



Caucasus "region" an artificial construct?

SALTO EECA Multipliers



DECEMBER
2007

No 2

Young
EUROPEAN
CITIZENSHIP
TRAINING
CYCLE
IN
EECA
COUNTRIES
ARMENIA AZERBAIJAN BELARUS GEORGIA
MOLDOVA RUSSIA UKRAINE




EVS Trainings Cycle in EECA



Eastern Mosaic

The SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre

Support for Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities (SALTO-YOUTH) network within the YOUTH programme was created by the European Commission in the year 2000.

SALTO supports quality development in European Youth in Action projects. It organises training courses and shares resources with European youth workers on different priority areas (geographic or thematic). The SALTO Network consists of **8 SALTO Resource Centres**, based within different National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme. More information can be found on  www.salto-youth.net

The SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre was established in Warsaw, Poland, in October 2003, on the basis of a European Commission decision.

The aims of the EECA Resource Centre are:

- To raise visibility and awareness of the Youth in Action Programme opportunities within the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region;
- To provide support and expertise to National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme by contributing to events promoting cooperation with the EECA region;
- To promote International Cooperation with EECA Partner Countries;
- To support project organisers in the development of contacts, partnerships and projects.

SALTO EECA RC organises:

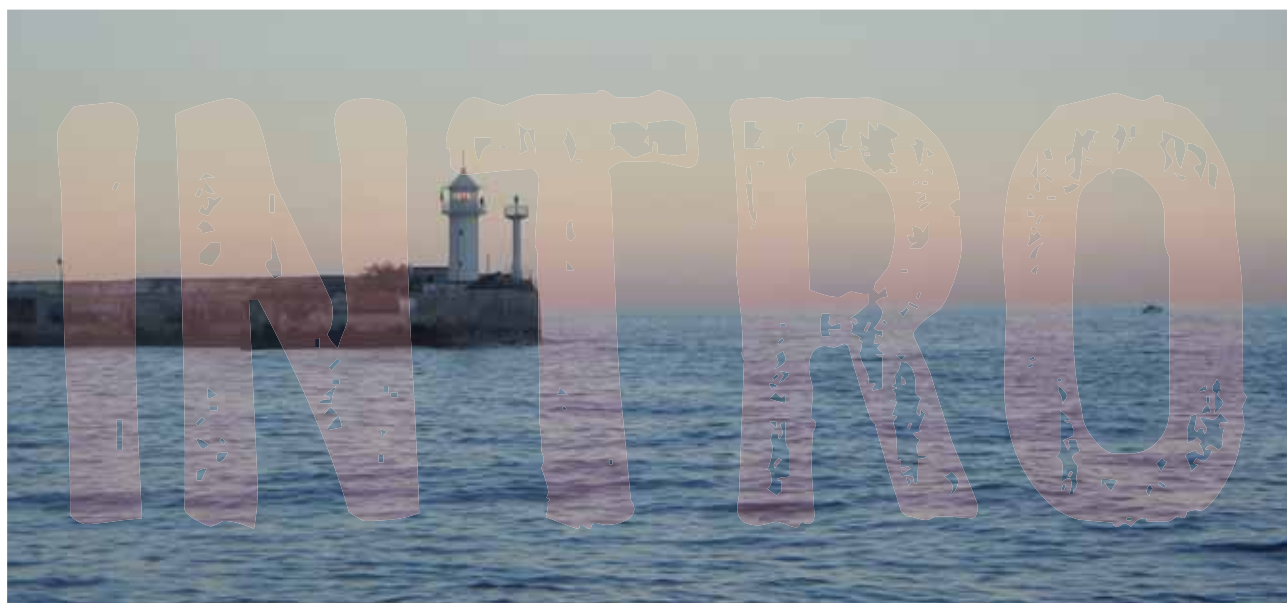
- **TRAINING EVENTS** with a focus on the development of skills, project management and building up an understanding of Youth in Action Programme Actions and non-formal education;
- **DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES** – contact making seminars and study visits aimed at building long-lasting partnerships between organisations from EECA and Programme countries;
- **INFORMATION ACTIVITIES** that enable organisations from EECA Partner Countries to have easy access to the Youth in Action Programme and promote cooperation with counterparts in Programme countries.

If you would like to be regularly informed about the activities of SALTO EECA RC as well as the latest developments in the field of non-formal education within the Region, you are invited to subscribe to the bimonthly NEWSLETTER on  www.salto-youth.net/newsletter.

In addition to everything mentioned above, SALTO EECA RC also provides access to:

- **“SALTO EECA Support Service”**  www.salto-eeca.eu, which is a dynamic and attractive information tool. It has been designed to simplify the process of finding a partner organisation and to strengthen communication among EVS volunteers and youth workers. Here you can find a Contact List for future partner organisations for International Cooperation within the Youth in Action Programme, a Forum and Assistance for Communication of EVS volunteers as well as youth workers!
- **Network of Multipliers** who have been trained by the Resource Centre. This is a network of people within the EECA region who are active and experienced in the promotion of the Youth in Action Programme. For further information visit  www.salto-youth.net/eecamultipliers.
- **EECA manual** – internet links to sources about Eastern Europe and Caucasus that might help you in the preparation of your projects. More information can be found on  www.salto-youth.net/eecamanual.
- Support resources for EVS Trainers and Youth Workers, with materials for future participants of youth activities from the EU going to the EECA region:  www.salto-youth.net/eecainfo.





Welcome to the 2nd issue of the “Youth in 7” Magazine! This is the first issue to be published in frame of the new Youth in Action Programme.

2007 was a year that involved the first steps implementing the Programme’s new phase: it was a period of testing and discovering new cooperation opportunities between Programme and 7 EECA Neighbouring Partner Countries by organising youth exchanges, training and networking activities, and EVS projects.

The Caucasus

The main theme of this issue is the Caucasus: a region that has gradually become more and more involved in the international youth field. We are happy about the growth in the number of youth projects, which are being realised by partnerships involving various youth organisations from the Caucasus region. It is a real pleasure to see how the Caucasus is coming closer and closer. Young people from Programme Countries have started to perceive the Caucasus in the way it was seen in the times of Herodotus and Odysseus. Is the Caucasus “region” an artificial construct? We give you a clue, but you will have to find your answer to this question.

We would also like to give readers a glimpse of the “Youth work reality in the Caucasus region” study visit, by giving you participants’ reflections. It was the first study visit to be organised by SALTO EECA in this region.

Nothing can depict the region better than the personal feedback of people who experienced the Caucasus themselves.

EVS

Unique opportunities to explore the world are available to young people through the European Voluntary Service. Sometimes, you can understand the world much better while you are detached from your everyday life and confronted with a bold new situation. Was this the case of volunteers who participated in projects in EECA countries? How did they feel? How did they tackle problems and overcome obstacles? We invite you to have a taste of EVS through the eyes of volunteers who report on their experiences.

The first year of the Youth in Action Programme is coming to an end. It was a year full of new challenges, obstacles that had to be overcome and various issues that had to be tackled. It was a successful year, as the number of young people who are interested in EVS projects in EECA countries is steadily rising, in part due to the efforts undertaken by SALTO EECA. In order to strengthen this trend, SALTO EECA would like to present its strategy for EVS training: a new support tool for volunteers in EECA countries. To increase the quality of EVS activities in the EECA region is one of the SALTO EECA’s main priorities.

Let’s do it with Eastern Europe and Caucasus!

We hope that Eastern Europe and Caucasus, as seen by project partners and participants, will serve as an inspiration for new projects, and will result in new experiences and lifelong friendships. We invite you to take a new look at Eastern Europe, and especially at the Caucasus – let us take a walk, shall we?

SALTO EECA Team

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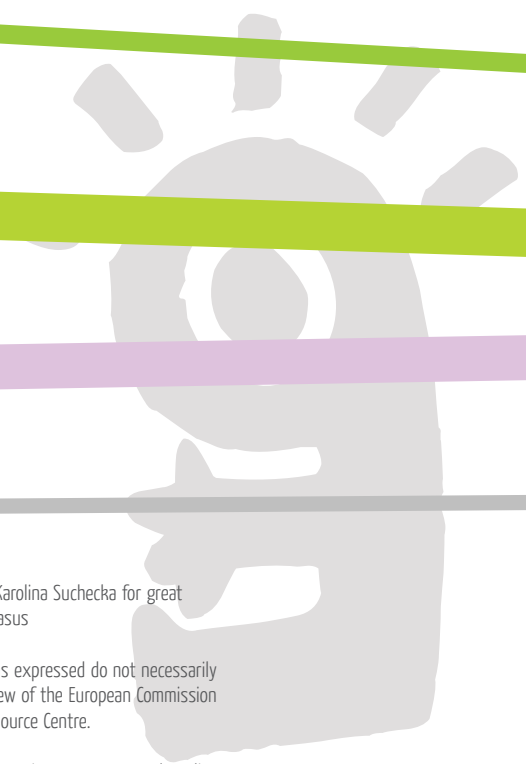
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to this magazine.

Special thanks go to Karolina Suhecka for great
photos from the Caucasus

The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily
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CAUCASUS "REGION" AN ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCT?

BY
Salome Asatiani



Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are commonly grouped together under a common label - the "Caucasus" or the "Transcaucasus". But evidence of such unity is hard to find on the streets of the nations' capitals.

In Tbilisi, one man, when asked whether he considered Georgia part of a regional bloc, said simply, „No, I don't. Georgia is Georgia.”

Asked if Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan had anything in common, he said, “Absolutely nothing.”

In Baku, the sentiment is similar, with a local resident saying: “I don't want Azerbaijan to be in only the Caucasus – it should also be in stronger blocs.”

In the Armenian capital, one woman spoke nostalgically of a time when the three countries had a greater sense of unity.

“We used to have many things in common,” she said. „We were similar in our temperament, lifestyle and human relationships; similar in almost everything. I never felt like an outsider in either Baku or Tbilisi.”

And now? “I think that all these things have changed a lot, and they've got worse – in religious matters, and in other ways as well.”

What's changed over the years?

Not much, according to regional analysts. To them, the notion of a “Caucasus” or a “Transcaucasus” has always been an artificial construct imposed from the outside.

We were similar in our temperament, lifestyle and human relationships; similar in almost everything. I never felt like an outsider in either Baku or Tbilisi.

“Russian people – or, let's say, the Russian Empire – logically gave the name “Transcaucasus” to that part of its empire located beyond the Caucasus mountain range as seen from the north,” says Alexander Iskandarian, the director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Media Institute.

