

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
YOUTH in Action
Quality in European Youth work and youth policy
Bonn, July 2006

Conclusions

From 4 to 6 July 2006, the European Conference “YOUTH in Action – Quality in European Youth Work” took place in Bonn. The conference was organised in co-operation between the European Commission and the SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, supported by IKAB e.V. 66 participants from 21 countries representing the different stakeholders in the YOUTH Programme came together in order to discuss the challenges to develop quality in European youth work and with regard to co-operation in the youth field and to further reflect on the concrete arrangement of the future programme. The aim was to make a contribution “to developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field”.

Quality is a key term in the new programme and is introduced as the fundamental element typical of the programme in the wording of the law itself – Action 4 is credited with a priority role with regard to innovation and operationalisation of this quality demand.

The participants agreed on the following conclusions:

1. There is a need to take the further initiative for **development of quality in European youth work and youth policy through Youth in Action**. This should build on the experiences and results from the efforts which have been taken towards quality in the programme YOUTH.
 - The Youth in Action Programme is more complex with regard to support of young people; increasing recognition of Non-formal Learning; expectation of European citizenship education and the need for the implementation of priorities of European youth policy.
 - There are several new Actions and Sub-Actions.
 - Despite increased requirements, there is a limited budget compared to the existing programme.

2. A **European Training Strategy is the core element** of a coherent quality approach. Such a European Training Strategy needs to go beyond offering a big variety of support measures on the basis of short-term needs carried out by National Agencies, NGOs and the Partnership for people involved in European youth projects, which were funded mainly through Action 5 in the YOUTH Programme. It is the main instrument for a sustainable strategy for capacity building of the different actors and providing them with the needed competences, especially in the field of Non-formal Learning and the work with young people. Some of the main elements are:

- Further development of the Training and Co-operation Plan as the main instrument of quality support through National Agencies in their role as intermediary structure:
 - It should include all training activities for all Actions
 - There should be a coherent setting and planning
 - It should meet the different demands
 - Training for NA staff and staff of other structures of the programme
 - Additional training activities for new actors, like youth actors at local level, and new topics, like European citizenship and youth policy.
 - Access/involvement of NGOs in all support measures in Action 4 in order to develop training responding to their needs
 - Support through SALTO on specific topics and priorities
 - Co-ordination of the Training Strategy at European level
 - Action 4 should also be used as an instrument to develop the competences of the different actors in European co-operation in the youth field
 - Development of a European frame of terms of reference for quality in order to support a collective understanding of aims, objectives, and principles.
 - An increased budget for Action 4 is needed in order to implement a European Training Strategy
 - A space for an organised debate between trainers in European youth work to discuss and contribute to the development of quality
3. It is needed to set up a set of **communication measures** at European level on the development of quality in Youth in Action. One reason is to discuss and to monitor the quality approach, the other reason is the transfer of competencies in the sense of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Some of the main elements are:
- Setting up and using virtual platforms to communicate between the actors and to inform about running activities and their results
 - Regular European meetings on quality issues
 - National platforms with regional and local actors in order to build links between the European and local levels
 - Establish the principle of dialogue between all stakeholders including young people
 - Supporting a “dialogue on equal footing” between European Commission / National Agencies and applicants of the YOUTH / Youth in Action Programme on the development of quality in European projects.
4. There is a need to develop specified ideas, concepts, and practice for the **valorisation of non-formal learning activities in the youth field**. Here, the specificities of the youth field and the Youth in Action Programme should be taken into account, especially when it comes to small-scale projects. Greater visibility gives better recognition of the value of non-formal learning in the youth field. The dissemination of experiences and results of YiA projects allows and encourages the transfer of good practice. Special emphasis should be put on the experiences with the development of human resources inside non-formal youth work.

5. Implementing a quality approach demands close **co-operation of all actors at all levels** in the youth field. This is not only the condition for the development of quality, it is also part of a strategy in the sense of learning from each other, specially peer learning. Some main elements are:
 - Co-operation with new partners, e.g. local authorities in Youth Democracy projects
 - Co-operation between the actors in the fields of non-formal and formal education
 - Support of Networking on specific issues and target groups to foster the development of quality in youth activities
 - Strengthening the co-operation of structures in the YiA Programme

6. The development of quality in the youth field needs support through **applied youth and educational research activities**. There is a need to contribute to the further development of a knowledge-based youth policy and to provide all actors in the youth policy field with the relevant data. There is also a need for qualitative studies on the impact of the programme activities and the assessment of their quality.

