



YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

Focus on:

# Youth Employment

*European  
good practice  
projects*



Youth in Action  
Programme

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**Androulla Vassiliou**  
*Commissioner for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism and Youth*



## Giving better employment chances to all of Europe's young people

**O**ne in five young people in Europe cannot find a job. The lack of quality employment opportunities threatens an increasing number of young people with a sense of exclusion. The transition from education to independence and a place in the world of work is becoming longer and more precarious. And those with the fewest skills or the fewest opportunities are most at risk.

There is no single remedy, but there is a need for wide-ranging efforts to seek solutions. Youth in Action is a valuable part of these efforts, with its focus on learning through experience. This EU programme challenges young people by presenting them with novel environments — other countries, languages or cultures, new ways of working, or new demands on their abilities to organise themselves and to make plans and carry them out.

This brochure gives some examples of how non-formal learning and the Youth in Action programme contribute to building up young people's knowledge and skills, and give them a glimpse of what it requires to seek and hold down a job or to become an entrepreneur. It makes them more employable. It also shows how this sector is countering youth unemployment and helping young people get back on track — particularly those who for one reason or another are marginalised or discriminated against, who lack confidence in themselves, or who have little sense of engagement in society. The programme contributes to achieving social cohesion in society at large, by supporting the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

These are snapshots of some of the 40 000 Youth in Action projects that, in the last five years, have offered a path for young people towards making positive choices about their own lives, their own futures and their own place in society and in Europe.

Some projects have supported initiatives taken by young people themselves. Others have allowed young people to explore new opportunities involving periods spent in another country. Many projects have given young people from different regions or countries the chance to share their experiences in coping with and overcoming the challenges of unemployment. And others have deepened the knowledge and skills of youth workers in relation to youth unemployment.

The projects in this brochure demonstrate how Youth in Action empowers young people, giving them the chance to transform themselves to take on a role in the job market, with its evolving demands for adaptability and resourcefulness. Its fundamental aim is to instil into young people a sense of autonomy, confidence and the conviction that they have a role in society and a voice in how it is shaped.

This helps them manage the transition from school to work — and ultimately to play their part in Europe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Vassiliou', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

**Androulla Vassiliou**  
*Commissioner for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism and Youth*

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## Star gazing

### *Looking towards future employment*

6

**Rebuilding a century-old fishing boat** in a Cornish fishing village provided a new sense of achievement and confidence for three young men from Austria who had difficult employment histories and disadvantaged backgrounds. They spent up to a year in 2011 living in the community in Cawsand, Cornwall, with support from a youth worker and local people, including a traditional fisherman and boatbuilder. As well as learning technical skills in woodworking and improving their command of English, they also acquired a sense of teamwork by working together in an environment that at first they did not know.

The project was run by the Rückenwind strategy, which specialises in strengthening the competences of young people with difficulties in the job market. It works with young people who have been unemployed







A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Austria.  
Project carried out by Cubic (Cultur und Bildung im Context), Austria; Point Europa, UK.



for lengthy periods, or who have educational or health difficulties. Rückenwind projects always take place with a strong anchorage to the local community, and with a local project coordinator as an intermediary to social workers, unemployment offices and other advisory organisations.

An initial interview process explores each young person's interests and skills in relation to possible fields of employment, and young people are then assigned to a local project (mostly non-profit making) to develop their strengths through concrete work experience. Participation in a Youth Exchange or a European Voluntary Service extends the experience to another country.

The process helps develop the long-term motivation of participants, who frequently find work after their involvement, go back to school or participate in other projects.

The project was hosted by Point Europe, a UK training and education charity, in collaboration with Cubic (Cultur und Bildung im Context) from Austria, which aims to help young people integrate into society and the world of work through international projects. ■

**'I learnt so much patience — and I was very self-conscious, but now I feel good about myself. I really came out of my shell and have something to tell my friends about.'**

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## Driven by passion for images

8

A group of four young French people from the urban community of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines was determined to get into film-making, and received a grant to develop a series of seven short films targeted at young people in school and youth centres. The topics covered — AIDS, substance abuse, civic responsibility, disability and how to get involved in society and social issues — were chosen to show other young people that Europe is an aggregate of values as well as of countries. The aim of the simple stories with improvised dialogues was to stimulate debate and reflection among young people about issues that concerned them. In contrast to many more classic information campaigns for young people, the films were deliberately iconoclastic in approach, so as to deliver a message in a way that young people would be ready to listen and respond to. The films were shown on the local TV channel, and each film presentation was accompanied by an exhibition and subsequent discussion. The project provided employment for a troupe of young actors, and since then the project leader, Djinn Carrénard, has gone on to make many more short films.

He has now directed his first feature-length film, *Je veux voir Donoma*, using some of the same actors as in the short films funded by the initial project. The film has received wide media attention, including on the cover



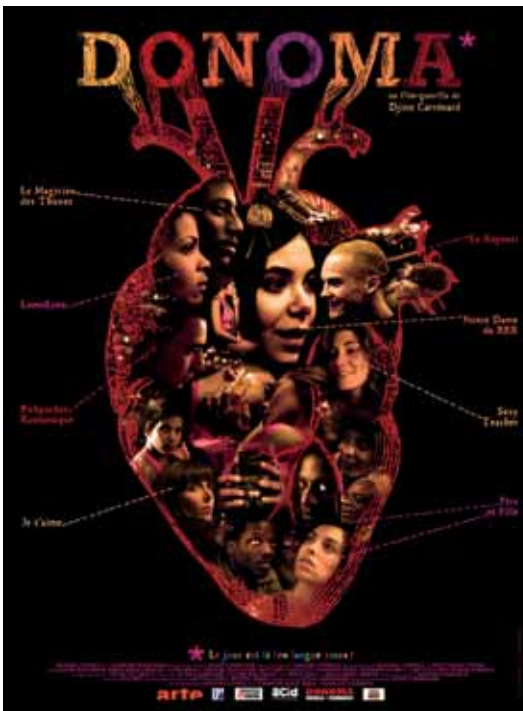
A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in France.  
Project carried out by Association Diaph'1 Kat, France.

page of *Cahiers du Cinema*, and has been shown in festivals in Canada, Germany, Korea and the UK.

The project, which ran for a year in 2005–06, gave the group and the project leader new opportunities for developing their own skills and talents, and for acquiring entrepreneurial skills. The release of the new film is being backed by donations solicited via an online promotional platform and by a tour of the regions of France. ■

**‘This project taught me to organise myself, to be independent and to bring a team together for long-term cooperation.’**

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## Young deaf people managing in society

10

**This Youth Exchange helped young deaf people** to cope in society, and to tackle questions of social inclusion and disability. Their engagement in the project allowed them to see how much they were capable of. They learnt even more about their capacities from analysing the outcomes of the activities, both positive and negative, paying attention to how to overcome deficiencies.

The project examined, from the point of view of young deaf people, the realities of educational options and issues of employment and unemployment, social security, and technical aids in Estonia and in other countries. It also gave a taste of the traditional culture of the countries involved. Through team-building activities and workshops fully exploiting visual communication, the participants learnt about possibilities in lifelong learning, work, and social benefits and assistance.





A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Estonia.

Project carried out by MTÜ Eesti Kurtide Noorte Organisatsioon, Estonia; Latvian Youth Organisation of the Deaf (LNJO), Latvia; Kauno kurėiųjų jaunimo organizacija, Lithuania; Polish Association of the Deaf, Poland.



The key challenge was to boost the employment opportunities and choices for people with impaired hearing, and to overcome the stereotypes of the past, such as the assumption that all deaf men should be carpenters and deaf women dressmakers.

The Estonian participants played an important part in choosing the themes of the project, setting goals, planning the programme, allocating responsibilities and preparing discussions. This required dealing with the challenge of contacts with sponsors, transport companies and local governments. The visiting participants prepared their evening activities and parts of their workshops. Everyone learnt to use the international sign language more fluently. Participants said that they were empowered by the project, and felt more courageous and open to new opportunities. And from the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship that developed, a further Youth Exchange project took place a year later in Poland.

