



Youth
in Action
Programme

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS, QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE
EVALUATION MEETING:

WHASSUP WITH YOU (th exchanges) ?



This booklet is the result of an international encounter between youth workers and youth leaders, reflecting upon Youth Exchanges within the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission. It is not meant to be the universal truth, but rather an invitation to join our reflections which hopefully lead towards more qualitative Youth Exchanges in the future. Take yourself on a journey while wandering around in this electronic publication!

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PARTICIPANTS' VIEW

QUOTES!

CONTRIBUTORS

ORGANISATION

VISUALIZE THE MEETING!

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Reaching the end of the YiA¹ Programme, this evaluation meeting/seminar set out to gather experienced promoters to create together an impact assessment of the use of youth exchanges on the young people involved, as well as the local communities affected by these youth exchanges.

Our objectives were to:

- Share good and bad practices in relation to the YEs².
- Evaluate the impact of the YE strategies on the involved young people.
- Evaluate the impact and involvement on local community through implementation of YE.
- Evaluate the compatibility of other YiA actions combined with the strategy use of YE.
- Evaluate how YE have promoted European citizenship-awareness for young people and local communities involved.
- Create an online document with summary of the finding and documentation.

The programme of the Evaluation Meeting was planned as below:

Wednesday 26/06	Thursday 27/06	Friday 28/06	Saturday 29/06	Sunday 30/06
	Breakfast in local café	Breakfast in local café	Breakfast in local café	Breakfast in local café
Arrivals	Debate and discussion groups on youth exchanges as a tool/instrument	Impact of youth exchanges on local communities and other stakeholders	Open Agenda	'Unfinished business' Evaluation Follow up & DEOR
Lunch in community centre	Lunch: Barbeque on the central square village	Lunch: buffet at swimmingpool	Lunch: Barbeque on the central square village	Lunch in Assentiz
Last arrivals in the afternoon	What's up with learning & Youthpass	Summary of findings	Defining and developing common document with findings and recommendations	Departures in the afternoon
Getting to know each other Intro in the programme	Development of a European awareness and citizenship	Free time and optional activities with the local community		
Dinner in Restaurant Marmeleira	International dinner in local families	Dinner in Vila da Marmeleira	Dinner on public event (combined with 'Bull-play') Bullfight arena	
Practice fair: overview of youth exchanges practices	International evening with families, live music	Fire evening	Official 'closure' Live concert open for public	

1: YiA = Youth in Action

2: YE(s) = Youth Exchange(s)

Even though the programme was fully set and prepared, the decision was taken to engage in an organic process where the participants were very much involved in the shaping of the sessions and activities for the week and how the programme changed and evolved.

We have based ourselves upon the 6 questions which are used in the 'box exercise' of the ATOQ (Advanced Training on Quality), a training course for experienced promoters of YEs. These questions became the backbone of all the discussions and further in this booklet are included the outcomes.

The 6 questions:

INVOLVEMENT OF PROMOTERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Can you say that the process has been developed in **equal ownership** by all involved promoters.

(This does not mean that all promoters have contributed equally but that all promoters have had an equal 'voice'/'deciding power' in the different steps of the process (preparation-implementation-follow up).

NON FORMAL LEARNING METHODS APPLIED

In order to address the different needs of participants and the desired outcomes, you used a variety of non-formal learning methods and techniques in your youth exchange project?

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROJECT

In the Programme guide it is stated that young people should be actively involved in **all** the stages of the Project, meaning preparation, implementation and follow up. Was this the case in your project?

(ps: actively = really contributing in terms of work done, decisions etc)

PROMOTION OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Can you state with 100% certainty that your project has given the young people more self-confidence when they are confronted with:

- New experiences
- New attitudes
- New behaviours

INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION

Your Youth Exchange increased young people's positive awareness of intercultural dialogue.