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe offers a privileged opportunity to develop an ongoing dialogue between youth policy, youth work, and youth research.

7. In order to take the Conference as a starting point for the development of quality in the youth field, we propose to take the following **next steps in the near future**:
 - To include the co-operation of European Commission, Executive Agency, and National Agencies on the development of quality as a permanent chapter in the work plan of European Commission (Programme Unit and Policy Unit) and NAs
 - To install an expert group at European level for the co-ordination of this initiative
 - To put quality support on the agenda of the coming Business Meeting of National Agencies
 - To discuss the development of quality within Youth in Action together with the TCP officers in the next TCP meeting in November 2006
 - To support a follow-up conference on the development of quality in Youth in Action in the near future
 - To take into account the outcomes and conclusions of the Bonn Conference in the final set-up of the programme guidelines and to include a chapter on quality support in the programme guide
 - To allow coherent implementation of the Youth in Action programme by delivering introductory seminars on the new guidelines for NA staff through EC / EA and to have training of NA staff and heads of NAs on specific issues organised by the NAs themselves in co-operation with the EC
 - To increase the budget for Action 4.3. for the year 2007 in comparison to the existing budget on the background of the broader aims and objectives of the new programme

- To provide the National Agencies as intermediate bodies with an enlarged TCP as an essential tool to initiate quality support
 - To check the new and existing tools for the Youth in Action Programme, such as application forms, database, etc. with regard to quality aspects
 - To maintain all the existing opportunities and instruments for quality support in the existing programme also for Youth in Action 2007 – 2013 and to develop on this further enlarged and improved strategies for quality support for youth projects
 - To launch long-term studies on the qualitative impact of the programme already with the first call for proposals in 2007 and to take into account quality aspects in the launch of the ex-post-evaluation of the YOUTH Programme
 - To support the debate on quality issues in thematic networks through SALTO
 - To use the existing virtual platforms and tools of SALTO for the quality development
8. Beside these conclusions, seven working groups have developed many **detailed recommendations** on the development of quality for several Actions of the YiA Programme, which are documented as an **annex** to these conclusions. The recommendations can not be seen as a complete list nor was it agreed on by all participants of the conference. Nevertheless they can be taken into account at European and national level by the different actors involved when starting with the implementation of the Youth in Action Programme.

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The conference is documented online at:

www.salto-youth.net/QualityinEuropeanYouthWork

Annex

Working group 1 – Action: Youth Exchanges Recommendations

Demands

Actors of youth exchanges need to be familiar with:

- Active participation
- Europe and active citizenship
- Non formal learning and its recognition
- Intercultural learning and cultural diversity
- Project management
- Visibility and dissemination
- Local impact
- Valorisation
- Risk assessment

Skill and competences

- Youth workers need to be supported in order to acquire skills and competences in the all topics listed above

Concerted strategy

- The youth exchange training strategy should fit the general one of 'Youth in Action' programme avoiding to develop isolated strategies. All similar demands from other actions should be put together in a general plan

Concrete actions:

Meetings, fora and seminars

- Meetings of and virtual platforms for stakeholders providing support measures should be organised to exchange strategies, to support the demands and to develop a common training strategy
- Meeting should also stimulate innovative approaches in youth exchanges
- Reconsideration of the existing training formats (BTM, Atoq, etc..) and the existing quality standards

Visibility & Access

- More visibility and recognition at European level of the training offers
- Access and co-ordinated approach to the training activities provided (e.g. SALTO training calendar)

National Agencies

- Training and Co-operation plan (TCP) of NAs should continue the leading role of the European training strategy and it needs to be supported by an appropriate budget
- A co-ordinated general NA staff training strategy should include training for project officers of action 1 in the above topics

Local Community

- Further efforts need to be taken to involve the local community into youth exchanges

Working group 2 – Action: Youth Democracy Projects Recommendations

Who are the actors in 1,3 that need support?

