



Education and Culture DG

'Youth in Action' Programme



Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?



About the Youth in Action programme

Youth in Action is a programme the European Union has set up for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the employability and inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural backgrounds: Youth in Action is a programme for everyone!

The Youth in Action Programme aims to achieve the following general objectives:

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

The Programme is structured around 5 Actions:

- Action 1 - Youth for Europe: encourages young people's active citizenship, participation and creativity through youth exchanges, youth initiatives and youth democracy projects.
- Action 2 - European Voluntary Service: helps young people to develop their sense of solidarity by participating, either individually or in group, in non-profit, unpaid voluntary activities abroad.
- Action 3 - Youth in the World: promotes partnerships and exchanges among young people and youth organisations across the world.
- Action 4 - Youth Support Systems: includes various measures to support youth workers and youth organisations and improve the quality of their activities.
- Action 5 - Support for European Co-operation in the Youth Field: supports youth policy co-operation at the European level, in particular by facilitating dialogue between young people and policy makers.

The permanent priorities of the Youth in Action programme are:

- European citizenship
- Participation of young people
- Cultural diversity
- Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

More information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/youth/>



Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?



Title: Youth Work: "Enhancing Youth Employability?"
Published by: Institute MOVIT, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Director of publication: Janez Škulj
Text written by: Tadej Beočanin, Vesna Milošević, Janez Škulj
Stories and project descriptions: submitted by the participants of the seminar
Editor: Tadej Beočanin
Copy Editor: Prevajalske storitve Contineo, Marko Ipavec s.p.
Photos: Archive MOVIT, Shutterstock Images
Design and layout: Lea Gorenšek
Printing: Birografika Bori, 2011

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

331.5-053.6(082)

BEOČANIN, Tadej

Youth work : enhancing youth employability? / [text written by
Tadej Beočanin, Vesna Milošević, Janez Škulj]. - Ljubljana :
Institute Movit, 2011

ISBN 978-961-6826-09-9

1. Gl. stv. nasl. 2. Milošević, Vesna 3. Škulj, Janez
256657152



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

This booklet is based on the results of the seminar entitled “Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?”, which took place in April 2011 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The seminar was organised by the EU Youth in Action programme with the National Agencies of Slovenia (Zavod Movit), Portugal (Agência Nacional para a Gestão do Programa Juventude em Acção), Italy (Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani), Estonia (Archimedes Foundation), Finland (Kansainvälisen liikkuvuuden ja yhteistyön keskus CIMO), Poland (Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji) and Sweden (Ungdomsstyrelsen – National Board for Youth Affairs) and in close cooperation with Salto Inclusion Resource Centre.

The aim of this international seminar was to review the role of youth work and competences acquisition to enhance the employability of young people, with an emphasis on non-formal learning in learning mobility programmes.

The seminar started with the situation regarding youth (un)employment, determining the reasons for the present unpleasant situation. Knowing the reasons, participants approached possible solutions towards higher youth employment, looking for ways to develop competences for higher employability through youth work. In the main part of the seminar, participants occupied themselves with the role of youth work and other policy measures in young people’s competences acquisition and development, focusing on learning outcomes that enhance the employability of young people.

Because it was open for youth workers, youth researchers, decision makers and experts, all working in the field of youth employment, it provided a diverse group of participants. This group proved to be highly motivated to actively participate throughout the seminar. A month after the seminar, almost all participants together applied a new project to Youth in Action programme, dealing with the same subject. I could not imagine a better follow up.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank all of the participants for their contributions with stories and good practice examples. I want to thank the trainers Andreia Henriques (PT), Ansgar Büter-Menke (GE) and Matej Cepin (SI) for their professionalism and to my colleagues at Institute Movit for their great support. Finally, I want to thank the co-organisers for their input in preparing, implementing and financing the seminar.

Special thanks also to Mr Igor Lukšič, Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, for his opening speech.

This booklet aims to disseminate the results of the seminar. On the following pages, readers can find some expert articles, opinions, discussion results, stories of success and more, all connected with youth work and its impact on youth employability.

Enjoy reading!

Tadej Beočanin, Editor
Institute MOVIT
Slovenian Youth in Action National Agency

The Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia opened the seminar with a keynote speech, in which he valued the contribution of youth work for youth employability and democratic societies.



Photo: Titi Košir

Dear Reader,

Democratic societies are based on responsible citizens. Youth organisations, as the basic platform for youth work and (at the same time) the basic learning environment for democracy, build upon young individuals as active and responsible citizens, who will keep such attitudes for the rest of their lives.

For a country to develop, it must recognise the interest both in the upbringing of responsible citizens, and in the highest possible fostering of autonomy, i.e. in acquiring competences for independent life. Youth organisations train and enable young people to influence society, to help them on their path to economic and social independence and consequently to have a key influence on the development of the country.

Membership in youth organisations leads to active and responsible citizenship and improves young people's quality of life, both during and after their membership, because it ensures the acquisition of knowledge, skills, important values and responsibility for society, and thus contributes to their successful development in all areas of life.

Youth organisations are often the most overlooked part of civil society; many do not think they need special measures. However, such reasoning does not hold, if we consider the importance of activities undertaken by young individuals in the framework of youth organisations. If we strive for a healthy, harmonious and interconnected society, giving a perspective for the future and enabling a happy and productive life, young people need to be properly provided for.

On 27th April 2009, the European Commission adopted a new EU strategy for youth policy for the coming decade. Entitled "Youth – Investing and Empowering", the new strategy acknowledges the fact that young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially in the current economic and financial crisis, and that young people are a precious resource in our ageing society. The strategy emphasises the important role of youth work in dealing with unemployment, school failure and social exclusion, as well as improving skills and providing leisure time.

Non-formal education and informal learning are among the key characteristics of youth work. Youth organisations offer an environment conducive to learning, mainly due to their methods and learning environment, which do not put young people merely in the role of students, but often allow them to co-develop the learning process, and to serve as resources of knowledge for their peers, with whom they learn, upgrade and uncover new knowledge together. In this way, young people develop a positive attitude towards learning and take responsibility for their own learning process and acquired knowledge. This positive approach to learning allows them to realise that knowledge can be gained in different learning situations, in different ways, that different forms of (formal, non-formal and informal) learning are complementary and interlinked. In this way, young people learn to develop their transferable competences through their whole life, not only in youth.

