Through project partnerships the project gains a threefold benefit: material provision of the project, a supply of potential project participants and training services. Networking involves various actors:

- Rehabilitation communities and probation offices, which send the project young former drug addicts as potential participants.
- Other work rehabilitation enterprises which can send or receive young former drug addicts for work rehabilitation according to whether there are too many new project participants or there is shortage of participants.
- Former drug addicts self-help communities where former project participants can be involved in their activities.
- Other social projects for sharing experience and sometimes for involving former project participants in their activities.
- Politicians for mainstreaming project results and influencing policy formation.
- Universities and colleges for cooperation in training, research and other related issues (e.g. art exhibitions of Art Academy students in the 'My Guru' bar).
- Mass media (e.g. Bernardinai.It) for visibility and mutual events, etc.

The project is also involved in international networking, the basis of which is rooted in EQUAL program international partnerships. Cooperation nowadays takes the form of Leonardo da Vinci mutual visit projects and there is a shared need to create an international project for replication of the 'My Guru' model in France and Italy.

## Supporting youth work

Because of restricted support during the financial recession, the social integration project 'My Guru' appreciates all financial support from national authorities and business. The most pressing need is to ensure the continuity of financial support from the European Social Fund with the possibility to finance project participants' stipends and accommodation during the work rehabilitation program. In order to replicate the 'My Guru' social enterprise in other cities, there is a need for political and financial support to arrange premises and material equipment for new socially oriented bars. To meet the expressed demand to replicate the model in other European countries there is also a need to win an international project for the piloting phase of this process.

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- Seek to hear and to understand every young person.
- Use a holistic approach to ensure effective integration in work and society.
- Work individually with every young person to meet his/her particular needs.
- Create a safe environment to discover and develop young former drug addicts' best qualities.
- Involve young people in decision making about their own lives.
- Seek to increase the self-confidence of young former drug addicts.
- Create a strong team during the project and in the self-help community after the program, to ensure further support.



# National Civil Service

[HTTP://WWW.SERVIZIOCIVILE.GOV.IT/](http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/)

## MISSION:

The National Civil Service is a national programme based on a completely voluntary basis in Italy. It offers the opportunity to young Italian citizens aged between 18 and under 29 years old to devote one year of their life for a solidarity commitment intended as a commitment for the common good.

Different types of organisations can participate in the programme (e.g. Institutional bodies, Charities, NGOs, etc.). The interested organisations have to be accredited in a register and have to present a specific project. At the same time young persons interested in the National Civil Service need to identify their favourite project, submit the relevant application and pass the selection process.

Once selected, volunteers will be involved for almost one year in the implementation of the project. Throughout this experience, volunteers are supported with informal, non-formal and on-the-job training. This allows the young person to experiment on a day-to-day basis the meaning of active citizenship with guidance and support of youth workers.

## Background

The National Civil Service is a voluntary based programme that provides the opportunity to young Italian citizens aged over 18 and under the age of 29<sup>31</sup> to dedicate one year of their lives in favour for the common good. The programme offers the volunteers the possibility to acquire experience through active participation and "immersion" in contexts of special needs in order to promote active citizenship among young people. This experience is acquired in a safe and structured environment in which young people are empowered to embrace their development through a 'learning by doing' process that will contribute to positive social change.

Overall, the Civil Service began in Italy as an alternative to the military service for conscientious objectors in 1972. In this period a large number of voluntary organisations

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Active Citizenship

Number of youth workers: more than 1,000

Number of young people: 15,939 (2011 data)

Target group: Young Italian Citizens between 18 and 28 years

Year activities established: 2001

<sup>31</sup> People that have been convicted by a judgement of first instance are excluded from the Civil Service.

were formed to provide social services that the government lacked the capacity to guarantee and were fuelled by these conscientious objectors.<sup>32</sup> During the wider debate on compulsory military service, in 2001 the government decided to introduce the National Civil Service. The main idea was to tackle the arising transformation in the Italian society and provide an alternative to compulsory military service (which was abolished in 2005). However, with the suspension of the constitutional obligation for compulsory military service, the programme cannot be considered only a consequence of conscientious objection to military service.

The goal of the Civil Service is to promote active citizenship through offering a contribution to local community problems in a wide range of sectors: health and social care, environment, artistic and cultural heritage, education and promotion of culture, civil service abroad. The overall aim is to contribute to homeland defence, through non-military means and activities, to enhance the constitutional principle of social solidarity and the cooperation at national and international level through the development of youth civic, social, cultural and professional conscience. In this context the homeland defence is intended as the dissemination and share of common values which are at the core of the Italian democratic order.

### Approach to working with young people

To promote active citizenship amongst young people, the National Civil Service gives the opportunity to young people to be directly committed for one year in solidarity initiatives. It offers the opportunity to be involved in the organisation and practical activities of the chosen projects. During this experience the volunteers are systematically supported by "local operator of the project", whose aim is to allow the volunteer to grow and acquire the necessary skills and competences. This allows the young person to train through informal, non-formal and on-the job training working alongside the "local operator of the project". The intended outcome of this model

is to give the opportunity to young people to experiment their personal strengths and weaknesses in a structured and safe environment.

Once they have identified their favourite projects, submitted the relevant application and passed the selection process, the young volunteers are given two levels of trainings: a general training at national level and a tailored training for each specific project.

The general training is provided before the beginning of the project. It is intended as a preparation to the Civil Service itself and aims at enhancing the active participation in the community and raising awareness on the "Civil Service choice". This kind of training gives an overview of the history, the laws and purposes of the Civil Service, the meaning of conscientious objection and homeland defence intended as the dissemination and sharing common values which are at the core of the Italian democratic order.

After the initial general training, the volunteers start working on-site on the chosen project and are provided with a specific training tailored to the activities they will carry out during the year. Due to the great variety of the involved Associations and local needs it is not possible to define common features among the projects.

#### *Key Approaches*

Direct experience of active citizenship through the practical implementation of projects

Systematic support and training of the volunteer through on-the job training

<sup>32</sup> H Perold et al. (eds), *Service Enquiry: Service in the 21st Century*. First edition. Global Service Institute and Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa, Johannesburg: 2003, Web, <http://www.service-enquiry.org.za>

In order to have a better understanding of the kind of training provided to the volunteers, the National Office for the Civil Service identified as good practice the project entitled "La solitudine condivisa- centro sud" (*The shared loneliness – centre and south*), promoted by the Unitalsi Association of Social Promotion.

The project promoted by Unitalsi entitled "La solitudine condivisa-centro sud" has been designed to address local needs emerged in Campania and Basilicata in two areas of intervention: assistance to elderly and disabled people. The young volunteers are involved in their day-to-day care and support, such as home care activities or daily escort services to rehabilitation centres, clinics and recreational centres. The aim of the project is to enhance the social inclusion of these persons in the local community, avoiding the sense of loneliness that they experience through the creation of a "proximity network". The project is mutually beneficial for both the disabled or elderly persons and the volunteers. On one hand, the first are practically and psychologically supported by the volunteers and, on the other hand, the young people experience the issues and needs of these people in their community and can sympathize with them. Through this process, young people raise awareness on problems and needs related to people at risk of social exclusion and develop their capacity in a range of areas. Throughout the whole period young people are constantly supported by "local operators of project", with whom they programme the weekly activities and share their personal experience on the level of engagement and motivation with the elderly or disabled persons, the achieved results, and possible issues related to the service provided and the assisted person. These activities are usually based on informal dialogues, empathy and a problem-solving orientation of the conversation. The aim of these activities is to create confidentiality between the volunteers and the "local operators of project" and to provide young people with the skills to identify and address the different issues that they encounter during the daily activities.

The main tool to promote this project among young people was through word of mouth from former volunteers. However a dissemination activity is in place through advertisement in the Association's website at national level, while at regional level articles in newspapers and television appearances are included. In addition, the project is disseminated to partner Universities and youth network such as Informagiovani.

The "local operators of project" role is to develop young people's potential and better understanding of themselves and the society<sup>33</sup>. The psychological support is an important component in their job. The "local operator of project" guides the young volunteers throughout the whole experience. Given the kind of persons they are assisting, the National Civil Service experience can be very emotional for the young volunteers. According to the interviewed "local operator of project", the first experience with people at risk of social exclusion is always a "shock" for the young persons involved in the Civil Service. Overall, the "local operators of project" interviewed for this project feel a level of job satisfaction as a result of working with young people involved in the Civil Service. According to them, it is rewarding to support young persons in discovering a variety of issues and facing them with energy, passion and commitment. To observe young people developing their potential but also facing their limits and to work with them is perceived as very rewarding.

As stated above, the young person involved in the Civil Service is usually provided with a general and a tailored specific training. While the contents for the first are

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<sup>33</sup> The requisites to become a "local operator of project" are enshrined in the *circulaire* 17 June 2009 emitted by the National Civil Service Office regarding the rules to be accredited to the National Civil Service. "Local operators of project" can be volunteers, employees or other contract staff with a qualification directly related to the activities inherent to the project and at least two years experience in the activities implemented in the project. Conversely they need to have attended the specific training provided by the National Civil Service Office or by the autonomous regions and provinces.

defined at central level, the specific training is tailored to the project and provided on site. In terms of methodologies used, the general training cannot last less than 30 hours and there are minimum requirements for the methodologies adopted (lectures, non-formal methodologies and approaches are suggested and the distance learning). Conversely, the tailored on-site training greatly differs among projects and considers a wide range of methodologies.

It has to be noted that the skills and competences acquired during the project are recognized at national level, for instance through certificates. Each project presented by the organisations provides a list of skills and competences that will be acquired by the volunteers during their service. In some cases these skills and competences are recognised by specific accreditation institutes or by universities.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

Overall, since the beginning of the programme over 300'000 volunteers have been involved in projects funded by the National Civil Service. Since 2001 the number of volunteers involved in National Civil Service projects steadily increased joining a peak of approximately 46'000 volunteers in 2006. From 2007 onwards the number of participants declined reaching almost 16'000 in 2011. This data are in line with the amount of funds provided. From 2001 until 2007 the amount of funds increased reaching 296 million euro in 2007 and steadily declining afterwards (135 million of euros were available in 2011). This resulted in a similar evolution on the number of projects funded.

The results show that the demand related to the Civil Service was not connected with the military service (which was eliminated in 2005). In addition, the crisis had a major impact on the funding which resulted in reduced number of projects and volunteers. This argument is supported by the increased ratio between the available places and the application submitted in comparison to the past (in 2007 this ratio was 1 out of 2, while in 2011 it was 1 out of 4).

Another interesting aspect is the geographical distribution of the volunteers involved in the national Civil Service projects. While in the Southern Region the number of participants and places available was always very high, in certain Regions like Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Valle d'Aosta it was difficult to fill the available places in the National Civil Service. In the last years both the number of participants considerably increased also in the North of Italy. According to the interviewees this might be the result of the difficulties encountered in the North of Italy by young persons in the labour market, which therefore decides to be involved in the National Voluntary Service.

In terms of sectors, in 2011 the vast majority of volunteers were required in the health and social care (almost 60%), followed by the education and cultural promotion (approximately 25%), and the artistic and cultural heritage (roughly 9%).

There are several mechanisms to ensure that the project is bringing added value and achieving its objectives. In order to be funded the organisations accredited to the Voluntary Service have to present the project to the National and Regional offices. They have to identify the context where the intervention is needed, the resources

### *Outcomes and impacts*

More than 300,000 volunteers involved since the beginning of the programme.

When the crisis hit, the amount of funds available for the programme declined. As a result the mismatch between the application submitted and the available positions increased.

In certain areas the increased demand of young people to participate in the programme might reflect the difficulties encountered on the labour market.

needed for the implementation of the project and have to clearly identify how the volunteers involved will be trained, supported and what skills and competences they will acquire during the implementation of the project. When the project starts there are monitoring and evaluation tools ensuring that the project is implemented properly. In addition often the organisations set up further mechanisms to ensure the correct implementation of the project.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

In the last decade there have been a number of identifiable trends that have affected the work and the activities carried out by the National Civil Service.

The first and most noticeable factor that has affected the National Civil Service is the crisis. The most relevant consequence of the crisis on the National Civil Service is the considerable reduction of funding provided for the implementation of the programme. Since 2007 the total amount provided each year for the funding of the National Civil Service steadily decreased and from 2009 onwards the reduction was even more noticeable. Unsurprisingly this decrease resulted in a reduced number of projects funded. At the same time the number of persons applying to the National Civil Service increased because of the crisis. This might be explained as a result of the scarce opportunities for young people in the labour market.

Another important trend that should be mentioned is the outstanding number of persons participating at the National Civil Service. Since 2001 more than 300,000 young persons aged over 18 and under 29 have been involved in the Civil Service. This number is relevant even because of the nature of the National Civil Service. Even if with the end of the compulsory military service was expecting to have a negative impact on the number of participants, this had not an important impact.

In addition the composition of the volunteers involved in the Civil Service has changed considerably throughout the period. From 2001 until 2005 the number of women involved was approximately the 95% of the total number of participants, while after the balance between men and women was less prominent.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

In terms of legislation, the National Civil Service was enshrined in the law with the national law number 64 of the 6 of March 2001. This legislation should be considered as part of the transition towards a professionalized military service. In this respect the law had to deal with this transition. One year later the legislative decree of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2002 further defines the purpose of the National Civil Service as a new opportunity to defend the State (in the sense described above). The new organisation and implementation model represented an innovation in respect to the actors and the participants involved.

One decade later these two laws still represent the legislative framework of the National Civil Service. In this respect there has been during the last years a great effort to transform and adjust the National Civil Service according to the transformations occurred in the society. However none of the proposed changes was able to complete the legislative process.

In terms of other regulatory frameworks, the skills and competences acquired by the participants during the projects are recognized at national level. When presenting the project each organisation accredited to the National Civil Service has to clearly define the skills and competences that the volunteers will acquire during the service.

## **Relationship with policy**

Currently, in Italy the main players in the implementation of youth policies are the regional and local authorities. This results in a variety of interventions and a lack of comprehensive strategy at national level. In this fragmented context there is no specific youth policy directly influencing the National Civil Service. At the same time, it has to be noted that the National Civil Service cannot be regarded as a comprehensive national youth policy, because its targets and objectives not only involve the volunteers.

Another aspect highlighted is the risk that the cuts experienced in social policies during the crisis in the social sector might lead to use the National Civil Service volunteers as a low cost solution rather than as a tool to enhance the active participation of young people in the society. For instance one of the interviewees disagreed with a project aiming at using National Civil Service volunteers in small towns in Tuscany that will perform activities formerly implemented by the public service.

The National Civil Service entered into the national political debate in 2011 as a result of a wider problem regarding the citizenship of foreigners. One of the requisite to enter the programme is Italian nationality which is not easily given to foreigners. This creates a problem regarding second generations as well which are still not solved.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

As a result of the fragmented and not continuative youth policies carried out at national level, it is difficult to have a comprehensive overview of the networking activities and the collaboration carried out.

It has to be noted that, although young people play a pivotal role, the National Civil Service is committed with the implementation of the service in a variety of sectors. Therefore networking and collaborations activities are carried out also with other stakeholders dealing with other kind of issues. This includes other NGOs, associations, public services, politicians, policy makers, teachers, businesses and other public departments working on social assistance, health care, environment and other issues. While it is difficult to determine the networking connections outside the National Civil Service, it is possible to have an overview of the networking activities carried out among the organisations accredited on the Civil Service. Although representing a heterogeneous and complex network of organisations acting in different fields and policy areas, their collaboration aimed at increasing their influence at political level and to represent a credible interlocutor for the National Office of the Voluntary Civil Service. As mentioned above one of the most relevant is the CNESC, which includes 20 important organisations accredited at the Civil Service at national level. This association was founded in 1988 in order to represent and promote the conscientious objectors choice and is nowadays is a recognized stakeholder of the National Office.

Regarding the networking activities with other institutions dealing with young people, in the last years the CNESC is collaborating with the Italian National Youth Council, mainly through the organisation of awareness campaigns. This collaboration resulted in a seminar on the Civil Service organised by the Italian National Youth Council. The aim is to continue the collaboration in order to organise more structured and integrated responses to the young needs.