EUROPEAN DIMENSION

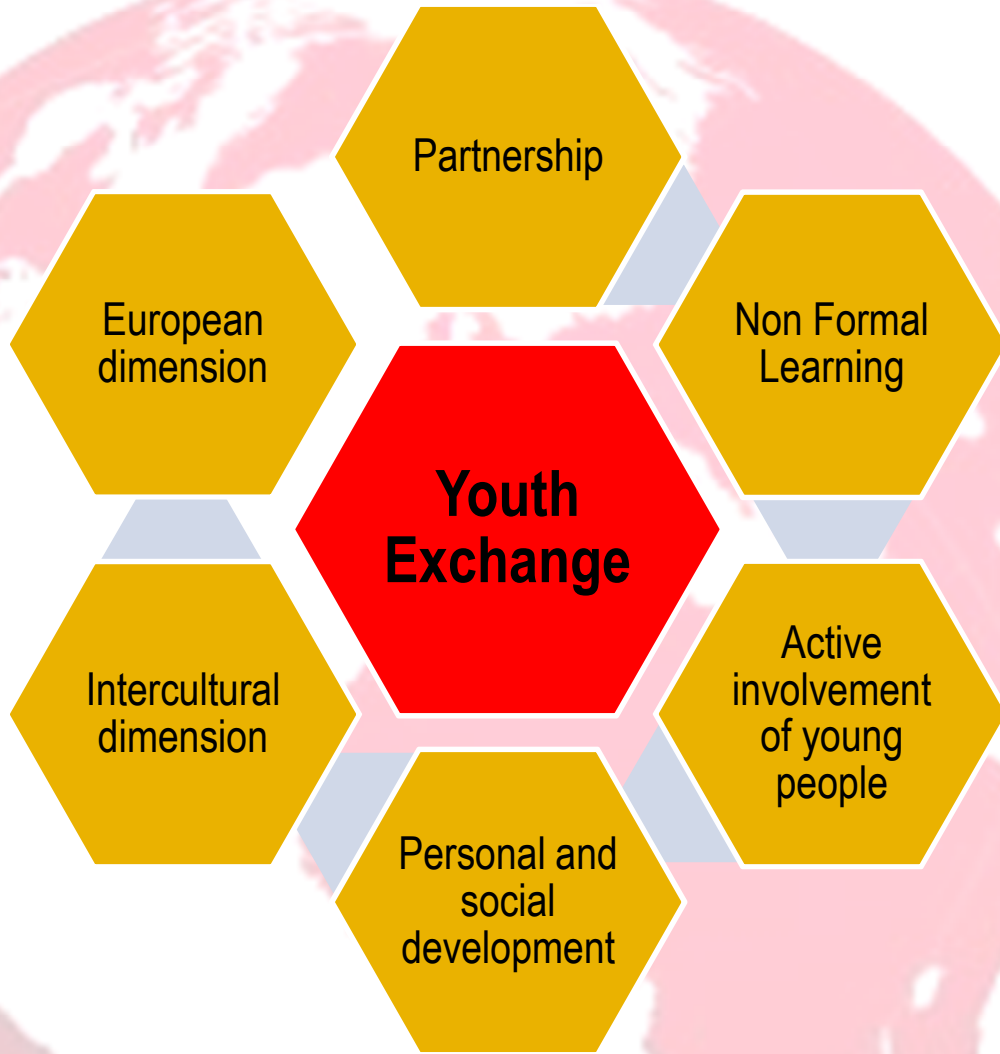
The Youth Exchange increased the young people's awareness in relation to the European/international context in which they live.

The uniqueness of the “Whassup with You(th exchanges)” Evaluation Meeting lies in two different pillars:

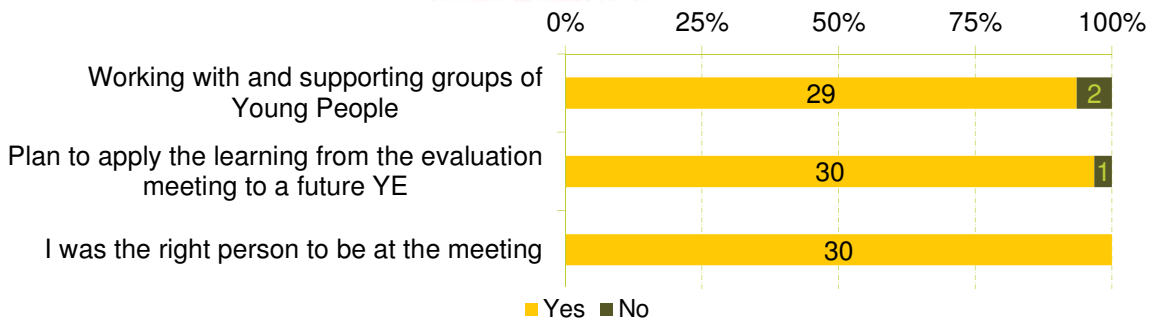
- i. The place where it took place and condition of accommodation for all participants
- ii. The way of working as a whole team, with an open agenda and complete sincere and interactive way of building the elements of the programme together, according to the needs of the people involved and flow of time.