Igor Lukšič, Ph.D.
Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia

About the seminar

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Youth work is out-of-school education managed by professional or voluntary youth workers within youth organisations, town halls, youth centres, churches etc., which contributes to the development of young people. Together with families and with other professionals, youth work can help to deal with unemployment, school failure and social exclusion, as well as to provide leisure time. It can also increase skills and support the transition from youth to adulthood. One of the main aspects of this transition is getting a job and an open question remains: “How can youth work enhance youth employment?” European institutions and organizations responsible for youth policy have on several occasions emphasized the importance of youth work to foster young people’s employability.

The seminar “Youth Work: Enhancing Youth employability?” aimed to review the role of youth work and competences acquisition to enhance the employability of young people. It took place from the 28th to 29th April 2011 in the City Hotel in Ljubljana, Slovenia. There were 21 participants, representing 10 different countries and three different profiles: the seminar gathered youth workers, youth researchers and decision makers – all experts working in the field of youth. Participants had the opportunity to:

- respond to the challenges that have been brought by new EU youth strategy to youth work in the context of learning;
- identify and present examples of good practice (actions on policies and Youth in Action projects that enhance the employability of young people);
- identify the position and the role of non-formal learning in the frame of key competences for better transition to the labour market;
- understand better the needs of other stakeholders and understand what and how they can contribute to the employability (getting a job) of young people.



According to the goals, the two-day programme covered a variety of topics, such as identifying obstacles to become employed in the EU in 2011, youth work (and its solutions for youth unemployment), sharing best practices and successful stories, the contribution of youth work for youth employability, other policy measures to achieve higher employment, etc. The following questions were also discussed:

- How can youth work help to tackle the issue of unemployment among young people?
- If youth work should help to resolve unemployment among young people, does that mean it is being recognized? Is professionalization of youth work needed in order for it to perform this task?
- How can youth work be further supported in order to deliver results?
- How can non-formal learning within youth work be further increased?
- What is the added value of international youth work in terms of increasing employability of young people?
- How is learning mobility increasing working mobility?

We received a good feedback from the participants. The following are a selection of comments by the participants:

"Thanks for the methods; they kept us actively participating in the seminar."

"Thank you all, it was great!"

"Youth work needs a complex approach, but the solutions can be simple."

"I'm very grateful, to be a part of it."

"There is a need to organize more of these kind of activities (concerning entrepreneurship and employability), because the youth sector is not prepared yet."

"It was really good and helpful."

"It was always useful to stop and discuss even the most basic points of one's work."

"I got a lot of useful information I can use for future work."

Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?



Youth Unemployment in the EU



Author: Vesna Milošević

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I. UNEMPLOYMENT

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

Unemployment is one of the key issues in most European countries these days. While it had already been much discussed before the economic and financial crisis, the crisis itself definitely put it on the top priority list of relevant themes. In addition to unemployment in general, particular attention has fallen on youth unemployment. Youth are a vulnerable group on the labour market and they were struck hardest by the crisis, a fact put forward by the European Commission in the New EU Strategy for Youth (2009). Youth represent a quarter of the world's workforce, but on the other hand they also represent half of the unemployed population all over the world (Križman in Vertot 2009, 1). Therefore, a special focus should be placed on overcoming the difficulties youth face when entering the labour market and the issues they encounter when trying to remain there.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS

Sara Elder, an economist from the International Labour Organization (ILO), reports that "in 2009, the youth unemployment rate in the developed economies was 17.7%, the highest this region has ever seen" (ILO 2010a). Still, youth unemployment rates in the European Union rose to a staggering 21% in 2010 and the numbers reached 5.5 million by January 2010 (European Commission 2010). In April of the same year, the unemployment rate among youth under 25 years of age in the EU-27[■] was 21.1%. The number then gradually declined to 20.3% by April 2011 (European Commission 2011). For comparison, the average EU unemployment rate in April 2011 was 9.9% (European Commission 2011). It should be noted that youth unemployment in the EU is generally 2-3 times higher than adult unemployment (Ignjatović and Trbanc 2009, 46).

■ EU-27 means the European Union with its 27 member states.



THE IMPACT OF CRISIS

Increases in youth unemployment rates were much higher than increases in adult unemployment rates, since youth unemployment conditions are a lot more sensitive to economic fluctuations (ILO 2010a). In addition, the youth labour market requires more time to recover from the crisis (ILO 2010a). Youth represent the so called “last-in, first-out” segment of the population (Ashby Cohen 2011), which means they are the first ones to be dismissed when the situation in the economy worsens and the last ones to be hired when companies once again need a workforce.

The generation that enters the labour market during a time of crisis and cannot find proper employment, subsequently becoming discouraged and desperate, has been dubbed the “lost generation” by the media and some other organizations (Adapted from ILO 2010a and Inman 2011).

CONSEQUENCES OF (LONG-TERM) UNEMPLOYMENT

The effects of long-term unemployment on youth can be severe and devastating. This holds especially true for underprivileged groups which are even more vulnerable, such as uneducated youth, ethnical minorities, migrants, people from different racial backgrounds, etc (ILO 2010c). The young are only starting their independent life and usually don't have enough financial capital or sufficient savings to survive on their own without regular earnings. Furthermore, they often lack the social capital that could help them seek out a new job within a short period of time. Their self esteem can suffer and the consequences can be seen for life. Because of long-term unemployment, or due to precarious working conditions once they do manage to find employment (short-term, poorly paid jobs with no security), many young people also delay their departure from the parental home, the setting up of their own family and the decision to have children (Eurostat 2009, 111).

II. PROBLEMS YOUTH FACE ON THE LABOUR MARKET

TRANSITION FROM EDUCATION TO THE LABOUR MARKET

Transition from education to the labour market is a very important phase in the life of every young person. It represents the transition from childhood to adulthood, the personal development from economic and social dependence (on parents) to independence, and it is therefore of critical importance for the autonomy of the young individual (Vertot 2009, 10). Most young people face difficulties during this phase and are especially exposed to the risks of social exclusion and poverty (European Youth Forum).

OBSTACLES

When entering the labour market, youth face similar obstacles in most European countries. (1) Information about the labour market is often insufficient and young people don't receive enough guidance and support during this very important stage of life. (2) Internships are not paid well enough and sometimes don't even involve a learning experience. In many countries, internships act as a replacement for youth jobs. (3) There is a lack of financial support and mentoring schemes to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth. (4) Furthermore, non-formal learning and the competences gained through extracurricular activities and youth-work are not recognized. This makes it more difficult for youth to present their achievements when entering the labour market as they usually have next to no formal work experience to show. (5) Discrimination in the hiring of young people, especially young women, and discrimination in working conditions for young people is still present. (6) In addition, the role of youth work is very often not recognized by the authorities and (7) youth are excluded from the social dialogue (Adapted from: Belgian Presidency 2010; Spanish Presidency 2010; Hungarian Presidency 2011).

UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

For many young people the problem is not just unemployment but also underemployment. They find it difficult to get a decent job and satisfactory working conditions. Many young people cannot find an employment position that matches their education level and field of study. A great number of youth work in unstable and unbearable working conditions; they do unacceptably long working hours, they work in shifts, during the weekends etc. (ILO 2011).

Statistics show that increasing numbers of youth are working in non-standard employment, which has little to no job security, no social security, no health protection and safety at work, no trade union representation and is accompanied by low or even uncertain wages (European Metalworkers' Federation). Such employment is referred to as precarious employment and is, unfortunately, becoming an everyday reality for many young people all over the world.



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■ "According to European studies, 50% of 15-24 year olds and 25% of 25-29 year olds are locked in precarious employment situations" (Spanish Presidency 2010, 7).

YOUNG EMPLOYEES IN TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT

A certain type of segmentation exists on the labour market where young workers are more often caught in temporary employment and are over-represented among short-term workers, whereas older workers receive secure, long-term contracts (Ignjatović and Trbanc 2009, 42). The share of temporary contracts decreases with age (Eurostat 2009, 118).

Figure 5.9: Young employees in temporary work, by age group, 2007 (%)

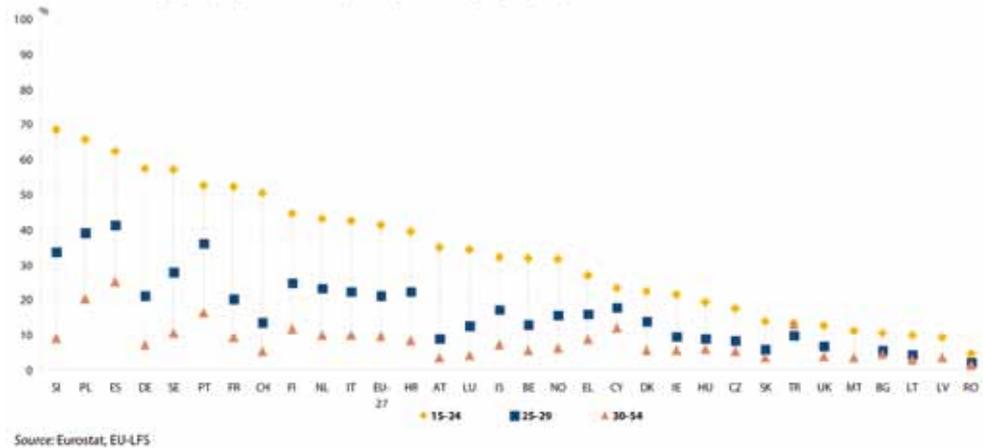


Figure source: (Eurostat 2009, 118).

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The general employment situation definitely requires changes in order to be more youth-friendly. Career-oriented training and guidance should be provided for all youth, non-formal learning outcomes must be recognized and likewise the role of youth work. Transition from education to the labour market should be smoothed by decent internships and young people should have access to long-term jobs with fair pay and secure working conditions (Hungarian Presidency 2011).

III. INFLUENCE OF YOUTH WORK ON RAISING OF YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

Through youth work and in youth organizations, young people gain valuable non-formal education and become active citizens. This integrates them into society (with major effects especially on vulnerable groups), and helps them perform better in everyday life.

Youth work gives added value to young people and equips them with competences that help them in their career life; either when searching for employment or in performing better at work later on. Besides raising their employability, it allows young people to become more confident about their achieved work and voice their competences easier.

Competences gained through youth work differ from one individual to another, but quite often they include most key competences; (1) communication in the mother tongue and very often also (2) communication in foreign languages, (3) acquisition of social and civic competences, (4) cultural awareness and expression, (5) learning to learn, (6) acquiring a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and last but not least (7) mathematical and (8) digital competences. Key competences are those “which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment” (European Commission 2007).





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Employability is the Hit of the Day Even in the Field of Youth Work



Author: Janez Škulj

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Youth policies always try to address what is considered as the main challenge for the integration of each new generation into society. Today, though, classic challenges such as participation, active citizenship and similar ones seem to have been pushed back somewhat. No one is saying that providing opportunities for learning about participation or the encouragement of active, responsible citizenship is redundant. We all know these concepts are still highly relevant and may be needed even more in the future. Why, then, does this traditional area of youth work seem to have faded into the background while increases in employability and entrepreneurship as the current popular goals and objectives are moving fast forward in public policies?

The idea that youth work should be a factor that clearly contributes to the better employability of young people and has a direct effect on all participating young people in terms of “making their own living” is not something that is accepted with great enthusiasm at the level of many youth NGO or youth services. In this regard, there are a quite a few question marks, even fears. Certainly, such a development can transform and even substantially change the landscape of youth work in Europe.

But the landscape of life in Europe is changing anyway. Yes, it would be nice if we could preserve the status quo, if – in other worlds – we could continue with the future of our parents. For a long time, one could say that in general, the life of every new generation was better than that of the previous one. Better in terms of the quality of life, material wealth and also personal and collective (social) security. Today, though, it is becoming apparent that many opportunities that were taken for granted during the 70s, 80s and 90s will be more difficult to reach, and their accessibility will be considerably lower.

If academic discussions in the 70s actually debated the challenges of overabundant free time, since it had seemed that less and less work was needed to ensure a decent living, no one today could even imagine such notions. Instead, the current discussion deals with the challenges of securing a decent living, of actually finding work paid well enough to provide for the basic needs of existence. The impact of economic hardship goes far beyond merely affecting the purchasing power of people and societies.



With a 40% unemployment rate among young people in some European countries, the pattern of integration of this generation into “adulthood” will be much more challenging. For each individual as well as society as a whole. And the consequences of such an extended volume of “prolonged youth” will have resounding impacts. This is not just a question of lifestyle or culture, it reaches deep into the foundations of all the existing economic and social solutions known as the welfare state in Europe.

Therefore, the question of providing for oneself is now very much in the focus of any thinking about the future. Given the prospect that our income will be much more burdened by expenses for food and energy, with reduced access to all the “goodies” enjoyed by the previous generations, the future is more than just a challenge to our present understanding of what life “should offer us”. As my father often told me, life owes me nothing – it will only give me what I am able to take.