- National Agencies – who are responsible for the implementation of this action
- Project Applicants who can be various – municipalities, youth groups, NGOs, youth sections of political parties, school or youth councils/parliaments,...

Recommendations

- Informing about the existence of the new action 1,3 and promoting the benefits and opportunities within it
- Training on “Participation” (how to involve young people in decision making processes, how to create space for young people to have a voice/influence, how to motivate young people to be involved and participate, how to keep them on board,...), “Multiplying & Valorisation” (how to make most of a democracy project, working with the press, showing results, how to involve more people/local community, have more impact,...), “Dialogue” (negotiation between different groups/stakeholders, of different ages, channelling opinions, promoting change,...)
- Support for partner-finding and partnership building
- Inventories and analyse democracy projects that exist already (outside Youth in Action) and get inspired by the good/bad practice (not make the same beginner’s mistakes)
- Transparency and access to projects and project ideas and practice (not to reinvent the wheel and to get ideas) via a central easy access platform
- Transfer/adapt the concept of coaching to action 1,3 as a tool to be used with young people (with fewer opportunities)
- Plan an impact-study or research about the results already from the start so that we can learn very quickly from the best practices and adapt to what works best
- Provide information about follow-up possibilities for the people in the action 1,3 projects (within or outside the Youth in Action programme)
- Specific support for democracy projects with young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. more support, coaching, taylormade info or working methods, earmarked sums/quotas for inclusion projects,...)
- Target local municipalities (other levels of authorities?) as a potential actor for democracy projects – make them aware of democracy projects and the benefits for them
- Suggest ways to bring down the “high fly priorities” (future of Europe, Social Inclusion,...) to concrete attractive projects for young people (linked to their local reality/context)

Working group 3 – Action: Youth in the world Recommendations

1. Information and Better Knowledge

- Increase better knowledge of EU neighbouring regions
- Focus more in depth on EU neighbouring regions specificity/sensitivity
- Diffuse better knowledge of young people living condition in EU neighbouring regions and share it amongst different EC officers, NA staff, NGOs representatives
- stimulate 25 EU Members countries curiosity/interest towards neighbouring regions (ex. large promotional events to foster visibility, raising awareness campaigns on Neighbourhood Policy)

2. Co-operation

- Have a clearer regional based approach in the implementation of the programme (regional SALTO harmonised on some procedures?)
- Enable mutual consultation process in a particular EU partner regions to support development of specific activities (ex. inter-regional exchanges on good practices including EU and neighbouring regions)
- Improve cross-border co-operation
- Enhance co-operation amongst different stakeholders operating in EU neighbouring region for developing “large scale projects”
- The creation of a NGO support platform (similar to EuroMed Youth Platform) for each neighbouring region
- The “TWINNING” mode of functioning must be taken into account as “good practice” as a working mode enhancing co-operation opportunities within those countries in particular (some NA become twins with one or more EuroMed Youth Units from MEDA countries)

3. Training

- Involve experts, trainers, beneficiaries from EU neighbouring regions into existing training modules and in the further development of new training curricula
- Offer to EU neighbouring regions beneficiaries the possibility to participate to networking TC (as SOHO or TOT)
- Offer training opportunities for NA staff to gain a better understanding of neighbouring regions realities.

Which SUPPORT MEASURES have been named to achieve the above-mentioned purposes?

- JOBSHADOWING to deepen knowledge about different working methods
- CMS modules should be improved with the support of regional Saltos. It has been suggested that CONTACT MAKING SEMINARS might contain a training element (new concept to be tested!)
- TCP as tool to offer more YOUTH IN ACTION oriented training activities in some neighbouring regions
- STUDY VISIT: should be implemented by some “more heterogeneous” groups including EUCOMM officers, NA staff, NGOs and local authorities representatives
- The “YOUTH ENCOUNTERS” activity should be open to neighbouring regions participants in order to increase their visibility and offer more intercultural meeting opportunities
- SEMINARS SALTOs should organise annually a large monitoring seminar (including several stakeholders) on the implementation of the action in the relevant neighbouring region

