

# REPORT

*of the*

## Forum: Youth Cooperation Beyond Borders

*Exploring the Impact of 6 years of Youth in Action  
with Neighbouring Partner Countries*

28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012, Baku, Azerbaijan



Forum  
**YOUTH COOPERATION  
BEYOND BORDERS**

BAKU, 28 – 30 OCTOBER 2012



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## Introduction to this report

The main content of this report are the key points taken during the International Forum "Youth Cooperation Beyond Borders", including a general introduction, the programme of the forum to then the findings of the researches carried out in order to explore the present youth realities and Youth in Action impact in EuroMed, South East Europe and Eastern Europe and Caucasus partner regions, including the feedback of participants to the researchers, as well as recommendations, and proposals for cooperation with partners from neighbouring regions. This report is written for all those interested in deepening their knowledge about the above-mentioned issues, regardless whether they are beneficiaries of the programme or decision-makers.

## Glossary of Acronyms:

SALTO RC – Support Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities Resource Centres

YiA – Youth in Action

NPC – Neighbouring Partner Countries

PC – Programme countries

MEDA – EuroMed

EMYU – EuroMed Youth Units

SEE – South East Europe

EECA – Eastern Europe and Caucasus

## Framework of the forum

2012 was the sixth year of the current Youth in Action programme, which is running for the period 2007 - 2013. With the Programme entering its final phase, and the development of the new generation of European youth programmes well on its way, it is necessary to look more closely into **what the Programme has achieved in the framework of cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries (Eastern Europe and Caucasus, EuroMed and South East Europe) and to assess the impact that the Programme has had in the different regions.**

Therefore, studies researching the impact of the Programme in the different neighbouring regions were carried out in 2011 - 2012 by the three regional SALTO Resource Centres in cooperation with their hosting National Agencies. The studies looked into impact of the Programme related to different aspects, in particular: individual learning and self-development, growth and development of youth organisations involved in the Programme, the achieved impact on youth work, local communities and youth policy. Focusing on different regional priorities, realities and approaching them accordingly creating a diverse yet complete vision of the three regional realities aforementioned.

The forum »Youth Cooperation Beyond Borders« was created to discuss the key research findings with a larger circle of stakeholders of the Programme, and to provide the necessary time and space to share opinions and recommendations for the further development of the cooperation with neighbouring partner regions in the field of youth.

Since the beginning of the Programme in 2007, the cooperation between Youth in Action Programme countries and the three Neighbouring Partner Regions in the youth field has brought together people and countries that had rarely collaborated before. This fact has a special meaning for institutions and practitioners that aim to contribute to cross-regional cooperation and dialogue in different fields of non- formal education, in the context of European Union enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy.

The three regional SALTO Resource Centres together with their hosting National Agencies in France, Poland and Slovenia therefore organized a series of events, between 2007 and 2012, in this framework, called the "Let's Cycle" process. Their strategy has contributed widely to the

success of this cooperation and action, involving both practitioners of the youth field and responsible of institutions: in terms of support mechanisms, sustainable partnerships, increased quantity and quality of international partnerships and projects, awareness on the possibilities offered by the Youth in Action Programme, valorisation and dissemination of results and good practices, strengthening of the cooperation among institutions and organisations involved and, last but not least, connection between the educational and political dimensions through the cooperation of promoters. This forum represents the last event of the "Let's Cycle" under the Youth in Action programme.

## **Introduction to the Forum**

The forum "Youth Cooperation Beyond Borders" was held from 28 – 30 October 2012 in Baku, Azerbaijan to explore the impact of the Youth in Action Programme in the frame of the cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries. The Forum aimed to develop recognition of the importance of the international youth cooperation in the field of non-formal education between Programme and Neighbouring Partner Countries within Youth in Action programme (YIA).

The forum was organized by the three regional SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres EuroMed, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and South East Europe as well as their hosting Youth in Action National Agencies; INJEP France, MOVIT Slovenia and FRSE Poland and hosted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan together with the Ministry's Youth Foundation. The specific objectives of the forum were:

- to present and discuss needs and achievements identified by researches carried out by the regional SALTO Resource Centres on the impact of the Youth in Action programme on:
  - Development of youth organisations and youth work in general (in Programme and Neighbouring Partner Countries (NPC))
  - Impact on local Communities (in Programme and NPC)
  - Youth policy development in the regions
- to develop recognition of the achievements
- to prepare conclusions and suggestions and feedback for future steps

The event brought together over 90 participants from YiA Programme countries as well as all three neighbouring regions (MEDA, EECA and SEE), including youth workers, youth leaders, representatives of youth policy decision-makers, National Agencies and other institutions in the youth field. The key outcomes of the three studies researching the impact of the Youth in Action programme in and with the neighbouring regions were presented and discussed, and participants were invited to share recommendations for the cooperation with neighbouring countries under the new European youth programmes.

