

Citizenship Scenarios – Project Examples



T-Kit
on
European Citizenship

Having explored so much of what we feel should shape your approach to education for European Citizenship it is now time to relate these ideas to some practical realities.

The following pages contain examples taken from real experiences of European Citizenship Education in action. The aim of this section is to further help you as practitioners think about what kind of activities you might organise, what kind of approach to your work you might take and what techniques you might use. Through the presentation of a series of *scenarios* we provide information, examples and exploration with the aim of stimulating thought and helping you to develop and enhance your own intelligent practice.

We have collected information from different people working on diverse projects across Europe. Some of the projects were set up consciously to work on the issue of European Citizenship Education; others have an alternative focus but embrace issues or approaches that make equally valid contributions to this field. We have deliberately not categorised the projects into different types. We want to encourage you to read all of the contributions as we feel sure you will find something of relevance in each of them.

However, we have tried to illustrate the diversity of activities that come under the European Citizenship Education umbrella. We have drawn upon projects that work, for example: with individuals; with big groups; on different issues; with the arts; with sports; in a small locality; internationally; and with a huge diversity of people in terms of age, ability, and social, religious or cultural background. These varied projects are managed by equally varied organisations, whether local, national or international, governmental or non-governmental, big or small, run by paid staff or volunteers.

European Citizenship Education, it is clear, can be carried out in many different ways with many different people and in many different contexts, both directly and indirectly tackled, and in formal or non-formal educational settings. There are many further means of carrying out education for European Citizenship and the examples we have chosen are illustrative rather than exhaustive. For example, as you will see in our resources section, there are a large number of very successful projects based around electronic communication. What we hope is that through demonstrating how ideas have been applied in a variety of contexts, you will be inspired to adapt and apply what you have learnt from this T-Kit to meet your own needs.

We hope that the following explanation will help you to navigate your way through these examples. We have not offered straight-forward descriptions of activities; instead we focus on key ideas or actions for illustrative effect. We have tried, however, to present these in a framework that shows the wider picture of the project and the local context. Each scenario appears under a heading of the project title. Where appropriate the name and contact details for the organisation are also given, as well as a brief description of its field of work.

Within the context of the particular project and the place in which it happens, we undertake a more detailed exploration of one or two key aspects or components of the project. The project organisers explain how and why they did what they did, linking their action into the more theoretical content of the T-Kit, raising questions and exposing issues for further contemplation. Each scenario concludes by drawing together Issues for Exploration that relate to the particular example, raising questions that might be kept in mind when planning, doing or evaluating European Citizenship Education. The aim of this is to help you, the practitioner, to find your own way to a responsive and intelligent practice that embraces a notion of European Citizenship as integral, complex and dynamic. The resources section at the end of the T-Kit will offer sources of further exercises and techniques.



As you read these examples, analyse a few of them, using the conceptual framework quadrants, and the key competencies, outlined in the earlier sections. Which area(s) and competencies does an activity focus on?
What can you learn from their experience?



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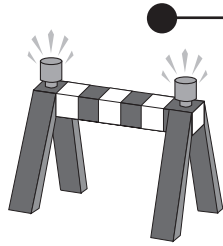
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Break into small groups. Each group takes one of the following examples, and analyses it using the conceptual framework quadrants and the key competencies. Reflect also on the extent to which the activity was an example of responsive practice (and did that make a difference?).

Public Discussions and Networking	<i>Association of Disabled Students (ADS)</i>
The Association of Disabled Students, based in Belgrade, exists to support young people with disabilities and to campaign for their rights.	Dimitrija Marinkovića 5 11 000 Beograd Yugoslavia Tel: +381 11 496 409 Fax: +381 11 497 409 Email: office@asdsyu.org Contact: Vladimir Čuk

In the period between March and June 2001 the Association of Disabled Students cooperated with several local organisations to hold a series of public discussions in six cities in Serbia. The key aim was to provide young people with disabilities with an opportunity to express their attitudes and problems in public, and to find potential solutions within the local community. Additionally, the organisers hoped to compare the situation in different local environments in Serbia as regards disability.

In the current social and political context of Serbia much of the challenge of this project was in establishing an infrastructure from which to develop future campaigns and action and in finding an appropriate means of introducing the concept of citizenship.

With recent political changes and the collapse of the war-time government, it has been revealed to what extent the seriousness of the situation for disabled people had been hidden for a decade. However, local governments, due to accumulated problems, the financial situation and inadequate information, are not yet making any significant steps to improve the position of disabled people.

In every area there are organizations of disabled people, founded and categorised according to medical disability. Although there are formal and informal bodies that co-ordinate the activities of all these organisations on a local level, such co-operation is in most cases only spoken. Further, contact with other NGOs is very rare and in most cases non-productive. This is partly a consequence of the previous government's attitude, previous dependence of disabled people on the state, and the lack of any history of the non-governmental sector in general.

The term European Citizenship in Serbia can be viewed through the lens of human rights. Even though the political system has recently been changed and the situation started improving, certain problematic areas of everyday life have hardly been touched by the changes. That's particularly so where the rights of people with disabilities are concerned – physical and structural barriers, vague legal regulations, the small percentage of employment, insufficient conditions for quality education and last, but not least, the strong impact of prejudices in society about people with disabilities. The size and range of the problems people with disabilities face daily, as well as the basic nature of their unfulfilled basic human needs in Serbia, leaves no room whatsoever for comparison with other European countries. This also means it is almost impossible to tackle these issues directly and explicitly. Therefore, the European Citizenship idea, in the sense of working for the achievement of basic standards in respecting human rights of persons with disabilities and finding ways of solving their problems, has been introduced into this programme almost "underhandedly".



The above context meant a very particular approach was required, which in a way introduced the concept of citizenship through the back door.

One of the main reasons for ignoring the needs and rights of people with disabilities is very poor communication and co-operation between organisations working with this target group. This project represents an initial step towards establishing unity and overcoming differences among these organisations. Once partners were found from local NGOs and interested individuals, it became possible to exert greater pressure on local authorities to commit themselves to solving local problems and establishing (pre)conditions for respecting the rights and needs of people with disabilities, and in accordance with European standards in this field.

Public discussions were organised in Beograd, Nis and Novi Sad first, these being the largest cities in Serbia, covering the central part of Serbia, the south and Vojvodina (the North). After that the public discussions were also organised in smaller cities – Krusevac, Kragujevac and Subotica, also with their geographic position and the particularities of the situation in mind (e.g. economy, refugees, multinational composition of society, standard of living).