In Tbilisi, one man, when asked whether he considered Georgia part of a regional bloc, said simply, „No, I don't. Georgia is Georgia.”

“People who lived in the Caucasus did not understand this unity, because it hadn't existed ⇨



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What's changed
over the years?

before. Prior to this, inhabitants of the Caucasus had identified themselves as part of wider communities – as citizens or subjects of the Persian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. Or they identified themselves in more local terms.”

Periods of union

There are a few examples of the three nations briefly coming together into a single political unit. There was a short-lived federation established in 1918, prior to Sovietisation. Later, there was the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, which existed within the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1936.

Literature and popular culture played their own roles in highlighting the link between the three nations.

the story of a friendship between a Georgian and an Armenian stranded in Moscow.

Then there are the innumerable jokes about „a Georgian, an Azerbaijani and an Armenian” that abounded during the Soviet era, all based on the general stereotype of people from the Caucasus as hospitable, eccentric, dark-haired, and – in the case of the men – thickly moustached.

Also perpetuating the image of Caucasus unity were Soviet-era melodies like the 1950s „Caucasus Table Song,” in which three “brothers” – the cities of Tbilisi, Baku and Yerevan – sing a toast to their friendship and future progress.

Tbilisi-based psychologist Gaga Nizharadze claims that such cultural representations and stereotypes – despite being the result of a kind of artificial homogenisation – ultimately fostered some genuine unity between Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians.

Then there are the innumerable jokes about „a Georgian, an Azerbaijani and an Armenian” that abounded during the Soviet era, all based on the general stereotype of people from the Caucasus as hospitable, eccentric, dark-haired, and – in the case of the men – thickly moustached.

Kurban Said’s novel „Ali And Nino,” first published in the 1930s, was one such example. The novel, set around the time of the Russian Revolution, chronicles the tragic love story between an Azerbaijani man and a Georgian woman.

Soviet audiences, for their part, loved Giorgi Danelia’s 1977 film „Mimino,” which tells

„We have carried out several research projects to determine whether there has ever been such a thing as a general ‘Caucasus identity,’” Nizharadze says. “We found that it does exist, although it is very weakly felt. I can speak from my own experience that, when meeting in Moscow for example, people from the Caucasus have some commonalties, be it in subjective terms, or even in terms of looks and appearance – ‘You are all Caucasian.’”



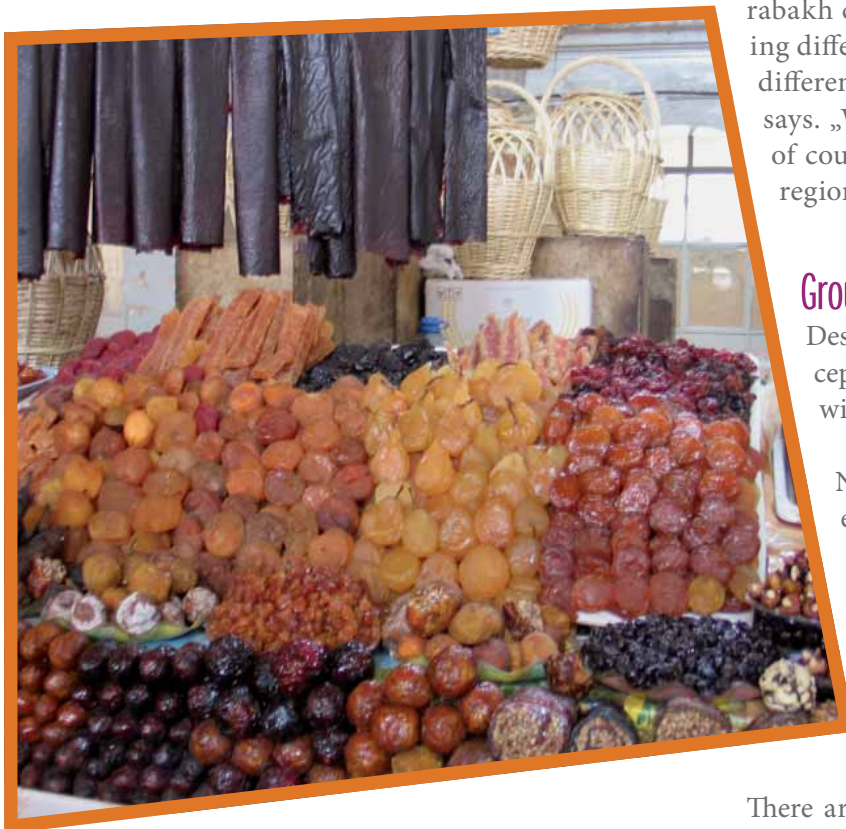


Diverging identities

But it is also clear that in the post-Soviet years, the three countries have proved more different than alike.

Nation-building efforts that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union led to increased emphasis on religious identities. This exposed differences among the three states, with Azerbaijan a primarily Muslim country, and Armenia and Georgia adhering to different branches of Christianity. Likewise, newfound nationalism led to intellectual disputes over cultural heritage.

Ultimately, despite their geographic proximity, the three countries have generally fared poorly at interstate cooperation. Azerbaijan and Georgia have forged some energy-transport deals, and Baku provided much-needed energy supplies to Tbilisi during its standoff with Russia. But otherwise, relations in the neighbourhood have not always been very neighbourly.



This is due in large part to their markedly different foreign policy perspectives. While Georgia grows more oriented toward the West, Armenia is seen as more tied to Moscow. Azerbaijan, rich in oil and gas resources, has the luxury of straddling the fence, and even seeking an individual role on the international level.

Nation-building efforts that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union led to increased emphasis on religious identities.

And then there is Nagorno-Karabakh, the ethnic Armenian exclave based on Azerbaijani territory. Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over the disputed region in a bloody war that lasted from 1988-94, and tensions over the exclave remain extremely heated.

Archil Gegeshidze, a political scientist based in Tbilisi, says the unresolved „frozen conflict” remains the biggest hurdle to regional unity.

„The issue of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the main problem, entailing differing foreign policy orientations and different systems of security,” Gegeshidze says. „When two countries are at war, it is of course out of place to speak about any regional unity.”

Grouped for convenience?

Despite all the friction however, the concept of a unified Caucasus region is still widely held in international politics.

NATO and the European Union, for example, use a single representative in dealing with all three countries. The EU launched its Neighbourhood Policy action plans simultaneously in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, despite the countries’ varying records on reform.

There are also numerous examples of efforts to promote regional integration – the European Commission’s “Youth in Action” Programme created a special group of Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the Eurasia Foundation created the South Caucasus Cooperation Programme ⇨

Grouped for
convenience?

and the Council of Europe created the 2006 Stability Pact for the South Caucasus.

Many analysts cite the states' small size and minimal global influence as reasons they are often bunched together. Another reason, according to psychologist Gaga Nizharadze, is that taking a regional approach significantly simplifies things for outsiders.

„It is easier to carry out policies in relation to regions,” Nizharadze says. „And for a foreign expert who comes and spends three days in Tbilisi, Baku and Yerevan, it is difficult to comprehend that in reality he is dealing with different countries, different languages, different religions, and that even historically we have never been particularly great friends. But when seen from London or New York, for instance, this is one geographical area, and it is much easier to deal with it as one.”

Baku-based political scientist Rasim Musabekov agrees. However, he believes a regional approach does not necessarily have to ignore the three nations' individual characteristics.

„From outside, for Europe, the Caucasus is seen as a region. However, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are each clearly distinguished within it, because their policies are far from identical,” Musabekov says. „I think this is how Russia sees it as well. Turkey and Iran are behaving in similar ways. Therefore, in this sense, the 'region' exists only for outside players.”

International actors may very well continue the practice of lumping Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia together, leading the three states to set aside their differences temporarily when on the global stage.

But another possibility is that the „Caucasus” term may gradually outlive its usefulness, eventually serving only as an example of a failed attempt to paint three nations with one brush. □

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www.salto-youth.net/rfer/caucasus
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„Youth work reality in the Caucasus countries” Study Visit for participants from Programme Countries

Gerhard Moßhammer
Jacob Soelling
Erika Munkova
Emiliano Bon
Jari-Pekka Kaleva
Katarzyna Nubiłczyk



**23 PARTICIPANTS FROM
PROGRAMME COUNTRIES
VISITED LOCAL YOUTH
ORGANISATIONS
AND YOUTH POLICY
INSTITUTES**

The Study Visit took place 23 June – 1 July 2007 in all 3 countries of the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). The study visit had several aims – first to learn about the reality of youth policy and youth work in the countries of the Caucasus, and second, to promote the Youth in Action Programme as a unique opportunity for international youth cooperation between Programme and Neighbouring Partner Countries in the Caucasus. 23 participants from Programme Countries visited local youth organisations and youth policy institutes in Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan and Vanadzor. Youth project markets were organised in each town in order to allow youth workers to get to know each other better and to start planning common future projects.

This was the fifth Study Visit conducted by the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre and the first in the Caucasus region.

The study visit would not have been possible without the help of the multipliers of the Youth in Action Programme in the Caucasus region as well as the significant support of the following institutions:

Azerbaijan Republic Ministry of Youth and Sport, <http://mys.gov.az>
National Azerbaijan Council of Youth Organisations – NAYORA, <http://www.nayora.az>
Department for Youth Affairs under the Georgian Ministry of Culture and Sport
Georgian National Council of Youth Organisations – NCYOG, <http://www.ncyog.ge>
Armenian Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, <http://www.minsportyouth.am>
National Youth Council of Armenia – NYCA, <http://www.nyca.am>

There is more information about the visit at <http://www.salto-youth.net/svcaucasus2007>



Gerhard Moßhammer (Interkulturelles Zentrum, Nationalagentur „Jugend in Aktion“, Vienna, Austria):

The main thing I learned during our study tour is that the Caucasus is not a homogeneous region; it is not even a region. In the "Caucasus", as we people from the outside call this region, three different countries exist, which do not have very much in common: different histories, different religions, different allies. What is more, they have unsolved conflicts among themselves and with their neighbours.

The young people we met showed their willingness to overcome these conflicts and to cooperate with their neighbours, but I felt that all three countries we visited had their own strong identity, underlined by the new nation building and nationalism that happened after the break down of the Soviet Union.

IN MY OPINION, YOUTH ORGANISATIONS THAT WANT TO COOPERATE WITH ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN OR GEORGIA SHOULD NOT ALWAYS TRY TO THROW THESE THREE COUNTRIES IN "ONE POT", BUT SHOULD COOPERATE WITH THESE COUNTRIES INDIVIDUALLY

In my opinion, youth organisations that want to cooperate with Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia should not always try to throw these three countries in "one pot", but should cooperate with these countries individually.