In more details:

- i. The meeting took place in a rural village in the centre of Portugal, “Vila da Marmeleira”, which has 460 inhabitants. Over the past 3 years different international activities has been implemented in this community, offering a win-win situation of all involved, local development and a learning for local people through their involvement and participation in the activities, besides the deep and rich intercultural experience of participants. Hosting the Evaluation Meeting in a place such as this, accommodating the participants in local homes, taking themselves the responsibility of organising their living together for the dates of the meeting and involving in all stages the local community, was one the most rewarding and crucial for the success factors of **“Whassup with You(th exchanges)”**. The village together with the participants of the meeting worked as a model example of how international activities, such as YE, can involve complete communities in their implementation and broaden by this way the experience, the long term non formal learning and impact not only on the participants but also directly on the community therefore completing a bigger circle.
- ii. Although a draft programme was designed so as to facilitate and bring participants prepared in the common logic of the meeting, the way of working during the meeting changed. The group of participants together with the trainers worked as team, in an open agenda, taking initiatives, making proposals, discussing together the results of the workshops and adapting the flow of the activities to the needs that were formed, step by step. The meeting became fully participative with no strictly defined roles, only facilitating the adaptation to the local community activities that were prepared especially for the event.



A look upon the selected participants:



PARTNERSHIP

One of the elements that rarely is of high quality during the projects is the partnership; the improvement and key security of it, comes as a need. Many examples of bad and good experiences were discussed and this then opened the issue of different ways to improve it.

- ✓ Working in participative democratic way with the people of the same group but also with the other partners.
- ✓ Having clear roles before, during and after the project with a person in charge of each step.
- ✓ Working in parallel with many channels of communication, clarifying the rules of communication and always setting deadlines which should be respected by everybody
- ✓ The young people involved should not be thrown in the middle of the story but step by step, increasing their experience of taking part and organising a YE.
- ✓ Involving as many stakeholders from society, people or institutions, who can benefit from the project, makes the partners more strong and confident in the partnership with others
- ✓ The involvement of stakeholders should be fair and promote the equal ownership of the project.
- ✓ Partners, young people, different stakeholders can fulfill a successful partnership only if they are passionate of what they do and willing to contribute in every step and need.
- ✓ Economic issues, as budgeting, to be together calculated or at least equally informed.
- ✓ Feasibility visit, as a tool of quality preparation and partnership, gives an added value to the final result. It requires a long perspective but it can be very effective. A good practice mentioned, which increase the ownership of the project, is the possibility of including “blind” participants like e.g. the whole group of parents or local authorities, or even organise a “getting to know each other” dinner with everybody involved.
- ✓ The partnership should be equal in all three phases of a project (pre-during-after) although it is usually equal during the activities, less in the preparation and not even there after the activity. The 1st step maybe better comes from the coordinator/host. A selection of partners ready and willing to contribute is necessary.
- ✓ Being strategic, even working in a “business” way maybe helps in organising things and we should (not?) be afraid of the formal term. Being professional doesn’t stop the magic or prevent the surprises that give the “spices” in a project.
- ✓ Being clear with partners about everything, aim, objectives and mostly about the reality of each country, that can influence the way of cooperation (practicalities, working language, application process etc).
- ✓ APV always recommended. A qualitative APV is the one where all partners share responsibility, young people are involved and take decisions, and its results are respected by everybody.

**... BUT STEP BY STEP,
INCREASING THEIR
EXPERIENCE ...**

NON FORMAL LEARNING

- ✓ It is important to find methods to review always the activities implemented, debriefing them and complete the cycle of learning:” do-analyse-reflect-replan-do”
- ✓ Debriefing in a longer time frame, when things are calmed down, gives another view on them and it is recommended especially in projects where the young people are involved in the whole process of preparation-implementation-evaluation-follow up
- ✓ The group identified the need of an activity, like APV, but in the end of the project, that can give the possibility of sharing the learning outcomes of the young people and the stakeholders involved and write them down in the evaluation report of the project. In case a meeting like that cannot be organised as a part of the project, and if we really are interested in the non formal learning impact, then support measures give the possibility of implementing one, as a separate project. The need of sharing learning outcomes with all stakeholders was identified and methods for that should be found in the future
- ✓ Longer duration of the project gives the possibility to slow down the process so as to realise it!
- ✓ Using non-formal methods has to do a lot with the intercultural learning and depth of the preparation that has taken place.
- ✓ Youthpass: the use of the tool by the years became easier and now youth workers can support the young people better than in the past. It is proved that is Youthpass works as a “kick-off” paper for many young people with fewer opportunities since it may be their first ‘certificate’ achieved. It would be useful if we could find ways to train all the participants of how they can integrate this in their CV, since it was mentioned that many of them not knowing how to use it, don’t do it.
- ✓ Complementary forms of educations need to cooperate if we want success to come. Recognising the non formal sector, building activities with/within the formal sector can prove that YE are not just playing but learning is in their “hearts”. This can only be achieved if all stakeholders take things seriously.