After choosing the local environments in which the programme was to be carried out, the ADS team searched for local partners that could help organise public discussions and support the very idea of the project. The steps in each of the local communities were mainly the same:

- Establishing communication with local organisations dealing with the problems of people with disabilities, or otherwise interested in co-operation.
- Field work and meetings with representatives of local organisations, the media, local authorities and interested individuals, in order to provide every possible kind of support to organising local public discussions.
- Defining the participants of the public discussion from the local community and profiling the main subject of the discussion.
- A few weeks after the initial meetings, the discussions were organised in co-operation with local partners.
- Through meetings and during the discussions themselves, the bases for co-operation between local organisations were set and the most pressing local problems concerning people with disabilities were defined, as well as possible steps towards their solution.
- A few weeks after the discussions, the ADS team visited each city included in this project once more, and intensified the effects of the projects through meetings.
- Following this project, ADS organized a few actions in the different local environments in order to intensify co-operation and help the local organisations. In four cities there were psychology workshops with diverse groups (participants had different disabilities or no disability), and all the cities were included in the recently completed media campaign.

It appears the public discussions project will show long term effects, as indicated by the recent founding of ADS branch in Kragujevac. ADS will now focus their activities beyond Belgrade, so that the idea of the Association and their way of operating may spread. That would also enable the organisation of projects on a national level with more impact than has been possible so far.

Issues to explore

- How to combine needs analysis of students with disabilities and (re-)establishing communication between this marginalised group and the society/community they live in
- Co-operating with local partners and organisations rather than imposing something from the outside
- Dealing ostensibly with one issue but tackling wider/deeper citizenship issues through doing so
- Long term process planning action and pursuing follow-up
- Working at the appropriate pace and level and going step by step towards bigger goals

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An approach to citizenship

Beavers Arts is an arts and education charity based in North Staffordshire, England. It exists to sustain, develop, and enrich the lives of individuals, groups and communities through activities that contribute to cultural democracy. To this end, a lot of projects are undertaken with diverse groups of people in many locations. Current projects focus particularly on asylum seekers and refugees, and young people at risk of social exclusion. For example, projects share practical transferable skills; explore community and personal history; create community events and celebrations; make books, exhibitions and videos. Above all, they use group work, training projects, music, photography, words, murals, banners, reminiscence and cultural exchange and much more, to work for tolerance, communication and co-operation between people. Walking through windows, an international youth exchange project was run in collaboration with Italian partners, L'Arvicola.

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At the core of Beavers Arts' work is their understanding of what being a citizen means:

Our approach to citizenship has little to say about nationality or patriotism, nor even about being European; instead it works through a process that starts with the individual, draws out the nature of commitment, and seeks to build of it something substantial enough to redefine the place where individuals draw their personal boundaries. The end we have in mind, for our work, is the same old idea of creating citizens of the world; keeping this end in mind, we come to the beginning – the boundaries around the self that each of us creates.

Rather than seeing citizenship as a set of conditions, rules or obligations, we believe that it is more important to ask how people see themselves and the nature of their relationship with others around them – including those with whom they have no actual contact. Positive actions, inclusive thinking and good citizenship are likely to stem from a sense of self-worth combined with an open, trusting and flexible approach to others.

Each of us defines the limits within which we perceive our own interests to lie; for the most damaged and defeated individuals, it's not always possible to draw such a boundary at all. For people with little trust in others, the boundary may include just "me and my partner" or "me and my family" – or just "me". Beyond this, things can get tricky, boundaries fluid, identities negotiable. Some young people (and adults, for that matter) extend their boundaries to a locality, a gang, to sub-groups that can be opaque to the outsider; or to a city, or a region; an ethnic or racial or religious identity; or to a nation, with or without statehood.

Wherever the line is drawn, people extend a degree of commitment to those *within* their personal boundary. As a minimum they will treat those *within* the boundary more favourably than outsiders. At the extreme, far too many are willing to deride, attack or even kill those outside their self-defined frontier or to die for the group within which they locate themselves.

For us, the task is firstly to build upon people's inherent ability to think positively about, and act charitably towards, those falling *within their own boundaries* and secondly to encourage individuals to extend their horizons – to look beyond the self, or the family, or their cluster of friends, to consider including others *within* rather than outside their personal boundaries – a more or less endless process, as new groups arise for our consideration and to challenge us.

Symbolically our task is simple enough though far-reaching to replace "I" with "we", to constantly push back the hypothetical border between "we" and "them". Theoretically such a process is well supported by both Islamic and Christian theologies, as well as by some political traditions – though in practice, religious and political allegiances may build barriers rather than eliminate them. The way we work with people from varied backgrounds and with different belief systems is essentially to pull simultaneously in two directions – firstly to reinforce the self through a process of creative self-expression, and secondly (simultaneously) to build trust in others through interaction with actual individuals.

What we actually do, you may be reassured to know, is rather more prosaic – drumming, games, collaborative working, eating, talking, walking. Just doing, though, is not all. The alchemy that turns the earthy stuff of *doing* to the glittering goal of changed reality is achieved by paying attention – what Buddhists might call mindfulness. And acting on what we observe. There is no plan, no guide, just taking note . . .



A little less conversation, a little more action...

Below we discuss an exercise that we make frequent use of. We call it 'entering the space'. Here, it is explored in the context of the first session of a fortnight's, performance-based international exchange project – 'Walking through windows'. The group was particularly diverse in every respect and also included some quite vulnerable and under-confident young people.

We wanted to start to introduce the idea of eye contact, of being able to look at other people. And that's about both increasing your confidence and making you look confident as a performer, which are two separate things. But as well as that it's to do with drawing strength from the group. It's a thing we do lots of – looking at the people within your group.

The exercise begins from the familiar, democratic starting point - the circle. Each member of the group is then given the opportunity to step into the circle and *be present* (enter the performance space), pause, look every member of the group in the eye, and then say their own name before resuming their neutral position in the circle. In the course of the activity, everybody thus assumes the roles of both actor and audience.

On this occasion we deliberately chose to let people go in their own time, rather than going round the circle, as we would normally do it. I actually looked round and went "oh, I can't ask them to do this". You just need to be so aware of the feeling of the group at the moment, and ready to adapt your plans.

We have quite a few exercises that work around similar principles as this one. An important aspect of such exercises is developing a sense of inclusion. This is embedded in the way we work around the circle; particularly how you regard other people – your look upon the audience and accepting their look on you, is very important.

We are not for one minute trying to suggest that by gathering a group of people in a circle and by taking them through a simple exercise that they will suddenly regard each other in a new and respectful light. However, we do believe that within a context of a project that builds upon processes and skills from one day to the next and that generates a trusting and relaxed atmosphere, such exercises enable significant changes to start to take place.

A final word of warning – the mechanics of this exercise are deceptively simple, but the process of its implementation was sensitive to many complex and ever changing factors unique to this particular session. Working with the same group in the same room, the next day even, would not be the same.

Issues to Explore

- The how not the what
- Working with people where they are at
- Democratic working practices
- Building skills
- Responding to the group
- Simple techniques – big ideas
- Exploration and self-development

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**Malta Comes
(South and North Europe Meet)**

Euromeet was founded in 2001 by a group of interested previous youth exchange participants. It is an NGO and receives no statutory funding, but does have the part-time support of a local authority youth worker. Based in Husum, Sweden, its aim is to expose young people in the region to the potential of international exchange through making Husum an international meeting point. The organisation currently has 30 members who are busy planning exchanges, building contacts, participating in courses and raising European awareness through outreach work.

