

MAGAZINE OF THE
YOUTH IN ACTION! PROGRAMME
ABOUT CO-OPERATION WITH
SOUTH EAST EUROPE

WINTER 2007 **#05**

SEE YOUTH!



**YOUTH IN ACTION
IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE**



SALTO-YOUTH
SOUTH EAST EUROPE
RESOURCE CENTRE



Education and Culture



Less than a year has passed since the Youth in Action programme replaced the former YOUTH programme at the beginning of 2007. And already, we – people active in the field of international youth work and non-formal education – have been getting used to thinking in its new terminology and framework. To those of us working in or with the neighbouring partner countries of the European Union, including the countries of South East Europe, Action 2 (European Voluntary Service) and Action 3.1 (Youth of the World, Cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries) are the parts of the still new Programme that matter the most, all along with the Programme's new priorities, challenges and opportunities (such as participation, European citizenship, key learning competences, visibility etc.).

This issue of SEE YOUth! wants to introduce and celebrate some of the important and (not so) new (anymore) features of Youth in Action that are of relevance for cooperation between young people, youth leaders and youth workers from Programme countries and South East Europe. Consequently, in this magazine there are fewer accounts of past activities, but more information and reflection instead.

Youth work has a short memory, which gives all the more reason to look back to the seven years of cooperation with the Western Balkans under the former YOUTH programme. While we often regret the shortcomings of the present situation, the development of this cooperation has been quite a success story nevertheless: In 2000, a mere 17 projects including partners from South East Europe were organised. Cooperation with the countries of this region of Europe, which was just starting to recover from several years of terrible wars, was then limited to a few Programme countries having particular ties with countries in the Western Balkans and was altogether viewed as a rather special and exotic adventure. Today, the picture is a different one. The socio-political situation in the countries of SEE has become more stable, and a range of youth organisations from the different countries of the region

and all over Europe alike have taken up the challenge of opening up to each other. Well over 200 projects involving SEE are organised per year. And all of the Western Balkan countries are on the way, albeit at different stages, to possible future full participation in the EU's educational programmes and EU membership.

And there is good reason for looking forward to the future of this cooperation under Youth in Action. To prepare the grounds for a progressively stronger cooperation with South East Europe in the fields of youth and education, in the perspective of pre-accession, the European Commission, during the coming years, will be making increased financial resources available for projects submitted by actors from South East Europe within the Youth in Action programme on the centralised level (under the technical term »Western Balkans Window«). As I see it, this is a clear message to youth workers, youth organisations and other actors in the field based in SEE to take up the initiative and leadership in developing projects and submitting applications for projects to the Commission's Executive Agency in Brussels. To back up this enhanced opportunity for creating partnerships and activities, SALTO SEE will offer further support to stabilise and increase project quantity and quality alike.

The various authors of this issue take a look, from different angles, at distinct parts of the Youth in Action programme.

You can find more extensive information about Youth in Action and the cooperation with South East Europe in the articles written by Pascal Lejeune and Giorgio Guazzugli Marini & Marzia Conte, all working in the Youth Unit of the European Commission. Lidija Buric provides a complementary view on the same development from the perspective of a youth worker and trainer coming from SEE.

»Let's meet our neighbours« was the name of a larger-scale event organised by the three regional SALTO Resource Centres and in-



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EDITORIAL

tended to launch the possibility introduced by the Youth in Action programme to bring together partners from different regions of neighbouring partner countries (EuroMed, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, South East Europe) within one activity. Davide Tonon, trainer coordinator of this event, looks back to a successful activity with a special atmosphere and an exciting perspective to follow up further.

Youthpass is a new term introduced by the Youth in Action programme. What is it? To find out more about this new tool for measuring key learning competences, have a look at the article of Darko Markoviæ, as well the reflections of Lidija Buric about the challenges of implementing Youthpass in SEE.

For all those who would like to (continue to) organise projects under Youth in Action involving partners from Programme countries and South East Europe the challenges are manifold. In financial terms, there will be room for supporting many projects, provided nevertheless that they are of good quality. In order to benefit from the increased resources available, it will often be the task of one of the partners in SEE to take on the coordinating role, to submit the application, and to take over the financial coordination of the project when granted. SALTO SEE will provide support wherever possible, yet knowing how much the needs of organisations in the region, especially those newer to managing projects under the Programme, outweigh the support provided. In many cases, an essential - and possibly newly to be defined - support role might have to be taken on by project partners coming from Programme countries.

In the name of the SALTO SEE team I wish you good luck with your projects and partnerships, and I hope that the articles in this issue of SEE YOUth! will give you some help and inspiration along the way.

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YOUTH IN ACTION 2007 - 2013

PROMOTING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING AMONG EUROPEAN YOUTH





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Providing young people with the unique opportunity to develop their active European citizenship and to acquire new competences through valuable non-formal learning experiences whilst encouraging their mobility within and beyond the EU borders: this is the essence of the new EU Youth in Action Programme!

A new Programme with a long-standing tradition

The EU has shown a long-standing commitment to supporting mobility and youth exchanges. The first EU initiative for young people – Youth for Europe – was launched in 1988, and since then action in this field has developed towards bolstering co-operation and involving young people more in matters affecting them.

In 1996, another important step was taken by adding a new dimension to mobility and youth exchanges: the European Voluntary Service (EVS) was created to stimulate a spirit of solidarity among young people. These two initiatives were subsequently integrated into one single programme in 2000. Over the period 2000-2006, the YOUTH programme provided around one million young people with the possibility to participate in a variety of projects, such as youth exchanges, voluntary service, youth initiatives...

Building on the successes of the previous programmes, as well as on the encouraging results of previous evaluations and of a large-scale consultation process, Youth in Action was launched on 1 January 2007. The Programme obtained a strong consensus within the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, as exemplified by their approval of a total budget of €885 million for seven years.

Whilst ensuring continuity in the EU's action in favour of youth, Youth in Action wants to be a response to the evolutions in the youth sector at European level. For this reason, it includes a series of new actions and features, such as an enlarged age access, a wider geographical scope, a simplified management method... The aim is to grant easy access to the opportunities offered by the Programme to the largest possible number of young people, with a special focus on those with fewer opportunities.

Mobilising the potential of young Europeans: 5 clear objectives...

Youth in Action is built around five clear objectives which focus on promoting active citizenship, solidarity and mutual understanding among young people:

- Promoting young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular;
- Developing solidarity and promoting tolerance among young people, in particular in order to foster social cohesion in the European Union;
- Fostering mutual understanding between young people in different countries;
- Contributing to developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field;
- Promoting European cooperation in the youth field.

... and 5 Actions

In order to achieve these objectives, Youth in Action supports a large variety of activities aimed at mobilising the potential of young Europeans through five Actions:

Action 1. Youth for Europe

The "Youth for Europe" action contributes to encouraging a sense of active European citizenship in young people and to promoting their mutual understanding by giving young people from different countries the opportunity to meet and learn from one another through intercultural youth exchanges. Youth initiatives, which encourage creativity and entrepreneurship, can also be funded under this action. Youth democracy projects encourage young people to become more actively involved in the democratic process at regional, national and European level.

Action 2. European Voluntary Service

The European Voluntary Service offers opportunities to carry out unpaid and full-time voluntary service for up to 12 months in

another country in Europe or in the world. It is free for the volunteers and open to youth between 18 and 30. It fosters solidarity among young people and is a true “learning service”. Beyond benefiting local communities, volunteers learn new skills and languages, and discover other cultures.

Action 3. Youth in the World

The “Youth in the World” action encourages a greater openness to the world, thus giving an increased international dimension to the Programme. This action supports projects with partner countries, particularly the EU’s neighbours (Eastern Europe and Caucasus, the Mediterranean region, and South-East Europe). It aims at encouraging mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue through exchanges, training, networking and co-operation between young people and youth organisations from the EU and beyond.

Action 4. Youth Support Systems

Young people are certainly the main target group of Youth in Action, but the Programme does not forget all those active in the youth field that make it possible for young people to get involved in highly enriching activities. Action 4 of the Programme offers backing to youth bodies and NGOs active at European level. It also provides youth workers with opportunities to co-operate, exchange good practice, receive training and build networks. Other measures include projects encouraging innovation and quality, information activities, as well as partnerships with regional and local bodies.

Action 5. European Co-operation in the Youth Field

Youth in Action is not only a tool to award Community grants to youth projects. It is also a financial instrument to support political cooperation in the youth field. Action 5 of the Programme aims at involving young people actively in policy-shaping debates and a more structured dialogue with policy-makers by supporting na-

tional and trans-national youth seminars. It also funds research and other activities which result in better knowledge of the youth area. Additionally, it encourages co-operation with international organisations targeting young people, particularly the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Bringing the Programme closer to its beneficiaries

In keeping with its predecessor, the Youth in Action Programme is mainly implemented in a decentralised way through a network of National Agencies, which have been established in each Programme Country in order to ensure a closer contact with the national reality of beneficiaries.

National Agencies promote and implement the programme at National level and are an essential ring of the support chain that the European Commission has put in place in order to provide assistance to project promoters and potential beneficiaries of the Programme.

Some specific actions are managed at central level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.

Criteria, deadlines, application forms...