Participants worked together in large and small international and regional groups discussing different issues related to Youth in Action, such as their image of youth, youth work and youth organisations, the influence of the Programme on local youth work, non formal learning and youth policy, capacity of youth organisations to develop recognition of their achievements, the influence of Youth in Action on the development of youth policy areas such as education, participation, inclusion etc.

The questions discussed were: How has the Programme improved the competences of young people in different organisations across the three regions? Which impact has it had on different communities in Programme countries and neighbouring partner countries? How has the Programme affected the development of youth work and subsequently impacted youth policy? What was the impact of non-formal education on youth and community development?

The main conclusion was the receipt feedback and recommendations from the participants to the European Commission for the necessary future steps concerning cooperation between Programme Countries and Neighbouring Partner Countries addressing specific needs of youth, youth organisation and youth policy development.

## The programme of the forum:

### DAY 1

#### Introduction and Welcome

Activities aiming at getting to know each other and discovering the group's expectations were carried out, followed by welcome and opening speeches by the organizers introducing aims, objectives of the Symposium. The facilitators of the Forum, Behrooz M. Afshari and Lorenzo Nava, presented the programme of the event and the other speakers:



Welcome speakers:

- Bernard Abrignani, SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre
- Federica Demicheli, SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre
- Sonja Mitter Skulj, SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre
- Andrij Pavlovych, SALTO Eastern Europe and Causasus

#### HOW DID IT GO? Youth in Action - Co-operation between Programme and Neighbouring Partner Countries (First part)

Following the initial welcome speeches and introductory elements, after lunch, three Research Reports were presented, and the participants could chose which group to join in order to contribute with their experience, on the Youth Policy in different regions: EuroMed, South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus.

#### HOW DID IT GO? Youth in Action - Co-operation between Programme and Neighbouring Partner Countries (Second part)

After presenting 3 reports in small groups (EM, SEE, EECA), this last session of the day was a plenary discussion for a whole group to talk about the outcomes of the previous discussions and to collect the feedback from the participants.

### DAY 2

#### OFFICIAL OPENING

Several Azerbaijani and international officials delivered welcome speeches to all the participants and organizers, stressing the importance of this event, which got a very high attention of local journalists from different mass-media in Azerbaijan:

Welcome speakers:

- Faig Gurbatov, Youth Foundation Under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Farhad Hajiyevev, Azrbaijan Youth Foundation
- Intigam Babayev, Ministry of Youth and Sport
- Andryij Pavlovich, SALTO Eastern Europe and Causasus
- Tomasz Bratek, Polish National Agency of Youth in Action Programme, FRSE

#### Open Café: What was the - Youth in Action impact in the Programme countries and Neighbouring partner Regions (part I)

After the official opening the participants came back to work and discuss and share opinions concerning how strong was the impact of Youth in Action in PC and NPCs according to their experience in Open Café (the method that was used by the facilitators for that afternoon).

#### Open Café: What was the - Youth in Action impact in the Programme countries and Neighbouring partner Regions (part II)

After lunch of this second day all continued working using Open Café method, on different topics from which the outcomes will later in the report.

## Summaries of the Researches

### SALTO EUROMED summary (prepared by the Kristian Brakel)

see more at [www.salto-youth.net/YiAimpactEUROMED](http://www.salto-youth.net/YiAimpactEUROMED)

*"Offering young people opportunities to visit and learn about places they are highly unlikely to ever visit".*

Concentrating on the cooperation with Programme Countries with the Mediterranean under Action 3.1 this study evaluates the impact YiA had on the more local level. Aiming at assessing its three main strands:

- Development of youth policies,
- Development of organizations and their practice of youth work,
- Development of local communities.

Including the direct and indirect positive effects youth in action had on the above mentioned and what were the main causes.

This report is based on the extensive study of existing publications on both YiA and EYP, as well as on interviews conducted between January and March 2012 with National Agencies, EMYUs in the MEDA region and CSOs.



As for actors in the MEDA region both the YiA and the EYP are closely linked, it was not always possible to distinguish between their effects.

The three points mentioned above are areas of concern in both shores of the Mediterranean, the main benefit that Youth in Action has provided to the MEDA countries was the offer of moral, structural and political support to the development of youth work, youth policy and youth organization, which otherwise would not receive the necessary attention and funding for its development. Being Youth in Action the only existing programme that supports the mobility, active engagement and non formal learning of youth people.

NGOs and NAs/EMYUs that were interviewed assessed the direct and indirect impact of the programme. It is therefore not surprising to find, that when asked about improvements in the youth work sector, most interviewees would name the enhanced capacity of NGOs and young people to deal with the structures of the programs. I.e. youth workers and young people are now better equipped to apply for and administer a YiA/EYP project according to the program's rules. There is an impact on the development of youth work and the methods applied therein, but again it is not first and foremost what interview partners connected with the programs when it came to capacity building.