Euromeet

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This project, the most recent of Euromeet's three exchanges, brought almost 40 young people from Sweden and Malta together. The aim was to compare differences and similarities between young people who come from the northern and southern extremes of the continent and to raise awareness on the richness and power of cultural diversity. The theme was young people and their leisure time.

Both groups started the project at home, planning different discussion themes like school, youth organisations, leisure time, and so on. We made a rough programme that everybody looked at and helped us to develop. Then when the Maltese group arrived we practically spent all the time together with them. The first evening we had a cultural evening, where we showed typical food, music, and so on from our region in Sweden. The Maltese youngsters had also brought things from Malta with them. We had an intercultural evening where we shared a lot of things. That was a way of starting to see that a lot of things seem quite different in the beginning. During the rest of the programme we mixed a lot of activities, visiting different special places in the municipality and discussions. One special thing we did was to invite people staying in the Swedish municipality during the summer but who come from Malta. The Maltese group did not know about it, so one day when we were sitting and eating, a boy suddenly came and started to talk Maltese with them. That was one way of showing that Europe can be smaller than we believe.

In this way of working your group learns a lot first about another country, but also more about their own country. Preparation and guided discussion help to develop this, and learn about Europe and its organisations.

Outcomes – First our group saw a lot of things around our area with "new eyes". You come to appreciate more of what you usually take for granted. Both groups found out that in practice there are really no differences between Swedish and Maltese youth, and that they are quite the same in their interests. They started then to want to meet more youth from other countries. Many in the group "grew" a lot during the exchange. They had to face something new and unknown, but they also realised that you can do more than you ever believed in yourselves. Many life-long friendships were formed.

I have been working as a youth leader since 1978. This work involves a lot of helping youth with low self-confidence. So the task is to guide, find ways to help them increase their self respect. I can tell you that during all these years I have never met such a good tool for this as intercultural learning and meetings.

Although the main aim of the project was to develop European Citizenship and interculturality, the organiser found that there were very significant outcomes in terms of individuals' personal development, too. He explores this below.

In Euromeet groups you always have a mixture of youth with different skills and abilities. Some may be good at writing, some at talking, some at planning or finding good solutions, and so on. So, for example, even if you are not so "good at English" there is still plenty that you can contribute to the group and the work – we make sure of it.

When we start a new exchange we have the whole group (or sometimes a smaller planning group at the start) involved from the very beginning. They see the whole process through from planning and decision making (and the accompanying discussions) to the real exchange/meeting and on to the evaluation and future talk.



We have had youth that come at the beginning feeling very unsure, with their heads bent down. Then, after the project, you can see how they have literally raised their heads as if to say “I really did this”.

All of the following factors together are important in achieving this: to be a part of a group; to have a mission within the group – a sense of purpose; to feel that you belong and are useful; to be supported to do something new and maybe also a little scary and then afterwards to see that you really could!

Before our first exchange with Malta I had what the group told me was a crazy idea – that we should have an English course. They told me that English was their poorest subject at school. I then told them “You have to talk and make yourselves understood, not think of spelling and grammar”. The scary thing was to go to a country where one of the languages is English. However, when we arrived and listened to how the Maltese people talked the young people became more sure of themselves. One of the boys liked it so much that after some days he just spoke English. He even sat down in cafes talking with the locals. We could see after this that he “grew” a lot, and he even came back and finished at school. The interesting part was also to listen to our group that refused to talk English together at home. In Malta they started to talk more and more with each other.

Another development is that after our exchanges and the related work, we decided to go around to other youth to tell them about this and the possibilities of youth exchanges. Then the participants trained more to talk in front of others – another scary thing for them. I can see that they now are more confident as a result of this. They are also more interested in taking responsibility – so many of them are now working voluntarily at our Youth Centre. And because of these positive outcomes, they talk positively about this kind of educational experience and we have more and more young people interested.

Issues to Explore

- Active participation – decision making and involvement in processes
- What makes a project on European Citizenship intercultural?
- Working with people’s strengths
- Finding a way for everybody to make their contribution and for it to be valued
- Challenging and stretching people – but not too much
- Building on success

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**Integrating Minority Groups through youth
participation in developing a civil society**

**Local Democracy
Agency, Sisak**

The Local Democracy Agency (LDA) is an international NGO that aims to support local authorities and citizens in regions affected by war to promote local democracy, through: networking and knowledge sharing; rehabilitation of public services; promoting economic activity, youth participation, gender equality, and freedom of information and expression. There are ten associated LDAs in the former Yugoslavia working to build a pluralist multi-cultural society.

A key project in the Sisak-Moslavina county of Croatia focuses on developing a civil society by the integration of minority groups through youth participation.

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In 1998 the project was launched with the task of creating a network for understanding, communication and confidence building for young people from different ethnic minorities from five towns at war just a couple of years earlier; and to do so in one year, starting from nothing. The project established five youth groups (one in each area) each reflecting the diversity of ethnic and social groups. The groups were connected by a Youth Focal Point in Sisak but also worked independently. Activities included the publication of a joint newsletter, training, summer camps, cultural events and international partnership.

To the organisers, the possibility of meeting the objectives, given the local circumstances, felt like science fiction. Just getting going was a major challenge...

We wanted to gather young people from different ethnic communities spread across five small cities (that were at war, just a couple of years before) and create with them a network for better understanding, communication and confidence building. We wanted it from them and we really believed that young people can make a much needed new bridge between divided communities.

When the project started all this looked like a science-fiction movie. After many official presentations and more negotiations with officials we finally got access to our desired group. We gathered young people from schools, and started with a group without previous youth work experiences (since at that time and in those places there was no such thing for them) and with a lack of practical skills. So, our very first steps were workshops, training and many, many meetings, phone calls, day talks, night talks...travels and walks around. After a couple of months, we established our co-operation and communication system. Each local youth group delegated its own representative who became a leader. Thus, communication finally became more effective and less expensive...instead of talking with 20 people from one town, we just had to call one.

Now, our group, fully aware of their role and mission, started to organise workshops, debates, solidarity actions, summer camps, training courses, exhibitions, concerts...it wasn't easy to follow the floods of ideas, but nobody wanted to give up on anything proposed. In order to reach a wide audience, we opened a small Info point where young people had the opportunity to use free Internet, to read new "European" literature, European newspapers and finally, to be informed about each of our activities or about those organised and implemented by their peers in other European countries. That's the place where one of the projects greatest successes – the newsletter – appeared. Edited together with a common sense and spirit, the newsletter "Tockica" (small point) soon became a tool for communication, freedom of expression, exchange of ideas as well as making the whole project more visible.