The conditions on how to apply for a grant under the Youth in Action Programme are detailed in the Youth in Action Programme Guide, which is available in all the EU official languages on the Youth website of the European Commission (www.ec.europa.eu/youth). This useful document guides potential beneficiaries and project promoters through all the stages of an application, explaining the eligibility criteria related to each action and sub-action, but also providing tips on how to develop a good project.

The Programme Guide has the status of a permanent call for proposals under which project proposals can be submitted according to the following calendar:



For projects selected at national level, five application deadlines a year are foreseen:

Projects starting between	Application deadline
1 May and 30 September	1 February
1 July and 30 November	1 April
1 September and 31 January	1 June
1 December and 30 April	1 September
1 February and 31 July	1 November

For projects selected at European level, three application deadlines a year are foreseen:

Projects starting between	Application deadline
1 July and 30 November	1 February
1 November and 30 March	1 June
1 January and 31 July	1 September

In addition to this, specific calls for proposals are published every year in relation to some specific sub-actions.

Applications shall be submitted via the official application forms that can be downloaded from the Commission's website or obtained from the National Agencies or the Executive Agency.

YOUTH IN ACTION IN FIGURES

Duration: 2007-2013

Budget: €885 million for seven years

Geographic reach: The EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, the EU neighbours (Eastern Europe and Caucasus, the Mediterranean region and South-East Europe) and other partner countries in the world.

Age brackets: 15-28 years old (in some cases 13-30)

Youth in Action in South-East Europe

As Neighbouring Partner Countries, the countries of South-East Europe (SEE) (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) can benefit from the opportunities offered by the Youth in Action Programme under sub-action 3.1 (Cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries of the European Union) and action 2 (European Voluntary Service).

The perspective of potential membership of the EU and the geographic proximity have given a special priority status to this region, which has benefited since 2005 from a pilot initiative aimed at reinforcing the level of participation of SEE-based organisations in the YOUTH programme. This initiative has now been fully incorporated in the Youth in Action programme and offers the opportunity to SEE-based organisations to become coordinating organisations - and therefore direct beneficiaries - of projects selected at European level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels.

This increased degree of participation in the Youth in Action programme allows organisations in South East Europe to improve their competences and capacities in the management and planning of their activities.

SEEing forward...

The success of Youth in Action does not solely depend on the structures that are managing it. Those who are benefiting from it have an equally important role to play to promote and support this Programme.

Improving the visibility of the Programme and better disseminating and exploiting the results of each project are key priorities for the European Commission. Various initiatives are being developed at European level to maximise the impact of single projects, but they cannot replace the "positive domino effect" that beneficiaries and project promoters can create by sharing their experiences with their peers. It is therefore only through the joint effort of all the parties involved in the Programme that Youth in Action can keep growing strongly and offering more and more young people the opportunity to get involved in unforgettable, non-formal learning experiences!



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**OPPORTUNITIES
FOR COOPERATION
WITH SOUTH
EAST EUROPE**



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We were asked to write an article about the opportunities for cooperation with the region of South East Europe (SEE) offered by the Youth in Action programme for this issue of SEE-YOUTH!, which intends to celebrate the launch of the new programme. We think this is a good occasion to reflect on how such cooperation has evolved in the past and where it may lead in the following years.

From 2000 to 2007

Looking at the past, it is worth remembering that one of the first EU initiatives that put emphasis on the mobility of young people and on cooperation in the fields of non-formal education and youth between (the “areas” of) the so-called Programme Countries and Partner Countries of SEE dates back to 2000. The YOUTH programme was indeed one of the first EU programmes to include an international cooperation strand offering support to projects targeting youth exchanges, voluntary service abroad and reinforcement of youth networks and structures outside the EU/EFTA borders.

What we consider nowadays as an extremely valuable dimension of the Youth in Action programme is the consequence of an important decision taken at times when the participation in the YOUTH programme of countries that were neither members of the European Economic Area, nor even candidate countries, was seen by some in the EU as a “rose with big spikes”.

In fact, the many positive arguments pushing towards the “internationalisation” of the YOUTH programme - such as the desire of closing ties between the EU and its neighbours, the aim to contribute to peace, stability and well-being beyond the EU, the will to undertake actions that would curb the idea of “fortress Europe” - were counterbalanced by several cons linked to the peculiarities of the programme itself.

Concerns and difficulties

Firstly, the international cooperation strand within the YOUTH programme was a difficult matter in terms of implementation. The YOUTH programme had been conceived as an initiative that was aiming at promoting mobility and personal development of young people, regardless of their social, physical, cultural and economic status. This goal was to be achieved through the support of thousands of micro-projects reaching civil society actors at grassroots level. The management of the programme was largely decentralised and relying essentially on a network of National Agencies established in each of the Programme Countries. In previous EU programmes and pilot initiatives targeting youth, the National Agencies had proven to be the key-actors for a thorough promotion and information of such programmes and initiatives at local, regional and national level.

Therefore, the fact that there wasn't any national body/structure in charge of implementing, monitoring, offering support to potential beneficiaries in Partner Countries was objectively considered as a difficulty that could undermine the achievement of the set objectives.

Secondly, there was the fear that the YOUTH programme could not be effective outside the Programme Countries due to the lack of partnerships among organisations in the field of youth and non-formal education. At that time, although the networks of youth organisations with a world-wide dimension were already a reality - regardless of the initiatives promoted at EU level - the partnerships among medium and small-size youth organisations from different regions were limited in number and scope. This was especially true in the case of South East Europe, as the region was coming out from the troubles and devastations of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, and the tissue of civil society was either destroyed by the wars, or in a crisis linked to the structural transformations injected by the collapse of the communist block. At the end of the 1990s relations and partnerships between EU and SEE-based organisations were mainly focussed on post-conflict re-habilitation projects.

Finally, there was an opposite concern that the international cooperation strand would only raise false expectations, due to the limited financial resources allocated to such dimension of the programme, especially if compared to the large surface of the targeted regions.

A bright result

Despite these difficulties and concerns, the decision to open up the YOUTH programme to cooperation with Partner Countries should be considered as a success story. More specifically, if we look at what has happened in the past seven years in South East Europe, we can consider that big steps ahead have been taken in order to dissipate the fears and overcome the structural difficulties that we described above.

One such important step was the establishment, in 2002, of the SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre. The Centre, established in Ljubljana, has made an extremely valuable contribution to

“boosting” the programme in South East Europe. Through its activities and “services” (information, promotion, training, networking and partner-finding support, counselling, accreditation of EVS projects), the SALTO was somehow able to counterbalance the non-existence of National Agencies in the region. The action of SALTO largely contributed – and still does - to raising awareness about the programme and to increasing the involvement of young people, youth workers and trainers from SEE both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Recently, the setting up by SALTO of a network of Contact Points throughout the region has further increased the impact of the programme at local level.

The second important step was realised in 2005. At that time, the Commission launched a pilot-initiative aimed at reinforcing the level of participation of organisations from the region in the YOUTH programme. This initiative – now fully incorporated in the Youth in Action programme – offers the opportunity to SEE-based organisations to become coordinating organisations - and therefore direct beneficiaries - of projects selected at European level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels.

This enhanced degree of participation in the Youth in Action programme allows organisations in SEE to improve their competences and capacities in the management and planning of their activities.

Overall, these two main initiatives, complemented by the action of large-scale projects targeting the Western Balkans region (notably, the YouthNet SEE project promoted by Interkulturelles Zentrum from 2002 to 2005) marked significantly the evolution of cooperation with SEE in the field of non-formal education and youth. This evolution was accompanied by an increased number of projects promoting mobility for individuals (young people, educators, “youth workers”), as well as higher networking and capacity-building opportunities for organisations (associations, NGOs, local municipalities) from SEE.

Increased financial support

Acknowledging the positive developments of the International cooperation strand of the YOUTH programme, the Commission and the Programme Countries have made efforts in view of increasing the budgetary allocations destined to support projects with Partner Countries. This has ended-up in a progressive increase of the overall budget assigned to international cooperation during the years of the YOUTH programme, and lead to the decision of the legislator of the Youth in Action programme to increase the overall budget ceiling to be allocated to support the external dimension of the programme.

Mainstreaming youth

In parallel, the European Commission’s General Directorate for Education and Culture (DG EAC) has constantly “lobbied” at inter-Directorate level in view of¹⁾ promoting youth as a cross-cutting issue to be taken into account in all EU policies and programmes towards the Western Balkans²⁾ considering the YOUTH programme and its successor, Youth in Action, as the natural tool to achieve the objectives set in policies and programmes targeting youth and non-formal education.

This internal action of DG EAC gave its first positive results with the systematic inclusion of “youth chapters” in the Stabilisation and Association Agreements signed bilaterally by the countries of SEE and the EU. These chapters formally engage the parties

of the Agreement to reinforce their commitments towards youth within their policies and actions at European and national level.

Another important result was achieved through the Commission’s Communication “The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity”¹, in which the EU reaffirms its commitment towards reinforcing the cooperation with the Western Balkan countries in the area of youth and affirms that the Commission will create new opportunities in that field.

The Youth Western Balkans Window

The Communication constitutes the legal basis for the establishment of a “Youth Western Balkans Window”, funded through the Instrument of Pre-Accession, and committing 4.5 million Euros for the period 2007-2009 in order to support Youth in Action projects submitted directly by project-promoters established in the region.