Especially EMYUs seem to have modified their approaches in their countries. We witness that more and more of them have started to invest in a trickle down effect to the local level. Some of them have made it their task to include especially youth in disadvantaged, often rural communities into the programme. They argued however that the limited funds available make it difficult to reach larger parts of the young population.



The impact on national legislation and the development of youth policies remains limited. While some EMYUs and NAs are consulted on question concerning such policies by their respective national governments, they are rarely seen as the key players in this field.

Impacts on the more institutional side of things seem to be more visible in the MEDA region. In the Program Countries and especially in those that enjoy highly developed youth support structures the impact was rather seen in the field of abating stereotypes and combating negative perceptions of the Partner Countries.



**Impact of Youth in Action in and with South East Europe – summary of outcomes of impact study (prepared by Urška Slana and Sonja Mitter Škulj)**  
see more at [www.salto-youth.net/YiAimpactSEE](http://www.salto-youth.net/YiAimpactSEE)

*“Increased awareness that the western Balkan countries are part of Europe.”*

Evaluation of the cooperation with SEE (South East Europe) within the Youth in Action (YiA) programme took place between August 2011 and August 2012. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the YiA programme in the SEE region as well as the cooperation with between partners in SEE and Programme countries, and complete the existing YiA evaluation studies which focused mainly on the Programme's impact in the Programme countries.

The main objective was to assess the impact of the YiA programme focusing on youth organisations, youth work and youth policies, highlighting both benefits and challenges of cooperation with SEE within the YiA programme and assessing the sustainability of its positive effects.

The study focused mainly on the observations of different stakeholders collected through online surveys. The surveys were designed to target representatives of organizations from SEE that took part in YiA projects and representatives of their partner organizations from Programme countries, trainers, accreditors, representatives of Contact Points for the YiA programme in SEE, staff members of YiA programme National Agencies (Action 2 and Action 3.1 officers), and representatives of Relevant National Authorities in SEE countries.



Within YiA, impact on an individual project participant is the basis of the Programme's "theory of change": it's the step to reach the long-term goals of inclusion of all young people, promoting young people's active citizenship, developing solidarity and tolerance, fostering mutual understanding between young people in different countries and promoting European cooperation in the youth field. Actions 2 and 3.1 – the two Actions that are available to participants from neighbouring partner countries – both have a strong individual impact expectation.

### **Competences gained by young people who participated in Youth in Action projects**

85% respondents believe that YiA contributed to positive changes in young people who participated in projects. The main competences gained that are mentioned are: interest in other cultures, self esteem, confidence, communication in a foreign language, sense of initiative, and ownership of learning.

Figures show an interesting mention of increased awareness of current political issues showing an understanding of political contexts, past conflicts in the Balkans and perspective EU Access as intercultural learning and benefit of the cooperation and refer to the past conflicts in the Balkans, the specific situation of the SEE countries in today's Europe or the countries' perspective of accession to the EU.

### **Competences gained by youth workers/leaders through involvement in Youth in Action**

85% of respondents find YiA useful for facilitating positive changes in youth workers: Team work, intercultural sensitivity are listed by over 80% of all respondents, followed by facilitating non-formal learning, planning and organisation, and communication in a foreign language.

Competences emphasised include innovative approaches to youth work, learning ownership and last, working with young people with fewer opportunities, and entrepreneurship.

Motivation for political participation and ability to discuss political issues rank among the least mentioned competences and attitudes (25% - 35%).

### ***How sustainable would this impact be in case of EU reduction or removal of support?***

Without financial and political support from the EU, fewer young people would have mobility and intercultural learning opportunities. Our survey indicates that continued exposure to such experiences shapes the competences of a young person more effectively than one-time experience.

#### **Impact on organizational development**

Through YiA many youth workers gained new competences which were in turn shared and multiplied with colleagues back home.

Common organizational changes were: CSOs began to work with a new target group (in particular young people with fewer opportunities), using non formal education, developed or the international dimension of their work or changed the way they finance their activities.

In most organizations the transfer of competences was more informal affecting mostly: new approach or methodology or changes in priorities of organizations' work programme. Youth workers mostly chose a training that was of personal interest to them. If the the new competences were useful in practice, the enthusiasm would "rub off" on their colleagues and they began to try new approaches. If enough people got interested, changes made their way to organisational culture.

Organisations were influenced by the principles of the Programme, especially through concepts such as non-formal learning, participation of young people, active citizenship and key competences for life-long learning.

Financial support enabled organisations to increase the participation of young people, establish new partnerships and networks and to engage larger-scale and more international projects. CSOs regularly benefiting YiA support experienced growth and underwent structural changes.