The more we worked, the more was done by the youth groups, and less by us – seniors! We were really a team where everybody respected the ideas of others (not that we completely agreed all the time!, but the respect and trust really worked).



So how did this happen?

The first steps in the early stage were taken with the aim of getting closer to our «targets» and to establish good communication and confidence. We didn't want to start with tough issues (such as ethnic tolerance, minority rights, confidence building) although we wanted to reach them at some point! We really wanted to reach them in a more subtle way, by showing how tough issues and their alternatives function in practice. Instead of immediately launching our desired high level objectives, we started with a questionnaire that covered all possible areas of youth's interests and needs. And it turned out in the results that youth, regardless of their social and ethnic background, showed interest in the same things (this was not a surprise for us, but it was a very good argument for further activities). Regardless of all the invented differences between them, they all wanted education about sexuality and drug use and misuse, and more music and fun. And we told them how similar they are. And we organised the same activities for all of them – activities they wanted to have. This really started to tickle their curiosity and to develop a sense of commonality. For the first time, contrary to what adults so often told them, they started to realise how they are not so different. While this was going on, we made good use of the newspapers and the radio to publicise every activity. Almost every day something was published that supported and gave importance to issues we were dealing with. Through the support of the media, we managed to create a common «invisible» space even before our groups actually met each other.

At this point, the mayors also realised the serious nature of our work, and they gave us free space for our activities. That was really something new. To return this big favour, we did our best and managed to find sponsors who gave computers. Having this important tool, our «dislocated» groups could prepare their own material, posters and leaflets to gather their peers. At that stage, we as facilitators did little more than simple logistical tasks like delivering paper and glue. Everything else was done by the youth themselves. I wouldn't say they were all the same, some were lazy, some were very silent, some were very loud, hard and stubborn. But, it was very important not to change their individuality and their identity since they were forced to change it so many times before due to the war and its consequences. They told me how many times they were betrayed and here I was extremely careful.

After four years and a lot of hard work much has changed. There are now established youth leaders in the region, running activities and courses, working with others in the daily struggle for building a fairer and more tolerant society.

Issues for Exploration

- Focusing on the group whilst projecting out
- Recognising surroundings
- Time and patience
- Gradual transfer of responsibility
- Following the interests of participants
- Varied approaches
- Tackling issues on every level – mayors and participants
- The importance of a common project
- “Tickling their curiosity”

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**Promoting real youth initiatives
from the local to European level.**

***Luciole – Manifeste ARA
local network***

Luciole is a not-for-profit organisation working under the umbrella of Manifeste ARA, in Brittany, France. The work of Luciole is based on giving all individuals, particularly young people, the chance to play an active role in their lives and their surroundings.

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Luciole strives towards these goals by working to:

- sustain projects and local actors connected to youth and youth workers through such support as advice and action-training
- participate in research/action in non formal education and intercultural learning

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www.chez.com/manifesteara/luciole

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This youth initiative, which began in 1999, has seen a growing group of committed young people develop a project idea and see it through to its realisation; first on a local level and then across Europe. The project, Michto la Caravane, is now working with partners in France, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Italy and Portugal to actively engage individuals in their local communities.

The project began with four young people (19-21yrs) who formed a link with the Manifeste ARA Network. Although at that stage they could not formalize any concrete ideas, it was easy to feel their need to act, to do something, and in a way, "to build their place"... So I began working with them to focus their ideas, beginning this process by exploring their own self-recognition and discovering their own competencies and skills. The second step was to push them to define what they could do with all those competencies.

The project Michto la Caravane was born. In summer 2000 the group crossed Brittany working with local people, using street-based art and educational activities, to act, to do something together...

A few months of extensive planning preceded this activity - visiting the different places to try and involve local initiatives in the project, and training in working methods, project management and social relations.

From this the will to continue grew and grew and in 2001, me still working with them, they decided to promote their values in a larger setting – Europe. After 5 months and a lot of effort in preparing dossiers and fundraising at all levels (from local to European), they gained the support they needed to make a start. So far, this has involved meeting partners from the different countries to prepare on a local level before the arrival of Michto la Caravane. This is essential to achieve the aim of their presence being a platform of initiatives rather than just a show. Michto is just a pretext to develop social relations at a local level, to promote the self-organisation of local communities. The tour begins this summer.

The work of Luciole very firmly adheres to the belief that learners should be active participants, and their learning experiences linked closely to the reality of the situation in which they are operating. Below, Denis describes a bit more how he worked with this group of young people and why he chose to do so.

As I said, it is not "classical training" about Citizenship or European Citizenship Education. It is more action training. This project is one example of our way of working - to train directly in reality, in the territory, using the ideas of the people involved. Our main aim, therefore, is to work on the social utility of the individuals, particularly young people, to work on their active participation in their environment (thinking that they can consider their environment as their village, their region, their country, Europe, the world...)

So when I started to work with this group, it was planned to be at local level first as an experiment, but with a view to a possible European perspective.

Through this action training approach, we worked on all dimensions of project management, administrative skills, Intercultural Learning, and to develop their competencies and social attitudes. This involved working with them as individuals and as a group, in an informal way.



They started first to develop their project at local level. This supports our process of empowering young people, giving them the desire to participate actively in the place where they live and to promote their own values – how they see social relations between people, sharing their conception of life, promoting and arguing for it. It is totally a process of citizenship Education!

You can organise abstract teaching for youth workers on this topic, but it is still in a way artificial if it is not related with the reality of the young people that they work with. And when you enter this reality, then you enter into a new dimension of time! You cannot speak of one week of training, because you have a lot of different aspects to work on in order to build confidence to empower, and finally to let them fly completely alone! Such work needs regular contact over months.

But one thing is sure: We cannot speak about the Citizenship of young people if we try to merely involve them in a project of the youth worker or the trainer! This means that it needs time and patience. On the plus side, as you train young people, volunteers, you are also training other people – the local social actors who are in contact with them, the other volunteers and members of those organisations. This approach of action training touches a lot of people!

Outcomes

I consider that if you give people the chance to taste this kind of work, to achieve something both for themselves and their communities and on their own initiative, then they want it again and again. This is what happened after 2000 with Michto. In France there are now (summer 2002) 50 young adults (from 18 to 30 years old) who are several months into this process, and who will shortly follow the caravan.

Issues for exploration

- Enabling a responsive and personal practice
- Matching process with intended learning outcomes
- Working with, not imposing on
- Natural progression - flexibility
- Allowing time for progress
- Many small steps can go a long way

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**Integrated Europe? –
A youth perspective**

***OBESSU (Organizing Bureau of
European School Student Unions)***

OBESSU is a European platform for national school student organisations. It was founded in 1975 in Dublin and currently has 24 members in 20 countries as well as contact and observer organisations in a further 10 countries. OBESSU does representative work for school students and organises seminars for its members to exchange experiences and develop common policies for (school) education on a European level. The following project was conducted in collaboration with two partners: The German foundation “Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)” and the federal school student organisation “Bundeschülerinnenvertretung BSV”.

