# Coaching

# Guide

↘ Are you a youth worker, a youth leader, a volunteer in a youth organisation,
an officer working in an institution for European youth programmes,
a teacher, an educator, a trainer, or simply a support or resource person
who wants to help young people to develop their own initiatives?

Then we invite you to take a look at this handbook!

How would you name the activity of helping young people to prepare their projects?
You might have used the terms 'supporting', 'advising', 'counselling', 'mentoring',
'accompanying',… or maybe you have already heard about the word 'coaching' to
refer to this kind of activities? Does 'coaching' apply to youth work?
How do we understand 'coaching' within Youth Initiatives? Why people coach?
Why do they (you) want to be a coach? What does it mean to be a coach?

Somehow 'coaching' relates to opening the door to young people for taking the
initiative, for being active, for showing their interests, for taking care of their own
contributions and development, for making the world a better place…

Written by an international team of authors for local or international use!

This coaching guide can be downloaded for free at:
www.salto-youth.net/youthinitiatives

# COACHING YOUTH INITIATIVES

## Guide for Supporting Youth Participation

A guide that explores the concepts of Coaching, Youth Initiatives and Youth Participation, including practical tools and methods, advice and information, opportunities and support for those encouraging young people's participation in Youth Initiatives

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# COACHING YOUTH INITIATIVES

## Guide for Supporting Youth Participation

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# SALTO-YOUTH Stands for...

… 'Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the YOUTH programme'. The European Commission has created a network of eight SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the YOUTH programme, which provides young people with valuable non-formal learning experiences.

SALTO's aim is to support European YOUTH projects dealing with important issues such as Social Inclusion or Cultural Diversity, with actions such as Youth Initiatives (Action 3 of the YOUTH programme), with regions such as EuroMed, South-East Europe or Eastern Europe and Caucasus, with Training and Co-operation activities and with Information tools for National Agencies of the YOUTH programme.

In these European priority areas, SALTO-YOUTH provides resources, information and training for National Agencies and European youth workers. Several resources in the above areas are offered via www.SALTO-YOUTH.net. Find online the European Training Calendar, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, Trainers Online for Youth, links to online resources and much more…

SALTO-YOUTH actively co-operates with other actors in European youth work such as the National Agencies of the YOUTH programme, the Council of Europe, European youth workers and training organisers.

⮧ The SALTO YOUTH Initiatives Resource Centre www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/youthinitiatives/

The SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre (in French Community of Belgium) provides support, information and training on Youth Initiatives of the YOUTH programme (Action 3), with the aim to promote this Action and increase its visibility at both national and European level. SALTO Youth Initiatives works with National Agencies and youth workers to develop a coaching strategy to support and enhance the quality of Youth Initiative projects. Furthermore SALTO Youth Initiatives also contribute to facilitate the search of partners and to empower young people to develop networking projects.

To reach its aims SALTO Youth Initiatives provides the following resources:

- training courses on coaching and peer education
- training courses on networking project management
- annual magazine on Youth Initiatives related topics
- database of local Youth Initiative projects updated every year
- up-to-date information about Youth Initiatives and opportunities via the Youth Initiatives Newsletter
- a serie of methodological toolbox ready to use for organising training courses on Youth Intiatives
- an overview of trainers and support persons in the field of Youth Initiatives

For more details you can visit the Youth Initiative pages of the SALTO-YOUTH website: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/YouthInitiatives/

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# Welcome to 'Coaching Youth Initiatives'

> 'A magic dwells in each beginning, protecting us, tells us how to live'… a German poem claims. You open the book, the title may already have caught your attention, or the strange mouse might have made you think 'what is this book about'? So a few words to introduce you to 'Coaching Youth Initiatives – Guide for Supporting Youth Participation'. The title hopefully speaks for itself. It reflects our attempt to come to a common understanding on how to provide support and advice to groups of young people running Youth Initiative projects. The action of 'coaching' is being progressively developed within the youth field and non-formal education, both at national and trans-national level, but still there is not a clear picture of what this practice looks like, particularly when it comes to supporting specific projects such as Youth Initiatives.

But what we found on this field is lovely 'PACo', a vivid little creature with a lot of curiosity and sensitive antennas on his mousey moustache. He will be with you as your 'Personal Assistant of the Coach' throughout the book, bringing additional colour and a little sunshine into the reading.

So, let PACo invite you now to take the first steps into the Coaching Youth Universe.

> Feedback is welcome at **youthinitiatives@salto-youth.net**

PACo
Personal Assistant of the Coach

PACo encourages you to climb aboard the  coaching bi-cycle of youth participation and to enjoy the journey of Youth Initiatives

# Foreword



↘ Through their actions, Youth Initiatives enable a large number of young people to become inventive in their daily life and to speak out on their local needs and interests but also on the main world issues. The idea behind this action of the European programmes 'Youth' (2000-2006) and 'Youth in Action' (2007-2013) is to ensure that young people develop their creativity by giving them the opportunity to try out ideas through initiatives on different areas of life such as: arts and culture, social inclusion, environment, heritage protection, youth participation, European awareness, rural development, youth policies, health, anti-drugs/ substances abuse, youth leisure, anti-racism/ xenophobia, equal opportunities, youth sport, media and communication and lots more. Youth Initiatives allow young people to be directly and actively involved in their local community and therefore are a real springboard for youth participation.

↘ **Youth Initiatives: at the heart of contemporary change**
The wish of young people to participate in the life of their district, city, town or village, as well as have their say in worldwide questions, is relevant and young people are getting more and more involved. However, we can observe an evolution in these forms of involvement. By comparison to their elders, there are less debates, long arguments and interminable exchanges of political views. Now the method of involvement is more creative and is directly linked to the evolution of media and globalisation.

A particular fondness is becoming apparent in young people for creative forms of involvement, with images, music, theatre, digital developments, youth information, health and drugs education, environmental projects and social actions to the fore. A single Youth Initiative can achieve a lot of things such as creation of an art gallery for the display of work by young artists of all origins and cultures, creation of an opinion-based newspaper or local radio station, production of a discussion site, debates and eyewitness accounts, production of a CD-rom on a European concern, organisation of events/festivals in rural surroundings, suggestion of activities to young children in class, so as to help them discover Europe…

↘ **Youth Initiatives: a link for political and social Europe**
Youth Initiatives represent an essential action within the European YOUTH programme to ensure that young people find their place in political and social Europe, so that all young people are able to get involved in the issues of today and tomorrow.  In allowing young people to get involved in a joint project, they offer concrete and lively involvement, through which young people come to an agreement on objectives  and achieve results together. They also offer the opportunity for young people to try their hand

at taking responsibility, negotiating between themselves and their surroundings, planning and promotion.

Youth Initiatives is an action that links an area (where the young people live) with a common interest in the European context. That is to say that these projects are about a theme or concern common to young Europeans, in line with the values upheld in Europe and given priority. By means of Youth Initiatives, young people have the chance to become actors in their own life and torch bearers for the future. It provides a platform for suggesting solutions and improvements at a local level through the creation of projects or tools and arouses the interest of other young people Europe-wide. Moreover, this action constitutes a remarkable means for providing experience in responsibility, autonomy and involvement for the benefit of a common interest.

## ⮌ Youth Initiatives: experiential learning

Youth Initiatives represent a great tool for non-formal and experiential learning. The defining characteristic of these projects is that they take the day-to-day experience of the young people as a starting point.

By means of Youth Initiatives, young people have the opportunity to gain cognitive skills (gathering of information on Europe, other cultures, European institutions…), social and relational skills (communicating, negotiating, group debate, acting in combination with others, promoting a project, meeting people, listening, power to convince…), ethical skills (openness to others, development of solidarity, respect of the democratic principles of human freedom and equality…), pragmatic and strategic skills (filling in an application form, respecting deadlines, planning and carrying out an action…) or even political skills in the sense mentioned previously (putting oneself at the service of the common interest).

## ⮌ Youth Initiatives: a step-by-step adventure

The value of Youth Initiatives experience does not lie solely in the quality or performance of the project. Rather it lies first and foremost in the wealth of the project processes. That is why those supporting Youth Initiatives have encounters and negotiation within a group as their main priority. The adventure begins with cultural and social diversity, and relations between young women and men, and this adventure can be seen as a progressive process: communicate, gather information, co-exist, express, use imagination, develop creativity, carry out a common production and promote it, take the initiative, get involved, commit oneself and act. Of course we are aware that each project may start at a different level depending on the young people and the context.

Where is the place of 'coaching' in such an adventure? Supporting a Youth Initiative cannot be improvised but requires a solid preparation. This handbook is intended to guide those people coaching youth projects, to give some points of reference, keys for self-reflection, suggestions and practical tools. If this is what you are looking for, please join in!

Majo Hansotte

*Citizenship Officer*
*Bureau International Jeunesse*
*French Community of Belgium*

# intro-

## INTRODUCTION

### ⬂ Why this Coaching Guide?

Simply because we believe it is needed. Within the field of non-formal education in the youth sector, it has become increasingly evident that a variety of support methods and strategies are required to ensure active participation, quality standards, recognition, and even health and safety. The European YOUTH programme already has a well established system and understanding of 'mentoring', supporting individuals who are realising European Voluntary Service projects. Thus we asked ourselves if it could be possible to transfer a similar type of support to Youth Initiative projects?

After consulting a wide range of practitioners supporting Youth Initiatives we felt that there is something quite different than mentoring that happens when supporting Youth Initiatives. We think mentoring describes best the relationship and activities required for individual support as in European Voluntary Service. But what about supporting a group of young people in a Youth Initiative project?

The term we chose and had a common understanding of was 'coaching'. Generally coaching has been understood as a process in which people and teams are helped to make the best of themselves and facilitate the way of working effectively as part of a team. But nowadays this word has a wider meaning. And even though throughout different fields this term 'coaching' has many meanings and interpretations, we identified it as one of the ways of increasing the quality of Youth Initiatives as well as working towards autonomy and active participation.

Coaching is a relatively new element in supporting youth work and it might be the case that you would never use the equivalent of the English word 'coaching' in your language to describe the activity you do. You might think of sport coaches or high paid consultants in suits who help managers to be better competitors, but not of what you do. We thought of all those people who support youth projects and initiatives and would propose calling their consulting, helping, supporting or advising, 'coaching'.

What you, as people supporting Youth Initiatives do have in common with other 'coaches'? It might sound surprising but the job you do has so much in common with the job done by business or sport coaches. You have to have the experience and skills on which you base your support, a clear picture of the change you want to achieve with the group you coach (from the start till the ending point) and tools to get there. You need as well to be rather longer than short term perspective oriented; it's almost impossible to coach a group within one meeting without monitoring and following their development. And you see if your coaching bears fruits or not, if your youth team 'plays better' or 'bring more benefits' to its project life.

So how to encourage young people to be active throughout the project? How to offer the needed support in each step of the project? What are the coaching steps of a project? How to deal with the challenges between coaching and autonomy? This Coaching Guide has been developed as a handbook, with the aim of offering practical support for people actively coaching Youth Initiatives. Hopefully you will find some answers to the above questions in this book.

## ⬎ Who is it meant for?

Somehow this guide, 'Coaching Youth Initiatives', has arrived in your hands. Either our promotion was incredibly successful, or you had an expectation connected with the title, which made you make the effort to get this book. For sure you are exactly the right target group for this material!

When the international editorial team of this guide first met in Brussels we had somebody in mind just like you: motivated, active and directly working with young people, is that right? Maybe you have a vague understanding of your supporting role with these young people as 'coaching'. Perhaps you have the motivation to coach in the future, because of your own experiences as a young person, because of a need in your organisation or because of professional aims. Thus, the readers we address in this book are as diverse as the 'landscapes' of European youth work itself, starting with young people who want to support their own Youth Initiative to adult professionals, who want to expand their knowledge and skills in youth work.

Your coaching activity might follow diverse objectives, according to your organisation's profile, the nature of youth work in your country or your target group. A handbook on such topics published at European level would never be able to fit to all these possible backgrounds and needs. In working as an international team, bringing together people from eight European countries and with such diverse background as we expect you readers to have, we attempt to benefit rather than loose from the diversity.

Through our different views and realities of coaching young people you will find in this book a number of different experiences and approaches towards this topic. We strongly recommend you to take from this whatever fits into your reality and needs. You can read this as any other book starting from the beginning, and reading to the end. Or you can look only for practical tools and choose to skip the rest. You know better than we do what you are looking for. We tried to give this book a shape that enables you to easily find what you are looking for.

## ↘ What is it all about?

What we publish here is definitely different to what you can find in handbooks on professional coaching of managers or sportsmen. Not only because of the field we work in and the framework we gave to this book by connecting coaching with youth work. It differs as well because of our attitude, which makes this not just a compilation of different and possibly contradictory elements. The authors agree on certain values in coaching

youth projects: firstly, it should lead to greater autonomy and active participation of young people and, secondly, the impact of the coaching should not replace the ideas and interests of the young people. You will find this 'attitude of coaching' more developed throughout the whole book.

We will start the journey with **chapter 1 'Opening the Door for Taking Initiative'** in which we will take a closer look into some of the key concepts behind the topics of the guide like Youth Initiatives and Active Participation. You will find views on the political relevance of such active youth participation and the role that coaching plays in this.

As a handbook which aims to offer practical support for people active in coaching youth projects, the biggest part of this publication deals with 'coaching' itself and the adaptation of different coaching techniques to the field of youth work. While **chapter 2 'The Coaching Mirror'** offers a number of perspectives to reflect on the role of a coach and implications of the coaching effects, **chapter 3 'The Coaching Bi-cycle'** comes to the point of how coaching might be structured and of what elements and methods it should consist within the frame of youth work. At this point of the book we hope you will be already seduced by the idea of coaching Youth Initiatives. But you still might be asking yourself how to optimise the process, how to make the best of your coaching practice for improving active participation of every young person of a Youth Initiative. **Chapter 4 'Increasing the Velocity for Youth Participation'** will help you to identify different dimensions of participation and will provide you with some hints and advice to act in concrete situations.

As an illustration of concrete projects, a number of examples of Youth Initiatives and related coaching

experiences will be presented in **chapter 5 'Best Practice and Beyond'** We will try to throw some light on how coaching looks and can feel in reality, for you to get inspired about what a Youth Initiative project could be. For you to learn from our own practices, good and bad ones.

Finally, to make this handbook helpful with a practical purpose, **chapter 6 'Bi-cycle Tools'** includes a selection of methods, techniques and instruments to be used when coaching Youth Initiatives, for you to adapt them to the context you are working in and to the people you are working with.

Last but not least we would like to thank all the people who have contributed to this book greatly with their opinions, ideas and experiences. Also thanks to 30 young people from 12 European countries and to coaches and participants of national and international seminars whose contributions are included in different chapters of the guide, as quotas from interviews and questionnaires.

We hope you enjoy reading this Coaching Guide and find some benefit for your youth work. If you want to share your coaching experience, tools, methods, links, additional material with us, or simply give feed-back about this handbook, please use the 'Card to the editors' we publish on the last page.

Coaching(ly) Yours,
*Your Editorial Team*

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**Be active!** Don't wait for others to solve your problems! Show your interest! Take care of your own contributions and development! See how you can make the world a better place… It is very likely that you have come across this type of slogan more than once, since they seem to be quite popular these days. So why bother? Why is it so important to be 'hands on' and take the initiative?

In this chapter we will play around with the terms 'Youth Initiatives' and 'Active Participation' in order to start reflecting on some of these core issues. Why participate and what does it mean to be 'active' for a young person? How can tools such as local and international Youth Initiatives be used to empower active participation? And why is it an issue at all?

# 1.1  The Weather Forecast for European Youth Policy

*A warm front is bringing a heat of motivation and interest in the areas of youth participation and active citizenship...*

Participation of young people in public life is not only the core of the current guide but is one of the key issues in the European youth field in general. Recent years have shown a remarkable rise in attention to the issues of youth participation and active citizenship. The European Union as well as the Council of Europe are the two actors with probably the widest influence in the area of youth policy at a European level.

On one hand the attention towards youth participation is evident in terms of political will, as various declarations express the importance. *„The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies",* states the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life of Council of Europe (revised version since 2003). Nevertheless the intention does not concern only the grass roots level but has a higher political interest. On 14-15.12.2001 the leaders of the EU adopted the Laeken Declaration stating that the Union has to resolve three basic challenges. One of these is *„...how to bring citizens and primarily the young, closer to the European design and the European institutions"*, ambitious but a truly important objective.

In addition, it is of great importance that the European Commission's White Paper „A New Impetus for European Youth" (2001) identified youth participation as one of the priorities for action in the European youth field. The reasons for this referred to significant demographic and socio-cultural trends affecting youth in Europe. In particular the prolongation of the period of 'youth', the need to attract youth to community work, when individualism becomes more and more the tendency in societal developments and the interest of young people in project-based rather than organisational participation mechanisms, amongst others.

Although the reality is that, very often, a political paper does not change much in practice, in the youth field a lot of emphasis has been paid to guaranteeing further attention to issues raised by the White Paper. In the area of youth participation one should first of all mention the open method of co-ordination (OMC, see the White Paper „A new impetus for European Youth", 2001) and the questionnaires drawn up by the European Commission.

These are aimed at identifying practices of Member States in three main areas:
- participation of young people in local community life,
- participation of young people in institutional systems of representative democracy and
- education for active participation.

According to the results of the questionnaires the participation systems are diverse, youth councils, youth parliaments and youth associations being the most common systems which represent local communities (Analysis of Member States' replies to the Commission questionnaires on youth participation and information, 2003).

Furthermore, the report seeks to identify practices of coaching for youth in their participative actions and finds that „...*there is an emphasis on the role of actors on the ground, in particular that of social workers, who act as an essential relay in informing young people about public authority action and programmes, providing support for them in implementing projects and initiatives, and publicising and utilising results. As well as information, guidance and counselling activities, support for participation includes training, including training in project management, and exchange of experience*" (ibd, p. 8). In this way, even if very generally, it still provides some guidelines for coaching actions in youth projects.

The political actions described above gain their very practical impact through different programmes and actions supported by national authorities as well as the European Commission. For example the pan-European programme supporting active participation and non-formal learning in the area of youth.

## Non-Formal Education and Active Participation    <span style="color:red">1.2</span>

The good practice of common action in the form of a pan-European youth field programme dates back to the 1980's and has shown great development ever since. Whilst writing the current guide, the European programme called 'YOUTH' (2000-2006) is operating and aims at providing non-formal learning and mobility experiences for young people in the age of 15-25 as well as to support co-operation in the youth work field. With its five actions (Youth for Europe, European Voluntary Service, Youth Initiatives, Joint Actions and Support Measures), the field of activities within the programme is rather wide, involving both activities centred at individuals (e.g. European Voluntary Service) as well as those supporting the participation of youth groups. The action which is primarily designed to provide youth groups with opportunities to contribute to their local community is Youth Initiatives.

Youth Initiatives do not only live in today's achievements and concerns but aim to look ahead to improve conditions for tomorrow. The European Commission, in co-operation with other actors involved with youth, has launched discussions on a new European programme for youth so-called 'Youth in Action' and starting in 2007. Youth Initiatives are one of the ways to support youth participation and are firmly part of the new programme 'Youth in Action'.

In this initiative young people can choose to concentrate on the needs of their local community and their peers. Where a group would like to challenge themselves to implement a project in co-operation with one or several youth groups at international level, the opportunity exists to get support for international Youth Initiatives.

While a local initiative aims to bring a European touch to purely local activities (whether it be by choosing a theme which is relevant also for other countries in Europe or by getting inspired by similar kind of projects from other countries without direct co-operation) the trans-national co-operation brings an added value. It combines the local activities (each partner group implements them in their home environment) as well as activities realised in international partnership (exchange of own experiences, producing common materials, organising international events…).

In that way it is not only doing something actively for your local community but also about making your contribution towards today's Europe. It may sound big words but probably for anyone who has struggled to realise a project in partnership with youth groups from another country, sharing the same values and ideals and seeking to make a change through your project activities, it has great meaning and value.

So how does it all work? The framework of the pan-European programme has been designed by the European Commission. The Commission is also responsible for the efficiency of the programme at a European level and so set respective priorities, conditions and criteria. Having recognised that the area of youth participation is a high political priority and might find a practical realisation in Youth Initiative projects in the frame of the European 'Youth' programme, the European Commission has also launched the SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre in 2003 in order to support Youth Initiatives with respective trainings, materials and resources. (More information about SALTO Youth Initiatives is available at the official website of SALTO-YOUTH ⌒ http://www.salto-youth.net/)

Compared to structures at European level mentioned above, closer to young people and youth workers, who would like to realise their ideas through initiative projects, there are the National Agencies. These are structures in all countries participating in the programme to provide information, project counselling, training and other support. National Agencies also oversee funding and project applications. (You can find the contact details of National Agencies at the official website of the European Commission ⌒ http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/index_en.html)

⤵ *"A Youth Initiative is a way to stress an interesting subject or very serious problem and show it to others, making them also think and do something about it. From my point of view Youth Initiatives help to grow more intelligent and sensitive generation, since people who have ever done or attended a project of that kind, seem to return and stay with it for as long as possible"*
*Jaana (19), Estonia*

As already mentioned Youth Initiatives are a great tool for active participation of young people in their local realities. The idea behind this concept is that young people themselves should take the initiative to make their life better, solve the problems around them and respond to their needs (within their possible scope of action and influence) instead of waiting for somebody to do it for them. Most of the Youth Initiatives are thus directly linked with local community life but some of them concern regional, national or trans-national issues.

The scheme below reflects the core of 'active participation' within Youth Initiatives. Being active gives one the power of influencing the world around you and allows young people to use their creativity in working on common tasks.

⤵ *"For me a 'Youth Initiative' is a chance for youth with ideas to put those ideas into life. As for 'active participation'. it is not to wait for others to do the things that you expect to be done."*
*Tomasz Moleda (21), Poland*

shaping reality    being active

taking part

being responsible forthings we can influence

**Active Participation**

nothing about uswithout us

working together

impact on decision-making process    self-realisation

Benefits of young people's active participation are numerous: having an impact on things which are important for young people, learning new skills and capacities, expressing one's own creativity and interests, working in groups of peers who share common perspectives, shaping self-responsibility together with responsibility for local community, and lots more.

Additionally there is one more thing which is worth mentioning: the recognition of youth as an active and vivid force. In cases where young people take an active role to contribute to their local environment they are seen by others not as a potential source of problems (which is often the case in communities where youth is passive) but as a very important resource group and partner whose opinion is to be taken seriously and with whom youth issues should be discussed.

The list of possible themes for Youth Initiatives is not limited, the creativity and imagination of young people are the only limits. These could concern art and culture, urban or rural development, peer education, equal opportunities, work with migrants, work with disabled, elderly or homeless people or could concentrate on youth information, protection of the environment or developing other interests of young people. Special priority is given to initiatives which involve young people who have fewer opportunities due to health, social, economical, geographical or cultural reasons.

### Local/ Regional/ National Youth Initiatives
When realising a Youth Initiative at local level, a group of young people needs to co-operate together in carrying out their common idea, which on the one hand reflects their own interests and on the other has 'local impact' and 'European dimension'. Both of the terms are commonly used in European youth work but what do they mean?

### Local Impact
There are many ways for young people to be active and participative in their local life. Setting up their own youth club in the neighbourhood, creating walls for graffiti painters, organising paths for frogs under high-ways, recruiting volunteers to help in elderly people's houses, designing anti-drugs promotion in schools and clubs, creating an international youth newspaper... these are just some examples of young people actions undertaken as Youth Initiatives. So it is evident that the forms of active participation can vary and thus can also be understood in many ways. In chapter 5 'Increasing the Velocity for Youth Participation' we will come back to different definitions of participation, factors which influence it and the role of a coach in empowering young people to be active participants. But before that we would need to take a look at what is a Youth Initiative.

Indeed, one of the ways to look at the local impact is to identify how the idea which young people want to develop will bring benefits to their local community. It will change something, help to solve some local problems and develop local life. It also means that young people will try to involve some other people and institutions in working together such as a local council, the town hall, the municipality, the schools, associations, youth clubs, church, newspaper, etc. Working on an issue which has an importance for the local community, as well as co-operating together and integrating local forces in order to achieve goals which are important for local communities, this is the heart of the local impact.

Different Youth Initiatives obviously have rather different expressions of local impact. Setting up a pool of young volunteers to work with disabled kids and helping to organise their free time has

already had a huge local impact, since in that community nobody had ever before thought about integrating able young people and kids with disabilities. It goes without saying that the local impact depends a lot on the different realities and needs of the local community but it is often related to helping groups of people who face difficult situations. Being able to initiate new possibilities in an area through a Youth Initiative project can definitely have a huge local impact.

**European Dimension**
The European dimension is the second important element of a Youth Initiative. Does an initiative which involves only local activities and no international cooperation have a European dimension? If yes, how? And if no, how to develop this dimension?

It is not easy (or maybe it is even impossible) to give 'the one and the right' answer. Nevertheless, one of the ways to start reflecting on this is through questioning: is the theme we have for our Youth Initiative only local or does also reflect European issues? For example in a Youth Initiative dealing with environment, the European dimension is reflected by the environment protection, concern and challenge that is common to any European country.

Does the Youth Initiative project you support involve groups of young people who have limited access to opportunities, such as the ones offered by the European Community programmes, and is your initiative aiming to equalise their chances in the society? For example: young people who are often marginalised by society because they are different (different colour, different mental or physical abilities, different culture, different sexual orientation, different religion…) or because they are in a vulnerable situation (lacking family support, facing poverty, limited qualifications, criminality and abuse, addiction to drugs, unemployment…) or because they are simply living in rural or remote areas with limited access to information. If your initiative is targeting any of those young people, you might see this as European dimension since working towards equal opportunities is one of the European priorities.

Having designed a project, do young people use methods or ideas which were developed in other European countries? For example if a Youth Initiative group is working on graffiti and aims to use methods developed by youth in some other European country, it could well be the element of European dimension in this project. Actually almost any kind of European co-operation or experiences which help young people to add new elements to their initiative could be seen as European dimension of the project.

Based on this, in principle we can see the European dimension as an added value for a local project. Try 'taking off your own shoes' for a moment and take a look at your local initiative from 'above' to see which elements are connected with European issues, values, priorities, themes, etc. There are obviously loads of materials reflecting European trends on the Internet. You might also like to look for more information about actual European priorities in the European Youth Portal launched by the European Commission (see link at the 'Bi-cycle Parts Supplies'). But you might also like to take the challenge of starting up an international Youth Initiative from scratch.





"For me a Youth Initiative it's a way to start to make something really good to change society"
*Gianlucca (26), Italy*

## Transnational Youth Initiatives

If asked to explain what the transnational Youth Initiatives are, you might have some difficulties. Youth initiatives are very often defined first of all by their clear impact at a local level, so that their relation to international issues might raise questions. The transnational Youth Initiatives, as introduced in the frame of the pan-European YOUTH programme, are based on the main elements of the local Youth Initiatives but have strong international networking and co-operation.

Activities within Transnational Youth Initiatives are designed as projects of co-operation between local youth initiatives from different countries where each of the partners work to the benefit of their local community. In other words, a Transnational Youth Initiative is a project where young people doing local activities co-operate together with international partners who have similar needs or interests in order to share and learn from other practices, methodologies, etc.

One of the added values of Transnational Youth Initiatives is that young people learn how to participate at European level. Ideally, such projects will allow young people to develop intercultural competences, to experience communication at international level, to learn how to work and take decisions within international teams, to share tasks and responsibilities with people from other countries. Participation in such projects helps to build self-confidence to take an active stance in their local community and implement ideas developed with European peers.

'Think global, act local', this well known motto applies also to Transnational Youth Initiatives since very often the examples of good practice from other countries motivate young people to start up a project to change their local environment and try to make their lives better. So it happens that by sharing experiences young people become more aware of realities in different countries and learn innovative ways to solve the issues concerning young people.

Transnational Youth Initiative projects run in co-operation with partners allow young people to apply experience of European peers in their local reality which is one of the very practical explanations of how transnational projects raise the young peoples' awareness of their role in the community life as active European citizens. Young people together with their peers from other countries search for common interests or concerns and by combining their efforts change their life for the better.