In case the EU reduction or removal of support, Under 10% of respondents from Programme countries report that their organization would be able to continue their cooperation with SEE countries also without YiA and over 40% report that cooperation would likely stop .

#### **Impact on youth work**

76% of respondents believe that YiA has helped the development of youth work in their countries. 91% believes that YiA has contributed to better youth work thanks to training opportunities. Now more young people participate in youth CSOs and a number of new organisations were developed. More CSOs are involving young people with fewer opportunities in their work. 50% believe the Programme has led to increased social recognition of youth work.

#### **Country specific influences**

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** mention the role of funding: YiA contributed by offering funding and support for youth projects, that youth workers could adapt financial management skills gained through YiA to secure other sources of funding, and that exposure to the Programme also influenced some local authorities to provide more youth work support.

**Serbia:** mention and increase of participation, more dialogue between young people and youth workers with authorities on decisions regarding the youth field, better understanding of youth work, and development of non-formal education.

**Croatia:** Reports new approaches of youth work and development of project management capacities as the primary contribution of the YiA programme, while respondents from **Montenegro, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** emphasize that due to YiA organisations integrate more international work in their programmes.

In case of EU reduction or removal of support, less international cooperation, therefore less best practice sharing, as well as decrease of project-based youth work is to be expected. Maybe decrease of recognition of youth work by the public. Perhaps a risk of exclusion of disadvantaged youth since not many other available grants focus on NFL opportunities for these groups.



## **Impact on local communities**

90% interviewees show local communities involved had a positive impact from YiA project presence. Respondents in Programme countries often mention that their local communities do not know much about SEE countries but prejudices towards them might be present.

In SEE, rural communities rarely have the chance to talk and interact with foreigners. there is still some "shyness" among the public, but direct experience with young people from other countries is helping them to open up. 70% of respondents mention that YiA projects in SEE sparked community-wide discussion of topics such as European citizenship.

## **Recognition of youth work on local level and impact on youth policies**

YiA projects helps to raise visibility of youth organizations and brought the importance of youth work to the attention of the public and local policy makers. Their organization was taken more seriously after showing that they can carry out successful international cooperation.

In all countries, Employability was the most picked priority, alongside with youth policy, support to youth work, recognition of volunteering and youth work, social inclusion and organisational capacity building and structured dialogue.

More respondents from SEE pick policy priorities that resemble concepts present in the YiA programme: non-formal education, social inclusion, international mobility of young people. It is interesting that non-formal education of young people is picked more often as a priority (49%) than formal education (33%). An interesting topic is also political participation of young people. However Albania and Kosovo are likely to state that their country has no existing youth policy or no clear priorities.

## **Impact of YiA on national youth policies**

Respondents from Serbia, BIH and Croatia tend to report that they believe the YiA programme is in compliance to their national policy. In Serbia and Croatia, the YiA programme seems to have had a strong influence not only on the content of youth policy documents, but also on the process of how they were formulated. Key beneficiaries of the YiA programme have also been acknowledged as important partners from the youth field and invited into dialogue with decision-makers. This seems to have resulted in a youth policy heavily influenced by the concepts and procedures adopted from YiA.

Overall, the YiA programme seems to have influenced national policies in a very specific way especially through Action 2 – EVS: Laws were developed on volunteering and simplified Visa procedures for foreign volunteers.

*"Prejudices are bigger towards SEE people. Having here SEE volunteers let us raise awareness in the local community about the lack of substance of such prejudices and about the common belonging to a European community which is not composed only of the old members".*

*"Diversity of projects, its topics, groups involved and geographical coverage"*

The goal of the study is to examine the opinion on the Youth in Action Programme among the participants of the programme and decision makers. Both Programme Countries and Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus were taken under the study. The research was divided into two sections: quantitative and qualitative. Here are the main results of the research:

The most popular type of activities was "Youth Exchanges". European Voluntary Service such as Training and networking had similar numbers of indications. A majority of respondents admitted, that the staff number of their organizations increased and the image had changed thanks to participation in Youth in Action projects. The main benefits of participation in Youth in Action projects are: establishing new international contacts, use of non-formal education methods and development of the organisation's scope of action.



The respondents admitted that Youth in Action programme had positive influence on the target group of their organization. The main aspects of intercultural learning, developed by participation in Youth in Action projects, are: communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and the last one – cultural awareness and expression. A majority of the surveyed claimed that Youth in Action programme had influence on educational working and tourist mobility. Finally the respondents admitted that participation in Youth in Action projects enhances young people's employability.

A majority of respondents admitted, that they need to cooperate with other external partners, while implementing the Youth in Action projects. Usually their experience of cooperation with external partners was good or very good.

The main challenges in such cooperation, indicated by surveyed were: bureaucratic obstacles, economical obstacles and communication obstacles.

The main obstacles mentioned by the speakers were communication problems, such as long waiting period for e-mail answers, language problems - especially in contact by Skype - and sometimes, cultural differences.