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Contact: Sinziana Radu

A seminar on migration and schooling took place in Berlin for one week in July 2001.

In total 30 participants aged between 16 and 24 took part in the seminar. For us it was important to have people both from EU member states and people coming from other European countries. The discussions we had about migration aimed at seeing the different problems related to migration in the EU and Non-EU countries in comparison. Furthermore it was essential that all the participants had a background in a school student organisation.

The aim of the international workshop was to see what the tendencies concerning migration in Europe currently are and the effects of migration on school education and the learning process. We discussed European integration as a process; if it is something we as school students want to see happening and if yes, how and what it should look like. We aimed to find out what role school students and their organisations play in the integration process. We aimed to find out what is behind expressions such as “the European idea”, “European culture” and “fortress Europe” and what they mean to us. We questioned what we mean when we say European culture or identity? Is it a geographical term? Is it an historical idea? Where does it come from? How can we identify what we have in common? How does Europe relate to young people?

Furthermore we looked at how migration affected Berlin (where the meeting was held) and at racism and xenophobia as phenomena often linked to migration in school and in politics. For us migration is related to citizenship because as an immigrant you often do not have the same rights as a citizen of one country. Nevertheless you have to follow the same laws, pay the same taxes and adapt in quite some ways to your country of residence. But migration does not only change the life of the migrant, it can also change for those who are his/her future classmates, who have the chance to learn from people with a different background in their class.

We used participatory methods such as plenary debates, working groups, theatre workshops, inputs from and discussions with experts, as well as exchanging experience between participants who reported on the situation and work done in their own countries. The experts were chosen not only according to their professional insight but also because of their way of presenting and involving participants. The working groups were different for each of the sections of the programme and always chaired and reported by one of the participants. For some of the working groups the team did not prepare the exact topic beforehand – they waited for the results of the first discussions and let the participants decide about the actual topic they wanted discuss.



The emphasis of OBESSU's work is on promoting active participation and the practice of European Citizenship.

OBESSU sees its work in general as aiming to make school students active European citizens. At each seminar we point out the special value of European co-operation on this issue. We explain the European institutions and the most relevant documents of the European Commission and the Council of Europe. And with our daily work we try to influence these institutions and give school students on European level a voice.

Nearly all our work is based on the idea that through active participation in school you will become an active citizen – and this is what we want students to become, or better, we want students to be capable of being active and hope to be able to stimulate them enough to be active. Active participation is not only an enriching way of designing a programme for a conference and often better for the learning process of the individual – but it is part of the idea of the active participation of a citizen in society. Part of the methodology is that the participants feel that their participation is wanted, useful and needed. One of the main points also is that it rather depends on methods than on the content if one is active and that for a project which deals with this topic it is crucial to choose participatory methods.

Of course citizenship does not only imply knowing the European Institutions and their way of decision making – on the contrary: for us democracy at school is vital for the development of democratic citizenship. Democracy cannot be taught in theory: it must be exercised from an early age on. As young people are not allowed to vote in real (national, regional or local) elections they need to learn about their rights at school. Usually school is the first state institution they meet in their lives and if they learn that there their input is wanted, that their participation is welcome, they continue to participate actively later on in society. Therefore, OBESSU helps to build school student structures where they do not yet exist and supports its members in their fight for school students' rights, and democracy at school.

Concerning European Citizenship OBESSU and its members demand that every school student has the possibility to go abroad (for a long or short term exchange) at least once in their school time. Through an exchange and learning foreign languages a European feeling of belonging and identity can be created. We want Europe to be a mainstreamed part of all subjects related to society, history, philosophy, etc. We try through the work with our members and their members to show that there is more to Europe than the European Institutions, a common currency within the EU member states and a common market in the EU. Europe is something which is present in many aspects of life and plays an important role for our future.

Issues for exploration

- Democracy cannot be taught – it needs to be learned/practised
- What kind of learning environment does it take to be able to “learn Democracy”?
- How to select participants – what factors do you need to consider?
- Working within structures that already exist
- Balancing knowledge and understanding with action and the development of ideas and opinions

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Football Summer School

Open Fun Football Schools

The Open Fun Football Schools began work in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2000. Supported by the Danish Football Association, the aim of the football schools is to use fun participation in sport as a means of crossing ethnic and social barriers and working towards better and more democratic understanding in society. Since its foundation in 1998 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the organisation has expanded to work in Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. The organisation operates on several levels, working with children, young people, teachers and youth workers through a variety of activities. To date over 40,000 people have participated in activities or training.

<http://www.openfunfootballschoools.org.mk/>

http://www.play-the-game.org/speeches/culture/football_schools.html

<http://www.uefa.com/uefa/News/Kind=524288/newsId=11058.html>

Football summer schools are an important aspect of the work of the organisation. However they are just one element of a more comprehensive programme that works to overcome societal tensions within the very particular context of post-war inter-ethnic relations in the region. The organisers explore below how their strategy aims to address the local situation.

The context in which the open fun football schools operate is not often conducive to collaboration. For example, few schools or educational institutions offer a cross-ethnic approach. Likewise, many institutions, from political parties to sports clubs, are divided along ethnic lines. Many young people in the region grow up not knowing the people that they live alongside; a situation that will foster many future problems if opportunities to engage across ethnic divisions are not provided.

Challenging the barriers and obstacles of this context is central to the work of the Open Fun Football Schools. We see our whole programme in the following way:

- as a tool for bringing teachers, leaders, trainers and children from different ethnic and social backgrounds to play together, thereby bridging present divisions and promoting social cohesion;
- as a project promoting democratic pedagogical principles, which gives children an experience of fellowship, co-operation, mutual understanding and the basic principles of sport for all;
- as capacity building for hundreds of qualified teachers from elementary schools and trainers from football clubs participating in our project.

In the 2001 season, the activities of the Open Fun Football Schools were implemented according to a regional strategy aimed at facilitating both cross-boundary collaboration (between nations) and cross-entity collaboration (between population groups – with usually antagonistic relations - within a country). For this reason, it was important that all 10 seminars for instructors, leaders and trainers involved a balanced number of participants from Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and were located evenly in all the countries involved. Similarly all our 45 Open Fun Football Schools in 2001 were organised in accordance with our “twin-city approach” where football clubs, leaders and trainers from a minimum of two municipalities from different population groups (between which relations tend to be antagonistic) jointly organise an Open Fun Football School.

In this context we find it important to emphasise that we succeeded in implementing 4 regional seminars for instructors, leaders and trainers in Macedonia with participants from all the above countries as well as 14 Open Fun Football Schools in the middle of the war/crisis. All schools were organised in accordance with our social and multi-ethnic principles, even though it was not always easy to recruit a sufficient number of Macedonian and Albanian children for the same activities. Our twin-city approach was adapted perfectly in Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro.