The window will contribute to prepare the ground for a further level of participation of the countries of the region in the Youth in Action programme in the long term. As a matter of fact - in line with the Thessaloniki Declaration² recognising EU membership perspective to the Western Balkan countries - the Youth in Action programme opens up the possibility that the Western Balkan countries participate in the programme on an equal footing with the EU Member States in the future. This will be achieved by a differentiated time-schedule according to each country’s preparedness and capacity to put in place the necessary administrative structures for the implementation of the programme at national level.

In this context, the Youth Western Balkans Window represents undoubtedly the corollary of a set of actions and initiatives aimed at increasing the degree of participation of SEE countries in the EU programmes in the field of youth. Projects supported through the proposed window will contribute to increasing opportunities for beneficiaries in the region until the full participation of the cited countries in the programme is achieved.

A fruitful cooperation

To conclude, the history of EU cooperation between Programme Countries and Partner Countries in South East Europe in the area of youth is made of progressive steps that have contributed – little by little – to reinforce the level of cooperation and increase the ties between the two “areas”. Such progressive steps have touched the three main elements that define the status of the cooperation within the programme:

- modalities of participation for beneficiaries and project-promoters;
- establishment of support structures;
- allocation of financial resources.

Thanks to such evolutions, over the past seven years there has been a considerable increase in the number of opportunities for young people from the two areas to open-up their minds, confront themselves with other realities, other cultures, exchange views with their peers..., in other words to positively “contaminate” and be “contaminated”.

In our view, these are intermediate steps of an irreversible process that will bring the actors of South East Europe to play an even greater role in the Youth in Action programme in the future.

To that end, the analogies with the history of the European construction teach us many lessons and invite us to be confident that the cooperation with South East Europe will bring many other positive surprises in the long term.

1 COM (2006) 27 final, of 27.01.2006

2 EU - Western Balkans Summit; Thessaloniki Declaration, June 2003



**YOUTH
IN ACTION
AND SEE**



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All important learning happens during coffee breaks. One coffee break in the autumn of 2000 was crucial for me and for my engagement in the YOUTH/Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission.

While drinking coffee and enjoying Austrian cookies, during that training course on sustainable funding for international organisation Service Civil International, I heard two colleagues (from Germany and Poland) discuss their experiences with the European Voluntary Service. Since then a lot of things have happened for me personally and also for the youth in South East Europe, as 2000 was the first year of the YOUTH Programme (2000 – 2006) of the European Commission.

A lot of projects involving partners from South East Europe have been organised. A lot of young people from South East Europe have had chances to work together in different projects with their peers from the countries of the EU – old and new, the EFTA countries, and Turkey as a candidate country. For some, the YOUTH Programme offered opportunities to travel abroad for the first time. A lot of youth workers and youth leaders have developed their skills and gained knowledge and experiences through opportunities provided by the Programme.

Many organisations, both small grass-root organisations as well as larger national ones, took the challenge and through participating and developing projects together with partners from different countries. They have experienced working in international teams, learnt about intercultural learning, project cycle management according to EC rules and new methods and tools for youth work.

According to the statistics published on the European Commission web site http://ec.europa.eu/youth/program/examples_en.html, participation of young people and organisations from the region has rapidly increased since the first year of the YOUTH Programme (2000) when organisations from SEE took part in only 17 projects. In 2004 about 130 projects with SEE involvement were granted. In 2005, the YOUTH Programme offered the possibility for organisations based in SEE countries to submit applica-

tions for pilot projects for the 1st of November 2005 application deadline, and thus to become the leading partner in a project.

As a result of those positive experiences and also because of the fact that countries from the SEE region, especially Croatia and Macedonia, are in the process of joining the EU, this opportunity has become an integrated part of the new Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013).

As a trainer in the fields of youth and non-formal learning, I see a lot of opportunities and encouraging aspects for the development of young people as responsible and active citizens of Europe through the Youth in Action Programme.

According to the Programme Guide, which we youth workers often refer to as “the bible” of the programme, the programme aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans, and to involve them in shaping the Union’s future by encouraging their participation in democratic life. The programme promotes non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue among European youth, as well as the inclusion of all young people, particularly those from less-privileged backgrounds.

The Youth in Action Programme encourages young people’s mobility within and beyond the EU borders, thus giving them the opportunity to expand their horizons and gain valuable life and work experiences.

From the point of view of a young person from one of the SEE countries it can be both challenging and confusing at the same time to find his, or her, own place of interest in the programme. In the objectives and priorities of the Programme there are a lot of words like EU, European, future of EU etc. What do they mean for the average young person (a high school graduate) from medium-sized town in SEE? Is that person European? Are the citizens of Europe Europeans, or is that privilege reserved only for the citizens of the EU countries? What makes one a European? If I am responsible, critical and engaged in democratic life of my local

community, am I an active European citizen?

These few questions raised about only one term from the foundations of the Programme invoke interesting discussions.

There is a strong political will in SEE countries to join the EU. Croatia and Macedonia are already candidate countries and are going through a lot of changes in order to fulfil all requirements for joining the EU. It is important that young people question what that means for them. How will joining the EU influence their lives (privately and professionally)? What benefits and responsibilities will that bring for all of us? The programme actually makes it possible to explore these issues. Through the programme activities youngsters can share their concerns and opinions with peers from countries that recently joined to EU, as well as with peers from the “old” EU countries.

Through that dialogue of sharing and exploring these issues, new generations of citizens, that will shape and develop the policies of our countries in the near future, will be encouraged to express their own doubts and thoughts. They will realize that differences exist (cultural, religious, ethnical, economical, physical and mental). By engaging in joint activities, we learn from each other and thus contribute to the fight against prejudices, racism and xenophobia.

An important priority of the Youth in Action Programme is the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. This should be a motive for the multipliers of the programme and for associations and youth groups. The programme should be accessible for all young people regardless of their educational, socio-economical, cultural or geographical backgrounds, or of their disabilities. This principle has to be applied in practice, and not just as a nice statement on paper. Less privileged groups can benefit greatly from the Programme, and although their inclusion can require a bit more preparation for the organisers, the effect can be enormous. The average young person has other opportunities for mobility and to meet peers and explore Europe.

The Programme funds a large variety of activities through five actions (similar to the previous YOUTH programme). For SEE countries, there are opportunities to take part in some of these actions. “Youth Exchanges” encourage young people to participate in democratic life through exchanges; “European Voluntary Service” helps young people to develop their sense of solidarity by working on a voluntary project abroad and “Training and Networking” promotes partnerships and various measures to support youth workers and youth organisations and improves the quality of their activities.

More information about the programme actions can be found in the Programme Guide.

One more new component of the Youth in Action Programme that will influence a lot of processes in this region is the work on the recognition of the learning outcomes of projects funded under this programme and the implementation of the Youthpass.

Non-formal education as a concept is quite new in South East Europe. It was introduced in the early 1990s with the establishment of the first non-governmental organisations as a way of education that they were providing to the society. The majority of these organisations were focused on human rights and peace-building

as consequences of the conflicts and the wars at that time. Non-formal education as a form for gaining knowledge, experience and developing skills for young people is a completely non-articulated opportunity which is not recognised in this region. Serbian organisations started to work on this issue more systematically a few years ago through projects implemented by the association “Hajde da...” In all the other countries some associations try to get recognition of their efforts and of the learning outcomes of their projects.

Youthpass as a tool for the assessment of the participants’ learning outcomes is for now in force only for EVS projects for SEE. I believe it is only technical question when decision will be made and Youthpass will be implemented fully in all projects involving participants from SEE countries (following the dynamics of implementation in the Programme Countries).



The challenge for youth workers and organisers of youth projects will be in developing capacities to support participants to assess their own learning. Firstly, young people in this region, due to the formal education system, that is slightly changing but is still very much based on ex-cathedra approach and not so much on the students’ needs, are not used to planning their own learning (that is, to be asked what they want to learn, how and how to assess their learning). Another fact is that the majority of youth workers do not have the appropriate professional knowledge and experience to support participants in this process.

With Youthpass, the European Commission ensures that the learning experiences gained through the YiA Programme are recognised as an educational experience. As a side effect this will influence the process of recognition and validation of non-formal learning in the countries of South East Europe.

With new developments of youth work and youth organisations in South East Europe, and with new opportunities offered by the Youth in Action Programme, there is great potential for young people to develop skills and gain valuable life and work experience. Even more now than before, when there are two different ways of applying for funds; at centralised level – (to the Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency) and at decentralised level – (to the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme). Youth workers and project managers should use all available resources and partnerships to develop projects of high quality and open the doors for our young citizens to participate and taste the feeling of intercultural experience, which will make them more prepared for the future.



LET'S MEET OUR NEIGHBOURS AND THE WORLD

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Can a big seminar open the path to new quality projects created by young people from regions that never worked all together before? The answer is still in the air, but the bet is seriously on the ground and comes directly from the European Commission and the regional SALTOs (SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus, SALTO South East Europe and SALTO EuroMed) in cooperation with the French National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme.

The new Programme allows for setting up youth projects (Youth Exchanges, EVS and Training and Networking projects) with partners coming from Programme Countries and from all the Neighbouring Partner Countries. This opens new perspectives to youth cooperation with the possibility to share in one project different experiences, diverse approaches and to build together a sense of neighbourhood not even imaginable before.

Definitely it will be also a huge intercultural challenge, and a big laboratory for preparing "the Europe and its neighbourhood of tomorrow", where young people from all the regions will hopefully have the chance to work together and share with all their neighbours in mutually enriching processes, without walls separating them!