## Supporting youth work

At national level as mentioned before the reduction of the funds provided for the implementation of the project had a negative impact on the implementation of the number of projects and participants of the National Civil Service. Being aware of the struggles faced by the Italian economy and the difficulties related to provide a greater amount of money, an increased amount of funding might not only support the high demand of participation but could also help in the short period to reduce the pressure on the labour demand caused by young persons.

In order to be take part in the National Civil Service, organisations need to be registered in Regional registers. The rationale is that Regions can better understand regional and local needs and evaluate the whether the projects are effective and able to create an added value. However the vast majority of the projects implemented by the National Civil Service are intrinsically related to the territory. In addition one of the interviewees highlights that some Regions are experiencing political pressures. The consequence is that in certain Regions almost the 90% of the approved projects were presented by public bodies. Therefore according to the President of the CNESC Regions should play a monitoring and evaluation role instead of providing funding.

At European level the main support could be given through the implementation a European Civil Service based on the same rationale as the Italian Civil Service. Given the current distance between the European Institutions and the people, this might be an interesting tool to create European citizens.

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- Commitment of the volunteers
- Raising awareness on the overall objectives of the programme and enabling the young person to connect the day-to-day work with the overall objectives.
- The project has to clearly define the area of intervention and the objectives intended to achieve. In addition it is important to align the training to the objectives of the project.
- In order to achieve the target defined in the project, it is important to identify the volunteers more suitable for the project.
- The volunteers should be directly involved in the implementation of the project and therefore should take over specific responsibilities.
- Establishing an ongoing dialogue with the volunteers. In this context the person in charge of the volunteers support has to be able to establish a trusted relationship with the volunteers.

Providing tailored evaluation of the performance of the volunteers at the end of the project. In this respect, the approach should not be only top-down, it is important that the young person provides a sort of self-assessment about the whole experience.



# Navigatorcentrums

[WWW.NAVIGATORCENTRUM.SE](http://WWW.NAVIGATORCENTRUM.SE)

## MISSION:

The centres of the Navigatorcentrums network are independently operated youth provisions. They support young people between the ages of 16-25 in their path towards employment. By providing activities focussed on entering the labour market (such as workshops on CV writing) and coaching, the centres aim to make young people take a more active approach towards employment. The first 14 centres were established in 2005. This was a result of a study in 2003 on social exclusion among young people by the Swedish Ministry of Education. At the moment there are 20 centres active across Sweden. The added value these organisations bring is the combination of multiple institutions under one single roof. This helps young people to get the help they need easy and efficiently. Most young people who leave the Navigatorcentrums either end up in employment or in education. This can either be a traditional educational institution, pre-training programmes or adult education schemes.

## Approach to working with young people

The approach the Navigatorcentrums use varies between the various centres. A general aim can however be identified; this is Navigatorcentrums can help young people in their path towards employment. This is based on a belief young people can change their own lives if they want to. They house a multitude of youth and social organisations under a single roof to make it simpler for young people to get the help they need from a single source. Examples of these organisations are the employment office and the social welfare office. The centres focus on young people that are between the ages of 16 – 25. Most of the young people they help, however, are between the ages of 17 and 22. The activities are open for all young people. However, young people who are vulnerable, such as those who are not in education, employment or training, are actively approached by the staff of the centres to participate in the activities offered. The centres receive the names and contact details of the vulnerable young people from the municipality who are not in education. Municipalities are required by law to keep track of these people. Navigatorcentrums can take up the role of executive body for municipalities to follow this law. When they first come to the centre young

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Social inclusion

Number of youth workers: Varies per centre. No data available for the network as a whole.

Number of young people: Varies per centre. No data available for the network as a whole.

Target group: Excluded young people aged 16-25

Year activities established: 2004

people are informed about what the Navigatorcentrums can offer them. Activities that are offered are workshops aimed at improving skills related to finding a job (such as practicing job interviews). They also offer activities that are more related to traditional education (like English classes) and individual coaching sessions in which they plan for themselves (with some help) the next steps towards employment. When they join they are assigned a youth worker. These youth workers have followed additional training to become qualified as coaches. As the centres are run independently of each other the amount of activities offered differs between the various centres from a couple hours a day to full time. Differences between centres are associated with local characteristics such as the size of the community the centre operates in and other available provisions in the same community.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The Navigatorcentrums help young people make the transition between education and employment. This transition is not always easy, especially for people who leave school early. By helping these particular young people the Navigatorcentrums can prevent them from future unemployment and social exclusion. Although there are no indicators to measure this, the future costs of people depending on social welfare and not paying taxes are known and referred to as indicators of success. Another outcome of the programme is that young people often see new possibilities for themselves and their future. As they are often not aware of help or opportunities that exist for them in the areas of education and employment, the Navigatorcentrums offer guidance and act as gatekeepers for further opportunities.

### *Key Outcomes*

Young people gain skills which help them to gain jobs.

Young people see more opportunities for themselves.

Participants use less social care.

Due to the local nature of the Navigatorcentrums evaluations are limited to local sites. An external evaluation was carried out on the socio-economic effects of the work the centre of Östersund. In this evaluation young people were interviewed before and after they participated in the programme. The results showed a reduction in areas of drug use and a reduction in the use of social services after the young people had participated in the programme. According to this study the payoff time of the programme's cost were three to four months. These were mostly the result of a strong reduction of using social care.

Most young people who leave the Navigatorcentrums either end up in employment or in education. This can either be traditional educational institution, pre-training programmes or adult education schemes. At the end of their time at the centre young people are asked to take part in a reflective process. In this process they reflect on what they have learned during their time with the centre and how they perceived it. Besides being a moment of reflection for the young people, the centres also use this to identify opportunities to improve their offer of activities.

## Experience of trends in youth work

The main trend the Navigatorcentrums has experienced is a shift in the focus of youth work. Whereas the focus in the past was more on getting young people into employment, educating young people is becoming more important. This trend was implemented by the centres themselves as they found out that educational activities would be beneficial for the young people. On a practical level this resulted in changes in the activities offered by the centres (they now also help people who struggle with

English, math and Swedish) and the hiring of staff with teaching qualifications. Related to this is another trend the centres experience, namely the increasing importance of the validation of informal learning. This has resulted in the development of an instrument by the centres to validate the experiences of the young people. This tool helps young people to describe what it is they learned at internships so they can use this on their CV's.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

One regulatory framework that has a big influence on the Navigatorcentrums is the social welfare framework. As the amount of social welfare one receives is strongly reduced when you have a small job, it is not always beneficial for young people to go into employment. As a result the Navigatorcentrums have to find ways to motivate young people to get a job.

Another limiting framework for the activities of the centres is that for adult education. Although Sweden has plenty of opportunities for adults to engage in education, the minimum age to participate in adult education is 20 years. For excluded youth at the age of 17-19 this can be a problem. Often they do not fit in traditional secondary education but cannot enrol in adult education either. In order to circumvent this problem Navigatorcentrums have to make agreements on an individual basis with educational providers.

### **Relationship with Policy**

Overall national policies in the field of youth work have a positive effect on the Navigatorcentrums. An upcoming policy change requires local governments to offer activities to young people not who are not in employment, education and training. At the moment the local authorities are only required to inform themselves about what these people are doing (e.g. if they are between jobs and thus are classified as NEET or if there is something else going on). Although this will not change the activities of the Navigatorcentrums directly, it will make their role more important as they are already provide activities for this target group.

There is a strong belief at the centres that policy can be influenced. Members of the network keep in touch with national ministries and actively participate in policy making. The change in policy presented in this section came to be partly because of participation of the centres in policy making on a national level.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

Networking is seen as important by the centres on both a local and a national level. On a local level the centres are in contact with organisations in the field of education (mainly schools), social welfare and employment (employment office) to give a few examples. On the national level the different Navigatorcentrums are connected to each other. Multiple times a year (around 6) the various centres meet to share ideas and to try to improve the concept of the Navigatorcentrums. Besides these scheduled meetings there is also informal contact between centres if a centre wants help on a topic. The network is also connected to politicians and various ministries. The connections between the centres are perceived by them as very useful as it helps them to deliver better youth work by sharing good practices of the various centres. Also it helps them to call in the expertise of other centres if required or to influence policymaking on a national level.

## Supporting youth work

Support the Navigators centres would like to see for their work is mostly related to the creation of visibility of their work and that of others. By making good practices more visible on a national and an EU level it would be easier to learn from other deliverers of youth work. This could lead to the improvement of the current programme. Also they would like to see more national level confidence in the local nature of youth work activities. The centres believe their activities can better meet local needs when organised at the local level in comparison to organising this on a national level. However, a better vision on youth work from a national level would be appreciated as well as this allows them to see how they fit within the youth work spectrum.

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- ☐ Treat young people with respect so they feel welcome.
- ☐ Participation should be voluntary for young people.
- ☐ Youth workers should be aware of what others are doing and stay connected to them.
- ☐ Develop activities that are not yet offered based on the needs of young people.
- ☐ Youth workers should be committed/passionate about youth work.
- ☐ Approach youth work strategically by involving other actors to create a logic follow up process in which young people easy transfer between the various phases of life (e.g. from school to employment).

# Service Civique

[WWW.SERVICE-CIVIQUE.GOUV.FR](http://WWW.SERVICE-CIVIQUE.GOUV.FR)

## MISSION:

Service Civique is a voluntary commitment programme which aims at reinforcing national cohesion and social diversity. It is accessible to everyone from 16 to 25 years old, with French nationality, or nationality of another EU Member-State or member of the European Economic Area, or with a regular residence permit in France for more than a year. Apart from those, there are no specific conditions (in terms of diploma or former professional experience) to become a volunteer. Motivation is the main criteria to be engaged for a mission.

Service Civique was set up by the law of 10th March 2010. Volunteers choose to carry out a community work assignment for a period between 6 months and 1 year. Missions can be implemented in associations, regional and local authorities, NGOs, etc. The assignments proposed must be accomplished in one of the nine different fields recognised as a priority by the State: culture and leisure; international development and humanitarian action; education for all; emergency intervention in case of crisis; citizenship; solidarity; health; environmental protection; and sport. In exchange of their engagement, volunteers receive a monthly allowance (between €573,65 and €680,15 for scholarship students or young people benefiting from the minimum revenue) and are recognized as having a certain number of rights, such as integral social security covered by the State.

In every mission, volunteers are accompanied by one tutor (youth worker), who ensures individualised follow-up for the successful achievement of their mission. Each youth worker supports a couple of volunteers within the organisation where they do their Service Civique, ensures a civic and citizen training and helps them to define both their professional and personal projects. Their role is crucial in the successful achievement of the Service Civique missions.

In general, and despite the variety of profiles, youth workers have a background in working with young people. Depending on the organisation concerned, they play a role of social worker, trainer, tutor and coach for young volunteers. In all cases, the relations between volunteers and youth workers are based on mutual confidence, respect and openness. There are generally no hierarchical links, and relations are quite informal.

## Approach to working with young people

Les Enfants du Canal is one of the associations officially authorised to host volunteers from the Service Civique. In June 2010, the association signed with the Service Civique Agency a two-year framework agreement<sup>34</sup> allowing the organisation to receive volunteers from the Service Civique. The agreement mentions the potential missions of the volunteers and the duration of engagement.

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/agrement\\_NA-00-10-00056.pdf](http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/agrement_NA-00-10-00056.pdf)

Les Enfants du Canal was created in 2007. It has 32 employees (including 22 Full-Time Employees) and 10 volunteers in "Service Civique". The main objective of the association is to provide support for homeless people and people with difficult housing conditions in four "arrondissements" of Paris (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>). Several initiatives have been set up to achieve this goal. Social workers organise visits to the homeless people on-site ("marauding"), propose 52 beds in a host centre and use a special mobile bus to provide food and support to homeless people. The association has also developed a programme of inclusion of homeless people by former homeless people. In parallel, they provide support in finding housing for priority households.

The association first hosted three Service Civique volunteers in June 2010. Since December 2011, they have been hosting approx. 10 Service Civique volunteers per year. They are in the process of signing a new agreement with the Service Civique Agency, to host up to 35 volunteers a year. Volunteers are primarily recruited on their motivation. There is a real will to promote social diversity within the association; for instance volunteers include, among others, non-graduated people as well as a PhD student. Volunteers are initially trained in the association premises, and then learn on-site directly with homeless people. Each volunteer is accompanied by a social worker, who briefs them about their mission on a weekly basis, and receives support from a dedicated youth worker – also called "tutor".

A specific guide for youth workers supporting volunteers was developed in September 2011 by the Service Civique Agency<sup>35</sup>. It aims to give tools and advice to youth workers to successfully play their role as tutors and supporting young people throughout their volunteering period. The main objective of the youth worker is to accompany and facilitate the identification and development of the competences of volunteers during their Service Civique mission. Prior to the start of the mission, the youth worker must prepare a plan of action, liaise with the volunteer to know his/her previous knowledge and experience, and define goals to be achieved. During the mission, the youth worker selects and prepares activities for the volunteers, supports them in the achievement of these activities and provides advice and counselling when needed. At the end of the mission, the youth worker must evaluate the competences acquired by the volunteer. This is articulated around two main elements:

- Attitude and social competences – "Savoir-être" (transversal to all organisations): autonomy, creativity, punctuality, team spirit, relational skills, rigour, communication skills, etc.
- Technical competences – "Savoir-faire" (depending on the organisation concerned): project management, project support, assistance to seniors, IT and Internet skills, administrative work, manual work skills, etc.

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: voluntary commitment in nine priority fields defined by the State.

Number of youth workers: 20 ("Service Civique" Agency); approx. 10.000 overall (more or less two youth workers per host organization).

Number of young volunteers: 46.000 (since 2010, i.e. three years).

Target group: young people between 16 and 25 years old.

Year activities established: 2010

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/ASC\\_guide\\_tuteurs.pdf](http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/ASC_guide_tuteurs.pdf)



In order to ensure the quality of support provided and help associations hosting volunteers, a specific training for youth workers / tutors has been prepared by the Service Civique Agency. It is delivered by the association *Unis-Cité* and the *Ligue de l'enseignement*. This training is based on two modules, which are adapted to the experience of the youth workers:

- For new tutors: increase their knowledge about Service Civique so that they are well prepared to host and support young volunteers;
- For experimented tutors: exchange of experiences and tutorship practices.

These daily trainings can be organised at regional or local level, at the request of Service Civique referees. In 2012, 116 daily trainings were organised, and 1757 tutors from 1360 host organisations were trained.

In the association visited during the case study, the youth workers interviewed described their role as tutors of several volunteers. They provide support and give them advice in their daily activities, ensure individualised monitoring and make sure all volunteers find their place in the framework of their missions. Youth workers also help volunteers to define their professional project in the middle- and long-term. Results of interactions between youth workers and volunteers include the development of more innovative and dynamic approaches, as well as the creation of long-lasting relations of trust, respect and mutual confidence.

#### *Main outcomes and impacts*

Increasing number of volunteers every year (objective of 100.000 per year in 2017)

89% of the volunteers are satisfied with their experience; 81% would recommend it to others

75% of the volunteers are employed or in training 6 months after their engagement

Service Civique missions are positive for the personal and professional development of both volunteers and youth workers supporting them

Youth workers are satisfied with their experience as tutors, considered as an eye-opener in their daily practices

The interactions between volunteers and youth workers enable the organisations to develop innovative and dynamic work approaches

The role of youth workers is crucial in the successful achievement of the Service Civique missions.

### **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

The "Service Civique" Agency has precise objectives in terms of the number of young volunteers starting a mission every year. In 2012, their objective was to reach 20.000 new volunteers, and this objective was achieved. In 2013, the objective is the scaling up of the number of volunteers reached in 2012, corresponding to the increase in demands which has been observed since the creation of the project in 2010. The President of the Republic recently set the objective of 100.000 volunteers per year by the end of his mandate, namely 2017. If they have the necessary human and financial means at their disposal, they think this goal can be achieved by then.