Football summer schools are week long programmes involving 8-14 year old children. Open involvement of children, regardless of ethnicity, social background or ability, and a focus on fun, is designed to challenge societal divisions.

Kids play on the same team regardless of gender, talent or any other difference. The key idea is that participation should be fun for everybody. The games and exercises are designed with a focus on enabling people to succeed again and again. Throughout the week the participants get to live football. However, it is not about developing and harvesting talented players, but about providing a rich and rewarding experience. Using ball games and 'playsport' the football schools aim to move people, physically and psychologically, across the numerous and invisible frontlines that still divide the country.

Through such sporting activity the aim is to bring together people from different groups of the population between whom relationships are antagonistic, and to work with them to create a space in which they can meet, discuss, and share enjoyment. In turn the aim is that this will stimulate processes of confidence building and the integration of refugees and minorities.

Issues for exploration

- How to bring groups of people or individuals together who usually do not communicate
- How do you plan to overcome the barriers between them?
- Working on several levels simultaneously
- Choosing participants
- Creating commonality where difference is over-bearing
- Using fun as a serious learning tool
- Tackling issues maybe not cognitively at first
- How to generate an atmosphere of non-competitiveness and equality

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Philosophical Studies

***The Centre for Knowledge
Science and Society***

The Centre promotes pragmatic and scholarly studies of knowledge-human interfaces; the relation between humans and things. It is a grouping of academics representing research interests across the University's faculties. Apart from an active research programme, the Centre is the home of the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Philosophy degree programmes in Philosophical Studies of Knowledge and Human Interests. Through innovative, project-based teaching and learning, students are encouraged to actively engage with and make sense of the world around them – society, its socio-historical foundations, its institutions and structures.

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Contact: Professor Milan Jaros

Hannah Perkins, an undergraduate student, used her final year project to explore notions of truth and knowledge and their relationship to time. She applied her conceptual understanding to the field of education, asking such questions as 'how can a teacher present truth?', 'how can young people be taught to think?', and 'why do we educate people at all?'. Hannah's learning processes and their outcomes illustrate the ethos of citizenship education embedded in the Centre for Knowledge Science and Society's teaching and research.

Through the process of working on her project Hannah developed both her opinions and her way of thinking. She discusses below how the course structure and learning processes helped her to do so.

When I was at school I never questioned things much. This course has changed that. Now I can look into things like texts so much more and see things that I just wouldn't have thought of before.

This course is great for helping you find a place where you want to be. It must be one of the freest courses ever – in every respect. You can do whatever you want and go into something, look into what interests you. Doing such a big piece of work, you have to do something that really interests you. This is what really helped me recognise that I would like to go into teaching. The course offers you the freedom to be something you want to be. Some people find it hard, but you can really take advantage of it. Having one-to-one discussions about my work was really inspiring and it was great that my tutor was able to pick up on what might interest me and help me to focus. It was pretty daunting at the start, but I think last year's project prepared me for this.

I am much more focussed now – I went through so many ideas and considerations. Also, I have to be one of the most organised people I know. I just had to be with having such big projects and deadlines months ahead. Another thing, that a lot of my friends tell me, is that I have a very rational mind now – that I am able to see the other side to things and think clearly. It's something that's come out of me on this course. I think those are all good qualities to have and they will help me teach.

The main issues that I wanted to address in my project were: Is it possible to have a timeless knowledge? And, therefore, how can a teacher present the truth (when it will not be considered the truth in the future)? To these concerns, I applied concepts taken from contemporary thinkers such as Michel Foucault relating to the change of knowledge over time. This led me to such questions as – why do we educate people? I asked myself, is it in order that they can be autonomous and do original things? Or is it as a means of social control?

I have a pessimistic opinion in some ways. But I think if I've got these questions in my head it may help to make me a modern teacher. I think children should know how to question and to think critically.



The philosophical studies degree programme uses project methods as a means of active participation to enable students to accept responsibility for themselves and their learning process, and to develop further skills for active citizenship.

Our degree programme in Philosophical Studies is above all about how to think – how to turn the volumes of information that we are confronted with everyday into selective order, and to establish a rational basis for personal identity. This is implemented by exploring some of the most spectacular achievements of the human mind. Such knowledge is not studied in the isolation of academic disciplines, but in terms of cultural practices. This approach, combined with a strong project component, aims to develop students' ability to separate knowledge from opinion in real life contexts, and their capacity to communicate with others.

Throughout the three years of their studies students are gradually given greater freedom and responsibility. By their final year they work on a large scale project that enables them to integrate their conceptual understandings with their beliefs and a real life situation or context. This is a key capacity needed for active citizenship. The active nature of a learning process based around individual projects develops the capacity for self-direction and self-management. While the course as a whole develops common skills such as the capacity to think clearly and rationally, to process information, and to make connections, project work inspires an originality and inventiveness that enables students to work beyond the restrictions of any tutor's understandings or opinions. Likewise the knowledge of power and institutional structures gained throughout the taught elements of the course is enhanced and personalised through its application in project work.

Project work enables tutors to focus on individuals and their specific needs and interests, and to respond to them and the context in which they are working. Such a way of working allows flexibility, not only in the topics of study but in the working styles used. Importantly, although much of the work is carried out on an individual level, students are encouraged to present their ideas to others informally in seminar groups and by way of formal presentation, thus developing their ability to communicate their understandings.

Issues for exploration

- How can you facilitate 'questioning' in formal and non-formal learning environments?
- How can you encourage young people to question their environment and the information they receive?
- Gradually building responsibility
- Flexible working practices and responding to the individuals concerned
- Giving people the confidence to accept responsibility and make decisions
- Expression and development of ideas
- How can you help people to connect what they are doing to the bigger picture?
- Balancing information or knowledge with capacities and skills
- Developing values based on knowledge and thought

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European Exchange Club

Francas + Nancy

Francas + Nancy is a youth and community education association based in a less privileged area of Nancy. It offers leisure activities and educational support. It is part of a substantial national organisation and in Nancy is supported by 7 staff and a dozen or so committed volunteers. The exchange club collaborated with Rencontres Franco-Roumaines, a small voluntary organisation that exists to promote cooperation between France and Romania, and a series of schools in Galati, Romania.

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The European Exchange Club grew from the development of exchange projects and collaboration that began in 1997. Three exchanges have taken place to date, supported by a wide variety of activities to involve the local communities in Nancy and Galati. These projects have also provided opportunities for training *animateurs. The aim of the work has been to generate opportunities for disadvantaged young people to engage with cultural activities and to be introduced to a European dimension.**

If education for European Citizenship has appeared explicitly at particular instants within the activities of the European Exchange Club, it is evident in a far more continual manner in the aims and practice of the organisation, even where it is not a specified objective.

As the project unfolded it developed in many directions not conceived of at the outset. The best way to understand this is to explore the process by which it happened.