Furthermore there were some partnership challenges. On the one hand they were the result of cultural differences, on the other hand some foundation were not experienced enough in international projects:

Almost all speakers admitted that their organization had grown. Some of the foundations were able to afford employment of new persons, but some increased only the number of volunteers:

International cooperation had big influence on the image of the organization. Thanks to the promotion in the media, the organizations had an increase of new volunteers who would like to get involved in projects. The organizations were also recognized in their country.

The interviewees presented several very positive stories. Most of them were connected to student's exchange – new country, learning new language, getting new job or gathering life experience. Some of them were about changes in human character - for instance shy people became more self-confident.

The youth exchanges also had changed people's life plan and collected experience was an inspiration for setting up new activities in homeland.

The interviewees' opinion about improvement of YiAprogramme can be divided into several groups: the first one is about bureaucracy problems (i.e. communication issues or visa procedures), the second one is connected with financial conditions. The last one is about promotion plan.

## Feedback and suggestions of participants

Kristian Brakel, presented the report on 'SALTO EUROMED'. Participants shared their opinion and were talking about importance of research and the obstacles that were faced. In many cases EuroMED programme and Youth in Action programme were mixed, which made research a bit harder. None of the organisations had a proper monitoring after activities, so results of research were made on assumptions and by feedback of respondents. People with fewer opportunities were not included that much also a language barrier showed as a big problem. The participants mentioned the importance of Youth Policy development, Local communities, Youth work through NGOs & Ministries. The issues raised as key challenges were comparison between participants from Meda and EU countries. The participant mentioned that some countries, for example Israel usually has better opportunity to organize activities other than YiA and EuroMed but also with USA. Participants from MEDA countries usually come having high standards of quality, usually even they are considered elites among youngsters from their countries. The EU participants are usually of fewer needs than the participants fro MEDA countries or are less educated than MEDA participants. One of the important outcomes in this topic was related to monitoring the outcomes of the projects, moreover there must be a way to make sure the ideas reflected the folks not only the participants of the activity. The suggestions were to concentrate more on local impact of EuroMed and sustainable effects; enable stronger integration of international aspect in the domestic Youth work; specialize monitoring mechanism and to be directed to the community not to the individuals.

Urška Slana and Sonja Mitter Skulj presented the report on SALTO SEE (South East Europe). The obstacles mentioned by the SEE region working group were mostly the financial and technical issues: sometimes it is complicated to get visa because of a lot of administrative obstacles, too long time and too less help from the institutions in the countries; too much paper work for preparing even small project such as youth initiative; sometimes Training fees listed in the Training Calendar are too high to be able to participate, financing – harmonization between practices applied in different countries; e.g. some finance preparation costs, some not); travel costs was also listed as one of the obstacles: disadvantage youth cannot pay 30% of travel costs therefore this youth cannot participate in the YiA activities, 100% should be covered for disadvantaged youth not to exclude them from the possibility to use this programme. Participants also mentioned the problem of having difficulties to find good and reliable partners, therefore another problems that comes is to establish a good long lasting partnership; language barriers was also a problem for many of participants. Participants pointed out that for the future they would like to establish a better cooperation between regions (There is too little cooperation between northern Europe and SEE and this should be changed).

Cooperation, networking, partnerships were mentioned by the SEE region working group as a part of every YiA project, bigger organisations cooperate more with other smaller organisations in other countries –they get more open; increased working with NGOs from other countries, not only EU but also beyond. More young people from EU and neighbouring countries got involved. Overcoming barriers – bringing youth from conflicted countries together to participate in the YiA projects, increased possibilities of cooperation with other partners in Europe that work in the youth field. Increased regional and international networking. Development of network on the local level.

Suggestions that came out during one brainstorming session regarding the future programme from the SEE region working group: introduce regional priorities (like national priorities in Programme countries to be considered during YiA project selection), motivate NGOs to use the SALTO database of good practices. Quality-related issues were taken as challenges to reach in the future. Many organisations organise many projects and lose track of the connection with their local reality and the needs of young people) The participants pointed out that in the future they would need to work on strengthening the weak management of projects, therefore they need to have more skills for that. Now they feel as a challenge to prepare good projects.»

Bartłomiej Biskup presented the report on SALTO EECA (Eastern Europe and Caucasus). Recognition of Youth Work on Policy level (EECA & program countries). Recognition of youth work was a very important topic stressed by many of participants. The participants mentioned that the problem is that some countries have no institutionalized recognition system, nor is the term of Youth Work what its meaning to be recognized as such at all. Big challenges are not only for EECA countries, also in IT, HE, SK and others. The profession such as Youth worker doesn't exist and there is no any specific education. Also in almost all present countries (BY, MD, UA, AT, EE, HE, IT, LUX, SK) (except AT, EE, SK) Youth Work has no legal basis; Non Formal Learning is not officially recognised. Only three of the countries present (EE, SK, AT) have scientific and legally recognised education as Youth Workers. The participants mentioned that it is important to have Youth Worker to be a profession recognized officially.