The project ran for eight days in July/August 2008 on the Estonian island of Saaremaa. It was carried out by organisations for young deaf people in Estonia and Lithuania and for deaf people in Latvia and Poland, and involved 42 young people from all four countries. ■

**‘Organisations for young deaf people can help assure a better future through contacts with other European countries, opening the way for youth exchanges, training opportunities and different courses.’**

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## Jobs for youth in the suburbs

12

**Young people in the suburbs of Oslo**, from different cultures and with different native languages, benefited from the JobbX project, which offered free job application courses and a drop-in service where young people could get feedback and learn about their rights, duties and responsibilities as an employee. It also offered counselling in entrepreneurship and developing projects. It deliberately provided services in the young people's local environment, because many of them have obligations or hesitations that make it difficult for them to get to the centre of town.

This project consisted of six courses. Using non-formal techniques, dialogue and peer-to-peer counselling, project initiators provided guidance to 63 young people, mostly upper secondary school pupils, on developing a good CV, making job applications and handling job interviews. The focus was on identifying





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Norway.  
Project carried out by Antirasistisk Senter, Norway.

positive skills, competences and relevant experience, as well as on language and computer skills, and using the Internet in the job application process.

The project was initiated and conducted by JobbX tutors, all of whom are themselves young, and mostly also from a multicultural background and with a command of other languages. For young people still learning Norwegian, this was an important asset to create understanding. One of the key objectives was to empower the young participants, by making them understand the value and strengths of being multicultural. Participants also shared their experiences of discrimination and prejudice and discussed citizens' and human rights and civic duties. They emerged feeling more confident about applying for work, and many of them got jobs after the course. The local community also became aware of the project.

The project ran for seven months in 2009–10 in Oslo, Norway. It was carried out by Antirasistisk Senter, the Norwegian centre against racism. ■

**'JobbX helped me see myself differently and taught me to believe in myself. I was motivated to apply for work, giving me a completely new approach to my own future.'**

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## University students on the way to EU citizenship

14

**The project prompted** more than 100 Turkish university students to reflect on what their future as EU citizens meant. It focused on the employment and labour market issues that are crucial for the plans of young people. Through the prism of EU integration, it explored career development, labour market structure and educational issues linked to employment.

Participants came from across Turkey and represented different ethnic groups and academic disciplines ranging from engineering to social sciences. Interactive seminars from academics, businessmen and government officials were complemented by workshops and events that promoted social networking, and gave the opportunity to learn about the cultural diversity of Turkey.







A youth seminar funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Turkey.  
Project carried out by Ankara Düşünce v Araştırma Merkezý Derneđý, Turkey.

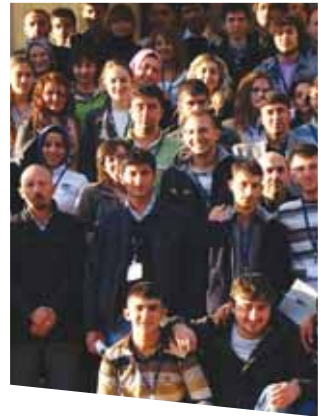
The programme provided information about the EU and its programmes, and about how it approaches employment issues, in a way that the students had not previously had access to. They were able to discuss these issues together and with experts, enhancing their debating and negotiating skills. A database of university students was created to continue circulating information. One-to-one meetings with professionals also helped students to structure their career plans both in the EU and in Turkey.

The results of the project, as measured subsequently, were that participants continued updating and enhancing their CVs, seeking renewed contacts with professionals, and investigating the possibilities of EU youth programmes.

The project took place over three days in October 2010 in Ankara, Turkey. It was carried out by the Ankara centre for ideas and research in collaboration with Turk Telekom, the Turkish central bank and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and with the 18 universities of Turkey. ■

**‘There was good communication among the participants and a cooperative networking atmosphere. Senior politicians came to talk to us personally, and answered all our questions.’**

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## Young people discover how they can influence their own future

16

**An initiative by a group of young people** from a small town in Poland's Bieszczady mountains gave rise to this project. The participants came from disadvantaged groups facing social and economic obstacles, all the more of a problem in an area as remote as this, where there are few opportunities for young people.

The project showed young people ways they could influence their own future, and helped them recognise more clearly their own advantages and disadvantages in their personal and professional lives. Meetings with employers, businessmen and workers in local companies, as well as with students, gave the participants some insights into the world of work, running a company and fields of study. They had the support of professional trainers, who encouraged them to make plans and take decisions on what type of work they wanted to find out about and what companies should be visited. Possibilities for working in other EU Member States were discussed, as well as the stereotypes that participants may face while working abroad.

Participants improved their skills in writing a job application and dealing with stress during interviews. They also learnt about job-market trends in Poland and the EU. The final part of the project was a youth enterprise fair, which the participants organised and where they presented what they had learnt to young



A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Poland.  
Project carried out by Stowarzyszenie Edukacja i Rozwój, Poland.

people in the region. This gave the organisers a sense of entrepreneurship and some specific skills, as well as experience of working in a group. They overcame many of the barriers they faced both personally and in terms of finding their place in the world of training and work.

The project ran for six months in 2010, and was carried out by the Bieszczady education and development association, which fosters scout movements and organises volunteering and educational activities. Four young people from Lesko formed the core group, and youngsters from Lesko and the surrounding villages benefited from the outputs. ■

**‘I learnt to take decisions and also to work in a team, with all the compromises that requires too.’**

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## Understanding global realities from the other side of the Atlantic

18

**A 30-year old Italian volunteer** spent a year in 2009–10 working in an Argentinean non-governmental organisation (NGO) focused on environmental protection and the sustainable use of marine resources. She developed networks with related organisations and supported educational activities with young people using non-formal learning methods.

The volunteer took part in meetings in schools to raise awareness of biodiversity, marine ecosystems, fisheries and marine pollution. She also ran workshops and events where young people could learn about the environment through practical experience, such as simulating the marine food chain and the impact of human activities on the ecosystem balance, or recognising different fish species. These included outdoor activities that built connections between young people and the environment, taught them how to observe natural phenomena and subsequently collect and compare data, and offered guidance on appropriate behaviour. In addition, she participated in a sustainable development campaign using multimedia tools, leaflets and games. She was also involved in developing an





A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels. Project carried out by CeDePesca, Argentina; Associazione Energy Formazione, Italy.



educational network among schools in Mar del Plata and Buenos Aires and in creating teaching material.

The volunteer improved her Spanish-speaking skills and learnt about local customs and traditions, as well as about Argentina and its culture. In return, she shared her experiences about young people's lives in Italy and Europe with students at local schools. She became so well integrated in the community that she felt at home there. Back in Italy, she told other young people about her experience, and distributed a CD she had helped to make about sustainable fishing and the marine environment. The cooperation with the hosting organisation proved so successful that the volunteer returned to Argentina to take up a job with it.

The project was hosted by the NGO CeDePesca (the centre for defending national fisheries) in Mar del Plata, Argentina, an organisation working for socially, economically and ecologically sustainable fishing activities by contributing to Argentinean and EU policies and law, and by supporting small-scale fishermen and educational activities. ■

**'I gained a real view of many things that I had previously just studied theoretically, and started to see some of the global implications too.'**

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## Projecto Mayonnaise

### *Blending urban culture and youth entrepreneurship*

20

**Over the course of a year**, this project developed an open house in an old movie theatre in Kortrijk, Belgium, to host creative and innovative sociocultural activities as part of the new dynamics of the city. It was run by a collective of youngsters to make young people aware of their place in Europe and in the world. Kortrijk has a very diverse population and is part of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Lille-Tournai-Kortrijk that crosses language and country borders. Accessible events — exhibitions, workshops, intercultural evenings, cooking in the street, street games and themed performances — were organised in the theatre and across the city to bring people together and involve them.

The group managed to build a network of cooperation with many different organisations in the city. It subsequently evolved into a professional NGO, and received recognition and a grant from the Flemish government for experimental youth work. One of the participants has since opened an eco-friendly bar that has become a popular meeting place for youngsters from the city.