The idea for the collaboration came from an informal discussion between two individuals. This occurred at a moment when Francas + Nancy was looking to develop their intercultural work and a School in Galati had an established French club keen for further opportunity to develop knowledge of French language and culture. Correspondence between the young people began. The idea for an exchange arose from the growing desire of the young people to meet their correspondents.

It was the constraints imposed by the possibility of gaining funding that determined the first leg of the exchange would take place in Romania. However, it was still possible to plan a reciprocal visit for the following year.

Planning for the first visit involved education about each other's countries – their history, culture and social realities. In France this turned out to be as much to overcome the misgivings of families towards sending their children to a country more or less confused with Yugoslavia and therefore the war, as it was to inform them. Following this visit, which involved time with host families, and with their exchange partners in the countryside and at the coast, the French youth prepared an exhibition and a reflective diary of their experiences. This was the point at which the European Exchange Club was created with the aim of carrying out future exchange and education projects to actively develop European Citizenship. The future direction of the organisation was based upon the experiences gained from the first exchange visit.

To meet the interests of the French group and ultimately to meet the demands of the project funders the 1999 exchange followed a clear theme and had much more structured activities. Working with experienced professionals, the young people had the opportunity to learn a wide variety of media techniques and put these into practice throughout an exciting period in which they worked in both countries and travelled together between France and Romania. A lot of effort was made to link these projects to the local communities. This was helped by family hosting for part of the duration of each project and, in Nancy by a media presentation and exhibition that followed the exchange visits. In the Romanian community the complementary programme for training workers, engaged 120 children and young people in activities run jointly by French and Romanian volunteers over the course of a month. Despite very limited funding, this project drew from local resources - what the participants and their families could themselves provide – and engaged them actively in social debates.

The exchanges themselves tackled issues of European Citizenship from a number of angles:

- Learning about European and national institutions
- Active participation of young people in their journey of discovery through use of the media
- The presentation of their discoveries to their own communities
- The involvement of their environment in the preparation and the realisation of the project
- Geographical awareness of Europe brought about by land travel

* "animateur" in French refers to a specific profession; it means people who work with children or young people to organise free-time and/or educational activities, including such things as sport or arts and crafts. In English animateur is most often translated as "youth worker".



Things are not always what they seem...

The exchange programme, despite its overall success, has had to overcome significant barriers. This has led to bringing collaboration with one organisation to an end. Underlying the problems, which we go on to explore below, is the difference of opinion over the motivation for the exchange activity and therefore its aims. Exploring this can offer some insight into important factors not to lose sight of in the effort to make projects happen.

On the part of Francas + Nancy, an important aim of the exchange was to keep participation open, and for selection not to be based upon financial means. Also, the active involvement of young people in developing an educational focus to the exchange was central to their citizenship-based approach. For one of the Romanian partners, such aims were lost in the eagerness to have an opportunity for travel to western Europe – a tendency enhanced by the socio-political situation and the difficulty Romanians have had in travelling in recent years. The aims of Francas + Nancy were thus accepted more as conditions that would make travel possible, rather than as embodying core values. This led to controversy over the selection of participants and the approach to the work, and ultimately undermined the success of the partnership.

In 2000, Francas + Nancy had to face an organisational restructuring, which ended in 2002. During this period it organised an interactive exhibition about the Euro and Europe, in partnership with several NGOs, institutions and young people of the area. This allowed the organisation to continue on the way of opening the area to Europe. In autumn 2002, the European Exchange Club restarted its activities and drew its new perspectives.

Issues for exploration

- Is your idea supported by a need or interest among the participant group? Is it more than a personal interest?
- Allowing things to develop according to the interests of participants can increase chances of success. Think about how low key activities might work to enable the introduction of bigger and more complex projects.
- Think about what might constrain the development of your project. How much of an impact will these external factors have? Are you able to hang on to what is important in your project? If not, is it worth continuing?
- How can you assess what is required and work with people from the place they are at rather than the place you would like them to be at?
- Think about how you can ensure your project is able to develop according to what is learned and the needs and interests of the participants.
- Choosing project partners – do they share your aims and ethos? Does this matter?

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Youth Empowerment Project

Sucokret – Centar za humanitarni rad

“Sunflower” – Centre For Grassroots Relief Work is a Croatian non-governmental, not-for-profit, organisation founded in 1992 as an emergency response to the psycho-social needs of communities affected by war. “Sunflower” has programmes in 6 regions of Croatia connected to the following cities – Zagreb, Varazdin, Pula, Knin, Topusko and Petrinja.

“Sunflower” is committed to the implementation of democracy building, citizen participation and empowerment, community development, voluntarism and altruism, shared responsibility, equal opportunities and the involvement for all regardless of gender, religious or national differences. It strives towards these goals through a variety of social projects of which the youth empowerment project is one.

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Four experienced youth workers attracted 60 young people, aged 16 – 23, mostly high school and university students, to participate in 9 months of non-formal education during the year 2001. The aim was to develop a team of dynamic and informed young citizens who, together, would become active youth/peer leaders, who would share their knowledge and experience with other young people. The objectives were: to learn about issues of global interdependence, to develop leadership skills and self-confidence, to design and implement social actions and projects that involve young people actively in their communities and in democratic processes.

Building a civil society

Objectives of the activity:

- to have the participants explore the necessary components for a civil society
- to have the participants think about obstacles to creating a civil society

Activity:

Participants are divided into groups of 4 to 6 people. In the first phase of the activity, each group is given thirty minutes to create their ideal community, based upon what the group decides constitutes a “civil society”. After the group has discussed what they want in their community, they must draw a blueprint of what it would look like. The group should discuss aspects such as: environment, population criteria, system of government, structure of the community, services, and other. These concepts should be reflected on their blueprint.

Following this exercise each group presents their “community” to the whole group.

The next stage allows for a more in-depth exploration and discussion of what the groups have begun to uncover. The facilitator(s) should work with the whole group in considering issues such as those below.

On the process of the activity: How was it to do this activity? What was the process of designing the community like? Was it democratic? Why or why not? Were there any conflicts or disagreements on how the society should be structured? How were they solved? Did anyone take on a leadership role?

On the nature of the communities created: Who will be responsible for maintaining order, fairness, and equality in the community? Who does the decision-making? Did the communities have anything in common?

On the relationship with the participants’ personal experiences: Is this community similar to or different from your community? If so, how? If not, why not?

On a more conceptual level: What prevents a civil society from developing? What are the components? What ingredients are necessary for civil society?



The presentation of this activity comes with a warning! In the words of the facilitator, "I'm afraid that this exercise is just a small piece of a one year process of non-formal education for voluntary work and civil society involvement and its meaning is not very deep." Below we explore how and why this exercise was used by this group, looking closely at the work context.