The first idea...

The results of the previous Youth Programme and the experiences that many organisations gained in cooperation with partners from other countries than those of the EU and the EEA, clearly showed a big need to support, and develop further cooperation that goes beyond the borders of European Union. Thus, at the

New perspectives for European youth cooperation with the neighbouring regions and the rest of the world

end of 2006, the idea arose of having a big kick-off seminar that would introduce these new possibilities for cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries and with other Partner Countries of the world within the Youth in Action Programme.

A seminar, where representatives from all the regions: EuroMed, South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, as well as from Programme Countries, could meet, establish contacts and celebrate the importance of wide international youth cooperation, was our dream and also a very concrete aim for the beginning of 2007. The European Commission, the SALTO Regional Resource Centres and the French National Agency had a clear vision of organising an event, where political input goes together with actual work on future youth projects under the Youth in Action Programme (Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service projects and Training and Networking projects).

The facilitation team

To organise such a big event it was necessary to create a facilitation team, a team that would also represent the new cooperation between the Programme Countries and the Neighbouring Partner Countries.

The preparation meeting was held during the first days of April 2007 at INJEP. Hiba Tibi, SALTO EuroMed trainer from Ramallah in Palestine, Areg Tadevosyan, SALTO EECA trainer from Yerevan in Armenia, Lidija Buric, SALTO SEE trainer from Zagreb in Croatia and Davide Tonon, coordinator and trainer from Venice-Barcelona, developed a programme combining contents, activi-

ties and methodologies with the creation of a nice atmosphere, a balance useful to reach the aims of the seminar.

The aims of the seminar

To introduce:

- the European Neighbourhood Policy
- Youth in Action and the possibilities of cooperation with Neighbouring Partner Countries (and the world)
- the support structures and some working tools

To explore:

- the richness of the European neighbours

To provide:

- a space for partner matching and project development



After the preparation meeting, the logistic team, set up in cooperation by the French NA and SALTO EuroMed, worked in closely with the facilitation team. Stéphanie Henry and Alice Dartout, supported by their structures and coordinated by Jacques Huon, provided everything possible and sometimes also the impossible in order to make the seminar enjoyable by participants.

...and what happened?

The venue

Neighbours met from the 30th of May till the 3rd of June 2007 at INJEP (Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Éducation Populaire), in Marly le Roi in Paris. The auditoriums, the big and small rooms around the hall, the cafeteria and the magnificent park, were the scenario for this huge meeting.

Who were the neighbours?

In Marly le Roi we had participants - representing NGOs and youth services - from Programme Countries and from Neighbouring Partner Countries. A total of 37 countries were represented: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, France, FYROM, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lithuania, Moldova, Morocco, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine. Resource persons were from the European Commission, the Educational, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency, the Regional SALTOs (EuroMed, SEE and EECA), the European Youth Forum, the Partnership between the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, the French National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme, other National Agencies and EuroMed Youth Units. Including the facilitation team and the logistic team a total 127 neighbours participated.

The faces of the Neighbourhood The atmosphere

From the first moment you could feel a special and exciting atmosphere. People were mixing at tables during dinner, in the big hall, around the cafeteria tables, in corners here and there. It was great to see people pushed by curiosity to approach each other: a Moroccan with a Slovenian, a Portuguese with a Georgian, Albanians with Russians, and also participants from Azerbaijan talking with Armenians ... as if it was a small scale world of neighbours. A human bingo and a game of little lies helped people break the ice.

What happened was that...

...the first morning the 127 neighbours were welcomed by the French organisers and by Pascal Lejeune, of the European Commission.

After a short introduction to the brand new Youth in Action Programme, it was the moment to go deeper into European policies towards its neighbouring countries and to, in particular, link Actions 2 and 3 of the Programme to the general mark of the neighbouring policies. The regional SALTO Resource Centres have a special role in supporting all this cooperation process. We learned about their activities and resources through a quiz game starting from a puzzle of the regions!

The richness of the types of organisations present and the variety of areas of interest was clear during the organisations' market, which provided a first chance to learn about the work of the organisations and to share project ideas. Of course a magical "neighbours' night", were flavours, music, legends and dances,



was integrated into the programme to give an extraordinary dimension to the seminar.

The second day was opened by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Fiona Deuss-Frandi introduced the dimension of the cooperation with other Partner Countries of the World. Other important support structures were presented: the European Youth Forum by Gisele Everard; and the Partnership between the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, by Marta Medlinska. After that it was time for the parallel workshops, organised by the French National Agency, on the different Actions for neighbouring cooperation: Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service and Training and Networking ... a lot of new information and inspiration!

One key point of the seminar was the space foreseen for contribution from the participants: From the self-management of the intercultural party, to the little workshops on good practices and youth work realities. During this session more than ten examples were presented and discussed in small groups.

The SALTO Resource Centres had the chance to explain the different regional procedures during the last session of the day. After that the free night was starting ... a very important time to get to know better the new friends, to develop ideas and to enjoy good company, either in Paris or in Marly.

The last day was dedicated to partner matching, with the possibility of consulting the resource persons of the different support structures. A dating system was used to keep the 'real time agenda' updated, while running from one discussion group to another; from a project on environmental issues to another one on inter-religious dialogue.

The results of the partner matching were presented by the participants on a big map, with strange dots of different colours, symbolising projects in their earliest stages, those more developed and those almost ready.

After the evaluation it was time for closure. Those three days - it seemed much longer because of the packed agenda - were closed with words of hope and vision by Jean Chiris of the French National Agency, Giorgio Guazzugli-Marini of the European Commission and Bernard Abrignani of the SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre.

The last night of such a special event needed to be celebrated in a French way. The musical buffet offered a balanced mix of relaxing after the intensive work, enjoying the INJEP park, having a big barbecue and dancing all together under the moon. "C'est cool, ah?" was the name of our world music band, which led us until late night in a spiral of 'world dances', leaving for the next day all thoughts about the people we met and the ideas to be transformed into projects in the near future.



Why was this seminar so special?

Because of the features of the new Youth in Action Programme, this was the first time that people from the Programme Countries and from all the different neighbouring regions, were present and worked together. In this sense the seminar was a good start for future quality cooperation. So we can say, like in the film "Casablanca"; that this is just ... the beginning of a beautiful friendship!

What the participants brought back home

The participants, in their evaluation questionnaires, stressed the importance of this kind of seminars to allow people to meet, to share experiences and good practices, to establish contacts and find new partners for future projects.

In this specific seminar, they got a first hand overview on the Youth in Action Programme and a vision of the European Neighbourhood Policy. They discovered possibilities of cooperation with Neighbouring Partner Countries (and the world). They got in touch with Regional SALTOs, the Executive Agency and other support structures. They also found hidden treasures of the European neighbours, discovered some new working tools and made new friends!

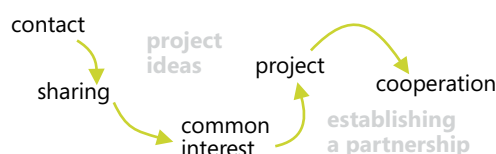
What happens after the seminar?

After the partner matching session we have concrete results that were visualized on the big map of Europe. In total we have 34 projects being developed:

- 14 projects are still at the level of being "ideas on the air";
- 10 projects are on the way;
- 10 projects are in an advanced phase of discussion among the partners.

The projects should be hosted in: Algeria (1), France (4), Spain (3), Tunisia (1), Albania (1), Cyprus (1) Poland (2), FYROM (1), Ukraine (1), Moldova (4), Turkey (2), Bulgaria (2), Azerbaijan (2), Armenia (2), Lithuania (1), Georgia (3) and the Russian Federation (1).

Gender equality, social theatre, intercultural dialogue, peace education, human rights, inter-religious issues, environmental awareness, art and creativity, active citizenship, immigration, tales, dances, cinema, transferability of results, youth work policies, intercultural communication, are some of the wide range of topics tackled by the projects discussed here.



The seminar has opened the doors to cooperation and projects among partners that for the first time have the chance to work together. This is a big step forward.

But to establish a sustainable and long lasting cooperation and to promote quality projects, a step by step approach is needed. It is important to "make it grow slowly" without the impatience to realise a project and losing the process of partnership building. For this reason it is fundamental to work on common interests, visions and strategies of the new partnership. And to deepen our intercultural competences, which are essential when working in this wide international field. A lot of patience is also a good ingredient.

A Spanish writer, Manuel Vazquez Montalbán, used to say that «we are made of memory and desire». Memory is our history, our identity. Desires are our dreams ... with open eyes ... Let's go for them!

A young woman in a blue checkered shirt is handing a certificate to a young man in a black t-shirt and orange vest. They are sitting at a desk in a classroom. The woman is on the left, and the man is on the right. The certificate is white with some text on it. The background shows other desks and chairs in the classroom.

YOUTHPASS IN ACTION

A new tool for recognition and validation
of learning in the Youth in Action



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When the new Youth in Action programme guide was published in December 2006, one of the biggest surprises for youth workers was how the Actions in the new programme had been changed and restructured, but certainly one of the biggest mysteries was the newly coined term – Youthpass.

In this article I will try to clarify this unique European mechanism for the recognition of non-formal learning and to present the concept of the key competences for lifelong learning, and hopefully stimulate reflection on the relevance of such a tool for young people in (South East) Europe. Please note that I am assuming that my readers are already acquainted with the concept of non-formal learning¹ and have a general knowledge about the Youth in Action Programme.