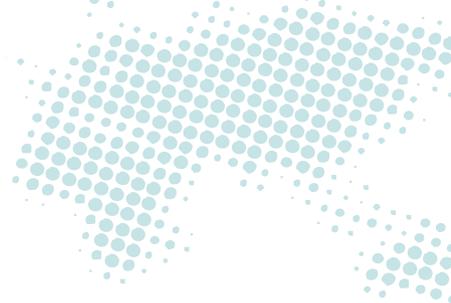
Without prosperity for all, is there a future for Europe the way we knew it yesterday and still do today? With potential decline, are we safe against extreme radicalism? We should not forget that the wish to organize a better society was an important impetus for all three totalitarian regimes in Europe during the 20th century. The consequences of major changes in European societies around the time of World War One, economic hardships, growing social injustice, these have all contributed to the rise of solutions for one group, one class, one nation... And soon enough these solutions could only survive by excluding other groups, other classes, other nations. This is the reason I am sceptical about many ideas going around today calling for different, better societies.

Where is youth work in the big picture? Why should youth work be charged with the same tasks many other systems in society were already responsible for? As I heard so often during the past year, though, the decision-makers are determined. What isn't proven to contribute to “growth”, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – the big title of the Europe 2020 Strategy – is now going out the window.

In a way, the question is simple: Will youth work as part of the public policies' focus go along and accept its additional major role, or will it be left out, becoming like a rare animal that is nice to keep around when we can afford one but is no great loss when we can't.

On the other side, if youth work becomes just another complementary area to other educational institutional paths, sharing the same aims and objectives, how will that affect young people who desire to be a part of it? Ultimately, we might end up with youth work but no young people to work with.

I never had doubts that the work of a group of young people making small and big decisions together, learning to respect and to take into account the needs and abilities of other members of “society”, is the best way to learn about democratic participation. Something that school cannot provide. But can youth work compete with schools in terms of getting there – to the first day of lasting employment? And if not, what then? Is it just an additional safety net for returning dropouts back into the system?



I always believed that bringing together young people from different walks of life so they can do things together is an element of the promotion of social cohesion, call it “inclusion work” if you will. And I am certain of the benefits that involvement in youth work has on self confidence, social and other skills, on taking initiative and on stronger self-responsibility. I can also see that all these potential achievements can significantly contribute to one’s ability to find a job or to create a job. Being involved in international youth work can be described as enrolment in university studies within the educational paths provided by youth work. If anything, the inherent links to future employment possibilities are even stronger.

But even with all its positive contributions, involvement in youth work can only be one aspect of young people’s efforts to increase their employability. The main path still lies with the formal educational system. In this context, informal learning certainly cannot replace it.

This is what worries me. In the context of participation, youth work was previously seen as an independent field. Now, youth work focusing on employability, strongly supported within public policies on all levels, might change our understanding of the field into something that merely complements other systems. This can change many things. There is no doubt that youth work in the past, East or West of the Berlin wall, was always instrumentalized within the social and political context. This time, though, attempts to instrumentalize it so tightly to one important (but not the sole important) aspect of the current need to integrate young people into society might also kill youth work as we know it.

Nevertheless, there are a few things I consider highly positive despite all the question marks, and they are worth thinking about.

Players in the field of youth work – youth organizations and youth services – will have ample opportunity to reflect on the issue of their role in the bigger picture and the possibility of repositioning themselves within new realities. As long as the young are around, youth work will always exist in one form or another no matter whether outside or inside of public policies. Perhaps, we will once again have youth leaders following ideas and not so many youth projects managers.

Those operating in the field of youth work will have an opportunity to increase their learning potential and formulate themselves as an environment for learning. In many circumstances, the results of youth work are misinterpreted and its potential neglected. It is time to forget about the old excuse that the “world does not understand us”. The “world” will not learn our language. In the upcoming debates, we have to speak to the “world” on its own terms. The debates on the future of the EU programme in the field of youth that are going around just now are crucial. The architecture they set up, including the question of a programme merged with the remaining educational programmes or independent youth and non-formal learning programmes, will determine a lot for the future at the European level.

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The opinions expressed in this article belong to the author and might not reflect the position or views of the National agency or any other institutions involved in the implementation of the YiA programme.



Outcomes of the “Youth Work: Enhancing Youth Employability?” seminar

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Report Article

Author: Tadej Beočanin

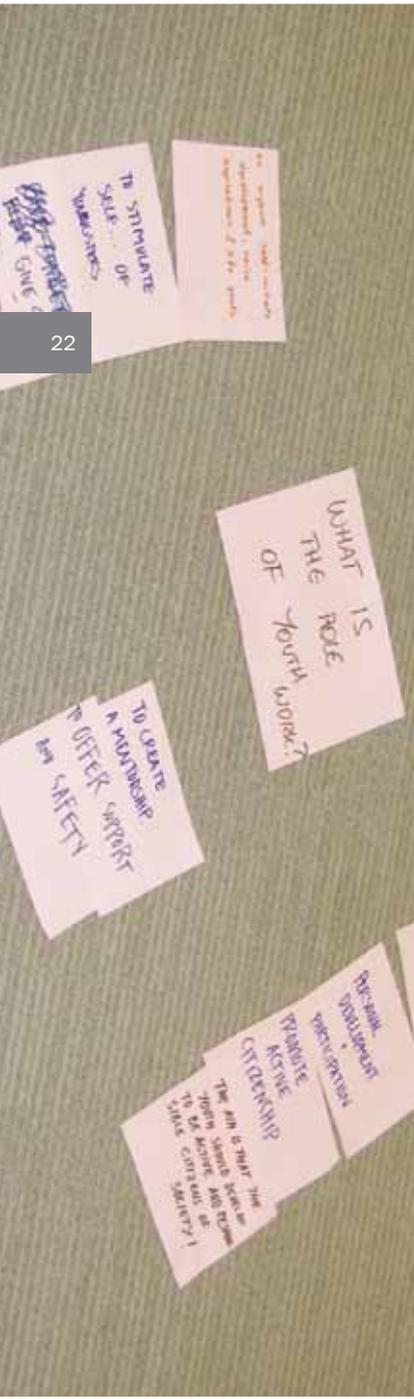
This article is summary of all outcomes of the seminar. Its main idea is to provide the final conclusions agreed by the group of participants who attended the seminar. It is done in a way that any reader can simply carry onward from these results. All information in the article is based on the trainers' report.