⬊ "Youth initiatives can be local or be done in co-operation with youth from other countries in addition to concerning local matters"
*Maria (20), Poland*

⬊ "I think that Youth Initiatives represents, for young people, a concrete possibility to compare themselves with contemporary life, themselves with young people of their age coming from other European countries"
*Claudio (24), Italy*

## Local/ Regional/ National versus Transnational Youth Initiatives

| Youth Initiatives* | Transnational Youth Initiatives* |
|---|---|
| local, regional or national co-operation | international co-operation based on networking principles |
| intercultural element is not necessarily present | intercultural element is present |
| can have regional or national mobility | can have regional, national or international mobility |
| core group from one country is building up the project, there is no need for international project partner | minimum two groups of young people from different countries are building up the project in co-operation |
| project has the theme/activities that reflect the interests of the core group and are concentrated on local issues | project has common themes/activities that are based on the interests of young people participating from different countries |
| continued local activities consisting of several events or actions | continued local and international activities consisting of several events or actions |
| core group takes the lead of the project | core groups from all participating countries share the leadership of the project |
| responsibilities and ownership of the project are shared among members of a core group | responsibilities and ownership of the project are shared among members of all partner groups |
| core group applies for the project and, if successful, gets funding | one of the partner groups applies for the project funding on behalf of all partners involved and, if successful, receives funding and distributes it among partners according to arrangements agreed beforehand |
| group dynamics mostly concerns the core group | group dynamics in national groups go in parallel with processes in international group through the people who have permanent contact with the partners |

Summing up, remember that in both local/ regional/ national and transnational Youth Initiatives, young people themselves should be responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of their project idea and it should bring benefits to the local community or communities of the partner groups involved in the project.

This guide focuses mainly on how to support local/ regional/ national Youth Initiatives, however due to differences between these projects and transnational ones a variety of suggestions for Transnational Youth Initiatives will be introduced and highlighted at different points throughout the guide.

# 1.4　Young People as Key Holders

To better understand what active participation means for young people and what kind of meanings they relate to the terms 'Youth Initiative' and 'Active Participation', young people from different European countries were interviewed. In addition to presenting the illustrating quotations through the guide, we would like to take a closer look into the opinions expressed during interviews as it brings out the perspectives of young Europeans on the main topics tackled in this guide. We consider the interviewed group of young people extensive not only in their geographical origins but also in their experiences in Youth Initiatives. Some of them have implemented transnational initiatives, some have experiences in local level initiatives, whilst others have no previous links to such projects. For the young people we interviewed while preparing this guide a Youth Initiative means many things:

➘ self development, opportunity to be active, responsibility for long-term ideas, willingness to help others, exchange of ideas, being engaged, working with others, creating of ones own world according to ones own needs, improving the situation of young people, realisation of one's own ideas and dreams, acting for others, trying out new paths and solutions, being independent from adult's decisions, common aims and actions…

The essence of these many answers is common to all, Youth Initiatives are young people's actions, undertaken by them to bring something new to, or change something in, their close surroundings. Moreover, as said by young people, Youth Initiatives give them recognition as partners at a European level in youth issues, since young people and not local authorities or schools, have received funding for realising their ideas.

Another aspect which young people emphasise is the link between self-development and developments in local community. As they have indicated, Youth Initiatives give them a chance to make a difference, to bring a small brick to the building of local life. Needing to do something, not to be passive, to take problems and difficulties into one's own hands, are recognised by young people as their own active participation in public life. The extent of the impact which their actions have on the local community is of high importance: *"I can influence what's around me"* was said by a young person.

Active participation is seen by young people as a multilayer construction (depending on the situation of youngsters). In some cases not staying at home in front of TV but doing something with others is already recognised as being active. In most cases active participation is linked directly with their projects and direct involvement of Youth Initiative group's members in all phases of the project. The last layer of active participation is seen as being fully aware of the importance and meaning of young people actions for local authorities, adults and other young people's who live in the same local community and whose interests active youngsters try to represent.

So, as far as those (one might say) idealistic ideas and understandings of active participation in Youth Initiatives are concerned there seems to be a rather good congruence between young people's point of view and politically defined objectives.

## Who Needs a Coach    1.5

In different stages of the Youth Initiative project young people have the chance to experience and take opportunities to learn new skills in areas such as working in groups, communication, project management, problem solving, conflict management, financial management, fundraising, public relations and lots more. It is quite an impressive list and brings forward the great potential of Youth Initiatives as pedagogical tools. But still in order to guarantee that the process turns into a valuable learning experience, young people may need some additional support. It might be because of difficulties they meet during the project process, limited skills or lack of previous experiences.

Being active is not difficult when you are young and full of energy. But doing a project within a European programme requires more than energy and motivation. Some skills and abilities, which young people might not possess, are required in order to respond to certain rules and responsibilities such us preparing a budget, planning activities, keeping deadlines, etc.

And once started, young people will probably face various challenges all through the project process. How to keep the group together? How to motivate their peers when they are bored and not willing to help any more? How to manage money, collect invoices and project materials, write reports, convince adults to be supportive, communicate with local communities and react in crisis situations? These are just some of the examples of situations where young people see a need for a coach who would help them out and give some support on how to move forward.

In most cases Youth Initiative projects are long term projects which raise an additional challenge as they result in a long term commitment for young people. According to young people the coach is especially needed to help out with the preparation of the project, checking out if everything is OK, keeping a handle on legal and financial issues as well as keeping an eye on the group dynamic.

It can also be the case that the only time young people identify a need for support and assistance is when being faced with a problem or crisis during the realisation of the project. For example, the biggest fear may be that either their group would collapse one day for different reasons or they would not be able to prepare all financial documentation according to the rules or sponsor's expectation. Remember that if the project or group collapses or folds, the legal responsibility for the project will be with at least one of the group members and possibly the supporting organisation. In these cases your support as a coach will likely be extremely valuable and much appreciated.

Last but not least, always keep in mind that the amount of support needed depends on the individual situations and needs of course, but should always respect the independence and autonomy of young people.

↘ "What I think is difficult is just to start a project. When starting a project, I think that advice from professionals is very important"
*Mari (18), Estonia*



↘ "All the time when realising our project we had a person to whom we could ask questions when we had any problem. This person wasn't taking over our project, she was always our shadow giving us support and help when needed."
*Tomasz (21), Poland*

# mir-
# ror

In this chapter we will share some thoughts and reflections on **coaching and the coach's role** in the context of work with groups of young people willing to or already implementing Youth Initiative projects. We believe these thoughts are also applicable to all the projects run by young people themselves, supported or/and accompanied by resource people who work as volunteers or professional youth workers.

So we will also invite you to look at the mirror and ask yourself: 'why am I coaching?' or, 'why do I want to be a coach? 'You might have different reasons for coaching: some of you want to support young people to realise their potential, others want to support young people in acquiring the skills for success. No matter what your reasons are every coach in every situation has the same basic roles and should have the same basic attitude.

## 2.1  What do We Mean by Coaching

As we already said in the introduction, although 'coaching' is not a new activity it is a term that is still quite rarely used in the context of European youth work. It is more often used in the area of sport or professional business, and these areas might more readily come to mind when you think of coaching. We know about the danger of setting expectations with a term used in different contexts (as, for example, you thinking of football coaches initially). But even though coaching for sport, for education, for business and for life can all bring along very different experiences the principles and aims are usually the same. Coaching is usually dialogue and activities aimed at releasing potential within groups and individuals. It is a dialogue of learning and change. At the same time the coaching dialogue is a model of how easily and quickly changes can be developed and achieved.

You might not call your activity of supporting young people 'coaching'. In this handbook, indeed we do refer to a variety of activities which support young people in carrying out Youth Initiatives and youth projects as coaching. Some of the techniques used in the field of European youth work have their origin in other fields of coaching, but incorporate specific attitudes and approaches in the area of youth work at European level.

There are non-governmental organisations offering coaching services for project groups, or teams performing concrete tasks, but in the framework of the European YOUTH programme the use of coaching is quite new. As we stressed in the introduction, we want to further develop coaching in this field, with the aim of supporting higher quality active youth participation. This situation opens the door for us to define what we mean by using the terms 'coach' or 'coaching' ourselves. At the same time we are aware that we take the risk of not covering all elements of the activities, profile and specific national backgrounds if we try to define the content of the coaching process and the work done by a coach. At least we hope that our attempts to describe coaching will be a good base for further discussions.

## 2.2  A Coach in European Youth Work

We know that neither the professional or educational background defines this person nor do the activities the person does. So what does he or she look like? Who is this coach we are talking about here? There is no such title, vocational career or university study as far as we know. Coaches in our understanding can be volunteers or professionals, youth leaders or leaders of youth organisations, workers of youth clubs or youth services. They can be young people who have experience in implementing Youth Initiatives or projects and are starting to spread their knowledge among other young people. Across Europe different countries or even regions have their own understanding of youth work depending on the structures of youth work, experience and traditions, socio-cultural context of the country.

We can try to define the youth coach according to what that person is doing with young people. By supporting young people in a specific way, this person first of all aims at the personal development of young people by using a variety of methods or creating opportunities to participate in different programmes or activities. Generally we can consider it as non-formal education. By participating in non-formal educational activities young people gain self-confidence and experience, learn to work together and take responsibility for themselves and the environment they live in. Non-formal education is also a good space for young people to learn how to participate, as it is based on self governance and voluntary principles, where they have to make decisions themselves as well as take the responsibility of implementing them.

This means, as well, that a coach has to have youth work experience and competence to accompany groups of young people and support their participation. However, when it comes to involvement in the Youth Initiative process and relationship with the group of young people running the project, a coach has a position which can be different.

A coach is a resource person rather outside a Youth Initiative but still supporting the group of young people in the implementation of their project (so, even though the person might be physically present where the young people meet, the position is clearly different from being a member of the core group). He or she is working with young people from time to time performing specific tasks based on the needs of the group (like providing information, advice, running a training workshop).

The coach is responsible for the 'coaching process' and rarely involves him or herself in the implementation of the project by the young people or undertakes responsibility for concrete tasks in the project. The place, role and responsibilities determine the specific relationship between the person accompanying a Youth Initiative and a youth group implementing the project.

Another important aspect, as basis of the coach`s work, is the relationship with the young people. This is the most important condition in the empowerment process; in our case empowerment for greater participation. The coach does not necessarily have to know the group of young people running a Youth Initiative beforehand, but if not, it might take some time at the beginning to build a positive relationship with the group. The coach might also not know all members of the group, but could meet a core group. Regarding the Youth Initiative process (as it is shown in chapter 4 'The Coaching Bi-cycle') it might even happen that coaching starts not at the beginning of a Youth Initiative project but in the middle or even towards the end.

Please notice that all aspects mentioned so far are not to be seen as exclusive factors. This is not the single definition of a coach in European youth work. Depending on the situation and varying from project to project the role of a person accompanying the youth group can change. It is good to be aware of this as it has an influence on your work.

coach in a youth initiative project is more like a guide – showing where there are difficult moments on the route and proposing methods for dealing with these difficulties

## 2.3    Discovering Yourself as a Coach

Take a moment to look at the mirror and ask yourself: Who am I as a coach? Why do I want to do coaching? What are my motivations? What are my interests? What are my attitudes towards young people? Which of my previous experiences can be helpful for my current or future coaching practice? What are my competences and abilities to deal with people? What are my strengths and my limits in working with young people? Which role fits me better or I feel more comfortable with? What are my own resources to be a coach?

Maybe too many questions or maybe not enough! Discovering who we are as persons, as human beings, is a non-ending life process. In the same way, discovering who we are as 'coaches' could be a constant introspective process during our work with young people. Asking questions and self-reflection is needed before starting any coaching activity because it will help you to know yourself better, to discover your motivations, your attitudes, your abilities, your limits, your roles. To discover yourself in order to be ready to discover others.

## 2.3.1 Clearing your Coaching Motivation

Motivations to advise and accompany a youth project can come from many different directions. The initial ideas, financial, friendly and personal or institutional interests or motives can play a role here. It is important to clarify one's own motivations at the start before one begins with the coaching process in a youth group. We will notice in the following text that one of the prerequisites for successful and constructive coaching is the impartiality and openness of the coach.

Idealistic interests can be a factor if you believe that the theme on what the youth group would like to work is extremely important and valuable for our society and therefore you will support the initiative with all your commitment.

Financial interests can be in the foreground if you work mainly as a coach and must safeguard your livelihood through this work or you might as well believe that it will be of economic value to the community or your locality.

In cases where you, as the coach, are somehow already related to the group or you are a friend of some members of the group, your motives to coach the group are likely to be based on this personal relationship.

The most 'dangerous' motivation however is if institutional interests or one's own interests are in the foreground. Dangerous because the coach could take a steering or leading role instead of offering a frame and methods through which the group can proceed freely and realise its targets and ideas

in a self initiated way. It could easily happen that you start to manipulate the group in the direction of your own interests and that the main ideas and aims of the group get lost.

So, if at the start, after clarifying your personal interests and motives, you notice that you want to accompany and to support the youth group mainly because you, or the organisation you work for, expect to profit out of the potential results of the project; in this case, you must pay attention during the coaching not to act in a steering or teaching way. It would be useful in such cases to name the personal or institutional interests openly at the start and, if necessary, to come to an agreement that both sides understand the expectations.

To sum up, we would say: If you are clear on your motivation beforehand, then you smooth your own way. You will win confidence and clarity and the group you coach will gain great benefit from it!

After reflecting on your own motivation the next important step is to have a look at your attitude when coaching other people.

## Reflecting on Your Coaching Attitude  2.3.2

If we ask ourselves for a moment: When was the last time that I had a consultation for myself? What was, during this consultation, helpful for me, what was it I enjoyed? or the opposite: What disturbed me?… Very quickly it becomes clear, that we don't remember the purpose, creative methods and techniques or interventions of the mentor, but questions like: was the mentor devoted and sensitive, did he/she listen to my story or did he/she freely give me advice?

Therefore you, as a coach, should primarily have the value of estimating the inner attitude based on a confidential relationship. This attitude shows your readiness to listen actively to the person in front of you, showing your interest for him or her and also presenting yourself as first and foremost an individual.

To coach a group constructively and successfully in its processes, you should, first of all, create a confidence base between you and the group. It is essential to the construction of this mutual trust that you, as the coach, accept and respect the people sitting in front of you. Among other things this means that you should be as free as possible from prejudices and judgements.

As a coach you should try to understand and to see the world of other people through their eyes. Feelings and expressed experiences are allowed and taken seriously. First of all you should accept that the members of a Youth Initiative are the owners and experts of the project and that in principle they know the best answers to their questions, as well as the solutions for their own problems. You will provide encouragement, advice and perhaps help with structure of thoughts, as may be needed from time to time, but you should never take over the responsibility for the people you are coaching.

don't give up! Be like a drop of water which slowly but surely makes a difference in a stone. Work on yourself!

In every case you will be required to handle diverse attitudes. You must be able to take different points of view and to think across a range of disciplines. But you are also a human being and therefore your personal condition and emotions play a role in the process of coaching. Personal problems can represent an obstacle to an empathic attitude from your side. With reference to the confidential relationship between you and the group, it's important to identify obstacles at such moments and perhaps make another appointment.

After questionning and answering yourself about the attitude you will adopt towards the young people you are coaching, you will be able to clarify the role or roles you will take during the process.

## 2.3.3 Clarifying Your Coaching Role

Everybody takes on different characters, roles and positions in everyday life. We are neighbours, friends, fellows, life companions, partners, parents, sons, daughters, colleagues, chiefs, co-workers and a lot more… Most of these characters and roles we know very well, we can take them over easily and we are trained and self-confident within them. If we have to undertake a new role, we have to accustom ourselves to it. In the beginning, from time to time we may stumble in this unknown terrain, we feel unfit and clumsy. But after a certain experience we almost certainly learn fast how to feel familiar within the new role.

So, what does it mean for you, if you want to start as a coach for self organised youth projects, and offer them your support and your experience? What character and which role do you undertake then? Are you a friend and partner of the group, who asked you to advise them? Or are you more a teacher and leader? Do you see yourself as a colleague or do you fill in the place of a chieftain or the elder?

To answer this question of 'role clarification' is easier if you ask yourself what you would expect from the person in front of you if it were you looking for advice. Most probably you would like to find somebody who listens to you carefully, who asks the right questions at the right moment, who understands you but also critically reflects the situation. Not an arrogant person who thinks he or she knows all that is needed to know, but a person who recognises him or herself as an expert with different qualifications.

In addition, depending on the different circumstances, as a coach you might be asked to be an empathic mediator, a conspicuous teacher, a discreet counsellor, a sensible and honest fellow, an effective trainer; in short, an encouraging person who helps the young people to help themselves and who is always a discreet confident.

This huge variety of roles to play and approaches to use require flexibility as well as some training and experience. Probably you will know some of these roles from your every day life and if you listen and observe actively you will recognise the right moments, when you are asked to slip into one or another role or use a combination of roles.

Once you are sure about your motivation and have reflected on your attitude and role as a coach, it is important to know what competences and experiences you should bring with you when starting to coach others.

# Identifying Your Competences and Experiences  2.3.4

„Whether you think that you can, or that you can't, you are usually right." This quotation from Henry Ford expresses very clearly that the most important thing is to be aware and have belief in your own abilities. Belief and awareness in our own abilities are usually born and reinforced with the acquisition of competencies and through gaining experience. For these reasons it is important to reflect in advance on your own experiences and competences.

Which knowledge and experiences should I bring when I want to advise and support others in an effective and competent way? Is it enough to have an open ear for the problems and sorrows of other people? Is it a basic condition to have experience in developing and initiating a project of my own if I want to help others with their project development?

These and others are questions that you might ask yourself if you are thinking about starting to become active as a coach for youth projects! There could be very different forms of questions in a variety of contexts in which coaching will be requested. It is not possible to define a standard, listing exhaustively all the competences a coach needs for supporting youth projects, although this would be very useful.

We would suggest the following as a list for ideal abilities, competences and experiences. You could ask yourself if you fulfil them or not, or if you would like to use them as a guide in future,

↘ so take a look in the mirror…

| Ability | What does this mean…?! | Check-Box |
|---|---|---|
| PATIENCE | I have learned to wait until others make up their own experience! I am able to watch group processes and to wait for the result they will achieve! | |
| HUMOUR | I am able to laugh with others and sometimes also about myself! In difficult situations, e.g. if the motivation in the group is in danger of disappearing, some sense of humour at the right time can help a lot. | |
| EMPATHY | I can respond to the emotions of others, like anger, fear, worry or shame without being frightened! I always try to understand the point of view of the person facing me. | |
| CAPABILITY OF SELF REFLECTION | I know my personal strengths and weaknesses! I know my personal limits and I'm able to refer to them! | |

| Ability | What does this mean…?! | Check-Box |
|---|---|---|
| **PERSONAL STANDING** | I have both feet on the ground! I have surroundings in which I feel comfortable and I feel well supported by my friends and family! Because of this I have people I can talk to if I need to reflect on the coaching situation. | |
| **CONFLICT AND RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDE** | I'm able to solve conflicts and critical situations with others in a positive and constructive way! | |
| **EXPERIENCE IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT** | I have already developed my own projects and initiated them! Because of this I am able to offer the group some methods and tools on 'how' to develop their project. | |
| **KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GROUP PROCESSES** | I gather experiences and observations of how groups interact and which processes they use regularly! This helps me to understand the emotions and reactions of the participants in each step of the process. | |
| **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES** | I know one or more techniques of communication e.g. 'person centred individual consultation'! This helps me to moderate the group communication in difficult situations. | |
| **METHODS FOR COACHING** | I know some creative methods to visualise or moderate situations and processes! Those can be helpful to structure ideas and opinions within the group and support the decision making process. | |
| **SELF EXPERIENCE WITH COACHING** | I have had a consultation during a project development or other situation! This helps me to see the advantage of it. It was important that someone from 'outside' who wasn't personally involved supported me to structure my ideas and opinions in a different way. | |
| **COACHING EXPERIENCE** | I have experience in coaching groups or individuals! Out of this experience I know about different reactions of participants in different situations. | |
| **EXPERT KNOWLEDGE** | I have expert knowledge in different areas, such as …………………….., which I can offer to others! | |
| **PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH OTHER ADVISORS** | I have an existing network of contacts with other experts concerning consultation, youth work or supervision! | |
| **PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS** | I have experience in psychological or pedagogical support activities! | |
| **ETC.** | ……………………………………………………………….. | |

Possibly this list isn't complete and you could adapt it to meet your own needs. You should understand it as a motivating technique to reflect in advance about your own abilities and limits. However it's not necessary to satisfy all the listed requirements. If you can say 'yes!' to at least half of the above mentioned topics, we think you are already well prepared to start coaching youth projects. If you are also willing to extend your own knowledge and experiences, there are no better preconditions you can have.

Comparing the necessity for reflection on personal motives and interests it is as important to develop a clear picture about your own experiences and competences appropriate for coaching youth groups. If you discover deficits which you would like to eliminate it's always possible to gather new experiences and to acquire specific knowledge. A proper analysis of one's own resources is indispensable so that you can use the above listed requirements in a convenient and correct way. Please don't overestimate yourself and try to interpret the quotation of Henry Ford, mentioned above, in a way that it's good to be aware of the things you can and especially of the things you can't! If you arrive, at one point, in a coaching situation in which you do not feel comfortable anymore, do not hesitate to ask for advice and guidance yourself.

# Being Aware of Your Limits and Possibilities   2.3.5

Despite its increasing popularity, coaching shouldn't be understood as a 'cure all' for the successful development of projects. While coaching self initiated youth projects we have to handle the individual bounds of the group in a very sensitive way so as not to disturb the creativity and active participation.
So in which situations is it better not to coach a youth project?

**Personal involvement:** *Because of all the trees, you can't see the forest?!*
It could occur that you lost the necessary distance from the group which you want to coach, because you have built up a very close relationship with the group or even because you are part of the group. It's no longer possible for you to keep an objective position and you are unable to change or to switch between different perspectives. If this happens at a time when the group is stuck itself, it could be advisable to consult an external person. But in many cases it's sufficient to take a look at different opinions or the thoughts of others. This could mean discussing the coaching process and your feelings with friends or colleagues, which helps to widen horizons so as to find the way out of the situation.

**Personality and looks:** *If the face doesn't fit find a new one!*
It is just human that some persons are more attractive to us than others. Sometimes we meet people and from the first moment we feel a certain harmony. On the other hand we have contact with new

people and we feel an undefined antipathy. We feel disturbed because of this person's behaviour, maybe we don't like his or her voice or the way he or she is talking, but there is no concrete reason why we don't like him or her. Also within the group who wants to be coached there could be one or two participants for whom you feel immediately an antipathy which possibly stops you from having an objective perspective. In such a case you can try to analyse your feelings: what arouses the negative feelings, what has this to do with myself?' and then to make the effort to get a neutral standpoint on these participants anyway. If this doesn't work, you might think to recommend another coach to the group.

### Missing expert knowledge: *I have no idea about the subject!*

At some moments in the coaching process you will not need to know much about the topic or the content the group is working on. It is often more important to offer tools and methods to structure the process and to smooth the way of decision-making. To the contrary sometimes it could happen that you interfere personally too much. Particularly if you are very familiar with the subject the group is working on. Should the group need professional advice in regard with the contents of the project, it could be your task as the coach to offer the group names and addresses of experts. No more or less!

### Missing variety of advice methodology: *Running out of ideas?*

Sooner or later you could arrive at a point within the coaching process where you have the feeling that you can't stop 'rotating in a circle'. You always ask the same questions again and again and you always get similar and partly monosyllabic answers. It can be very helpful to use another conversation and advice methodology in such situations or, for example, to use visualisation (see 'Bi-cycle Tools' (1)).

### Personal state of the coach: *Own problems and worries?!*

If you, as the coach, are facing problems and worries, you surely will have difficulty in developing a real interest in the requests of the youth group. In any case it makes sense in such a situation that you ask the group to postpone your appointment. It is also advisable for your positive relationship with the group to be open and to inform the group about the reason for the postponement. For example you could ask them: 'Today I feel not very well, are we able to find another date?'

### Lack of time: *Unexpected duties!*

It might happen that, when you are on the way to coach a Youth Initiative, you realise that you do not have enough time to meet the group. Maybe because the group has a bigger need than you thought in advance or maybe because you have more work than you expected beforehand. Then it's again desirable to be open and honest with the group members. It's better to recommend to the group somebody else who could support them rather than you having to hurry through short meetings.

it's not easy to resist temptation of doing the project for young people and deciding things for them

**Belief of the coach that the group has arrived at a point at which no further advice is needed:**
*When it's over, it's over!*
The main aim of coaching for self initiated youth projects is to support the participants to be creative, self organised and active. With regard to this goal the main task of the coach is to be aware of the situations and phases within their project processes and where it's better for the group to be independent and left alone. It is absolutely possible that you, the coach, and the group are no longer feeling the same conviction. Then it's better to stop or to interrupt the coaching process. You probably could arrange a common final meeting to avoid frustration and additionally you could arrange an appointment for an evaluation meeting, where you as the coach are informed by the group about further processes and the development of the project since the end of the coaching.

And so, after all these thoughts and reflection on motivation, attitudes, roles, competencies and experiences, limits and possibilities... did you finally discover a bit more about who you are as a coach? Actually you don't need to answer this question right now. Discovering yourself as a coach, as we said at the beginning of this chapter, might be a very long trip. But if you still want to know more about yourself, and more concretely about your 'coaching approach', we invite you to go to the end of this guide, 🏃→ **'Bi-cycle Tools' (2),** and fill in 'The Coaching Ghost Inventory' exercise. It might help you to explore and identify possible learning and development areas for improvement as well as to understand a bit better the role of a coach.

## Between Coaching and Autonomy  2.4

When you already identify yourself as a coach and find out what roles belong to this job then you can easily discover that being a coach is a wonderful experience: you get the chance to improve things you tended to do wrong in the past, so helping others not to fall in the same trap. As you get to know (by your own experience or during studies or professional development), there are many traps, and we presume that a part of your motivation in being a coach for youth projects is, that you want to help them not to invent the wheel over and over again. But what if they want to invent it again? And what if they are about to fail? As far as personal development is concerned it could be the best thing that could happen to them.

So what happens if they fail? What about the involvement of the organisation in the background (maybe the body that pays you)? How much can they or can you afford a learning experience ending with a failure, meaning that the grant given for the project might be even paid back? In sociology, the youth age is often seen as a kind of 'moratorium': a time where young people have a prolonged time to gain experiences without the full responsibility of an adult in terms of liability or carrying financial consequences. Youth Initiatives and projects are perfect tools for gaining such experiences.

↘ "I would like the coach to give me advice and answer my questions but not to tell me everything, rather to motivate me to search for answers and ideas by myself"
*Maria (20), Poland*

Within a framework young people are able to realise their ideas and interests and a failure does not necessarily mean personal bankruptcy or sitting in jail for years as it might be the case in 'adult' business. For the young people, failure (it maybe a clash in the group, total breakdown in the motivation of members or the organisational disaster of an event) can be a source of learning.

As a coach of Youth Initiatives your very difficult task is to find a balance between the rights of young people to gain their own (good and bad) experiences, your motivation as a coach to be as helpful as possible and the interests of donors and supporting organisations. What is the highest value in this? Idealistically speaking, of course the autonomy of the young people. But realistically, the influence of the mentioned external factors tend to have such a strong impact that young people sometimes become the mere material to be used to the organisation's and coach's advantage in terms of grant aided activities, number of members, or others.

Therefore we see the role of a coach in this system as a mediator, somebody who gives enough space for youth development, provides protection against being used as instrument of organisational interests and keeps an eye on the proper amount of support that is needed to add to resources the young people have themselves.

"The best coach should allow me and all the group to find our own way to reach our goal. The coach should ensure me and my team to be autonomus in our project activities. The coach should be the map, not the driver!"
*Anna (23), Poland*

# Five Coaching Principles

Our experiences and research have led us to identify five universal coaching principles. They are an integral part of the learning and changing process. Conscious use of them as principles of change should provide an easier and quicker path to achieving goals.

### 1st Principle:

### Resources for the job!
In principle we all have the resources for managing challenges. It only becomes difficult when we fail to recognise these skills and resources in ourselves. Identifying our resources helps us feel confident in our abilities.

### 2nd Principle:

### Understanding yourself and change!
In principle we all have the resources for managing challenges. It only becomes difficult when we fail to recognise these skills and resources in ourselves. Identifying our resources helps us feel confident in our abilities.

### 3rd Principle:

### Taking Responsibility!
Responsibility arises out of the awareness for what 'is' and what 'should' be. Trust, consciousness and responsibility are important ingredients of high performance in every activity.

### 4th Principle:

### You have the choice!
This always applies! Just how many options we have depends on the degree of our awareness and our willingness to take on responsibility. Think outside the box, work outside of your comfort zone.