The expected results are closely monitored. In February 2013, a survey was conducted by TNS-Sofres on a population of young volunteers (approx. 180.000) six months after their mission, to analyse their personal experience regarding the



programme and their professional development afterwards. The results of the survey indicate that 89% of the volunteers have a positive opinion of their experience, and that 81% would recommend it to others and would do it again if possible. After 6 months, 75% of the volunteers are employed or in training; 61% of the volunteers believe that the "Service Civique" was an added-value in finding a job. 92% of the volunteers think that it is important to be useful for others, and 43% believe that others can be trusted (against only 17% in a comparable youth population). The "Service Civique" Agency is aware that there are still unsatisfactory demands, from both volunteers and host organisations. The Scandinavian system, which promotes flexibility in the organisation of studies and offers various possibilities for gap years within and after high school, could be seen as a potential model for the Service Civique, in the possibilities given to volunteers to gain additional experience outside the traditional educational system. A harmonised approach at European level should also be promoted.

One person in the Agency is responsible for monitoring and evaluation. They set up various means of control on the host organisations: compulsory activity reports; on-site visits (with the objective that 20% of host organisations are controlled each year); regular contacts with the dedicated referee in each organisation; possibility to withdraw an agreement based on complaints of volunteers (e.g. by letter, on Facebook). They also developed satisfactory surveys for volunteers. Generally satisfaction levels are quite high, and there is often a will to renew the agreement on both sides.

In the association visited, interviewees believe that the "Service Civique" is an interesting tool for young people. It enables discoveries and open-mindedness. It is also important for personal development and to prepare young people to become responsible citizens. Furthermore, a lot of autonomy and responsibilities are given to them in their various missions. However, in order for a mission to be successful, two conditions are necessary: (i) the hosting structure must be willing to recruit a volunteer, and not a low-paid employee; (ii) the project of the volunteer must be well thought through from the beginning. In these cases, a mission of "Service Civique" will be a very stimulating experience for volunteers, as well as a strong added-value on their CV. For the youth workers interviewed, the experience of supporting volunteers was also very positive, from both a personal and professional point of view. Personally, they acquired soft skills related to mentoring, coaching and interpersonal relations. Youth workers usually build strong links with volunteers, which can last even after the period of volunteering. From a professional angle, the experience helped them to develop management and coordination skills, as well as gain innovative ideas to better conduct their activities. Indeed, volunteers generally act as eye-openers for youth workers, enabling them to enlarge their perspectives and develop new ways of working in their daily activities.

Volunteers who realise a mission in an association often pursue their voluntary work after the term of their mission, thus contributing to the renewal of associative life. Sometimes, large associations such as "Unis-Cite" or "Ligue de l'Enseignement" develop their own intermediation partnership entrusting volunteers with new assignments. In June 2012, a few former volunteers of *Les Enfants du Canal* created an association gathering all former and current volunteers, with the objective of supporting the current volunteers, and providing assistance to the organisation if necessary (e.g. when they need extra people for special events). This initiative was put forward by young people themselves, which showed that they are still willing to be involved even at the end of their mission. Besides, two former volunteers now work in the association, one at the reception centre and the other as a temporary volunteer on some missions.

## Experience of trends in youth work

Young people seem to be much more interested, engaged and committed in voluntary activities than before. The two fields where they are mostly engaged are social work (especially at local level) and environmental protection. There is a strong demand from a majority of volunteers for these two areas. Voluntary commitment has become a priority for young people nowadays. This is all the more observable as the socio-economic situation has been really difficult for them in the past few years. Given that young people struggle to enter proper employment and that employment perspectives are quite limited, they need to find new ways of engagement. "Service Civique" is a good system to give positive perspectives to young people and support their personal and professional development. It can be seen as a tool to reach different profiles (young people from deprived areas, school leavers, unemployed, etc.) and to help them looking to a brighter future.

Another trend, from a political point of view, is the fact that since 2010 "Service Civique" has been one of the priorities of national youth policy (with a significant dedicated budget). There is obviously a change in the way young people are considered by politicians. Young people are better taken into account. Policies and activities in the youth field are not made for young people only, but also with them and by them.

Young people have a different attitude towards commitment and volunteering than before. Even if they are not certain about their future and the way to achieve their goals, they want to engage on missions that make sense to them, especially if it involves a direct contact with people. They are as involved as before, but in rather innovative ways and outside the traditional structures of engagement.

## Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice

A few key dates are essential to understand the rationale behind the "Service Civique":

- 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1996: Announcement made by the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, to suspend mandatory military service. He also promises the creation of a voluntary "Service Civique".
- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006: The Equal Opportunities Act aims at making equal opportunities a reality for everyone in several areas, including the creation of a voluntary "Service Civique". The National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities is created, with the responsibility of coordinating "Service Civique" (without the necessary financial means).
- 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010: Promulgation of the "Service Civique" law. Creation of a "Service Civique" for young people aged between 16 and 25. It harmonizes the different existing programmes and introduces the Defense and Citizenship Day, replacing the Preparation and Call to Defense Day;
- 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010: Creation of the Service Civique Agency.

The law creating the "Service Civique" and a series of ministerial decrees frame the activities of the Agency. They are not seen as limits but rather as supporting tools providing security and stability. Indeed, it is a relatively recent scheme which thus requires a strong framing. The framework is strict but not opaque, in the sense that the regulations have been developed by the Agency into operational tools accessible to all youth workers. For instance, the Agency has developed several guidelines for organisations hosting volunteers and for tutors taking care of young people.

In the association Les Enfants du Canal, both the director and youth workers do not feel any particular judicial or legal constraint. Each volunteer obviously has a specific status which is clearly defined by the "Service Civique" regulations, including minimum remuneration, number of hours per week, social security, list of tasks and objectives to be achieved, etc. Besides, the association can be monitored any time by the Agency, and has to provide an Annual Report to the Agency. These are considered as normal and positive practices.

### **Relationship with policy**

Since 2010 and the creation of the "Service Civique", volunteering of young people has been one of the priorities of national youth policy. Significant human and financial means have been made available to achieve ambitious objectives, notably the intention to have 100.000 volunteers per year in 2017. The importance given to volunteering at political level, accentuated by the economic and financial crisis harming young people, create new opportunities for both organisations and young people to develop and participate in volunteer activities in the coming years.

In 2010, the director of the association Les Enfants du Canal provided a report ordered by the "Service Civique" Agency about the involvement of young people in relation to homeless people issues. He presented the different type of missions that could be proposed to young people (a real position of volunteer with concrete responsibilities, instead of an underpaid job), as well as the specific trainings they would need to follow in order to be able to work with homeless people. Following the publication of this report, the association engaged three volunteers in June 2010. It also enabled an improvement of the definition of the status and missions of volunteers, now considered as real volunteers and not as low-paid employees or interns.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

Throughout its history, elaboration, development and management, the "Service Civique" has been relying on close relationships with various partners. First of all, associations provide the greatest part of the assignments offered to young volunteers (almost three quarters since 2010). This goes from small local associations recruiting one or two volunteers, up to large organised associative networks capable of managing hundreds of volunteers. For the last three years, more than 2.000 associations became host organisations for volunteers. Another important group of partner is constituted by local authorities, who can receive approval to host young people: big cities or regional and general councils can set up programmes for young volunteers in "Service Civique". Regions, departments and communities are increasingly numerous in supporting young people in their involvement, giving them reductions for transport, grants at the end of their mission or even access to vocational training. Innovative programmes were developed in cities such as Bordeaux, Grenoble and Tourcoing, to support volunteers in defining their own projects, while welcoming young people with no qualifications or coming from deprived neighbourhoods.

Besides, the law provides the obligation for higher educational establishments to take into account "Service Civique" as part of the students' courses. One good practice example is the one of HEC Business School, with its SolidariFrance program, who is partner of the "Service Civique" Institute. Private companies also support the activities of the "Service Civique" Agency, either as partners to valorise the engagement of volunteers at the end of their mission, or as donators. This group includes companies such as Banque Postale, EDF, CapGemini, IBM, AXA, Orange and Microsoft. Eventually, there is a strong commitment from international partners, especially since requests for

assignments abroad are very high. Conventions with the France-German Youth Office, the Quebec-France Youth Office and the Agency for French Teaching Abroad benefit to a growing number of young volunteers every year. Moreover, the possibility for reciprocal agreements was experimented with exchanges between volunteers from France, Tunisia and South Africa. Young people who commit themselves through the European Voluntary Service or as International Volunteer for Solidarity can now develop this experience in the same conditions as those who performed their "Service Civique".

Les Enfants du Canal has developed partnerships with other associations working with homeless people, such as the Red Cross, Emmaus and the Secours Catholique. These partnerships enable them to join forces to offer common training to volunteers participating on the same subject or topic. They also have a more institutional partnership with the State, via the Ministry of Housing, which is their main donor. All these networking activities are important, because they enable a constructive dialogue and the exchange of good practices. Nevertheless, it is crucial that each organisation maintains its autonomy, because too many partnerships, frameworks and regulations can break spontaneity and dynamics.

### Supporting youth work

One of the interviewed youth worker would like to see the development of a sort of federalism around the associations hosting young volunteers. This federalism is currently taking place. Indeed, since 2012, several associations hosting volunteers gathered in the *Service Civique Platform*, which represents 40% of all volunteers. This platform has become a privileged interlocutor of the Service Civique, and the spokesperson of the platform recently met the President of the Republic to discuss emerging issues relating to Service Civique development and volunteers.

The idea is that in smaller structures, which can hardly host more than two or three volunteers, it is difficult for young people to really make the most of their experience, because the support provided is not sufficient. If volunteers are part of a larger organisation and/or if a few organisations develop common activities involving several volunteers, they can more easily feel the added-value of their work as volunteer in "Service Civique", and not as any other volunteer in a given association. The interviewee therefore wishes that the central agency managing the programme would favour more common initiatives and partnerships among host organisations, in order to create a stronger sense of belonging among volunteers. Three initiatives have recently been set up by the Service Civique Agency to animate the network of Service Civique volunteers<sup>36</sup>. These initiatives aim at bringing together volunteers from across the country and enable them to exchange about their experiences and stories: (i) participation of volunteers in the national day celebrations; (ii) organisation of regional meetings to help volunteers to meet each other, add value to their experience and live a unique event as citizen; (iii) collective delivery of Service Civique certificates to volunteers to recognise officially and solemnly their commitment.

The director of the visited association also promotes the development of innovative approaches and missions which can serve the general interest. In these times of economic crisis, public authorities and donors are somehow reluctant to finance innovate and original projects, although they are needed to keep attracting young volunteers. He highlighted one example of innovative project that they are currently developing in the association: in three weeks, they will launch the "Rom Civique" project, for which the association will host 24 young people, including 18 Roma people. They are currently looking for funding to develop this initiative further. They need credits for the first year of activity, and then would have to find ways to have

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<sup>36</sup> *Information Note on the animation of the network of volunteers, Service Civique Agency, June 2013*

sustainable funding in the longer-term. Funds should be dedicated to these types of projects, especially at national and European level.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ Direct access for all young people to missions through a dedicated website.
- ☐ Self-motivation and self-commitment of young people.
- ☐ Management of the programme by an independent agency (dedicated staff and budget) without administrative constraints and without competition with other mechanisms.
- ☐ Programme open to all types of organisations (NGOs, public administrations, international organisations, etc.), which breaks traditional sectorial approaches.
- ☐ Compromise between individual motivation and collective engagement.
- ☐ Regional and national meetings between volunteers to share experiences.
- ☐ Avoid excessive regulations because this can break the motivation of volunteers or host organisations.
- ☐ Give responsibilities to young people so that they take initiatives and become more confident and autonomous.

# 72 Stunden ohne Kompromiss

[WWW.72H.AT/SITE/UEBER72STUNDENOHNEKOMPRO](http://WWW.72H.AT/SITE/UEBER72STUNDENOHNEKOMPRO)

## MISSION:

72 Stunden Ohne Kompromiss (72 Hours without Compromise) is a country-wide volunteering action organised in Austria every 2 years by the Union of Catholic Youth (Katholische Jugend). It is part of the international initiative 72 Hours without Compromise (other countries include Hungary, Switzerland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany and Czech Republic). The goals of 72 Hours without Compromise are:

- To put the commitment and action of young people in the spotlight.
- To improve living conditions and human situations via realisation of specific projects.
- To promote volunteering all over Europe.

The Austrian project has engaged young people in 3-day volunteering projects throughout the country six times since 2002. The number of participants in recent years has been around 5000. In 2012, the criteria for volunteering projects were adjusted to include an emphasis on social engagement – helping elderly people, disabled, people in need in Austria and abroad.

## Background

72 Stunden ohne Kompromiss (72 Hours without Compromise) is a volunteering project for young people aged 14-24, which is organised by the Union of Catholic Youth (KJ) of Austria following the model developed in Germany and currently implemented in several EU countries. The project takes place every 2 years and consists of a multitude of small volunteering projects implemented by groups of young people in all Federal Lands of Austria, all during the same 4 days (hence the name of the project). In the recent years, most small projects focused on 'social engagement' – e.g. helping people in need, people with disabilities or elderly people. The target group reached by the project in reality consists mostly of school students, since young people in VET (apprenticeship) are not usually involved. The concept of 'social engagement' means engaging with people whose life situation is different from that of the young people involved and their families, or with people whom these young people 'would not normally meet' – be it elderly

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Volunteering

Number of youth workers: 9 federal land coordinators, plus about 400 volunteers. The 9 federal coordinators have a team of professional youth workers behind them. Size of team differs from county to county. Each federal coordinator also has a partner from Young Caritas. There is also a coordinator for all of Austria, plus support from PR departments of Catholic Youth in all counties.

Number of young people: about 5000.

Target group: school students aged 14-24.



people secluded in a retirement home, students in a lower educational track basic school, people with disabilities living in a nursing home, or refugees. The project activities are presented to the general public in Austria via specially organised media support (e.g. a long-term cooperation with a national radio channel) and are also aimed at showcasing young people's social engagement as a force for the good in society.

### Approach to working with young people

72 Stunden ohne Kompromiss is organised by Katholische Jugend (Union of Catholic Youth of Austria), and was first organised in Austria in 2002 (based on the already existing idea of 72 Hours without Compromise, developed in Germany). It has been taking place every second year since then (2012 saw the sixth round of 72 Stunden in Austria). The project supports and promotes local volunteering initiatives for young people throughout the country, selected on the basis of criteria developed by an organising committee.

When a project has been approved by the regional/Federal Land coordinators, it receives support (but not funding, which project groups have to raise themselves) – e.g. media support, for ensuring project visibility. Young people applying online as volunteers (usually classmates from the same school or youth groups from parishes) sometimes apply with their own projects, but more often the search for projects is done by coordinators. Young people are then encouraged to support an approved project (e.g. a Catholic parish, a retirement home, or a charity proposes a project, suggesting activities – and a group of young people who have applied to take part are encouraged to use this as the site for their activities).

The target group definition on project website does not go beyond age group, but in reality the majority of young people taking part in the project are attending schools of a higher educational track (Austria has a multiple track school system in which the 'tracking' of students takes place relatively early). Given the limited social mobility of the Austrian education system, this means that most participants come from 'educated middle class' families. Organisers and coordinators note that so far they have had limited success in engaging youth with a migrant background (although they have a partnership with the Muslim Youth of Austria), and had very little success in reaching young people in training (apprentices).

Young people are involved both as volunteers and as project group leaders (young adults in charge of a group of schoolchildren aged less than 18).

Young people get involved in these activities through word of mouth (their friends have done a project with 72 Stunden two years ago), through their parish (almost

#### *Key Approaches*

Volunteering projects are implemented during the same 4 days across the whole country.

All volunteering activities are implemented by groups of young people, usually between 14 and 18 years old (more seldom up to 24 y.o.), supervised by a teacher or a young adult with experience of volunteering and group leadership.

Projects are selected on the basis of a set of criteria that may change from year to year (e.g. in 2012 only projects with an element of social engagement theoretically were approved).

The content of volunteering projects is extremely varied, from renovating a parish charity shop to performing a play in a retirement home or helping refugees in a refugee centre).



every parish has a Catholic Youth group), through their school (a teacher invites the class to do a project) or through the publicity campaign run by the organisers. Young people mention doing something positive that brings change and being together with friends (and having fun) as the reason to get involved in a 72 Stunden action.