For many youth workers and youth leaders, running a youth activity is mainly about learning, about providing young people with possibilities to gain new competences (knowledge, skills, and attitudes). For some others, youth work is mainly about social activism, where the learning could be seen only as a means of empowerment and social change. Finally, some youth workers see youth work primarily as leisure time and fun activities. Obviously, in reality, in a successful youth activity, these three elements are interlinked and supporting each other, providing young people with possibilities to learn some new skills, to contribute to a better world and to do it in a nice and youth friendly way. Still, it is very important to say that the way you approach your own youth work could significantly influence the way you would perceive calls for better recognition of non-formal learning from the following statement:

In April 2006 the Council of the European Union adopted Resolution on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field. In this resolution the Council states that “the work and achievements of young people and those active in youth work and youth organisations deserve greater recognition in order to enhance their value and visibility, and should be given due consideration by employers, formal education and civil society in general”². The Council also invites Member States and the European Commission to get involved in the development of youth-specific recognition tools for “for identifying and recognising the skills and competences acquired by young people through non-formal and informal learning”.³

If your answer to the question above is positive, then the story about Youthpass will definitely be very interesting for you, because Youthpass is all about learning and recognition of learning. But you might be wondering where it does come from? What is the larger picture?

Do you feel there is a need for better recognition of learning in youth activities and in the youth field in general?

The larger picture

For the ones not much acquainted with recent developments in the European educational policy and youth policy arenas, the above statement is just a part of the wave started in Lisbon in 2000 when the European Union set the ambitious strategic goal to become “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based society” by 2010⁴. This new strong focus on education and learning in Europe was further re-fined and elaborated in the lifelong learning strategy which brought the concept of “lifelong learning” to the heart of today’s thinking about learning and education in Europe. This strategy has offered a broader definition of learning, recognising the fact that learning takes place not just across the whole life span, but also “life-wide” in a whole variety of social contexts and settings. The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning⁵ calls for the recognition of all forms of learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. This is indeed a historical statement providing the opportunity and the legitimacy for the youth field to show its potentials as one of the biggest and most important arenas for personal and social learning.

Following the same discourse, the European Union and the Council of Europe have set different “milestones”⁶, explored various “pathways”⁷ and created some pioneering tools⁸ to better support the recognition of the learning which happens in the youth sector.

Learning in the youth field

For us working in the youth field, it is not surprising at all how much precious learning happens in youth activities. Some of this is a result of the carefully planned learning processes (non-formal learning), and some just happens because of unpredictable factors of positive group dynamics or life in general (informal learning). Nevertheless, it is clear that, in a youth friendly way, young people can learn how to communicate effectively; how to understand cultural differences and how they affect communication; how to work in a team; how to lead a project; how to deal with conflict situations in a non-violent manner; how to be more self confident when standing for their rights; etc. It seems that we have known all this for a long time, but there was always this difficulty of explaining what is happening in the youth field to those not involved, no matter whether they are from other sectors or simply our own parents. In a way, so often we have lacked a common language to convey the message in a way that others would understand.

Key competences for lifelong learning

In March 2000 the heads of states and governments of the European Union stressed that „every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in this new information society“ and that „a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills“. As Von Hebel (2007) writes, the task was to focus on identifying the key competences every citizen should develop throughout life and how, together with traditional skills, they can be better integrated in the curricula, learned, and maintained throughout our lives. Key competences should be genuinely available for everyone, including those with special needs, school drop-outs and adult learners. Validation of skills and key competences should be promoted to support further learning and employability⁹.

After a long process of consultations, discussions and research, the proposal for the framework of the eight “key competences” was agreed upon by the European Council, and adopted by the European Parliament in December 2006¹⁰. It is important to stress that there is no hierarchy between the competences and each competence is defined as combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Key competences for lifelong learning

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. Communication in foreign languages;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Social and civic competences;
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

If you take a brief look at the list of competences identified by the educational experts and adopted by the politicians, you will immediately recognise a number of skills, important knowledge and attitudes young people can gain through participation in Youth Exchanges, EVS or Training and Networking.

And that is exactly the largest potential of this framework – to serve as a common translation system for learning outcomes between education, employment and youth sectors. And that is the main reason why Youthpass as an instrument for recognition and validation of learning is using the key competences as a basic “operational system”.



So, what is Youthpass?

Now that we have seen the larger picture and presented the concept of “key competences”, it should not be very difficult to present what Youthpass is.

In practice it is a certificate that each young person participating in a Youth in Action project is entitled to. But Youthpass is more than a certificate of participation. Apart from general information about the type of project (Youth Exchange, EVS or Training and Networking), there is also an important individualised part of it. In the case of Youth Exchanges this is just a small personalised paragraph explaining what kind of actions and tasks were undertaken by the individual. However in cases of EVS or Training and Networking projects, the second part of the certificate contains a description of the learning outcomes using the language of the key competences for lifelong learning. The certificates are created on-line and detailed instructions on how to create them are available at <http://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>.

From September 2007, there will be a possibility to download the Youthpass guide, a special publication with all the background texts and practical tips on how to help young people with their own self assessment of learning in the youth activities and how to describe what they have done/learned using the language of key competences. The guide will also contain all necessary technical information related to use the software at the Youthpass website.

So far, the instrument itself has been created for Youth Exchanges, EVS, Trainings and Networking and it is under development for other types of projects. It was formally approved by the Programme Committee on July 6th and the main process was led by the SALTO-Youth Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.

There is a strong belief that Youthpass will not only facilitate a better recognition of young people’s learning in youth activities, but that it will also contribute to a better quality and a clearer “non-formal learning dimension” in Youth in Action projects. During the test phase the initial feedback was very positive, both from users, participants and stakeholders (e.g. potential employers). In the future there is a great possibility that Youthpass will somehow be integrated and linked with Europass¹¹, thus providing even more transparency of the competences acquired in the youth field.

However, the challenge is how to equip youth workers/ leaders/ mentors/trainers well enough to use it properly and to integrate the “learning to learn” competence in their educational programmes/ projects. Some tips you will definitely find in the Youthpass guide. You might apply for a Youthpass training course, or simply start thinking with your colleagues about how to create a “culture of reflection and self-assessment” in your next Youth in Action activity. Good luck!

**DEVELOPING
YOUTH IN
ACTIONS
PROJECTS IN
SEE**



How can my organisation get involved in the Youth in Action programme? And how can I make sure that we apply for such funds for projects from the Programme that will give meaningful support to our programme and mission? In his article, Domagoj Kovačić reflects on the process of identifying possibilities and priorities of the South East European Network (SEEYN) for using YIA.



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Sometimes it seems to me that my life is too much connected to the Youth in Action Programme and defined by its deadlines for project proposals. I cannot imagine taking holidays around 1st of February or 1st of September. This is when the South East European Youth Network (SEEYN) submits project applications to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission. I am a volunteer in the SEEYN steering board and I work as a fundraiser.

I am involved in project planning and writing applications for our proposed projects. This autumn, I have spent quite some time working on an application for a training course, and for a group EVS project on youth leadership and inclusion of young people. Also, I am planning a seminar on exchanges of good practices in volunteering for peace. I am organising some individual EVS projects and preparing applications for participation in SALTO activities. In this article I will reflect on the context I work within and the possibilities that my organisation, the South East European Youth Network (SEEYN), has to develop projects within the new Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission.

Some months ago we had the pleasure to organise our first activity that was supported by the EACEA, a partnership building activity entitled "SEE Youth in Action". We hosted 40 great young persons from all over Europe, and we hope that most of them will add all those deadlines to their personal and organisational calendars. One group has already submitted a proposal for their first youth exchange project. In one month, we are hosting another project approved on the centralised level. This is a training course on EVS projects involving SEE countries. In November we will host another activity in Sarajevo, a huge conference on volunteering. This is also supported by the Youth in Action Programme through a special agreement between the EC and the United Nations Volunteers Programme, RIVERSEE.

In between the deadlines, there is a lot of work in implementing the approved projects. SEEYN also finds candidates to participate in meetings, youth exchange projects, and EVS projects all over Europe.

So, there are a lot of possibilities and a lot of work is being carried out. There are a lot of initiatives coming from the SEE region or involving the SEE countries. I know that many of my co-workers and colleagues have a similar time schedule, also defined by the Youth in Action Programme. How are all these initiatives and projects created? Where are all these ideas coming from? Who is involved and why are we doing all this work? I will try to answer these questions from the perspective of the South East European Youth Network.

SEEYN is a network of 15 organisations from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. It was established at the end of 1999 and it is legally registered as a foundation in Sarajevo. Our vision is peace and stability in the SEE region and our focus is set on volunteering. SEEYN provides training and counselling services to voluntary organisations and initiatives. It supports international work camps for volunteers and long term exchange projects for volunteers. It also conducts researches and issue related publications. Some of our member organisations have rich experiences with the YOUTH Programme, but on the network level, SEEYN has just started to warm up to the Youth in Action Programme.