**... THE NEED OF AN ACTIVITY,
LIKE APV, BUT IN THE END OF
THE PROJECT ...**



Expectations on the first day, done with a metaphor of the production process of Marmalade. A clear link to the origin of the name Vila da Marmeleira!

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- ✓ Different level of participation in different activities, according to the competences of young people, can help in motivating them and giving them the opportunity to become more mature in organising themselves their projects.
- ✓ A good practice was discussed, as a tool to indicate where and when young people can take decisions: “Traffic light method RED - YELLOW – GREEN” where Red – to the leaders to decide, Green – to the young people to decide, Yellow – things that we always try to make green, but sometimes become red (matter of experience)
- ✓ However methods need to be adapted to the group and its needs e.g. traffic lights maybe seem childish in the eyes of a 25 year old young person.
- ✓ We shouldn't forget the whole range of age participating in YE, since many times we behave like we are working only with minors.
- ✓ Tools of keeping young people active in the NGO's life, after a YE seem to be also a need. Many they have faced this reality with participants very enthusiastic during the project but disappearing afterwards as concerns their involvement in local activities.
- ✓ A common mention was also that groups of “mixed” identity, like the groups of young people in a YE, when they face a new environment, they behave with new norms, as one group.
- ✓ Clarifying the framework so as everybody, all young people from all countries, feel comfortable, can raise the sense of ownership and motivate their participation.
- ✓ Feeling safe and secure should be our aim, no matter the characteristic of the group. Trust is also an important element that needs to be step by step built.
- ✓ Although the participation of young people nowadays is of better quality, the challenge still remains of how to involve participants from sending organisations. Here comes the importance of a strong partnership and of support measures (like PBA³) that will put young people together to design their projects and us (the youth workers) around them to support them.
- ✓ Taking always in consideration the different characteristics of the groups, giving priority in inclusiveness, not taking for granted the time needed for preparation in different realities and supporting the whole process and only part of it, are key factors that can help us of improving the active involvement of all young people in the project.
- ✓ Don't forget that it takes time for becoming mature and ready to organise a YE with full participation and it can be a valuable experience for everybody, even us, learning from the process.

... DIFFERENT LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, ACCORDING TO THE COMPETENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE ...

3: PBA = Partnership Building Activity

PROMOTION OF SOCIAL & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Different tools and practices were discussed, always underlining how important it is to work with a long time perspective and not having in mind only the timeframe of a YE.

- ✓ Follow up activities are important tools to measure the development and should happen from all partners and not only the hosting one that is a common fact.
- ✓ Youthpass is a tool of following the development during and after the process.
- ✓ Motivating the young people to write down their stories brings out the different elements of development.
- ✓ In some cases, it proved to be a good practice, to involve researchers who followed the whole process and came with conclusions.
- ✓ A “lively” environment where young people create and take initiatives can step by step support their development during the projects but also during the activities in their local community.
- ✓ The society, the local authorities can also gain and develop their experience and capabilities through the projects.
- ✓ There are many methods to measure quantity but how can we count quality? This question still remains...
- ✓ The role of youth workers in the whole process is more than important not only because they are role-models for the young people but also because they can take the needed measures in cases where young people “lose” themselves during the project. Youth workers should give space and time, different one in different young people, trying always to build self-directed learning processes.
- ✓ Emotional intelligence, respecting the human feelings and train ourselves as youth workers in developing our competences, can have an indirect but very crucial impact to the young people, we work with.
- ✓ Young people are “flexible” and able to change their behavior according to the group they interact in the moment, so it is important to give space for recognising the group and make them feel comfortable.
- ✓ Sharing evaluation results can prevent future challenges and help in organising tools for supporting their personal development.

**... YOUNG PEOPLE ARE
“FLEXIBLE” AND ABLE TO
CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR ...**

INTERCULTURAL & EUROPEAN DIMENSION

The interpersonal relations are always more important for creating the national image of another country, in comparison to whatever you have read or watched. So being in an international context and forming a group can create identity and promote overcoming the “fences”.