There are no 'youth workers' in the sense of persons permanently involved in youth work. Groups of school students implementing individual projects are led each by a young adult who has experience of voluntary youth work (often Catholic parish youth work) and/ or by a teacher. Once the time for the project arrives, the team starts whatever voluntary activities they have planned (e.g. free after-school tutorials for children from a primary school, organising leisure activities in a retirement home, collecting foodstuff donations for people in need in a developing country). The activities go on for 3 days.

Each project is seen by the organisers as a learning opportunity for the young people involved. The learning is defined as 'social learning', i.e. experiential learning and development of social awareness through action. Raising young people's own awareness of the difficulties encountered e.g. by people with disabilities, elderly people and people in developing countries is sometimes combined with actions directed at raising awareness of these issues in society at large. Thus, the project PIES DESCALZOS in Innsbruck (Tyrol) consisted in organising a football match between celebrities and politicians, all playing with bare feet, to attract media attention to the plight of street children and children having to earn their own living in the developing world. Another project (in Vienna) was aimed at developing a fair and sustainable product – the young people involved learned from sustainably industry examples and learned about fair trade before developing their own idea of a product.

However, not all projects described on the 72 Stunden ohne Kompromiss website have an in-built learning concept in their design. Many projects are aimed at renovating or cleaning from rubbish local parish facilities used for charitable work, or at organising entertainment for children or elderly people. While these experiences may also be described as a form of 'social learning' by simply being part of other people's world for several days, they do not always represent a setting for a clearly defined awareness raising or immediate engagement with social issues.

School-based and parish-based volunteer teams clearly are the ones on which the organisers rely to build up the bulk of projects – schools are a reliable recruitment channel for volunteers, especially where the teachers are regular supporters of the project.

### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The organisers consider the project's continuing popularity with school-age young people the main evidence of its success. According to organisers, young people asked to fill out evaluation questionnaires after participating in 72 Stunden usually rate their experience positively. At the same time, no

#### *Outcomes and impacts*

Young people are for the most part satisfied with their participation in the project and find that it gives them an opportunity to contribute to society.

Young people's sense of self-worth and their image in society improve.

Many young people who have taken part as volunteers in earlier rounds of 72 Stunden have come back as group leaders for volunteering projects some years later.

full-scale evaluation of the project has been carried out by a third party, so it is difficult to establish the exact extent of the project's impact. Young people stress the project's contribution to their sense of doing something useful for society, and some see it as their chance to engage in meaningful activity and to bring positive change.

The organisers also note the positive effect of the project on the perception of young people in society – improving the fairly negative image of young people as unmotivated, unsociable and irresponsible through extensive media coverage of positive activities and social engagement by young people.

The difference from what is already done by others (e.g. open youth work, parish work with young people, etc.) is that the project is action-oriented, intense and focused on bringing concrete results through young people's voluntary activities throughout the country over a short period of time. Many young people who have taken part as volunteers in earlier rounds of 72 Stunden have come back as group leaders for volunteering projects some years later.

### **Experience of Trends in youth work**

One trend that occurred to the organisers of 72 Stunden was the increasingly big space taken up by school in the lives of young people from their target group. The time dedicated to school and homework and the importance attached to school by young people has, in the opinion of the organisers, increased over the years. This means that engaging school (e.g. teachers leading a class in volunteering activities) is seen as a more secure way to reach young people and to involve them in the project. On the other hand, extra effort is needed to arrange for schools to give students 3 days off to implement their project.

Young people from minority and migrant background are more difficult to reach for a project like 72 Stunden because their social networks in Austria do not always overlap with the social networks of most young people in the 72 Stunden volunteer groups. However, working together with associations of minority youth (e.g. Muslim Youth) it is possible to reach part of that target group.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Activities organised by associations, such as the Union of Catholic Youth (KJ), fall under the category of associative youth work in Austria. This type of youth work is delivered by private associations, though it may be supported financially or otherwise by public organisations.

Activities involving under-age youth fall under the provisions of Jugendschutzgesetz – Law on the protection of youth. Concrete requirements may differ between Federal Lands. The organisers of 72 Stunden have noted that while regulations for school activities are very clear, the field of youth work outside school is for the most part unregulated. Since they wanted to make sure that their project groups' arrangements on safety, hygiene and other issues would not be considered illegal, they followed more strict guidelines associated with school activities and treated their projects for regulatory purposes as 'school outings'. This required extra effort and investment in terms of human resources. Organisers also have to arrange for the school to give students three days off for their project activities.

### **Relationship with policy**

According to the organisers of 72 Stunden, while young people's interests in Austria are represented at policy level (through associations promoting young people's agenda), young people are not a primary focus of attention for policy makers and politicians, since they are not seen as important contributors to the economy. Hence

there is insufficient financial support for associative youth work and volunteering activities, such as 72 hours. Without sufficient funding, it is not possible to ensure continuity and institutional memory of such projects, since coordinators are hired part-time and only for the period when volunteering activities are selected, prepared and implemented.

The legal framework for associative youth work is less supportive than that for open youth work (a different legal category under Austrian law), as it is not viewed as a duty of public (federal government and federal lands') institutions to provide for associative youth work. This has its advantages (freedom to set own agenda) but also disadvantages in terms of stable infrastructure and funding. Given that in many countries youth associations are directly involved in implementing national youth policy through a grant-based public funding framework, perhaps this would also be beneficial for the future of youth associations in Austria.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

72 Stunden has a good network of sponsors and media partners, as well as a network of partners among public institutions and youth associations.

Sponsors include Raiffeisenbank Austria and the Conference of Superiors (umbrella organisation of Catholic monastic orders), and public sponsors include three federal ministries. Media partners include public radio and TV channels. The network of Friends of 72 Stunden includes Austrian Muslim Youth, Austrian Evangelical Youth, Federal Network of Open Youth Work, Austrian Scouts and Guides and other organisations engaged in youth work.

The role of sponsors is to ensure funding, without which the project would not be possible. A coordinator responsible for public relations ensured that liaison with sponsors and the media was smooth and that fundraising and publicity goals of the project were met. Friends of 72 Stunden were mostly engaged in spreading promotional information about the project and attracting participants from the target groups of these organisations. Thus, through the networking partner Muslim Youth of Austria, some students of migrant background were reached and engaged in the project.

### **Supporting youth work**

In the opinion of 72 Stunden organisers, the EU could support the participation of young volunteers from other countries where organising committees of similar 72H projects exist, in the Austrian project events, and vice versa. In the past, they have applied for EU support under the Europe for Citizens programme, and have obtained support in 2008 and 2010; however, it did not get support in 2012.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ For action-style volunteer projects, long advance preparation is essential. Examples of successful youth volunteering actions are to be studied, and also used to demonstrate to potential donors and supporters that the project idea brings good results.
- ☐ Social learning happens when young people are engaged in volunteering projects that bring them face to face with people in circumstances different from their own – e.g. living in a retirement home, or living in poverty.
- ☐ Engaging schools is an important channel for attracting volunteers, school-based volunteer groups are often organised by the same teacher year after year.

# Daily Centres 'Siemacha spot'

[WWW.SIEMACHASPOT.PL/PL](http://WWW.SIEMACHASPOT.PL/PL)

## MISSION:

Youth centres for young people of school age opened in shopping centres by Siemacha Association are an innovative example of combining educational and therapeutic functions of meeting places for youth. At 'Siemacha spot', young people are free to participate in a wide range of workshops (e.g. music, cooking, social development) and can receive psychological support.

Daily centres 'Siemacha spot' are dedicated to school children (from 7 years old to the end of secondary school), for which a shopping centre became a place of productive meetings. The main aim behind this initiative was to create a place for creative development for young people that could serve them as an independent "backyard" and a peer education space, where peers can co-decide about the purpose of its use.

## Approach to working with young people

Youth centres in shopping malls are separate, special places, where approx. 80 young people can stay at the same time. They are involved in many different and creative actions in a variety of areas, such as: social and personal development (social therapy group), education (logical thinking, foreign language in a practical way, various workshops), art and culture (artistic, musical theatre that serves upbringing); sports, and psychological support and cooperation with the family. During the meetings, young people have the opportunity to choose between different classes. Centres offer, among other things, practical language learning, learning support on school subjects, the development of their talents (music, plastic, the acting, sports). In addition, many centres organise study visits, including trips abroad.

The basis for Siemacha's work is teamwork alongside individual work. The approach to youth work draws on well-known methods of socio-therapy. Equally important and valuable are original programmes of classes and workshops prepared by the employees that are continuous, meaningful, and are tailored to a specific group. Currently, Siemacha runs three youth centres located in shopping centres and plans to create a nationwide network of such places in the upcoming years (in addition to Siemacha's centres located elsewhere).

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Siemacha Association youth centres

Number of youth workers: about 400

Number of youth centres: 30  
Siemacha Association centres – 3 in shopping centres

Number of young people: about 2000

Target group: young people aged 7-19

Year activities established: 2010

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

Various effects can be observed in different areas and at different stages of youth work. At first there is progress in learning, working with a psychologist, and overcoming shyness. In the longer term, a young person learns to trust others by working in a group of peers, which is later transferred into trust in school, family, and personal relationships in adult life. Evidence shows that some young people have become successful both personally and professionally, despite various difficulties that brought them to Siemacha. Some of them finished education in college, some have a public function, others graduated from secondary school and/or got married. There are also some former beneficiaries that continue to work within the organisation as educators, teachers, or volunteers.

### *Main outcomes and impacts*

Personal and social development of young beneficiaries that positively impacts school, family, personal relationships in an adult life.

Education development of young beneficiaries leading to better school achievements and perspectives in professional life.

Strong ties between young people and the centre resulting in continued involvement of some former beneficiaries as educators, teachers, or volunteers).

The first, greatest value of Siemacha is the community. It is a group of about 200 young people who know each other well. Their source of success is their relationships that serve as a foundation for all actions. The second key success factor is youth workers and leaders elected by the group as a community. These are the people respected by the group, competent in their field, who know how to deal directly with young people, and passionate about their work. In addition, the relationships between adults and young people are not formal but based on friendship, trust and co-operation. The opportunity for young people to co-decide on the rules is yet another factor that contributes to Siemacha's success. At the centre, young people feel that they are at home and have an influence on what they do. Finally, what differentiates Siemacha's approach from other similar activities offered by other stakeholders is that the programmes implemented in its centres are tailor-made to address the needs of a group in a specific locality.

When young people finish their participation in activities organised by Siemacha, they finish high school at the same time. Then, they either go to college or enter the labour market. If they decide to study, they often maintain further contact with the association, visit the centre, or become are volunteers. If they are employed, they come to socialise and often cooperate with centres.

## Experience of trends in youth work

In recent years the environment in which young people live has changed dramatically. This refers mainly to the introduction of new technologies and the Internet that has changed the way young people communicate. Nowadays, youth more often talk via social networking sites than through face-to-face contact. This means that the way to reach young people also must be reformed. Secondly, there are a growing number of children from immigrant families and mixed families in Poland. This phenomenon began to appear less than three years ago and makes it necessary to apply a different way of looking at these communities and organising appropriate activities for them.

Furthermore, places of leisure activities have also changed: it is not just the backyard but also a shopping centre. Research carried out in Krakow has shown that spending time at shopping malls is the most common leisure activity for young people. The answer why they choose such places to meet is: 'because it is clean and warm; this is a place where you can hide yourself'.

All these changes require Siemacha's employees to constantly learn new things, to be open to the world, to read, to be ready for new ways of behaviour (e.g. how to approach someone who always wears earphones) to adjust the way of contact with young people appropriately. Youth workers must be able to demonstrate with their own attitude that there are alternative ways of functioning in a society.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

As a public benefit organisation Siemacha Association is subject to the Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism Act. These regulations allow the participation in competitions to run leading centres in the city, which are co-financed. The main difficulty is that the legal framework remains incomplete in some areas and some provisions can be applied only in theory. For instance, the Public Procurement Law requires the leading centres to announce a tender in too many situations, which adds additional burden to the centres work.

### **Relationship with policy**

In recent years, many changes for the better in the area of youth work can be observed in Poland. For instance, many local authorities outsource the establishment and maintenance of youth centres to NGOs. This is a positive development because earlier the city authorities were 'afraid' of cooperation with NGOs and often created institutions that were not working well. Today, a number NGOs specialising in youth work are often invited to co-operate with the authorities to run centres for young people. With funding and supervision, such initiatives are more likely to be successful. A drawback that remains is that there is no long-term social policy in the area of youth work. Only now the Regional Social Assistance Centres (ROPS) begin to build the foundations of youth policy, but a long-term vision is still lacking at local level. Programmes are created only for one year and this period is too short to plan something sustainable to achieve a continuity of efforts.

EU policy is of key importance in this regard. One example is a possibility to exchange young people and staff between different countries. This brings concrete results: for adults it means they can learn something new and share their experiences; for young people it is an opportunity to test what they have learned in their organisation in a wider forum, and to significantly broaden their horizons.

Siemacha's strength and influence in the society is high because it is a network organisation. This refers mainly to the regional level, where its voice is heard. However, when it comes to the national perspective, the situation is slightly less optimistic as draft laws and amendments are not drafted in consultation with organisations such as Siemacha.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

Siemacha forms a large network of contacts with similar organisations, schools, courts, and others. It has also contacts with large companies and business. They usually act as sponsors and substantive partners with whom the association can consult different issues. Also, Siemacha's employees can be trained within these firms while their staff can be trained in Siemacha. Members of the association also work and



are active in different areas, such as academia or politics, which helps to maintain a very broad network of contacts, allowing the organisation to expand and learn new things, such as business tools, measuring the effects of its activity.

### **Supporting youth work**

At EU level, there is a need to maintain the policy that promotes mobility and exchange, workshops, trainings, which are very practical and deliver concrete results. At the national level, there is a need to create a stable long-term youth policy. At the regional level, there is a need to strengthen the openness and willingness of cities and municipalities to delegate the creation of youth centres to non-governmental organisations. It is also necessary to create long-term policies and directions of future development in the area of youth.

#### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Build strong organisational structure (sound work, consequences of decisions).
- Engage youth workers and leaders who are authentic and can build an authority among pupils/beneficiaries.
- Establish clear rules for all employees and young beneficiaries.
- Allow youth to co-decide about common matters.
- Build credibility and trust in the organisation and between the people who work in it.
- Build a community based on strong social ties.
- Offer tailor-made programmes and implement activities on regular basis (e.g. classes).

# Czech Association Outreach work – quality assurance activities

WWW.STREETWORK.CZ

## MISSION:

The Czech Association of outreach work or street-work (CAS) is a professional association of experts, outreach services and youth drop-in centres in the Czech Republic. The association brings together 58 centres engaged in outreach work or street-work, running drop-in centres for youth or drop-in centres for drug users. The association has several goals of which a key one is to support professional delivery of street-work activities. To this purpose the association runs a range of actions, two of which are:

- Certification of quality assurance for member organisations; and
- Delivery of training activities for staff.

The first set of activities will be discussed in more detail in this case study. In the Czech Republic drop-in centres for young people fall under the legislation on social services (108/2006 Sb). This law defines among other things the requirements for social service providers to put in place quality assurance processes complying with nationally defined standards as well as the qualification and training requirements for staff delivering social services. Drop-in centres for young people are open spaces where all young people can come and make use of available facilities and staff. They are accessible without any payment of a fee or membership. Their core role is prevention, information and advice provided by qualified and trained staff. These centres are primarily targeted at young people who spend their time on the streets without any organised support and are thus at greater risk, but they are genuinely open to all. Depending on the local context and situation of youth, each centre defines its target group and working methods.

This case study is based on the experience of two organisation members of CAS with accredited quality assurance processes.

## Approach to working with young people

At the core of youth drop-in centres is the provision of a safe space for youth in which they can be themselves and where they can also receive professional advice and support. The centres offer a space – a club – which is open to all and which runs various leisure, socio-therapeutic, educational and preventive activities as well as individual counselling. The main principles are that the participation of young people is voluntary and that young people are encouraged to be active in addressing the difficulties they are facing while being supported and advised. Their autonomy and motivation are key to the solution.

The centres work with a very broad range of young people depending on the areas where they are located but in general they are open to all. Activities of drop in centres are often complemented with street-work outreach activities through which young people 'on the streets' but increasingly also 'on the internet' are engaged.