This short description of SEEYN is not only here to promote (a bit) our organisation, but to point out one specific reality for the countries of SEE. We exist since 1999 but are we starting to use the YOUTH/Youth in Action Programme just now. I would say that organisations in SEE have developed and worked in a unique environment within Europe. This environment has offered great support from the different governments and intergovernmental

organisations to NGOs in the SEE region. SEEYN has received great support from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that has allowed us to develop and to run our own programmes. We did not even have the need (or the time) to use other possibilities. Nowadays, much of this support is being discontinued, as the region is much more stable than at beginning of 2000. And when our countries are starting processes towards EU membership, European funding is becoming more accessible and more important. I am sure that many organisations in SEE have gone the same way.

So, how has SEEYN planned to benefit from the Youth in Action Programme (YiA)? What was the process like to find out what would be appropriate activities for my organisation within Youth in Action Programme?



When you work as fundraiser and you are searching for new possibilities, you have to start by checking if your organisation's goals and activities fit with the objectives and the priorities of the Programme. When I compare the objectives and priorities of SEEYN with those of YiA, they turn out to be a great match. So what about European citizenship? Yes, as South East Europe is a part of Europe and as the SEE countries are taking smaller or bigger steps towards the EU, young people from the SEE region should develop their European identity as hopefully sooner than later, they will become a part of the EU family. What about the participation of young people? Yes, SEEYN is promoting voluntary work and to volunteer is to be an active citizen. What about cultural diversity? Of course, SEE is rich in its cultural diversity. Unfortunately, it has led us to terrible conflicts, but now we are learning to celebrate this diversity again. What about the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities? Unfortunately, many of our beneficiaries – young people in SEE – have fewer opportunities than many other young people in Europe. Almost all of them need a visa to travel outside SEE.

I can find even more features of SEEYN that match with the Youth in Action Programme. What about non-formal learning and the recognition of non-formal learning? Voluntary work results in non-formal learning and this has to be recognised, both in SEE and on the European level. We also organise different activities that involve non-formal learning. What about visibility? Youth work in SEE, and those that support it, should be more visible. By increased visibility, maybe we can motivate our governments to provide more support? What about the fight against discrimination and equality between men and women? I will not go into any details, but there is still a lot to achieve in these matters.

What about specific priorities for cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the EU to contribute to peace and stability? This is the vision of my organisation! Strengthening civil society; fighting racism and xenophobia; increasing inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue; post-conflict resolution and reconstruction – all these thematic priorities are also our priorities and they still are very valid.

Now, when I have concluded that the goals, objectives and priorities of my organisation and those of the Youth in Action Programme are compatible, and that the Programme can support us to continue to work according to our vision, I have to check if the Programme can support our strategies, methods and tools. The answer is yes. Youth exchanges have many similarities to our voluntary work camps. We organise long term exchanges of volun-

teers, both within the region and with other European countries. This fits with the EVS strand of the Programme. We are network that has a training centre as one of its most important components. This means that the training and networking strand of the Programme can also be used by SEEYN.

Great! My organisation is compatible with the Youth in Action Programme both concerning objectives and on the activity level. Now I have to decide which of our ideas we should realise in the form of a project. This may be the most difficult part. What can we actually do and what do we want to do? For me as a fundraiser, the easiest solution would be to sit down, think a bit, and then write a project description. This is of course the fastest approach. But it is the wrong approach. One of the main features of the Youth in Action Programme is participation. Participation is also very important for my organisation. So, what I need to do is to check with all the stakeholders within my organisation, and find out what we actually want to do. I need to discuss ideas with the steering board, member organisations, our trainers and experts. Of course, I also need to consult our long term strategic plans. This way, I do not need to invent anything. I just need to use knowledge and ideas that already exist, that are already drafted and that are supposed to lead towards the achievement of one or a few of our goals.

What else have I found out? First of all, some of our activities can not be supported through the Youth in Action Programme. We have a programme that aims to establish local voluntary clubs in each of the member countries. This is something that is in line with the Youth Initiative strand of YiA. However, this action is

still not open to the SEE countries, so I can forget about that. The second step is to exclude activities of SEEYN that already are being supported and that do not need additional support. Also I need to exclude all activities that will suffer significant changes if I want to adopt them to the YiA criteria. I cannot apply for a network assembly meeting as seminar, because it is simply not a seminar.

We organise international work camps for volunteers. They are similar in some respects to youth exchanges of YiA, but they are not the same. I cannot adopt them without changing the overall approach. And we cannot and do not want to change or adapt the concept just because of available funding. It would be quite hard to justify youth exchange projects implemented at network level, not only to the EACEA, but also to the network itself. I can recommend youth exchanges to our member organisations, but the scale of one youth exchange project is a bit too limited for the whole network. However, we could organise training courses for group leaders in youth exchange projects.

The main focus of my organisation is on voluntary work on the local, national and international levels. I can not apply for a direct support from YiA for local or national voluntary projects. Our international voluntary exchanges match perfectly with EVS on several levels. First of all, we want to create a European secretariat of the network, with staff and volunteers coming from different countries and backgrounds. If we want to promote something, we also have to live it and practice it. One of our first possible activities will be to host one or more EVS volunteers in our secretariat in Sarajevo.

We can also benefit from EVS by organising group exchanges. We can coordinate big groups of EVS volunteers coming to the region, and going from the SEE region to EU countries. This will lead to the personal development of the young people involved. It will decrease prejudices and the use of stereotypes, but increase the capacities of the participating organisations. At the same time, a group EVS can allow us to exchange several EVS volunteers within the SEE region. This is something we have been doing from the beginning, and for us, projects within the region have a significant impact on conflict resolution and inter-ethnic dialogue. These exchanges can sometimes be even more challenging than exchanges with the EU countries. Besides contributing to the personal development of the volunteers, they are small but concrete steps towards peace and stability in the region. We can relate every single EVS project to our other activities and our goals. EVS volunteers can support voluntary work camps or they can work on peace and stability issues.

I have now identified the main possibility and the main interest of my organisation within the Youth in Action Programme. This is European Voluntary Service.

If we want to exchange a significant number of volunteers, and if we want to involve not only our members but also other organisations from the SEE and EU countries, and if we want to motivate and recruit the adequate number of volunteers, we also need to provide some support to the organisations and the young people that we want to work with. This leads us to another possibility of the Youth in Action Programme; Training and Networking. We can, and probably we should, organise different training sessions, seminars, study visits and job shadowing activities in order to make our future EVS projects as successful as possible. Training is something we are quite experienced with, so again, this fits our strategy.

The possible topics of training and networking are still to be defined according to the needs of our partners and the young people we want to involve in our future EVS projects. We could organise training on the project management or training for EVS mentors.

We could organise a training seminar on Youthpass, which is something new for all of us. We could organise a training seminar on how to promote EVS and motivate young people to become EVS volunteers, or we could have a seminar on the exchange of good practices. There are many possibilities.



I have identified opportunities within the Youth in Action Programme that are especially interesting for my organisation. Now I need another round of consultation with the YiA priorities and with my colleagues to develop something more operational and practical. I have to start to think about practical arrangements and conditions like dates, locations and finances. This could be a topic for a more technical article on project development.

There is one more thing to think about. SEEYN is a regional organisation within SEE, and the Programme requires a balance between the number of countries from the EU and from outside the EU. We need partners from the EU, but we also want to share our ideas and experiences with other organisations from SEE. In recent years, we have developed contacts with networks and organisations from other parts of Europe. This will be first door to knock on. In these modern times, we have the opportunity to use all kinds of databases, mailing lists, web-sites and other on-line miracles, to find the partners. It may be hard to ensure the quality of a partnership established on the Internet, but we can always organise a partnership building activity for new partners, or we can participate in such events organised by others.

So, after almost one year of thinking and after all the processes described above, we do have some concrete results. After our first partnership building activity and just before our first training course on EVS, we are getting ready for new EVS volunteers to come and go.

It is clear that there are many opportunities for cooperation, and there will be even more opportunities in the coming years. What is even more important is that young people in South East Europe are clearly willing and able to make the most of those opportunities.



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SEMINAR ON YOUTH POLICY IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

The Partnership of the Council of Europe and European Commission in cooperation with the SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre organised a seminar on youth policy in South East Europe, Trogir, Croatia, 12-15 September 2007.

The Partnership of the Council of Europe and European Commission in cooperation with the SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre organised a seminar on youth policy in South East Europe, Hotel Medena, Trogir, Croatia, 12-15 September 2007.

The aims and objectives of the seminar were:

- To gather key stakeholders in the youth field and youth policy from South East Europe and some Council of Europe and EU experts;
 - To exchange information and views on the status and developments of youth policy in the region, as well as in the activities of the Council of Europe and the initiatives of the European Commission;
 - To discuss the potential fields of future cooperation, that would be of most value to all participants;
 - To create stronger networks between governmental representatives, youth workers and youth researchers and organising a structured dialogue between all three parties.
- secondary education is in decline;
 - Emigration of young people, especially among the highly educated;
 - Negative demographic trends;
 - Increase of deviant behaviour as a social outcome of unemployment and unstable conditions, for example delinquency, prostitution, drug trafficking and drug consumption;
 - Mobility is limited by economic standards and a strict visa regime of the EU countries. Therefore, interaction and co-operation between young people from the Balkan region and the rest of Europe is poor;
 - The gap between the development of urban centres and rural areas is large;
 - In some parts of the region, peace and stability remain fragile and insecure. In the regions that were affected by the war young people face various challenges every day;
 - The liberalization of economic, political and social life has generated a state of disorientation among young people. Traditional moral values have been overturned and there is no coherent system of values.