### 5th Principle:

### Learning Opportunities!
That is the fundamental principle of learning! There is always a risk involved with trying out something new that you have not practiced before. Performance can only develop in a previously unknown sphere if horizons are broadened with every mistake and every success that is made. Accept there is no such thing as mistakes, only learning opportunities.

bi-

cycle

There is no universal approach, coaching is an art. Just as we cannot define one type of profile for a coach, there is no universal way to approach coaching, only individual approaches, generally guided by professional ethics. Nevertheless there is a general consensus about the skills required and the principles that must be respected.

In this chapter, you will not find any ready-made recipes, however you will be able to identify many of the essential ingredients required for coaching. Projects cannot be dealt with by applying a standard 'how to' methodology and the same goes for coaching. But we can identify some key points and moments to optimise the coaching experience as well as practical tools to be used at different steps of the coaching process.

# 3.1 The Road of Youth Initiatives

Youth Initiative projects follow the same road as every project: planning, implementation and evaluation, and hopefully, it will have some future continuation or impact. The Youth Initiative process is organised around this understanding.

**Planning:** In this phase the group of young people work together on their project idea and adjust it to the formal, qualitative and financial criteria of Youth Initiatives. Before the application is submitted the whole project has to be designed and planned and tasks divided within the group.

Transnational Youth Initiatives should be planned and designed involving all the groups from different countries. The task sharing should be also balanced.

**Implementation:** Implementation of the project should be done according to what was planned, described in the project and confirmed in the contract. All changes have to be monitored and most often they have to be accepted by the grant giver or approving body.

**Evaluation:** It's very important that the project is monitored and evaluated throughout the whole project time, not only at the very end. It helps young people to follow the flow of the project and to share the common experience of learning together. In practice, monitoring of the project can take place in many different forms.

## 12 questions for planning Youth Initiatives

Context and motivation    Why is the idea important for the young people? Why do they want to realise this project within Youth Initiatives? What's the context of this project? What's the personal motivation of young people?

Aims and objectives    What are the aims and objectives of this project? What do the young people want to achieve through realising the project? What change should it bring and by what means?

Beneficiaries    Who would benefit from this project? Who are the people directly affected by this project and what advantages will it bring? How will the young people themselves benefit from the initiative? What do they hope to learn for themselves personally?

**Preparation**    What actions have to be done in order to prepare for the realisation of these aims?

**Involvement of group members**    Who and how would they be responsible for realising the project idea? Can all group members devote the same amount of time and energy? Is there any leader/s in the group? What are the roles within the group? What communication channels are there for the group during project?

**Coaching**    What is the role of the coach and other supporters? When and how will they communicate? What are the boundaries of self independence before asking for help? If there is an informal group which needs a supporting organisation, what are the means of communication and cooperation? How will money be transferred to young people and what would be the procedure of financial reporting?

**Local impact**    What impact would this project have on the life of local community? What other actors or/ and institutions are already involved and willing to help in the realisation of this idea? Who could also be useful in realising this project and in working towards making it as beneficial for the local community as possible?

**European dimension**    What is the added European value of this project? Why should it be financed not by local funds but through European resources? What is the European dimension of the project?

**Time schedule**    What activities would help to achieve the aims and objectives set by young people? Who is responsible for which part? When and where exactly will these activities take place? What are the time deadlines?

**Budget**    What are expenses linked with this project? What material and resources are needed? What other expected resources (in kind or financial) are required for the project and should the budget include?

**Evaluation**    How will the project be evaluated throughout the whole process? How will young people check if everything is realised according to the plan and that they have reached their aims? By what means will they monitor the work as a group, impact of their project on local community and development of their idea?

**Continuation**    How do they imagine possible continuation of their project? Which elements should be continued and in what forms? What are the next steps after the possible conclusion and successful happy end to their project?

Hopefully you will have now an understanding of what a Youth Initiative looks like and how you as a coach can enter and move along this journey. Since there are no identical Youth Initiatives there are no similar supporting processes. But still it is possible to draw out main phases of a coaching process that are present in more or less all the cases of coaching.

↘ Are you ready to follow the road of Youth Initiatives? You might need a vehicle, why not a simple 'Coaching Bi-cycle'?

## 3.2     The Mechanics of the Coaching Bi-cycle

The coaching bi-cycle model (see picture below), aims to provide a guide for the main coaching phases and will help in managing the coaching process.  Why we use the picture of a penny farthing bicycle to describe the coaching process? If you visualise the structure of a regular penny farthing you will see two wheels: a main big wheel and a small wheel, next to the big one. The structure of a penny farthing will help us to understand the coaching cycle process, including the following phases:

▪▪ motivating
▪▪ getting to know
▪▪ building the relationship
▪▪ identifying needs and competences
▪▪ supporting
▪▪ evaluating
▪▪ keeping contact and feedback

According to the picture, the coaching process of a Youth Initiative will work in a similar way that a regular penny farthing: two wheels moving at the same time and influencing each other in their movement. The big wheel represents the motivational and relational aspect of the coaching process as well as the reflection about abilities of the group individuals to manage the project. The small wheel represents the supporting dimension of the coaching. Support could be offered in many different ways depending on the needs and competences identified for a specific group. The small wheel represents the different possibilities to offer support, including:

▪▪ informing
▪▪ suggesting
▪▪ facilitating
▪▪ training
▪▪ other

Evaluating should be done throughout the whole process, every support given should be thoroughly analysed and the coaching strategy adopted accordingly. Now take a look at the following picture which represents the different phases of the coaching bi-cycle process, including relational elements of the big wheel and supporting possibilities of the small wheel.

The 'penny farthing' was one of the first
bicycles produced in the 1800's

EVALUATING

KEEPING CONTACT AND FEEDBACK

SUPPORTING

Motivating

Getting to know

Training

Informing

Facilitating

Suggesting

Other

Identifying needs and competencies

Building the relationship

But how are all these elements linked with the practice of coaching? What exactly is happening during each of the phases of the coaching bi-cycle?

Before a starting point can be identified firstly the young people must have ↘ the motivation, inspiration and enthusiasm to embark on a Youth Initiative. The desire to take such a journey can be an exciting one, which in itself can be motivation enough for the group, but the challenge can often be maintaining this motivation and focus. This is where the coach comes in and this can play an important part in the development of, and support for the group. Another key factor will also be the desire and motivation of an individual to become a coach. This can come from experience, training, and the determination of supporting young people in realising their dreams and reaching their potential.

During ↘ the getting to know phase both the young people and the coach get to know each other. During this phase the coach gets more information about the group (their age, previous experiences, interests, passions, etc) and about their Youth Initiative project (main idea, aims and

objectives, activities, etc). The information can be gathered through meeting the young people, from the supporting organisation(s), from the funding institution, or others. For young people it is also good to know about the experiences of the coach and current involvement in the activities. The getting to know phase is a starting point and throughout the whole coaching process people usually get to know each other better.

↘ Building the relationship phase is for establishing the need for coaching and ensuring a positive working relationship among the members of the group as well as the relationship between the group and the coach. It is worth clarifying for both the coach and the group of young people what are their respective expectations and where could be the limits of the coaching process and relationship. It is useful to know the roles and responsibilities during the coaching process. Agreeing on communication, cooperation and responsibility can simplify the process of keeping the contacts alive.

To ↘ identify needs and competencies of the youth group both time and investment are needed. During this phase, through observing the Youth Initiative process, exchanging information with a group of young people, asking questions or using other tools, the coach identifies both hard and soft skills for improvement and can advise on the methods or ways of possible development. This phase is repeated constantly as the process of a Youth Initiative can take quite a long time itself and new needs appear throughout the project lifespan.

To answer the identified needs of the group as well as of the individuals, the coach should identify accordingly different ways of ↘ supporting young people in their project development process. Take a quick look at the small wheel of the 'Bi-cycle' model; it highlights: informing, suggesting, facilitating, training and… others. There are no ingredients for specific methods to be used in coaching that are identified as essential. It is better to look at this phase of the coaching cycle as a combination of actions, knowledge and skills that are at the disposal of a coach. The decision however to use one or another of the methods identified in helping young people depends on the experience and competencies of the coach as well as the preferences of the group to be coached.

Besides the above described phases, there are important elements in coaching that cannot be put as a separate phase as it goes on throughout the entire coaching process. Those are evaluating, keeping contact and feedback.

↘ Evaluating phase is for reviewing, on the one hand the objectives and outcomes of the project, and on the other one, the objectives and outcomes of the learning. It is also the moment t review the coaching process itself. The coach can receive feedback on his or her work with the aim to improve his or her performance in the future. It can be negotiated with a group to continue the coaching process with follow-up activities but this should be clearly confirmed and agreed by both parties (the young people and coach). Moreover, if young people have enjoyed and learnt so much from the Youth Initiative and coaching experience, why not become a coach? They could indeed be encouraged to become 'peer' coaches for other young people wanting to develop their own Youth Initiatives. And then the coaching bi-cycle starts moving again ridden by the young peer coaches themselves!

⬎ Keeping contact and feedback between the group and the coach is for following the process from the beginning till the end in order to maintain the relationship as well as to identify the needs for improvement.

The intensity of the coaching process will also depend on the time spent with the young people during the Youth Initiative process. We tend to think that the coach who spends more time with young people have a more intensive relationship with them and through this support them more efficiently. This is probably true, but you should not take this as a universal rule. Remember that when it comes to personal relationships, 'quality' is often much more appreciated than 'quantity'!

## Climbing on Board the Coaching Bi-cycle    3.3

Does an ideal way of coaching exist? One universal model for all groups and different Youth Initiatives projects in different countries? It would be just perfect, right? Somehow, as we have seen above, the intuitive answer is 'No', it does not exist. Each group and topic is so specific that it's not possible to have one approach on how to coach in general Youth Initiatives. Of course from all experience gathered by coaches from all over Europe working with a given type of young people, and from the collection of specific needs of the Youth Initiative projects in general, we can more or less create a framework for the basic elements of ideal support. But as it is mostly with all ideals in our lives, they are not overlapping with the reality. It always depends on a given group, context, situation, need, time, complexity, aims, motivation, and lots more.

**When to start?** The simple answer is: when needed. Some young people need a coach from the very beginning, maybe before the idea for the project comes to their mind. They need somebody who will stimulate them, empower them and enable them to realise the possibilities of doing something together. If young people are independent and self organised already they might need coaching in further phases of their project when things get naturally complicated…

**What to do?** A similar simple answer would be: whatever is needed. First of all, try to build trust and relationship. These are fundamental for working with young people. It's important to be honest and realistic with making promises and moving forward. If young people really trust you, they would feel free to share their problems and dilemmas. Listen to yourself and be honest about your limits. Try to ensure a safe space and let young people fill it themselves by what's most important for them.

Being a good coach is like doing anything good in our life. One has to be convinced that what he or she does makes sense and has a purpose. Moreover, what's needed in coaching, according to the young people whose opinion we asked for, is: passion, need for constant self development, need to make a difference, belief in young people, patience, a lot of understanding and time for young people. The main tool for working as a coach is personality and experience; a good coach has to have the respect and trust of young people.

⬎ "The coach should be the person who wouldn't be involved in the whole process but only when a problem appears and the team does not know how to solve it." *Rasa (18), Lithuania*

⬎ "Our coach was just watching… and giving tips how to improve one or another thing" *Gintaras (20), Lithuania*

It seems to be quite a hard job… What does a coach get in return? First of all you will get self and job satisfaction and the knowledge of the differences which are made in young people's lives. Second of all you will get self development as working with young people can be a source of constant learning. Since we live in a time of constant change there is no one stable adult world, the work is not about simply transferring experience and knowledge to the younger generation but rather about learning from each other and common participation in projects built around this thing we call 'life'.

## 3.4 Riding the Coaching Bi-cycle

How to ride the coaching bi-cycle? Given the lack of 'how to' universal methodology to ride coaching, it might not be as easy as riding a real bicycle. But still we will provide you with a kind of 'instructions manual', based on our coaching practices and experiences, to help you to climb on board and ride the coaching bi-cycle. For that we need to re-visit carefully the different phases of the two bi-cycle wheels.

### 3.4.1 Motivating

⤷ *"The most difficult can be to start together and to finish together"*
*Ilja (24), Estonia*

⤷ *"For me the perfect coach is a person who never stops saying that there is nothing impossible, if you try, then there will be a time when you will succeed!"*
*Baiba (18), Latvia*

As we highlighted in chapter 2 'The Coaching Mirror', the first key factor is the desire and motivation of an individual to become a coach and this can come from experience, training, and the determination of supporting young people in realising their dreams and reaching their potential. If you are motivated yourself, then you are ready to motivate others. But how to do so? Not an easy task, we know.

Firstly try to discover young people's motivation, inspiration and momentum to embark on a Youth Initiative: what they like, what they need, what things or feelings make them feel alive, what inspires them to do a project together, why on this topic, why at this period of their lives. Then the challenge can often be maintaining this motivation and focus throughout their project lifetime.

It could be that the developed objectives of a project are difficult to achieve and therefore young people feel less enthusiastic than at the beginning. It is your role then to keep the motivation of the group from the beginning till the end of the project and challenge them in finding solutions to reach their aims. Please remember that your role as a coach in developing and maintaining motivation can be integral to a successful project!

#### What is motivation?
Put simply 'motivation' is what 'makes people tick'. Motivation is what makes people want to do well, for themselves, their friends, their school, their job, and their family. Motivated people are inclined

to do things willingly, with enthusiasm, direction and team sprit. They are inclined to do the best of their ability.

So why is it so important to help young people to keep and maintain motivation during the whole Youth Initiative process? Motivated young people will more easily rise to the challenge and achieve their potential, their own enthusiasm will drive them to perform. Motivation will make them feel enthusiastic and full of energy, co-operate in solving problems, accept responsibility and change, perform at a high level.

Two theorists on motivation are Maslow and Herzbeg (references in 'Bi-cycle Parts Supplies'). Let's see what they say and how it applies when it comes to motivate young people doing Youth Initiatives.

**Maslow's theory** came from his 'hierarchy' of needs. His thinking was that people are motivated to take action to meet various needs:

- physiological needs: to satisfy hunger, thirst, etc;
- need for safety: to have emotional security and protection from physical danger;
- need to belong: to have satisfying relationships with others;
- need for self esteem: to feel good about themselves and to be recognised for their accomplishments;
- need for self realisation: to grow and develop in a way that is personally fulfilling.

**Herzberg's Theory** was based on 'things that cause satisfaction' and 'things that cause dissatisfaction'. The aim is to identify areas under these two headings and working towards building on and increasing the satisfaction areas and illuminating the dissatisfaction areas.

These theories, as often happens, have been expanded, developed, exploited, dismissed and challenged over the years, however they can still prove extremely valuable as a guide and a tool when thinking about our own motivation and that of others.

## What to do in practice?

Keep in mind that everyone is different and not necessarily a perfect reflection of the models described by Maslow or Herzberg. In general to motivate people try to ensure that the coaching process provides as many as the following elements as possible.

Use the table below to help you **identify motivational factors** that may help in the coaching of a Youth Initiative.

| Elements to be considered | For the coach | For the young people |
|---|---|---|
| A safe, healthy environment (physical) | e.g. work space (office) | e.g. a good place to meet |
| A nurturing environment (emotional) | e.g. supervision and line management for the coach | e.g. space to talk, people to listen (maybe a group contract/ agreement), building a strong group |
| Positive, respectful and supportive relationship | e.g. constructive and positive feedback from management and colleagues | e.g. taking responsibility and being shown trust by the coach, the community and others |
| Setting realistic and achievable goals | e.g. time committed to the group and coaching process, being aware of your coaching competences as well as your coaching limits | e.g. being aware of the group and individuals' competences, identifying short and long term successes |
| Accomplishment, responsibility, trust and recognition | e.g. management approval, being paid | e.g. certificates, rewards, local recognition (press/media coverage) |

Use the models and think about what your own motivational needs are for the coaching process to be a success. Then do the same for the young people, put yourself in their shoes: what would enthuse and motivate you if it were your group and project? It will be important to remember that you are there to coach the group and the project, other de-motivating factors outside of these will be difficult to deal with.

To sum up, always keep in mind to monitor and reflect on the three different levels of motivation: your motivation to be a coach and to coach this specific project, the motivation of the group at the start of the project, and finally maintaining the motivation through the coaching process for all involved.

In this phase of the coaching process, your task is to get a sufficiently clear picture of the group and the social and psycho-dynamic reality of its members as well as their Youth Initiative project idea. You should concentrate your actions to build trust and a reliable relationship between the members of the group but also between the group and yourself. But how to do so? How to get to know each other? How to get to know the project idea? How to build trust, establish a relationship that builds the base for a productive co-operation, without being too close and sabotage the distinct function of a coach, which is in the first instance to accompany and not lead the Youth Initiative project?

## Getting to Know the Group

Who is the group of young people you are going to work with? How many are they? Since when they know each other? What do they do in life? What have they done together so far? What is the stage of the group process they are at? What are the potential obstacles for the success of your coaching having in mind the educational or psychological background of the young people?

As your coaching can be a permanent struggle to find the right entrance (e.g. to find the right words, approaches, methods…) that would enable a reflection/ action/ process by the young people, you should know about obstacles inherent in the social reality and characters of the young people. Try to get as much information as possible at the beginning of your coaching process to have a clear picture of the young people you will work with and the tasks to be undertaken accordingly.

To help young people reflect on their self-image and for you to get to know what are their deepest wishes, dreams and fears, we suggest you to use the method **'Personal Mind Map'.** It is generally used for illustrating a task, a project idea or the interdependence between various aspects of a problem; starting with writing as brief as possible the main definition, the idea, the problem… in the middle of a big paper and then naming sub-problems, side-ideas or parts of definition on branches, starting from this given middle point. As 'Personal Mind Map' it is the name of one person (you/ the young person) that stands in the middle and the branches lead to aspects of this person such as 'life dream', 'wants to become', 'is good at',  'is afraid of', 'belongs to this family' etc. It looks a bit like this:

↙ 'Personal Mind Map'

I am afraid of red tapes

I come from a Spanish family who immigrated to Belgium

My life dream is to live in a better world

**Maria**

I want to be a youth worker

I am good at listening and advising people

Young people have a big problem of believing that they can be partners in the world of adult

The Personal Mind Map is a powerful tool for self-reflection, getting to know each other and resource orientated youth work.

This getting to know each other period is an important foundation to a relatively long relationship that will hopefully be productive and fruitful to both the coach and the group. This is the coach's chance to get to know the key characters and players in the group: who is leading, who has the ideas, who is most passionate about the project, who is the most committed, who is the joker, and many others.

Besides, please remember that getting to know each other means giving the opportunity to young people to get to know you as well. What experiences brought you there, what kind of person are you, what type of activities you did as a young person, what are the values you would fight for… whatever they want to know and you want to tell can be exchanged in this first getting to know section of the process. It is here when both of you have to decide if it 'fits', if you trust each other at least enough to get the whole thing started, if you can get along. And it is at this point where coaching can find an end before it even started.

In the 🏃→ **'Bi-cycle Tools' (3)** you will find a checklist which will help you to formalise the process of 'getting to know' and keep the 'history' of all Youth Initiatives you will support during your coaching practice life.

## Getting to Know the Project Idea

As stressed already, you don't necessarily have to be an expert in the field of the group's activity or project. But for sure you have to have an understanding of what the project is about, what are the objectives and aims, what are the financial and organisational requests, staffing and volunteer needs and all the other aspects that are part of project management to be a good coach.

To get a clearer picture what the project or activities are about, we propose you follow the '8 W-Questions' (Laswell):

| | |
|---|---|
| **What?** | Project activities and description |
| **Why?** | Needs that the project responds to, motivation |
| **For Whom?** | Target groups |
| **Who?** | Project group, partners |
| **With What?** | Resources that are needed, budget |
| **How?** | Methods, realisation |
| **Where?** | Venue/s |
| **When?** | Time schedule |

Here the attention is drawn on the project idea and all eight (or more if required) questions should be answered by the young people. It allows you to structure and visualise the most important aspects of the planned project and can therefore already be part of your coaching!

Some of you might think: 'after all our experiences, a project is a project, and therefore it does not matter much from a coaching point of view what the project is about'. Somehow you are right. Projects face very similar life cycles, similar problems and similar tasks for young people who try to realise them. But project cycles, problems and tasks are to be faced by different groups of young people. And therefore, as much as people are different, projects are also different. Therefore if you want to gain the group's trust and to provide them with the best of yourself, in terms of understanding, supporting and feedbacking, it is important to get to know the group and the project as deeply as possible.

PACo TIPS

## The project idea in Transnational Youth Initiatives

▪▪ Creating a common understanding about the project idea can be more challenging in Transnational projects due to the cultural differences, different realities and the contexts young people are living, different experiences and distance between the groups as well as other communication barriers.

▪▪ Ideally the project idea should come from the communication between, and agreement of all the groups involved. Quite often it comes as a proposal from one of the groups, in this case it is worth ensuring there is space for the ideas and understanding of other partner groups to become involved.

▪▪ Ensure young people share and discuss essential questions with their partners, such us: what is each partner understanding of the project idea? Why do they want to do this project? What are the links with their local realities? Do all partners involved have a common vision of the project? If yes, which one? If not, do their different visions fit into a common project and how to deal with these differences?

▪▪ It is also important to be aware that different countries may have different rules for accountancy and financial matters. Therefore it is good to clarify the rules from the very beginning of the project.

▪▪ Encourage young people to keep other partner groups informed of activity levels, time commitments and achieved tasks to ensure efficiency. Maybe an online journal/ diary of events, chat rooms, web forums and online meetings could help to improve communication .

▪▪ Signing an agreement outlining each partner group's responsibilities and division of tasks might be a way to ensure the commitment of all the groups in contributing to the project as well as to avoid possible misunderstandings.

# 3.4.3  Building the Relationship



When a group of young people come together to create and develop a Youth Initiative, what takes place between them, besides the project itself, is a group dynamic. Building the relationship means essentially managing group dynamics, which is managing the interactions between members of the group as well as between the group and you.

At this stage, some reflection on group behaviours might be needed. For example, which kind of group behaviours you will face during a Youth Initiative process? Which style of group leadership applies to which behaviours? In the 🏃→ **'Bi-cycle Tools' (4)** you will find a table which will help you to identify behaviours and suggest ideas for improving relationships within groups of young people.

In practice, the aim is to guarantee a favourable environment in which the project and the group can each develop. To ensure a favourable environment you will need to develop your skills of 'observer' and of 'communicator'. You should be able to understand the verbal and non verbal signals and know what is going on with each of the members so as to get the most out of the group and to adapt to different styles of communication. Among other things, you have to be careful to avoid negative attitudes that prevent group members from expressing themselves naturally.

↘ Porter Scale

The **'Porter Scale'** model might be useful to identify different styles of communication and select those that encourage people to speak and communicate.

| Actions | Advice for the coach | Tool | Possible coach responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Questionning | During meetings encourage young people to reflect about and question what is to be / has been achieved... Get them to ask questions themselves. | Simple reformulation. When someone stops speaking, encourage them to say more by repeating what was said. | „So you didn't get the co-funding you were expecting, have you asked yourself why it failed?" |
| Providing answers | First encourage young people to find the answers themselves. Don't automatically give them all the answers because it might prevent them from thinking by themselves. | Simple reformulation. Don't be afraid of silence, possible answers might come after some time of reflection. | „OK…so, like you say, it's not going to be that easy to get the Mayor to come along to this event. How do you think he might get to know about the event you're organising at the start of your project?" |

| Problem solving | First ensure that everybody listens to the others' view of the problem. Facilitate the discussion and encourage them to suggest possible solutions. If needed propose solutions yourself but let young people take their own decisions. | Mirror reformulation. Reflect the feeling that you think the other person is trying to express. | „If I understand correctly there are two different opinions about the current situation. Both of you think to be right and feel frustated because of not being understood by others. Could you both propose a way to solve this problem and we will discuss it all together?" |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interpreting | Try to sum up long discussion going around in circles. Be careful of interpretations, since they might lead to frustations if misinterpreted. Try to be as neutral as possible. | Reformulate and summarise. Take notes and reformulate using your own words. | „OK, I've made a note of everything you've just explained. I'd just like to go over it to check everything's understood and see if there's anything that's not clear…" |
| Understanding | Be empathic and try to accept others as they are. Try to be as free of prejudices as possible. | Listen and reformulate. Try to make people feel at ease so that they express their inner feelings. | „So you said you have problems at the moment and therefore you cannot be involved in the project as much as you wished…" |
| Stating opinion | Whether it's positive or negative, your opinion is likely to influence young people's opinion as what you say (as a reference person) can be taken for granted. | Just don't do it! | Avoid sentences like: "Let's not work in this area since the local population is not interested in your project…" |

To this end we can suppose that some socio-psychological skills useful for human interaction will help you to understand the process of group dynamics; this combined with communication skills will enable you to use this knowledge to help members of the group to manage their aspirations and cope with change and succeed in their projects. But most often, your effectiveness in building a good relationship with the group will depend on factors linked to experience, to your abilities to listen, observe and establish a dialogue, combined with an open-minded spirit and the ability to deal with different personalities.

Furthermore, building and maintaining a safe and trustful relationship during the time you spend together will ensure that both sides, the group and you, learn together and achieve a personal development process.

try to know your group as much as possible – who they are?, what problems do they have? What do they want to achieve in their lives,? What are their abilities?

# 3.4.4  Identifying Needs and Competences

You can suppose that to run a Youth Initiative project there is first an essential need: funding. And you are right, most of project ideas need money to be realised. But money is not the only need and often neither the most important element to develop a project. What else is then needed to realise a Youth Initiative? It is very important that you find out what competences and abilities the members of the group have already and which ones they need to develop in order to reach the targets of the project. Do not worry if you find out that the group is missing some essential capabilities to realise a given task related to the project. Through a Youth Initiative they will have the chance to develop them and your tasks as a coach will be to help the group to identify their own learning objectives to be reached during the project.

To support a group in this phase of the coaching process, first of all you have to know what target to reach and the time estimated to reach it (1). Then you need to find out which competences are available in the group and which others are needed for reaching the target (2). Last but not least it's very important to identify economical, structural, material and human resources to be used to reach the target (3). Here below follows an example and a scheme that intends to be a tool for practical use.

| Target (1) | Competences needed by the group (2) | Financial, structural, material and human resources external to the group (3) |
|---|---|---|
| An electronic and multimedia publication about youth related issues. To be done in 3 months. | - Web designing skills<br>- Journalistic skills<br>- Public relation skills<br>- Organisational skills<br>- Teamwork skills<br>- Communication skills | *Financial resources*<br>Budget needed to create the website is  800 €<br><br>*Structural resources*<br>Workshop room with computers and telephone available, photocopy machine<br><br>*Material resources*<br>Paper, digital camera, CD-roms, software progammes (Photoshop, Quark Xpress…)<br><br>*Human resources*<br>Coach , Information and Telecommunication Technology (ITT) expert |

Once you have clarified the targets to reach, the needed skills and the available resources (from a global point of view), you will have to identify the support to be offered accordingly. You will need to clarify together with young people the following:

(a) what competences need to be developed in order to reach the target of the project but also the individual learning objectives
(b) which strategy to establish for developing the competences needed
(c) who does the strategy address
(d) the places and spaces necessary to meet
(e) the time schedule
(f) which support people for helping the development of the competences required

| (a) What | (b) How | (c) For who | (d) Where | (e) When | (f) With who |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learn how to create a website | Training course organised by an ITT expert (700 € expert fee) + workshop on teamwork organised by the coach + peer learning for PR skills | For two of the people involved in the project | In the main room of the association | In one month | The coach can support the group to find an ITT expert |

This is just an example for a given project and a given group. According to the several tasks the group identifies, you will find yourself suggesting different strategies for supporting the group.

Last but not least, this phase could be a great moment to identify the learning objectives of the group and/or the individuals: which skills do you already have and which ones would you like to acquire or to improve through the project? The division of tasks could be done according to the competencies that the members of the group(s) already have or according to the skills that they would like to develop. For example, if it is the case of a Transnational Youth Initiative and the task is to create a website, it could be that the group more experienced on web designing proposes itself to create and develop the website, or it could be that one of the groups less experienced in this field would like to take this task in order to improve their skills in web designing. Your role here would be to encourage young people to learn from and support each other in developing new skills. Peer education plays an important role in this process and should be used as a tool to lead young people towards autonomy and youth participation.

*Coaching young people means being close to them, being open to their needs and problems. Sometimes it means just being around*

Supporting

Once you have determined what the group needs for realising the project, you have to evaluate your own competences to support either individual or collective needs.