These forms of youth work started to boom in the Czech Republic in the second half of nineties which is also when the association CAS was set up. It was set up with the objective to ensure that the support provided by these centres is professional and that staff working in these centres are prepared to react in very different situations. In 2006, drop-in centres were recognised by the new Act on social services (108/2006 Sb) as a social service which means that they can get grant funding from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs or from regions and municipalities for this form of work. At the same time they have to comply with certain minimum standards regarding the provisions of services as well as staff qualifications (in particular there have to be qualified social workers in each centre). The quality standards of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are subject to inspection.

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Quality assurance and training for staff in youth drop in centres  
 Number of member organisations: CAS had 58 member centres in spring 2013.

#### Case studies:

OS Proxima (Proxima Social Civic Association): set up in 1993, drop in youth activities focus on youth aged 12-19, in difficult life situations, living in proximity of the centre. In 2011 they ran 10 drop in centres in Prague and surroundings, worked regularly with 2013 young persons and delivered over 20,000 interventions. The associations also works with other target groups in difficulty

The Association Prostor: set up in 2010, in 2012 ran three drop in centres for youth in towns in Central Bohemia, they work with youth aged 13-26, in 2012 they worked with 414 young persons, delivered 7046 interventions of which 216 were with newcomers.

To accompany its member organisations CAS developed a more specific quality standard for drop-in centres and a methodology for external and internal review. All CAS members have to be certified by CAS following the quality assurance standard and methodology. The 2006 standards were based on those developed by the Ministry but they were made more specific for this type of work. The Ministry standards were designed at a very general level to fit all forms of social services from those working with elderly to those working with drug users. The CAS standards were more specific but also more 'actionable' as they gave more concrete guidance on what is expected from a centre to comply with the national standard. These standards are currently being revised. In 2006 when they were set up they were mainly designed so as to prepare the centres for the inspection. It was based on verifying compliance with the norm and a lot based on verifying written procedures. In the upcoming new standard the aim will be to move one step further and not double the Ministry standards anymore. The methodology is also much more based on observing how the standards are interpreted in practice. Based on these standards each centre defines its own internal process for quality assurance and CAS supports them through a methodological visit.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

A survey of drop-in youth centres carried out by CAS every year since 2010 shows the following results:

- Around 60% of young people served are boys;
- 45% of the cohort served are in the age brackets of 15-18, 11% are older;

- 35% of clients have Roma origins (while they are estimated to be 5% in the overall population) and 5% have origins from other countries than the Czech Republic.
- The survey indicates high satisfaction rates among respondents when it comes to feeling of security, enjoyment, provision of advice and reactions of staff.
- Over the past three years the level of qualification and the level of experience of club leaders have been growing. In 2012 the average number of years of experience in a relevant field of work was 6 years and in leading a club was 4.8 years. When it comes to other staff there seems to be much more fluctuation, as on average people have been in their positions for 2 years.
- 88% of clubs always design an individual plan with each young person (compared to 69% in 2010).
- 95% of clubs use facebook to contact young people as compared to 46% in 2010;

The survey is based on a sample of 43 centres and 699 young persons' responding. Regarding the impact of the quality assurance services, interviewees noted that:

- It helps them structure the process of dealing with young people;
- It puts clarity in who does what and how and such clarity is reflected in staff well-being as they feel confident, competent and understand their role in the organisation;
- It is an inspiration for clubs further work on their internal processes and practices.

The interviewees appreciate the change of methodology of CAS external review towards less paper work and more work with staff on the ground. There are many more drop-in centres than those run by CAS members in the country. Though there is no hard evidence, CAS sees the difference in professional handling of cases and quality of services offered by the member centres who have to have certain processes in place and others.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

The following main trends were noted:

- In the past outreach work was mainly done on the streets (hence the word streetwork) but today young people are increasingly on the internet and hence the need for online outreach activities;
- Drop-in centres have recently started to work with whole families and engage in programmes that do not just work with the individual. This is a new way of working for them and brings a lot of question marks and challenges as while it can be adapted in some situations it is not always suitable.
- There is a growing willingness to engage in cross-agency work and to make drop-in centres work with other social services. However, this is not always easy. For example when it comes to cooperation with judicial and police authorities be it in preventive or remedial measures there is a need for staff on both sides to find a common language and understand each other. For example the judicial services do not always understand and accept that participation in drop-in centres has to be voluntary and it cannot be required from the young person.

## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

There are two ways in which the regulatory framework for social services influences the work of youth drop-in centres. Both are obvious from the above description:

- The legislation defines the requirements for these centres to have a quality assurance system and follow nationally defined quality standards; and
- The legislation introduced minimal qualification requirements for social workers who have to be qualified in a relevant field of study. This can be achieved through a university degree but also through continuing education and training (in particular relevant for people who were active in the profession prior to the adoption of the legislation).

According to one of the interviewees the definition of qualification requirements led to a very important increase in the offer of university degrees in the field of social work the quality of which differs greatly. It also resulted in a change of profile of staff interested in this type of work: *In the past the typical person working in this field was an enthusiast, often with personal experience of difficult situations, frequently not qualified in a relevant field but who did additional training while working, not always that keen on those aspects of youth work that concern rules and procedures. Today we get much more young people who are more at ease working within a predefined framework and norms but sometimes the initial enthusiasm is missing.*

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

The tradition of drop in centres in the Czech Republic has been nurtured by the experience from neighbourhood countries. The Saxony Social Academy designed and delivered training on streetwork for Czech social assistants. The training included site visits to youth centres in Germany. This experience was crucial in informing the work of those who later started setting up first drop-in centres in the Czech Republic. CAS is a member of the European umbrella organisation for streetwork Dynamo. This membership is an important opportunity to share good practice. CAS is active in a number of mainly ESF funded projects that concern enhancement of quality of youth work in drop in centres where exchange of good practice with partner countries is an important methodological component.

## **Supporting youth work**

The core success factor for this case study lies in the support CAS offers to its members. This support takes the form of:

- Accompanying the centres;
- Provision of guidance on how to improve;
- Training for staff which is tailor made for the population of people working in this field (for example in 2011 590 persons took part in the trainings they offer to persons doing street-work);
- Platform for exchange among centres and professionals in the field.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Open access
- Voluntary participation of the young person
- Problem based individual planning
- Confidentiality
- Safe environment
- Professional support by staff who are prepared to react in very different situations
- The social service character of these activities. The drop-in centres have a prevention and remedial purpose and all activities are designed with this aim. Though the centres deliver leisure activities, the leisure aspect is a method/ way of working rather than the purpose.

# SUPPORT FOR YOUTH COUNCILS

[WWW.CIVISPOLONUS.ORG.PL/INDEX.PHP/COMPONENT/CONTENT/ARTICLE/47/108TYPE](http://WWW.CIVISPOLONUS.ORG.PL/INDEX.PHP/COMPONENT/CONTENT/ARTICLE/47/108TYPE)

## MISSION:

Civis Polonus Foundation supports young people's informed and active participation in the life of their local community. Believing that the teenage citizens can be valuable partners for local administration, the Foundation assists youth in building relationships with local authorities by consulting decisions on matters of concern to young people.

One of the Foundation's activities aimed at strengthening active citizenship is development of education programmes that support municipality and district youth councils. Whereas youth councils can provide an opportunity to find a common ground for adults and young people to exchange their views and work together, their role remains limited and opinions are rarely taken into consideration.

The main purpose of the Foundation's projects is therefore to enhance the consultative role of youth councils so they provide an actual space for participation of young people in decision-making process that concerns their local community. This is to be achieved by:

- 1) Collecting good practices of municipality and district youth councils.
- 2) Promoting these practices among local authorities and NGOs.
- 3) Increasing the interest of young people in taking an active part in a social life.
- 4) Showing young people the opportunities to influence the world around them.

## Background

Established in 2004, the Civis Polonus Foundation has the aim of developing citizenship that allows individuals to have impact on the world in which they live. Among Foundation's measures to strengthen the potential of young individuals as citizens are active citizenship programmes that support municipality and district youth councils. Throughout these projects, local authorities are assisted in developing the model of youth council adapted to their needs and conditions, whereas young people and animators are offered guidance and training on basic operational principles of youth councils. Currently, there are approximately a few hundred youth councils in Poland. In line with Art. 5b of the Act on the Local Government (March 8, 1990), they can be established as "consultative bodies" at the local level. Local

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: support for youth councils.

Number of youth workers: approx. 5

Number of young people: few hundreds.

Target group: pupils from gymnasias and upper secondary schools elected as young councillors.

Year activities established: 2004 – present.



authorities are tasked with creating municipal/district youth councils, providing their statutes, and defining the electoral and operational rules. Youth councillors are pupils from gymnasias and upper secondary schools, elected by their peers from school.

Despite these developments, the work of youth councils is often perceived as inadequate to its designated function (i.e. consultative body). Their role is usually limited to the implementation of ad hoc charity projects, entertainment, or international exchanges, while consulting activities are only a margin of their activity. According to young people, a weak flow of information, low engagement on the side of adults (and sometimes youth councillors), and insufficient preparation of youth council animators to fulfil their role, are among key shortcomings. They make a structure of youth council artificial and cut the enthusiasm of newly elected young councillors. In addition, the fact that schools do not encourage/support extra-curricular activities makes it difficult for active young people to combine their passions with school responsibilities.

Such problems are due to a number of more complex issues including the lack of tradition, good practices and standards for youth councils to function as well as instrumental and top-down approaches to work with young people. Youth are rarely consulted about young people's needs and their opinions are seldom taken into consideration. Rather, it is perceived as a white card to be filled out by adults with content or as a subject on which certain actions should be performed (e.g. upbringing, health services, sport) and a source of problems (e.g. dropping education, drinking etc.).

In the light of the above, the main rationale behind the Foundation's activities is to help youth councils to become a tool for real participation and to impact the decision-making process by playing their designated "consultative" role. Inviting young people to co-govern and co-decide is a new approach in Poland, however, and requires structures, mechanisms, as well as a change of attitudes to perceive youth as a source of potential. Thus, the Foundation encourages local authorities to establish a dialogue with young people and treat them as equally rightful and aware citizens, who have an impact on the functioning of the society they live in be it school or local community.

## Approach to working with young people

The Foundation's projects focus on promoting the consultative role of youth councils. This is to be achieved by:

- Inviting youth to co-decide about issues that concern them and taking their opinion into consideration.
- Supporting local or school authorities methodologically to help them to engage young people in decision-making processes.
- Supporting local self-governments by appointing an animator that helps to start the consultative activities and assists a person responsible for organising these consultations.
- Collecting and exchanging good practices and standards on the work youth councils.

In addition, the youth council programmes should diagnose the barriers for youth councils to conduct consultation activities and opportunities

### *Key Approaches*

Young people create aims and methods of their work.

Young people decide about the extent of their own engagement.

The activities stem from needs and interest of young people, not from the top-down approach.

Meetings on the spot and engagement through interactive and participatory methods/approaches.

to overcome them, develop a model of consultation activities for youth councils, and set off a portal with information about youth councils ([www.mlodziejowarada.org.pl](http://www.mlodziejowarada.org.pl)). Through the Foundation's projects, the authorities are assisted in creating standards for youth council's work, preparing a catalogue of topics/themes for their meetings, and developing methods of cooperation with youth. The youth from gymnasiums and lyceums, in turn, are supported in organising elections to the youth councils, arranging debates, and animating the work of youth councils. This is done through:

- Regional meetings in order to share Foundation's experience in the area of the youth council advisory activities, analyse the local environment and define the objectives faced by the community in the area of civic participation, and trigger a joint reflection on how you can achieve them.
- Coaching services provided by Foundation's trainers in six selected communities for approximately 10 weeks involving regular monitoring and supporting the work of young councillors, teachers, animators, and civic servants, to achieve their previously established goals, and testing youth council's consultation model.
- Dissemination of results by summarising collective achievements, collecting best practices and sharing them with representatives of public administration, preparing youth council information package for the municipalities and the NGO, and organising a seminar on project-related activities.

Educational programmes for target groups are usually carried out in a form of workshops delivered on the spot. This gives an opportunity for the representatives of the youth councils and local authorities to meet each other and serves as a good forum to exchange experiences, practice, and discuss the problems faced by the youth councils. The inter-active and participatory methods and approaches used during such meetings include: work in small groups, open space, simulations, role playing, sitting in a circle, using informal language, integration games and ice-breakers, team-building activities, brainstorming etc. The key themes explored during workshops cover issues such as: functioning of local self-governments (How does it work? Who is responsible for what?), preparing official letters/documents, awareness-raising on the right to information, project work (planning activities, setting goals, work plans, preparing budgets, group dynamics, internal and external communication), mapping the local needs and resources to undertake adequate activities, identifying a network of local actors to cooperate with.

Youth workers act as workshop animators and their role is to build a friendly atmosphere during young people's meetings in order to find out who feels more comfortable in what area and to open young people to new ideas and modes of cooperation. To fulfil these tasks they have to know how to lead workshops and trainings and how to manage participants' resistance. While following some structure, they guide workshop participants in preparing the programme of their work and deciding about the extent of their own engagement. By asking questions, animators encourage youth to find the answers and have a starting point for their activity that stems from their needs and interests. They also inform youth councillors on the bureaucratic procedures to prepare them for future difficulties or disappointments. Youth workers also prepare adults to act as animators of youth councils. The role of youth council animators is to act as a link, buffer, or a mentor between adult decision-makers and the youth. He/she should translate the administrative/bureaucratic language into the language of youth and vice-versa and keeps the speaking-time balance during the discussion to avoid a monologue on the part of adult decision-makers when both groups meet.

Motivating young people to become active in youth council activities requires specific approach. First, young people are to become involved through an immediate activity (not just verbally) because the first small success gives young people respect among

peers, teachers and parents. Second, youth council's meetings are organised in an interesting way with engaging methods of integration. Third, awarding young people's engagement is crucial and decision-makers are encouraged to appreciate their social activity. In general, however, there is no single pattern reflecting what drives young people to become youth councillors. Some point out to the willingness to change something, meet people, be active, learn something, and satisfy pure curiosity. Others are motivated by prestige and the possibility to get credit points for volunteering that count on their diploma.

Those who are elected often stand out at the school level (due to their popularity or grades), sometimes have political aspirations and some experience of activism. Overall, however, they are chosen accidentally, usually by teachers, due to good learning results. In consequence, the group of youth councillors consist mainly of youth from good families, supported by teachers, even if they do not possess talents to represent their peers (e.g. being pro-active, go beyond the template, charisma). This makes youth councils an elite structure and excludes youth with problems, difficulties, or/and outside the school system from their activity.

There is a number universal competences needed at all stages of life that can be shaped by active participation in local community. Therefore, youth councils could become an opportunity for both advantaged and disadvantaged young people by making them more courageous and prepared for life as adults. Various training/learning opportunities linked to youth council initiatives include:

- Empowerment (I am important as a citizen, I can make a difference) but not through formal education.
- Responsibility and engagement (I co-shape the community in which I live).
- Communication and cooperation skills.
- Ability to set goals and rationally adjust resources.
- Planning activities in a timeframe.
- Building information strategies to reach wider groups of recipients.
- Understanding how the political structures work.
- Changing the vision of own future by looking at benefits from certain choices.
- Becoming responsible for own decisions and reflective about what should have been done differently to achieve a better result.

In addition, youth workers report that they have learnt how to be open-minded and think wider, to look at things from a different perspectives, to understand and acknowledge that a definition of a problem is different for a different group.

## **Outcomes and impacts of the initiative**

It is expected that as a result of projects activities youth council will increase their role and contribute to:

- Greater interest of young people in policy-making at the local level.
- Developing the skills of young people to undertake activities to take action for their community.
- Developing a dialogue between the representatives of local authorities and youth.
- Understanding of the needs and concerns of young people by local authorities.
- Increasing the effectiveness of the activities carried out by local authorities for young people.

- Familiarising young people with the principles of operation of local self-government.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the most important outcome of the projects directed towards youth councils is the interest of young people in public affairs and their support for the development of civil society at the local level. Some of the observable project effects include:

- Cooperation between youth councils through visits and exchange of information without Foundation's support.
- A number of local projects initiated by youth councils (e.g. revitalisation of green areas, competitions for good teachers, debates on placing road signs in a dangerous place, planning a venue for career counselling and job placements, debate on the future of local community seen through the eyes of youth).
- Changing the perception of youth council (a consultative body) resulting in cooperation with local authorities.