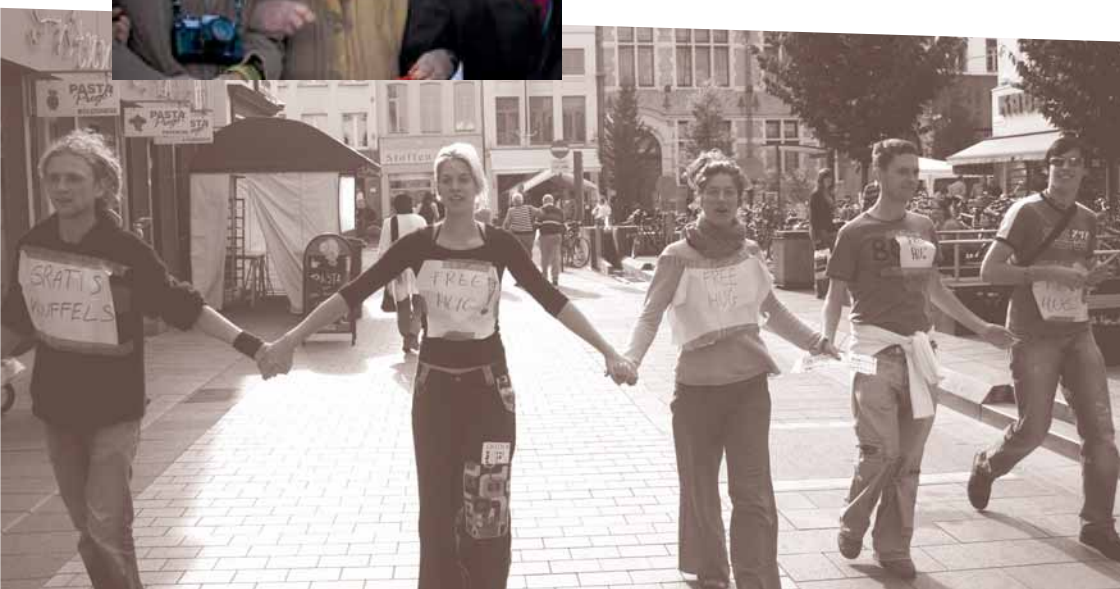


A Youth Initiative project funded by the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium.  
Project carried out by proMayo.be vzw, Belgium.

The project took place over 18 months in 2009–10 and was organised by proMayo.be, a training service established in Kortrijk by 14 youngsters with creative and innovative ideas specialised in personal and creativity development, and sociocultural entrepreneurship. ■



**‘Life is a fine sequence of coincidences, people who cross your path, strange events ... Projecto Mayonnaise takes you on an adventure through things you thought you knew, but are seeing through new eyes.’**





## Open your mind

### *Get on track*

22

**Fourteen young people** from the UK and Sweden, all suffering from social exclusion and many of them with experience of homelessness, acquired an understanding of how two European countries work with young people. This widened their horizons and increased their aspirations, confidence and skills.

Prior to the exchange, they had all been involved in planning and research on youth services and the job market, and their interests had influenced the programme. During a week in Helsingborg they took







A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Sweden. Project carried out by Navigatorcentrum Utvecklingsnämndens förvaltning, Helsingborgs stad, Sweden; the Youth Independence Forum, UK.



part in team-building exercises, workshops to raise their self-esteem and cultural activities. The activities were adjusted to suit the youngsters' own personalities and backgrounds, to ensure that they felt comfortable with the tasks they were set and were able to succeed. The activities repeatedly presented them with questions and answers about how the EU works, national and European contexts of employment, what the EU can do for young people, and how they themselves could play a part as active citizens in society in general. A seminar on coping with unemployment gave participants the chance to raise questions, to compare experiences in different countries and to develop ideas for future cooperation.

To help them understand how representative democracy works, they had the opportunity to take part in a debate on these issues in the city hall's debating chamber, where they engaged actively and were able to express their opinions by pressing voting buttons. They gained a greater sense of involvement in the society they belong to, and a new awareness that career opportunities exist that are attractive and attainable.

The project ran for two weeks in mid-2011, hosted by Navigatorcentrum Helsingborg in Sweden, a municipal organisation which specialises in helping school drop-outs with trainee programmes, support for special needs, and study and vocational guidance. Coaches remained in contact with the Youth Exchange participants after the project finished, helping them in subsequent steps towards education or work. ■

**'The seminar gave us the chance to raise the questions we wanted, and to see where we were similar and where we were different from young people in other countries. ... It has been an amazing experience and it has made me realise that I can do so much more than I ever imagined.'**

## Getting prepared for the world of work

24

**This training course helped** 16 young jobseekers in Estonia prepare for the world of work. It increased their awareness on youth employment, the labour market, and how to look for a job and start a business. Through non-formal learning, it guided them in assessing their own capacities and in career planning, and it created links with employers. Participants interviewed and job-shadowed specialists in a field that interested them, including office work, construction and jewellery art, and compiled their own CVs on video.

The aim of requiring participants to conduct an interview was to enable them to understand the activities, roles and responsibilities of a person from their chosen field. They had to establish the contacts and prepare the questions, and then to prepare a written summary of the interview when it was





completed. On the last day of the training session, all the participants had an opportunity to give feedback on the programme, and all of them said it was ‘interesting’ and had ‘broadened their horizons 100 %’. Many of the participants subsequently found work, and others are continuing the cooperation with specialists they job-shadowed, looking for opportunities to work as volunteers abroad with support from the EU Youth in Action programme, or planning to continue their education or start a business. As such, all of them are entering the market in their own way.

The organisers also learnt from the experience, and developed their own awareness of the impact of youth work and non-formal learning on youth employability and opportunities for success on the job market. The 16 participants were selected from more than 150 applicants.

The project ran for eight days between February and April 2010 in Tallinn. It was organised by the Estonian national agency for the Youth in Action programme, and public and private partners included the CV centre, the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Johannes Mihkelson Centre. ■

**‘The job shadowing experience confirmed my desire to work in that area — and also made me realise that it is up to me to create the opportunities for myself to get a job.’**



## All inclusive

### *A path to new possibilities*

26

The project was designed for young people with few vocational qualifications, limited opportunities and experience of unemployment. The main objective was to boost their employability. Each participant carried out a four-week assignment as a volunteer in another country, in the field of youth work. Some worked in summer camps, others in assisting in afternoon activities for children, and others in youth workshops for unemployed youngsters, on activities such as car repairs.





A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Finland.  
Project carried out by NGO Öökull, Estonia; Lahden kaupungin nuorisopalvelut, Finland; Zavod Manipura, Slovenia.



Each assignment was customised to the interests, skills and aims of each volunteer, with the tasks geared to the needs of the host organisation. There was also a European dimension to the tasks, for instance introducing games and stories from different countries served as a platform for explaining about the EU. All the hosting organisations were flexible, and focused not just on the service supplied but also — indeed more — on the individual learning.

The encouragement to improve their skills and competences also widened volunteers' understanding of possibilities open to them at European level. Giving them a view of their future in a broader perspective improved their self-esteem and strengthened their sense of participation and responsibility for their own actions. Two Finnish participants hosted in Estonia were subsequently motivated to start studies, in youth work and in nursing.

The project ran from June to December 2011 in Tartu, Estonia, in Lahti, Finland, and in Begunje na Gorenjska, Slovenia, and involved eight young people from the three countries. ■

**‘European Voluntary Service gave me a great opportunity to experience different countries while doing something worthwhile. Working with disabled and young kids, I learnt some things about myself too.’**

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A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Italy.  
Project carried out by informal group Back thru the future, Italy.

Its creators aimed at acquiring and spreading awareness about the environment in which they live, and at testing their own abilities and creativity. In structuring the game, the participants upgraded their computer skills and, in compiling the questions, they also widened their historical and geographical knowledge and cultural awareness.