- ✓ Increasing working in our mother tongue during the project, can increase integration and already some countries are focusing in this
- ✓ Identity always influence what we want to share and how we do that
- ✓ Many challenges appeared the last years, when working with young people in European dimension, due to crisis. So we had cases where the ones who aren't in EU/Euro or the ones who live the crisis, they don't want to enter.
- ✓ A crucial question raised was if we have shared in EU the values. Because only then we can create an environment where young people can start searching their identity and their role in this big society.
- ✓ YE are giving the opportunity to have a look outside towards Europe and even if it is not 100% perfect way, it is important to take advantage of it and have a critical or not view on things. Learning and development of young people can be strong if we are working in this frame.
- ✓ Intercultural interaction is part of our history and this can be proved since some parts of one's cultural identity, is a part of other's. So it is simple, not simplified issue and we need just to be aware of that.
- ✓ Politics in one hand, like they are perceived today, it can be a danger since young people are very critical and negative to this sector. On other hand, if we make a try to explore the term of Politics (from Platon: politics: being active citizen (“polis” in greek=citizen)), can give the chance to the young people to explore the area more and try to see what and how can improve it.
- ✓ It is quite difficult to change the perception of what politics are and most of the times we are far from what is happening in the political national/European/global level.
- ✓ Question for reflection for everybody involved in YE: “How many of us have we talked about these topics with young people in our projects, or during preparation of them??”
Working with a topic is quite different to simply discussing about it.

... WORKING WITH A TOPIC IS QUITE DIFFERENT TO SIMPLY DISCUSSING ABOUT IT ...

EVALUATION NOTE, August 31, 2013

“European Evaluation Meeting “Whassup with you(-th exchanges)”

26 – 30 June, 2013, Vila da Marmeleira – Portugal

Participant: Marigona Shabiu

Organization: Kosovar Association for Human and Children's Rights,

Country: Kosovo



The Evaluation Meeting “Whassup with you (-th exchanges), was a great experience for me as a youth activist. During the meeting, have been evaluated the impacts of youth exchanges on young people involved and communities where those activities were implemented. All participants, coming from different countries were directly or indirectly involved in youth exchanges in different ways, some with huge experiences, some with less, where all contributed by sharing them freely, in order to become an inspiration for the others, as many became for me, to generate new ideas for future projects, to find out difficulties in their work, and to bring on the spot the youth perspective of young people involved.

In terms of program I would say it was very well prepared, organized and suitable to the objectives of the meeting. The agenda was always communicated to participants by the trainers and it was flexible enough so we could intervene and adjust it or propose/suggest anything.

The trainers were so cooperative, inspiring and dedicated to participants and overall activities in order to make possible that everything was going well and smoothly.

Living as we were ordinary inhabitants of the village was another fruitful side of the whole story, because I experienced a different way of living in a different cultural environment, which turned out to be a source of socialization and interconnection with citizens of the village.

The experience gained through this meeting was made even more enjoyable and useful, due to the fact of meeting people from 15 different countries, with whom I have shared experiences, ideas related to our work and life in general; we have learned something for the histories and cultures of one another countries, we tasted food, tried to learn words in different languages, and so on. All these contributed in increasing of the intercultural dialogue and awareness, which is a meaning full outcome while working in international settings. The meeting was also productive in terms of starting to establish future cooperation to work together towards common goals.

**... LIVING AS WE WERE
ORDINARY INHABITANTS OF
THE VILLAGE WAS ANOTHER
FRUITFUL SIDE ...**

Whassup with you evaluation meeting report (June 26-30, 2013)

Participant: Ruzanna Nahapetyan, Armenia

With this report I would like to highlight the importance of the evaluation meeting for me as a participant and youth activist.



General impression from the meeting

The project was well-organized, motivating and inspiring for participants. During non-formal meeting the participants were sharing the excitement about the meeting some of them were stating that the meeting is life changing experience for them. In general, the atmosphere was friendly (like all participants knew each other for ages) no participant was isolated or ignored by trainers or participants team, everyone had a chance to share and learn from others, especially when we had such a multicultural team. The location was just the one needed for such a meeting; it supported the participants to be fully involved in spirit of the meeting. Moreover, the engagement of village served as the best example of how youth exchanges affect local communities in a positive way.

The meeting was organized in very dynamic way. The team enjoyed open air meeting as well as the opportunity to be part of local community (attending the community swimming pool, common dinners etc.)