Obstacles for youth employment

Participants divided obstacles for youth employment in Europe into nine areas. Some have been identified as more serious than others; however, young people are faced with all of them:

Obstacles area	Obstacles young people face
Qualification and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having skills labour market doesn't need• Having skills everybody has• Having unrecognized skills (non- or informally learned)• Not getting back into school (for school dropouts)• Being over-qualified
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High costs and expenditures• Travelling long distances to work• Living in a rural area decreases mobility options• Having a situation that does not allow young people to leave home (“I have a dog at home”)
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not knowing how or where to find information on employment issues• No access to internet (rural areas)• Not looking for information (ignorance, no motivation)• Undiagnosed learning disabilities (hard to study, get information and understand it)• Information overload (lack of selecting competences)• Not enough information• Not knowing that exposing too much private information could be an obstacle in the future (embarrassing pictures in social media, etc.)• Information unsuitable for young people (not in their style or language)

Obstacles area	Obstacles young people face
Work experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student work doesn't count as work experience • Not enough recognition of voluntary work as work experience • Aversion to lower-paid jobs • Waiting for the perfect job • Overly high expectations regarding: salaries, when lacking experience • To get work you need experience, to get experience you need to work (vicious circle)
Economic Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic crisis • Exploitation of young people in jobs • With economic growth, education is devalued • The price of the current crisis is being paid by young people • High instability in working situations • Financial situation of young people • Regulations on social security (payments to retirement funds)
Trust in young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many stereotypes about young people • Discrimination against young women, because they are expected to have a family and children • Young men are not regarded as stable if they don't have family obligations • For employers, young employees are irresponsible and show lack of experience • Lack of openness, team work skills, social skills, simple communication skills, motivation
Soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of self-confidence • Different cultural backgrounds & barriers (habits, language, etc.) • Lack of support from parents • The centre of young peoples' lives is often not solidarity and participation
Having a life target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being overly ambitious • Young people are not willing to work for their life goal; they want it immediately • Young people often don't think further than a week or month ahead • Lack of patience • Having a life target, but not knowing how to reach it • Family or peer pressure • No role model, example, support • Employment only through connections – lack of meritocracy
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics • Immigration • Too much focusing on problems, instead of possibilities • Unexpected crisis, changes in circumstances • Individualism



Having the obstacles, participants approached the possibilities that youth work has to overcome.

Youth work and its role

For the purpose of this seminar, participants used the definition of youth work as stated in the EU Strategy for Youth (see the section “About the Seminar”).

For even better understanding of youth work, participants approached the field of youth work from the other side, determining what youth work was not. It was difficult to answer; they managed to share some ideas: (a) work which is not related to youth; (b) formal education; (c) work done by teachers; (d) social work in some countries (the last differs among the cooperating countries).

As to key activities and values promoted in the framework of youth work, participants mentioned personal development (a chance to develop oneself); structure, perspective and reflection; support to young people; being familiar with young people’s needs; street work; promoting employment opportunities; voluntary work; strength in participation (being involved).

The main collected roles of youth work are the following:

- to create mentorship;
- to offer support and safety;
- to contribute for young people to find themselves;
- to give space and opportunities to gain competences;
- to stimulate self-awareness in young people;
- to promote personal development and participation;
- to develop young people in such a way as to be active and responsible citizens of society (active citizenship);
- to support self initiative development, raise aspirations and life goals;
- to empower young people to enable to become responsible individuals and easily enter the labour market;
- to engage young people in personal and social development programs and activities.

Youth work – an answer to some employment obstacles

Having the previous paragraph in mind, there are many roles of youth work that can help deal with youth unemployment. To be as persuasive as possible, youth work should answer the employment obstacles identified in the beginning of this article. A world café was a method to find concrete solutions youth work can offer to the identified obstacles:

Obstacle area	Keyword	Solutions youth work can offer
Economic situation	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth work opens one’s eyes for opportunities • Youth work could influence the economic situation in the next decade
	Young people are paying for current crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth work gives competences to young people others do not have; so they are more qualified
Trust into young people	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of young people's rights (equality of young women, etc.) • More work practices, work camps to give young people experience and to raise trust of employers • Connecting young people and employers (job markets) • Promoting entrepreneurship of young people • Introducing principles for gaining employers trust
	Discrimination against young women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of young people's rights
	Prejudices: being young equals not being responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation between youth work and possible employers (work camps, trainings, etc.) • Offering good experiences
Mobility	Living in a rural area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating youth information projects in these areas
Work experience	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of experience • Showing young people can they can do • Increasing marketing skills • Youth workers can lobby policymakers on these problems
	Vicious circle (No work / no experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing practical working courses when no other possibilities are around • Letters of recommendations from youth workers etc. to possible employers • Gaining experience through different mobility programs
	Adversity in some jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering trials for young people to check out the job for some days • Motivating (convincing young people to take a job and get the experience rather than no experience at all) • Working with the individuals to find out the reasons why he/she doesn’t want to do the work
	Lack of recognition of voluntary work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training young people how to market their skills/volunteer work • Doing projects that are visible for the community • Having a campaign about youth work –increasing its visibility (especially in profit sector)

Qualification and education	Offer (not equal) demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give information to young people about offers from labour market • To match offers with the characteristics / skills of young persons
	School dropouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention in order to understand the phenomenon and to offer solutions • Cooperation between schools and NGOs • To use non-formal tools in formal education and recovering this competences gained
	Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better recognition and recording of competences and skills • Improving recognition tools (Youthpass etc.) • Projects for gaining skills
Soft skills	Lack of soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities, projects etc. that promote the lack of soft skills problem • Giving soft skills through projects and activities
	Importance of family and role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth workers are good role models and leaders
	Lack of motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help young people to find what makes them “sing inside themselves” • Mentor projects (with support people) • Make, keep young people active
Life target	Young people are too ambitious, which causes pressure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To confront young people with reality • To work with young people so they will be able to make choices by themselves, stand up for themselves and take responsibility for their actions
	Young people don't know how to accomplish their goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth worker can make some planning with young people (introducing steps etc.)
	No orientation, role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing personal stories and paths • Talking about young peoples' issues • Organizing work related events and fairs • Helping young people to get work experiences: trying out different things at actual workplaces
Information	Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have the means if they want to – youth work increases motivation!
	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth worker provides information where young people are (good access) • Making information more understandable • Youth worker should be better informed about possibilities in employment sector • Youth worker could create better partnerships with job centres... organizing meetings and projects together