Gradually, the issue of youth civic participation becomes more visible and supported by some organisations locally and regionally. Nevertheless, the area of youth civic engagement is still undervalued in Poland and most programmes for youth implemented in Poland aim at "indoctrinating" and forming young people in a certain direction (e.g. as patriots). These are usually top-down initiatives that promote execution of commands according to instructions, individually, on a competitive basis. Cooperation is rarely promoted in these initiatives and pupils are not taught how to discuss problems and how to solve them.

The key benefits for youth workers from their involvement in youth council activities include satisfaction, emotions, and contribution to social change. One of the most rewarding moments is to receive a positive feedback and gratitude from young people and to see how their interests, horizons, and motivation have been inspired by youth workers' work. Also for young people engaged in youth council projects a number of advantages have been identified. When asked about gains from their involvement, they mention:

- Contacts with various people with whom something can be done and from whom something can be learned.
- A cool and creative way of spending time.
- Different ways of looking at one problem and achieving the same goal with different means.
- Using arguments to convince someone of one's own idea.
- Learning how to manage tasks and prevent/handle conflicts.
- Awareness of one's own needs and interests.
- Satisfaction that one's activities can make someone's life easier.
- Learning by doing things, in team and independently.
- Writing official documents.

#### *Main outcomes and impacts*

Changing perception towards youth council (from artificial structure to consultative body).

Triggered/increased cooperation between youth councils and with local authorities.

Animation of local projects by youth councils

Learning by doing (problem solving, discussion, team-work, networking).

Following the trajectories of youth workers and young people that have been once engaged in youth councils is difficult as there is no information gathered on this topic.

<sup>37</sup>For more about Civic Polonus' projects that target youth councils please see: [www.civispolonus.org.pl/index.php/component/content/article/47/108](http://www.civispolonus.org.pl/index.php/component/content/article/47/108)

According to anecdotal evidence, former youth councillors who have been devoted to youth council's work continue their civic engagement by joining in existing NGOs or by establishing their own associations, trying to join the commune councils, or becoming youth council animators. As for youth workers involved in active citizenship programmes, they often continue their career in the HR sector or other areas where soft competences are valued. Sometimes they experience frustration when entering the labour market as any job without a social aspect similar to youth work appears as "mechanical" and less satisfying. For both youth workers and young councillors is it important to see the increasing willingness of young people to act and a growing popularity and impact and youth councils.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

The following trends in the area of active citizenship programmes can be observed:

- Regarding youth workers' profiles, peer-education starts to be acknowledged and recognised as an effective approach to learning, where young people can share experiences with their peers.
- As for young people, they start to think more strategically and calculate what brings more benefits (e.g. competences, recognition) as they have more chances to acquire various skills than 10 years ago.
- In terms of forms of youth work, there is a growing differentiation of youth organisations and their work. Yet, they remain very scattered, working from project to project as they depend on the EU funding.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Article 5b of the Act of 8 March 1990 on the Local Government creates an opportunity to establish youth councils as consultative bodies. This provision is considered as broadly defined, which can have positive or negative implications, depending on youth council's relations with the authorities and the local community. It has been suggested by interviewees that a provision strengthening the function of youth council could contribute to its recognition and achievement of its objectives.

Also a need to change the Act of April 24th 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work to include youth work as an area of public benefit has been mentioned. Some steps to address this issue have been already undertaken by youth organisations.

### **Relationship with policy**

In general, youth policy remains neglected in Poland and a coherent state-oriented approach to address the specific needs of young people is missing. Due to the lack of national mechanisms to support youth initiatives, the sector of youth activity has been shaped mainly by the EU's Youth in Action programme. Moreover, there is no state body responsible for youth policy ("Youth policy is an orphan", as stated by one of young respondents) and no system of youth information and youth centres exists. This makes the work of youth workers, young councillors, and other active young people, difficult as they often have no place and space to meet and not tools/mechanisms to carry out their activities.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

Apart from public administration (local authorities) and youth councillors, there are many actors that should be engaged in the process of youth council development

ranging from headmasters, student self-governments, teachers, to libraries, NGOs, and international organisations acting in this field. Identifying a network of local stakeholders to cooperate with is one of key prerequisites that make it easier for youth councils to achieve their goals, particularly when these goals are often similar to those of other actors.

## Supporting youth work

Support at national level that would be welcomed by youth workers interviewed for this case study:

- Including youth work into areas of public benefit under the law to 1) recognise youth work as an area different than education, upbringing, and summer leisure; and to 2) open the possibilities to finance youth work at different levels.
- Developing legal framework that:
  - Defines terms such as youth worker, youth work, and what youth organisations are.
  - Allow for different support mechanisms for youth work (e.g. network of support).
  - Sets the principles of cooperation with youth (e.g. a catalogue of rules for civil servants).
- Appointing a partner (institution) on a public administration side responsible for youth policy.
- Developing a new strategy for youth to replace the Polish Youth Strategy for the years 2003–2012.
- Developing a youth information system to disseminate of good practices worked out during various project and secure their sustainability.
- Developing a Polish equivalent of Sub-Action 1.2 - Youth Initiatives (Youth in Action programme) to continue a grant support for local initiatives (also long-term projects), including small informal youth groups that want to realise local democratic activities, via simple and not bureaucratic application procedures.
- Establishing a network of bureaus for youth or youth centres/clubs as structures and system of youth work that is planned and designed by youth, managed by youth, which implement youth projects and have participatory budgets for youth to decide how the money is to be spent.
- Implementing the conclusions and recommendations stemming from dialogue shaped at the EU level (e.g. recommendations from the Polish Presidency of the EU Council, Youth 2011 report).
- Strengthening the role of youth councils locally (e.g. through round tables) and assuring that their work methods are adjusted its to the level of competences, skills, knowledge, and free time of young people, as well as to the way young people think and work (If young people do not want to be engaged, it means that conditions for their involvement are not adjusted to their needs and skills).

Support at EU level that would be welcomed by youth workers for this case study:

- Continuing the Youth in Action programme to secure resources for countries where initiatives devoted to youth initiatives and in-formal education of young people are not funded at national level.
- Analysing the Youth in Action programme through the perspective of its results: focus on internal change of its participants as compared to Erasmus programme that refers to different kind of education.
- Implementing the recommendations from evaluations of Youth in Action programme.



- Continuing to work on sharing good practices on the standards of youth work and youth policy to inspire governments to apply them.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- Youth workers should be always present and prepared 100% of the time.
- Youth workers should motivate young people with good examples (deeds not words) and work individually with young people.
- Do not point out the mistakes but encourage young people to learn from them.
- Constantly think about group development, looking for new perspectives and projects.
- Youth workers should respect and appraise the group and avoid making empty promises to young people.
- Coach and inspire young leaders to move beyond routine activities.
- Pursue partnership-based cooperation with youth and other stakeholders at all stages of work.
- Adjust working methods to the level of competences and abilities of young people.
- Engage in constant learning and critical assessment of own work.



# UCee Station

[WWW.UCEESTATION.NL](http://WWW.UCEESTATION.NL)

## MISSION:

UCee Station is a programme from ClickF1 which aims to educate young people about the use of media. By participating in a series of workshops, in which they create media items, young people learn what it is to express their opinions and to look at local issues that affect their lives from various perspectives. By making young people play an active role in the programme it aims to get young people involved in their local neighbourhood and to develop competences related to social skills and active citizenship. These goals relate to the young people participating in the programme as well as those that listen to the show as this is shared on the UCee Station website. By partnering with local youth and social organisations ClickF1 ensures the specific needs of the local community can be met in the delivery of the programme. The combination of expertise about the local situation and the field of media educations enable the UCee Station methodology to be used in a wide variety of settings.

## Background

UCee Station is a media education project developed by ClickF1. The first series of media workshops were held in Utrecht in 2006. ClickF1 worked together with the district office of Overvecht (a neighbourhood in the city of Utrecht). Together they organised series of media related workshops. ClickF1 did so on request of Portaal who wanted a programme that could include a lot of different actors and made use of media. They choose ClickF1 as they had previously developed other activities in the field of sport and culture for them. The series of workshops in the UCee Station programme focus on a single type of media (print, radio or short documentaries). These workshops are aimed at teaching young people about media, what it takes to create media items and to develop the talents of young people.

Several variations of the UCee Station methodology exist. The thing they have in common is that all variations work together with local organisations to provide the workshops. The target audience however is different for each variation. The main strand is "UCee in de Buurt" (UCee in the neighbourhood) which works with young people between 13 – 20 years old and operates in local youth centres across the Netherlands. Within this format ClickF1 works with local youth organisations to reach the young people. Other strands are UCee @ School (operating in schools for secondary education), MIX Station (for children aged 6 – 12) and MASSA (for talented young people in third cycle vocational education who pursue a career in media). This case study

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Media education

Number of youth workers: 28 – 43 (mostly freelancers)

Number of young people: 64 – 110 workshop participants (depending on the number of programmes).

Target group: Young people aged 13 – 20

Year activities established: 2006

focusses on the “UCee in de Buurt” initiative.

### Approach to working with young people

The methodology used in the UCee Station programme places the young people in the centre of the programme. This is done by making young people responsible for the media items they create; they come up with the topics and are the ones to make the items. As they get more experience in the production of media items their responsibility will increase. Young people help others that are less experienced. The media items that are created in the workshops are placed on a webpage. On this page all the media items created from a single location are displayed. The webpage is connected to the pages of other locations where activities take place. The website enables young people to quickly see their results and those of other locations. This connection with the other locations creates a virtual network on which young people can interact with each other.

#### *Key Approaches*

Collaboration between local youth organizations/schools and ClickF1.

Combining educational activities in the field of media production and the creation of real media.

Sharing the results on an online platform so results reach a wider audience.

At a site young people will meet for two hours on a weekly basis to create media items. To make the media items they work in groups of around 8 persons. Together with the others in the group and with the help of a media coach they will come up with the topics of media items they are going to work on. The media coach might explain something related to the topic they have chosen or teach them some skills related to the creation of media. An example of this can be how to do an interview or how to talk into the microphone. After this explanation the young people start to work on the topics they came up with in small groups of 2 or 3 persons. Activities young people undertake here can be doing research on a specific topic or writing an article for a newspaper. After a short while (about half an hour) the young people get back together to combine their items into a single media production (eg a radio show). When the production is finished it will be placed on the website by the media coach. The young people can see the results and show this to their friends and family. Depending on the strand of the UCee Station programme young people get involved in a different way. For the “UCee in de Buurt” concept the way young people get involved depends strongly on the organisation ClickF1 is collaborating with. At the site that was visited young people had to take the initiative when it came to deciding which activities were offered. Young people who were interested in the media activities had to convince the youth centre that should offer these kinds of activities before they would be organised by the youth centre. . In order to ensure the engagement of the young people when the programme is running at a site new activities are offered in the various workshops. These activities move from participating in a media item at the first workshop to doing interviews with guests or creating stand-alone items that can be used in the show. Also youth workers might engage the young people by asking them to participate in other events of the youth centre in the role of reporters. The media items they create in this role can later be used in the workshops to be part of the show.

The role youth workers have depends on whether they are leading the workshops or are part of the local youth centre. Workshop leaders (called media coaches) describe their role as being responsible for the final result of each of the workshops. They have to prepare each workshop and help the young people in the creation of the items. This

starts by making sure the young people come up with suitable topics that can be used as a media item. Once these are chosen the media coach has to make sure young people are working on these items and help them if they have trouble with their assigned item. During the combination of the various items the media coach role is to make sure the quality of the production is maintained. This is done by playing the radio host or chief editor. After the workshop the media coach is also responsible for the publication of the media items on the website. Youth workers of the local youth centres can be involved in the delivery of the workshop but their main role is to engage the young people at times there is no workshop. This can be by engaging young people in events as reporters or by informing them of the possibilities to participate.

Learning opportunities exist for both young people and youth workers involved in the programme. Young people gain various skills when they are producing the media items. Examples of skills are social ones such as listening (when conducting interviews) and more technical ones such as the use of various types of (radio) equipment. Besides these skills, young people gain knowledge about the role of media plays in society and how to create an informed opinion. Before a media coach starts with the workshops, they receive training on how to deliver these workshops. This involves topics such as how to approach the young people and the UCee Station methodology. During the workshops media coaches can apply these things in practice thus further improving their skills. Youth workers involved in the media activities do not receive any formal training before they start helping in the delivery the activities. However, there are learning opportunities for them as they can learn about how to engage young people by using media. These opportunities are provided in workshops aimed at youth workers.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

Evidence of the outcomes of the UCee Station activities is mainly to be found in the fields of the development of skills of young people and their knowledge about media. Evidence of these positive outcomes can be found in various evaluations of local sites as well as overall evaluations of the whole programme. Outcomes of these evaluations mainly focus on the young people participating in the shows. These young people are better able to express their opinions. This is illustrated by their ability to have more focussed discussions and more expressive use of language compared to their peers. They also get more involved in their neighbourhood as they discuss local problems. By using media to do so requires them to look at a topic from various perspectives. On the neighbourhood level UCee Station appears to have an impact as well. Through the shows, people living in these neighbourhoods appear to become more involved in local change. As young people inform others of the local changes, more people become aware of the personal impact local change can have. Other evidence of the added value UCee Station brings is the fact the programme has been growing and they are now active in 5 cities in the Netherlands and various schools across the countries. To ensure they are bringing added value to the field of youth work UCee Station asks young people about their experiences with the activities. These evaluations result

### *Key Outcomes*

Participants become more involved in their local neighbourhood.

Participants are gaining social and technical skills.

often in positive reactions of young people that the workshops have a positive impact. An example of this positive impact is a young person who said it was easier to apply for a job. As he had learned to let others finish if they were talking, job interviews were easier for him. Also they evaluate their activities with the local youth centres they work with. This is done after a series of workshops. In these evaluations they look for evidence that their activities are successful. ClickF1 believes it is complementing what has been done by other organisations. Using media as a method for youth work is relatively new. As a result of this there are only a few other providers of similar activities in the Netherlands. The strong focus on the participation of young people makes them further unique in this field and helps them to create impact.

Sometimes young people participating in the workshops realise they want to pursue a career in media. This is not the main focus of UCee Station but can also be classified as an outcome. UCee Station can further support these persons in one of their other programmes for students in vocational education (MASSA). This trajectory however is not followed by the majority of people who participate in the workshop.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

Six trends are identified by UCee Station. The first of these is an increased importance of talent development of young people. It is perceived that this has become more embedded over the years as something of great importance. Although this is a key element of the UCee Station approach, the increased importance has resulted in the further development of MASSA. In this programme young talented people receive further possibilities to develop themselves in this field. The second trend that is perceived is an increased focus on placing the young people central in the programme. As this has always been a key element of the UCee Station programme this has had only positive effects. This mainly shows in an increase of recognition that the UCee Station approach is beneficial.

An increase in uncertainty about collaboration is something that has been a negative trend for UCee Station. This is mainly the result of an increasing uncertainty by partner organisations. Due to continuous reorganisation in the youth work sector in the Netherlands organisations do no longer have a long term perspective. This makes it harder to make long term arrangements. This lack of long term arrangements results in a lack of deepening of the activities offered by UCee Station. A fourth trend is the fact that the combination of media and youth work slowly becomes more recognised. At this moment this increased importance has not yet directly influenced the activities of UCee Station. They however hope the increased recognition of the value media has on the field of youth work will lead to a better accessibility of funds. Currently, it is not always clear from which funding schemes grants can be obtained due to the untraditional nature of the activities offered. A further trend is the decreased importance of preventative measures. As UCee Station is mainly aimed at preventing young people to make wrong decisions by providing them with useful activities this is seen as a negative thing. On a practical level this means it has become harder to cooperate with local organisations as they have to spend more on activities that are not preventative in nature. A final trend is mentioned by one of the youth workers. This trend is a shift in which the young people are approached. The trend focusses on young people taking the initiative when it comes to developing youth work activities. In the past youth workers could organise activities for young people. Now young people have to take the initiative to develop their own activities and youth workers can only provide assistance. For the UCee Station programme as a whole this has little influence. At the local level however the young people now have to motivate why they want certain activities before they can get the support of the local youth workers.

## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

Regulatory frameworks that affect the work of USee Station are in the field of copyright and funding. The broadcasts of USee Station often include media items which fall under copyright laws. This results in the fact that they have to pay a fee for the copyrighted works they use. They are partly exempt from paying this fee as they are a social non-profit organisation. There are however a number of restrictions with which they have to comply. One of these restrictions is that the programmes are only available for a limited period. Overall these restrictions are no problem compared to the benefits of the use of copyrighted items.

Another framework that influences the activities is the funding framework that is in place for media activities. This framework specifies which activities can be undertaken with funds from subsidiary programmes. As USee station undertakes activities which often cover multiple activities it is not always clear which funding scheme has to be used for what activity. An example of this is the "Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie" (Fund for Culture participation) which gives out funding for radio drama but not for radio programmes which include journalism.

## **Relationship with policy**

The policies that influence the activities of USee stations are those related to the public tendering of youth work. As these tenders influence who ClickF1 partners with to carry out the activities with it is sometimes hard to make long term commitments. An example in which this occurred was the recent tendering of youth work in Amsterdam Nieuw West. As organisations have to wait for a long time before they know if they have won the tender the continuation of USee Station activities became uncertain. Also the lack of specific policy in the field of media use in youth work makes the work of ClickF1 harder. Due to this no specific funding scheme exists for the type of activities that are offered by USee Station.

Policy is something ClickF1 believes that can be influenced. For the municipality of Utrecht in which USee Station is active they even drafted a youth media policy. The municipality was very happy about this. However, when they had to implement it they did not follow through due to local reorganisations. At the moment however they are not actively involved in influencing policy due to restraints in resources. They are however connected to other groups who can influence policy.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

USee Station is highly involved in the networking with other organisations and is at the heart of its existence. The collaboration between ClickF1 and local youth organisations and schools is a prerequisite for USee Station activities to take place. The benefit of this approach is that both parties involved have specific expertise. ClickF1 provides the expertise about media education and the local youth organisation knows the young people that participate in the activities very well.

Besides the local organisations ClickF1 is connected to a number of national youth bodies and other non-profit organisations. An example of this is the Dutch Youth Institute (NJI). These connections are made to get their work recognised. Also they can function as a producer of media items for other non-profits. This is mostly done by young people involved in the MASSA programme.

The people at USee Station believe they can influence policy. At this moment they are not active in lobbying as the current situation does not allow for the allocation of resources. However they know they can influence political stakeholders as they have done so in the past. They organised a seminar for local politicians and other policymakers a couple of years ago for example. Here they showed the possibilities of

their approach. This resulted in a great enthusiasm about the approach with the attendees. Also they try to influence policy through local youth boards by actively showing them the benefits of using media in the field of youth work.

### Supporting youth work

The main type of support ClickF1 at a national level would like to see is the recognition of the value using media within youth work. They hope this increased recognition will lead to the creation and implementation of better and more youth media policy. This is type of policy is often non-existent and leads to a lack of clarity when it comes to applying for grants. Regarding the grant system UCee Station would also like to see a new fund specifically aimed for initiatives in the field of the use of media in the field of youth work. This also would make the grant application process mere easy leaving more resources available for the organisation of activities.

On an EU level the simplification of procedures and a greater importance of media education in general education are things UCee Station would like to be supported with. Simplification of procedures with regard to funding application on EU level (eg from the Youth in Action fund) is seen as essential for more use of these funds. EU programmes have the possibility to make young people aware of others who are similar to them. This is done in the UCee Europe programme in which reports are made across Europe which involve young people. An increase in the importance of media education in general education would help UCee Station as well. This would create a better understanding by teachers of the importance of its activities. As a result UCee Station @ School could further expand its activities.

#### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- ☐ Make positive characteristics of young people central in the programme.
- ☐ Use previous experiences of success/achievement as to further develop young people.
- ☐ Make sure it is valuable for young people to participate in activities.
- ☐ Involve young people in the design of the activities.
- ☐ Give young people responsibility for the execution of the activities.
- ☐ Collaborate with local youth organisations in the delivery of the programme.
- ☐ Make the programme results accessible (eg through an online platform) so it reaches more people than just the participants.
- ☐ Develop a number of variations of your programme focusing on a specific target audience.
- ☐ Make a connection between the various programmes you offer.
- ☐ Embed learning objectives in activities that are not directly linked to



# Youth Achievement Foundations

[WWW.UKYOUTH.ORG/YOUTH-ACHIEVEMENT-FOUNDATIONS.HTML](http://WWW.UKYOUTH.ORG/YOUTH-ACHIEVEMENT-FOUNDATIONS.HTML)

## MISSION:

The Youth Achievement Foundations (YAF) is aimed at helping young people who are not in education, employment or training by offering alternative educational activities. By helping young people, the foundations aim to help young people to reach some sort of accredited outcome. Doing so, the YAF provides young people with an opportunity for a better future. The work is carried out by professionals who have some background in education or youth work or have been involved in the activities as a participant. This allows them to relate to the young people and the problems they are facing. In turn this helps them to find solutions for the problems they face and provide them with the help they need. This, in combination with an approach that incorporates methodologies used in youth work, social work and education, is what enables the YAF to provide a positive change in the lives of young people.

## Approach to working with young people

The Youth Achievement Foundations (YAF) is an alternative educational provider established in 2008. The foundations are based on 10 years of research by UK Youth alongside other alternative educational providers on the successful engagement of young people in education through youth work. It offers full-time, part-time and short term educational placements for young people aged 13 – 16 who, for various reasons, are not in mainstream education. Activities take place at 12 locations in England for a total of 40 hours a week for full-time students. The activities offered are part of a vocational and activity-based curriculum of personal development, alongside literacy, numeracy and other core subjects. The type of activities varies between the locations of the Foundation based on the individual interests and characteristics of the people involved and available facilities. The philosophy of the YAF is to place the young person at the centre of the programme by offering activities based on their interests and to help them to reach some form of accredited outcome in these areas. Although participation is on a voluntary basis, in order to participate at a YAF young people have to be referred by schools or youth services that are responsible for the educational placement of the young people. These organisations refer the young person to the head teacher of a foundation who identifies the needs of

### Key Facts

Theme of activity: Education and training

Number of youth workers: 60

Number of young people: 600

Target group: Young people aged 13 – 16 that are not in education, employment and training.

Year activities established: 2008



the young person and, in deliberation with the individual, looks at interventions to be put in place at the YAF to best suit the individual. Young people are given a personal mentor whose role is helping the young person to reach the goals that are agreed upon at the start. Young people are given a voice in most aspects of the programme and have some influence in more organisational matters such as what staff to hire.

## Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

The most visible form of evidence that the YAF is reaching its goals of developing young people is the accredited outcomes all young people gain while they are involved in the programme. These outcomes can be in the area of vocational skills or personal development. Other outcome indicators are the increase in attendance rates and the decrease of behavioural problems of young people when they go through the programme. Also, the fact young people come back as volunteers to help in the delivery of the activities after they left the foundation as students shows the positive contribution the programme has had on their lives.

In order to bring added value to what is already been done in this area the YAF distinguishes itself by taking a holistic approach when it comes to looking at the young person and his/her problems. By combining the disciplines of education, social work and youth work solutions are sought for the various problems these young people face. In practice this can mean the offering of educational activities related to conflict resolution to young people who were previously involved in criminal activities. By using approaches from the field of education, social work and youth work the programme helps these young people who often face multiple challenges. An example of this is the placement of a young person at a foundation who would lose her foster care placement if she did not had an educational placement.

There is no single trajectory for young people after their time at the foundation. However, the YAF tries to ensure that every individual got some sort of work or education placement and monitor them in the year after he or she leaves the school. These placements can result in re-enrolment into traditional education or in work-placements/apprenticeships in various organisations within the local community.

### *Key Outcomes*

Participants gain accredited outcomes in vocational skills and/or personal development.

Participants come back as volunteers.

Behavioural problems decrease with students.

## Experience of trends in youth work

The main trend the YAF faces is an increase in emphasis to justify its activities in a more quantitative way. The interviewee pointed out that for education this is often not a problem as quantitative data is often available (e.g. attendance records or grades). For youth work however this is not as easy because of the more qualitative impact it has. Measuring the positive impact of the YAF's activities in a quantitative manner would require a lot of data. This trend is a negative thing for the YAF as often funding is linked to this method of justifying the programme's outcomes. Another trend with regard to funding is the shift from receiving funds upfront for a number of people to participate in the programme to funding at the end of a period based on the actual number of people that were involved. This has a negative impact for the foundations as they have to hire youth workers before the young people start to participate in the programme. In effect this requires the foundations to predict the number of referrals in advance and hire staff accordingly.

## **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

The main framework that influences the work the YAF does is the one described in the Education act. This framework describes what kind of standards have to be met before a provision can be classified as an educational one. As a result of recent changes in this act young people can no longer be in alternative educational provisions other than those with the status of independent schools. This is a limiting factor as schools are now only referring young people to provisions who have this status. Most foundations do not have this status yet. As a result the various foundations are now applying to become independent schools. However, being an independent school has its disadvantages as well as they now have to comply with Ofsted standards for independent schools. This standard is more focussed on traditional education rather than in youth/social work. Although this does not directly influence their daily practice, this framework narrows the scope on which they are evaluated on.

## **Relationship with policy**

The foundations are primarily influenced by policies regarding the provision and funding of education. Recent changes in policy regarding the centralisation of funding resulted in the amount of funding for each young person to be fixed at a certain level. This standardisation of funding is positive for the YAF as they do no longer need to negotiate with local authorities about the funding but can be certain of a certain amount of money. Another change with regard to the raising of the mandatory age young people need to be in educational provisions is positive for the YAF as well. This allows for the development of new activities for young people in this age group.

Policy making is seen by the YAF as something that can be influenced. Through UK Youth the foundations are in regular contact with government bodies and ministers to make sure relevant topics stay on the agenda. Also they are working with private investors to seek evidence of the positive benefits of the work the YAF carries out. This evidence can then be used to convince policymakers about the value of the YAF activities.

## **Networking with other stakeholders**

Networking is seen as important by the foundation as this allows them to secure resources (both financial and non-financial) and to gain credibility on a national level. National networking partners include other charities, youth organisation and multinational organisations. On a more local level being connected allows others to better understand what they do and to gain expertise of others. Local partners include local schools, law enforcement, community centres and other youth services.

## **Supporting youth work**

Better recognition of the positive effects of both of the holistic approach used by YAF as well as youth work in general by the national government is a key element of support the YAF would like to see. This recognition would result in greater credibility with local authorities and schools and make it easier to justify the programme. On an EU level support with regard to the maintaining and setting up of networks is seen as important. These networks could enable the YAF to share best practices with other types of youth work. This would help YAF to further improve its activities. An example of this exchange is the sharing of working methods with a youth work organisation in Lille, France.

### **Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:**

- ☐ Meet local needs (which are different everywhere).
- ☐ Give young people a voice through participation in the programme.
- ☐ Use measurable outcomes to track progress of young people.
- ☐ Engage the community to create a support network so the programme becomes embedded.
- ☐ Create understanding from local authorities so they know what you are capable of.
- ☐ Provide holistic support for young people by integrating various disciplines into your programme.
- ☐ Divert young people from negative environments by showing what they can do so they stay on the right track.

# YOUTH WORKSHOPS

[HTTP://WWW.NUORILAHTI.NET/AMMATILLISET\\_PAJAT/](http://www.nuorilahti.net/ammattilliset_pajat/)  
AND [HTTP://WWW.TPY.FI/IN\\_ENGLISH/](http://www.tpy.fi/in_english/)

## MISSION:

The aim of the Youth workshops in Finland is to improve the skills and abilities of young people to get into education, training or employment. The main means to achieve this is through a paid period of on-the-job training in the field in which the young person has shown interest and motivation. Equally important is to improve their life-management skills through personal coaching and their employability through employment coaching. In other words, the staff in Youth workshops have multiple areas of expertise ranging from domain experts in their own field to staff with background in youth and social work as well as in psychology and nursing. This allows a case-based approach to each individual focusing on their needs across usual sectorial boundaries (e.g. employment, social issues, youth work).

Since late 1980's, Youth workshops have been established all across Finland. In 2012, there are over 260 workshops across the country which serve both young people and adults. Since 1997, the National Workshops Association functions as an umbrella organisation for its members in the field. It aims at improving the professional skills of those employed in workshops and at developing new workshops activities.

## Background

The aim of the Youth workshops in Finland is to improve the skills and abilities of young people to get into education, training or employment. The main means to achieve this is through a paid period of supervised work in the field in which the young person has shown interest and motivation. Various schemes are available from rehabilitative on-the-job training to subsidised employment schemes in Youth workshops or outside in the open labour market. Equally important is to improve young people's life-management skills through personal coaching and on the other hand, to improve their future plans to get into education, training or employment after the period. The staff in Youth workshops have multiple areas of expertise ranging from domain experts in their own craft who focus on training to social workers and psychologists who act as personal mentors. This allows a case-based approach to each individual focusing on their needs across the usual sectorial boundaries (e.g. employment, youth work, social issues).

### *Key Facts*

Theme of activity: Employment

Number of youth workers: 1663

Number of young people: 13061 under 29 years of age (in 2010)

Target group: Unemployed youth under 29 years of age, but also older groups

Year activities established: Late 1980's, National Workshop Association in 1997

In 2010, there were Youth workshops in 264 municipalities in Finland. Their funding comes from multiple sources; main contribution comes from the service provider (e.g. municipality, some foundation) in addition to governmental grants under the subsection of youth work, employment subsidies and other social benefits, and eventually also from the possible income generated by the facility when selling out the products and services produced.

The first Youth workshops were established in Finland in 1983 to address youth's social inclusion issue especially among those who remained outside of mainstream education and training opportunities. Practices in Denmark could be considered as a source of inspiration. In 1987, the new Employment act was adopted which obliged municipalities to offer youth employment. This gave a push to Youth workshops to fill the gap. In early 1990's, Finland went through a heavy recession with high unemployment. As a consequence, Youth workshops started offering services also for a larger audience than young people under 29 years of age. In 1995 Finland became a member of the European Union, which meant that the European Social Fund (ESF) was made available for various development opportunities. Development of youth work was part of the top ten national initiatives that allowed many municipalities to further develop their ideas and services around Youth workshops. Especially in the city of Lahti, where this case study was conducted, the importance of the ESF support has been significant.

The case study site is in Lahti, a mid-size town located in southern Finland. The Youth workshop facilities are part of the city's services provided by the Youth Department which belongs to the Department of Education and Culture<sup>38</sup>. 52% of Youth workshops in Finland are run through municipal services (not exclusively through Youth department). The facility has a staff of about 40 out of which about a third are with a fixed-term contract. In Lahti, three different types of Youth workshops are offered, namely rehabilitative work, employment coaching and work training in various fields, e.g. on new media and internet, on carpentering and wood-works, at a car-workshop or lunch restaurant, to mention but a few. The city of Lahti is very committed to running and further developing their Youth workshop services.

### **Approach to working with young people**

The aim of the Youth workshops is to improve the skills and abilities of young people to get into education, training or employment. The main means to achieve this is through a paid period of on-the-job training in a work-place environment where the

#### *Key Approaches*

The Youth workshop scheme allows an alternative and remunerated way to explore employment in practice in a supervised and supported environment in order to help get on track with further options in life.

The Youth workshop schemes range from rehabilitative work to employment coaching and work training, depending on the needs and the level of the young person.

A range of professionals is made available to work with youth. The strength is that young person's needs are looked from a holistic perspective, always including support for social and life skills in addition to the domain specific work training.

The model of Youth workshops is created around cross-sectorial regulatory frameworks thus taking advantage of Finnish governmental subsidies in the areas of youth work, employment and social issues.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.nuorilahti.net/english/>

young person learns new skills and gains new responsibilities over the training period. Importantly, whereas the “product” that the Youth workshops “sell” is built around the aspect of coaching and mentoring the young person, the by-product of the process is the artefact or the service that is produced as an outcome of the job. This multimodal approach means that within Finnish legislation, the Youth workshops function in the realm of *youth work and youth outreach work* (under the Ministry of Education and Culture), *employment* (under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy) and *social issues* (under the Ministry of Social affairs and Health). Typically, Youth workshops function with marginalised groups rather than the mainstream audience of the above-mentioned services. Therefore, Youth workshops do not fall under any particular line of the above-mentioned service sectors, but often function as an interface between these various systems and services. This can be regarded as one of its main assets, but also its main challenges.