Jacob Soelling (NGO SILBA – „Support Initiative for Liberty and Democracy“, Copenhagen, Denmark):

The study visit managed to give – as much as the relatively short time permitted – a first hand impression of the culture, mentality and regional political and social problems related to each of the countries, not to mention the tensions between some of them. These are impressions that I consider necessary if fruitful engagement in this region is to be carried out. Secondly, the programme provided the opportunity to communicate directly with a lot of different organisations in well-organised settings through meetings with particular NGOs as well as the bigger NGO fairs.

Besides a handful of contacts which I see as potential partners, I learned a lot from talking with people not only on topics related to NGO issues but also on daily matters which say something about the mentality, culture and living conditions in general. I knew beforehand that each country had a separate identity but was amazed by how much this was emphasised when I saw it. In the same light, I thought that it was very evident that these places already had and seemed still to be moving away from Russian cultural domination, although security matters related to the big neighbour cannot be neglected.

Furthermore I got the impression that despite the problems with corruption, the rule of law and not exactly well-founded democratic institutions, it seemed as if people felt quite free in the sense that in their daily life they were not suppressed and that economic life seemed to thrive relatively well at least in the capitals (from the bus and train rides I got the impression that the provinces and rural areas are different stories). It would have been interesting to





see more of the province as well – in particular in the case of Azerbaijan more of the NGOs not favoured by the regime (I am thinking for example, of opposition groups, journalists and human rights groups). All in all, the atmosphere and hopes for the future in this light seemed to me to be of a fundamentally different kind in comparison with a country like Belarus of which I have some knowledge.

The trip, as everybody appeared to agree, was well organised and the organizers themselves managed to be in control and make things glide smoothly without being dominant which is an art in itself. Furthermore, I enjoyed travelling with the group and it was enriching to be together with many other nationalities from the EU and its near neighbours. I was especially glad to see Turkish participation and think that even on this micro level it could be a valuable contribution both to ties between Turkey and EU and in this particular case necessary (friendly) contact and dialogue between Turkey and Armenia.

Emiliano Bon (XENA - Centro Scambi e Dinamiche Interculturali, Padua, Italy):

I don't know how to comment on the experience in the Caucasus. There are too many things to say about it, about the people who hosted us so kindly that I felt at home so far from my house, about the group with whom it was so interesting to spend the days, about the wonderful organisation of the study visit, and about the very interesting places we saw.

The first thing is a feeling of a place totally out of my mental classification. For me it is geographically Asia, the former Soviet Union, not yet Europe, and named 'Caucasus' from the outside, even though the 3 countries are really different. When I heard Russian spoken, it sounded unnatural for the people of the region?

THE FIRST THING IS A FEELING OF A PLACE TOTALLY OUT OF MY MENTAL CLASSIFICATION

My impression was that there was a sort of ongoing identity research in different directions or at least with different speeds. It was very interesting for me when I heard people from the Caucasus saying that some people say Georgia should not be included in the Caucasus, but be seen as part of the black sea culture..." I felt very strongly while speaking with people that there was a feeling of "where are we now?"

The other strong impression still in my mind is about the political situation of the Caucasus, the halted relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Armenia and Turkey, and Georgia and Russia, as well as the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

As always with situations of "frozen war" or as someone said during the study visit "sitting on the volcano" the idea that something must be done is reflected in the work of NGOs; both in their activities and aims, but also in the strong attitudes of the people we met.

These are the impressions in my mind, as well as the wonderful memories of people and places. I hope to have the possibility to cooperate with these countries and to extend my impressions of the region soon.



Erika Munkova (Regional youth centre in Kosice, Slovakia):

It was a great, incredible week for me! I still run very quickly across the street - green or red it makes no difference :))

Jari-Pekka Kaleva (Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi, Oulu, Finland):

SWEAT AND DEHYDRATION IN CAUCASUS

When my plane landed in Baku, I celebrated the fact that my trip there from northern Finland had gone very well. I was not hungry or thirsty, I had slept well in the plane and the people I had met from our group in Moscow were just fantastic. Everything but one tiny minor thing, Aeroflot had lost my luggage.

So, there I stood, somewhere in Baku during the darkest night. I only had the clothes I was wearing and a tiny briefcase full of papers. Something in my head told me that this was to become an unforgettable journey.

Afterwards I realised that by being forced to spend eight days in the Caucasus region without my luggage, I really learned a bit more about the realities of the region. First of all, I depended on the good will and generosity of other people as many young people on the area do, and it was frustrating. The youth NGOs from the Caucasus area can only participate in the Youth in Action Programme if an NGO from an EU member state is willing to apply for money for them. When one starts cooperation with these kinds of roles, it is a challenge for both sides to build up cooperation on an equal basis.

I was lucky. One of the participants gave me a marvelous Deutscher Sportjugend t-shirt. It was surprising to look at myself in the mirror and just see all the prejudices I have

towards members of the Deutscher Sportjugend. I felt even more strange to combine my portrait with the idea of a sports maniac (actually members of Deutscher Sportjugend are just normal, but very healthy, young people).

ALL COUNTRIES OF THE CAUCASUS REGION SUFFER FROM A BAD IMAGE. THERE IS EXTREME POVERTY IN AZERBAIJAN, BUT IT IS ALSO A RICH OIL STATE. THERE IS CRIMINALITY IN GEORGIA, BUT IT IS NO MORE DANGEROUS THAN TURKEY. THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH INFRASTRUCTURE IN ARMENIA, BUT THEY ARE ALSO REBUILDING THE COUNTRY. ALL OF THESE THREE COUNTRIES ARE CHALLENGING, BUT NOT AN IMPOSSIBLE ENVIRONMENT FOR NGO PROJECTS.

Now, when I walk in the streets of my home town, all my friends start to laugh when they see me, the most unsporty person there is, wearing the Deutscher Sportjugend t-shirt. Although it was nice to have this t-shirt and it is very nice to cheer up the day of my friends, I did not participate in this study visit just to have the t-shirt. For me, the main goal in working for the NGOs was to achieve the goals stated in the statutes of the NGO, rather than any personal benefit.

In the Caucasus region though, young activists seem to be much more interested in running projects to get money for their organisations and nice trips to foreign countries for themselves. They seem to be much less interested in the goals and themes of the projects and the way they suit the goals of their NGO. This clearly is a challenge for cooperation with organisations from that region.

Quite many people I met seemed to be much more interested in wondering who was to blame for the violent history of the region, rather than thinking about how to move on and overcome these crises. The next day was awful for me, but I survived. Hopefully there will also be more people looking to the future instead of lying in the past in the region.

In the end, eight days without luggage went well, mostly thanks to all the wonderful people who helped and encouraged me. And finally, after four weeks of waiting, I also got my luggage back.



Katarzyna Nabiałczyk (Intercultural Youth Association, Łódź, Poland):

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS ON THE CAUCASUS REGION

I am very pleased that I was chosen to participate in the study visit in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. I must say that two days per country is not long enough to understand what life is really like, but I will try to express my general impressions. First of all, I find the culture in this region quite similar to Polish culture. People are very open and friendly and do their best to host their guests well. Another common thing is partying... dancing, eating and drinking (not to forget toasting, especially in Georgia ;)

I would like to briefly describe each of the visited countries. Let me start with Azerbaijan. While walking on the promenade in Baku's harbour, I had the impression that this was how European countries looked in the '70s. Tacky benches on which to take romantic photos, merry-go-rounds, cheap boat trips...I am aware that this pleasant, easy-going atmosphere is just an illusion though, as I spoke to a friend from Baku who opened my eyes. Low wages, big problems



with corruption, huge disproportions in the standard of living...this is the sad reality of Azerbaijan.

The next country we visited was Georgia. I was amazed by the beautiful orthodox churches in the former capital of Georgia. Tbilisi is also a great city worth visiting. In comparison to the other two countries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, Georgia seems to be the most European country. People are dressed in a European way, and they are also more open and like to share views about the political situation. I think that Georgians resemble Mediterranean people...their passion for wine and having fun means it is very easy to make friends.

The last country on our route was Armenia. The first things I saw after crossing the border were breathtaking landscapes and dilapidated buildings. Then I talked to the Armenians and found out how difficult the situation was there. People do not get enough money to live and must be supported by international donations. Nevertheless, people are optimistic and try to do their best to make their lives better.

Summing up, I would like to mention that I am aware that I only saw part of what life is like in the Caucasus. Moreover, we mostly visited the capitals, where the situation is very different from that in the countryside. Even so, while talking to local NGOs I realised how motivated and eager young people are for international cooperation. The image of Europe that they keep in their minds is idealised but seems to be a challenge they wish to face.



Vision from Georgia:

by Giorgi Kakulia

International Youth Work in the Caucasus countries

The European Commission's Youth in Action Programme offers a lot of different kinds of non-formal learning experiences for young people all across Europe. Through trainings, seminars and youth exchanges, it is possible to get to know plenty of young, highly motivated people working on youth issues. There is a particular atmosphere at such events. You have fun, but you also learn a lot during these events, ... at least this was what I heard more than three years ago.



At the time I was a 20 year old Georgian studying Mathematics at Tbilisi State University's Sokhumi Branch. I was active in a local youth club in Tbilisi and had just set up together my own youth organisation called the Academy for Peace and Development with my friends. Within the framework of both structures, we dealt with local youth activities and worked on reconciliation between young Abkhazian and Georgian people.

So I knew, or thought I knew more or less, what active participation meant. I thought that we – pupils, students and young people in general, could have an impact on our world, but really I could never have imagined how my personal views and opinions on a lot of topics would change after getting involved in the YOUTH and now the Youth in Action Programme.

However, at the time, I had no idea about any of this at all.

Looking at the situation of young people in the Caucasus region, there are not many possibilities for us to get involved in international meetings, seminars or general youth projects. This is simply because we do not know about the many options that exist.

Our life is dominated by the economic situations in our countries after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, and the heritage of the internal conflicts in our region, the civil wars in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and in the mountainous Karabakh. However, young people with fewer opportunities do not only come from conflict regions, their situation is also caused by the difficult economic circumstances that many families are still living in. The development of our countries in general has been and is still ongoing. All three countries in the Caucasus are developing countries and therefore there are very few opportunities given by the government to young people.