## Main outcomes of working group discussions

### Outcomes of discussions during the Open Cafe according to the topics

*"Politically this is the main tool for peace building in that area. It prepares the ground for integration with the EU. For young people it is a very important way of learning about European history and the idea behind the integration – most of the young people today have no possibility to remember the war in Yugoslavia, so they grow up used to living in peace – this makes them more vulnerable to extremism".*

Youth participation in NGO's. Participants shared their experience and realities in their countries including different types and perceptions of what is youth participation. However Youth participation in NGO's stimulated more discussions and produced more detailed information: In **Azerbaijan** youth are active if they are on Universities (almost 50% of them is active). The ones who are in the Universities they receive large amounts of information which are provided by Student Councils, but problem is that information is not shared which makes participation harder for other youth. In **Austria** there is a combination of non-formal and formal sector, which ensures active youth participation in some NGOs, for example Red Cross. Every school organises groups of students who are promoters and main actors for the Red Cross at that school so everybody has a chance to join. In **Germany** most of youngsters intend to join some NGO and suggest their ideas and plans but find obstacles in making the steps to actually become active. And their excuse is that none of NGO's fulfils their expectation. In **Italy** they are lot of complains sent to the NA that NGOs also do not fulfil the expectations, organisations never asks for volunteers what do they want. In general participants mentioned the problems with tourist volunteers and that in some of NGOs youth are just decoration and all decisions are made by management or board of organisation. Participation of young people in the SEE region (as the feedback was quite similar from all the six SEE countries): YiA has inspired higher involvement of young people into NGOs activities, more youngsters wanted to become volunteers and more youth started to be involved into active participation. Other changes that were brought by the Yia programme that more youth started actively joining NGOs and therefore we have more youth workers. Therefore NGOs became more active (empowerment of young people to suggest and initiate projects), therefore there was an NGO growth in members and resources, as well as more activities started being organized by many different new NGOs.

Voluntary activities. Participants were sharing the experience about volunteering and voluntary activities in their countries. The outcome was awareness of the importance of choosing apt participants for events, preparing them and organising a follow up after the event. International works is great, but as long as it's not transferred into local community goals are not achieved. It is important to know how to choose volunteers in order to achieve good results of the project.



Youth Policy. The most important outcome in these discussions was a suggestion by participants for improving the impact on *local communities, NGO's and youth policy*. Participants mentioned importance to organize language courses in order to overcome language barriers, to organize follow up after Training Courses/ youth exchanges and to create rules (example: every participant has to act as multiplier and carry out at least 10 local workshops after the event); to improve communication with NA's; to approve budget for youth that will be only for promotion of outcomes, events, projects; to focus more on women and youth in rural area; to design one unique workshop after each TC or exchange that should be conducted by participants after the event; to empower youth when it comes to their influence on decision making processes; to encourage networking and also search for new funds.

Target group/ outreach. The working groups mentioned that it is really important reaching out to real target group, not only those that are convinced already. The problem is that some organizations are reaching always to the same people; lack of communication to reach »the real« target. Some of the organizations especially local ones do not feel as having the opportunity to participate in the projects. The participants mentioned importance of being open to all communities (working more about the inclusion, involving the larger public, especially young people with a challenging socio-economic background.)

Participants mentioned that in order to improve the mobility it is necessary that the governments in all the countries should cooperate more; geographic inclusion is necessary, economical troubles sometimes can be as a problem in mobility topic: as the 30% may be very huge if the event is held in far away distances; to make the project according to the priorities & interest of the youth in the countries so that the NGO can have better chances to find participants; rural places don't get much attention therefore there are no many youth travelling from these areas. There should be more support from all the authorities to help volunteers of EVS to learn the language of the destination.

**Non Formal Learning.** Participants mentioned that Youth in Action programme could contribute to the recognition of NFL & Youth Work even if there could be more official researches



results to promote the recognition of NFL; organize more public events within the Youth in Action programme in all the countries (the participants expressed their satisfaction about this forum and said that there should be more events like this, connecting so many people from such different countries); try to get in touch with formal education sector unifying both, as the formal education has bigger lobby. Impact of YiA Programme in NFL and the Regions was important. For example in Belarus, Bulgaria and Tunisia, - new information awakens the need to find out and learn new methods of NFE and to start using them. Participants from Belarus shared that they still have a copy of Soviet Union system of additional education but the YiA programme brings changes in people's mentality that start working with this programme. Turkey besides the formal learning system starts using more and more NFL that is more about skills not theory. Therefore participants mentioned that NFL becomes more recognised widely by government and businesses. In the future in order to get more results there should be more promotion used for the NFL, other important thing is to bring NFE methods to Formal Learning system. The non-formal education as most fast growing bench of Education, most flexible way to keep competences on contemporary level.