The project ran for almost a year in 2010–11 and other young people became involved. They were supported by an experienced coach and the YARD (youth action for rights development) association. At the same time, the game acted as a showcase for the skills of its creators. The game was their idea, born out of a determination to combine innovation with art and to look for new artistic languages. They won support from the EU Youth in Action programme to develop and upgrade it to a European level. Their work increased their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and developed their powers of expression.

At the end of the project they presented the game at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, and the game is now being distributed in schools. ■

**‘We discussed how Europe could deal with the crisis and the role of young people in building Europe.’**





## Showing young people how they can beat unemployment

30

**Curiosity among Polish students** about employment possibilities in other EU Member States led to an invitation to young people from Lithuania, Slovenia and Turkey to examine and discuss the impact of unemployment on students. With input from experts, they spent a week in a remote forest location exchanging ideas and experiences about coping with unemployment, what support is available and what opportunities the EU offers in terms of mobility. At the same time, the project promoted a sense of entrepreneurship among young people, with workshops on how to set up and develop a company, and with the practical challenge at the end of the seminar of promoting some imaginary products to people in the streets in the centre of Cracow.







A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Poland.  
Project carried out by KTU SA, Lithuania; Organizacja Studencka Paneuropa, Poland; Zveza študentskih klubov Slovenije, Slovenia; Euro Star, Turkey.



Through working as international teams on business plans, participants acquired new interpersonal and presentational skills and ways of looking at business challenges. They also improved their language skills as they communicated in English. They developed a sense of solidarity and tolerance, and a better understanding of young people in other countries. The project promoted European cooperation in the youth field, and helped the young people involved to see their role as active members of society both locally and at the European level.

The project ran for 10 days in October 2010, in Ojców and Cracow in Poland. It involved 20 Lithuanian, Polish, Slovenian and Turkish young people and was hosted by Paneuropa, a Polish association of students of economics that runs international exchange projects linked to the job market. ■

**‘We had to practice communicating with other people with different languages and from different cultures, and that gave us a chance to understand other nationalities. The workshops were really creative, helping us look at jobs — and at our own talents — in a new way.’**



## Neue Horizonte

### *Empowering European youth towards job entry*

32

**This project involved some 50 youth workers** from Austria, France, Germany, Poland and Sweden in a one-week seminar that covered young people's transition from school to work, and the evolving requirements and skills in career planning. The participants shared their experiences and methods, and learnt more about approaches in other countries to volunteering and mobilising young people. Through a series of meetings with experts, discussion groups, visits to local youth projects and specific training sessions, the participants developed a position paper which they presented to politicians in the course of a panel discussion.

In particular, they brought a new European perspective to the issues of career planning and development, with specific attention to the possibilities of mobility. Their position paper tackled head-on the challenge of





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Germany. Project carried out by Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung, Fachbereich Jugend, Austria; Mission locale intercommunale des bords de Marne, France; ver.di Jugendbildungsstätte Berlin-Konradshöhe e.V., Germany; City of Warsaw, Poland; Klassmorfar för borner i Sverige, Sweden.



building a new integrated approach for youth topics at European level, in the face of the wide variety of national approaches and different educational systems, methods and resources.

It concluded that the aim was not just to make young people 'fit for work', but to support and strengthen them so they are able to make choices, and even to change the situation of the labour market themselves. A regular exchange among social workers from different countries was considered as absolutely vital.

The project took place in mid-2011 in Berlin, and was hosted by the youth training centre in Berlin, Konradshöhe, which initiated a mentor programme for the transition of pupils from school to training or professional support and looked for expertise in empowering young people in other European countries. ■

**'There is a great need for regular training and exchanges between youth workers from different countries.'**

33



## Shape arts: Articulate UK

### *Young disabled people and employment*

34

**Young people with learning disabilities** had an unprecedented opportunity in this project to express their aspirations for support in seeking employment. To help them overcome the barriers they usually face in communication, a conference with policymakers and decision-makers was held, conducted largely through forum theatre, for which they devised their own scripts based on their own experiences so they could articulate their wishes through performance.

The project also provided them with information on policy and planning so that they could gain a better understanding of existing services. In addition, the approach gave the young people new insights into work-related decision-making processes and a new role in influencing the design of the services that affect them.

Young people were provided with an attractive, accessible approach to handling the practical aspects of the transition from school to the workplace, and they were given control over exploring, in their own way, many of the sensitive issues concerning independence and decision-making. The project helped counter the tendency for young people with learning disabilities to drop out of education, employment or training. They were able to use interactive media to voice their ideas and thoughts, assisted by a group of young journalists who themselves had learning disabilities. The journalists created a record of the event using web-based media, blogging, video and live interviews.



A youth seminar funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the UK.  
Project carried out by Shape, UK.

The youth and employment experts who participated also benefited by widening their knowledge of disability and equality issues, and learning good practice and policy for employing disabled people. Their future work with this group of people will be better informed and more responsive, as they accommodate special needs into service delivery and policymaking.

The three-day project ran in June 2010, at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London. It brought 15 young people together with experts in the fields of youth-led training, employment support and post-education service delivery. Participants came from London, Liverpool and Manchester. ■

**'They learnt so much, proving to themselves and to others that they are capable of doing so many more things, and acquiring confidence to make people listen to them.'**



## Etcetera

### *Guiding young people towards employment*

**Etcetera was targeted at youngsters** without work, a diploma, or any idea of what they wanted to do after school or in their future working life. It encouraged them to be creative in running their own projects.

The simple concept was to offer young people advice related to their employment aspirations, or practical assistance in setting up projects with a social, cultural, professional, sporting or tourism dimension. So anyone wanting to organise a football tournament but not being sure about how to do it could turn to <http://www.etcetera.lu> for help on everything from making contacts to publicity and event planning. After providing extensive initial support, the advisers gradually withdrew from the project, in line with the growing confidence of the participants.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Luxembourg.  
Project carried out by Musel-Sauer Mediathék, Luxembourg.

Etcetera also provided job information and orientation for youngsters without work or qualifications. It encouraged them to look at media interviews with people from different professions to learn more about what was involved in different jobs and what qualifications would be needed to embark on different careers. Participants also conducted interviews themselves with people who shared the same passion for their jobs, on subjects of their choice.

The Etcetera group created a space where young people could develop confidence about taking on challenges. It also launched a microfinance scheme to support young people's own projects, such as a fashion show with second-hand clothes that involved some 40 young people as models, cameramen, photographers and designers. The organisers themselves were eight youngsters with fewer opportunities from Wasserbillig, Luxembourg. The projects ran for five months in 2010, and the group eventually evolved into a new NGO to maintain its work. ■

**'The project has not only had a positive impact on the young people it attracted, but it has also influenced our own views of the world. In fact, most of us decided to work in the social domain.'**

37





## Learning through bonding in a new environment

38

An unemployed 26-year-old Slovenian graduate in political science identified an organisation and defined a project where she could use her capacities for getting results from team work, and at the same time develop her own skills and knowledge. She covered her own expenses for an advanced planning visit to prepare her project.

Through non-formal learning methods, she promoted the local activities of the host organisation via its website as well as by designing and distributing information and by making presentations in schools and at public events. She established closer links with local authorities, partner organisations, university and high school students, and youth clubs. The volunteer also organised and coordinated local volunteers and







A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovenia.  
Project carried out by Together, France; Zavod O, Zavod škofjeloške mladine, Slovenia.



international youth exchanges, providing support to training sessions and seminars, and documenting the organisation's activities in images and writing. She also brought an international dimension to the host organisation's work and strengthened its international network.

As a result, she acquired a new awareness of European mobility and identity, increased her own management capacities at international level, developed new skills in working with disadvantaged young people, became an actively involved citizen at a local level, and learnt about living in an intercultural environment. She also learnt French and improved her English and Italian. Above all, the volunteer boosted her own confidence and enhanced her sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. By sharing her experience with young Slovenes, she motivated them to take a more European view of their lives and to explore European opportunities. She declined an offer of employment from her host organisation, and instead set up a youth organisation in Slovenia.