Youngsters are more likely to deal with the problem of “killing time” due to a lack of work than to take an active part in the development of their local communities. Only a few of us are involved in NGOs and honestly our possibilities are limited, because educational programmes, if they exist, are often still run using methods from former times. Youth organisations also face the problem of a lack



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Quality of a project...



of funding opportunities and seminars that could provide us with knowledge on how to organise local or international projects and events.

Bearing this in mind, you can imagine how I felt when I received a confirmation letter from the newly established SALTO EECA Recourse Centre in Warsaw to participate in their launch event, the Contact Making Seminar (CMS) “Go East”, which took place 2-7 April 2004 in Warsaw.

“Yes, after several rejected applications, I could finally participate in an international seminar. I could leave my country and meet other people who work on youth and try to understand and make our ideas, visions and dreams real. I was given the chance to discover new approaches to youth work, make new contacts, and get involved in all this, ... all this I only heard about before.”

Really, the CMS changed my life a lot. I met several new international partners, I was selected as one of the regional Multipliers for SALTO EECA, and I felt the atmosphere and the energy of 40 youth workers working together on the creation of new projects. I promised myself that I would bring this positive experience back to Georgia and “infect” my colleagues with the virus of international youth work. The Academy for Peace and Development (APD) was established in October 2002 in Tbilisi, with the mission to create bridges of friendship and understanding between teenage war victims of the Georgian-Abkhaz civil conflict. At the same time, the APD set itself

I was given the chance to discover new approaches to youth work, make new contacts, and get involved in all this, ... all this I only heard about before

a goal to provide an opportunity to the young people of the Caucasus to develop self-confidence, and to receive non-formal education and skills to increase their opportunities for future life. Sure, we implemented several local projects, and we put time and effort into the realisation of our ideas, but nevertheless, looking back, our NGO started to work on another level when we entered the international arena with the help of the YOUTH Programme. It brought new input, new options, new motivation and most importantly, plenty of new and different experiences into our organisation, local projects and finally our minds.

The first project within the framework of the YOUTH Programme, which we implemented in Georgia, was consequently a Contact Making Seminar. Consequently, because what we learnt was that most of the active NGOs in our regions did not have access to this programme and this had to be changed.

The CMS “East Meets West – For Future to Europe” was organized in Tbilisi, Georgia, 14-18 December 2005, in close cooperation with the “Youth Initiative Association” from Gdansk, in Poland. 30 participants from 30 European organisations and 20 Youth Programme and Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries got the possibility to establish partnerships and work on common future projects.

This milestone made a big impact on us and our development. Six youth exchanges, a Training Course, three Contact Making Seminars, and three EVS volunteers hosted by APD in Georgia followed over the next two years. At the same time, between 2005 and 2007, APD sent groups to ten youth exchange projects, eight Training Courses, eight Contact Making Seminars, eight seminars and three job shadowing projects in different countries. In total, during that period



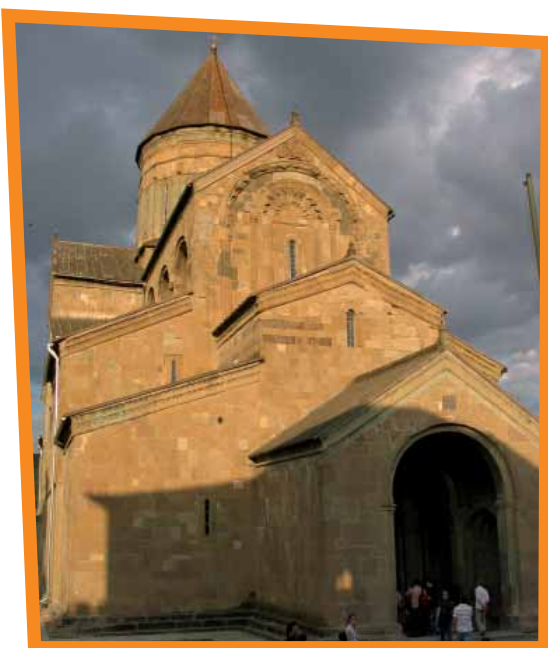


APD beneficiaries included 423 young people and youth workers from all over Europe.

Two projects are now of major importance to us.

In 2006, in cooperation with Culture Goes Europe – Soziokulturelle Initiative (CGE, Erfurt, Germany) we initiated the project “European Volunteers Supporting Civil Society and Local Community Development in the Southern Caucasus.” This was a multilateral European Voluntary Service project, in which 6 volunteers from different programme countries were hosted in youth organisations in Georgia and Azerbaijan from November 2006 to September 2007. This project gave the possibility to five different organisations from the Caucasus to host their first EVS volunteers. We took on a great deal of responsibility with this long-term volunteer project, but with the professional support of our partner CGE, we managed to get new organisations involved in the EVS programme.

It was a big task for us to run this activity, but we learnt a lot during it and were glad to help our partners in their first steps in the EVS world. Volunteering in the Caucasus is a challenge for the hosts and the volunteers.



Both sides have to learn a lot from each other, because work realities and life situations in our countries differ a lot from Europe. It is not always easy for both sides, but we all benefit from the experiences on a personal and professional level.

The second project I want to mention is our large-scale project “For Future to Come – International Youth Work on Conflict Management”. It was initiated and is being implemented by us in close cooperation with Minorities of Europe (UK), Mostar Friedensprojekt (Germany), the Academic Centre of European Information and Education (Poland), the Association of Young Azerbaijani Friends of Europe (Azerbaijan) and the Stepanavan Youth Centre (Armenia) for a duration of 27 months.

Training for trainers on conflict management, two training courses on conflict management, two Contact-Making Seminars, and three youth exchanges will be implemented as part of the project and two training manuals will be published, an internet platform launched, and a project film shot. It is expected that 72 youth organisations and 84 young people from Programme and EECA countries will be involved in these activities.

Over the last few years, being part of the European youth work family has made me feel proud, because I have realised that we, young people from the Caucasus, can be part of this family, we only have to take our chances. It is not easy to do, but it is worth doing, because I believe that as these experiences changed my life, they can change the lives of other young people. Talking, listening, working, discussing, and finally partying with people from all over Europe give you a new point of view on many things going on in your and other countries. These experiences change your mindset and your personal opinions of your possibilities, the potential you have and the impact you can create out of yourself and your ideas for you and others.

Finally, I can say that the previous Youth Programme and the current Youth in Action Programme have provided a great opportunity for young people from the Southern Caucasus to explore different cultures, learn about a variety of topics, break down stereotypes, raise self-confidence and simply get the feeling that we are part of Europe and its future. □

Volunteering in the Caucasus is a challenge for the hosts and the volunteers

"MAKE IT BETTER!"

A training course about partnerships in Azerbaijan: our insights and questions

by Olga Buzinova¹
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Try to find your own answers together with us! We will organise a training course in Azerbaijan! In Azerbaijan?! Why not to do the same, but somewhere closer? In our own country maybe, where we know everything! There would be minimum risk and we could save plenty of energy. In Lithuania out of 11 international cooperation projects, only 1 was not organized in Lithuania... it makes it much easier "to invite".

So why should we do projects in Neighbouring Partner countries? Is it needed? Are we applying an “Equal partnership” principle to our work? How do we see this “equality”? If the partner is treated as a guest, is it really an equal partnership?

This article does not aim to find answers to all these questions, but will look at the issue and try to find some answers...

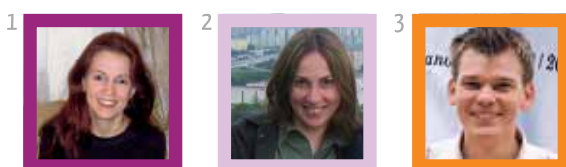
If we ask “why have a project in a Partner country?”, the answer will be that we believe **personal experience is a crucial aspect of trainers’ work**. If we see ourselves as trainers in the field of the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region, then we need to use our expertise **not only through words, but also through actions!** To speak about “promoting cooperation with EECA countries”, and fail to do it ourselves, through initiating our own projects would be strange to say the least.

While working in our organisations in the Baltic States and Poland and cooperating with organisations in the EECA, we have seen

great interest in joint projects between these two regions. In comparison with organisations from other EU countries, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland have much more in common with the 7 Eastern European and Caucasus region’s countries. We have a very closely connected history, which helps us to understand each other better and very often we speak the same language - in practice English is not the only working language used, but Russian is an unofficial working language as well. Besides these considerations, connections are supported by governmental institutions and the National Agencies. Cooperation with the EECA region is a priority for the Lithuanian NA for example, and Georgia is a priority country for Development Cooperation in Latvia.

So, we have an interest and links with each other and definitely want to run joint youth projects, but we often lack the skills and knowledge for implementing **high quality youth exchanges, EVS projects and training courses**. **While analysing the reasons for this, we saw that quality is directly influenced by the efficiency of cooperation and the sustainability of partnerships.**

What is the quality of a project under the Youth in Action programme and how can we ensure it exceeds minimum standards? How should we work with international partners? What should be done to make the partnership stable? How should work be organised in order to prevent possible conflicts with partners? How should we deal with conflicts that have already appeared? How do intercultural aspects affect teamwork and cooperation? The “Make it better!” training course aimed to provide some answers to these and other related questions.





Quality of a project...



8 organisations from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland on the Programme Countries side and Russia, Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan on the Neighbouring Partner countries side attended the training. Lithuanians (“Austeja Friends”) applied for funding, Azeri partner (AEGEE Baku) hosted and 4 trainers (from Lithuania, Latvia and Azerbaijan) ran the programme during the training course.

We wanted to encourage participants to cooperate and to get involved in common projects.

So, what does the organisation of projects in Neighbouring Partner countries give to youth leaders and youth workers?

We believe that if you **do not see the reality for yourself, you are more likely to be afraid of facing the challenges**. But go and see what is going on in Azerbaijan, how young people work there, how they see you, what they want from the common project! If you are an Azeri organisation, then don't be afraid to try something new with “foreign partners”, step away from the familiar activities and do other things with the EU programme at home or abroad!

Get out of your comfort zone to one that stretches you, and be sure that your learning process will start very early – from the moment you get to the project venue.

Feeling the mobility issue from the other side

For those from EU countries, getting through the invitation process and overcoming visa obstacles is almost a forgotten

feeling. Going through such a situation makes a strong impact and you suddenly feel the way people from EECA countries feel every time they go to EU countries.

This experience makes you more tolerant to others. You step into the shoes of others and learn many things... How to keep deadlines, how to book the flight in advance for a cheaper fare, how to deal with bureaucratic procedures. **You learn that an invitation letter is not a simple formality, but an important document that should be carefully prepared in advance**, as border offices in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, will not accept an electronic version on your lap-top. It sounds like a little thing, but those who travel a lot know how much stress can be caused!