The youth policy makers represented the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia and the FYRo Macedonia. Unfortunately Slovenia and Albania were not represented. The practitioners represented the following countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, FYRo Macedonia and UNMIK Kosovo. The researchers' point of view was covered by Slovenian, Serbian and Bulgarian representatives. Among the (international or internationally funded) institutions active at the moment in the field, the representatives of the following attended the seminar: European Youth Forum, Twinning Platform, Forum Syd, the Partnership of CoE and EC, the SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre and the European Commission – Directorate General for Education and Culture.

The participants were very active throughout the whole seminar. Firstly, they presented information on the situation in the youth field in their respective countries. With regards to the socio-economic situation of young people in SEE region it is possible to identify some common determinants:

- The main problem is the lack of educational, professional and social opportunities, especially difficult access to productive and decent jobs and a high level of unemployment;
 - Young people are longer socio-economically dependent on their parents, but family social support structures cannot provide the safety net for the current generation of youth;
 - Many young people do not complete their education, and a low number of the population is attending educational institutions. In some countries, even enrolment to primary and
- A lack of government ownership to policy processes;
 - Rivalry between government ministries and limited inter-ministerial cooperation;
 - Non-governmental youth organisations are less developed than in Western Europe;
 - Rivalry within the NGO sector. NGOs are donor driven;
 - A lack of tradition in involving stakeholders in decision-making processes;
 - A lack of tradition for addressing young people as a cross-sectorial strategy area;
 - A fear of approaching the media;
 - A formalistic approach;
 - A lack of understanding;
 - Too many policy action plans;
 - A lack of trust in politicians because politicians do not feel accountable;
 - Difficulties in involving marginalised groups and national minorities.

With regards to youth policy, despite many difficulties (e.g. lack of funds and human capacities) there is hope for optimism. Most of the countries seem to be eager to improve the situation for young people. Finn Yrjar Denstad, currently employed by the Ministry of Children and Equality in Norway and with a history of advisory roles in South East Europe, has pointed out some general and some specific challenges faced in the process of developing youth action plans in South East Europe. Some of the challenges are:

From the presentations of policy makers from the individual countries some good developments and some problems can be extracted:

- Long term official strategies dealing with youth issues have already been developed in Greece, Bulgaria, FYRo Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia. In Serbia they are in the middle of a consultation process;
- No explicit document on the state level and no national legislation on youth in BiH. Republika Srpska (RS) has youth law. The Federation has no such document but it is in preparation;
- At least basic governmental youth structures have been established (e.g. The State Agency for Youth and Sports in Bulgaria; The Department for Children and Youth is located within the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity in Croatia; the Agency of Youth and Sport in FYR Macedonia; the Sector for Sports and Youth in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Media in Montenegro; the Ministry for Youth and Sport, established in May 2007 in Serbia)
- Croatia and FYRo Macedonia are currently developing a National Agency for the Youth in Action programme;
- A system for voluntary work has not developed yet;
- Only FYRo Macedonia has already adopted law on voluntary work;
- NGO structures that would represent the interests of the young people are weak or not stable in the most countries (one example is Montenegro);
- Youth councils are not existent in every individual country (on all levels) or they do not carry out activities based on the real needs of young people.

Furthermore, the participants discussed the key issues for youth policies: Mobility and migration; youth participation and education; and employment and family life. Among the conclusions the following should be pointed out:

- The visa application processes for young volunteers and other young people active in the civil society should be facilitated;
- All interested parties (the European Youth Forum, organisations of and for young people, students, researchers, etc.) should unite and claim a special status for young people within the visa regime;
- Diploma nostrification processes should be regulated to stimulate the return of students;
- The exchange of practices and programmes of non-governmental organisations from the region on a local level should be enhanced;
- The recognition of work experience should be increased;
- Future development with regard to emigration should be anticipated;
- A close cooperation and a structured exchange of all youth policy stakeholders for strong youth participation should be enhanced and forged. Therefore, a regional resource centre on youth policy should be established. Ms. Lena Bratic from the Twinning Platform offered that her institution would act as a driving force of such a centre;
- A database of experts in the youth field (especially of policy-makers) from South East Europe, and of international experts with experience in the region, should be created;
- The governments should provide means (funding, framework for friendly environment) for the development of youth NGOs;
- Policy makers should pay attention to involving non-organised youth in the policy making process, and in the implementation of such policies;
- Policy makers should pay attention to involving disadvantaged young people in the policy making process, and in the implementation of such policies;
- NGOs and youth organisations in South East Europe should

involve young people more in all stages of their work (developing, implementing, evaluating activities) and also in decision making bodies;

- Practitioners should receive training on how to empower and enable young people for greater participation;
- A closer cooperation between youth policy, youth research and youth work is needed. Youth researchers and trainers shall provide methodological and training support for practitioners and policy makers to employ participatory methods of social assessment;
- Qualification of youth workers/social workers/professionals should be improved;
- There is a need to promote a culture of youth work. A formal and social recognition of youth work as a profession is needed. This could be helped by publishing a magazine on youth work in the region;
- There is a need to promote the spirit of volunteering.

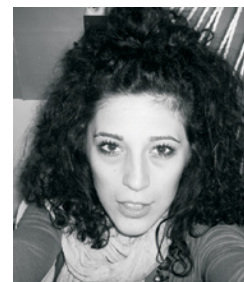
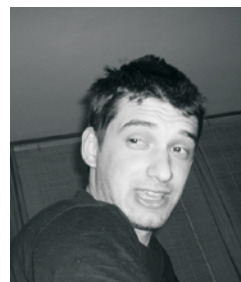
Among the proposals for international (or national) institutions were the following:

- To organise a seminar and publish a guidebook/manual on:
 - In what phases/activities within youth policy development, implementation and evaluation young people can take part;
 - How to enable active youth participation in those phases.
- To develop a programme aimed at:
 - Raising awareness among policy makers of importance of youth participation in policy creation and implementation;
 - Training policy makers on participatory methods.
- To organise a seminar on comparative review of legal frameworks of youth participation in South East Europe;
- To use meetings and seminars as possible tools for the enhancement of youth participation;
- To review of the obstacles and best practices of participation of disadvantaged young people (e.g. youth with disabilities) in public life.

Institutions have stressed and promised those follow-up actions:

- To link and share information between the Partnership of CoE and the EU, the SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre and the European Youth Forum;
- Provision of information on the region via the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, EKCYP, (www.youth-knowledge.net). The countries of South East Europe will be invited to nominate national correspondents for the EKCYP;
- To make activities on-going in the region more visible, on the web and in other ways;
- To invite ministries to nominate researchers to the Partnership's European Youth Research Network;
- Experts active in the youth field are invited to the Partnership's thematic research seminars on issues related to young people that are organised twice a year (The seminar on equal opportunities is upcoming in November 2007. In 2008 there will be seminars on intercultural dialogue and on housing, well-being and autonomy);
- The Partnership will discuss the development of a youth policy development manual, and a corresponding conference;
- The CoE and the Partnership are very interested in recruiting participants for their training activities;
- The CoE will report back to the institutions about the results of this activity, print the report and make it available online;
- The European Youth Forum will continue to have SEE as a high priority in the future;
- The institutions expressed the wish to have annual meetings of this kind.

NEW PROGRAMMES - NEW OPPORTUNITIES



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It is a well known fact that the position of young people in South East Europe could be a lot better. All that has happened in the last 20 years has left its mark on the young people. The possibilities for the development of individuals, as well as the society on a whole, have been reduced and are not comparable with modern European standards.

This is especially relevant for the young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as the situation there is worse than in its neighbouring countries. The present situation is a result of what happened in the past, the political system, the educational system and the unemployment of young people. This makes young people think about leaving the country with the hope to create a better future abroad.

Much effort has been put into the development of different youth programmes that should improve the present situation. But what happens when they are met with the passivity of young people? Should we give up? That is not an option. It is necessary to find new methods to approach young people and make them more active in their communities. Their active participation will improve their situation and the situation of young people in the whole country.

It has been emphasised for a long time that young people have to participate in decision making processes. This is important, but now that they actually can do that, they are not interested. Why? An organised system for the social engagement of young people does not exist and not enough young people are interested in working on youth related issues. A part of the country has adopted a youth development plan with defined youth policy elements, but the other part of the country does not have anything similar,



which means that not all young people in the country are in the same position. Another problem is that there is no strategy for the development of youth policy on the state level. The existing youth development plan, Youth Policy of Republic of Srpska, is possibly not the ideal document but it does clarify certain things and maybe most importantly, it clarifies the responsibilities of the government towards young people.

There are several international youth programmes in BiH that offer possibilities for young people. Through a variety of activities they play an important role in improving the position of young people in the country. One of these programmes is the previous YOUTH Programme of the European Commission, under which many quality projects were implemented. By modifying the previous programme the European Commission has created the new Youth in Action Programme (YiA), which leads us to expect even better results. We are already aware of some quality projects, either in development stages or already implemented, that will produce more concrete results than projects implemented under the previous programme.

At the seminar “Let’s Meet Our Neighbours and the World” held in Marly le Roi, Paris from 30th May –3rd June 2007, we learnt that the new programme does present some new ideas for improved quality. The seminar facilitated partner matching which led to many projects being developed right there. The seminar also provided opportunities to learn about the new programme, which will be useful for further project development. The seminar was successful and now we hope for the resulting projects to be funded and implemented.

