

The SALTO Tools for Learning Strategy

What are the pillars of this strategy?

The Tools For Learning Strategy has three pillars: The Tools Publications, The online Tool Box and the Tool Fair annual event. Together these three enable Educational Tools to be presented, promoted, reviewed and developed. The intention of the overall strategy is to make Tools for Learning accessible and to engage users in discussion about quality and development.

- The tools Publications such as the Practical Guides, Study and Research papers and the Newsletter are used as an educational background for engaging discussions, but also creating pedagogical reference to the strategy in the non-formal learning framework.
- The Tool Box is an online library where people can search for, review and contribute to the development of Tools for Learning. The Tool Box relies on trainers uploading their ideas and on their peers to use them and provide feedback.
- The Tool Fair is an annual event held in different European countries to showcase Tools for Learning and bring different stakeholders together to experience and discuss them. The Tool Fair also promotes the process of peer review and offers the insights of 'critical friends' for those who present.

A 'Tools for Learning Working Group' has been set up to guide the progress of this strategy. The Working Group is made up of representatives of National Agencies of the Erasmus +: Youth in Action Programme plus experienced trainers, coaches, experts and facilitators.

In addition to providing opportunities for the presentation and development of Tools for Learning, the Working Group also contributes to the wider dissemination of Tools for Learning beyond the youth programmes and into other areas such as Formal and Life Long Learning. The Tools for Learning strategy is the responsibility of the SALTO-YOUTH Euromed Resource Centre as a horizontal task on behalf of the Network of SALTO Resource Centres.

FOCUS ON TOOL FAIRS: 2015 is the 10th Anniversary!

When the first Tool Fair was held in 2006 in France and it was not expected to give birth to the dynamic which actually followed it. It has been quite a journey to the full inclusion of the Tool Fair as a pillar of the "tools for learning" strategy and beyond.

The Tool Fair is a place which offers the opportunity to test and taste new tools; to

analyse, exchange and evaluate them, in order to valorise creativity in non-formal education pedagogical initiatives. It is part of the SALTO horizontal responsibility to support active and innovative contributions to quality development, recognition and visibility of the youth sector and non-formal education as a whole. For a long time the main answer took the form of the online toolbox, which enabled youth workers to upload and discover tools. But what the online toolbox can't offer is the opportunity to share ideas and experiences within a "Rencontres du 3ème type" (or "Close Encounters of the Third Kind") way.

As needs and experiences change like calls for new answers the Fair has been renewed every year since then, proving to be a flexible model to be adapted to the place, country and needs of the moment. The core concept of the Tool Fair lies in the opportunity it offers to test, taste, analyse and improve the transferability of pedagogical tools. Involving local actors and national agencies as well as guests from the formal education domain, the Tool Fair usually lasts three or four days, and offers different possibilities to share tools and experiences: An

open space workshop enables participants to bring their tools to light, while one hour and two hour workshops permit a deeper presentation and discussion about the tools presented. During these workshops, the key idea is to remain as interactive as possible. Every participant is in turn presenting and commenting on or thinking about these tools which enrich the participants as much as they are enriched by them.

If the spirit and structure of the Tool Fair has been similar for the past 9 years, it is its permanent capacity of adaptation which has made it successful. Each place and each year has its own characteristics, constraints, advantages, needs and requirements. The strength of the Tool Fair lies in its flexibility. Despite the common goals, targets, and structures, each Tool Fair is unique and brought its stone to the pedagogical tools structure which is now to be continued in Hungary this year for the 10th Anniversary.

Federica Demicheli

SALTO EUROMED & GOOD PRACTICES
RESOURCE CENTRE

15 years of SALTO

support online

The website of the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres first saw the light of day in 2001. As any organisation, the SALTO network needed an **online business card**: What was SALTO and what did it do? That was the static content of our initial website. These were our first baby steps.

Promoting & finding training activities

The SALTO network started off as a training network. The SALTO-YOUTH.net website was an ideal tool to post information about our training offers. But why not give an overview of all youth work courses within the YOUTH programme and beyond. That's why we created a database-driven **European Training Calendar** (ETC) with a search function, so that users could easily find the courses corresponding to their training needs. 998,937 searches for training courses were carried out among 344 courses in 2014 (2737 searches every day).