Maybe this experience can make EU citizens more aware of mobility issues in Europe, and encourage more actions from the side of EU NGOs to change mobility policies within the EU.

When the training programme starts, new challenges appear.

It is easy to be tolerant while sitting on your sofa, but try to run a group building activity in a yard in the middle of Baku, with 30 children and dozens of adults watching and “helping you work”, explaining that they “have never seen such funny people before!” It is certain to give you a real feeling of “**impact on the local community**”!

It is possible to learn what cultural sensitivity is, especially in Azerbaijan, a country that is predominantly Muslim. Suddenly you realise that prejudices and xenophobia, which result from Islamophobia in Europe, are being challenged, when you see how the manager of a hotel in Baku is trying to organise Easter dinner for Catholic and Orthodox participants. You see how important it is for participants from Azeri organisations and staff in the Baku hotel to show respect and not “offend the guests”, by making the right



Easter cake (specially blessed in the Orthodox church in Baku!), painting eggs for the first time in their life and even fasting together with Christian participants for several days. After such an experience you might well start wondering whether you would be so sensitive and respectful to the traditions of others.

Insights from the training course from trainers and participants. What did we explore during the training?

It might be strange to realise that countries that once were part of the same empire are getting back together the way it should have been done in the first place: through constructive dialogue face to face and an open space for sharing ideas. It is all about shaping solutions, not problems, and simply “making it better”. The training certainly provided an open space. The team of trainers made this possible by providing not only the space, but valuable insights to help form the content; the starting point to speak, to listen, and to progress.

Many questions were answered but even more were put forward just to prove the relevance of the subject tackled. So, let’s look together at some of them!

As the question of **equality in partnership with the EECA** was the key issue in the training course, we noticed several **interesting tendencies**, which participants brought to the discussions, such as:

- ✦ **A mentoring approach in selecting partners from Programme countries.** During the discussions about “how to approach the right partner”, participants from EECA Partner countries underlined that NGOs tend to choose “more experienced partners from the EU to help us”. “Generally speaking, organisations from the EECA have less experience of working with international projects and the Youth in Action programme, so naturally they try to choose a partner that can train and help them to work in this field”.

But at the same time we are claiming it is an “equal partnership”. So, we started to question how it might be possible to combine the position of “trainee” with keeping the role of “equal partner”? How can a partnership be balanced in this case?

- ✦ **A partner for prestige?** If we say that we are working with partners from Bangladesh, or from the UK, how will this influence the prestige of the organisation on a local level? Participants said that participating in the EU’s Youth in Action Programme and making common international projects with organisations from Programme countries can provide very strong motivation for starting common projects and choosing partners.

If this is true, then how does it influence the nature of such partnerships? What are the positive and negative aspects of such cooperation?

- ✦ **Financial influence on partnership relations.**

If one partner is managing the finances, how does that make you feel? Does it influence your participation? This is one of the rules of the Youth in Action programme, that in multilateral projects only one partner gets the money. But if only Programme countries can be the applicant, then Partner countries are always the “invited guests”. The only difference is in how this makes them feel – an “honoured guest” or a “helpless subordinate”? At one of the sessions, participants were asked to analyse a case, in which an EU partner proposes that an EECA partner “host the project: when you are informed about the topic, time and financial conditions,” and that the rest “they can take on their own shoulders”. Would you agree to participate in such a project?“. Participants from Programme countries said that in this case they would feel like a “tourist agency” rather than a partner in the project, and that they would require a more active role in the project development, such as the right to influence the content of the project and so on. Participants from the EECA noted that this had become a kind of “tradition”, when “European partners come with the money and we as hosts just help them. There is always a tricky moment when you ask for equality in such a situation”.

How can we deal with this situation? What should you do if your partner does not seem to be interested in conducting the project together and taking equal responsi-

When we organise something together, how do we work?
Do we do everything at the last moment or in advance? Do we write down the tasks and then reporting on fulfilling, or just do as it goes?

bility? Should we just “get rid of the partner” or trying to change him / her) or should we take on responsibility for the problem as well? Is ensuring equal contributions a common responsibility for all partners?

❖ **“How will you make me trust you?” or “How can I make you respect me?”**

Running a project in the Neighbouring Partner countries requires a high level of trust among partners.

“You should trust us!” “Trust does not appear from nothing, we should build a good basis for it!” The basis of trust is transparency and EECA organisations should understand the responsibly and the risky financial position of their Programme country partners and be open and transparent about how they use the money and in what kind of situations they work.

EECA organisations cannot demand trust from applicant organisations if they are not transparent. Transparency opens up cooperation between partners. If both organisations have the right picture about each other’s situation, they will try to help each other to solve problems and overcome difficulties, by cooperating and supporting each other. Constant and close cooperation is the glue that holds a partnership together.

Specific cultural factors in work in or with Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

A tricky issue for us was paying attention to cultural differences, without stereotyping people and countries.

The main misunderstandings in partnerships happen because “quality” and “professionalism” mean different things to different people. The tendency here is to perceive our own working style as the correct one, and we tend to blame others for their “wrong work”.

When we organise something together, how do we work?
Do we do everything at the last moment or in advance? Do we write down the tasks and then reporting on fulfilling,

or just do as it goes? What is more important for the hosting organisation; to be focused on the needs of the programme or on making participants feel comfortable in their free time?

If misunderstandings happen, do we find another partner, which works as we do, or we look for ways to deal with the situation? Do we try to challenge and change ourselves?

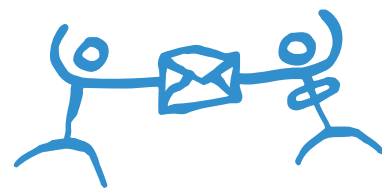
People involved in international cooperation often ask how to work with specific countries, but is there such a recipe? We can study different cases from the countries, but this does not mean that we should not avoid “labelling” this as a general tendency. Where do we draw the line with stereotypes?

While discussing these issues, participants in the training course developed some recommendations on how to build an international partnership:

- ❖ Create deadlines with a time reserve! “Respecting the deadline” can mean different things, from being ready a long time in advance, to completing something the night before the deadline to being 1 or 2 days late.
- ❖ Projects need maximum planning and minimum risk. Discuss and agree on even the smallest things. This will save you a lot of energy and anxiety afterwards!
- ❖ Regular or even constant communication can be time consuming, but it is an essential part of future success. Use all possible ways of spreading information and communicating;
- ❖ Agree on priorities together! What is more important for you, might be less important for your partner. Do not think that anything is self-evident; you might be very disappointed afterwards;
- ❖ Be open minded and take cultural behaviour into consideration.

Finally: If you want to discover the specific cultural factors of one EECA country or another, just go and do your project there! 😊

Welcome to the new restructured SALTO EECA Network of the Youth in Action Programme Multipliers



WHAT IS A NETWORK OF MULTIPLIERS?

The network of SALTO EECA Multipliers was created in 2004 in order to support the development and visibility of the YOUTH Programme in the Region as well as to increase the quality of YOUTH projects in Eastern European and the Caucasus. Initially, the Network gathered together 20 active members of non-governmental organisations from each of the 7 EECA countries. Since 2004, the Network has evolved a lot. Some people changed jobs and withdrew, other new people joined the Network in the meantime. The experience gained during the last few years of Multipliers' work is very valuable.

At the time when the YOUTH Programme changed into the Youth in Action Programme, we decided to refresh and restructure the Network and open a new page in its work. Nine youth workers from the previous Network decided to bring their experience into the new Net. 21 new people joined the group, so now it gathers 30 youth workers from all 7 EECA countries.

WHO IS AN EECA MULTIPLIER?

This is a youth worker, who:

- actively works in a non-governmental organisation in the youth field in one of the EECA countries;
- has support from the above mentioned organisation;
- speaks very good English and very often also Russian;
- knows the Youth in Action Programme, SALTO Tools and the SALTO EECA Support Service very well;
- is experienced in the previous YOUTH Programme and has coordinated a minimum of 2 projects.

WHAT DO EECA MULTIPLIERS DO?

Generally the Multipliers work in several directions:

They organise informational and promotional meetings in the EECA Region about the possibilities of international cooperation within the Youth in Action Programme along with SALTO EECA Resources and Tools, especially with young people, youth workers, youth organisations' representatives, trainers and local youth policy makers;

Multipliers raise awareness about the YiA Programme, and encourage contacts between organisations from Programme and EECA countries as well as sharing good practices by answering enquiries by e-mail and phone and meetings with the youth groups and local youth institutions;

They also promote their own and the Network's achievements, as well as other activities in the framework of the YiA Programme in the Region, through the SALTO EECA bimonthly Newsletter, the SALTO EECA Forum and the SALTO EECA „Youth in 7” Magazine;

In practice, the general fields of work are followed by a deeper approach and subsequent activities including:

- local networking (between youth organisations, institutions and local authorities) in order to build the multiplying potential, strengthen the impact of multiplying activities and discover new possibilities for international cooperation;
- coaching and counselling possible applicants with their projects within the YiA Programme;
- raising awareness about other resources, possibilities for international cooperation (for instance Council of Europe – European Youth Foundation etc.);

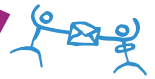
Moreover some Multipliers also publish materials about youth work and the YiA Programme in their national language and create local youth information centres.

Do you want to meet Multipliers virtually and learn about their work?

Visit: www.salto-youth.net/eecamultipliers



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“Concrete jungle...?” by Nick Taylor

BRITISH VOLUNTEER IN RUSSIA

My first impression on arrival in Samara was that it is a “concrete jungle”. Through Western European eyes, it looks like a huge housing estate. Most people seem to live in large tower blocks, myself included. I live on the eighth floor of a nine-storey block. You may think that this offers a good view, but all I can see are the other fifteen or so tower blocks that surround mine.

If I look very hard, I can just about make out the great Volga river, which flows less than a kilometre from our apartment.

Big freezer...

I expected cold weather, and I have not been disappointed. The temperature in winter varies between -15 and -30C.

The cold weather can be painful – it penetrates my thermal gloves in minutes – but there is a major advantage. When I buy beer in the local shop, it is at room temperature, but by the time I have carried it home, it has chilled to a refreshing fridge temperature! Russia really is a big freezer.

Stereotypes

It is a widely held view among Western Europeans, that Russia is dangerous and under the control of the Mafia. In fact, I have never seen any evidence of Mafia presence here at all.