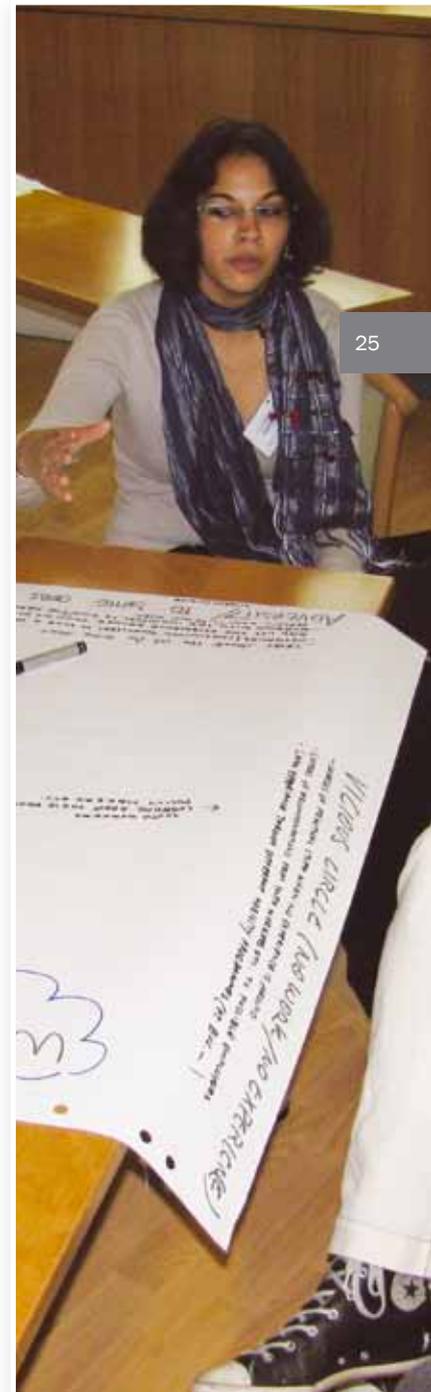
As you can see, almost none of the stated solutions youth work can aid in facing the employment obstacles deals with getting competences in youth work projects and activities. The higher competences of young people involved in youth work are taken for granted (see article “Youth Unemployment in the EU”), so the group of participants focused on some concrete other measures youth work can offer for higher employment of young people.

Recognition of youth work and its impacts to higher employment of young people

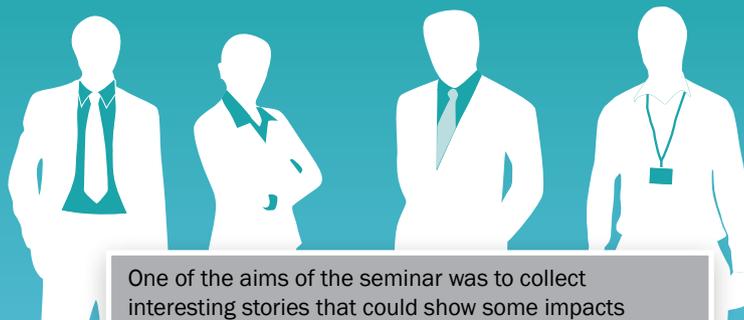
If youth work is to be more recognised for its value in youth employment in the future, it will need clear presentations of its results. However, these results will not be clear, if different actors (meaning governmental and nongovernmental organizations working in the field of youth education) do not build bridges between them – not only between them, also between different sectors (cross-sectoral communication), between policy makers, institutions, NGOs, universities and so on.

This recognition might also have negative effects. Youth work will have to become more professionalized, which will increase its costs and make it more bureaucratic. However, if recognized, youth work will be more supported by governments and other people, which can decrease these negative side effects. Still, there are many positive effects as well: more cooperation and debate with civil society will be established; young people will have a greater chance to influence society (participation) and will feel more secure.

One of the challenges for youth work is how to measure its impacts – participants agreed that quite a few effects of youth work cannot be measured (such as feelings, changes in social development, etc.). See changes in people (as a group) going through youth work would help, but that cannot be easily done. Each of them has its own story and that is why one of the ways of showing the impacts of youth work is to present their stories. That is what participants did in the seminar – some of the stories are in the next chapter.



Stories of success



One of the aims of the seminar was to collect interesting stories that could show some impacts of youth work. We have selected some of them for publishing in this booklet. We hope that they will inspire further stories of success and give some recognition to youth work and its impacts for higher employment levels of young people.

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*Author: Tiia Rantanen,
Youth Department of
Helsinki*

Alex's story

Alex is a 21-year-old young man, who hasn't had any kind of work experience since finishing his basic compulsory education at the age of 19. Normally, it is finished by the time one turns 16, but due to a long-term illness Alex had to be individually tutored in hospital instead of attending normal school. In hospital, his grades went up because of the individual teaching and support.

Things at home were never quite okay and Alex wasn't happy. The financial situation at home was never anything to be proud of and instead of motivating Alex, the situation made him more desperate.

Not really interested in studying, he quit high school before finishing his second year and began spending time with his friends and partying. Eventually, he realized he had had enough and had to start doing something with his life. Alex went to the employment agency, but soon realized that it is very difficult for him to find a job, since he was already 21-years old and had no experience whatsoever. He expressed his interest in doing youth work – since he had received a lot of support from youth workers when he was younger.

The employment agency gave Alex a telephone number and he came to me to see if he could get some training in youth work. We found an interesting placement for a month – only a month to see if he was up for it and if everything would go alright. Everybody was so happy with his work that they wanted him to stay for the rest of the year. He also applied for school and wants to study to become a youth worker. He is motivated, reliable and a hard worker. With support and guidance, he will get into school and become a great youth worker.

Delfina's story

*Author: Iris Wessels,
Welzijngroep Sedna*

Delfina is 23-years-old and the single mother of her son Luna, aged three years.

When Delfina was growing up, her father left her mother and she became depressed, which had an impact on Delfina and her little sister. Delfina became a tough young woman who thought she didn't need anyone. She moved to another country to be on her own, and make her dreams come true.

She found a job, a house, met a nice guy, felt in love and got pregnant.

However, as soon as she told her boyfriend she was pregnant, the problems began. The problems became worse and her boyfriend left her, and didn't come back. It was just Delfina, all on her own with her new-born son. She had no friends, because she had always been with her (ex)boyfriend and didn't care about anybody else.