I/we learnt:

- ✓ How YEs influence in other countries both in positive and negative ways
- ✓ Different ways of impact of YEs on young people and ability to evaluate and reflect those impacts
- ✓ The importance of involving local community considering the risk of influencing in a negative ways
- ✓ Promotion of European Citizenship through YEs

**... SOME OF THEM WERE
STATING THAT THE MEETING
IS LIFE CHANGING
EXPERIENCE ...**

Trainers:

The trainers are experienced and have deep understanding of the topics covered during the meeting. They did the best to engage each and every participant in team work and to make everyone's voice heard. As a result we had a great team.

Follow up

As a participant I am in contact with my team members to discuss our ideas and to develop mutual projects. We also just support each other in a case we need some help during our activities back in our countries. In addition to this, I have shared all the knowledge and skills with my NGO colleagues.

**Having reflection
always identifies the
learning**

**Show me and I may not
watch, tell me and I may
not listen, involve me and
I will understand**

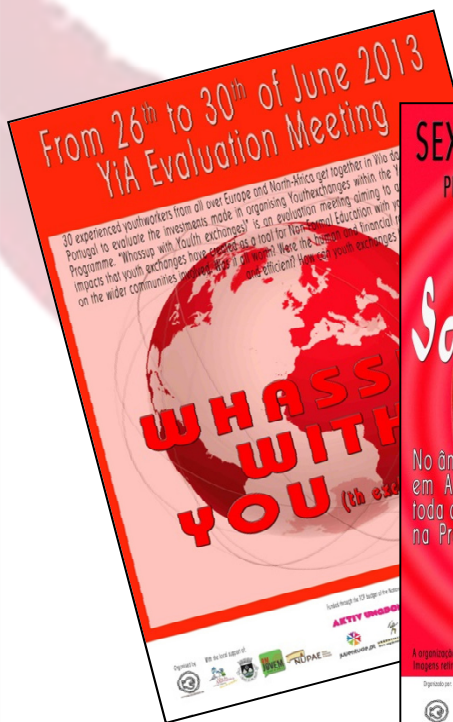
**Never be afraid of
including**

**YE is a micrograph of
humanity, in time and
size**

**Europe is a huge
project of peace**

**YE is like a marriage
...being able to create
"we" without
excluding "I"**

**Live all moments
(motto for participants
and organisers)**



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AKTIV UNGDOM



LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

This training course has been implemented with a wide set of partnerships, both at local, regional and international level, besides the active involvement and support of different families and local population



HOSTING OF THE EVALUATION MEETING



VISUALIZE THE MEETING



With the full team receiving participants in the airport with a first snack and drink



During the first dinner an official welcome word by local and regional policymakers



Breakfast every morning in buffet style in the local central café Tijuca



Session in the former primary school of the village: here the expectations and contributions



Lunch twice in BBQ style, for some the very first time in their life ...



Small groups work and discussions in the shadow areas around the school



Preparations of the international evening: getting ready to receive the families



1 of the 6 families receiving a small group of participants for dinner in their own house



Interaction with local habitants was a constant ingredient



Similar to youth exchanges: we clean up together and share responsibilities for the space



During informal moments ... an improvised internet 'café'



Lunch in buffet style: meat, fish, vegetarian etc.



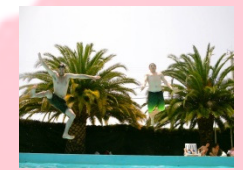
Salsa night together with the local population on the central square



Optional fire spitting session during free time at night.



Session on the 6 important questions during the Evaluation Meeting



A fresh dive in the swimming pool, accessible during all informal moments (daytime)



1 of the 5 houses in the village hosting pax and team. This one claimed by DK flag



Final event: gathering together and informal chats/discussions



Village population presence during final event



For some participants this was indeed an exciting intercultural final event ...



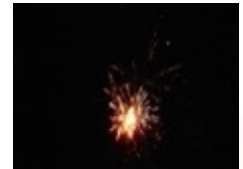
A traditional group of 'forcados' during the bull games



2 pax together with the Ambassador of Denmark who joined the full final event



Dinner in traditional way: a full pork grilled and 'locals' giving a helping hand



Closure of the final evening with fireworks ...



The last morning: final conclusions, evaluation and a groups photo on the central square



Time for goodbye to the village and direction Lisbon for airport and Expo site



Pax who leave in the late afternoon having a 'cultural' visit to the expo site in Lisbon



... the end of 4 days full of action, debate and learnings ...