This activity made up one small element of training for a group that met weekly and was participating in a training curriculum of 20 workshops, focusing on communication, peer leadership, facilitator's role, creative techniques, collaborative problem-solving, human rights, civic participation, social action design. This extensive training was then the foundation upon which the young people designed and conducted research to identify issues of concern in their communities and implemented social actions and micro-projects.

This exercise, like all of the activities, was experiential and interactive, using joint experiences, reflection and discussion as a tool for learning and sharing.

Again, in the words of the facilitator: "I find it useful as an introduction to start thinking about young people's role in civil society and civil sector development. We use this exercise:

- When dealing with young people who do not see any space for their active role in society because they take youth marginalisation as fact;
- When we want to confront young people with their passive role in society;
- When we want to raise self-awareness about their potential for making changes;
- When we want to motivate and empower them to start acting and planning social actions."

The most valuable, long term result was that 15 young people, participants of this project, felt confident enough to take on active roles as peer leaders. Together with 4 experienced staff they started 8 new groups in 5 different cities, sharing their acquired knowledge and experience in new 9-month projects. This was a crucial moment that has helped "Sunflower" to spread this kind of project to three new locations in 2002, using the "snow ball effect" with young people educating themselves to become active citizens in a developing civil society.

Issues for Exploration

- Time investment – realistic time planning
- The investment in the individual to achieve a multiplying snowball effect
- How can the same activity be implemented successfully with different people? How can workers prepare themselves to achieve this?
- What opportunities can you provide for young people to take forward their newly acquired skills/knowledge and put them into practice
- Keep momentum going at the end of one phase of the project
- Do the activities you are planning form part of a structured whole that has some purpose and then develop in a particular direction, so they are not just a random collection?
- Are your activities open-ended enough to develop to meet the needs and interests of the group?

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Step Toward Tolerance	Youth Centre Izgrev (YCI)
<p>The Youth Centre Izgrev is based in Sofia. It is run by a core team of five volunteers, with the support of a further thirty youth volunteers who were involved in former activities. The centre's main activities are based in schools, where the volunteers run educational programmes on such issues as drug misuse, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and HIV/AIDS prevention.</p>	<p>Sofia, 1164, h.c Lozenetz, str.Kiril Vidinski 2 app.35, Bulgaria</p> <p>Malina Edreva - malina_edreva@abv.bg</p> <p>Elena Milanova - lenilaf@abv.bg</p> <p>Gergana Berova - berovs81@yahoo.com</p> <p>Daniela Furnadhieva - danielaf@dir.bg</p>

This drugs and HIV/AIDS education programme ran for three months in 2001/2002. Its main objective was to reduce the risk behaviour of the 15-18 year old participants with regard to drug taking and sexually transmitted diseases, and to challenge prejudice. Equally important was the ambition to train the 30 young people who participated as peer educators and to assist them in more wide-reaching programmes of work.

The initial motivational meeting and training was held at a local hotel because of the free and relaxed atmosphere it provided. It was particularly important to create a relaxed atmosphere as the project brought together a diverse group of young people, with different motivations, from five schools, and of differing ages. We began the project by finding out the knowledge and interests of our participants. This helped us to judge how to present our activities and at what level. The team adjusted their plans to suit the group. At the first meeting with all participants, we presented YCI, the idea, the purpose and the expectations we had of the "Step Toward Tolerance" project. Following some motivating games and a brief "tour de table" all 30 participants were divided into five mixed work groups. Every group chose a team co-ordinator to represent the group during the project. A talk about HIV/AIDS, touching upon factual and emotional aspects in a global context, formed the basis of a lively discussion within the groups.

Following this meeting, there were weekly gatherings with the team co-ordinators. Each session combined the presentation of information, discussion and social activity. We focused on many topics such as: how to explore a youth community; how to assess community needs; and how to write a project proposal. Each team provided different approaches – questionnaires, characteristics, printed materials, games – helping the co-ordinators to develop the work systematically. As a result they took their own initiatives and everybody prepared a draft for a future project. Our feeling was that the co-ordinators matured during this time.

The level of participant activity was also very pleasing. During the period of the meetings they had their own initiative to develop the work and to involve a larger audience, not only in their classes, but in their schools and the entire local community. Also, some external events happened during the project. The students took part very actively in the ANTI-AIDS coalition activities on 1st of December. Together with the Red Cross they distributed information in night clubs and on streets.

The project continued with the part most looked forward to – the participant training. For this the Centre relied on the help of experienced facilitators. They attracted the attention of the participants with games, music, discussions and moving talks. The training included talks about health promotion and education, in general. However, the participants were most interested in the topic of drugs, so we concentrated our efforts on this. After this the subject of STDs and risk behaviour was explored. The students heard many examples from real life. We had a separate talk specifically on HIV/AIDS followed by an interesting simulation of situations. The young people were engaged on both factual and emotional levels.

One of the goals was to attract the young people to become volunteers of Youth Centre Izgrev and we achieved this goal with great success!



An important aspect of this programme was developing a peer education programme. One of the organisers explores in more detail how and why peer education was integrated into the Step Towards Tolerance programme.

Peer education is not a new method for Bulgaria. I think it is a key way of educating young people and involving them in voluntary work, because it both increases their awareness of social problems and encourages them to be more active. However, educating young peer leaders is not a simple process. There are many factors to be considered, such as the economic situation of the country, the different mentalities of the individuals involved, their age (teenage years are the most sensitive in human life and are the best for peer educators), their backgrounds (including such things as religion and education from the family). I mean that when you stand up in front of a class of thirty students, you have to consider that they are totally different from each other, and at the same time you have to somehow develop unity among them. I think this is a challenge which was difficult for me personally.

The project we conducted with 21 difficult high-school pupils from Sofia is an example of training good peer leaders.

This experience reminded me that when teaching students to be good peer-leaders it is important to consider the following things that you may need to do or be ready for:

- have a mixed team of young people with different experiences
- be open-minded towards students
- speak freely and show your own emotional connection with the issues concerned
- help them understand that everybody is unique as a person, and every person has an opinion that is very important to the group as a whole
- use different kinds of methods that draw on their creativity and allow free expression, such as games, poetry, and drawing
- create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere
- continually motivate and encourage the group
- be ready for different questions, which often are very confusing
- accept that maybe no more than one or two will be ready to continue their actions after your efforts
- be ready to continue your work with these interested people, including them in different projects and meetings, giving them information
- understand that the way in which you act with them will shape how they will behave themselves, what their values are, and how in the future they will begin their own work with others

Finally, don't forget that young peer leaders could give to you many new ideas which are important when you write a project proposal or prepare other material.

Issues for Exploration

- What do you consider important when planning a peer education programme?
- How might you balance skill knowledge and attitude development?
- Why are you doing what you are doing?
- Can you be flexible and responsive?
- How can you support others to develop their ideas into practical action?
- What kind of working atmosphere do you want to generate and how might you go about this?
- Working with people as individuals
- Establishing the needs and interests of the group

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