▶ www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Training/

We created user-access for our National Agency colleagues and other training organisers so that they can upload and manage their own

courses. Quite specific for our context was that **National Agencies pre-select candidates**. They often pay travel costs for youth workers participating in courses linked to the European youth programme, so they should have a say in whom they send (depending on priorities, budget, etc.). In 2014, this was good for a total of 344 courses in the European Training Calendar.

🔔 Did you know you can register to **receive a notification** each time a new training course is added? That way you don't miss a single offer.

Another practical development in the Training Calendar is the application form system. After creating a course description in the database, you can choose to create an **online application form** via an easy drag and drop system. The link to the application form is shown in the Calendar. After the application deadline, you can simply download all applications in an excel sheet and start your participant management. This is quite a change from the hundreds of faxes or PDF applications training organisers had to manage before...

Make your life easier. Add your youth (work) training activity to the European Training Calendar and create an online application form. Success guaranteed.

Finding the right trainers & finding training jobs

Not only SALTOs, but also National Agencies, NGOs and other institutions are organising a gigantic number of training courses each year. But how can we find the best trainers for each of those courses. We maybe know a few trainers, but they are not necessarily experts on the topic of your course. In response to this, SALTO created a database of **Trainers Online for Youth (TOY)**. On the one hand, this made it easier for training organisers to find the trainer that fits (outside of the usual suspects), and for international youth (work) trainers this is an additional tool to promote their services.

👉 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/TOY/

The quality of trainers has always been a primary concern. But it is impossible for SALTO to assess the competences of all trainers in TOY. For this reason trainers have to list **minimum 3 references for international youth work training courses** in their profile. That way we can A) assume that they know what it is to work on a course as we know them in our field and B) training organisers can contact the reference persons to gather more information about the trainer in practice. Because you wouldn't just marry someone direct from a dating site, would you?

Life in the youth sector is very volatile. Many new trainers come (and they can register in TOY provided they have the 3 minimum references – it is not a closed club!) but also many go. That's why we do a **yearly TOY refreshment**. Trainers are requested to update their profile where needed. If they don't, we switch them offline (after a warning or two). But also the reference persons choose every year if they are still willing to be a reference person. Here as well, if they don't react to the refreshment link, we switch them offline. This system guarantees that the trainer profiles are maximum one year old and that the contact details in their profile are valid.

👉 **WANT TO BE A TRAINER?** You can create a profile in the Trainers Online for Youth database. Read all about it at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/NewTrainer/.

Currently, there are **450 experienced trainers online** (each of them having 3 international training experiences in the youth field). Per year, there are on average 80,000 searches in TOY (219 per day). But to make life of training organisers even easier, we created a possibility to send a Call for Trainers to all online trainers in TOY. That way available and interested trainers who fit the selection criteria (= self selection) will apply for the course. And for trainers this is a great way to get new jobs. In 2014 we recruited 113 trainers this way.

👉 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/CallsForTrainers/

Sharing educational tools & practices

In the hundreds of training courses the SALTO network organised over the years, the trainers developed many effective methods, ranging from dynamic energisers to full-blown simulation exercises and every type of educational method in between. We did not want to reserve these methods for the 20-30 participants of the course. As we work with European funding, we also wanted to share all the good things developed in our activities.

This was the philosophy behind the **Toolbox for Training and Youth Work**. We created an online database with educational methods, useful presentations and practical publications. In the beginning, only SALTO added 'tools', but soon we also opened up the Toolbox for anyone to share the training and youth work methods they developed. After a standard quality check, good tools are switched online. An ideal way to promote your great work.

👉 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/

Insert Image IT Group website 3 or 4 here or nearby

With **1250 methods online**, it can be a bit difficult to find what you are looking for. That's why we developed a more strategic approach to categorize the different methods in the Toolbox. You can search according to type of method, the topic addressed or the type of project you

can use the tool in. That makes it easier to find the right methods for your activities. 138,859 searches were carried out in 2014 (380/day).

Receive educational inspiration in your inbox: register to **get a notification** each time a new tool goes online.

But you are not alone to assess the quality of a tool in the toolbox. There is also a **star rating system** that gives you an indication of the popularity of the method. Moreover, it is possible to add comments to the methods on how you used or adapted. A great way to get inspiration for your own activity.