During the Youth Initiative process specific competences might be needed by you as a coach in order to meet specific needs of the young people. Generally, the most needed skills are related to:

### Informing

It might be that at a certain moment in the coaching process young people will ask for concrete information related to the implementation of the project, e.g. aspects of project management, contacts for funding. You do not necessarily have to be an expert here but to respond at all to this is of crucial importance. Not knowing is no shame, but use your competence to help them to find sources of information and preferably leave the decision of action on using it or not with the young people.

> �’ "I would like the coach… to share with me his ideas and knowledge…"
> *Miriam (17), Malta*

### Suggesting

This is creating opportunities for young people to find themselves answers and some kind of direction or solution to the more complex and difficult situations. This can also include sharing some guiding advice gained from prior experiences. Your role here is, together with the young people, to clarify the situation and identify all possible options for the decision. This is also to highlight possible consequences of each option, motives, so as to make the final decision. Most importantly young people should make the final decision, even if sometimes it does not correspond with the opinion of the coach.

> �’ "I wouldn't like the coach to give me ready ideas but rather to mobilise me to think by myself, to develop my own skills. Not to force his/her solutions, to ask how I see the things…"
> *Maria (20), Poland*

### Facilitating

You as a coach can be asked or decide to take a facilitator's role at certain moments of the coaching process. Facilitating can be useful when you are responsible for structuring the process of the work

and the group of young people is filling in the content. This might happen during meetings, the planning or evaluating process or in solving conflicts within a group. In this sense facilitation implies also moderation. You can use different tools or methods: ask specific questions, make visual notes and minutes to summarise the results reached by the group, among others. It is important to stay as neutral as possible, not stepping into the content area but staying responsible for structuring the process.

## Training

In order to improve the performance of a group, you might use training methods or arrange training opportunities. Training activities might aim at personal development (e.g. self-awareness, time management, planning skills…), improvement of the group performance (e.g. team work, sharing tasks and responsibilities, conflict management…) or be theme oriented (e.g. intercultural learning, gender issues…). Training activities can be run either by you or by external trainers (training opportunities in institutions, associations, enterprises…) as recommended by you.

## Other

Besides these competences there are also other abilities or roles that you might perform during the coaching process. These roles are less concrete, but still remain important elements in coaching. As examples, you might think of the roles of needs analyser, observer, challenger, teamworker, animator, etc.

In the ↗ 'Bi-cycle Tools' (5) you will find a tool which might help you to reflect on your personal attitudes, knowledge and skills as a coach to support a given Youth Initiative project.

↘ "When realising Youth Initiative the most difficult for me and our group was to achieve and coordinate different interests and to manage the diversity of the group"
*Sonia (27), Portugal*

↘ "Training, preparation would have helped us to realise our project even better than we did"
*Vytas (22), Lithuania*

PACo TIPS

## What does the coach do?

- helps to shake the world view of young people in order to open new possibilities for action;
- helps young people to identify their true interests and capacities they have;
- listens, makes enquires, observes and reflects;
- identifies the areas for improvement and actions plans for their development;
- accompanies young people in the development process motivating and challenging them in reaching their aims;
- works with young people to discover answers to their questions and concerns;
- explores the possibilities available and makes the results reached by a youth group visible to them;
- asks powerful, thought-provoking questions that touch the inherent wisdom and creativity of young people.

# 3.4.6    Evaluating

Evaluation is an essential part of the coaching bi-cycle model. Making sure that the project works well in its different stages and providing help with decision-making for needed improvements, as well as checking with the group if the coaching itself is meeting their needs, are not to be neglected in any coaching process. In terms of young people's personal development, evaluation provides an opportunity to set learning objectives for each of the young persons involved in the project (also for the coach), then review these objectives at different moments of the process and finally reflect on what knowledge, skills and competences you all gained through the process.

When evaluating a Youth Initiative you should take into consideration three complementary elements: the group, the project and the coaching. For each of these, a main general objective is to be met: identify the limits and the needs for improvement and draw attention to positive achievements. In this way a Youth Initiative can be constantly improved both in terms of the project activities and of the coaching strategy.

But of course a final evaluation reviewing all different aspects of the Youth Initiative and making clear end of the coaching process is needed.

## Who to evaluate for
The young people, yourself, the funding institution/s, the supporting association/s, the local (or international) partner/s, the sponsors, the municipality… or even the local community. Keeping in mind for whom you are evaluating will help you in identifying the appropriate methods to be used. Stressing the importance from the beginning of the project of setting up an evaluation strategy (identify concrete moments for evaluation during the project process, select methods, etc) will help in improving the project strategies and the actions being taken about future planning. This is also about being accountable for the way public and/or private money is spent.

## When and why to evaluate
Even though the highlight of the evaluation is often situated at the end of the 'coaching bi-cycle', it should actually take place at different moments of the process, as an ongoing process itself (helped by constant feedback). Imagine that you are doing a very long trip by bike: you could go non-stop till the end of the journey, or stopping in your way only when something wrong happens, for example one of the wheels is broken; or you could stop at different moments of your trip to check if everything is OK, the air in the tyres, your health, etc.

As far as evaluation is concerned, your task as a coach is to identify the moments and methods of evaluation based on the needs of the group, your own needs as a support person, the support organisation and the funding bodies. Also it would be good to share and discuss with the young

| Preliminary Evaluation | At the beginning of the coaching process | The purpose of this evaluation is to analyse if the goals and planned activities will enable you to achieve the aim and clarify if the goals and activities are realistic, achievable and measurable. It is an opportunity to clarify the learning objectives for the group, the individuals and the coach. |
|---|---|---|
| Mid term Evaluation | At the middle of the coaching process | The purpose of this evaluation is to confirm that the goals and the means chosen to achieve them are appropriate. It also allows you to adapt the coaching according to the results of the mid term evaluation, confirm direction, achievements and challenges at the mid way point of the process and project. It can be an opportunity to identify and celebrate those goals already achieved. |
| Final Evaluation | At the end of the coaching process | The purpose of this evaluation is to confirm that the initial aims, objectives and activities have been achieved. The evaluation provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of this project, how useful it will be and whether its effects are likely to last. The evaluation should also provide some feedback about the coaching and about the impact on the young people (e.g. new skills acquired). |
| Follow-up Evaluation | After an identified period of the coaching process | The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the long term learning, development and impact of the coaching experience and project. It would be an opportunity to explore the achievements following the project and the transferable skills and competences used. |

people the need and importance of evaluation. The following table might help you to identify some concrete evaluation location possibilities and understand the importance of them.

As you can see, evaluation is needed troughout the whole coaching bi-cycle and therefore should not be considered as a separate phase in the process. The benefit of carrying out an ongoing evaluation is for both you and the group of young people to identify and respond to the every day needs of the process and the project. This will include closing sessions or meetings, everyday discussions about the project, regular feedback… and will allow you to gauge the ongoing success or not of the coaching process for yourself and for the group.

## What to evaluate
Within a Youth Initiative project we have identified three clear areas for evaluating the process: the project process, the coaching process and the learning process. We will try now to understand what it means to evaluate each of these areas and will suggest some tools and methods accordingly, to be found in the annexes of this guide.

### 1 – Evaluation of the project process

To evaluate the project itself you should first make an assessment of the situation at a given moment ('starting point'); then decide what goals you want to achieve, at a certain time 't'; then make another assessment of the situation at a later time 't+1'; and finally measure the difference between this situation and the 'starting point', in the light of the goals that were decided at the beginning.

In order to do so, you have to be able to refer to indicators, that is elements that allow you to measure the difference in terms of quantitative or qualitative variations. For example, if the goal is to increase the number of people that benefit from the action, a simple indicator would be the number of people taking part. However, the goals are often more complex (for example, improve public awareness of environmental issues) and the indicators are therefore more difficult to identify, implement and measure.

To 'follow' the project process you should organise meetings with the young people, some of which focusing on the development of the project while others will be an opportunity to keep things on track. Thanks to the continuous feed-back provided during planned meetings, you can facilitate synergy within the group and help them to move forward with the project. Some meetings will serve as 'warning lights', key points in the project process, taking the form of partial ongoing evaluations often requiring modifications which can be identified using a SWOT analysis (see description of this method at ⚡→ 'Bi-cycle Tools' (6)). Remember that whatever method you decide upon it is very important that the group is actively involved in the reflection.

In the ⚡→ 'Bi-cycle Tools' (7-8) you will find some questionnaires which might help you to collect information about the project and the group during the planned meetings.

### 2 – Evaluation of the coaching process

When collecting indicators that will help you to adapt the coaching strategy, it is essential to have the right tools. However there are no magic tools, only simple ways of taking note of hidden dimensions, things not immediately obvious, sometimes simulated or under the surface such as feelings, the beginnings of demotivation, well-being or assimilations, etc.

The evaluation of the coaching process should be open and interactive. The aim is to start a discussion about something that has not yet been dealt with in the group such as, for example: the effectiveness of the meetings with the group members, the relationship with you, your availability, your role and involvement within the project, the methods you used for 'supporting' the group, the evaluation itself, etc.

To stimulate the discussion you can use some starting sentences which should be continued by the young people, according with their feelings, opinions or suggestions, such as: I feel… I am happy… I don't have… I suggest… I would like… I don't like… etc; or such as: the three things I best liked are… the three things I least liked are… If you would like to use these methods properly, they are further developed in the ⚡→ 'Bi-cycle Tools' (9-10).

### 3 – Evaluation of the learning process

It often happens that after finishing a project we evaluate the outcomes of the project, that is, if the objectives initially planned have been reached or not, but do not put much attention on what has been learned through being involved in such experience (no matter if the final outcomes are positive or not). It could happen that we focus too much on the results of the project itself and not enough (or not at all) on the process development. However our experiences showed us that whether the project has been successful or not there is always a learning outcome which should not be forgotten or neglected. The learning outcomes should be also taken into consideration when evaluating the success of the project as a personal development experience.

The evaluation of the learning process can be subdivided into two parts: the learning of group members and your own learning as a coach. Experience and skills that young people acquire from setting up a Youth Initiative project are usually called key or transferable skills which include, among others, working with others, self-awareness, communication, problem solving, autonomy, adaptability. Although difficult to measure, their consequences are invaluable, also for professional insertion purposes.

🏃→ **In the 'Bi-cycle Tools' (11)** you will find a list of indicators that validate what has been observed by you in terms of personal development of the group members. They correspond to objectives put forward by the coach such as: developing motivation and enthusiasm, empowering, developing autonomy, building self esteem, changing social behaviour, developing citizenship, etc.

If you want young people to evaluate themselves, for example in terms of self-esteem and skills to interact with others, you can use the 'Self-esteem Questionnaire' provided in 🏃→ **'Bi-cycle Tools' (12),** which aims to identify weak and strong points that could serve as learning objectives for personal development during the progression of the project.

To identify what exactly has been the learning points from the project but also to guarantee that the project achieves the set aim and objectives, both mid-term and final evaluation should form essential part of the project process. What is your role as a coach in that?

So the opinion and feedback from the coach? Why not? In some countries the role of the coach is also associated with more concrete mapping of acquired skills and competences, in which young people might need some support and will certainly require feedback. For example, in the UK the British Council has developed a model of Personal Record of Achievement (PRA) in order to provide evidence of young people's experiences and development from their participation in a Youth Initiative project 🏃→ **(see 'Bi-cycle Tools' (13).** It can be a valuable tool in terms of recognition and accreditation of gained skills.

To sum up, evaluation is a constructive and ongoing process and should be approached positively. It shows the dynamic nature of a project and the corresponding actions (possibility of adapting the project, basis for communicating information about and outcomes of the project…). It can help to strengthen co-operation between you and the group of young people (increase in confidence, reinforce teamwork …). And it is an opportunity to make the most out of the skills (sharing them, recognising them…).

⬎ "The coach could point out the shortages of our project because sometimes the people that are so involved in what they are doing they don't analyse their actions", *Kadri (18), Estonia*

# Coaching Bi-cycle in Transnational Youth Initiatives

In projects with international partners, ↘ 'getting to know' the other groups involved in the project may be a difficult and time consuming process but extremely valuable for ensuring a good co-operation. It will also be good to know about the coach(es) involved in the other youth group(s), if any, and plan coaching strategies together. If the country groups have never met before you could suggest them to organise a meeting at the very beginning of the project, gathering 2-3 project leaders of every partner country. This would be an opportunity to get to know about each other's previous experiences and local activities of their organisations as well as to ensure that all groups have the same understanding of the project idea. Reflect with them on the following questions: why they want to do this project (and not another one)? What is the link between the project idea and their respective needs and interests? What is the link between the project activities and their respective local communities?

↘ 'Building the relationship' in transnational projects take more time as there are different cultural and country groups working together. When working as part of a wider team it is good to know the expectations of the partners involved towards the project itself, towards their co-operation as an international team and towards your coaching strategies and coaching availability. You should communicate regularly with the partners involved and set realistic frameworks for supporting all the groups, if needed. Be honest with the partner groups when discussing the limits of your coaching practice in case there would not be any coach directly supporting the other groups.

When ↘ 'identifying needs and competences' in a transnational project you should ensure that the different contexts and realities of the countries involved in the project are taken into consideration. Creating a project idea with other countries can be a lot of fun but implementing it according to different needs and interests of the local groups could be a challenge. Encourage the young people you are coaching to share their group specific needs with the partners as well as to identify common needs of the network. Also work with them in identifying competences of different partners and looking for possibilities for peer learning among the different groups.

When it comes to ↘ 'supporting' a transnational Youth Initiative one of the main points to consider is how to communicate within international teams. Communication does not just happen, it has to be encouraged and it has to be organised. In this sense you might help the group to develop a communication strategy together with their partners: When to communicate? How to communicate? What to report to the other groups? Who does it? Sending regular emails, organising virtual meetings through chat forums, naming a person reponsible to communicate with the partners in each group, setting an agenda about when to inform about what… could be suggested as useful tools to improve better communication among the groups.

With regard to ↘ 'evaluation' it is very important to ensure that two different levels of activities are evaluated: the local activities in the partner countries and the international activities as a network.

You should also encourage the group to evaluate how they worked together as an international team: did they communicate effectively? Did all the groups feel part of the network? What they learnt from each other? You could also encourage the group to reflect on their intercultural awareness before and after their networking experience. A final evaluation meeting including all the partners could be organised within the project. It could be an opportunity for the group to evaluate the project but also to celebrate their achievements as a team, and maybe to plan follow-up activities and future co-operation.

# Keeping Contact and Feedback   3.4.7

In addtion to all key elements described previously: motivating, getting to know, building the relationship, identifying needs and competences, supporting and evaluating, there are certain tasks or activities that you, as a coach of a Youth Initiative project, will have to perform in a permanent way, that is during the whole coaching process. Those permanent tasks are related, on the one hand, to maintaining regular contact with the group of young people and on the other hand to sharing feedback during the entire process of a Youth Initiative.

⤷ „A coach should come up with constructive criticism. I wouldn't like him/her to express criticism without having any suggestion for improvement."
*Palmir (23), Denmar*

As far as **keeping contact** is concerned, it involves both you and the members of the group in continuous communication and exchange of information. It is important for you to have up-dated information about the situation in the group, development of the project, answers to questions that concern the young people running the project. For the young people it is also important to know about your availability if the need for coaching emerges.

As for **feedback,** it is important to create the space for giving and receiving feedback both for the group of young people and for you as coach. Being able to observe the process of a Youth Initiative from aside can give you the opportunity to relay the effect of project process to the group/individuals for their use and learning; therefore raising their awareness on the group process and enabling them to improve their performance. At the same time you can use feedback from the young people to improve your own coaching practice.

In order to make feedback be most productive and beneficial, you should keep in mind that the feedback you provide should be helpful to the person/s receiving it. To be helpful, feedback to the group or individuals must be such that the group or the person: understand the information, is able to accept the information and is able to do something about the information. Be sure that the feedback you give serves only the needs of the person/s receiving it and not your own needs; otherwise it is likely to produce defensive reactions from the group receiving the feedback and they are unlikey to amend the project process as a result.

# How to Give Feedback

•• 1. Your feedback should be given in terms of specific, observable actions or behaviours and the effect of that on the project process and the project results.

•• 2. Perceptions, reactions and opinions you have concerning the project process or specific behaviours of the group members should be presented as such and not as facts.

•• 3. Ensure that feedback you provide refers to the relevant performance, behaviour or outcomes, but not to the group of young people or individuals as persons.

•• 4. If your feedback concerns an area of performance it should include a discussion of what is viewed as the 'high' and 'low' points of the performance and the specific behaviours which appear to be contributing to or limiting full effectiveness or accomplishment.

•• 5. When discussing problematic areas you should try to encourage the group to find out the ways how to improve performance, and if needed, also give suggestions. The discussion might lead to establishing some procedures or activity plan for achieving solutions.

•• 6. When you give feedback, it should aim at possible improvements and should thus have clear evaluative purpose (rather than purely descriptive). Yet it is important to avoid simplified judgements of 'good' or 'bad' and set clear criteria for assessment.

•• 7. The feedback you provide should be concerned with those things over which the group or an individual can exercise some control, and may include indicators of how the feedback can be used for improvement or planning alternative actions.

•• 8. You should avoid terms which produce emotional reactions and raise defences; but in case you encounter those reactions, you should deal with the reactions themselves rather than trying to convince, reason, or supply additional information.

•• 9. You should give the feedback in a manner which communicates acceptance of the group/individuals as a worthwhile person/s and of that person's right to be different.

•• 10. Usually, feedback is most effective when given as soon as possible after the event (though some aspects of a person's performance may be better dealt with in private).

But in practice, how to ensure the 'contact keeping' and 'feedbacking' during the whole process? As a general rule, when coaching takes place it is in the form of meetings between the coach and the young people. These usually happen in a place chosen by the coach (often where the coach works) or a venue the coach is aware of or used before. We would advise you to go and meet the young people regularly when the project activities take place to see how the project is developing. All of these meetings provide opportunities for you to help the group apply the ground rules they agreed on together (punctuality, checking if the project is on schedule, etc).

It is important for the meetings to be informal, not to make the coach look important but, because you may need to redefine the parameters, clarify your role and check that the young people have effectively accomplished the goals set for the project. You can do this by simply holding a meeting in your office (if you have any) or any other common place and discussing how the project is going on, with an official looking file showing the name of the group and the title of the project clearly in evidence! This kind of administrative detail isn't just there for show, it's part of the guidelines for effective coaching. Your file on the project has to be up to date and contain details showing how the group has evolved, the schedule and the tasks to be carried out.

These meetings are therefore opportunities for getting feedback from the group by reminding them what happened during the first meeting when you both (the coach and the group) agreed to embark together into this Youth Initiative journey. If you formalised the agreement with a contract, it will be easier to refer to it and maybe to redefine your role, or more to the point, the roles and responsibilities of the young people!

Remember that meetings with the group could also be an opportunity for managing group dynamics and work towards group cohesion. You should aim, among other things, to build their self-confidence, help them deal with conflicting issues (if any) and focus energy on positive factors in the project group and the surrounding environment.

↘ „A coach should help with providing information, supporting, advicing… I would like to have regular meetings with the coach"
*Vytas (22), Lithuania*

# Coaching Meetings

PACo TIPS

## What role to undertake?

- Specify the goal of each meeting
- Facilitate discussion between the members (i.e. questions, suggestions, etc)
- Ask questions and let the members answer
- Maintain order in the discussion
- Bring the group 'back to order' when necessary
- Help clarify the meaning of certain interventions when they appear confused
- From time to time, summarise what has been said or done
- Ensure the group is involved in deciding tasks and task division
- Without preventing people from expressing their differences or possible conflicts, direct discussion towards the objectives of the meeting or check that it doesn't jeopardize the flow of the meeting
- Make sure the meeting moves along at a good pace
- Summarise the meeting, make a short evaluation at the end of the meeting

## Which attitude to develop?

- Listen attentively to all members of the group
- Respect the ideas and the individuals
- First try to understand, then to be understood
- Give equal opportunity to the different points of view to be weighted and examined by the group
- Try your best not to have preconceived ideas about the members and the points of view

# 3.5    Challenges on the Road

Challenges and problems occuring throughout the project and the coaching process at the time could be seen as the biggest disaster ever. It is only through reflection and evaluation that these disasters can help in identifying problem solving techniques and highlighting personal development and learning.

Imagine that there is a book on your book-shelf *'Answers to all possible problems young people can have in their Youth Initiatives: a guide for the coach.'* Whenever an obstacle would arise in a project, the right solution would just be at your finger tips…it would be boring, right? Anyway, this is impossible! Still, again, in this section we try to offer some support and guidance on the possible challenges that you could face.

So the solutions to obstacles would still need to be found by the project group itself with your support and good coaching, adapted to the very specific project conditions. Indeed, it is evident that as young people, their experiences, skills and competencies as well as environment in which they implement their project are very varied, so are the needs and obstacles related to their projects.

Nevertheless in rather generalised terms it could be said that difficulties in projects are associated either with the core group itself (i.e. motivation, awareness, skills, interpersonal relationships) or external conditions (i.e. conditions in which the project is implemented, changes and required adjustments, the need for public relations, lobbying and financial resources). Both of these are surely also influential to each other. So below we take a further look into what could be the possible obstacles.

### Setting the scene for the project... needs analysis, objectives

In many project management handbooks it is stressed that a project starts with an idea. This is important, to the extent that we must remember and ensure that ideas still come from the young people first. In a Youth Initiative project everything starts from the young people (the core group), their motivation and ideas, and one of the first obstacles young people might face is that there are simply not enough people to start to realise their Youth Initiative project.

The ways for finding new group members are as creative and varied as young people themselves. There are examples where advertisements have been put in local newspapers or street performances done to attract the attention of other local young people, among others. Sometimes the reward and attraction can be taking part in the first place, other times you may want to be clear about the advantages of getting involved.

What tends to be difficult for young people though is the formation of a group with a common understanding of the project's roots and purpose, its aim and objectives. It is so often the case in

the planning process that we tend to jump to defining activities (which are much more concrete and easy to think of) rather than having finished the needs analysis first. Yet it is important to avoid that the people in the group have different understandings of what the project aims are and how to achieve them and thus avoid misunderstandings in later phases of the project. First of all, the whole group should take the time to set the basis of the project. Part of it is to follow that the motivations of the young people who become part of the project core group are shared and are similar.

### Identifying resources
When all kinds of resources needed for the project are being identified, human resources (including those within the youth group) are of the greatest importance and are the first ones to be put forward. We then look for external means needed to implement the project.

But let's reflect for a second… what do young people consider as obstacles?

*"Lack of knowledge, especially about financial issues"* Baiba (18), Latvia

Indeed if there are some issues in project management that young people fear it is mostly the financial aspects of the project: how to know all the prices and calculate the budget, how to find sufficient funding from other different sources, how to report on expenses and how to be legally accountable for the funding.

It is clear that some knowledge is required to be able to identify financial issues of the project and you, as a coach, might have already some skills gained through previous experiences that could be helpful to support young people in this matter. Besides that, for finding support for a project it is important to introduce the idea, so you might be a valuable resource in identifying targets and channels for public relations, marketing and (why not) lobbying for additional financial assistance and management.

Moreover young people might need support and advice in some juridical aspects. Indeed the project may require renting some very expensive material or hiring a professional service. In these cases a signature of contracts might be needed with all the juridical responsibilities that it implies.

### Group and time management
There is an overall lack of time in today's society and the reality is that very often those young people who decide to start up a Youth Initiative project are also involved in, and busy with, other youth activities, their studies or work. Besides the motivation the exact role division is often a determining factor for how much time and effort we are ready to dedicate to the project... So the group and time management become important issues in the realisation of the project.

Initially when the idea is fresh and motivation is high the task division should not be difficult in the project group. Experience shows though that in many projects it becomes a great challenge to keep to the agreed task division and schedule when the project progresses. Threfore taking this 'touch of reality' into account, during the initial planning of the task division and of the timetable, could

"One of the greatest problems is the lack of money. It is possible to ask support from different foundations, but usually all the projects require own finance too" *Mari (18), Estonia*

be helpful. Or why not identify possible risks that could happen so as to be ready to adjust to the changing conditions?

It might also be helpful for the group if, on the one hand, the calendar of project activities is not planned too tight and busy (because despite of good will, in reality it can become rather difficult to find a time to meet and dedicate yourself to the project once a week, for example) and, on the other hand, the meeting times are set already at the project preparation stage so that everybody can plan their agendas well in advance.

The longer the project process is, the more varied activities are or the bigger the core group is, the more important it becomes to have good co-ordination for the project as a whole. Preferably the co-ordination should be done by some member(s) of the youth group. Similarly, leadership is another sensitive and rather challenging issue. That could also be a topic where support and feedback from the coach is needed and appreciated all through the project process.

### There is an obstacle in our way... so what do we do now?

The understanding behind this guide is that a youth project can bring a valuable experience for young people even if it was not a smooth and problem-free process. It might happen for instance that the tasks agreed are not performed as it was agreed by the group members and then tensions arise.

Or maybe some people decide to withdraw from the project and there are not then sufficient human resources to continue with the project. Or it could be that new people join in in the middle of the process and the project starts to take a new direction which is not appreciated by those people involved from the beginning.

In reality the project is planned initially without considering potential changes that might occur during the project process. So it can be the case that in some situations the tension is rather high and the group would need you to act as a mediator to help to facilitate the evaluation of the current situation and the planning of further steps.

But don't panic! Remember that obstacles are often good experiences that can bring groups closer and that will challenge their problem solving capabilities.

Looking at the issues so far it might sound like setting up a Youth Initiative is a rather risky business... well, luckily in reality a project is also much more, as it is reflected in this guide. Having brought forward some of the issues which seem to challenge the process in many Youth Initiative projects, it is evident that no 'tailor-made' solutions exist. Again the solutions are often based on the values and attitudes of the people involved. So it might be that through your experience, through different projects as a coach, you decide to create your own compilation of good and not-so-good practices and problem solving tools. Then, keep them on your book-shelf as reference to what you have learned out of your past experience for whenever needed in the future…

↘ "The tasks should be delegated so that I would not have to do everything on my own. But when everybody has some kind of a task then it's still important that the team would feel a team. That everybody would know their roles. So if I was a leader of that project the problem for me would be how to organise the group and how to be a good leader"
*Kadri (18), Estonia*

↘ "A problem that we met in my second project was that one person takes all the work to him or herself and does not share any information or duties with others. The most difficult is that this person is "starsick", does not want to listen to what others think and does all the things as he or she likes."
*Jaana (18), Estonia*

# 4. INCREASING THE VELOCITY

## FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

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pation

The European Commission's motivation to choose 'active participation' as a priority in Youth Initiatives clearly identifies the value of this action in enabling young people to become active citizens and therefore answers concretely one of the main topics of the White Paper on Youth Policy. Through this action, a new approach to youth activities has been introduced to guarantee the widest possible youth participation at both local and international level.

When speaking about youth participation we use different terms: 'participation', 'involvement', 'active participation', 'proactive participation', etc. In this text you will not find any new definition for participation but rather some thoughts and approaches related to the topic. How can you as a coach contribute to increase the active participation of each young person in the activities run through a Youth Initiative project? How can you encourage young people to involve their local community in the realisation of their project? This chapter will help you to identify the personal and social dimensions of youth participation and what you can do, as a coach, to manage the participation process of a Youth Initiative.

## 4.1　Learning to Participate

When talking about youth participation in Youth Initiatives we should refer to two different dimensions of participation: participation at personal level and participation at community level.

The first dimension, **participation at personal level,** refers to the potential of young people for taking decisions at each stage of the project. It is about encouraging young people to take responsibility for their actions and, in time, their own lives. It is therefore related to young people's personal development.

As for the second dimension, **participation at community level,** it refers to the contribution of young people, in terms of ideas and energies, towards the community (local, regional, national or international). It is about giving young people a voice, and hence some kind of empowerment in society. It is therefore related to the young people's social development.

To ensure active participation of young people in Youth Initiatives it is important to take into consideration both dimensions of youth participation and this is where your role of coach providing support to a concrete Youth Initiative (both at individual and group level) plays a decisive role.

## 4.1.1　Personal Development through Progressive Participation



Young people's personal development is clearly encouraged through participation in Youth Initiatives in terms of learning how to take decisions and be autonomous.

John Huskins (1996) describes different degrees of participation in decision making which entail different levels of personal involvement of young people in youth activities. This approach entitled Curriculum Development Model (CDM) can be applied to the process of progressive involvement of young people in the management of a Youth Initiative, from dependence to independence of the group in the realisation of the project (towards decision making, responsibility, autonomy).