**Personal development.** The YiA programme and its activities help in personal growth and development, learning to be more tolerant, breaking stereotypes and inspiring people to be more active and self confident. For example of the multiple situations shared by one of the participants: "A guy from Jordan was very shy and after some experiences and attending several YiA events he decided to establish his own NGO." Most of participants start seeing the conflicts they discovered when they participated in the events: for example, Palestine vs Israel, Azerbaijan vs Armenia. Therefore it is important to be aware that YiA programme works a lot on each individual personally in deep psychological level, changing the perspective of the participants about a country or a nation in positive or a negative way. The international events encourage people to know about their countries and the others, to get ready to answer every question about their country, nation, continent therefore it is always continuous learning about the others and about you.

**Sustainability of positive developments:** The working groups mentioned Sustainability as a very important issue; they also commented that developments related to YiA programme would influence developments in Partner countries, especially participants from Serbia mentioned a desirable outcome of having a more youth centred education.

**Intercultural Dialogue and Intercultural Learning.** One of the important impacts of the YiA programme is intercultural learning, more possible and better interaction between different nations. The participants stressed that Intercultural learning it is more than music or dances. Some participants expressed their doubt and asking for more clarifications about using not only Intercultural dialogue but also multicultural. They pointed out that ICL doesn't come automatically but has to be facilitated. ICL is highly connected to ethnocentrism. Multiculturalism – does a fact exist; Interculturalism is the process how to be achieved and learned. In SEE region Intercultural awareness was also inspired a lot by YiA and increased understanding of diversity, multiculturalism, develop intercultural understanding, the participants expressed feeling more openness to other cultures.

**Social inclusion.** This discussion was mainly about minorities (immigrants, Roma community people with fewer opportunities, etc). YiA projects and its impact on social inclusion is very important (youth exchanges, EVS, short/long term activities), social initiatives. In order to make more impact and guarantee better work in the future it is important to overcome some



barriers such as language barriers, separation of people into races barrier, to have more clear and recognized the profession of youth workers, and to work on real involving of the socially excluded people while working with them. Such project help in Social exclusion: EVS, Youth Exchanges give a possibility to people to step their shoes in the shoes of the excluded people, to learn to respect each other, cultures, religions, and do not feel any races but equality and unity in spite of the differences)

Youth employability and entrepreneurship. Youth (un)employability is a current topic in all the countries, EU and beyond. Young unemployed people are searching for work experience through mobility programs (YiA, LLP). If young people who have academic degree don't get job, then they use YiA in order to get the experience in other country that can help them to find a job. Lately the profile of the EVS volunteers has changed: more academic unemployed young people do EVS to get first work experience and do something. Participants mentioned that they see as entrepreneurship is one of the idea of YIA; YiA inspires to try something out to take a risk, to be an active citizen, develop the attitude of entrepreneurship. Participants also reflected that Soft skills are not always easy to measure, the reflection process is necessary. They pointed out that for many young people Self esteem increased through YiA and especially EVS. For the future the employability should be definitely one of the priorities of the new programme, other aspects are also important to not to lose: intercultural learning, mobility, European citizenship, etc. Sharing and implementation of new practices and ideas was also strongly mentioned by the SEE region group, meaning that every YiA Training Course and Youth Exchange inspired the development of new ideas, developing and sharing new approaches, good practices, knowing good practice from other NGOs (get to know policy).

Creativity and Culture. The impact of YiA programme inspires to be creative many young people in spite of their cultural background. YiA activity brings to success, - say any participants, - YiA projects push the (re)socialisation of disadvantaged youth (socially, economically). The participants pointed out that the YiA projects motivate youth in a creative way to put much more efforts in receiving better education, etc. by creating the atmosphere of growing creativity for youth.



Youth NGO development. Participants have shared their experiences about how youth NGOs are using more and more YiA funds. YIA is very used in EECA. Some participants expressed the difficulties, for the future asking to make a change in budget lines, f.e. 30% of travel costs, that if any of the NGO has not to cover it may have a bigger influence on worker /new youth NGO. People get motivated participating in YIA projects and take actions upon return. The participants mentioned that it is very important for NGOs development to keep close cooperation with local authorities that can support visibility of activities and development of youth policies relevant to the context. Definitely, YiA has a big influence on NGO development and also in local volunteering making more active youth. This programme according to all the participants supports capacity building of NGO and networking as well as partnerships building. In SEE region was active implementation of non-formal learning methods and approaches on all levels and in all activities (was mentioned by Serbians); also was more organised and planned approach to working with young people (Serbia); NGO workers started elaborating more application for other funds (IPA) because of positive experience/skills developed within YIA.