The Youth workshop facility in Lahti is located in an old industrial building near the centre of the city. Like in most Youth workshops across the country, the products offered in Lahti range from rehabilitative work to employment coaching and work training depending on the needs and motivations of each individual. During the last year, a new structure for all Employment services under city’s Youth Department has been developed and its implementation started four months ago. Such continuous development is at the core of the youth services in Lahti as they aspire to be a *one-stop career service point* for young people, especially for those at risk of marginalisation.

The target audience of workshops in general is unemployed young people and adults without vocational or professional qualifications or work experience. Youth workshops focus on those under 29 years old, but for example in Lahti, they focus on those under 25 years of age. Increasingly, the audience is also at risk groups such as young people with diminished ability to work, people recovering from substance abuse or mental health problems, young long term unemployed and those unable to work. Frequently, it appears that they are at the risk of exclusion, but have not yet been identified as such nor are they under any of the existing social services. For example in Lahti, one of the aims of the restructuring was that the young person does not need to know what type of employment services they are looking for (e.g. rehabilitative work, employment coaching, work training, each are with a different type of government grant under different services), but once they arrive at the one-stop service, they are guided to the right type and they are helped to seek the right type social services, if needed. Usually in Youth workshop, the clients arrive through a variety of routes, e.g. through Employment and Economic Development Centres, through local social services, from vocational training institutions or secondary schools and others.

One of the key success factors with Youth workshops is that the young people start there at their *own free will*. This sets a better base for their engagement; the participants are expected to take an active role in their own learning and development. As Youth workshops are outside of formal education and services, they have no means to neither oblige nor sanction young people to attend and complete their on-the-job training period. However, if for example a person who receives a subsidised salary drops out, they most likely will lose their income, but this is dealt at the Employment and Economic Development Centre, not by the staff at the Youth workshop. This sets the tone for mutual respect and an environment where the young people are given a second chance, which is important to overcome previous negative experiences with authorities (e.g. difficulties to adapt to formal education, long term care relationship with social services, negative reinforcement of failure).

The modus operandi of Youth workshops is to build around training, coaching and mentoring, however, the focus of everyday activities is on the job training in a working environment of a given workshop. The young people are expected to follow set working hours and attend according to the agreement (hours can vary from case to case, usually 32 hours per week for a period of five months). There are two types of



trainers: **on-the-job trainers** are professionals in their specific trade and they support participants in learning work and specific labour market skills. In general, the majority of permanently employed staff fall into this category. In Lahti, for example, there are two such trainers in each workshop. Additionally, there are **personal mentors**. Their background varies from youth and social workers to psychologists and nurses. They look into participants' life situation as a whole, providing support to improve their life-management skills and capabilities always focusing on building future plans after the training period. Depending on the case, the personal mentor can help the young person to seek social services (e.g. housing or mental services), but the coaching can also look into different public support measures available for future employment (e.g. salary subsidies for work experiment, traineeship or work placement) or focus on future study plans. Participants meet with the personal mentor at least at the beginning of their period, in the middle and at the end. However, often times the meetings are more frequent, again, depending on the case. During the case study visit, it became clear that the commitment of the staff to their work and young people is very important for the success of the whole process. In Lahti, the staff also have a central role in the participatory development cycle of the Youth workshops when new processes and services are planned.

The training opportunities at the Youth workshop facilities in Lahti are now offered in three different categories depending on the individual's needs. Each category typically received different types of governmental grants or subsidies. The most rehabilitative work is offered in three "Creative workshops" that have a very low entry level. They deal with the topics of interior decoration, drama, and multimedia and internet. In these workshops, the focus is heavily on managing everyday routines as well as work and communication skills. Increasingly, these young people have multiple issues; therefore, the holistic, case-based approach is important in guiding them to seek needed services (e.g. social/housing/mental services). The second category of workshops deals more with on-the-job training focusing on work experience and skills in the given domain. The last category of workshops is run in close cooperation with employers meaning that the training does not take place in the facilities of the Youth workshop but in real businesses. In these cases, for example, the employment coach follows up the trainee at the workplace. In each of the workshops, documenting the work and the progress is an important part of the learning process. This is also related to recognising non-formal learning opportunities and describing them in order to make it easier to compare non-formal learning with learning acquired within the formal education and training system. Eventually, such descriptions could be recognised as part of a vocational qualification. This is currently possible in theory, but still slow in practice.

### Outcomes and impacts of the initiative

#### *Main outcomes and impacts*

In 2010, 31% of the unemployed youth under the age of 25 benefitted from Youth workshops

Since 2006, about 75% participants under the age of 29 have moved on in a positive direction in their lives, meaning they found a job, study place or another activity after participation in the programme

Youth workshops have worked in the field of social employment and youth work since 1983. They have continuously contributed in developing and redefining the field with other stakeholders.

For the first time in 2013, the legislative text on Youth employment called the Youth Guarantee mentions Youth workshops. This is a sign of its success and maturity as an accepted key player in the field.



In 2010, there were 34,627 unemployed people under 25 years old in Finland. In the same year, there were 10,859 young people under the age of 25 who benefitted from Youth workshops meaning that the Youth workshops reached out to about 31% of the unemployed youth under the age of 25. Additionally, there were 2,157 people between 25 to 28 years of age and 7,711 people in other age categories. Since 2006, about 75% of young participants (under 29 years) have moved on in a positive direction in their lives, meaning they found a job, study place or another activity after participation in the programme. However, 71% of Youth workshops in Finland report that they are not able to take in all the potential participants that could benefit from their services.

New and on-going development and project work run by the National Workshop Association can be considered as part of the impact. Currently, the association is scaling up at the national level a three-year pilot on best practices of rehabilitative youth work. This pilot was part of a wider national action focusing on housing issues among youth, therefore working with a wide range of stakeholders in the field, e.g. organisation working with mental health issues among youth. Another example of working with a wider stakeholder group is in the area of immigrant participants in Workshops. The number has been increasing since 2000, currently immigrants are at 5% of participants which is clearly above the national average. The project focuses on the transfer of good practices and works widely with other stakeholders in the field, e.g. municipal immigration and employment departments, associations and youth organisations.

Another two-year long development project<sup>39</sup> aims to create new, more comprehensive national quality and impact criteria to better assess and evaluate the impact of Youth workshop work across the country. Since there are different levels of services offered by Youth workshops (e.g. rehabilitative work, on-the-job training and placements in labour market), more adaptive ways to measure success are also needed. For example, gains in the rehabilitative work are not necessarily seen right after the period in the Youth workshop but only after a longer period of time. Currently, at the individual level, progress is always documented. However, mechanisms are missing where the individual success can be better measured using more unified descriptors that could allow assessing the success of all the Youth workshops in a more comprehensive and constructive ways.

### **Experience of trends in youth work**

A clear trend that has emerged is the professionalisation of the social work sector and Youth workshops across the country. In the beginning of the workshop activities in the late 1990's, the work was less structured and it was more about creating a cool, relaxed and alternative environment for on-the-job-training opportunities. The trainers were "the cool guys" who interacted easily with youth regardless their background. Since mid-2005, the Workshop Association has worked on refining the division between the trainer and the mentor. The triangular relationship between the trainer, mentor and mentee now sets the base of the collaboration. Nowadays, this more professional attitude has also formalised and stabilised the status of Youth workshops. For example, even if there is no regulated job description or requirement to become a trainer or a mentor at workshops, about 70% of personal mentors have a degree from tertiary education.

Validation of non-formal learning that takes place in alternative learning environments and its recognition and certification, for example, as part of the formal qualification is

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<sup>39</sup> [http://www.tpy.fi/mita\\_me\\_teemme/vaikuttamistyota/sosiaalisen-vahvistamisen-kehitt/](http://www.tpy.fi/mita_me_teemme/vaikuttamistyota/sosiaalisen-vahvistamisen-kehitt/)

one of the rising trends that Youth workshops observe and follow. The National Workshop Association is now working on terminology that should facilitate describing the acquired learning and skills in non-formal environments by using agreed terms that appear in the curriculum to describe learning acquired within the formal education and training providers. However, the Workshop Association emphasises that such training is always provided in cooperation with training institutions who retain the right to award qualifications. Similarly, the idea of supported apprenticeships is also gaining ground. Currently, the Youth workshops already supply personal employment coaching and apprenticeship coaching a service that they also provide to employers.

### **Influence of regulatory frameworks on practice**

The Youth workshops typically function in a cross-sectorial manner interfacing with many of the regulatory frameworks in the area of youth work, employment and social issues both at the national, and regional and municipal level. However, none of the frameworks directly stipulate how Youth workshops should function. The Youth act, for example, mentions that municipalities may organise Youth workshop functions, but it does not say how it should be done. In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Culture have given some guidelines on the matter, but they are neither restrictive nor binding. Internally, the National Workshop Association applies a quality model that is used in the field of social employment, it dates back from 2005. This model is based on European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) criteria.

Since the field of social employment is fast moving, new legislations and regulations mean that new and agreed vocabulary is needed. Therefore, together with another stakeholder organisation (VATES-säätiö), the National Workshop Associate has co-operated to better define the field of social employment and the key terminology used<sup>40</sup>.

### **Relationship with policy**

A new cross-administrative initiative, the Youth Guarantee, took effect from the start of 2013. The reason behind it is the growing concern of the risk of social exclusion of youth. The Youth Guarantee has been set up to ensure that all young adults find their way into education, working life and society. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the guarantee of education and training, the young adults' skills programme, the youth workshop and outreach youth work. The project is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Social affairs and Health. The Youth Guarantee consists of various elements: a guarantee of employment, one of education or training, a young adults' skills programme, *a youth workshop*, and outreach youth work<sup>41</sup>. This is actually the first time that the term "Youth workshop" has entered into official legislative text in Finland, a sign of its success and maturity as an accepted key player in the field.

However, the first steps of the initiative have not been so favourable. Actually, many Youth workshops have seen a decrease in numbers<sup>42</sup>. Some say that the Employment and Economic Development Centres have interpreted the new law too strictly (i.e. instead of starting at the Youth workshop right away, it is only offered within three months of becoming unemployed), others point to another new initiative that came into force at the same time which stipulates that in order for the young person to

<sup>40</sup> Sosiaalisen työllistämisen toimiala – Palveluilla tasa-arvoa työllisyyteen (2012)

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Verkkouutiset/2012/10/youth\\_guarantee.html?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Verkkouutiset/2012/10/youth_guarantee.html?lang=en)

<sup>42</sup> [http://yle.fi/uutiset/nuorisotakuu\\_vaikeuttaa\\_taydelta\\_flopilta\\_uusi\\_laki\\_vaikeuttaa\\_nuorten\\_paasya\\_tyopajoille/6544094](http://yle.fi/uutiset/nuorisotakuu_vaikeuttaa_taydelta_flopilta_uusi_laki_vaikeuttaa_nuorten_paasya_tyopajoille/6544094)

benefit from the government grant for subsidised employment, they need to know which field their future work will be. This restricts especially the rehabilitative work that Youth workshops are conducting. Thanks to advocacy efforts by the National Workshop Association, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy is taking needed measures.

In general, the National Workshop Association is an advocacy/lobby organisation speaking on behalf of its members across the field. In 2012, for example, they have commented on a number of law initiatives that potentially could hinder their work, they have directly participated in a dialogue with functionaries and policy-makers who prepare and work on those initiatives, and they have participated in numerous local and national level seminars and debates around them. Currently, the Ministry of Social affairs and Health is preparing a reform of the social welfare and health care service structure that could have many ramifications for Youth workshops. The National Association has a keen eye on the debate.

### **Supporting youth work**

The asset and the challenge of Youth workshops is that they take a very cross-sectorial approach interfacing with various existing systems and regulatory frameworks. For example, a youth workshop can receive its funding from more than ten different sources (e.g. municipal and national subsidies from social and health sector, from education and culture sector in the case of youth work, from employment related sources and from other funds such as ESF, Finland's Slot Machine Association). The young people, on the other hand, usually receive their subsidies either from the social and health funds or from the funds related to employment. However, such cross-sectorial working is seldom supported by policies made and actions taken by the Government, which has ramifications on the available budgets. This makes the work of Youth workshops challenging, an example of which is the implementation of new legislation in the beginning of 2013 (see POLICY). The National Workshop Association would like to see more support for their cross-sectorial work also in future regulations and frameworks.

Additionally, more support would be needed to properly work out and successfully implement new ways in which training could be delivered on top of traditional methods. Even if looking at the EU-level Finland has made useful attempts towards recognising non-formal and informal education environments, the cooperation between non-formal and informal education providers and traditional education institutions who deliver the qualifications could have room for improvement. On their own end, the National Workshop Association is working on the issue in terms of creating descriptions of learning acquired in non-formal learning environments such as in Youth workshops using the terminology used in the official national curriculum. Potentially, this could make the transfer towards vocational qualification easier. It is emphasised that they do not wish to become an accreditation body themselves, but working seamlessly with them.

### **Networking with other stakeholders**

The National Workshop Association is an umbrella organisation for Youth workshops in Finland. The association was created in 1997 and it is mainly financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 2012, the association was comprised of 205 organisations (the membership in the association is not required, in 2010, there were more than 260 workshops). The main goal of the association is to support and provide further professional development to its staff, further develop and disseminate good practices identified in the field and act as a lobby and dissemination group towards various stakeholders and interest groups.

Importantly, within the National Workshop Association there are various thematic and regional networks that function regularly to support and enhance cooperation among Youth workshops that are spread across the country. There are eight regional sub-networks who meet and cooperate around local and regional issues. As an example of thematic networks, that are for a fixed period of time only, the following ones were running in 2012: Art and culture network, Continuous development network for trainers working with alcoholics and Network for “workshops without walls” focusing on the on-the-job-training opportunities out in the labour market. The meetings of these thematic networks are planned ahead of time and they focus on sharing practices and co-developing new ones. This allows focused and timely support for the members in the field. Additionally, continuous development is offered for the staff working in member organisations. In 2012, the association organised 23 training days. The National Workshop Association is also responsible for coordinating international projects and contacts. For example, it is a partner in Leonardo Da Vinci and Grundvig projects, and it currently also receives funding for some project work through European Social Found. The association also participates in some other networks, for example, it follows issues and updates from the International Production School Organisation (IPSO) (even though it does not agree on all the issues, e.g. for Youth workshops, it is important to function with formal education system in Finland, not within it, as ISPO argues).

Nationally within Finland, the National Workshop Association is an advocacy and lobby group towards policy-makers at the national level. In order to create a common ground in the field of social employment and youth work, they network with other similar stakeholders (e.g. VATE-foundation; OKTETTI-foundation).

### Top Tips for Successful Youth Work:

- When young people seek the service at their own will, it creates a better relationship between the youth worker and the young person.
- Look for alternative paths to explore training and employment opportunities. Create supportive on-the-job training option for youth to explore employment in a supervised and supported environment. Do not recreate traditional education environments; the strength is in being *alternative*.
- Look at young people's needs from a holistic perspective. In order to help them with future employment and training, one might need to start by coaching with everyday routines and working skills first. Don't set the threshold too high to begin with the journey.
- The holistic approach is complemented with various job descriptions of staff working with the youth: **on-the-job trainers** support participants in learning work and labour market skills. **Personal mentors** have background in youth and social work, in psychology or nursing.
- Make sure professionals working with youth have a range of qualities available. For example, the **on-the-job trainers** need to be experts in their trade in order to give a positive image of the profession. But, they also need to have an "internal social worker" within them to listen and support.
- Know the legislative and regulatory frameworks in your country in order to function across them (e.g. governmental subsidies in the areas of youth work, employment and social issues). Often drop-outs happen when young people transition from one service sector to another. They need to be supported despite administrative gaps.
- Look at removing one obstacle at the time. Nowadays, youth at risk have multiple issues. For example, a short period at Youth Workshop cannot perform miracles, but it can be a start for a future path and new connections.

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