We will represent the participation of young people through the picture of a shell which is divided into seven progressive stages (see picture on the left). Every circle of the spiral corresponds to this progression in seven stages, meaning that the process will be repeated and repeated through a non-ending coaching spiral. As seen by Huskins, during stages 1 to 4 you, as a coach, are essentially acting 'for' young people, stage 5 is the significant change when you start acting 'with' them, stage 6 is when activities are run 'by' young people, and stage 7 is 'through' them taking on a leadership or peer education role. Furthermore, we would add another stage to Huskins' model: stage 8 would

be when young people, after doing a Youth Initiative, become coaches themselves for other young people developing projects.

To explain the different steps of this model, let's take the example of an art gallery being organised in a local community within a Youth Initiative project.

## ⬂ example of Curriculum Development Model

**Stage 1**

### first contact
Young people are testing their future coach out: what has this adult to offer us? Can he or she be trusted? *Example: the group present to you their idea of organising an art gallery; they wonder how you would help them, to which extent you would be involved in the project.*

**Stage 2**

### familiarising
Both the group and the coach are gradually getting to know each other, getting to know more about the project idea, engaging with each other: trust and sharing begins! *Example: you and the group start meeting regularly to discuss the details of the project, sharing what you have to offer to each other…*

**Stage 3**

### socialising
The group and the coach are building the relationship, clarifying expectations from both sides, agreeing about roles and responsibilities, setting some rules for cooperation and communication. *Example: you have regular discussions with the group based on trust; you tell the group that you expect them to be responsible for the project and for themselves, the group tell you that they expect you to advise them when there are different possibilities or ways to follow and be available if problems appear but not take over the project as a leader. Young people begin to express opinions about how to set up the gallery, test ideas and seek your responses…*

**Stage 4**

### taking part
Young people are introduced to a participation process by taking part in the project activities developed out of their interests and needs. *Example: the opening of the gallery is mainly organised by you but based on the ideas and opinions of the group. Young people participate in the opening and start collecting ideas for further development of the gallery…*

**Stage 5**

### being involved
Young people begin to take an active part in planning and running activities, the coach stays behind the scenes but is always available in case he or she is asked for advice or support. *Example: the group is responsible for planning and organising the next exhibitions, they set the agenda for the following months, they discuss with you the themes of the next exhibitions and make the final decision themselves, they ask your help to seek for contacts of young artists in the neighbourhood, they collect ideas about how to advertise the next opening and share them with you…*

⬂ **Why 'Peer Coaching' within Youth Initiatives?**

*"Consultations with people who have already done a Youth Initiative would have helped me and my group to realise our project even better"*
*Gintaras (20), Lithuania*

Peer education, that is learning by one's peers or fellows of the same age, is an important tool to be used in Youth Initiatives in order to develop an effective coaching system without the youth workers influence. Young people leading the project from the beginning till the end and benefiting from their experienced peers' support is what could be called 'peer coaching'. Promoting peer coaching and using it as an educational approach is interesting for different reasons: it is cost-effective, it helps to foster youth participation in non-formal education and it reduces the barriers between coaches and young people in terms of facilitating understanding and communication through proximity.

If you went throughout the process of a Youth Initiative project, you can offer, as a peer, a coaching support that would be close to and familiar to young people since you know the Youth Initiative process ▶

► from your own experience. Other young people would learn from your experience. Your role would not be to tell the group how to do their project but to listen to them, to share experiences, and to see how you can contribute to the group with your experience.

Becoming a 'peer coach' can be a challenge and at the same time a great opportunity for you to continue learning and sharing. Supporting a Youth Initiative project can become a process of learning a great deal about life and about yourself. Based on your experience you could coach your peers in a kind of 'invisible' way, leaving the group to their own devices as much as possible; precisely what you would have wanted when you were coached yourself!

As any on-going process you might face unexpected obstacles and difficulties during any of the stages described above, but as an empowerment experience you will be proud to have put into practice what you have learned while doing your project so as to help ►

**Stage 6** ## organising

Young people take responsibility for planning and running activities, they organise the activities themselves; the coach is progressively distancing him or herself from the group but is still there if needed. *Example: the group carries out a research on the local community to find potential artists to be involved in following exhibitions, they design invitations for the next opening and distribute them in the neighbourhood, they prepare the settings of the gallery (scenery, lights, etc), they are responsible for the budget (buying materials, reporting invoices)…*

**Stage 7** ## leading

Young people are fully independent in their decisions and their actions, they take the leadership role or resort to peer education: the coach is not needed any more! *Example: the group takes full responsibility for the preparation and opening of the following exhibitions (tasks division, contact with artists, contact with the local community, management of the budget, supporting each other…) as well as for the evaluation of the whole project and the writing of the final report. They take responsibility for others as well as themselves; you say good-bye to the group!*

**Stage 8** ## peer coaching

After the leading stage young people are ready to take over a peer coaching role, based on their knowledge, skills and experience gained during the process of participating in the Youth Initiative. That is the reason for including this important next stage in the model and in the circular process of the shell. *Example: during the last exhibition some young visitors suggested that it would be good to involve older people in their activities so as to show them current art and compare points of view from different ages, and through that, promote inter-generations understanding. The young leaders of the art gallery encourage them to develop further their idea and apply for Youth Initiatives to get funding. They offer themselves to help the new youth group in the application process as well as in preparing and running their Youth Initiative if needed.*

(Model adapted from CDM, John Huskin, 1996)

We believe in this progressive participation process within a decision making approach as it ensures the development of young people's autonomy. But above all we believe in the principle of young people's involvement from the start. You should involve the group throughout the whole process, from the very beginning till the end, in order to give them a sense of ownership. Stages 1 to 4 do not necessarily need to be considered as acting 'for' young people (as stated by Huskins) but 'with' young people, if they are encouraged progressively to take responsibilities. The approach should never be to carry out a project for young people, and not even with young people, but rather by young people.

This model can be used to provide evidence of young people's learning and behavioural change resulting from running a Youth Initiative. Nevertheless it should not be seen as a rigid and unique model of progressive participation in a youth project. Not all the groups running a Youth Initiative need to follow all the stages in the order presented above. While stages 1 to 3 ('first meeting' to

'socialisation') apply to most groups of young people, stages 4 to 7 ('taking part' to 'leading') differ not only according to particular groups but also to specific individuals within the group.

For example, one group as a whole could jump from 'socialising' to 'being involved' (since they are in general independent enough to plan and organise the project activities) but inside the group it could be one or several person(s) who still need(s) to go through the stage of 'taking part' while others could go directly to 'organising' or even 'leading' (for instance, a youth leader very experienced in project management).

Obviously starting at one or another stage of the progression depends on the level of dependence/independence of the young people about an actual Youth Initiative. You should keep an eye on each person individually to ensure that everybody progresses within his or her own level of participation. The aim is not that all the groups actively participate at the same level but that everyone progresses according to his or her personal situation as a starting point. Every group is a unique universe and should be 'coached' taking into consideration the particularities of its unique members.

▶ a new group to realise their own Youth Initiative. You will want the project to become a success because their success is a bit of your success too!

"If I would like to start and realise a Youth Initiative the kind of support I would need is concrete and practical examples. Just someone who have done a Youth Initiative and could tell us what they did, how much paper work it was and how much time they spent on it. Someone who could tell us if our project is good or not and how practically to work with it."
*Pia (20), Finland*

## Social Development through Community Participation   4.1.2

Youth Initiatives open channels for active participation not only within the group running the Youth Initiative but also within the local community or even at a more international level.

Young people's social development can be reinforced through participating in a Youth Initiative in terms of their involvement in, and the recognition they can get from, the local community. A Youth Initiative can be developed within a small or large community: at local level among citizens in a town, at national level among citizens from several regions, or at European level connecting communities from different countries. In each context we can identify the level of social participation by using different indicators which help to measure the degree of young people's involvement in the given community.

There are indeed different levels of participation in the local community. The following scale will help us to understand the **steps of the community's participation** in society through a Youth Initiative.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

ADVISORY PARTICIPATION

PARTICIPATION

MANIPULATIVE PARTICIPATION

NON PARTICIPATION

↙ levels of participation

Let's take the example of a Youth Initiative organised by a 'students youth organisation' for other young people in the local community. The project idea is to organise a theatre performance about the topic 'all different all equal' aimed at young people to promote tolerance and European awareness.

It is ↘ non participative when young people do not take part in the activities which have social and cultural impact in the community. *Example: young people from the local community do not participate in the theatre performance organised by the 'students youth organisation' because they are not informed about it or because they are not interested in theatre, or because they cannot afford the entrance fee.*

The ↘ manipulative participation occurs when the participation of young people is used by someone else (association, youth workers, coaches…) to reach personal purposes, which often are hidden behind other objectives. *Example: several immigrants from the neighbourhood are invited to perform within the theater play 'all equal all different'. The director from the local school who recently has not accepted the application of one Muslim girl to enter the school, is also invited. In reality the leaders of the theatre would prefer to see the director to be fired and their aim is thus to bring attention to this case through the theatre play. In this situation young immigrants are participating in the activity without being aware of the hidden purpose of it.*

The level of ↘ participation is when young people decide to participate at a concrete activity by being present. *Example: during the theatre performance 'all equal all different' a group of young people from the neighbourhood decide to participate as audience. In this case the young audience participated in the performance but was neither involved in the preparation nor the implementation of the show.*

The ↘ advisory participation step is when young people contribute to an activity by offering opinions to the organisers but without any decisional responsibility. *Example: a group of young people from the neighbourhood suggests to the organisers of the theatre performance some ideas concerning the setting designs which will be taken into consideration in preparing the stage. Besides they will participate as audience.*

The ↘ active participation step happens when young people from the community contribute to the project with their own ideas and decide by themselves, they are involved in decision making and in taking responsibilities towards the project and other members of the group. *Example: a group of young people from the neighbourhood organises together with the 'students youth organisation' the theatre performance by sharing responsibilities in terms of preparation, implementation and evaluation of the success of the performance in the given community.*

It is generally the case that the higher the participative levels, the bigger the motivation of the community to contribute to the project. No matter which target group from the neigbourhood participates in achieving a Youth Initiative, they should be given the possibility to decide by themselves and contribute with their knowledge, experiences and competences to the project activities.

When coaching a Youth Initiative you should keep in mind that there is a constant need to find out the needs and competences both of the core group (youth leaders) and the target group (community), and to review your own position towards the young people's involvement, depending on the degree of autonomy reached step by step by the group and the community. What matters is not to replace the core group or target group when they are not competent but to help them to be aware of what is needed at each step of the project and support them in the development of new skills.

## Route Planning from Local to European 4.1.3

Participation: local or European? Certainly not all young people have the same opportunities and abilities to participate at the same level. Your role as a coach would be to identify the maximum individual participative levels and support their development progressively. It does not matter if young people reach the higher 'leading or peer education' stage (as identified in stage 8 of our shell model), neither if they reach the higher European impact, but what matters is to facilitate a self-confident learning space for each young person and for each group.

Both the personal and social contexts of participation presented in this chapter are needed for young people's active participation in society. The personal development is about learning the skills needed to participate and to take decisions within a group initiative itself. The social development is about participating and taking responsibility within the community. A good balance between both aspects, on the one hand the learning experience of the young person as an individual and of the young people as a team and, on the other hand the impact of the project in the community, would contribute to a high quality Youth Initiative.

Leading a Youth Initiative gives young people the experience of 'being active' by acting and reacting on common European concerns at local level, the feeling of pride in having achieved something positive at local level and as a possible consequence of that, the feeling of wanting new challenges like starting co-operation at international level.

Learning to be citizens through a local Youth Initiative, but especially through an international experience, is the first step to progressively internalise the common responsibility of becoming citizens not only of our region or our country but also citizens of Europe and citizens of the World.

# 4.2        Travel Conditions for Participation

Think about a Youth Initiative as a journey through the 'road of participation'. You are a coach and are riding the 'coaching bi-cycle' with a group of young people doing a Youth Initiative project. You are riding behind them, not too close but not too far. Far enough not to be too present on their trip but close enough to be there whenever is needed. Along the side of the road you will have at your disposal different 'pit stops'. The trip could be quite long and therefore you can decide when and where to stop in order to build up energy for the rest of the way. To support the group you are riding with, energy could be given in terms of increasing ⬎ competences required to move forward (knowledge about the road to follow, social skills to communicate with people along the way, etc), in terms of ⬎ opportunities or resources needed for the way (drink and food, a map, etc), or in terms of ⬎ motivation to continue till the end (challenges, enthusiasm, etc).

These three elements are indeed seen as the main conditions for participation within a Youth Initiative:

▪▪ Competences: knowledge, skills and attitudes to participate and take decisions.
▪▪ Opportunities: power to make decisions and resources available.
▪▪ Motivation: willingness to take an active role in their community life.

In Youth Initiative projects the combination of all the mentioned conditions differs in each phase of the process. Because of that, it is worth seeing youth participation as a long-term process where young people gain participation experience, develop capacity to participate and their motivation to participate further is growing.  Your role as a coach should aim at increasing the level of youth participation by working in three directions: accompany the young people's personal development process, open different opportunities to gain participation experiences and encourage young people to take an active stance in their life.

Coming back to the model of participative levels, meaning different involvement of people in making and undertaking decisions affecting their life, Youth Initiatives should be at the top level of participation because those projects are prepared, run and evaluated by young people themselves. In reality young people are not, usually, at the same level of participation from the beginning to the end of the process of a Youth Initiative. But still there is a way for you as a coach to support every group, no matter the participation level they feel more comfortable with, towards autonomy and youth participation. Again an individual approach adapted to a given group in a concrete situation will need to be adopted.

⬎ "Active participation is when all the young people participate and are active in the project. If I had an idea I wouldn't like my coach to give me his back and not listen or understand me."
*Miriam (17), Malta*

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tice

5. BEST PRACTICE AND BEYOND

In this chapter you will find a European **kaleidoscope** of seven different project examples from seven European countries. These stories will tell you about diverse projects and coaching realities. You will get to know very different groups of young people from different backgrounds, with very different ideas and also very different needs. This small compilation of examples shows the really wide variety of project possibilities and of possible coaching situations.

The people who gave advice and support to the following groups met the young people at certain stages during their project. They had different roles and resources they could offer to the young people. In those presented cases, where the support was rather sporadic, you will find the description of the example is outlined from an outsider's view and also written in the third person, so as to comment on possible successes but also mistakes and failures. In other cases where the coach of the group was accompanying them throughout the whole process, the example is described from the perspective of the coaching person.

Before you start reading the examples now, we would suggest you keep in mind the different models of participation we introduced in the last chapter. Based on them you may reflect at what point the aim to support the highest level of participation, young people leading the project and coach supporting the group as a mere adviser, is reached.

　Postcard from Poland: 'Our Few Minutes'

*by Milena Butt-Pośnik*

## ⬊ The project idea

A group of young people from a small town in south east Poland prepared a project called 'our few minutes'. The title refers to the feeling they had, that as a group they had a very short time left before they could do something together, before they start becoming 'adults', busy with work, responsibilities and personal obligations for life.

The town they live in does not offer many possibilities for spending free time out of home and school. The unemployment rate is very high and the families of young people who prepared this project suffer from economic and social difficulties. All of the initiators were students of the same high school where they created the 'Student's Club of Independent Arts'. The main aim of this club was to create a space for self development and some activities which could compete with TV and doing nothing.

As they said, everybody can be a member of their club: loved or not, too slim or too fat, big and small, talented or not, happy or unhappy, hard working student or lazy one. They wanted to create a 'world of alternatives' where they could express themselves. The idea of the Youth Initiative project came as a need to develop further their Club and so motivate other young people to discover their talents and deeper wishes. To get people out from their life corners.

## ⬊ The initiators

The most active members of the 'Club of Independent Arts' came up with the idea of the Youth Initiative. In total nine young people, aged between 14 and 25, created the project. Since they did not have any experience with preparing projects and applying for money, the librarian from their high school offered them support and help in creating and writing the project. The school library was a gathering point where most of the group meetings took place.

These young people were already known in their local community since they organised poetry evenings, exhibitions, Valentine Days and common activities with disabled young people from the town. The director of their school together with the teachers helped the group to create and submit their project to the YOUTH National Agency in Poland. They had 14 meetings together before the application was ready to be sent in.

## ⬊ The timetable and methodology

The project was planned for five months, but later on it was extended due to changes in the programme and within the group of young people.

During the first month, preparation and first activities started. A questionnaire aiming to identify the

most common needs and interest of youngsters, which couldn't be realised due to lack of money, was created and distributed to young people from the town. According to responses, four main areas of working were put forward: art, architecture, electronic and computer and foreign languages.

The first phase of the project was very enthusiastic. Young peple were very motivated and happy that they managed to receive a grant. Co-operation with the school was very good as well as within the group of initiators. The advisor from the school, who took the role of coach for the young people, was doing a great deal for the group, as well as being the contact person with the National Agency.

During the second month, implementation started. And then, the first problems appeared: conflict between the co-ordinator of the project and the advisor. The role of co-ordinating the project was given by the group of initiators to a young poet. One day the co-ordinator called the National Agency with a complaint that the advisor was influencing the project too much and did not allow the young people to act freely as it should be by the principles of Youth Initiatives. The first phone call with the advisor and other group members, made by the National Agency, showed a different understanding of the problem. The group promised to first discuss the issue together and then find a common solution.

As for the coaching system provided by the National Agency, three steps were implemented.

### First step: e-mails and telephone talks
In a few days the National Agency received a letter from the group informing about a change of the project co-ordinator. The same day the National Agency received a letter from the co-ordinator that due to manipulation by the advisor the group was forced to reject her as the co-ordinator of the project. Talking to both sides by phone and mediating between them did not bring total clarification. At this stage the main reason for conflict was recognised in the advisor's involvement.

### Second step: meeting with the whole group at the National Agency office
Since the information was contradictory, we invited the whole group to the National Agency for a meeting to discuss possible solutions. The group was very united against the co-ordinator who was seen as a betrayer since she informed the National Agency about the conflict. Different methods were used to identify the source of conflict within the group and to reach possible solutions. We discussed the motivation of team members to work together and projected the results of a possible solution. At the end the group agreed to compromise so that they would give one more chance to the co-ordinator. At this stage the main reason of conflict was recognised as the relationship between the group and the co-ordinator, the group did not want to be co-ordinated by a person they did not respect and did not trust. The advisor was not present during this meeting. All members of the group had very good opinion about the role of the advisor and the importance of the help given by the advisor in their action plan.

### Third step: meeting with the whole group in their town
The co-ordinator did not fulfil what was agreed in the compromise and the group asked for further support. A first talk with the co-ordinator showed that she felt a huge pressure from being observed

and lack of trust by members of the group. The group decided that since communication was so difficult and so many emotions were involved, it would be much better if the actual co-ordinator would take over the responsibility for co-ordination of one section instead of the whole project. The advisor was not present during our meeting.

## ⬊ The project results

The project met its aim: young people created space for their talents and creativity. The town became more and more a place where young people could spend their free time. All activities which were planned in the timetable were realised. However the initial project co-ordinator dropped out of the group and never came back. So the principle of the Club that every person can be an active member was not accomplished.

## ⬊ The coaching approach

From my reflection, the strong points of the coaching approach were: taking problems seriously, showing boundaries, ensuring young people take decisions by themselves, suggesting to young people alternatives for solutions and common analysis of benefits and disadvantages of given strategies, jointly confronting the core of the conflict and leaving the final decision in young people hands, create safe space for mutual exchange of opinions and needs. As for the weak points of coaching, I would identify: not understanding the local context and the importance of an adult's presence in recognition of the group by local authorities, not properly identifying roles within the group and not appreciating the crucial position of the advisor for the young people.

From the very beginning this group of young people was supported by different adults: teachers, librarian and parents, and at the end, officers of the National Agency. What was the most problematic area was linked more with them as a group than any external problem. The main field of needed coaching concerned conflict management, communication, group dynamics and team building. The project itself brought new and unknown challenges to the young people: how to work in a group together? How to reach their ambitious aims and objectives and still like each other? How to manage communication within the group? How to deal with group members who don't obey group rules? How to communicate with adults? Whose side to take in case of conflict among advisors or group members? How to deal with personal confrontation and crisis of friendships? How to clarify misunderstanding and doubts?

I think that it would have been very good for this group to have had have some team building and group working exercises which would have helped them to know each other better from the perspective of working together within a team for many months. Moreover it would have been helpful for young people to have had one coach external to their group or support organisation. The young people lacked support from somebody who was not involved into the project.

*by Nerijus Kriauciunas*

## ⬊ The project idea

The main idea of the Youth Initiative 'Yellow-Green-Red' was to create a video recipe book. Young people wanted to gather cooking recipes of traditional meals prepared by people from different cultures living in Lithuania and put that on video.

What was 'driving' young people during this project was the possibility of travelling around the country, meeting people from other cultures, playing with the video, trying new and interesting meals and having a good time during the summer holidays. In fact they were motivated by a classical formula: new experience, challenge and fun. But also the project gave the opportunity to show other young people that it is possible to do something interesting whilst drawing their attention to the cultural diversity around them. Moreover the possibility of experiencing non-formal education was also important even if they were not totally aware of it.

All participating people were living in Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania, which is often celebrating cultural diversity, but not necessarily paying a lot of attention to it or valuing it in daily life.

## ⬊ The initiators

Around 30 young people participated in this Youth Initiative and 6-7 of them were the main people who carried it out. The ages differed from 16 to 18 years old and their experiences were also varied. For almost all of them this was the first contact with the YOUTH programme. Until this experience the young people knew each other as friends with whom it was good to party. Youth Initiatives gave them the possibility of knowing themselves as colleagues in work and that turned out as a totally different experience. For some of them participation in the project built their confidence, others were convinced they would rather stay as friends rather than as project co-leaders.

## ⬊ The timetable and methodology

The starting point of the project was the **search for a common idea**. During this stage I, as coach, was using some creative thinking techniques that helped to find enough original and innovative ideas. After finding a common idea it was important to put in order all main actions and tasks to be undertaken during the project. It helped then to **plan concrete steps** of the project, using participatory techniques.

After finding the idea and planning concrete steps, the young people started to **fill in the application form**. They had meetings where they were discussing parts of the application form, then sharing responsibilities out and filling it in. I was doing proof reading of the application and sending my feedback via email.

After getting the grant the young people had **meetings to plan project activities**, share the tasks and responsibilities. It was important to firstly plan all the visits in different regions where people from other cultures live, agree with them on meetings, and identify resources available and needed. Everything was planned and decided by the young people with some consultation with me via phone calls. During consultation I was trying to clarify the options, but the final decision was made by the young people themselves.

During the first weekend visit we tried to combine **group building activities** and **shooting the film**. For the group building I used several methods based on experiential learning principles. Activities showed some disagreements within the group and weak points in their common work. The negative side was that some people from the group did not know a lot about the project as they were invited to join it just before the first visit. During that visit I participated in the first shooting of the film as well. (Although I did not participate in the rest of the shooting, I was positively surprised when, during the last presentation of the movie, I saw how many people from different cultures they managed to place on the video!)

During some of the following weekend visits I used **experiential learning** as a way of answering the concrete needs of the young people in the group. In one of the first stages of the project we went on a night trip in order to get to know each other better. In the middle stage of the project we went on a boat trip to discuss gender issues as it was appearing as one of the important topics in the group. In both cases I made suggestions after identifying the group needs and young people were deciding to take the challenge or not.

One of the **main barriers** for some group members' participation of some members of the group was money. As the project funding was delayed the young people had to pay their participation to the visits from their own money and in few cases they paid extra money to cover the costs of other people involved in the project. As a learning point from this they took more time to work on co-funding.

The **most difficult stage** was in the autumn when they had to finish the preparation of the video book and organise its presentation. The main problems were the starting of the school year, participation in other after school activities and lack of motivation. My role here was more to put questions trying to clarify their interest and wish to continue the project.

During the **final stage of the project** young people participated in two weekend seminars. One was focusing more on intercultural learning and the other one on generating ideas and planning. During the intercultural learning weekend I prepared workshops and worked with them more as a trainer. For the second one I helped them to find two trainers who worked with them.

During the **evaluation** stage of the project we had two evaluation meetings. The young people used some evaluation tools to reflect on the Youth Initiative experience and evaluate the outcomes. During the evaluation meetings they prepared the final presentation of the project. I was participating as a guest.

It is worth mentioning that due to the over run of the last stage of the project, it was necessary to extend the end date of the project. The final version of the movie was cut by professionals in co-operation with the young people which gave them the opportunity to learn new skills. I did not use the video film as a source for evaluation but it could be a very good tool for this purpose.

During the **reporting** time I advised the leader of the group on how to prepare the financial and activity parts of the report. As we were submitting the final report to the National Agency together, it was important to agree the changes in the project.

## ⭦ The project results

To a great extent the main aim of the project was achieved as it was supposed to be beneficial to the initiators of the project themselves. That's how it happened. Maybe the product of this Youth Initiative, a video book of recipes, is not of the best quality, but the process was valuable for the personal development of the young people. Through this project they strengthened their motivation to keep an interest in other cultures and actively participate in similar activities in future.

The year after finishing this Youth Initiative project several of the young people hosted a multilateral Youth Exchange project with the main theme 'Culture'. The local community was involved in some activities of that international project and participated in the final presentation of the project.

This Youth Initiative was beneficial not only for the young people directly involved in the project but for other people too. During one of the first visits to a small town a new Youth Initiative was 'born' to be implemented the year after the project. In that new Youth Initiative some of the young people from the video recipe book Youth Initiative participated as well. Through participating for the second time in a Youth Initiative young people were active in advising, inspiring and offering creative proposals to their peers.

## ⭦ The coaching approach

From the methods and techniques I used in coaching this Youth Initiative the best were creative thinking techniques and experiential learning activities. Quite good was also the working group building activities and evaluation tools.

My coaching was important at the very early stage of the project when the young people were searching for an idea and preparing the application form. At the final stage it was important to motivate the young people to finish the project and to encourage successful reporting so that the young people could cope with their obligations.

I think without my coaching the Youth Initiative would be different, but it is very difficult to say what it would be, if it would be…

# Postcard from Italy: 'Initiative after Initiative'

*by Mario D'Agostino*

## ⭨ The project idea

The project I'm describing doesn't concern one single Youth Initiative but two of them, one after another. The idea of these initiatives was to develop young people's opportunities in a territory where there were neither youth policy nor youth organisations or youth centres, and therefore there weren't any youth activities.

In 1995 I was a social worker responsible for a centre for young people with disabilities and at the same time I was a young activist of the 'Youth Express Network', from exclusion to integration. Thanks to the 'Youth Express Network' I had the opportunity to participate in the Long Term Training Course held at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. Participants on this training course came from all over Europe with an idea of what a youth project could be. The project I had in mind was to build a youth centre in my mother town Tivoli (60.000 habitants, province of Rome) in order to offer an opportunity to young people to be creative and active and to promote the culture of youth participation among young people and politicians.

## ⭨ The initiators

Thanks to the information and skills I acquired during my training in Strasbourg and the support of the Youth Express Network, I started to spread what I had learned to a group of young people living in Borgonuovo,  a socially disadvantaged suburb of Tivoli. I was enthusiastic to tell the group that, as young European citizens, we had a chance to express our right to be active and creative and above all, that we had the opportunity to develop a Youth Initiative project through the 'Youth for Europe' programme.

So I started meeting at the centre for young people with disabilities where I was working with a group of 15-19 years old young people, who were strongly motivated to realise their own project with me. This was the beginning of my experience as a coach for a Youth Initiative project.

## ⭨ The timetable and methodology

Initiative after initiative, the different phases of the whole project idea were the following:

### First phase : Youth Initiative 'Letter to Europe'

After several meetings in January 1996, the group finally agreed on a common idea for a project. At this stage I tried to do my best as a coach not to influence their choice, but supporting them to clarify their idea for the project. Their idea was to produce a film that would show their living situation. Far from becoming famous actors their aim was to spend some good time together and at the same time to let the others, such as young people, local politicians and European youth organisations,

know about their reality. We wrote down the project and finally sent the application to the National Agency of the 'Youth for Europe' programme.

We faced many difficulties because we were informed that the project was approved 6 months after sending the application, and the financial support arrived to us 1 year later. It was very difficult for me as a coach to keep their motivation high for such a long time and it was really stressful to support the group without any tool and without any money. Yet I couldn't leave the group at that moment.

But finally, at the end of 1997 the film titled 'Letter to Europe' was ready and subtitled in English and French. The film was a documentary including a strong denounciation of the social and cultural situation of the young people living in this suburb.