The project took place over 12 months from early 2010 to early 2011. It was hosted in Metz, France, by Together, a voluntary organisation active in cross-European cooperation and mutual learning through networking among civic organisations with a youth focus. ■

**'The most important thing is to clearly define needs and expectations. Each volunteer must keep in mind that the success of the project is based on their own initiative.'**

39



## Learning to help others

40

**This project trained 40 young people** from disadvantaged backgrounds, some of them from the Roma minority, as volunteers in disaster assistance and special first-aid service. Its use of non-formal techniques helped the participants to realise their value in society and take pride in using their leisure time to help others.

The young people involved were living in care and many had social problems: some were orphans, some had learning difficulties. They had previously had little opportunity to take part in professional activities or in meaningful leisure pursuits. The project organisers took them on visits to learn the theoretical background and to become involved in practical activities, including environmental protection, ambulance services, first-aid or crime prevention.

They were encouraged to develop their sense of initiative and to use it in making decisions about their own lives. Subsequently, six participants became permanent volunteers for the organisation —





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Hungary.  
Project carried out by the Concorde Soproni Speciális Kereső és Felderítő Mentőcsoport Alapítvány, Hungary.

demonstrating how they had found a new goal and motivation in their lives. Most stayed in close contact with the organisation, with some of them becoming involved in subsequent projects to help more young people develop skills.

The project ran for eight months from July 2010 and was organised by the Concorde Sopron special searching and exploratory ambulance foundation, a volunteer team of disaster assistance and recovery professionals who support ambulances, the fire service and the police in the city of Sopron, Hungary. ■

**‘Besides taking part in meaningful activities and receiving specific training, the young people enjoyed the feeling of being part of society.’**



## How to work and study in Europe

42

During one week, 26 young people from the Netherlands and Spain explored and discussed differences between unemployment in these two countries, and how young people make use of the possibilities and opportunities for study and employment as they search for jobs. Their participation in an international project allowed them to gain a broader perspective and explore what the EU can offer young people in terms of work and study. There were meetings with employer associations and local employment agencies, local businesses and the city council. Job interview simulations and role-play helped participants reflect on their fears and expectations about their future careers. Workshops also explored





A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Spain.  
Project carried out by Welzijn Midden-Drenthe, the Netherlands; Ayuntamiento de Pilas — Delegación de Juventud, Spain.



traditional crafts such as working in leather, ceramics and decoration. In addition, young people were able to develop their skills in other languages.

The participants all gained a clearer sense of what they wanted to do with their future and how to plan effectively to make it happen. The project promoted youth participation, giving the participants greater self-confidence and a new awareness of different cultures. After the project, one participant returned to abandoned studies, one found work in the local municipality, another with mobile phones and one as a gatherer of shellfish.

This 10-day project arose from the initiative of many of the young people involved. It took place in mid-2010, run by the youth department of the city hall of Pilas, Spain, with Welzijn Midden-Drenthe, the Netherlands, sending 11 young people. ■

**‘We had the opportunity to make new contacts and to improve our English, and the project helped open our minds and develop our capacities to appreciate other cultures.’**

43



## Investigating business start-ups

44

**This project provided participants** with skills to solve the challenges presented by real-life entrepreneurship. Going beyond merely allowing young people to meet and talk with successful businessmen, the project provided training and shared experience with entrepreneurship learning tools — what they are and how to use them. The participants used case studies, role-play and theatre to develop an attentive and professional approach to business. They compared and analysed entrepreneurship methods from their own countries, and prepared methodological guidelines for moderators to create custom-designed low-cost business simulations. Lithuanian businessmen, coaches and student leaders were involved throughout as advisers.

The project offered examples of managing firms in different market environments, incorporating social responsibility factors and the importance of human resource management. It also gave participants a







A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Lithuania. Project carried out by Dynama, Czech Republic; Rotaract Club of Jacobs University Bremen, Germany; Noorteühendus Juventus, Estonia; Profat, Lithuania; University of International Technology and Management in Rzeszow, Poland.



valuable experience of working as a team — moreover an international team — in which each had to adapt to the needs of the group.

The project ran for a week in mid-2011 in Vilnius, Lithuania, and involved 25 students interested in business topics from the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. It was hosted by Profat, which implements projects for young people to equip them with knowledge and skills necessary to understand and manage the processes and factors that sustain Lithuania's economy. ■

**‘The aim is to inspire young people to create a positive and sustainable future.’**





## Reflection for action

### *Towards youth employment*

46

**As part of the structured dialogue** on youth employment across the EU, this project allowed young people in Portugal to have input into the preparations for the European Youth Conference, which took place under the Hungarian EU presidency in March 2011. In five regional meetings and one national event, 300 people from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and geographical origins became involved. They explored priorities and measures to be developed at EU level, discussed them with decision-makers and experts, and devised mechanisms that could put them into effect.

The focus throughout was on non-formal methods, ensuring a participatory approach. The tangible outputs were a CD reporting engagement of youth and youth organisations in the structured dialogue, and a simple and visually attractive guide to young people's rights and duties in employment, and the opportunities





A youth seminar funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Portugal.  
Project carried out by Conselho Nacional de Juventude, Portugal.

offered by the EU. It also created a mailing list of participants and a regularly updated website on the structured dialogue process.

The project took place over three months in early 2011 in Madeira and the Azores, and the north, centre and Alentejo/Algarve regions of Portugal, and was organised by the Portuguese youth council. Others involved included the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, and the Portuguese youth institute. The Youth in Action national agency, the employment institute and the national association of young entrepreneurs were part of the national working group of the structured dialogue. ■



47  
**‘Young people had the opportunity to take part in a consultation process at European level and exercise their citizenship through debate, reflection and the search for solutions to youth unemployment.’**

**‘Coming from a remote region, I was glad to have the chance to exchange ideas with other young people from different backgrounds about national and European issues.’**

**‘Young people have seen for the first time — through their involvement in the structured dialogue process — that they could be part of the solution, not just part of the problem.’**

## Solstice

### *Young people put on their own events*

48

**Over seven months, a core team** of four young Irish people prepared and managed a four-day arts event that brought together 100 artists, provided short-term training opportunities for 50 volunteers and interns, and drew audiences of more than 1 300. It focused on events attractive to young people with no close engagement with the arts world, and on providing a friendly low-cost environment conducive to dialogue and networking. Theatre, dance, music, visual art and film-making were all represented, and performances ran from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day.

The project was part of the Cork Midsummer Festival, and was initially driven by canvassing young Cork artists, but it expanded to take in experience from young people's festivals elsewhere. Those involved came from mixed backgrounds — isolated rural areas and varying economic circumstances, educational levels, religions and sexual orientations — and from eight different countries. It also introduced the public to many emerging Irish artists.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Ireland.  
Project carried out by Cork Midsummer Festival, Ireland.

Project participants were involved in programming, producing, marketing, budgeting and delivering events, thereby developing skills that made them more employable. The project also promoted new work opportunities for young Irish artists, acting as a springboard to other festivals (Solstice artists have since presented work at the Galway Theatre Festival, the Dublin Fringe Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival), and furthering their careers.

Solstice ran from February to August in 2011, and involved young people from Austria, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. ■



**‘ Even after you’ve done your show, everyone carries on living together in that community atmosphere, and meeting new people involved in different aspects of theatre, art and music.’**

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**‘ It’s like getting a research grant. The amount of work I have seen has been phenomenal, and you know that once you have absorbed all that, it will come out in your own work.’**



## Volunteering in Europe

### *Spreading the word on renewable energy*

50

A **27-year-old French graduate** in electrical engineering spent a year in Ireland on a European Voluntary Service project, where he organised awareness campaigns on renewable energy.

He worked on carbon footprint and energy feasibility studies, and created displays for public buildings on renewable energy in the framework of European programmes. He learnt how to write grant applications and to convince partners. The volunteer set up a local network and displayed a new entrepreneurial spirit. On his return to France, he created a website <http://www.solaire-coop.fr> and a cooperative company — sponsored by the Tipperary Energy Agency — to advise collectives on installing solar roofs. He has since provided services for homes for disabled people, for sports centres and for the community managing the national park of Vexin.