Besides relevant tools, SALTO also comes in contact with many great projects. The European Commission, National Agencies but also course participants frequently asked us for **examples of good practice**. Projects can inspire and spark of new projects. That's why we also put a number of good practice projects online on different European priority topics. These are preselected by SALTO and described in a way that you can learn from them.

👉 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/GoodPractices/

Finding partners for youth projects & find interesting projects

A recurring challenge in European youth work is to find appropriate partners for international projects. Different National Agencies had partner request forms that could be sent to other NAs and published in a newsletter or on a webpage. A very longwinded and cumbersome process.

A **partner-finding database**, in which you can find partners for your project or where you can express your interest in joining one, appeared to be a better solution. The only problem was that 4 or 5 organisations at the same time had the same idea. Having a number of parallel databases reduced the efficiency of partner-finding. That's why SALTO, as a European support network for international youth work, proposed one central partner-finding databases. That is how **Otlas** was born.



👉 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Otlas/

Otlas stands for Organisational Atlas (and perceptive readers probably also noticed that it is SALTO spelled backwards) and gives a chance to **any youth NGO to register online**. Currently, more than 6300 youth organisations and youth groups did. Besides an organisational profile, NGOs can also add projects to Otlas for which they are looking for partners. And interested organisations can of course look for projects to partner with. In 2014 **1,823,620 searches** were carried out (4996 per day) to find the perfect organisation or to join one of the 3000+ proposed projects.

Spreading the news

From the short description above, it is clear that there is a wealth of resources online. But you don't necessarily want to go through it all. Instead you can register the **SALTO newsletters** to get the most important information and the most recent changes delivered in your inbox. You can select between the different priority topics SALTO is working on.

👉 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Newsletter/ (log in with your SALTO username and password, or create one if you didn't register on SALTO-YOUTH.net yet)

What does the future bring for the SALTO website?

The development of the SALTO website over the years was a success story. More and more useful youth work databases were added to the web site. SALTO-YOUTH.net increasingly became the central “place” in Europe for youth work experts to find and spread information.

Towards a portal for youth work

During Erasmus+:Youth in Action Programme (2014-2020), SALTO would like to further develop its website from a “place” towards a “portal” with an integrated set of tools for (international) youth work. The SALTO website has the potential to become the European portal for youth work, complementary to the European Youth Portal for young people.

Quite a number of online tools for youth work already exist and are well used. They serve a real need. Missing are tools for interaction and cooperation. We will start adding social features and communication tools to the SALTO website and its different databases. These should allow youth work experts to communicate and cooperate online in open and closed groups.

The possibilities are endless...

For example, trainers could prepare participants in a closed training course environment. Youth work experts could debate online the pros and cons of educational approaches and tools. Working groups could have an online space to make available documents, to discuss and progress. NA staff could use the online possibilities to develop common long term strategic projects or single activities to support the implementation of the Erasmus+:Youth in Action Programme.

Having these opportunities on SALTO-YOUTH.net would avoid problems regarding ownership, privacy (commercial companies collect and use your information), organisational issues (in some organisations Facebook & co are not allowed during work times) and tailor-made

sustainability (SALTO will continuously develop the tools with the specific needs of the sector in mind).

Upgrading to the mobile world

Another issue we are very conscious about is the evolution towards an increasingly mobile world. Gartner Research Institute predicts that in 2015 only 321 million PCs will be sold, in contrast to almost 2 billion smartphones. Half of all Europeans have a smartphone in their pocket. So we also need to make sure that our youth work content is also nicely available on the go, and we could also look into additional applications.

Why not think of a SALTO app that gives you a notification when a new content is added to the SALTO website? Or we could bring youth projects in contact according to their geographical location. Information should also be easily shared from any mobile or internet platform, to reach as many relevant people as possible. Because sharing resources, is what SALTO is all about.

Bear with us

Technical changes take time and money; two precious resources we have to use carefully. However, in the step-by-step approach we are taking, we hope to complete our dream of the future by the end of the Erasmus+:Youth in Action Programme. Any web developments involve lots of trials and sometimes errors. So bear with us and please let us know if you encounter any teething problems.

Suggestions for improvements are always welcome. That is how we slowly but surely build a communication and cooperation platform for youth work in Europe, open for professionals and volunteers, practitioners, researcher and decision makers: for you!

Andreas Bergendal, Udo Teichmann, Federica Demichelli & Tony Geudens

SALTO IT GROUP