At this point the group decided to hire a cinema in order to show their film to citizens and politicians. Their intention was also to organise a forum on youth issues with local politicians, as a place where to ask the politicians to support them in establishing a youth association, in setting up a youth centre and in developing a youth local council. That day the cinema was full of people (with exception of politicians). Later on I realised that the need of holding a forum with politicians was much more mine than the group's.

When the film was over the group told about their experience and invited the other young people to join them in creating a youth organisation and in claiming a youth centre.

### Second phase : Youth Organisation 'Free Young City'
About 8 new strongly motivated young people joined the group after the Youth Initiative 'Letter to Europe'. In 1998 finally they succeeded in establishing their youth organisation called 'Free Young City', but a few months later only 6 people were left in the organisation, from which only 2 were part of the original group. For a long period the group of 6 tried to organise little activities for other young people and children but it was difficult for them to keep their organisation alive without recognition and support from the municipality.

### Third phase : Youth Initiative 'From Creativity to Participation'
In 2001, after a big crisis among the members of the group, the organisation realised a local Youth Initiative project entitled 'From Creativity to Participation' supported by the YOUTH National Agency, and once again with my volunteer support as a coach.

In 8 months throughout this project, a group of 15 young people from the 'Free Young City' organisation realised several activities, such as concerts, movie forums on youth situations, performances by young artists, round table discussions on youth policy and youth participation and workshops on theatre, traditional music, intercultural work, clowning and video making. They rented an old factory that became a self-managed youth centre for the period of the project. This time, I was sure that the aims of this project such as motivating young people to be active and politicians to support youth policy were the ones carried out by the group and not by me. My role as a coach was rather to train the group in project management in order to improve their ability and autonomy to manage the project by themselves.

The result of this project was a video documentary that has been discussed with the Mayor during a public conference. Finding inspiration in the White Paper on Youth Policy of the European Commission and the Card of Participation of the Council of Europe, the young people asked the Mayor to provide them with a youth centre and to support a youth local council. At that moment, the Mayor took the commitment to pay the rent of the centre for 10 months and to support young people in order to find a common way to develop youth policy.

### Fourth phase: Youth Centre 'Youth Community of Tivoli'

In 2002 the youth organisation had 250 young members. The organisation asked me to continue supporting the group in the research for funds to realise a participative youth centre. By that time a regional law set aside a fund to increase youth participation. Both the organisation and I were seeing our initial dream come true. Finally, the organisation received economic support to start a youth centre aiming to promote active youth participation in the city of Tivoli.

## ⬎ The project results

The fact that today there is a youth centre that fosters participation is a result of a process carried out during more than 7 years thanks to 'Youth for Europe' and 'Youth' European programmes.

Nowadays, six people aged 25-30 belonging to the original group and to the youth organisation 'Free Young City' are working as youth workers for different organisations in the area. About me, I am currently coaching a group of young people coming from a town of 100.000 habitants in the south of Italy, where no youth organisation nor youth centres exist.

## ⬎ The coaching approach

In the initial phase of the project I worked above all to spread information about the European opportunities and to motivate the group in realising something for themselves and for the local youth community. In this phase I shared with the group concerns and emotions, taking myself the role of group and project leader. At that time I was young and probably I was more a social worker and an activist than a coach. What I am asking myself and what I ask you is, if in your opinion it's right that the aims of a young social worker are to be transferred to a group of younger people. Do you think I manipulated the group or that I gave them an opportunity?

In the second phase the group was looking for autonomy and identity so that some older members, unfortunately the more socially and economically disadvantaged ones, left the group while younger ones entered. It was tough for me not to enter the group in this phase, above all because the young people whom I thought could bring an important contribution to the group were leaving. I supported the group only when they asked me to do it. Sometimes I ask myself if it would have been better to be more present as a peer. What do you think?

In the third phase the young people came to me to have some consultation about a problem related to the participation of young people to the activities they were promoting. They asked me to support them in realising a local Youth Initiative project. This time as a coach I facilitated communication

among the group members, I shared aims and strategies of the project, I trained them on project management, I helped them to identify their individual competences and I acted as a mentor. This was the phase I felt to be more suitable for me, maybe because this is what I was asked for.

The fourth phase meant, to me, the end of my coaching role. I put my knowledge and my competences at the disposal of the youth organisation, as far as fund research to realise a democratic participative youth centre was concerned. Unfortunately, after receiving the economic support of the Region the organisation board did not accomplish a participative management of the centre. The only ones to manage it were the president, the vice president, the treasurer and the secretary who were all working as youth workers.

So now I'm asking myself and to you: is it possible for a coach to be manipulated by a group of young people?

Two videos document this experience: 'Letter to Europe' filmed in 1996 and 'From Creativity to Participation' filmed in 2001. A copy can be requested at the e-mail address riodago@tiscali.it



# Postcard from Germany: 'Participation... Mission (Im)possible'   5.4

*by Jochen Butt-Pośnik*

## ➘ The project idea

In my position of a youth worker for a big youth organisation, I have to find additional funds from time to time to balance the cutting by the state or district of our regular grants. From research, I found a grant possibility in a project fund for improving the social participation of young people, offering a maximum of 10.000 € for projects that aim at contracts between young people and political representatives, local authorities or even private companies.

For my association, I set up the project idea of 'Participation – Mission (Im)possible' to create a frame for local youth groups to develop such contracts and to realise projects corresponding with their local needs. Our office would provide a CD-Rom with material and tools on project management and offer a training course to accompany the local projects; and the local projects would do what they felt was needed to improve their situation.

## ➘ The initiators

When I wrote down the application, there was not a clear and expressed need of the young people themselves that I responded to, but more a 'feeling that this would be needed' and a focus on the interests of the organisation I work for. I made leaflets and spread info about the project among the local groups of our association to motivate young people to take part in that project once it was granted. And… it was! We got the approval, my board was happy with the extra money and I had the

extra effect of feeling that I could combine my interest to motivate my target group for project work with the needs of my organisation. So honestly, the iniator was me and not the young people.

## ⬎ The timetable and methodology

But what happened was that after three months of publicising this grant (including money for local projects), nobody seemed to be interested. What to do? I still found our original idea valid and good, and had the feeling that the young people should get involved in the planned project. The benefit for them would be great, at least we thought so. They could get better representation of their ideas, maybe solve some local problems, learn how to get along with the promises of politicians; all good results, but somehow the young people didn't seem to be really interested. In addtition, the benefit to our organisation would be worth the effort: some extra money, better contact with our young volunteers, and something else, let's call it reputation, a nice success which could be shown to the public.

Coaching under such circumstances is in danger of becoming a dirty business. You get more and more fixed on the view that you have to find just anybody to realise your project idea. What are the young people's coaching needs? Certainly it is not proposing them to solve their problems through participation in your project. Of course, you don't sell the idea to everybody. No participation work is sustainable and has a good involvement of the young people if it does not correspond to their own interests and needs. So I tried to convince people here, place a comment about the benefits of the project there, and try to create an atmosphere, where the young people start to think about the opportunities for them if they take part in 'my' project. If they would do it at the end… I wasn't sure.

So maybe I would have had to write the project report with a bigger use of my fantasy, or give back some of the money, or just evaluate that my planned project was not based on needs, but on a (insufficiently estimated) prediction of dynamics. It is hard to reach such a conclusion especially when your job is connected with the success of such enterprises, but better this way than making the young people the tool of your ideas. I would not have wanted to be treated like 'raw material for a youth worker's sake' when I was young and this could be a clear point of reference on the question of how far you can use your role as a coach to fulfil your own ideas with the young people you work with.

## ⬎ The project results

After two more months, all of a sudden participants on one of my seminars started to show an interest in the project possibilities. Those young people I had previously worked with for some time created their own ideas and identified needs for this project. Then they sent me a SMS in the middle of the night asking about funding rules. I guess they would not have done so if I had 'made them do' the project!

We used a sequence of four seminars to coach and support local projects run by the young volunteers. They were supposed to be based on their needs at a local level, for example the renovation of a youth room in their association's house or the creation of attractive options for local youth to spend free time during summer holidays. For their support, my organisation developed a CD-Rom

with checklists and materials for doing local projects and work as a volunteer in the youth boards of our organisation.

The problems they faced implementing local projects were, and still are, enormous and realistically it seems that these projects are not really of the highest priority for their work in the association. Nevertheless, some of them tried out project work, went through experiences with such participation projects and (at least that's my hope) learned a lot. We had the first big public presentation of the project and it proved how much the young people understood this whole thing as their issue.

## ⬂ The coaching approach

I guess that a lot of youth workers are in a similar position: trying to find a balance between their organisational interests and the interests of the young people themselves. In most of the cases, your professional success is most likely based on fostering 'successful' youth projects or activities. Getting public money might need your project ideas on the one hand and young people's involvement on the other; but should you try to connect these both by all means necessary?

Where is the boundary where manipulation starts and your coaching support is using the young people to fulfil the organisation's needs? Rather easy to define maybe by a lack of commitment of the young people and by a bad conscience in you. If you take a realistic look at your role in the group of young people and you find yourself in a position of being the overall motivator, the only one who is taking responsibility; if you listen to your words when you coach the young people and you hear mere attempts to convince... then take a step back and reflect on your role again!

'Coaching with an attitude towards active youth participation' leads to stunning results and you still like to look at your face in the mirror…

# Postcard from France: 'Against Violence at School'

*by Pascal Chaumette*





## ⤷ The project idea

'R.A.S au bahut' is a dramatised debate on the theme of violence at school. The aim of this series of sketches is to fight against violence in primary schools, secondary schools and high schools. The innovative aspect of the project is that 'R.A.S au bahut' is an interactive performance, or what is known as an interactive dramatised debate, meaning that during the performance there are constant exchanges between spectators, actors and a mediator.

What happens? A scene is first performed by actors playing the role of a monitor or teacher who is the victim of an act of violence. When the scene comes to an end, the actors 'freeze', meaning that they stay fixed in their roles while the mediator invites the audience to find solutions. As ideas take shape, the mediator gradually identifies two or three perceptive young people and asks them to come up on stage to act out not just their own role, but also that of the teacher who has been attacked… It will be up to the young people, on stage, to resolve the conflict in the fairest way possible.

Through these sketches, pupils of a secondary school or college can have an open discussion about subjects like verbal violence, rackets, stealing and similar issues that they can encounter everyday, and try to find solutions to these problems together.

## ⤷ The initiators

The project was initiated by five young people aged between 18 and 25, led by a young lady who played the role of co-ordinator. They were all unemployed but loved acting and theatre. They struggled on getting whatever jobs they could but with this project in mind aimed at young people who are victims of violence at school every day. The co-ordinator and her friends have witnessed this type of violence and wanted to perform theatre with purposes.

## ⤷ The timetable and methodology

With a great idea like this, people from the local community didn't need much to be convinced of the need to develop such a project and the good impact it would have in the schools. It was simply a matter of 'setting up' the project, for instance telling people about it, emphasising that the skills already exist in the group, the 'goodwill' is in place, but that there is a lack of means.

When the co-ordinator first came to see me, she presented the project without a single written word! We needed to work on the drafting and consequently the structuring of the project. Together we discussed everything in detail, and as I knew nothing about her, she put together her 'network map': a practical tool that can be used to identify existing knowledge that could contribute to the project, whether personal, professional, or others.

We then worked on all aspects of organisation and above all we focused on the ways to find the

necessary funding. We had to deal with setbacks when we got refusals from funding sources; that was a difficult time when we had to overcome doubts and hesitations.

## ⬂ The project results

This project was set up 5 years ago and still exists! In terms of recognition, the group received the national first prize for initiatives led by young people.

Today, the co-ordinator and her friends have created an association: Trac'n'Art Théâtre. She is its director and continues to work on this project, among other activities dealing with subjects that concern young people (AIDS, drugs…).

Hundreds of secondary schools and high schools have asked her to perform for them: there is a long waiting list to 'get' a performance by this group as its results are extraordinary! That's no surprise because here the 'ethics' do not come from the teachers or the parents or even from the actors on stage. Because of the way they are involved, the message comes from the young people themselves!

## ⬂ The coaching approach

My main aim as the coach of those young people was to get the project going and organise the group, set up a project management process that would allow us to work through established steps to reach the objectives. Seeing that they were motivated and convinced about the project but were somewhat lost when it came to paperwork and administrative details, my role was also to create synergies between the group and potential partners. This way we were able to share out the responsibilities and each person was clear about what they needed to do while still remaining within the general framework of setting up a project. Based on their different skills, the group decided for themselves who would do what.

It was important that the group didn't give up their idea or get discouraged because of the quantity of paperwork and administrative challenges they had to deal with. The first steps in any project are absolutely crucial for consolidating the team and should all be noticed, underlined and even celebrated! During our weekly meetings, my objective in terms of team management was to rationalise what they were doing and hold everything together so that they could have a clear picture of where they were going with the project. This approach apparently paid off since the group members told me that they felt as if they were building a jig-saw puzzle and at the same time they were one of the pieces of the puzzle.

As I know very little about the world of theatre myself, I had to enlist the help of experts for things like the needs analysis and especially for finding low-cost materials. My idea was to conciliate technical details and teambuilding, since I believe it's much easier to concentrate on the 'human' side of things when the technical issues have been dealt with!

My role mainly was setting out the general procedures. There was no need to review the objectives or contents, but rather a need to work on the means for developing the project. In fact, the group had already a great capacity to be autonomous as well as the skills required for project management, but there was a need for a guide to show them the way to structure the project stages. This is the role I took over!

# 5.6    Postcard from Estonia: 'Rural Information Network'

*by Ülly Enn*

## ⬎ The project idea

This Youth Initiative was run by a group of young people from a local youth club in one of the rather remote areas in Southern Estonia. In principle it was one of those places one could easily moan about that it is too small, too far away from the centre of the region and thus a rather boring place for young people to live. With the exception that in this little village the co-operation between different generations to develop the community worked rather well. For instance, the local youth club was launched with strong support from local government and the events of the youth club were very popular among the local population. So in one of the gatherings of the local youth club a new project idea was raised: a group of young people active in the youth club decided to make their contribution to raise the youth awareness and interest in active participation in other more remote villages in their region.

## ⬎ The initiators

The idea of the project was launched by some young people who were active in the local youth club since its beginning and thus had most experience in local level activities. In order to open up the group and involve other interested people, an invitation was sent around through the e-mail group of the youth club and finally 14 young people, most of them aged 15-19 started to develop the project idea further. Since it was a rather small village, all of them knew each other quite well.

The project aimed to involve young people living in different villages of the region so that they would become more aware of their potential for active participation and starting something on their own in their home environment. The emphasis of the project was laid on the young people with the idea that if it succeeds the whole community would benefit in the long term.

## ⬎ The timetable and methodology

The project was planned for 12 months. During its introduction phase, the project idea was presented in the regional radio for wider publicity (for one week different interviews and interactive games took place as part of the radio programme to attract the attention of youth) as well as through targeted mailing towards local governments in the region.

Next stage was organising awareness raising events in different villages. Altogether 6 events took place involving more than 200 young people. The programme of events included introduction to the project and to the local youth club, info sessions on how to start up a local youth club, how to initiate youth projects and where to find financial support for local level youth activities, as well as a workshop on obstacles to local youth participation and some entertainment (sports games and disco). During each meeting ideas from local youth for further initiatives were gathered and a

contact list for the regional youth information network consisting of young people from different villages was started.

The results of the events run in villages as well as the grand finale were forwarded to the heads of local authorities. Speaking of the project results in terms of products, the following were created: a web-page with useful material for those interested in local youth participation and an information booklet about local youth clubs.

Through the project process the group of initiators was supported by a youth worker active in the co-ordination of the local youth club. In addition in Estonia, all the core groups of Youth Initiatives grant aided in the frame of the YOUTH programme are also supported by the National Agency by involving young people in the Mid-Term Evaluation Training. Some coaching was then also provided by the National Agency itself.

It is a pity that even though normally the training takes place somewhere in the middle of the project process (to raise the quality of projects through support to their mid-term evaluation and further phases of project), this project group got involved in training just a month before the end of their project.

Due to that my coaching, as National Agency's project officer, involved mainly support to the evaluation of the experience during the training (including assistance in management of some misunderstandings between the core group and the local coach, identification of main learning points together with the young people, etc) as well as some phone and e-mail consultancy after the training to provide support in the final activities and reporting of the project.

## ⬂ The project results

In general it could be said that the young people reached their main aim: they succeeded raising awareness of how to start up something at a local level in small villages and as a result several local youth clubs were formed. Also, through the events of the project, public attention was attracted to youth issues.

In addition the benefits of the project can also be measured by extensive learning experience for the core group. The project process was rather long and not very easy and therefore the young people faced a few challenges:

▪▪ difficulties in the relationship with the youth worker of the local youth club. It became evident that the young people and the youth worker had different views on the project realisation. As officially the youth worker was the person responsible for the project, according to the young people, it had created quite sensitive discussions on ownership of the project.
▪▪ a modest interest (and in some project workshops even arrogant and interrupting behaviour) from the young people in the target group. In general the project was welcomed very warmly by youth in villages, but in some events it did not work out well in creating contacts with local young people.

As a result of these difficulties some of the group members lost their motivation to continue the project. So the actual reality of the project was that in trying to reach their planned objectives and create a positive local impact on youth participation in rather remote villages using their own personal experience as a good example, they also had to struggle with challenges related to team-work and influences from local community, among others.

## ⬊ The coaching approach

This project was run in an environment where, in principle, the young initiators had many people and institutions to turn to for coaching: their local youth club, the local authority and the National Agency. From the example we can see that in some aspects of the project the group had to be ready to find the best solutions for the project to be realised. This had to be completed rather independently of coaching.

It is a pity that the training organised by the National Agency could only happen so late since it was evident that it provided the group with a rather safe and comfortable environment to evaluate their project process, as well as to identify those moments in which they clearly needed some monitoring and assistance from somebody outside the project process. During the training different methods were used:  creating commercials to bring up the essentials of the project; facilitating group discussions to identify the learning experiences in terms of gained skills, attitudes and knowledge; workshops based on forum theatre to try to identify solutions for problems experienced by the core group members during their project; individual and group level mapping of achievements and results of the group initiative. After training the coaching mainly involved phone and e-mail consultations.

So the story ends quite well for this project as the main aims were achieved and the young people gained a valuable learning experience. Probably, without coaching, the project process would have been different and maybe not that difficult for the core group. Another way to look at Youth Initiatives though is to admit that a Youth Initiative is a rather safe environment to try out your own abilities and understand your own mistakes in project management and in this light, if all went perfectly as it was for this particular group in this particular project.

After the project, some of the young people from the core group have also been involved in forming youth groups for new projects in the frame of the YOUTH programme such as another Youth Initiaitve and several Youth Exchanges.

# Postcard from Belgium: 'Urban Artistic Gallery'    5.7

*by Henar Conde*

## ⬊ The project idea

This is the project story of a group of young artists from different countries and backgrounds who shared a common dream: create a network of European artists from urban culture and a space for artistic exchange in an area of Brussels where the partners and the local community could realise their projects. The idea to create a project came up when this group of young artists had for the first time the opportunity to set up an exhibition in a youth association in Brussels, capital city of Belgium. They were in charge of organising the opening, selling the paintings and other artistic objects, reception of the public... What an enriching experience! Why not create a space where they could exchange their own artistic expertise, learn from each other, be autonomous, be themselves? Why not realise their common dream by setting up a project together with other groups of young people in Europe?

As the group was composed of young people from different countries they had created in each country a network of local artists. Altogether they decided to set up an art gallery in Brussels where young artists from different countries could live the experience of creating their own piece of work and show it to the public.

## ⬊ The initiators

The promoters of the project were from 6 different countries, all residents in Belgium, and aged between 22 and 25. They were all passionate about urban art and culture, and because it generally lacks recognition and is often not understood by the public and the institutions, they decided to set up a project aiming to make urban art better known and appreciated in the area.

Two of the initiators in Brussels were students at that moment and the rest were unemployed, so they proposed themselves to co-ordinate the project. On behalf of the network of young artists in different countries, these 4 young people in Belgium applied for a Networking project (Transnational Youth Initiative), with partners from France, Spain, Czech Republic and Belgium. They were granted the funds!

Why did they want to do this project? On the one hand they did it for themselves, to develop their artistic and personal skills; and on the other hand they did it for their network, to exchange practices and expertise and gain recognition for their work. Besides, since there is not art gallery dedicated to urban art in Brussels, they wanted to do this project for the local community (neighbours, local associations, schools, and community services) to make urban culture more visible and better known throughout the neighbourhood. From a long term perspective, their final ambition was to become an autonomous cultural enterprise, so as to be integrated in the labour market.

## ⬂ The timetable and methodology

The project idea was in young people's mind one year before they were awarded the grant to realise it. The project itself lasted one year but they were planning to continue afterwards.

The task division was done on the basis of the competences and motivations of each member of the group: writing the application, creating the Internet website, administrative issues, communication, graphics, looking for future partners and looking for a place to set up the gallery and organise the exhibitions. All partners should prepare a folder with a port-folio about their association and their artistic work. Each member of the group should find the role that suited him or her best but all of them should have an overall vision of the tasks in order to co-operate better in the project.

The first thing the co-ordinating group did was to find a place for their activities. The next step was communication related: to create an email address, website related to the activities, name and logo in order to ensure the recognition and visibility of the project. Then the programme of activities was implemented: opening of the gallery, production of posters and invitations, contact with the neighbourhood, promotion of future activities, and so on.

## ⬂ The project results

The project reached its aim: the opening of the first exhibition was crowded with visitors and so were the following exhibitions! Local partners and new artists from the neighbourhood were present. Lots of new contacts were created. Short magazines were produced at the end of each exhibition and a final book including all artists participating in the project was planned to be published as a follow-up to the project. Several people expressed their interest in buying some pieces of work and some fresh international artistic atmosphere was spread around the neighbourhood.

The project had a direct benefit on the core group co-ordinating the project in Belgium and on the partner artists but also on a large number of other artists and non artists who presented their work in the gallery. Actually the real number of beneficiaries is very difficult to calculate since the impact reached not only the local community in Brussels but also in the partner countries.

## ⬂ The coaching approach

Unfortunately the group did not have a coach providing regular support during the implementation of the project and therefore they received no help when different problems appeared. How to realise a project? How to put what is written in the application into practice? Writing the application, working out the budget, these are easy tasks. You can learn it thanks to your studies, but how to set up a concrete project in the real world? There is a 'User's Guide' about theoretical questions but there is no guide about how to deal with practical issues, that's what they missed.

Moreover the international aspect of these project brought additional difficulties to the development of the network such as communicating between partner groups, dealing with different expectations and interests of the groups, tasks and budget division, involvement of partners, and others. For those questions, a support person would have been very helpful.

It's very likely that having a coach during the preparation and implementation of the project would have helped to deal with some misunderstandings within the co-ordinating group and with the partners and probably it would have helped with some technical skills that the group lacked such as accountancy. Maybe also it would have encouraged the motivation of the group during some difficult steps when things did not seem to work as initially planned. But even though they had no support from the coaching side they managed to deal with the difficulties they encountered and they definitely learnt a lot.

The coach might have avoided the overall frustation felt by the group, yet they gained self-confidence and new artistic skills as well as new competencies on project management, communication, logistics, administration, designing, publicity, and lots more. And it was a great intercultural experience: learning to work in an international team, sharing practices and ideas… Probably, the coaching here would not have had effect on the outcomes of the project since this was a great success but would have been very useful in the process itself, as the young beneficiaires easily acknowledged!

# Summary and Prospective    5.8

↘

As you could see above, the presented stories can be hardly called the best examples of our coaching practice. Our idea was to share with you the complexity of each case and possible ways (which not always were successful and proper!) to support these initiatives. We believe that we can learn and gain from each other's experience, even if it's an experience of failure.

These seven examples hopefully show that the coaching support for youth projects is very valuable not only to raise the quality, improve the process and the success of the projects but also (and above all) of the young people's learning experience. We don't know in which way the project results would have been different without coaching, but for sure we can offer new doors for the young people who wish to initiate their own project. We can try to motivate them if they are stuck in their process and provide them with methods to continue and follow their ideas.

Obviously the most important point to remember while coaching is to leave the self initiative and active participation as much as possible to young people themselves!

tools

It is not sufficient for a successful coaching to 'have it's heart in the right place', to ask the right questions at the right moments and to be able to put oneself in someone's place. Coaching means to reach defined goals and to find solutions together in a common group process. The task is to discover all existing resources and to make them useable and available to others.

To create this process you need tools and instruments helping you to visualise important aspects, to get to know the group you will work with, to identify your own competences and resources as a coach, to evaluate the project and the coaching processes, to reflect on skills gained by the young people or even to unravel confused thoughts and to structure them. There is a need for explanation models, advisory methodology and intervention technology. In this chapter you will find a variety of tools and instruments that might help you to ride the Coaching Bi-cycle in the most efficient and participative way, taking care of the creativity and different ways of expression of each individual.

# 6.1    Coaching Ghost Inventory

Use this tool as a self-reflective assessment model to guide you in supporting and challenging your development as a coach. It will help you to explore which coaching style fits you better, as well as to understand the different roles that a coach can play when supporting youth projects.

**↘ Directions:**
Read the following statements and circle your responses for each statement on the response form table provided on the next page.

**Responses:**
To what extent does each of the 40 coaching Inventory statements describe your behaviours, values or attitudes? Circle the appropriate letter for each statement using the following key:

A = Always
S = Sometimes
N = Never

*Note: you can only circle one response per statement.*

## Coaching Inventory Statements

1. The responsibility for learning and development always lie with the coach.
2. As a coach I like to share my skills and knowledge by being involved.
3. Coaching is about showing people the way.
4. People learn best when they take responsibility and get involved.
5. People need coaches to facilitate learning and for directing them to success.
6. Learning by doing with others is essential for the coach and the learners.
7. Coaches are essential if expertise and knowledge are to be transferred.
8. It is important for everyone to be involved through the whole process.
9. A coach is there to ensure people stay focussed and on track.
10. A coach's participation is an important part of any team.
11. The responsibility for learning is that of the participants, the coach is there just to support.
12. The coach has to ensure everyone has the opportunity to fully get involved.
13. Coaching is another friendlier term for a manager.
14. As a coach I find it difficult not to get involved.
15. If people are the vehicles and drivers, the coach is the map.
16. A coach has to be able to creatively engage all participants.
17. The coach reminds the participants of the agreed aims and objectives.

18. The coach can motivate and ensure the group achieves more through seeing themselves as part of the group.
19. The coach is there to hold the hands of the participants.
20. When a group is functioning effectively the coach isn't needed.
21. A coach will have more experience and knowledge than the participants.
22. Being totally part of the group allows the coach to fully understand the group dynamics and learning process.
23. A coach will encourage and motivate the group to identify forward strategies.
24. A coach should allow the group to review and evaluate their own activities.
25. A coach should not allow the group to deviate from its goals.
26. The coach's input of ideas is as important as the participants'.
27. A coach is there to manage the groups dynamic not the group activities.
28. The coach will ensure everyone in the group has equal opportunity to give their views.
29. A coach will make sure meetings move on a good pace.
30. A group cannot meet if the coach isn't there.
31. A coach can make suggestions about the process but the group will make the decisions about the direction and activity.
32. The process is more important than the product.

33. A coach can firstly show the group how tasks can be accomplished before allowing them to attempt them.
34. A coach's needs are just as important as the group's.
35. A coach will support the group in reflecting to ensure the group learns from the experience of participating.
36. The group chooses its own direction and tasks.
37. A coach should encourage the group to think outside of the box, to be creative when approaching a challenge.
38. Problem solving is the responsibility of both the coach and the learners.
39. The coach will ensure there is a safe and productive learning environment.
40. The role of the coach is to be like 'a fly on the wall' and just observe.