Delfina became a stay-at-home mom, because she couldn't afford childcare; there were no parents or friends who could help take care of the baby. Delfina was always at home, day in, day out, and became increasingly depressed. The bills kept coming in, but there was no money to pay them. She had to leave her house and move into a not-so-nice neighbourhood, with her son.

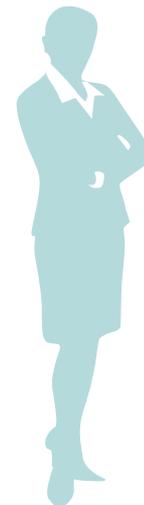
Delfina felt as if she was no more than a bad mother. She felt she was just a mother and no longer a young girl who liked to hang out with friends or live her dreams.

Delfina couldn't support herself anymore and got welfare. In Emmen, we want to help people become self-supporting, so we try to help young people to get a job, or to go back to school, so they can get a degree. In Delfina's case, this was not an option, since she felt was depressed and had a young son. That's where I came in. I talked with her and got to know her. I talked with her about her life, her dreams and her life goals. She told me she didn't have any anymore; she told me she was just a mother and no longer a young woman.

As her coach, I confronted her with herself and the way she looked at herself. We did some exercises about who she is, how she sees herself and how she wants to see herself. After a few weeks, Delfina changed. She was more and more open and learned to see herself as a young woman again. We developed some life goals and Delfina could dream again. Her mood changed, she didn't feel depressed anymore and wanted to work on her future: the future of Delfina, the mother, but also the future of Delfina, the young woman.

Together we arranged her finances; I taught her how to arrange the practical aspects of her life; she got child support and Delfina started attending a young mothers group and made some friends already. Two weeks ago, she also started with a cooking class and in September this year she is going back to school.

Delfina isn't there yet, but she has made a lot of progress. She now knows how to combine motherhood with taking care of herself and enjoying life.



*Author: Sanja Obaha
Brodnjak,
Društvo Salezijanski
mladinski center*

Goran's story

Goran is young volunteer in our Don Bosco Youth Center, in Maribor. He is tutoring mathematics to 12-year-old girl, in foster care. When he took this assignment, he already had a job, but he hadn't received a pay check in over four months. Even though he didn't have plenty of money himself and he had to drive from suburbs to give his lessons, he gladly offered help to this girl in need. His love moved me, and I couldn't stop telling this story to other people. Fortunately, the right person listened and offered Goran a good job in a good firm for very nice salary, because he wanted to have a person with these values on his team. Goran is starting his new job in May.

Maria's story

*Author: Tiina Pancy,
EEE-YFU*

Maria is a young woman from Finland. Before her exchange year, she was an average student with average grades, and she didn't want to participate in any extra curricular activities. When she was 17, she went to the USA as an exchange student and spent a year there in a host family, attending the local high school and adjusting to the American way of life. Sometimes, she just wanted to give up and go back home to Finland, because it was not always easy; in the end she made it.

After returning to Finland her family, friends and teachers noticed a positive change in her: she had gained great trust in herself and her abilities, and a wider understanding of the world and people. Maria was an active member of her school's student council and started to lead a club for kids. She also started volunteering for YFU, her exchange organization. After graduating from high school, she entered a university. While there, she was an active volunteer for YFU and participated in various seminars and trainings in Finland and throughout Europe. She also did an internship in the United States that she found with the help of her American host family. After graduation, she landed a really good job, thanks to her international experience.

Oskar's story

*Author: Girolamo Vicenti,
Associazione Culturale
Link*

Oskar came to Italy for his EVS. He had already a plan... well, a plan that perhaps somebody else made for him! The plan was to go back Finland, after EVS, to study. At the end of the six months in Italy, it just happened, one day, that he met a group of jugglers during a festival. In the final weeks, he was practicing every day, because he was attracted by this kind of activity and he decided to try to enter a Circus School in Torino. After two years studying in that school, he is now a professional, doing shows all over Europe as a circus performer.

Lithuanian Success story

Many success stories can be found among vocational training graduates. After registration in the labour exchange, a person with a low level of education and without a profession is encouraged to train for one and thus to enhance his or her ability to compete in the labour market or to gain self-realization in his or her favourite activities. Often, success depends on something as seemingly simple as training the unemployed for a job interview. Sometimes, clients simply lack confidence and they have some psychological obstacles to communicating directly with a potential employer. Written recommendations are a kind of encouragement, and often have good results.

Here is one success story of the Youth Job Centre: a 22-year-old trained plumber had no work experience and had been trying to find a job for over a year. When registering in the labour exchange, he was directed to a consultant who works with youth up to 29 years of age. During the consultation, it was discovered that the young man had some experience and skills in informal work (he has been providing assistance in the field of plumbing), but he did not mention this in his CV and did not tell employers about this. So, a new CV was written and he was sent to a training course to learn how to introduce himself to employers. He soon found work as a plumber.

*Author: Valdas Maksvytis,
Lithuanian Labour
Exchange under the
Ministry of Social Security
and Labour*

Asia's letter after "Social Inclusion" Training in Italy

Ania suggested that I accompany her to the training organized by an Italian youth organization; I was happy to receive the invitation, because I had wanted to do this. Training was a part of the "Youth in Action" European Union project, whose primary goal was the integration of young people into society.

I was soon on my way, but after landing at Fumicino airport in Rome, two things came into my mind – "It's so hot here" and "What am I doing here?"

That second question was the more frightening one. Others came: "Why me?", "What I should do?" and the worst: "How I can communicate with others?"

I thought that I should go back home to Poland, but I had less money to do so, and I thought that I could not disappoint Ania and the foundation. So I collected myself and got on the way to Umbria, where the training was to be held.

The first impression was very bad – everybody were waiting for us, standing in the darkness. We began presenting ourselves to the group, but I could not understand

*Author: Asia
(Deaf Woman from
Poland)*

others, because I could not see the mouths, so I could not communicate. So I simply shook hands and told my name to everyone.

But in the following hours, my fears and consternation were changing into joy – I learned that I can communicate with the foreigners!

And others were positively surprised to see a hard-of-hearing person explaining and describing her world. It was very nice that they asked directly about the life of the hard-of-hearing people, the functioning of hearing aids or implants. I also taught them the basics of sign language. And they treated me as equal to themselves. Why should it be different?

How did I communicate? It was not so easy at all – I did not understand everything. I know English, but it was extremely difficult to lip read – I do not lip read foreign languages. They tried to speak clearly, and they did not show any impatience. If the communication was difficult, we just resorted to writing. There was no shame in this; I used to do so when I was abroad.