In my experience, the most dangerous aspect of Russian life is crossing the road. There seem to be no traffic rules and the streets are extremely wide, with virtually no road markings.

Another perception I have found to be untrue, is that Russians are hostile to foreigners. At first they may seem stony faced. But in my experience, Russian people will always go out of their way to give you help if you need it.

Russian hospitality is unforgettable. I have often visited the families of Russian friends, and without fail, I have always been invited to share in a table of delicious food, and of course, vodka!

New knowledge

I have learned so much about Russia, England and myself since arriving. Of course, it is not difficult

to learn about Russia when you live here for a year as a volunteer. But England is my home, and I always took my way of life for granted. Now that I am experiencing something different, I can truly analyse my own culture from a distance.

Furthermore, one of my tasks as a volunteer has been to prepare and lead discussions on British culture and the British way of life. By doing this, I have discovered so many aspects of my own culture that I knew nothing about before! So I am learning and learning and...

From Finland and Italy to Azerbaijan...

INTERVIEW WITH TIINA YNNILA AND JVAN'S JVAN YAZDANI BY SHAHIN BAYRAMOV

The Association of Young Azerbaijani Friends of Europe (AYAFE) has been implementing EVS projects since 2002. During this period a number of EVS projects have been successfully completed and through those projects several young Europeans have been given the chance to spend their time in Azerbaijan.

Currently, AYAFE is implementing EVS projects in collaboration with its European partner ICYE. The main theme of the project is “youth volunteering in sensitive contexts” in Azerbaijan. The aim of the project is to place a volunteer in the long-term NRC project in Baku city and another volunteer at the UNHCR's Youth and Women's Refugee Centre in Baku city, so that the volunteers gain practical experience with children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds such as refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) implements long term awareness raising campaigns that address the problems of IDPs from conflict areas of Azerbaijan. As a disadvantaged group, IDP youth do not have the opportunity to develop themselves or to integrate into society. In this settlement, there are approximately 120 young people and children. The UNHCR's Youth and Women's Refugee Centre houses 120 young refugees from Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. These young people and children are totally excluded from society. Involving a volunteer in the work of the centre motivates young refugees to integrate into society, communicate and increase their knowledge.

Two volunteers are involved in these projects: Tiina Ynnila from Finland and Jvan's Jvan Yazdani from Italy.

I would like the volunteers to talk about their projects and their life in Azerbaijan.





Please briefly describe your project:

Tiina Ynnila: I am working at the UNHCR Youth and Women's Refugee Centre. I teach English and art, and I help children to spend their leisure time effectively. I have about ten groups of children for English lessons.

I also work at the UNHCR with separated children who live without their parents. We interview children, visit the places where they live, identify their needs and problems and write reports for UNCHR.

Jvan's Jvan Yazdani: I work in the IDP community. I organise various activities for IDP children like English language classes. I teach English to children of various ages. I have a conversation club for older children. We discuss a variety of topics. We play different games and have a good time with the IDP children.

How do you think your project is helping you to achieve the aims you are working towards?

Tiina Ynnila: I think my project is very useful. They learn English and they are able to spend their time effectively by playing various games, drawing and so on. They always express their satisfaction and it really encourages me to work with them and help them.

Jvan's Jvan Yazdani: I think it is very important project for IDP children, because they live in an isolated community. They do not have access to resources in society; they always need help from outside. I spend a lot of time every week in community.

What about your impressions of Azerbaijan?

Tiina Ynnila: I come from Finland. In comparison with my country, it is a very different culture, which is why I chose Azerbaijan for my EVS project. This country is very interesting for me, people are very hospitable and it is very easy to get to know people and to make friends in the country. Of course, there are also some problems in the society.

Jvan's Jvan Yazdani: First of all, there is a personal reason why I chose Azerbaijan to do my EVS project. My roots are connected with this nation. I came to learn the Azerbaijani language and to learn more about Azerbaijan and the Caucasus region.

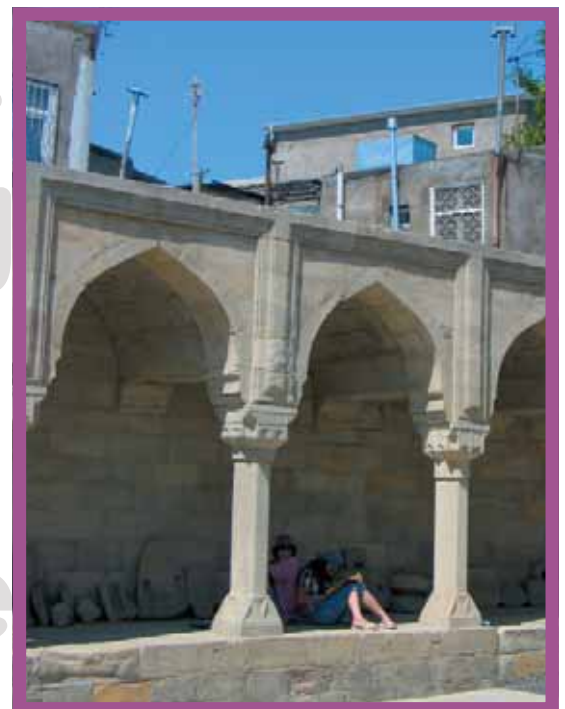
I am very happy to be here, people are very hospitable and kind to us. Azerbaijan is a new country and is currently in a period of transition. Young people are very ambitious and want what is good for the country.

Of course, there are also problems, like IDPs who live in severe conditions and face a lot of problems and so on.

What does the project give you?

Tiina Ynnila: It is very useful. I think it is a very good project to develop yourself. I am working in a team composed of dynamic people. By working in such a team I am improving my various skills such as team working, leadership, communication and so on. The most important thing is that I am getting experience of a new culture and learning the Azerbaijani language.

Jvan's Jvan Yazdani: This project has played a great role in my life, showing me how to learn new things and boost my knowledge and various skills. First of all, I have learned how to organise different events and this has improved my organisational skills as well as giving me new problem solving skills. The most important thing is that during this project I learned how to work with people with fewer opportunities.





Georgian volunteer in Spain

by Lela Topuria, Georgia

Who am I and where was I?

I am Lela Topuria, from Georgia. For 10 months, I did my EVS project in Tarrega, in the Catalonian region of Spain. It is a pleasant little city between the two big cities of Lleida and Barcelona.

I was working in the big organisation – “associacio ALBA”. It is an organisation that works with disabled people. I was working there as a supervisor for these people. I was living in the same city as the youth hostel “Ca n’aleix”. I had my own room, with a bathroom. I lived in the hostel with other volunteers, several disabled people and their supervisors. I ate in the hostel or in the organisation’s dining room.

Technicalities

I had two training sessions; on-arrival training and mid-term training, where I received good general information about the EVS project. Twice a week I had language lessons and in two months I was speaking and understanding almost everything.

What was my job?

My work involved looking after disabled people, going for walks with them, helping them to develop their possibilities and helping them in any way they needed. During the EVS, I took one 19 year old boy to Slovakia, Zilina in the same organisation for disabled people. We were there for two weeks and it was a great experience for me and for this young boy, who changed totally as a person, and became more independent.

Like a tourist

During the summer holiday we travelled around a beautiful region of Spain for two weeks, arranged by several organisations.

In the mountains of the Pyrenees, our organisation took part in the Olympic Games in Costa Brava, Girona. This Olympic Games event was for disabled people and I was there working as a supervisor.

New duties

The head of the organisation asked me to work as a psychologist as she knew that this was my profession and I was very interested in getting to know the psychology of these people. They also

let me organise a theatre performance with the disabled people. We staged a play “The red heat” and it was very interesting experience for everyone involved because it was the first time that they had acted. They liked it very much and all of them asked to continue with theatre in the future.

I had a really good time

All the people I met from the “ALBA” organisation were very kind to me. I had a tutor and a coordinator for my project, who was a good friend to me and a good adviser.

I am very happy that I had the opportunity to do an EVS project in Spain, and in this organisation in particular. It gave me great experiences and a good knowledge of Spanish.



Adventures of Spaniard in Russia...

by Guzman Garcia Rodriguez

My Russian adventure started before I even got to Russia. Just a week before my flight, I talked by phone with 3 EVS volunteers who were already in Saint-Petersburg at the same HO (Hosting Organisation). They warned me not to come because the situation with the HO coordinator was very tense. They had all decided to cancel their EVS projects because of a very chaotic EVS project management system in the HO concerning everything: money, housing, training, and the language course. They finally left the country a few days after our conversation, but they had really scared me...

Right after this chat I let my SO (Sending Organisation) know about the problems and decided to cancel my project... and it was cancelled just a couple of days before my planned de-



parture! However, my coordinator checked all the issues with the Spanish National Agency and got the “green light” to go ahead. I really wanted to use the chance I had been given! So, I finally left for St. Petersburg, in principle just for 2 weeks, to check whether it would be possible to realise my 8-month programme.

After a half of a year of thinking about my future stay in Russia every single day, I was not willing to just drop this amazing challenge so easily!

Now, 5 months later, I am still in Russia. I am still working in my EVS project and I am pretty sure that the problems I encountered are quite common and could affect any EVS project. In each project, the personal human context is very important: who is involved, who is responsible for what and so on... And of course different situations can happen, which are not always pleasant. Since it was not my first, or even my second, year-long experience of living abroad I came prepared to deal with any difficulties with a lot of patience and perspective. That is my philosophy: You can find these kinds of people and situation anywhere you live, but you should face it and not just run away... life is never perfect! Furthermore, are difficulties not like the sugar that makes life sweeter and more interesting, like challenges to learn from?

In general everything about my work was good, nevertheless I would like to mention some problems I came across. First of all, I have to mention my unique case concerning housing. After staying for three weeks at my organisation’s office I was told to move to the Dietskii Dom (it’s not only an orphanage but rather a children shelter) where I would start to work... and live! Second, I had some problems with financial issues connected with the project, but finally I managed to solve these.

I have at least two firm suggestions for future volunteers:

1) It is always better to live in a place other than your work place. Just to have clear division. It is true that the prices of renting a room can be quite high, but then the solution might be to share

an apartment with another volunteer or to rent a room in the suburbs.