## Coaching Ghost Inventory – Response Form

| 1 | A S N | 2 | A S N | 3 | A S N | 4 | A S N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | A S N | 6 | A S N | 7 | A S N | 8 | A S N |
| 9 | A S N | 10 | A S N | 11 | A S N | 12 | A S N |
| 13 | A S N | 14 | A S N | 15 | A S N | 16 | A S N |
| 17 | A S N | 18 | A S N | 19 | A S N | 20 | A S N |
| 21 | A S N | 22 | A S N | 23 | A S N | 24 | A S N |
| 25 | A S N | 26 | A S N | 27 | A S N | 28 | A S N |
| 29 | A S N | 30 | A S N | 31 | A S N | 32 | A S N |
| 33 | A S N | 34 | A S N | 35 | A S N | 36 | A S N |
| 37 | A S N | 38 | A S N | 39 | A S N | 40 | A S N |

## Coaching Ghost Inventory – Scoring Form

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 3 1 | 2 | 3 2 1 | 3 | 3 2 1 | 4 | 3 2 1 |
| 5 | 2 3 1 | 6 | 3 2 1 | 7 | 2 3 1 | 8 | 2 3 1 |
| 9 | 1 3 2 | 10 | 1 2 3 | 11 | 3 2 1 | 12 | 2 3 1 |
| 13 | 3 2 1 | 14 | 3 2 1 | 15 | 2 3 1 | 16 | 2 3 1 |
| 17 | 2 3 1 | 18 | 2 3 1 | 19 | 1 3 2 | 20 | 1 2 3 |
| 21 | 1 3 2 | 22 | 1 2 3 | 23 | 3 2 1 | 24 | 3 2 1 |
| 25 | 2 3 1 | 26 | 1 2 3 | 27 | 2 3 1 | 28 | 2 3 1 |
| 29 | 2 3 1 | 30 | 1 2 3 | 31 | 3 2 1 | 32 | 3 2 1 |
| 33 | 2 3 1 | 34 | 1 2 3 | 35 | 2 3 1 | 36 | 3 2 1 |
| 37 | 3 2 1 | 38 | 2 3 1 | 39 | 3 2 1 | 40 | 2 3 1 |
| TOTAL | | TOTAL | | TOTAL | | TOTAL | |
| ↘ Directive | | ↘ Involved | | ↘ Guiding | | ↘ Participative | |

**↘ Directions:**
Add each column (down) and place totals in the boxes provided. Then also add all the columns together to give you your grand total.

GRAND TOTAL:

## Plotting Your Results

To obtain a more graphic illustration of your Coaching Ghost results, transfer your column totals from the scoring form to the table below. Maybe use different colours and fill the columns to create a graph like illustration.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | | | | |
| 25 | | | | |
| 20 | | | | |
| 15 | | | | |
| 10 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |
| | Directive | Involved | Guiding | Participative |

## Coaching Ghost Interpretation

The Coaching Ghost Inventory is a self reflective assessment model to be used as a guide for supporting and challenging your development as a Coach.

The maximum score on this Coaching Ghost Inventory is 120 points. Any score above 100 will usually mean that you use a balanced combination of coaching method styles and have a broad and advanced understanding of coaching methods and techniques. You are aware of the importance of coaching and that different learners and groups can have different learning needs and approaches.

If your score is in the range of 60 – 100, this could mean you have a good understanding of coaching methods and techniques and you may be slightly experienced but not a regular coaching practitioner. In time with some self reflection, training and further experiences of coaching you are well on your way to improving your practice and understanding of coaching.

If your score is below 60 this could mean that you are a coaching novice. Your understanding of the term and your experience of coaching might be relatively new. Completing the Coaching Ghost Inventory could be your first positive step to becoming a coach and understanding its roles.

The column with the highest score can mean it is this approach you feel most comfortable and familiar with. However it is important to look closer at those areas where you reach a low score to identify possible learning and development areas for you as a coach.

Remember a good coach will always use a variety of techniques and methods depending on needs. A well balanced coach will have column scores that are close and similar.

### ↘ Directive

This style and method of coaching is very much based on the coach offering direction and some-times steering the group in a certain or desired way. The coach acts as a sign post through identify-ing possible routes and opportunities and occasionally will try and persuade the group to choose a particular route. The coach clearly and fully understands that this slightly manipulative approach is necessary at that particular time.

### ↘ Involved

This style and method is where the coach feels being a member and part of the group. This is more aligned to a peer approach. The coach will usually feel he or she has the same amount of invest-ment as the group and therefore deserves the same amount of the reward. This is where the coach is immersed in the whole group process; he or she is involved yet at the same time he or she is the coach. The coach here may only be identified by having more skills in, experience and understand-ing of, the topic area.

### ↘ Guiding

This style and method is where the coach focuses on supporting the group or individuals. The coach is there to ensure the participants' well being by ensuring a safe learning environment and that the group process is well managed. This is where the coach supports the group at every level, almost handholding the group and making sure they don't experience potential hazards.

### ↘ Participative

This style and method are where the coach allows the group to find its own way and individuals are self directive. The coach will ensure the group has ownership and autonomy of the projects and activities. The coach here acts more as a sounding board and can offer suggestions but the partici-pants ultimately make the final decision and choose their own direction.

### Coaching Action Plan

Based on your scores of the Coaching Ghost Inventory which coaching method and style do you most strongly align yourself with (this will be the column with the highest score)?

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Based on your scores of the Coaching Ghost Inventory which coaching method and style do you have the weakest connection with (this will be the column with the lowest score)?

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Which coaching style and method do you believe best fits with your understanding of Youth Initiatives?

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What strategies can you implement to explore further the coaching method and style you scored lowest on?

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What strategies can you implement to develop a more balanced approach to coaching?

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What opportunities in terms of support, training, resources, consultation… does your support organisation, your National Agency, SALTO-YOUTH network, other peer colleagues, etc can offer in improving your coaching awareness and skills?

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What opportunities do supporting Youth Initiatives offer in improving your coaching awareness and skills?

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My commitment to my own development and that of others:

Throughout the next 6 months I will ...................................................................................

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Through supporting Youth Initiatives I will ..........................................................................

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↘ wishes are ok, but intentions are for real

🏃→ BI-CYCLE TOOL 2

Here you will find two creative open methods that might help you to see where the group stands in the beginning. Moreover we introduce you to different methods of visualisation for practical use during the coaching process.

### ↘ The mirror

For the first contact with a new group you could bring a rectangular mirror with you. After the first getting to know each other you bring out the mirror (first with the back side in front of the group) and ask the group, "*what do you think, what do I have here in my hands?*" Because the participants of the group are sitting in different positions and therefore they have different points of sight, you will get a variety of suggestions like 'picture-frame', 'painting', 'blackboard' or also 'mirror'.

After a short reflection on the fact that things can change if you look at them out of different perspectives, you turn the mirror in the right position (horizontally) and invite the group to place themselves in front of the mirror, so that they can see themselves and all other members of the group. If they succeed, it's possible to turn the mirror again in the vertical position and to ask them to solve the same task 'to place themselves in front of the mirror, watching themselves and the others…'. Because the mirror gives them less space when it's in the vertical position than when it was horizontal, the group will squeeze in to have an 'external' look on themselves.

### ↘ The bicycle

You draw a bicycle on a flip-chart and explain: "*For the beginning I like to invite you for a short experiment of thoughts and explain at the same time how I work… Imagine that this bicycle is standing here in our room. It is stabilised at the handlebar, so that it can't fall on the right or left side. Forwards and backwards it is moveable. The pedals are vertical, so one is turned up and the other is turned down. The one which is turned down is turned to your sight. Imagine further on, that I fix a string on the pedal which is turned down and that I pull with the string in a 90° angle towards the back of the bicycle*". Then draw a string on your bicycle on the flip-chart and ask to the group: "*in which direction is the bicycle moving? Please discuss shortly with each other and tell me your result!*"

The group will put their heads together and discuss for a while… Unanimously they should agree that the bicycle will move forwards. Now you bring out a hidden bicycle and fix like in theory a string on the pedal. One participant is now asked to hold the bicycle and another one should pull the string. As a surprise for the whole group the bike is moving backwards.

You can use this astonished atmosphere to offer the group some new 'glasses'. "*What I like to show with this experiment is the relationship between theory and practice. There are many different theories existing concerning the topic working in teams and groups. But practically speaking the reality often looks completely different – like we just experienced some minutes ago…! With regard to this fact I suggest*

*also to try to change perspectives and positions sometimes during our future co-operation. This will help us to look at the different things from different sides..."*

The most common and standard method of visualising thoughts, perceptions and solutions is to write the contents on cards. Topics and Goals are written individually on cards to sort them out and to bring them finally in a new structure.

Similarly we are used to create schematically presentations on a flip-chart helping us to understand the context in a better way. In these cases it's helpful to ask the participants to draw their own presentations, because then it is easier for externals to understand the thoughts of somebody else and often it also helps the person who is visualising his/her own ideas and thoughts to clarify them meanwhile.

Another convenient method of visualisation is to create moveable pictures out of different materials. Therefore you can use for example wooden figures or also postcards with different subjects, characters or situational atmospheres. To work on the floor offers the advantage to better play with the distances. The overview from above supports a distanced perspective especially if the people are strongly involved in the topic.

Following the motto 'one picture tells more than thousand words', visualisations can help during the coaching process to clarify and structure some elements of the project. The pictures answer the purpose to mediate in communication. Visualisation offers the possibility to get more distance and also sometimes to reflect with a bit of humour.

But above all, the heart of coaching is an open and constructive dialogue involving active listening and questions which support the self reflection of participants. A possible danger of visualisation is that you loose real contact with the group for example if you concentrate more on the aesthetic of the pictures than on the content!

# 6.3     Analysis of Coaching Needs

When it comes to coach a new group you will first need to get some general information about the group such as contact details, group structure, group interests and activity profile. Besides that, it might be helpful to analyse the coaching needs in a systematic way, including motivation for the coaching and specific role you will play as well as identification of challenges and resources for every coaching process.

Hereby you will find a complete check list to 'formalise' a bit the getting to know phase and analysis of coaching needs. It will help you to keep the 'history' of all Youth Initiatives you will support during your coaching practice experience.

## a. General information

Name of the group/initiative:  ............................................................................

Name of a contact person:  ...............................................................................

Address:  ....................................................................................................

E-mail:  ......................................................................................................

Phone:   .....................................................................................................

What is their favourite medium to keep in contact?  ....................................................

Supporting organisation (if any):  .......................................................................

Names of group members:  ..............................................................................

Other general information:  ..............................................................................

## b. Group structure

How many people are involved?  .........................................................................

What type of group is it? (Informal group/ branch of youth organisation/ association/…)

............................................................................................................

Who is 'leading' the group? (Youth worker/ somebody from the group itself/…)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

How do they make decisions? What are their formal regulations?  (Board/Chairman/collective…)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What is the age range?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

How many young men, how many young women are involved?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What are the group members doing? Are they working? (Pupils, students, apprenticeship, jobs, unemployed…)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Are all members volunteers or is there any professional worker involved?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

How often do they meet?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Have they established the group themselves or do they belong to an existing structure?

### c. Groups interests and activity profile

What are the main activities?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What interests (cultural or social interest/leisure time/friendship/outer force…) keep the group together?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What do they want to do (Youth Initiative project)?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What is the time range of their activities or planned project?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Other relevant information concerning the activity profile:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

⬂ Obviously, there are some structural reasons for group problems, such as too small or too big group (and contradictory wishes), a wide age range or an unequal division of sexes could lead to unsatisfactory situations for some group members. You should as well be able to identify the environment of a Youth Initiative: how much stress might come from their social or work situation, etc. Dissatisfaction could also arise from a mismatch of an 'official structure' and the group, such as a rigid hierarchy going against the group interests.

⬊ Any coaching activity needs the voluntary will of the young people to be coached, for example why it would be good to be coached and why it should be done by you. If these minimal conditions are not fulfilled, the coaching will not lead to desirable and constructive results. Especially the motivations of external elements such as organisations and youth workers ("We want them to do a good project for the benefit of our organisation") have to be clearly identified.

⬊ Normally, there is no such thing as the one reason for a coaching need. Your problem identification should be able to identify a number of elements and their connections to give successful support.

⬊ As coaching is a limited process in terms of time and impact, your influence is and should be limited as well. Thus, the overall aim in coaching youth projects is to make your support unnecessary at the end. Resource orientation helps to identify the strengths they can use without permanent support from you or any other coach.

### d. Analysis of coaching need I – Voluntarism and motivation

Who made the first step to do this coaching? The group itself, their supporting organisations, youth workers or was it you?

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Is your role as a coach clearly expressed? Or do you have a different function?

..............................................................................................................................

Does the youth group want to be coached? Do they want you to coach them?

..............................................................................................................................

Will you be paid to coach? Will you coach them as part of your current job? Will you coach them on a voluntary basis?

..............................................................................................................................

### e. Analysis of coaching need II – Identifying Challenges

What is the coaching need in the eyes of the young people themselves? Why do they think they need your coaching support?

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What do they want to achieve, develop with your support?

..............................................................................................................................

In what of the issues mentioned before (e.g. group structure, group interests…) you see additional obstacles which might influence substantially the coaching process? How far can they be included in your coaching strategy?

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### f. Analysis of coaching need III – Identifying Resources

What kind of strengths, abilities and resources can you (as a coach) identify that would allow to take up the challenges linked to the coaching process?

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What abilities do you think the group already have or should further develop to progress without you or the help of any other coach?

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Building the relationship during a Youth Initiative project is generally a never ending process. Young people, as human beings with different backgrounds and experiences, are, feel and behave different when interacting in a group of people. Use this tool to identify some group behaviours that may appear during the process of a Youth Initiative project and to find coaching approaches to increase the group cohesion.

BI-CYCLE TOOL 4



| Group dynamic | Description | Advice for the coach |
|---|---|---|
| Co-operation | Collaboration of one or more members of the group. Positive attitude. | Give positive recognition, use it as a reference. The project itself is a form of co-operation. |
| Competition | One or more group members compete with each other. | Put things in proportion. Identify the difficulty and encourage people to talk about the issues. It can be a positive stimulus for the group. |
| Withdrawal | Someone withdraws from the rest of the group. | Set up some kind of 'teambuilding' exercise. Speak to the person individually (away from the group). |
| Scapegoat | One person is blamed for all the real or imaginary things that go wrong. This allows the group to overcome the feeling of insecurity. | Identify the real problems and find out why they are happening. Get the group to talk about it in one-to-one or group meetings. |
| Rejection | The group adopts a judgemental position and rejects one of its members. | Analyse the problem and offer to mediate. Create a space when everybody has a say and is listened to by others. |
| Flight | The group gives up or some members drop out. | Suggest a mid-term evaluation to discuss the coaching and the viability of the project. Work on their motivation. |
| Alliance | Advanced sub-group dynamic that allows some people to move forward and others to stay in the background. | Encourge the ones doing a lot to delegate and the ones not being active to take more initiative in order to reach a better balance. |

| Coalition | An alliance between members directed against a specific target. | Encourage open discussions with the aim of reducing tensions. |
| Off the subject | People chatting about other things (during meetings). | Remind them what they agreed initially (rules decided all together). Focus the group's attention on the subject. |
| Leadership | A leader emerges, a group member perceives a need and tries to answer it. | Don't intervene directly. Evaluate the leadership style (charismatic, authoritarian, democratic) and check if the others are happy with this new role or if they are just resigned. |

## 6.5    My Competences as a Coach

🏃→ BI-CYCLE TOOL 5

Before designing a coaching strategy for a given group of young people you should identify your own competences (strengths and weaknesses) related to the needs of coaching for this specific group. Try to complete this table through identifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes you have and those you can develop to support a specific Youth Initiative group according to their needs and demands.

| AS A COACH | I have already … | I have to develop … |
| --- | --- | --- |
| My knowledge | | |
| My skills | | |
| My attitudes | | |

The following tool can help you to reflect on your skills and abilities linked to the main specific tasks and roles of a coach and openly share with the group how you can support them and how you cannot.

| AS A COACH | I am good at… | I have difficulties in… | I am not able to… |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informing | | | |
| Suggesting | | | |
| Facilitating | | | |
| Training | | | |
| Others; e.g. mediating, challenging, team working, animating, etc | | | |

## SWOT Analysis    6.6

**SWOT stands for: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**

Use this method with young people to enable them to identify their Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats they might face during a Youth Initiative project. Through this tool you might help them to focus their activities into areas where they are strong and where the greatest opportunities lie. It is important to examine both the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) environments as to find out the factors that will have an influence on their project.

| | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| **Internal** | Strengths | Weaknesses |
| **External** | Opportunites | Threats |

Write down answers to the following questions:

**Strengths:**
- What do you do well? What are your best skills/ abilities?
- What relevant resources do you have access to in your town/ city?
- What advantages do you have comparing to other projects/ organisations in the same town/ city?
- What do other people see as your unique strengths?

**Weaknesses:**
- What do you do badly? What could you improve?
- What resources are you missing in your town/ city?
- What disadvantages do you have comparing to other projects/ organisation in the same town/ city?
- What do other people see as your biggest limits?

**Opportunities:**
- Where are the good opportunities that you face?
- What are the interesting developments in youth work in your town/ city?

**Threats:**
- What obstacles do you face in your organisation/ in your town/ in your city?
- Is the local community sceptical or rejecting your project idea (neigbourhood, municipality, youth councils, schools…)?
- Is time going to be a factor to endange the success of the project? Are you, all members of the group, available to contribute equally to the project?
- Do you, all members of the group/ organisation, have the same understanding of the project idea? Do you want to reach the same objectives?
- Do you have all the funding needed to set up your project or you are still looking for co-funding?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your project?

Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Don't be modest. Be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics and abilities.

Carrying out this analysis will often be illuminating, both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting problems into perspective.

You can use the following analysis grid at different moments of the coaching process to assess a series of quality criteria related to the particularity of Youth Initiatives. Of course you can adapt the assesment criteria below to a given group and a given project. It might be useful for measuring the progress of the group concerning a number of indicators that you consider essential for high quality Youth Initiative projects.

BI-CYCLE TOOL 7

**Project Title** ................................................................        **Date** ................................................

| Assesment criteria | – – | – | – + | + | + + |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Active participation**: How involved are young people in the project? Are they contributing to the project with their own ideas? Are they making decisions by themselves? Are they taking responsibilities towards the project and other members of the group? | | | | | |
| **Local impact**: How is the project involving, or beneficial for, the local community? To what extent does the project incorporate awareness of other people and social commitment? Are the project activities related to or including other young people from the community? | | | | | |
| **Innovation**: How can this project be a new experience for the young people or/and for the local community? How are the project process and project activities being a new learning experience for the group? | | | | | |
| **European dimension**: How are the young people becoming aware of the European culture heritage? Is the theme of the project of European interest? Is it easily transferable to other young people in other countries? Is it contributing to European citizenship? | | | | | |
| **Partnership (if any)**: How is the involvement of different partner groups in the project? Are all partners sharing a common vision and contributing equally to the project? Are they all realising activities related to a common purpose? Are they communicating regularly? | | | | | |
| **Budget**: How is the budget balanced? Are all the costs related to the project activities? Are all expenditures clearly justified? Is the total grant amount sufficient to realise the project as originally planned? | | | | | |

**Feasibility of the project**: How can the project be accomplished according to the original plans? Does the project meet an identified need? Are the objectives set at the beginning being reached?

**Personal/ group challenge**: Have the young people challenged themselves according to their potential at the start of the project? What are the level of motivation and the degree of personal and group efforts invested in order to accomplish the project?

**Group dynamic**: How are the young people building a relationship within the group? Are they getting on together? Are they working well as a team? Are they communicating effectively?

**Learning outcomes**: How is the experience contributing to improve or gain new skills? What professional aims does the project have? To what extent will it bring new skills for the young people involved?

**Peer learning**: How are the young people learning from each other? Are the young people sharing experiences, knowledge and skills within the group? Are they helping each other? Are new abilities being developed by individuals through sharing experiences?

**Evaluation**: is the group able to undertake self-evaluation? Are the young people reflecting on what is being achieved? Are they identifying what still needs to be done? Are they adapting the project according to results of the evaluation process?

**Follow-up**: How could the project be continued after the contractual period? What are the expected developments of the project from a long term perspective?

| Assesment criteria | − − | − | − + | + | + + |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

When it comes to evaluate the project and group processes, there is always the possibility to use an individual questionnaire at any moment of the 'coaching bi-cycle'. Below you can find one example of questionnaire for Mid-Term Evaluation, including questions dealing with important elements inherent in the functioning of any group. They may seem obvious or repetitive sometimes but they allow you to make everyone aware of the different phases of the project and to understand the process. The answers should bring out issues relating to the degree of group cohesion.

## Questionnaire for Mid Term Evaluation
GROUP WORK

### Aims and tasks
Did you set objectives for building your project?

.........................................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................................

Do you think that all of you agreed with the group objectives for building the project?

.........................................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................................

Do you think that any of you had different understandings of these objectives?

.........................................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................................

Has the group achieved its objectives?

.........................................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................................

What role have you played yourself in achieving these objectives?

.........................................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................................

Has the group accomplished its tasks?

.........................................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................................

Do you think you could have done better? How and in what conditions?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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## Working methods

What method did you use to build your project?

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How did you find this method? Who suggested it?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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Did this way of working help you to accomplish your tasks?

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## Participation

Has everyone contributed to the project?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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If people didn't participate equally, was that felt as a problem for you or for the group?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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What kind of atmosphere is there in the group?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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Do you think that this atmosphere is good for cooperation and mutual understanding?

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## How the group works and adapts itself

Did your group have some kind of structure or organisation?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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Did you discuss about each other's tasks before 'launching' your project?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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Did you feel any tensions? Any barriers? Why?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

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# Incomplete Sentences     6.9

Use this tool to start a discussion with a group aiming to evaluate different aspects of the coaching process. It is an informal way of getting to know thoughts and feelings of the young people you are supporting related to your coaching approach: what they like, what they don't like, what they would like to change.

BI-CYCLE TOOL 9

| I feel… | I am happy … |
|---------|--------------|
| I don't have… | I don't like… |
| I would like… | I suggest… |

## How to proceed

1. Use a diagram or an overhead projector, write 5 or 6 incomplete phrases (see example in table above). You should change or adapt them according to your needs. What is important is to allow the young people to look back at what has happened before and to put forward suggestions for the future.

2. Explain to them that this exercise is important for the success of the activity and that all their ideas and suggestions will be taken seriously.

3. Give them 15 minutes to write down possible endings for the phrases. This is to help those who don't feel confident about speaking or who are shy.

4. Ask all of them to read two of the complete sentences aloud, giving each person a maximum of one minute each. (In the case of small groups have them read out all the sentences).

5. Start a discussion about the points to be taken into account, set up a two-way communication with them avoiding recriminations and justifications.

# 6.10    Best Liked / Least Liked

Use this tool to assess young people's satisfaction with the coaching process. You will get to know about the best and least liked aspects of your coaching, through the eyes of young people themselves.

The three things you ↘ best liked about the coaching experience:

1. ........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
2. ........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
3. ........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................

The three things you ↘ least liked about the coaching experience:

1. ........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
2. ........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
3. ........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................

Young people should be given about ten minutes thinking and writing (off the top of their head), then they are asked to share their comments. The following steps might help you to use this tool in practice.

**How to proceed**

1. Ask young people to express how they understand their role and contribution in the project.

2. Provide them with the worksheet above and ask them to write notes (privately) about what are their initial opinions about the coaching experience, specifying three things they best liked and three things they least liked.

3. Ask them to share their comments about the best liked items in a round-robin fashion amongst the group.

4. Facilitate a general discussion of priority items to summarise the key points best liked.

5. Count the number of times each item appears to find out which were the most common and so probably the most important items. These are then re-listed starting with the items having more responses, then the next most frequent and so on down the list.

6. Repeat steps three, four and five with the least liked responses.

7. The evaluation can now be brought to the point by comparing the best liked and worst liked aspects of the coaching process under review.

8. Quantitative analysis can be done (optional).

You can use this tool to collect information about how the coaching process was felt by the group coached and whether the coaching system helped or helps the implementation of the project without affecting the integrity of the group. It is helpful to encourage you and the young people to express yourselves about the subject that brought you together: the project and the coaching.

# 6.11    Observation Indicators

In order to evaluate the achievement of concrete learning objectives it is necessary to set some indicators, long term and medium term, which will help you to observe the group accordingly or create suitable adapted questionnaires. Here you can find an example of an objectives-indicators table for practical use. However we recommend you to adapt it according to the specific group with whom this method will be used.

The indicators above are based on Etudes VVVSI (1995): Sitelle, Rigault-Villié Consultant, France

| Objectives | Indicators |
|---|---|
| Mobilise, motivate, encourage pro-active participation of the group | ▪▪ Degree of motivation for the project<br>▪▪ Ability to get involved in an action<br>▪▪ Level of participation (active/passive) in an action |
| Empower ownership | ▪▪ Ability to take decisions and accept responsibility<br>▪▪ Respect for terms of contract and commitment<br>▪▪ Degree of initiative |
| Develop autonomy | ▪▪ Ability to make choices<br>▪▪ Ability to take responsibility |
| Build self-esteem | ▪▪ Self confidence<br>▪▪ Awareness of own potential<br>▪▪ Assertiveness (expressing opinion) |
| Develop teamwork skills | ▪▪ Ability to form part of a group (integration/ isolation)<br>▪▪ Team spirit<br>▪▪ Attitude to others (aggressive/ friendly)<br>▪▪ Tolerance, self-discipline, self control |
| Develop communication skills | ▪▪ Ability to speak in public, to communicate with other people<br>▪▪ Oral fluency, ability to analyse |
| Give meaning to certain values | ▪▪ Solidarity with others |
| Transferable skills for work and employment | ▪▪ Ability to learn new techniques<br>▪▪ Ability to identify technical skills and knowledge gained during the project |
| Encourage young people to think about their professional future | ▪▪ Attitude to the future (passive/ active)<br>▪▪ Ideas about what they want to do next (are they actively looking for work or for training?) |

If your aim is to work on the personal development of the young people you might use the following tool. It is a self-esteem questionnaire and should be done 3 times at 6 month intervals. Through reflecting on, and filling in, the grid below, every young person can evaluate him or herself by identifying their weak and strong points related to two categories: own personality and relation with others.

How would you describe yourself on the following characteristics?
For each description, put a tick in the column that best describes you.



| I am… | Very much | Pretty much | Not much | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MY OWN PERSONALITY** | | | | |
| Confident | | | | |
| Unreliable | | | | |
| Happy | | | | |
| Easy going | | | | |
| Moody | | | | |
| Friendly | | | | |
| Get angry quickly | | | | |
| Take responsibility | | | | |
| Intelligent and bright | | | | |
| Lazy | | | | |
| Forgetful | | | | |
| Always on time | | | | |
| Shy | | | | |
| Courageous | | | | |
| Sympathetic | | | | |
| Always the joker | | | | |
| Have good ideas | | | | |
| Get bored quickly | | | | |
| Avoid hard work | | | | |
| Practical minded | | | | |

| | I am… Very much | Pretty much | Not much | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Calm | | | | |
| Energetic | | | | |
| Trustworthy | | | | |
| Creative | | | | |

MY RELATION WITH OTHERS

| | Very much | Pretty much | Not much | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Open minded | | | | |
| Make friends easily | | | | |
| Find it easy to get on with adults | | | | |
| Cooperative | | | | |
| A good leader | | | | |
| Good at organising self and others | | | | |
| Good listener | | | | |
| Work well in a team | | | | |
| Talk a lot | | | | |
| Look out for others | | | | |
| Make put down comments | | | | |

I am… **Very much**   **Pretty much**   **Not much**   **Not at all**

# 6.13    Personal Record of Achievement (PRA)

↗ BI-CYCLE TOOL 13

You can use this tool to help young people to track and provide evidence of their experiences and development gained (knowledge, skills and understanding) from their participation in a Youth Initiative. This method has been developed by Connect Youth (British Council, UK) and is used as a tool for recognition and accreditation.
It is available at **http://www.britishcouncil.org/connectyouth-youth-initiatives-record-cards.pdf**

The PRA for Youth Initiatives highlights that all projects should entail participants 'using' and 'developing' certain skills which are considered base skill areas. There are six of these 'base skill areas'. Besides, there are also eight 'optional skill areas' identified. Participants are encouraged and expected to show development evidence in all six 'base skill areas' as well as two choices from the 'optional skill areas'. Those are the following:

**Base Skills**

- Working with others
- Self-awareness
- Intercultural and global awareness
- Communication skills
- Problem solving
- Review and evaluation

**Optional Skills**

- Citizenship
- Equal opportunities
- Health and safety
- Political awareness
- Analytical skills
- Project theme skills
- Number and information technology
- Improving learning and performance

Each skill area has then a variety of learning outcomes to be measured and evidence provided as well as some notes, guiding questions and suggestions, for how to reflect with the group on the different skill areas. We will present below a summary of the guiding notes for the 'base skills', you can find respective notes for the 'optional skills' in the PRA folder available at the website indicated above.

## ↘ Working with others

- •• How the others react to you?
- •• How do others behave in the group? What could you do to try to make things more effective?
- •• How decisions are made in the group? Can the process be improved?
- •• How you involve others in developing the part of the project for which you have responsibility? What approaches do people respond best to and why?
- •• How do you respond to direct instructions?