Visibility, transfer, follow up were mentioned by the working groups as an important aspect. The participants mentioned transferability of learning, of competences, of expertise as important issue to work in the future more: many of them doubt if youth organisations are learning as an organisation or there is only personal learning that is improving during the participation in YIA? Outcomes of a study show that learning is transferred accidentally. The participants sees as a problem and to issue for improving for the future is nowadays existing lack of promotion of benefits from participating in YIA, lack of motivation after event to follow up; sustaining the impact after the activities, to stress more in multiplying effects, to work more on visibility of results at local level, involve more the local community; improve the collaboration between NGOs, local communities and authorities (municipalities, for example). Promotion of the EU: the participants said that would be good to work more to increase of visibility of NGOs, international dimension and more visibility of youth organisations, stronger promotion (visual) on local, national and international level. NGOs became aware of YIA and other programmes (information) and see the importance of promotion of the European Union in their countries through participation in YIA projects (Bulgaria); they also would like to involve better of the social community (NGOs) in the policies of the EU (municipality)



Youth Work. The participants discussed about the importance of recognition of youth work as well about what competences are needed for youth worker to be successful. They defined seeing what is youth worker as the one who leads projects and activities. The participants mentioned the importance of continuing using the YouthPass but stressing it more as a tool for recognition. In SEE region more NGOs were created especially in small towns and villages. Working groups also mentioned that Social recognition of non-formal learning and youthwork are essential: the participants mentioned the importance of the development of above listed issues, working on spreading more the idea of non-formal education; no acknowledgement of youth work among public or private sector (Albania); need for cooperation among organisations to lobby the government to start process of accession to YIA (BIH); to know what the EU plans so to start acting sooner because NGOs need to develop strategic plans, so they need to be informed. **Young people** got encouraged by YiA, started thinking out of the box: got inspired to do something else than before, started going abroad, meeting other people, by making friends from other countries started being more interested to know about politics of other countries, the countries where their friends live. This programme also stimulated a personal development and employability. Capacity building including personal and professional growth was one of important points pointed out by participants (making presentation, organisation management, project writing, management, soft skills). New knowledge and experience made the horizons of young people to be broader. **Youth workers** expressed that YiA gave a great impact, they acquired more competences, all of the mentioned that YiA was essential in acquiring skills and knowledge that formal education cannot provide. YiA was important also creating new professionals such as trained and responsible youth workers, trainers, facilitators etc. (esp. in regard to new/changed attitudes, from Serbia). YIA has provided new tools and methodologies for youth workers that made their work to be more professional. (SEE)

An eye to the future. The discussion aimed at formulating suggestions and recommendations on the new European programme on youth. After an introduction to the main outline of the new programme, discussion was split on three Strands according to the proposed three strands that were proposed at this stage for the creation of the next programme: Mobility of individuals, Cooperation for innovation and good practices and Support for policy reform.

#### **The main outcomes of these discussions were:**

**Mobility:** Concerning mobility participants expressed their wish and need to continue supporting mobility programmes for groups and for individuals, to provide more support of mobility opportunities between programme and partner countries, including also the possibility of language or sports events through non-formal education and according to the principles of intercultural learning and social inclusion. A major discussion concerned visas and mobility restriction obstacles that many young people in partner countries face, and a better job of European and national authorities to support the mobility and learning opportunities for young people. Concerning voluntary activities, it has been proposed to have two types of activities, continue with the European Voluntary Service, and extend the job shadowing to an internship programme for youth workers empowering them to be able to part-take in youth organisation beyond their national borders. One final remark consisted also the support of mobility activities within and between partner countries, also without the compulsory participation of partners from the European Union.

**Cooperation:** This group focused mostly on the recognition of non formal learning, as well as on the recognition of non formal educators and their professional recognition as such. It was also proposed to increase the support and possibility to carry out longer term cooperation projects and programmes, not only limited to the Executive Agencies centralized yearly calls.

**Policy:** Support was asked for more coordination and cooperation between beneficiaries and decision-makers into making a stronger impact on national and international youth policies and its implementation, suggesting that a future programme would also envisage measures for the inclusion of all into a structured dialogue, creation of apt bodies, also support is requested for the facilitation, creation and functioning of youth policy bodies also at local level, not just national or international.

As more general needs fitting any of the above strands we had to work more on the topics of Employment and Entrepreneurship as well as Participation and Volunteerism.



*"Taking part in the YiA projects has changed the way I look at the world."*

*"Youth in Action has changed my life."*

*"There is nothing such as this program, there is no such other offer, not in member states level, not in cross border level, no in European level there is no such other program that gives a possibility to young people to develop their skills in non formal settings, and this is extremely needed, because if you were to take away Youth in Action, there will be an empty space. You will see if yia were not to exist in a short period we should create something similar to youth in action, there would be a gap that would not be filled"*