A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in France.  
Project carried out by Centre d'Information et de Documentation Jeunesse, France; Tipperary Energy Agency, Ireland.



The project took place for one year in 2008–09 in County Tipperary, Ireland. The hosting organisation was the Tipperary Energy Agency, which supports sustainable energy through energy efficiency, energy management, renewable energy and sustainable transport. It operates locally and through its links with the European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies. The volunteer had worked on environmental issues before taking part in the project, and was keenly aware of the energy crisis. He wanted to work on the development of renewable energies, especially photovoltaic. ■

**'The experience of European Voluntary Service completed my knowledge and extended my professional network, giving me an opportunity to set up my own business in the field of renewable energy. This is a chance to boost your professional experience and to open yourself up to things about Europe that you never dreamt of.'**



## Turbo golf

### *Playing for a place in the world of work*

52

**To combat unemployment** and social exclusion among young people, this project gave help in overcoming psychological barriers and in improving self-esteem through workshops combined with a variant of traditional golf. Nineteen unemployed young people from Białystok, Poland, took part in an innovative combination of sports and non-formal learning. They were given a chance to develop the discipline required by a sport more commonly associated with people who are wealthy and successful.

These two forms of non-formal education complemented each other well. The golf element helped break down barriers and show that, just as anyone can become proficient in golf, anyone can also — if they really want to — find work. The project developed a new assertiveness and capacity for communication among the participants.

At the same time, they explored communication, presentation, motivation and methods of looking for a job, with a focus on the local labour market. By working in a group, participants learnt about teamwork and how to better deal with stress in job-seeking situations. As part of the project, they met local businessmen and selected professionals to help





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Poland.  
Project carried out by Stowarzyszenie Kreatywne Podlasie, Poland.

them become better informed about expectations and needs — both their own and those of employers. The participants developed skills appropriate for the labour market, gained clearer ideas about writing a CV and widened their social networks. The project had a strong impact on the local community, prompting interest from businessmen and the media.

The project ran for six months in 2010 in Białystok, Poland, initiated by the association Creative Podlasie, which was set up by local students who wanted to do something to benefit the local community. ■

**‘The labour market is not too kind to young people looking for work, and repeated rejection can damage anyone’s self-esteem. Being involved in this project helped me regain a positive approach.’**

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## Time to change

### *Combating unemployment and discrimination*

54

**This project set out to promote** the employment of young immigrants, and to prevent racist exclusion and isolation of groups and the compensating tendency for the formation of gangs. Fifty-two young people from Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the UK, mainly unemployed men of immigrant backgrounds or on the verge of exclusion, were involved in the project.

It took the form of a residential workshop in Helsinki, featuring debates, role-play and other exercises to develop the participants' job-searching techniques and skills through peer support. In preparation, the participants had conducted preliminary investigations on employment in their home countries so they could compare their situations, not just on unemployment but also on factors linked to it, including racism, exclusion, discrimination and gang culture. During the course, they visited places related to the themes of the project, such as apprenticeship and unemployment offices, and were invited to a dinner discussion by the UK ambassador.





A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Finland.

Project carried out by Somalisk ungdoms og udviklings netvaerk, Denmark; Kanava nuoriso ry, Finland; Somalia och Sverige vänskapsförening, Sweden; Alhijra Somali Community Association, UK.



The young people improved their job-search techniques and interview and presentation skills, and deepened their understanding of the challenges for immigrants in seeking employment in Europe. They also developed ideas about arguing against discrimination and racism. They presented unemployment offices with a list of the challenges, and circulated information about support structures to youth centres and to mosques.

The project ran for one week in July in 2010 in Helsinki and was hosted by Kanava nuoriso ry, Finland. Project partners were organisations working mainly with young people of Somali background. ■

**‘This project has not removed youth unemployment and racism from Europe or from young people’s lives, but the participants now have a more positive attitude in the face of both of these phenomena, and they understand better how to deal with different challenges in life.’**



**‘I understood that finding a job is a serious business and I have to take it seriously.’**

## Learning how to help young people find their place in society

56

**This project trained youth leaders** from eight countries in working with young people facing unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion. It guided them in techniques to stimulate entrepreneurial skills among youth, and to interest unemployed youngsters in seeking qualifications, employment and involvement in society.

In an intercultural environment, and through interactive sessions and role-play, the participants developed their capacity for analysis and critical thinking, and acquired new perspectives, information and skills on the principles of non-formal learning. They encountered concepts such as an expectation horizon and explored entrepreneurial skills. The project also stimulated them to use their spirit of initiative and creative thinking in seeking to improve young people's job prospects on the job market. The activities also focused on participants' development and awareness of the European dimension of their work.





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Romania. Project carried out by EuroDEMOS, Azerbaijan; Youthnet Hellas, Greece; the municipality of Brolo, Italy; the Centre EVS and Amnesty International, Moldova; Kasta Morrelyi, Romania; the association of young Romanians from Basarabia and Bucovina, Romania; the centre for youth work in Novi Sad, Serbia; the Tufak youth club of Ankara, Turkey; the Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Lviv, Ukraine.



Through a non-formal approach, discussions addressed entrepreneurship and business strategies, social inclusion, youth unemployment in Europe, vocational qualifications, the socioeconomic situation in participants' countries and the challenges of engaging unemployed young people so they participate actively in society. On the basis of this project, further cross-border cooperation has developed to reduce youth unemployment and support local communities.

Twenty-two people from Azerbaijan, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine took part in the 10-day training, which took place in mid-2010, and was hosted by Kasta Morrely in Iasi, Romania, a human rights organisation that promotes skills central to the development of a democratic society. ■

**'After this training, we were determined to influence our national authorities to help unemployed young people and young entrepreneurs.'**



## Try it yourself

### *Young women discover their talents*

58

#### **Computer programming or music production**

are not things that many girls have the opportunity to try. The *freiTräume* project gave them a chance. A group of young women from different creative and technical backgrounds created a series of non-formal workshops on making radio shows and animated films, designing and programming a computer robot, creating a magazine, becoming a professional DJ, and song writing.

Six young women managed a team offering 18 different workshops, as well as vocational counselling and orientation. The workshops were promoted in schools, youth centres and youth networks in and around Salzburg. In doing so, the project team improved their own project management skills and encountered new ranges of contacts.







A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Austria.  
Project carried out by informal group Try it yourself, Austria.

More than 200 girls and young women around Salzburg benefited, and the encouragement they received helped them to gain self-confidence as well as to discover new talents and skills. They could then approach their future professional careers from new perspectives.

*freiTräume* still exists. Many of the participants remained in contact with the project team via Facebook, Twitter or mailing lists. The website remains online, offering workshops to anyone who is interested.

The project ran for 18 months in 2009–10, and workshops and camps for girls were organised in Salzburg city and Zell am See in Austria. ■

**‘The workshop was great and we all learnt a lot! Everyone could say what they thought and bring in their own ideas.’**





## Fresh thinking to counter unemployment

60

**Two European Voluntary Service volunteers** from Germany and Spain spent 10 months in Depaul's residential projects for people with addiction problems, encouraging the people living there to develop new skills and interests. The fact that the volunteers came from different cultures brought fresh thinking, motivated and boosted self-esteem among the people they were working with, and contributed to the harm minimisation approach of the hostel. Activities ranged from cookery classes to developing skills in writing a CV. The volunteers were encouraged to document their experiences in writing and with photographs, and to share these stories.





A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the UK.

Project carried out by Experiment e.V., Germany; Asociación para el Fomento del Empleo de los Jóvenes de Castilla-La Mancha (AFEMJO CLM), Spain; the Depaul Trust Northern Ireland, UK.