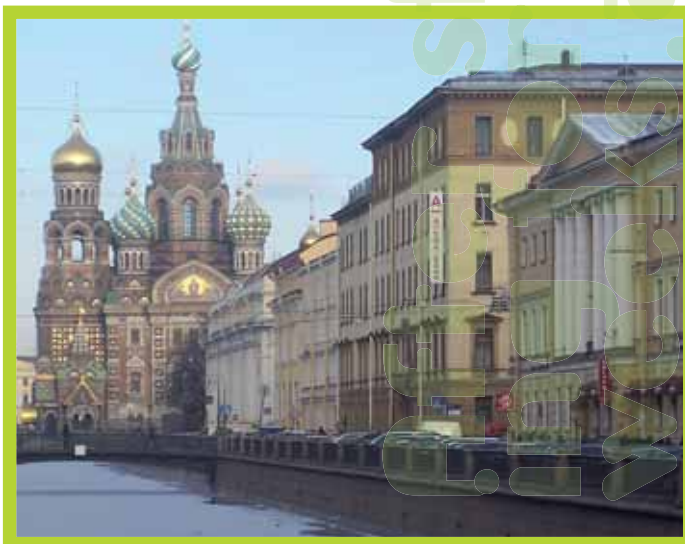
2) In my opinion it would be much more better for a volunteer to receive pocket money directly from the SO, rather than through the HO. It would allow you to avoid a lot of possible problems with the HO.

However, whoever reads this might think that my experience here has not been very pleasant... but nothing is further from the truth!

The negative side represents only 10% of my experience here, but it is without a doubt, the most interesting part prospective volunteers can learn from. Deep inside, since the beginning, I convinced myself not to leave despite any problems because I consider myself a survivor who loves challenges in life and is able to adapt to any situation. Overall, we western middle-class people, are very lucky in this world if we take a look around the globe. So, whatever difficulty comes, it will never be too serious...

After a turbulent couple of months my situation became more comfortable, and now I feel absolutely at ease. I really like my “job” as I get along really well with most of my children and teenagers; I feel very confident with the language, while during the first month I was really pathetic, I have met a lot of people, starting with university students of Spanish; and I am enjoying the city (this Northern Venice or Eastern Paris needs no more comment), as well as travelling around (not only the region but even Moscow), and so on...

I do not think I need to comment further on the positive side of my experience here since it is not very useful for giving advice, but my situation here now is absolutely fine. If it were up to me I would love to stay at least another half a year, but I know that experiences are wonderful because they finish and become a sweet part of your memories.





Sweet independence!

by Zoryana Slyusarchuk

I am....

Just a person who wants to achieve a lot of established goals in my life!

My name is Zoryana and I am from Ukraine. At this moment I am doing EVS in Prague, in the Czech Republic. Before this adventure I was studying and taking an active part in the social life of my city.

The reason to do EVS...

One of my goals was to change my life. Being an EVS volunteer was my big chance and I used it! I was so determined that I wrote 20 e-mails to different organisations and to be honest with you, it wasn't easy. I already started to give up after so many of my e-mails were ignored and other organisations sent me negative answers. But miracles happen! One organisation gave me hope and from 30 volunteers they chose me! I couldn't believe it – It was my “lucky ticket”.

My first questions after the good news...

What should I expect next? I had to find out on the answers to other questions too: what do I need to do with my studies? How do I get a visa? What do I need to do before leaving? And the hardest question of all: how do I tell my father that I'm leaving?

Prague, here I come!!!

On 1 July, at 7:01 a.m. in the main railway station in Prague, I stood by my huge suitcase, holding enough clothes for one year. It was the starting point of my new life!

I had the chance to live and do my EVS project in one of the most romantic cities in the whole of Europe, with amazing architecture – Prague. My dreams had come true.

For the first three months I was involved in the summer activities of my hosting organization “Duha”: amazing international art projects “Get f-ready” and “Meet the Freak!!”, and two international work camps, as well as all these EVS daily life and volunteer meetings.

During the summer I met so many interesting, funny and sometimes crazy (in a good sense) people, that after all this I needed to relax and be alone for some time.

What I kept in my memory?

I consider my EVS project very cool, valuable and unforgettable. I had a friendly office-team, an understanding project leader and plenty of space for my ideas and improvements.

Unfortunately no situation is absolutely perfect; there is always one downside, one minus. I had a bad experience with the visa, which was the most horrible point for me!

Before my departure to start EVS we did everything to arrange a one-year visa. The procedures were not easy going: getting information from the internet, making phone calls to the embassy and trying to find out details about arranging a visa were so strange, that no one could give us the correct information.

The result was that every three months I needed go back home and get a new 90 day visa. We did not even know that it would take one month to get the visa each time. I lost two months at home from my valuable EVS experience. If someone could have given me the correct information and advice for a work visa, it would have been much easier.

Even here though I found a positive side to it! When I came back to Prague, I felt that my arrival and every day of being a EVS volunteer became more and more valuable.

My advice to people who are thinking about doing an EVS project is act! Do more! Ask! And believe in yourself!

On 1 July, at 7:01 a.m. in the main railway station in Prague, I stood by my huge suitcase, holding enough clothes for one year

EVS Trainings Cycle in Eastern Europe and Caucasus

THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE SALTO EECA RESOURCE CENTRE



Since the very beginning SALTO EECA has worked to increase the quality of one of the most important pillars of the Youth in Action Programme – European Voluntary Service (EVS), especially those projects taking place in the EECA region. The first few years of SALTO EECA brought several contact making seminars and training courses focused on EVS project management and development, including TC “EVS4U” in 2004, three CMS “Yth2” in 2005 and 2006 as well as TC/CMS “EastWestEVS” and TC/SV “Train to EVS” in 2006 (you can find reports in the SALTO Toolbox: www.salto-youth.net/toolbox).


THESE EVENTS WERE crucial for establishing partnerships between organisations and future EVS project partners, and for deepening their basic understanding of the European Voluntary Service. Training courses allowed participants to understand the most essential elements of EVS, like volunteer self-development and learning, support for the host organisation, impact on the local communities both in the host country and back home as well as the need for constant training! The EVS project cycle consists of four trainings and meetings, which support volunteers in their learning processes throughout their projects:

- pre-departure training
- on-arrival training
- mid-term training/meeting
- evaluation meeting

All four elements of the EVS Trainings cycle are very important for the well-being of volunteers abroad as well as the overall success of the projects. Within the 31 Programme Countries of the Youth in Action Programme (27 European Union countries, Countries of the European Free Trade Association which are members of the European Economic Area: Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein and Turkey as a candidate country) the National Agencies are in charge of the EVS Trainings cycle and therefore the support provided for volunteers is secured. Due to a lack of National Agencies in Eastern Europe and Caucasus region, partner organisations that implement EVS projects are responsible for the EVS Trainings cycle. Because of the huge variety within the region and youth work experience in EECA countries, EVS training sessions managed by organisations differ greatly and sometimes fail to meet the minimum standards that were set by the European Commission in 2004.



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SALTO EECA Resource Centre decided to support EECA organisations throughout the EVS Trainings cycle and provide the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to those trainers who might be able to conduct EVS trainings on 



a professional level. There are many reasons for SALTO EECA involvement in the EVS Trainings cycle in the EECA region. Three of the most important are presented below.

First of all, SALTO EECA hopes to ensure the necessary quality in EVS trainings. There should be a clear distinction, especially in the on-arrival training, between objectives and minimum standards, and the local induction or introduction into organisation. Very often in EECA region, both elements of EVS project are mixed together. Sometimes the on-arrival training is only a local introduction by the host organisation, and therefore doesn't provide the necessary learning support for the volunteer or an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all EVS actors.

Moreover, when on-arrival or mid-term training is organised by the host organisation, it is very difficult for volunteer to be able to assess his own development. All relations, friendships or conflicts from their daily work risk becoming part of the training and do not allow the volunteer to have any space for self-reflection and evaluation.

Secondly, SALTO EECA would like to make sure that volunteers hosted in EECA countries have the possibility to

meet and create contacts, building up their own networks. In such a region without formal structures to support EVS volunteers (like National Agencies, or ex-volunteer associations like EVA for example) it is extremely important that volunteers from different organisations get together and support one another. This is not only a basic minimum standard of EVS training, but also a fundamental tool for risk prevention and crisis management. Because of the individual approach and lack of institutional support in the EECA region, most EVS trainings unfortunately don't meet this essential need. The necessity for common or joint EVS trainings in EECA countries has become a hot topic.

Finally, not all EECA organisations that host EVS volunteers have enough human resources to provide the training. A lack of the skills and, even more important, the right attitude towards the very specific learning event that EVS training is, creates a big gap in the learning process for volunteers. Huge cultural differences



The experimental phase confirmed the reality of many EVS hosting projects and most of the reasons why SALTO EECA got involved in the EVS Trainings cycle in Eastern Europe and Caucasus.

among some of the Programme and Eastern European & Caucasus countries means there is a strong need for common or joint volunteer training, run by trainers who are proficient in European Voluntary Service, to support young people through the culture shock they might be experiencing. Unprofessional EVS training may harm volunteers and create more difficulties rather than providing solutions.

For all of these reasons, SALTO EECA decided to focus primarily on support for organi-

sations in the EECA hosting EVS projects, so on the on-arrival and mid-term training for volunteers from Programme Countries who have come to Eastern Europe and Caucasus.

In August 2006, SALTO EECA organised the first Training of EVS Trainers from Eastern Europe and Caucasus. During a time of Programme shift (“Youth” was transformed into “Youth in Action”) the Resource Centre wanted to launch an experimental phase of EVS training support. The first training for trainers took place in Poland and gathered together dozens of youth workers from EECA who were interested in EVS trainings. The aim of this meeting was to raise the quality of EVS training and create an organisational setting for future common/joint EVS trainings. During the next 12 months, some participants got involved in EVS trainings support and organised the first common/joint EVS training sessions in Eastern Europe and Caucasus, especially in Ukraine and Georgia. These examples clearly showed two important points for future cooperation:

- trainers organising common/joint EVS trainings should have outstanding EVS project experience in the country as well as the professional skills and attitudes to run such events;
- the most difficult part of the common/joint training is its organisational preparation, which includes a lot of communication and explanations to make the event transparent both in terms of quality and financing.

The experimental phase confirmed the reality of many EVS hosting projects and most of the reasons why SALTO EECA got involved in the EVS Trainings cycle in Eastern Europe and Caucasus. The preparation involved in the common/joint EVS trainings that took place particularly indicated the need to organise such events on a regular basis.