*Think about how you work in the group...*

*Think about your feelings…*

## ⬊ Self-awareness

- Are you feeling nervous about working with your colleagues? What is that you actually feel nervous about?
- If you don't feel nervous, do you feel anything else? What you feel and how it affects your behaviour?
- Can you identify your own strengths and areas where you are not so strong?
- How you behave in the group and how your behaviour affects others in the group?
- How the others see you?

*Think about how your project reflects a European dimension…*

## ⬊ Intercultural and global awareness

- Which ways you can find out how young people in other countries tackle the issue you have chosen for your project?
- If you think about other ways of tackling the same issue, how cultural differences may have affected those various approaches?
- Are you keeping a list of what information you inform your partner about? How do you do it and what response, if any, you receive? How did these match your previous thoughts?

*Think about the variety of different people who you will talk with both before and during your project…*

## ⬊ Communication skills

- How do you communicate in your own group and with your partner group (if you have one)?
- What reports you will need to write in connection with your project and what information you want to pass on about it? What skills do you need to have so that others fully understand the purpose and value of your project?

*Think about problems you may encounter during the project…*

## ⬊ Problem solving

- How will you deal with these problems if they occur?
- Which skills do you have that can help to solve problems?
- What new skills you learn so that you can help to solve other problems you have not dealt with before in other areas of your life?
- Can you identify at least three problems, with which you were directly concerned, while the project was taking place and the role you played in enabling these to be overcome?

*Think about ways you can make regular reviewing…*

## ⬊ Review and evaluation

- When you set out to develop the project, are you sure that you have clear targets about what you personally want to get from it and why?
- How you can involve your partner group, if you have one, in the evaluation and what you will do with the information you get?
- Can you identify at least four ways in which the aims of the project were met and describe your role in achieving these?

Evidence of the above skills can be provided in many formats such as: written, audio recording, drawings, multi media or simply orally. The important thing to remember is that it should be recorded in some way to allow creativity and expression of a given group of young people, taking into consideration their preferences and abilities to express themselves.

The evidence is then usually validated or assessed by a youth worker or coach supporting the group. There may also be an opportunity to involve the whole group in the assessment, as more of a peer approach. On completion the individual receives a certificate and has a portfolio of learning evidence. The portfolio should be the property of the young person completing it. Therefore if you as a coach wish to monitor each individual's learning process and completion of the PRA, keeping a coaching record will be essential. This can be done for each individual or tracking their progress as a group.

On the completion of the final assessment it can be extremely beneficial to celebrate the learning achievements of participants. This can be done through holding a presentation evening or award ceremony to present the final certificates, including the local community involved in the project, the neighbourhood, friends, family… and even the media!

Using the PRA can introduce a new dynamic to the coaching process: it encourages and allows you to focus more on the participants learning rather than the task or activity. Nevertheless, you should be aware that completing the PRA process requires a huge amount of dedication, support and time. In addition to the actual project the PRA can sometimes also present itself as a difficult and time consuming tasks which comes in addition to an already challenging experience. In this case you should use your creativity in highlighting the importance of the PRA and maintaining the motivation of the group to come to the end of the process. If embarking on the PRA with a group, as a coach you will also need to be aware of the additional time and commitment required from your side.

Last but not least, you should keep in mind that choosing the PRA as an assessment and evaluation tool has to be a decision taken together with the group, and of course individuals within the group should be given the choice not to work on it.

So finally... what does it mean coaching 'in practice'? Hopefully most of you have found (at least) some answers to this question through the pages of this book, whether it was thanks to the theoretical and practical inputs, the tools and methods to use, the sayings from the young people and coaches or the concrete examples.

As a last contribution from the grass roots, this section will offer you another view point of coaching. A list of practical tips on project coaching methods will bring you a new perspective to look out to the coaching scenery.

So... we invite you to follow us through this new coaching adventure. Directly coming 'from practice'. You just cannot miss it!

*Interview of **Marie Rouxel**, a professional coach, France*

## ↘ Coaching stages of a Youth Initiative

*A method, me?*
*Each project has its own style of coaching: it's the empirical method where you adapt yourself to actual needs. Yet, I have been able to identify stages in coaching, the roles of the coach during each stage and some 'tools' or 'tricks' that I often use.*

## ↘ Project coaching methods

**Listener stage**

**1. Clarify what the request involves**
*The first thing to do is to listen. Ask questions, then listen to the young people express themselves and try to discover what is behind their request. Sometimes when the young people talk about a project what they really want is a work placement…*

**Pen stage**

**2. Help to reformulate, write down the objectives**
*For some people it seems impossible to go through this very formal written stage. Without doing it for them, you have to reformulate, translate the project into clear language, and help them get it down on paper.*

**Probing stage**

**3. Checking up the personal motivations and 'talents' or skills**
*It is important to find out exactly what they expect from their project. A simple verification of skills will allow you to suggest training options where appropriate.*

**Cooking stage**

**4. Evaluation of means to be put into practice: human, material and financial**
*The experience of the coach will be useful to help to draw up a complete list of what is needed to carry out the project. I remember a young man who wanted to set up an organisation providing a home delivery service in a rural area but had not given any thought to transport costs!*

### 5. Study of similar projects

*The project holder is always convinced he or she's doing something innovative. The knowledge that the coach has of the local area could help to set up meetings with other people who have similar projects. Beware of the inward-looking reaction: 'they are going to steal my project idea' or 'yes I know, but they don't know anything about this topic…'*

<div style="color:red">Mirror stage</div>

### 6. Identification of people who can help and creation of a skills network

*The idea is to put together a local 'who's who' so you can use the network dynamics to get people with projects into contact with 'experts'.*

<div style="color:red">Head-hunter stage</div>

### 7. Making a preliminary budget

*It is a good idea to draw up an initial 'fairytale' budget, covering all expenditure as fully as possible. Then, move on to an 'ideal' budget they should be aiming for. And finally do an optimistic budget, which is likely to happen if all goes well. The last step consists in drawing up a 'pessimistic' or hyper-realistic budget, which shows what they might get if things do not go according to plans. According to the progress of the project, they may refer to one or other of these budgets ('fairytale' for files to be presented to sponsors, for example).*

<div style="color:red">Calculator stage</div>

### 8. Search for resources

*When they present their project, young people often only have a partial or inaccurate concept of possible sources of financing. It is the role of the coach to help them find their way through the jungle of funding mechanisms.*

<div style="color:red">Gold digger stage</div>

### 9. Setting up a schedule

*First of all the coach has to avoid getting carried away by the urgency syndrome. You have to be able to tell people who want to submit a Youth Initiatives application in two days that they need to be thinking more of three or four months. In addition, you will need to help them set up an action plan, with regular meetings to check how the activities go ahead.*

<div style="color:red">Timer stage</div>

### 10. 'Test' period

*To avoid major failures, particularly concerning large projects, it is useful to provide test periods (depending on projects) to see how things are working out and, if necessary, to allow the group to review the situation and take a reality check.*

<div style="color:red">Safeguard stage</div>

### 11. Communication

*Facilitate contacts with the media for example by holding a meeting with a journalist. They could, for example, get a student in communication to work on how to promote the project (in particular, make their project known to sponsors).*

<div style="color:red">Spokesperson stage</div>

## 12. Implementation

*Although it is best to keep your distance when the project is under way, and avoid any temptation to 'take over', the project group may like to have you around, if only for reassurance, during this implementation phase. It is also important to 'let them go' at some stage when you feel that the group can manage on their own.*

## 13. Evaluation

*For project groups, making a report is often considered as useless. However, whether carried out internally or with external partners, this stage is essential. The coach must ensure that any gaps between what was originally planned at the start of the project, and what actually happened, are evaluated. This stage may be extended as some kind of follow-up if the project goes on for a certain length of time.*

## ↘ A few 'tricks'

**The coach is not God**
*Whether it's a question of being available, having the necessary skills or simply recognising that several heads are better than one, the coach needs to know when to hand on to someone else or call on others for support.*

**Contacts**
*I have an address book full of names of people I know and who will be ready to give a friendly ear to people doing projects. It is not a good idea to try to take the expert's place; the project group may well hold it against you if you do. A coach can also use his/her address book to evaluate their own coaching.*

**The 'what's in it for me?' test**
*There is an old 'missionary trick' where you look at whoever initiated the project, check that it really is their project and that they expect to get something out of it for themselves (and not just for parents, friends, etc.). What is their personal project within the collective one?*

**The contract**
*You need to reach an agreement with the group about their goals and the way they intend to achieve them. In practical terms, no one leaves my office without having some kind of task. In return, at the end of a meeting I try to make sure my visitors leave with some specific information or a commitment about what I will do at our next meeting.*

**The conference**
*This is about bringing a third person into the coach/coached partnership to get an outside opinion about the way the project is going ahead and examine any problematic issues.*

**Emergency exits**
*This is a guidance counselling technique. When you can see that the original project may not be feasible, you look for alternative solutions with the group to avoid ending up with a failure. This may simply mean postponing the project, making it less ambitious or finding another interim solution.*

Young people who were interviewed for this guide also gave their reflection about ideal coaching by answering the question: "For me a perfect coach is…"

Enjoy the collection of some of the answers hereby and hopefully you will feel that this could be you indeed! So, for me the perfect coach is…

*"…somebody that has enough empathy to understand the different personalities, giving confidence, coming up with constructive criticism. One that finds the perfect balance between authority and neutrality, between observation and participation"* — *Palmir (23), Danemark*

*"…someone who has clear vision of how he/she can help me, motivates me, is easy to contact with"* — *Jacek (24), Poland*

*"…supportive, sensitive, with lots of knowledge and fun"* — *Monica (25), Portugal*

*"…respectful towards the participants, expert on his or her topic, able to help in logistics and organisational work on spot during the activities, discrete and full of energy"* — *Karen (18), Estonia*

*"…a person that always helps me to realise my idea, not to change it!"* — *Tomasz (21), Poland*

*"…someone who would always be helpful, available and prepared for giving his/her hand whenever is needed"* — *Rasa (18), Lithuania*

*"…someone who have knowledge, experiences, vision and energy to finish the project with us, someone who wants to share all he/she knows"* — *Martin (18), Czech Republic*

*„…giving advice and practical hints, giving contacts, sharing difficulties and mistakes, having good humor, positive thinking…"* — *Sonia (28), Portugal*

*"…someone who shows the way"* — *Krzystof (19), Poland*

*"…not only a coach but a good friend"* — *Gianluca (26), Italy*

*"…a person who is open minded, good listener, flexible (but not too much), calm and energetic"* — *Pia (20), Finland*

*"…a person who helps to concretise needs and feelings, and helps with project planning and management, and always is near in order to give support, advice…"* — *Marcin (26), Poland*

*"… supporting, advising, wise, experienced, skilfull"* — *Vytas (22) Lithuania*

*"…a guiding light in the middle of the dark forest!"* — *Andy (27), Malta*

*"…professional, neutral, diplomatic and nice person whom I trust"* — *Ilja (24), Estonia*

*"…person who knows what to say and when to say it"* — *Gintaras (20), Lithuania*

*"…a map, not the driver!"* — *Anna (23), Poland*

What do we leave you with now, dear reader? With just another handbook on the book shelf? With a bundle of question marks in your head, replaced by new ones? As stated in different parts of this handbook, we did not find ourselves in the position to just collect all possible wisdom which lays undiscovered in European youth work, mix it thoroughly, and *voilà*: we proudly present you the miracle coaching strategy for active youth participation!

The coaching strategy for Youth Initiatives being 'under construction', it made the writing of this guide a difficult job. Using coaching for youth projects is a relatively new field, with a number of differing approaches and experiences developed so far. In this context we, as an international team of people who are active at different levels of European youth work, tried to cover a wide spectrum of this area. You will have to decide whether we succeeded or not.

Nevertheless, not being able to give the best solutions ever does not mean not to be able to present you a position towards values, strategies and techniques of coaching Youth Initiatives. At least we tried to convince you to follow us in one elementary point: that coaching Youth Initiatives should lead young people to greater autonomy, not to greater dependence on coaching support. We see your (and our) task as eventually making your coaching unnecessary for the young people; this is when you have done a good job as a coach! Furthermore, we believe in what we called progressive participation and we believe that coaches can play a decisive role in its development.

So… are we at the starting point of creating a new professional sphere of youth coaches, with European budget to be spent on, job possibilities for unemployed youth workers and a number of handbooks like this one to be published? Not really. It is not without reason that peer-to-peer education is one of the most recommended ways of coaching and supporting Youth Initiatives and is promoted by the European Commission, SALTO-YOUTH network and National Agencies of the YOUTH programme. Of course this does not mean that if you are not young any more you should not coach Youth Initiatives!

What came out as one of the most valuable findings during the work on this handbook is that coaching Youth Initiatives takes place under a certain inner tension between two poles: the strive for the increase of active participation and qualitative aspects of being a good and helpful coach. Doing a Youth Initiative means having the right to discover new ways, learning by doing and learning by mistakes. Being a good coach means reaching a compromise between these two poles. This might not be easy but let's work at it!

If you feel encouraged, by what you read in this handbook, to share your views with the authors, as well as to suggest further reading, resources or materials… please do not hesitate to get in touch with us using the e-mail **youthinitiatives@salto-youth.net** or the post card to editors on the last page.

Currently, the first training courses on Coaching Youth Initiatives are being set up in Europe by SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre, National Agencies of the YOUTH programme and some of the authors of this guide **(www.salto-youth.net/a3courses/)**. If you would like to co-operate with us to organise further seminars and training on this issue, please get in touch with us.

We hope you enjoyed our work and wish you good luck in future coaching!

*The editorial team:*
*Buzz, Heike, Henar, Jochen, Mario, Milena, Nerijus, Pascal and Ülly*

All through this guide we have been reflecting on coaching as a way to support young people in their Youth Initiative projects. Therefore in this guide somebody called 'coach' is in the key position. The reality of Youth Initiatives is much more complex though and there are people that might help young people in one or another moment during the project process in various roles.

Below we take a brief look at some of these roles in order to create a basis for further discussions on who, and how, could be a help for young people in their initiatives. And in doing so, there is no point to re-invent the wheel, so we take the advantage of what has already been developed by European colleagues and fits well with our understandings.

## ↘ Coach…

…is a commonly used term in various fields (probably in sports and business) to describe someone whose task is to support the quality of performance of a certain group of people or individuals. Traditional coaching is focused at a behavioural level, involving the process of helping another person to achieve or improve a particular behavioural performance. Coaching methods at this level derive primarily from a sports training model, promoting conscious awareness of resources and abilities, and the development of conscious competence. They involve drawing out and strengthening people's abilities through careful observation and feedback, and then facilitating then to act in co-ordination with other team members. An effective coaching of this type observes people's behaviour and gives them tips and guidance about how to improve in specific contexts and situations.

In the context of Youth Initiatives it refers to the person who develops a relationship of mutual respect and trust with a Youth Initiative core group in order to help young people to work effectively as a team to reach their project goals. Coaching in Youth Initiatives means supporting a groupwork process, through the cycle of dialogue and activities, that aims at encouraging the group to realise its potential through autonomy, learning and change. In its activities the coach can therefore choose to inform, suggest, facilitate, train, motivate… but all in the dialogue with young people since whatever the methods used or length of the coaching period in the project process, in Youth Initiatives the activities undertaken by the coach should always lead to greater autonomy and active participation of young people.

Differently from other forms, coaching young people during a Youth Initiative does not necessarily take place all through the project process but could be called upon or proposed to young people as response to their respective needs. The role of the coach can be undertaken by people who otherwise have different roles, for example some young person with extensive Youth Initiatives experiences can decide to start coaching his/her peers, but it could also be done by youth work professionals.

## ⬊ Mentor…

*…ing is a structured process for providing personal guidance and support to someone who is younger, less experienced or new to the game- whatever the context may be, but most commonly in education, training and employment contexts. Mentors act as critical but non-judgemental friends, provide a role model and a source of useful information and advice, and can take on a coaching task (helping to improve performance).*

Lynne Chisholm (in Bridges for Recognition. Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven 19-23 January 2005, p.47)

Mentoring is the process of dealing with 'individiuals' in terms of their total personality in order to advise, counsel and /or guide them through particular life challenges. It involves guiding someone to discover his or her own unconscious competences and overcome internal resistances and interferences, through believing in the person and validating his or her positive intentions. Mentors help to shape or influence a person's beliefs and values in a postive way by 'resonating' with, releasing, or unveiling that person's inner wisdom, frequently through the mentor's own example. This type of mentoring often becomes internalised as part of a person, so that the external presence of the mentor is no longer necessary. People are able to carry 'inner mentors' as counsellors and guides for their lives in many situations.

## ⬊ Peer supporter…

…in the context of Youth Initiatives is a young person who takes a role to support other young people with his/her experiences, knowledge, motivation… The activities of peer supporter can take various forms depending on the specific context, the needs of young people and the skills of the peer supporter: reflection on his/her own experiences as input for further discussions, use of training methods supporting the non-formal learning of project group, etc.

## ⬊ Support person…

…is the more general term often used to describe anyone who has the relationship to the youth group implementing the Youth Initiative and assists with information and guidance. One could say that coaches, mentors, peers, trainers… can all have their supportive role towards young people implementing the Youth Initiative project and therefore can be referred to as support persons.

## ⬊ Teacher…

*…is the word traditionally used to refer to those who shape, guide and accompany learning processes in schools, colleges and - to some extent – higher education.*

Lynne Chisholm (in Bridges for Recognition. Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven 19-23 January 2005, p.47)

Teaching relates to helping a person develop cognitive skills and capabilities. The goal of teaching is generally to assist people to increase competencies and 'thinking skills' relevant to an area of learning. Teaching focuses on the acquisition of general cognitive abilities, rather than on particular performances in specific situations. A teacher helps a person to develop new strategies for thinking and acting. The emphasis of teaching is more on new learning than on refining one's pervious performance (as it is the case in coaching).

It goes without saying that in case young people have a good relationship with some teacher from their school, the teacher might be asked to get involved in the Youth Initiative project in a supportive role or teach young people a specific subject related to the project theme or implementation.

## ↘ Trainer…

*…is the word traditionally used to refer to those who shape, guide and accompany learning processes in the initial and continuing vocational education and training sectors.*

Lynne Chisholm (in Bridges for Recognition. Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven 19-23 January 2005, p.47)

Trainer is usually seen as an instructor of techniques or skills on a specific subject. In Youth Initiatives it may happen that the coach or the youth worker takes a role of the trainer and runs a training activity at certain point in the project where development of specific skills or attitudes seems to be a need. Otherwise it can also happen that the coach assists young people in finding the contact with some trainer if the group seems to be in the need or has communicated the need to develop their performance through participation in the training activity.

## ↘ Youth Workers…

*…are people who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts, typically focusing on personal and social development through one-to-one relationships and in group-based activities. Being learning facilitators may be their main tasks but it is at least likely that youth workers take a social pedagogic or directly social work based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions are combined with each other.*

Lynne Chisholm (in Bridges for Recognition. Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven 19-23 January 2005, p.48)

A youth worker creates voluntary opportunities for young people to establish relationships, relationships within which youth workers seek to engage with young people in the deliberate and purposeful process of experience, reflection and learning. On the contrary, coaches do not create the voluntary opportunities, they already exist through the YOUTH programme and initially the coach does not seek to engage as this is led and done by the young people.

Although the idea for a Youth Initiative comes from the young people themselves, they may often turn to, or be proposed to turn to, some professional for further help and guidance – a youth worker. Sometimes the need to start co-operation with some youth worker could also be motivated by legislative or financial regulations such as the need to engage adults in book-keeping or contractual procedures related to project implementation. Depending on the local/national youth work practice, type of the institution, etc., the youth worker can be involved in a Youth Initiative on professional or volunteer basis, yet it is normally the practice to be involved with the group all through the project process, often even considered as one of the project actors with specific role all through different phases.

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- **http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/index_en.html**
Youth site of the European Commission contains information in the area of youth (also youth work and youth policy) in the Union, including youth policy issues and documents, information of 'Youth' programme, calls for proposals etc

- **http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/TXT_charter_participation.pdf**
European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (revised version since 2003) is divided into three sections. The first provides local and regional authorities with guidelines for how to conduct policies affecting young people in a number of areas. The second part provides the tools for furthering the participation of young people. Finally, the third section provides advice on how to provide institutional conditions for participation of young people.

- **http://europa.eu.int/constitution/futurum/documents/offtext/doc151201_en.htm**
"Declaration on the Future of Europe" known also as the Laeken declaration was adopted by the European Council on 15.12.2001 and is recognized as having opened the way to major reform for the future in the European Union.

- **http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/whitepaper/index_en.html**
The White Paper on Youth (adopted in November 2001) has been initiated by the European Commission in order to deepen the Community co-operation to the benefit and with the involvement of young people. The White Paper covers not only the situation of young people but also studies their concerns and desires. It also attempts to draw the action lines in order to further develop the youth field.

- **http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11075.htm**
Analysis of Member States' replies to the European Commission questionnaires on youth participation

and information (since 2003) presents the basic information on the legislation in force in each country, outlines the current policies with examples of best practice as well as describes the expectations at European level. The questionnaires were initiated by the European Commission in application of the open method of coordination (OMC) as result of the White Paper on Youth.

▪▪ **http://www.salto-youth.net**
SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme. Started in 2000, it is today a network of 8 Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field: providing youth work and training resources, organising training and contact-making activities to support organisations and National Agencies within the frame of the European Commission's YOUTH programme and beyond.

▪▪ **http://www.salto-youth.net/a3compedium**
Here you will find many examples of Youth Initiatives projects done all around Europe in 2004. Take a look if you are a young person between 15 and 25 and are looking for European partners to set up an international Youth Initiative or just need some inspiration for project ideas.

▪▪ **http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/**
Youth site of the Council of Europe contains important information in the area of youth of the institution, including its youth sector priorities, calls for applications for financial support, training and other support materials, etc.

▪▪ **http://www.leargas.ie/youth/dwl/gi-guide.pdf**
A guide that provides information and guidelines to youth groups and young people about how to take part in and run a Youth Initiative project. It explains what group initiatives and networking projects are, as well as providing tools for project management and higlighting supports available to help you. This guide has been created by Léargas Youth Work Service (YWS), Ireland.

▪▪ **http://www.britishcouncil.org/connectyouth-youth-initiatives-record-cards.pdf**
A Record of Achievement to allow young people to provide evidence that they have developed a range of knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of participanting in a Youth Initiative project. This tool has been designed by Connect Youth, British Council, UK.

▪▪ **http://europa.eu.int/youth/**
European Youth Portal, launched by the European Commission, which offers you information, news and discussions about Europe. It includes detailed national, regional and local level information presented under headings such as Studying, Working, Volunteering and Exchanges, Your Rights, Portals for Young People, Travelling Europe and Info on Europe. In addition, you can submit your own contributions, participate in discussion forums and ask questions to information experts in your own country.

▪▪ **http://www.salto-youth.net/toolbox**
Report on the SALTO training courses "Inclusion and group initiatives" which took place in 2002 provides a collection of methods used during the training and proposed as possible tools to encourage inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities through youth initiative projects. Besides this training report the toolbox might be an interesting source to discover other inspiring materials and why not to contribute with your own.

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Henar has been working for SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Centre in Belgium since it was created in 2003 until the end of January 2006. She has a background in psycho-pedagogy and she is currently doing her PhD in the field of Comparative Education. During the time she worked for SALTO-YOUTH she focused on Youth Initiatives and particularly on promoting youth participation and developing a coaching strategy for youth projects. She used to organise training courses and was responsible for publications on the mentioned topics. She participated in the 'Training of Trainers for European YOUTH projects' and since then she is passionate about training. She is always looking for self-development and new challenges, like the current publication! Henar is currently working for the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.
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Ülly has been working for the Estonian National Agency of the YOUTH programme since it was started in 1997. Through these years her work has been involved with all the actions of the Programme, including Youth Initiatives. Holding the *Magister Artium* degree in Social Work on research in the areas of specialised youth work and young people with fewer opportunities, she is currently responsible for inclusion. She has also been actively involved in the developments of Estonian youth work field, including the participation in the development of the Estonian Youth Work Concept and various thematic working groups at national level but also as lecturer and author of publications. Ülly is also working as a trainer both in Estonia as well as at international level, mostly in the areas of inclusion and Youth Initiatives.
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Pascal is the head of International Development System (ID6), an organisation that works in the field of training and Europe related issues with universities, schools and youth organisations. Graduated in Political Sciences and having participated in the Long Term Training Course (LTTC) and other courses of the Council of Europe, he has several experiences in using the European programmes: structural funds, Socrates, Youth… Pascal is in charge of the European sector of the Mission Locale of Roubaix (France) which mainly deals with young people with fewer opportunities. He is also the co-ordinator and founder of the European Youth Opportunities Network **(www.yonet.org).**
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Being a pedagogue and free thinker, Mario is an expert in the field of non formal education and of social "animation" since 1989. His profession as social worker has led him to work with children, young people and adults coming from different social, cultural and geographical contexts. Since 1993 he is member of the Youth Express Network which he has represented from 1999 to 2003 as member of the Advisory Council of the Council of Europe in the role of Vice president. At the moment he lives in Latina (Italy) and works as advisor for institutions and organizations. He is also trainer in cooperation, networking, participation, human rights education, intercultural learning and leadership issues and works mostly everywhere.
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Jochen Butt-Pośnik is a free lance trainer and project manager, mainly active in the fields of youth initiatives, contact making seminars and youth participation. During decades of voluntary work in youth initiatives and youth projects he learned about most of the mistakes possibly happening in such structures. As founder and project manager of the non-profit association 'Profondo' he is co-operation partner of the German National Agency of the YOUTH programme and works for a number of other bodies in the field of national and international youth work. In 2002 he published with his association the consulting book for youth initiatives '*Was Geht*' (roughly to be translated as 'What's up') – unfortunately in German.
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## ⬘ Milena Butt-Pośnik (Poland)   *AUTHOR*

Milena Butt-Pośnik has been working for the YOUTH programme in Poland since 2001. She completed M.A. in sociology. Being raised in a small village, she has close understanding of what does it mean to have fewer opportunities and how difficult it is for young people to increase them. She tries to use these experiences and knowledge as the co-ordinator of Youth Initiatives Polish National Agency of the YOUTH programme. In her work she support and coach young people willing to start or already doing Youth Initiatives and she is involved in developing and facilitating Youth Initiatives training and seminars at national and international level. She completed the 'Training of Trainers for European YOUTH projects' and national school of coaches and trainers and wishes to discover more this path of non-formal education.
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From 1998 until 2002 Heike has been working for the German National Agency 'Youth for Europe' in Bonn, responsible for Youth Initiatives within the YOUTH programme. Since 2002 she's working as a free lance supervisor for the European volunteers in Germany and additionally as a trainer in adventure and experiential learning based projects for young people and adults. Heike is a social worker and outdoor trainer in the field of international youth work. In the summer 2000 Heike generated and published a methods handbook with the title *'Mach' was draus…!'* (to be translated as 'Take your chance') for the German National Agency, with tips and tricks for youngsters to plan and develop projects within the frame of Youth Initiatives. From time to time Heike is still supporting the development of Youth Initiatives in Germany.
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## ⬊ Nerijus Kriauciunas (Lithuania)   *AUTHOR*

Nerijus has been working as a trainer since 2001. He finished business related studies at Vilnius University and started MA in adult education. Till now he was involved as participant in a Youth Initiative and as youth worker supported youth groups running Youth Initiatives. While working as a volunteer in the Lithuanian National Agency of the YOUTH programme he had experience in informing and consulting young people on Youth Initiatives. In his work with young people his main interests are cultural diversity and youth participation. By using creative methods, intercultural learning, experiential learning and outdoor education he supports the groups of young people in creating, running and evaluating their local and international projects.
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## ⬊ Buzz Bury (United Kingdom)   *CONTRIBUTOR, PROOF-READING*

Buzz has over 20 years experience as a qualified youth and community worker both at practitioner and management levels. Experience has come from a wide variety of activities ranging from health promotion, club and centre based work, training and project development. With 10 years international experience gained from exchanges, supporting volunteers and particularly supporting Youth Initiatives. Buzz is now a freelance trainer and education consultant based in the north west of England. His international training activities are now increasing and he has recently completed participation in the Training of Trainers for European YOUTH Projects, organised by SALTO-YOUTH Training and Co-operation and Interkulturelles Zentrum. He is also a very keen cyclist.
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