This project took place in mid 2010–11 in Belfast, where Depaul manages two hostels that provide housing and support to families that are homeless due to unemployment, unplanned pregnancies, domestic violence or family break-ups. Volunteers had an opportunity to experience the full range of Depaul programmes, which also include easy-to-access free training for young unemployed people from disadvantaged areas. ■



**‘Everyone benefits, with volunteers from other countries gaining experience, skills and new insights into different ways of living, while Depaul Ireland and its service-users profit from the volunteers’ energy and enthusiasm and learn about other cultures.’**

**‘By settling into a foreign country, coping with problems in English and working in a new environment, I became more and more self-confident and independent.’**

## Working out how to get into work

62

**To overcome the difficulties** of engaging young people in discussions about employment and the labour market, this project adopted a learn-as-you-play approach. It created a highly accessible online game through which young people could learn in a structured, but non-formal, way. The game entices young people to take part through stories they can easily relate to about four very different people encountering difficulties in the labour market. The game takes 15 minutes to play, and participants are asked to select from a range of options what happens to the characters and how they should react. In this way, participants learn more about employment and unemployment, and gain greater awareness of the obstacles and opportunities that they are likely to come across themselves.

It raises questions — and provides answers — about how far work is a right or a duty, about career paths and about where help can be obtained. A background pack of advice dispels some of the myths about the world of work, helping youngsters cope better with the reality of the job market and its challenges.

The project targeted youngsters who are unemployed, working in interim jobs or are likely to drop out of school. The game was offered in public places, such as the Ghent festival or employment fairs, and has so far reached 300 youngsters. It helped them think about choices that would be best for them, and also offered



A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium. Project carried out by informal group Natan Hertogen, Belgium.

them ways to make their voices heard by policymakers through an interactive debate with specialists and politicians in the Flemish region. One of the youngsters who started up the project, with a Master's in history, was himself unemployed, but subsequently got a job as a project coordinator in an organisation that works on unemployment topics.

The project was carried out by an informal group of four young people from Flanders, Belgium, in partnership with youth organisations, including KAJ, Minderhedenforum, Vlaamse Jeugdraad, ACV, ABVV and Victoria Deluxe. ■

**'We wanted the voice of young people to be heard in discussing jobs and Europe, so we looked for a fresh approach to engaging them.'**



## Every part counts!

### *Moving from school to work*

64

**Not everyone becomes a raftsmen**, a herbalist, a rescuer, a magician or a bodyguard. But precisely because these are professions not typically linked to classic education systems, they were at the centre of a project aimed at helping young people with fewer opportunities to make a successful transition between school and the world of work.

The participants were a group of young people, many of them on the verge of becoming drop-outs because of social and economic obstacles, learning difficulties, family violence or their refugee backgrounds. The project gave them the encouragement to look for ideas and inspiration for their future professional lives, and demonstrated to them that they can be creative in generating work for themselves. Stove-making was





A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovenia.

Project carried out by Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur Prenzlauer Berg e.V. — ASP Kolle 37, Germany; Društvo Center za pomoč mladim — podružnica Maribor, Slovenia; Asociación Ostargi Gizarte Elkarte, Spain.



presented during a two-day action where the young people invited local citizens to participate in building an outdoor fireplace, which they decorated with a mosaic relating a story of friendship, intercultural dialogue and creativity.

The young people watched professionals at work, interviewed them and tried out those jobs for themselves. Throughout the project, the participants constantly reviewed and discussed what they had done and seen, and took part in planning each day's activities. They enhanced their practical skills in, for instance, making travel and administrative arrangements, organising food supplies and taking measurements. They also improved their abilities to communicate in their own and in foreign languages through writing letters to sponsors and donors, and creating an English dictionary for easier communication among themselves. The result was that they became more employable and more confident in their own abilities, with better social and civic competencies, and greater abilities to establish good relations and manage conflicts.

The Youth Exchange project took place near Maribor, Slovenia, during a fortnight in late 2010, and involved 26 young people from Germany, Slovenia and Spain. It was organised by Youth Aid Centre, a non-governmental organisation based in Slovenia in the field of rights and the personal and social development of young people. ■

**‘Young people facing problems at school and at home gained self-confidence and boosted their chances of finding a job.’**

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## 'I don't have a job but I am working on it'

### *Training for youth workers to combat unemployment*

66

**Youth workers from across Europe** spent a week together exchanging experience and ideas about tackling youth unemployment and advising young people about opportunities under EU programmes.

As part of the project, participants conducted research into the factors governing employment. They concluded that while they could not themselves influence many broader issues, such as the economic context, they could argue for facilities to help young people develop skills and for a boost to non-formal educational possibilities, support mechanisms for unemployed young people and the fight against discrimination.

One of the central conclusions was that it is important to look at the context in understanding the characteristics of unemployment among youth in different countries. This was the key to tackling unemployment as a social phenomenon among youth and to finding ways to overcome it — such as using the Youth in Action programme as a tool. Participants







A training course organised by the Youth in Action national agency in Portugal and SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre.

also derived benefit from living and working in an international group, cooperating on common objectives, using English more freely and confidently both in work and personal contexts, and learning to learn through new methods. Further ideas on international projects have been launched.

This training course was organised by the Portuguese Youth in Action national agency and the SALTO Inclusion resource centre in Guimarães, Portugal, in mid-2009 and brought together 26 people from 16 countries: Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Most of the organisations involved work on inclusion in the field of employment. ■

**‘During the course I found out about many ways by which other countries fight unemployment among young people, and I learnt methods to help them to help themselves.’**



## Jump start

### *Giving young people a new sense of motivation*

68

**Seven unemployed young people** acquired a new understanding of looking for a job during a three-week European Voluntary Service project at a vocational school in rural Estonia. They learnt some — literally — concrete skills in laying a new floor, under the supervision of qualified educators. Coming from Italy, Latvia, Lithuania Spain, Sweden and the UK, and mixing with unemployed young people from Estonia who also became involved, they overcame language barriers and came into contact with other cultures.

On the personal level, the project also proved to them that they can have an effect on the world around them and that they have the power to make constructive changes. These were all youngsters with fewer opportunities, and half of them had related social or





A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Estonia.

Project carried out by Cubic (Cultur und Bildung im Context), Austria; Kehtna Majandus- ja Tehnoloogiakool, Estonia; Continuous Action, Estonia; Ushanga, Finland; CE.S.I.E Onlus (Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo Onlus), Italy; Adult Education Centre Cesis, Latvia; Jaunimo mainu agentura, Lithuania; AFAIJ (Asociación para la Formación y Actividades Interculturales para la Juventud), Spain; Göteborgs stad Linnéstaden/Ungdomsenheten, Sweden; Point Europa, UK.



health problems. Through living and working together, and sharing their cultures, they developed their social skills and capacities to work in a team, and widened their horizons. The project's non-formal learning approach, focusing on the individual situation and needs of each participant, helped boost their confidence and self-motivation, and made them more employable. Through this project, they developed a new desire to plan for their future and to identify objectives for themselves.

Ultimately, there was a positive impact on local communities too. When they returned home, the youngsters displayed an interest in active participation in society: some got jobs, others went back to school, and some became involved in other reintegration programmes and international youth projects. Presentations they made about their project raised awareness of Europe and of Youth in Action opportunities among local young people. The school benefited from a new floor, too. In addition, for some of the school's staff and organisers in the small Estonian village where the project took place, this was a novel teaching method and their first experience of dealing with youngsters from different parts of Europe.

This short-term European Voluntary Service project ran for one month in 2010 at Kehtna Economy and Technology School in Estonia. ■

**'We work on developing the competences of young people with employability problems, to increase their participation in society and on the labour market.'**

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## (Un)employment

*Is this an opportunity?*

70

**This project was designed for young people** currently unemployed and willing to learn in order to get a job. A group of 80 young students from the city of Kaunas and the Kaunas region in Lithuania started the project to introduce young people — particularly those suffering from health problems or other disadvantages — to the local labour market.

In a first phase, local businessmen took part in seminars, assisted in simulating job interviews and offered inputs to an analysis of the labour market. They also provided guidance on writing motivation letters and compiling CVs, showing participants how to continuously rewrite in order to improve the documents and to sharpen the young people's own critical and analytical capacities. There was also extensive role-play and simulations of business situations and negotiations. Participants met successful





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Lithuania.  
Project carried out by informal group Iniciatyvinė jauno studentø grupė, Lithuania.

businessmen and potential employers, learnt best practices, and gained a sense of how they might plan their own careers.