But I had my success at the railway station – without the help of anyone I discussed the money return at the ticket counter. So I can say that if you are not afraid, you will manage to talk with everybody in any circumstance! It does not matter whether it will be with your voice, gestures or writing. Do not be afraid! People are amazing!

To summarize: although it was not my first journey abroad, it taught me the most. I had to spend not a few minutes or hours, but a few days with foreigners. I learned that I could cope with it. I see myself more as confident now, and I have many new ideas for my future.

I study geography, which can be associated with trips, but I had thought that I could not travel "seriously", that I can only visit the monuments, but now I know, I can be part of the international community – I can communicate with everybody!



Birgit's story

Birgit is a 23-year-old Austrian. When she was 20, after finishing high school, she went to Italy for an EVS experience. She spent six months discovering, experimenting and learning new skills. She tried all sorts of new situations and did her best to explore new situations as much as possible. She experimented with working with young people with fewer opportunities, discovered she was talented in doing many things in the field of youth work, and she learnt how to deal with a different culture, a new language, and different ways of thinking.

At the end of her EVS, she had the feeling she had still something to discover, experiment and learn, so she decided to stay longer.

The hosting organization thought it was a good opportunity to have Birgit inside the organization, not as a volunteer but as a youth worker, so they decided to offer to her a job.

Now Birgit is employed in the same organization. This is a good example of how, non-formal learning and Youth in Action projects can enhance employability.

*Author: Girolamo Vicenti,
Associazione Culturale
Link*

To conclude with: Discover, Experiment, Learn

Link has never organized a project with the specific aim of enhancing employability. In our experience, any project, even if there is not a clearly set aim to do so, creates opportunities for young people to better know themselves, their limits, their potential, their fears and their dreams. Youth in Action projects, especially EVS (European Voluntary Service), are a great opportunity for young people to find their place, gain their independence and the freedom to discover, experiment and learn new things. They can understand what they can do, what they like and what they do not; they can find new (often quite unexpected) paths, they can grow and open their mind in many different ways (professionally and personally). The approach, from a hosting organization's point of view, should be based on guiding, listening and giving young people the possibility of experimenting with as many new things as possible. These projects are about learning, and in many cases about learning how to discover the competences and attitudes that young people may have but they still cannot see. In over 10 years' experience in EVS and other YiA projects, we can count many cases in which EVS has totally changed the perspective of the volunteer – cases in which they have found, thanks to the volunteering abroad, the path to employability or, at least, to what they really wanted to do in their lives.

*Author: Girolamo Vicenti,
Associazione Culturale
Link*

Appendices



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Programme of the seminar

	27th April	28th April	29th April	30th April
9:00	Arrivals	<p>Official Opening (9:30)</p> <p>Tinkara Bizjak Zupanc, NA Slovenia</p> <p>Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, Igor Lukšič</p> <p>Strategies in EU to enhance youth employment, Tadej Beočanin</p>	<p>Sharing successful Stories</p> <p>Finding youth work answers to the obstacles</p>	Departures
		<p>Getting to Know Each Other</p> <p>Identifying obstacles to become employed 2011 in Europe</p>	<p>Contribution of Youth Work for Youth Employability</p>	
12:30		Lunch		
14:30		<p>Wall of Organisations</p> <p>Sharing Best Practices</p>	<p>Building links for achieving Youth Employability</p>	
		<p>What is Youth Work?</p> <p>Reflection about the Day</p>	<p>Evaluation & Closing</p>	
19:30		Dinner		
		Informal welcoming	<p>Dinner out</p> <p>Short tour of Ljubljana</p>	<p>Informal farewell evening in Ljubljana</p>

List of participants

Country	First name	Last name	Organisation
PARTICIPANTS			
Estonia	Janne	Kuusmik	Kohtla-Nõmme Noortekeskus
Estonia	Siim	Krusell	NGO Mõnus Tegu
Estonia	Pirjo	Turk	Centre for Policy Studies PRAXIS
Finland	Tiina	Pancy	EEE-YFU
Finland	Tiia	Rantanen	Youth Department of Helsinki
France	Stephanie	Fauvarque	eurocircle
France	Fabienne	Lorelle	ADICE
Italy	Massimo	Fotino	DIAGONAL ASSOCIATION
Lithuania	Valdas	Maksvytis	Lithuanian Labour Exchange under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour
Lithuania	Ligita	Poskaite	Department Of Youth Affairs
Lithuania	Elzbieta	Rapčevič	Vilnius diocese Caritas
Netherlands	Iris	Wessels	Welzijngroep Sedna
Poland	Aleksander	Zablocki	ITAKA – Centre for Missing People
Poland	Magdalena	Gajdzinska	Foundation for Social Initiatives
Poland	Dorota Anna	Milke	ECHO - Polish Foundation for Children with Hearing Disorders
Slovenia	Rudi	Klainšek	University of Maribor
Slovenia	Sanja	Obaha Brodnjak	Društvo Salezijanski mladinski center
Slovenia	Gregor	Jevšček	RIC Bela krajina
Sweden	Karin	Nejdmo	Vänersborgs kommun, Arbetsmarkandesenheten
Sweden	José	Hernández	Vänersborg kommun
United Kingdom	Aziz	Choudhury	Ensign Youth & Community centre
TRAINERS			
Germany	Ansgar	Büter-Menke	
Portugal	Andreia	Henriques	
Slovenia	Matej	Cepin	



The seminar was co-organized by:



THE SWEDISH NATIONAL
BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS
www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se





Besides the National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme Institute MOVIT also hosts:



EURODESK

Eurodesk is a permanent support structure for European youth work as part of the Youth in Action Programme. It operates as a European information network dedicated to providing European information for young people and to those, working with young people. Eurodesk offers daily fresh information on European opportunities for young people and information on European youth policy. If you need support at searching European information for young people or international partners for Youth in Action projects, you can always contact Eurodesk.



SALTO-YOUTH SEE RESOURCE CENTRE

The SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre was set up in 2003 to promote the participation of young people and other actors in the field of youth and non-formal education from South East Europe in the Youth in Action Programme. It acts as a support service for the network of Youth in Action National Agencies in the field of co-operation with SEE, as well as youth organizations, youth leaders, youth workers and other actors in the field who are interested in developing co-operation between Programme countries and Neighbouring Partner Countries in SEE.



EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME CONTACT POINT

The Europe for Citizens Programme supports international projects, bringing together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future, fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, and encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society organisations in Europe.

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