In September 2007, SALTO EECA Resource Centre decided to organise a group of trainers from Eastern Europe & Caucasus, ⇨





already experienced in EVS, to support the EVS Trainings cycle on a deeper level and with a stronger impact. Between 15-23 September, almost twenty trainers met in Simeiz, Ukraine for a high quality level Training of EVS Trainers. The objectives were as follows:

- Deepening knowledge about European Voluntary Service (EVS);
- Exchanging experience about organising and providing EVS trainings, especially on-arrival, but also pre-departure, mid-term and evaluation meetings (the EVS Trainings cycle);
- Developing skills, competences and attitudes necessary for providing EVS trainings;
- Developing / Reconstructiing a group of EVS Trainers in EECA region;
- Improving the EVS trainings system provided by SALTO Resource Centre in EECA Region.

Are you looking for professional EVS training for your volunteers in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus? Do you want to make sure that volunteers are trained on a high, professional level and that the SALTO EECA Resource Centre is involved?

COOPERATE WITH OUR EECA EVS TRAINERS!

EECA EVS Trainers will contact sending and hosting organisations just before the volunteer arrives in the EECA country to propose the place, date, content and budget of the common/joint EVS training. You can be sure that there

will be also volunteers from other organisations and your volunteer will be able to create essential contacts and relations with different EVS volunteers in the country.

After the training, EVS trainers will provide you with a qualified report!

You can see some examples here:

www.salto-youth.net/EVStrainingsReports

PROJECT COORDINATORS AND PROMOTERS!

Please make sure that you include at least 500 euro for on-arrival training as well as 400 euro for the mid-term meeting in the project budget.

Agree with your project partners about the necessity for common/joint training for your EVS volunteers.

Do you want to ask detailed questions about the EVS Trainings cycle in EECA or contact a specific group of EVS trainers in EECA?

Please let us know: eeca@salto-youth.net

Learn more about the details of EVS Trainings in EECA: www.salto-youth.net/EVStrainingsEECA





DATE	VENUE	TITLE
12-17 February 2008	Ukraine	EECA Multipliers Meeting
7-13 April 2008	Turkey	“LAB 3 active” Training Course
6-12 April, 2008	Lithuania	“Getting to the roots of Citizenship” Training Course
15-19 April 2008	Ukraine	Youth Policy Workshops
12-18 May 2008	Poland	„East&West Included” Partnership Building Activity
1-7 June 2008	Slovenia	“Let’s WORK with our Neighbours” Training Course
9-15 June 2008	Poland	“Changing locally – cooperating internationally” Training Course
5-12 July 2008	Luxemburg	“Intercultural Competences” Training Course
13-20 September 2008	Turkey	“Building Bridges in conflict areas” Training Course

Visit our website to find more information  www.salto-youth.net/activitieseeeca

Meeting of the Network of Multipliers of the Youth in Action Programme in Eastern Europe and Caucasus, Ukraine 12-17 February 2008. This will be the annual meeting of all 30 members of the Network, which will aim to evaluate the work done in 2007 and plan activities for 2008. The meeting will be also accompanied by training sessions on multiplication, and promotional and informational skills development.

Meeting of the Network of Multipliers

“LAB 3 active” Turkey 7-13 April 2008. This TC is being organised by the SALTO EECA RC in cooperation with the Turkish National Agency. The “LAB 3 active” will gather together 26 experienced youth workers representing active organisations in Programme countries and the EECA region. The course aims to explore non-formal education methods for increasing youth participation in the Youth in Action Programme, in cooperation with EECA Neighbouring Partner Countries. Why is it called “LAB 3 active”?

LAB 3 active

- LAB because it will be a laboratory, as we are working on methods;
- 3 as we want it to be innovative, there are three possible activities for cooperation with Neighbouring Partner Countries (EVS, youth exchanges, training & networking) and because action 3 is associated with this kind of cooperation;
- active, because we are focusing on youth participation!

TC “Getting to the roots of Citizenship”, Lithuania, 6-12 April 2008. This Training Course is organised by the Lithuanian National Agency. Aims of this training are to develop the attitudes and skills of youth workers, to improve citizenship education in youth work and to explore and understand experiential learning and outdoor education methodology as an approach for youth citizenship education. Youth workers and leaders working directly with groups of young people in their own communities in Programme Countries and the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region are invited to join the Training.

TC Getting to the roots of Citizenship

Youth policy workshops, Ukraine, 15-19 April 2008. This seminar is organised by SALTO EECA RC in cooperation with the Partnership Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. This event will bring together representatives of Youth Ministries and Youth Councils as well as youth workers from EECA countries to discuss topics related to youth policies in the region.

Youth policy workshops



„East&West Included” Partnership Building Activity, Poland 12-18 May 2008. This event is organised by SALTO EECA RC in cooperation with the Polish National Agency. The event’s main aims are to create contacts between organisations and build partnerships; to exchange experiences; to introduce methods of working with disabled youth in Poland and other Programme Countries as well as in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus; and to explore the opportunities within the Youth in Action Programme for international work with young disabled people. The PBA/SV will involve 26 participants who work with young disabled people, and who are experienced in international cooperation or have an interest in cooperation within the Youth in Action Programme.

“East&West Included” Partnership Building Activity

“Let’s WORK with our Neighbours”, Slovenia, 1-7 June 2008. This Training Course is a continuation of the cooperation between Regional SALTOs Euromed, South East Europe and Eastern Europe & Caucasus RCs. Slovenian, French and Polish National Agencies are highly involved in the event. The idea is to explore ways of cooperation between Programme and Partner Countries within framework of the Youth in Action Programme. The training will focus especially on future cross-regional partnerships and youth project management. “Let’s WORK with the Neighbours” will be a big event that will gather together 80 youth workers from Programme and Neighbouring Partner Countries.

Let’s WORK with our Neighbours

“Changing locally – cooperating internationally” TC, Poland 9-15 June 2008. This training is organised by SALTO EECA RC in cooperation with the Polish National Agency. The main aim of this event is to increase the participation of young people in their local communities through international cooperation. The Training Course will bring together 24 participants from Programme countries and the EECA region.


Changing locally – cooperating internationally

TC “Intercultural Competences”, Luxembourg, 5-12 July 2008. The Luxembourgian National Agency organise a Training Course to develop mutual understanding for different cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages; to develop intercultural competences and promote intercultural dialogue; to help in contact making between youth workers and youth leaders from the different countries; and to share and learn from different experiences and work realities in different countries. Organisers are especially inviting youth leaders and youth and social workers from organisations that work with young immigrants and/or with multicultural and mixed ethnic groups.

Intercultural Competences

TC “Building Bridges in conflict areas”, Turkey, 13 – 20 September 2008. This Training Course is organised by SALTO EECA RC in cooperation with the Turkish National Agency and SALTO SEE RC. The aims of the training are to explore youth work experiences and developments in conflict areas, increase the skills and abilities needed for pro-active interventions in the youth field in conflict zones, and build up partnerships for future projects in the area of conflict youth work. “Building Bridges in conflict areas” will bring together 30 active youth workers who are experienced in the youth field (especially in conflict area youth work) from Programme Countries as well as from the EECA and SEE regions.

Building Bridges in conflict areas




SALOME ASATIANI is a journalist and a media researcher from Tbilisi, Georgia. Currently, she is a correspondent at RFE/RL's Central Newsroom. She has spent 10 years in radio, starting out as a DJ at a rock station in Tbilisi. She joined RFE/RL's Georgian Service in 2004, producing the „Another Face” weekly program focusing on Georgia's ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities. Salome Asatiani studied film history and theory at Tbilisi State University. In 2000 she obtained an MA in media studies from Sussex University, UK, passing with distinction. She also has an MPhil in gender studies, obtained from the Central European University. [✉ AsatianiS@rferl.org](mailto:AsatianiS@rferl.org)




OLGA BUZINOVA – Russian living in Lithuania. She is involved into youth work since 1999: in the beginning in Russia as the head of ICYE Russia and afterwards as project coordinator in Lithuanian Youth Organisation for Voluntary Activities “Austeja Friends”. Olga is a freelance trainer in the youth field, member of Lithuanian NA Trainers Pool. She is specializing on such topics as International Cooperation focusing on EECA region, Project Management in the frame of Youth/Youth in Action programme in general and EVS particularly, Intercultural Learning, Social Inclusion and Non-formal Education. Majority of her projects/trainers work is in the field of cooperation with EECA region or integration of national minority youth. [✉ obus@mail.ru](mailto:obus@mail.ru)



GIORGI KAKULIA – is President of the Academy for Peace and Development since its establishment in 2002. He is actively involved in International Youth work in the frames of Youth in Action Programme since 2004. He is a freelance trainer and works for several international and national organizations. He is a multiplier, EVS trainer and EVS training coordinator in Georgia for SALTO EECA. He has been involved in implementation of various international and national youth projects since 2000. He holds Master in Mathematics and Bachelor in Informatics. [✉ giorgi.kakulia@gmail.com](mailto:giorgi.kakulia@gmail.com)



RENATA KALIVOD is youth worker and trainer in youth non-formal education field for around 10 years, being involved in youth work and training at all the levels, from local to international one, working with different topics from the Human Rights, ICL, and outdoor education to project and organisational management. Has a good experience in regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea region and between the EU and EECA countries. Besides, has experience in youth policy, being active as board member in the National Youth Council of Latvia for 5 years. Member of the Pool of Trainers of the European Youth Forum and of the Latvian National Agency for YOUTH in ACTION Programme. [✉ renatakalivod@yahoo.com](mailto:renatakalivod@yahoo.com)



LAIMONAS RAGAUSKAS. He is a free-lance trainer in the area of non-formal learning, working for various youth work organisations, local and European institutions. He currently lives in Vilnius, Lithuania, but working across the Europe and beyond. He is mainly dealing with such topics like diversity, networking, participation and citizenship in the youth field. He gathered most valuable youth work experiences in Centre for Creative Expression since year of 2000 and currently he is active in Association of Youth Non-formal Education in Lithuania. At home he is exploring youth life by dealing his three children and other young people around. Additionally Laimonas is involved in informal exploration of clubbing and sauna cultures in the World. [✉ laimis001@gmail.com](mailto:laimis001@gmail.com)



TOMASZ SZOPA – project officer at the SALTO EECA Resource Centre, Warsaw, Poland. He is involved in the international youth work since 2000. His interests focus mainly on Eastern Europe and Caucasus region, its social transformation and ethnic minorities. In youth work his specialisation goes across voluntarism, group management, intercultural learning and evaluation process. Tomasz graduated from Sociology and Ethnology faculties at Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. [✉ tszopa@youth.org.pl](mailto:tszopa@youth.org.pl)



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