Working group 4 – Action: European Voluntary Service Recommendations

- Database – development – and its expansion to a PORTAL – Internet (also place for sending, volunteers)
- Information, promotion and support for Inclusion projects – designed, tailored for the Target groups
- Specific Information and Training on Group EVS
- Obligatory trainings/seminars for EVS organisations and mentors on NATIONAL level
- Training and seminar meetings for EVS volunteers follow up
- Provide space for exchange and sharing of EXPERIENCE – good and bad practice
- Support structures for Networking of EVS actors on National level
- Better coordination of planning International Activities in the EVS training field
- Regular communication – using already existing tools on International level
- Training Strategy on EVS – keep existing practice and develop it further
- Keep space (content wise and with financial support) for INNOVATIVE ideas – following arising needs during the Youth in Action Programme

Working group 5 – Action: Training and Networking Recommendations

- Don't forget the input on the local level
- More adaptation and translation of resources (T-kits, Salto handouts,...)
- Evolution of TCP as a cooperation tool
- More forums for exchange of „good practice“
- Coordination of the evaluations on European level
- Coordination of long term strategies, e.g. capacity building outside Y.i.A
- Review and Promotion of a (the) European training strategy
- Transparency of the different TC's (a visible platform for all open trainings)
- A4.3. should be also linked to A5
- Y.P. should be clearly listed as actors /participants
- Peer to peer education should be taken as a serious part, especially when involving y.p. as actors

Working group 6 – Action: Encouraging innovation and quality Recommendations

Call for proposals

- It shall be published at least 6 month in advance to be able to prepare strong partnerships and projects.
- Thematic priorities shall be pre-announced 1 year in advance before the call to allow for strong projects to develop.
- In the Call for proposals references (web sites, documents, etc.) regarding policy, research and practise concerning the thematic priority shall be included.

Capacity building of applicants

- The development of thematic networks for A 4.4 shall be supported through other sub-actions of the *Youth in Action* programme.
- Training opportunities for the development, implementation and evaluation of large scale projects in an intercultural context shall be provided.

Communication flow between actors

- The Executive Agency as responsible institution for the Call shall provide qualitative feedback for the applicant on the applications as well as on the outcomes (reports).
- To facilitate the consultancy of the applicant organisations there shall be an exchange between the involved institutions (EACEA, NAs, SALTOs) on the project and the general organisations practise.
- Exchanges between project organisers and support structures (e.g. meeting of Innovative Project Promoters) on international level shall be facilitated.

Make better use of outcomes

- To valorise project outcomes, products and impact adequate systems and capacities shall be developed.
- Developed knowledge as well as products by projects (e.g. study, external evaluation) shall be made available taking into account the potential users as well as their potential needs.

Innovation

- Inter-disciplinary and cross-sectorial approaches in projects (“looking beyond the YOUTH-plate) shall be encouraged.
- To better understand the term “innovation” it shall be explained through examples in the Call.
- “Innovation” shall be considered “context-dependent” (what is Innovation in one place is routine in another place).
- The Co-operation between partners from non-formal education, formal education and vocational training shall be encouraged.

Working group 7 – Action: Co-operation in the youth field Recommendations

- Use Action 4 to build up the necessary competencies for Action 5 meetings (i.e. A4.1 + A4.2. = access to information)
- Use the Action 4 to support all actors to develop their competencies for the co-operation in the youth policy field
- Use other actions to build competencies of young people /youth field; (like European awareness in Action 1.1.
- Develop a national strategy for the participants in European dialogue (i.e. youth event during presidency)
- Action 5.1. should include project-preparation and evaluation > continuity
- Action 5 should focus on dialogue between various actors, especially youth and policy makers; facilitated by intermediaries.
- Action 4 should provide sufficient means to youth NGO´s and structures of the programme to support the competencies:
 - NAs – TCP
 - NGOs – access to all action 4 actions (4.1., 4.2.)
- Make (better) use of youth research
- Platforms for actors on national/regional/local level to facilitate the dialogue on European youth policy

Needs of young people:

- Access to information, possibility to reflect collectively (CCC), to know how to participate, Communication skills/language, European awareness, self organisation, time factor...

Needs of intermediaries:

- Knowledge of young people and youth policy, process organisation, knowledge of structural systems and processes, methodological competencies, facilitating skills and ethos, communication skills, European /national awareness, interlinking and flexibility, co-operation and networking-skills...

Needs of policy makers:

- Better knowledge of young people, information in youth policy, communication skills, openness and listening attitude....