More than half of the participants subsequently put what they had learnt into practice. Participants were motivated by hearing successful stories from businessmen, who encouraged them to look for jobs or to start their own businesses. From the contacts established with the business sector, nine participants found a job and 47 kept in touch with the organisers asking for help on various topics. Three participants became members of the initiative group and are still working in non-profit organisations. Some participants made a movie to share their experiences and the results of the project. The people running the project developed their skills in lecturing and in project management.

The project ran for six months in 2010 and was carried out by an informal group of four students from Kaunas, Lithuania. ■

**‘ This project motivated young people who had little confidence. It gave them the confidence to approach the job market with a new sense of purpose.’**

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## Bridges to work

### *Stronger links between employment and youth*

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**Bridges to Work** was a conference that built networks among people working on youth employment and entrepreneurship, strengthening links between employment and the youth sector so as to improve young people's chances on the labour market.

It provided employers, employment services, job coaches, youth workers, project managers and policymakers with an overview of funding and support programmes. It also demonstrated employment projects for young people, showcased good employment and entrepreneurship practices, and offered feedback on how projects can be best adapted to evolving needs.

The three-day conference featured a mixture of keynote speeches, workshops, visits to local projects







A seminar organised by SALTO Inclusion (Belgium) in cooperation with SALTO Training and Cooperation (Germany), SALTO Cultural Diversity (UK), and the Youth in Action national agencies in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Croatia, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the UK.



and interactive discussions. In parallel, a youth seminar was held, involving 23 young people who were facing difficulties finding a job and who were engaged in employment or entrepreneurship projects. The young people's views were shared with the other participants as a reality check on suggestions, programmes and initiatives under discussion. They asked for recognition of their skills, for a more realistic and adjusted education system, and for real opportunities that allow them to fully enter an ever-more competitive jobs market.

The participants brainstormed on how they could have a positive impact on combating youth joblessness and promoting entrepreneurship across Europe. They designed concrete action plans to improve chances for young people on the labour market, and committed themselves to cooperation projects, exchanges of information, new campaigns, future contacts, local initiatives, mobility projects and new ways of working. Most participants reported that they had made plans for new employment or entrepreneurship projects in light of the conference.

The conference took place from 18 to 21 October 2011 in Antwerp, Belgium, and featured 150 stakeholders, including 23 young jobseekers involved in employment or entrepreneurship projects. ■

**‘We need a change of mentalities. We need to build bridges between young people and employers, but we also need to build bridges between generations.’**

**‘You have to give young people responsibilities and avoid thinking: “Oh, but they don’t know enough.”’**





## Transitions to employment for young people in rural and urban south Wales

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**A group of young people** ran a project that they devised themselves, exploring how the difficulties they encountered in moving from school to employment might play into youth policies and attitudes. They shared their experiences — good and bad — with one another, with other young people and with policymakers, in a bid to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges at local and at European levels.

They looked beyond their own experience of unemployment and examined ways of escaping from it. Some had grown up in local authority care, all had few formal qualifications or learnt skills, and came from backgrounds with limited social and economic opportunities in cities or rural areas.

The project developed a sense of ambition through a blend of meetings, workshops using artwork, imagery, music and film from across Europe, and online resources and interactive tools. Each member of the group made an individual contribution to the project: some were involved in the practical organisation and administration, others led discussions on youth unemployment and some made presentations on European culture. In addition, everyone was responsible for engaging other local young people and for making representations to policymakers, including councillors and members of the National Assembly for Wales and the European Parliament.



A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the UK.  
Project carried out by informal group Dan Butler, UK.

Participants learnt about networking skills, the idea of job creation, deciding on what to do in life and returning to education.

They also developed a workshop for youth groups, practitioners and policymakers to identify key factors in transitions from education to employment and to discuss the contribution of individual actions and attitudes as well as access to support services. Better understanding was achieved by presenting real-life experiences, rather than just theories and statistics — and from the perspective of young people, rather than through the policy context.

The project, supported by a coach, involved an informal group of six people from Cardiff, Wales (UK). It ran for four months in late 2010 and early 2011. ■

**‘Our initiative can contribute to building a Europe that values and supports its youth.’**



## Lead the way

*The sky is the only limit*

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**This seminar was created** to equip young people in Europe with skills and knowledge to improve their chances in the world of work, and particularly to encourage them to start their own companies. Serbia was chosen as the location so that participants could explore the possibilities for implementing their business plans in its less developed areas suffering from long-term unemployment.

All 30 participants — students from 15 different countries — had already received some career advice and were interested in further guidance. The seminar covered aspects of establishing a business, including writing, developing and finalising a business plan, EU funding opportunities, and leadership training. The working language was English, which they had to





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovenia. Project carried out by Student Union of University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; EESTEC LC Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; student organisation at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, Croatia; IEEE Student Branch Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Fachschaft Elektrotechnik und Informationstechnik, TU München, Germany; IEEE NTUA Student Branch, Greece; Magyar Villamosm érök- és Informatikus-hallgatók Egyesülete, Hungary; Evropsko udruženje studenata elektrotehničke Crna Gora, Montenegro; UOS AGH EECSS Club, Poland; BEST Bucuresti, Romania; Electrical Engineering Students' European Association (EESTEC), IAESTE Local Committee Belgrade, Serbia; Zdrúženje študentov elektrotehničke in računalništva, Slovenia; Društvo študentov FERi, Slovenia; Eurielec, Spain; IEEE METU Student Branch, Turkey.



master to present their business cases. The international nature of the seminar allowed participants' concepts to be assessed from different viewpoints. Discussions with business executives from Serbia and experts on EU programmes alerted the participants to new possibilities and to how the EU framework can help them overcome challenges in their field. The broader opportunities of European politics and wider challenges of sustainable development, poverty and green energy were also covered. In addition, everyone involved in the seminar learnt more about needs at the level of local communities and about how to help those with fewer opportunities.

The project ran for 10 days in March 2011. It was carried out by the Slovenian branch of a European association of electrical engineering students that promotes international contacts. It was hosted by the IAESTE Local Committee Belgrade, the Serbian member. Other countries involved were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Spain and Turkey. ■

**'This allowed me to approach the business world while enjoying the cultural mix of people from all over Europe — and building new relationships throughout the continent.'**



## Youth in Action

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**Youth in Action is the European Union programme** for all young people aged 15 to 28 (or in some cases 13 to 30). It enables more than 150 000 young people and youth workers every year to exercise non-formal learning mobility across the EU and in 140 countries beyond by getting involved in educational activities outside schools. With a budget of EUR 885 million for the period 2007–13, the programme helps young people to develop skills and fosters their active participation in society. It promotes in particular the inclusion of young people facing obstacles in their lives.

To achieve its objectives, the programme funds a wide variety of activities through five actions. The activities include exchanges, initiatives, democracy projects and a voluntary service. It also supports youth workers and youth organisations through training and networking, and promotes European cooperation in the youth field.

## Programme Actions

### ■ **ACTION 1: Youth for Europe**

Encourages young people's active citizenship, participation and entrepreneurship by supporting exchanges, initiatives and democracy projects.

### ■ **ACTION 2: European Voluntary Service**

Fosters young people's sense of solidarity and tolerance by voluntary activities abroad carried out for the benefit of local communities.

### ■ **ACTION 3: Youth in the World**

Promotes mutual understanding through exchanges and partnerships among young people and youth organisations across the world.

### ■ **ACTION 4: Youth Support Systems**

Helps youth workers and youth organisations improve the quality of their work.

### ■ **ACTION 5: European cooperation in the youth field**

Supports youth policy cooperation at European level, and facilitates dialogue between young people and policymakers.

**Youth in Action:** [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)



### **Youth in Action 2007—10**

more than  
**527 000**  
participants:  
**390 000**  
young people and  
**137 000**  
youth workers;

**30 100**  
projects  
were selected to  
receive grants out of  
**61 000**  
applications submitted;

**20 000**  
project promoters a  
year: non-governmental  
organisations, informal  
groups of young people,  
municipalities.



Youth in Action: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)



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