Meetings of this kind are necessary for potential partners who wish to work within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme. Projects are often developed through already existing contacts established at seminars, training sessions and similar events. These events offer opportunities to meet new partners and to develop project ideas.

Seen from the point of view of youth workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Youth in Action Programme offers great possibilities for young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina to co-operate with other young Europeans, and in this way create a different outlook of future generations, which will change the face of Europe. There is a chance to offer young people new ways to look on a variety of issues by co-operating with other young people of different cultural backgrounds. By creating projects together they will learn how to work together and how to use different means to achieve their goals.

With the new Youth in Action Programme we have a new tool. Now it is up to us to use it in the most productive ways.

TRAINING FOR EVS VOLUNTEERS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE



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In spring 2007 SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre took over the implementation of EVS training in South East Europe. The aim is to cover the full training cycle: pre-departure, on-arrival, mid-term and final evaluation, and thus involve both the incoming and outgoing volunteers in the region.

Training is a relevant and an appreciated part of each EVS activity. By offering training, SALTO-YOUTH SEE RC guarantees that volunteers in South East Europe have the same rights as volunteers in Programme Countries.

Most volunteers gladly attend training related to the service. In addition to the information and tools provided by the formal programme, the volunteers get a chance to connect with others who are in the same stages of an adventure: Either anxiously waiting to take off, in the middle of the joys and sorrows of the project, or finally reflecting on their experiences after returning home. An ideal EVS training session can offer a volunteer a combination of information from the organisers on “how things should be”, and unique knowledge and experiences offered by the fellow volunteers.

In South East Europe, EVS training was not systematically organised before SALTO SEE’s involvement. Local organisations, mainly project organisers, organised the training themselves, but training sessions were neither arranged frequently enough, nor did they reach all volunteers in the region. The main reason for the European Commission to give the responsibility for EVS training in South East Europe to SALTO SEE was to establish a coherent support structure for all volunteers. In addition to this, SALTO SEE aims to guarantee, that the EVS training in SEE is in accordance with the Minimum Quality Standards set by the European Commission.

The EVS training cycle was initiated in late May 2007, when the first volunteers were invited to participate in an on-arrival training course in Bečej, which is a small town in the province of Vojvodina in Serbia. In this particular training course, only one of the participants was hosted by a Serbian organisation. The rest came from other countries in the region. Since then the training courses have been held in the various countries of SEE. This means that for each training course, the majority of the participants must cross one or two borders in order to attend. The fact that SALTO SEE operates on a regional level creates certain challenges as well as advantages for the volunteers and for the organisation of the training courses. While participants may find it tiresome and time-consuming to travel long distances, they also appreciate the possibility to establish a contacts with other

volunteers in and from South East Europe. Volunteers from the Programme Countries, in particular, value the possibility to travel within South East Europe during their EVS, and to be hosted by other volunteers.

The training courses consist of various thematic areas adapted to each of the relevant training courses. While participants in mid-term training courses are already interested in their possibilities after finishing their EVS, the major part of on-arrival training courses is to facilitate adaptation to new cultural environment and working conditions. The common aim in each training course is to provide solid and coherent information on the Youth in Action Programme in general and on EVS in particular. They are also aimed at fostering intercultural understanding, clarifying the concept of non-formal learning and providing tools for crisis management and conflict resolution. The setting and surroundings of each training session aim also to provide space for individual reflection and for the sharing of experiences and feelings.


As EVS projects usually last for several months it is inevitable that volunteers and organisations will encounter some problems. One of the main objectives for EVS training is to provide perspective and support in dealing with problematic situations. By organising EVS training sessions, SALTO SEE obtains useful information on EVS projects in South East Europe in general. This information can be used to address the needs and possible problems of, not only the volunteers, but also the project organisers, and further, it enables SALTO SEE to establish an appropriate strategy to respond to these needs.

It is remarkable that when the participants are asked to evaluate the training sessions, they use words such as “belief”, “commitment” and “self confidence”. They contemplate the impact of the training, and through that, the impact of their overall EVS experience, in terms of deep personal development and long-term future plans. This obviously shows that by committing to an EVS project, a young person puts at stake -not only some months or a year of his or her life- but also hopes, dreams and fears; perceptions of self, others and the world around. Such a process of growth and change should be carefully facilitated and thus the importance of good quality and coherent volunteers’ training is very high.


The SALTO

South East Europe Resource Centre


The SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre (SALTO SEE) promotes cooperation between Youth in Action Programme Countries and the Partner Countries in the Western Balkans




Provide information about the possibilities for cooperation between Programme Countries and Partner Countries in South East Europe;




Offer help finding partners for Youth in Action projects involving Programme Countries and Partner Countries in South East Europe;




Coordinate and organise educational activities;



Produce, collect and disseminate relevant information and materials for cooperation in this field;



Promote the visibility of ongoing cooperation between actors from South East Europe and Programme Countries;



Provide support and expertise in all issues related to involvement in and the promotion of Youth in Action co-operation with South East Europe.



The SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre publications

Some examples of our publications besides this magazine are:
Country profiles
Handbooks and reference guides
Reports of activities organised by the centre

All publications are available on our website:
<http://www.salto-youth.net/see/>
Printed copies can be ordered at: see@salto-youth.net

You can subscribe to our monthly E-Newsletter at:
<http://www.salto-youth.net/see/>. The newsletter has information about the Centre's activities and recent developments in the youth field

A close work with the National Agencies

The SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre works with National Agencies to organise seminars and training activities. Seminars run by the Centre bring together people working in the youth field in South East Europe and other countries in Europe. They help to develop partnerships for future co-operation; in particular the development of common Youth in Action projects, such as Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service and Training and Networking projects. They also aim to give participants the information and skills needed to implement such projects.

Accreditation of EVS organisations

Since 2006, the Centre has been accrediting EVS organisations in South East Europe.
More information at: <http://www.salto-youth.net/Elsee/>

Training for EVS volunteers

From 2007 onwards the Centre is responsible for coordinating EVS training in South East Europe.
More information at:
<http://www.salto-youth.net/seeEVS/>

A partner organisation's database

The SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre maintains a database of potential partner organisations from South East Europe and a partner searching forum, both of which are published on the centre's website:
<http://www.salto-youth.net/database/>



Contact Points

The SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre has established contact with organisations in the region for the promotion of the Programme in South East Europe. The main tasks of the Contact Points are to provide information in the local languages and to give advice and support to potential project partners.

Information about the Contact Points can be found at:
[Http://www.salto-youth.net/contactpoints/](http://www.salto-youth.net/contactpoints/)



ON-ARRIVAL TRAINING

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As I woke up on the 11th of June knowing I had to go to the on-arrival training, I was not very happy. First of all, I am not a big fan of such trainings, and secondly, I had already had some problems with my EVS project, and consequently I did not expect much from any EVS related initiatives. Anyway, I took the bus and hours later arrived in Beëej, a small town 130 km. from Belgrade.

Despite of my prejudices, I had decided to have an open mind. From the moment I arrived, I felt like a VIP: the hotel was more than nice, the staff was extremely friendly, but the most importantly, the trainer, Darko Marković, and the coordinator, Maija Lehto from SALTO SEE, seemed normal people with a sense of humour, and not naive “world improvers” as I had expected them to be. However, I did not want to jump into conclusions too fast, and I remained suspicious about the training.

Meanwhile, I started to socialise with the other volunteers. All of them were natives of neighbouring countries of mine (Belgium), and did their EVS in South East Europe. However, I learnt that we all had to some extent different backgrounds, different motives, expectations and perceptions towards our EVS adventures.

After dinner the training really started. The first exercises didn't really appeal to me. They were exactly the kind of “energizers” that have made me hate such training sessions. So what happened in the following three days is hard to explain. I ended up enjoying the training with my entire soul and body! Did I change? Or was the training just really good?

In my opinion, the cocktail of a successful training has many ingredients: An open attitude of the volunteers; natural behaviour of the people in charge of the training; a well prepared working schedule and the possibility to loosen up; for example by having a table tennis competition, salsa-dancing, drinking beer together...

“To connect, to support, and to learn” was the motto of our training. We connected with each other, with the environment and with our EVS journeys. We promised to give each other support on various levels in the future, but more importantly, we felt strongly supported by our training duo. And finally we learned a lot. We learned about intercultural learning, Youthpass, conflict management, SALTO, Youth in Action and in particular about EVS...

On Saturday, the 16th of June I woke up and knew I was about to make the long trip home. I felt fine, and the bus did not worry me as much as before. I felt inspired again with renewed hope and strength to overcome the forthcoming challenges in my EVS project, and I congratulated myself for the first real working experience within EVS.

To conclude, I have to admit that I am looking forward to my mid-term meeting!

Many thanks to all those that have contributed to this issue of the SEE YOUTH!
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Creating links between European Union and South East Europe

The SALTO-SEE Resource Centre is one of eight SALTO Resource Centres which have been established by the European Commission to support the implementation of the YOUTH programme in different priority areas. SALTO stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Possibilities.

The SALTO-SEE Resource Centre aims to facilitate and increase the participation of the programme partner countries of South East Europe in the YOUTH / Youth in Action programme.

We offer support and training for YOUTH National Agencies and project organisers to promote co-operation and improve the quality of YOUTH projects between Programme countries and the region of SEE.



SALTO-YOUTH
RESOURCE CENTRE
SOUTH EAST EUROPE



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
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