



European  
Commission

Youth in Action  
mobilising  
the potential  
of young  
Europeans

# Youth Support:

## stronger backing for youth projects

**T**he Youth in Action programme provides the opportunity for those involved in youth work to come together and compare experiences, and helps improve the quality of their work — and get better results out of the programme. It funds training for youth workers and people working in youth organisations.

It also promotes research into youth work, forming a much-needed bridge between theory and practice in this area. The benefits include a broadened understanding among the participants of the challenges facing young people — notably for those suffering disadvantages or from minorities. Projects have boosted the expertise of youth workers in areas ranging from structured dialogue, through effective communication skills, to teamwork. They have also helped young people to achieve a better transition between school education and professional lives, to tackle the problems of unemployment among



▶▶ *'As a consequence of training trainers, I am now on the trainers panel for the national agency and continue to deliver many training sessions for it. I have learnt so much about the Youth in Action programme that I integrate it into my professional life and share my knowledge with many organisations.'*

▶▶ young people, as well as to stimulate research on the impact of non-formal learning on key competencies for lifelong learning.

These actions range from job shadowing to feasibility visits, from evaluation meetings to study visits, and to supporting partnership-building and networking activities in areas such as intercultural learning. Project promoters,

the Youth in Action national agencies and the SALTO resource centres have increasingly delivered high quality training events and built competence among youth workers, youth leaders and youth researchers. This has proved a valuable method of securing quality levels across the Youth in Action programme and of assuring better recognition of non-formal education.



## Some of the many Youth Support projects completed so far

### 1. Making information available to young people

This 12-day job-shadowing project hosted in 2010 by 'In Petto', a youth information service in Antwerp, focused on different aspects of youth information work: management, information development and distribution (printed and online), dealing with questions from young people, detecting information needs, selecting topics, involving young people, networking, and use of media and online communication channels. Attention was given to cooperation between the national, regional and local levels, peer-to-peer work and the use of social games as methods for disseminating youth information. Youth policy in Flanders was also

reviewed, including how it supports and interacts with youth information work. The experience gained by the representative of the youth non-governmental organisation was shared with other staff members so that they could learn from the Belgian/Flemish experience and create strategies for the further development of a planned youth information centre in Novi Sad (Serbia).

**Project funded by**  
the Youth in Action national agency in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium

**Hosting organisation:**  
• In Petto, Youth Service Information and Prevention, Belgium.

**Partner organisation:**  
• Omladinska nevladina organizacija (youth non-governmental organisation), Serbia.

## 2. Euro–African partnership for youth work

Empowering youth organisations and structures in Ghanaian, Kenyan and South African civil society was the aim of this project. A group of 24 experienced youth workers from 11 European countries travelled to these countries to work with 96 local youth workers and multipliers. Subsequently, a seminar in Europe in August 2010 brought together European youth workers and six African participants to share experiences and define possible paths ahead for future Euro–African relations, which were compiled in a guide on 'Facilitating a sustainable Euro–African partnership for change'.

The European Federation for Intercultural Learning that coordinated the project is a European umbrella organisation of 27 American Field Service (AFS)

organisations — educational NGOs offering intercultural learning opportunities for young people around the world.

**Project funded by**  
the the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency  
in Brussels

**Coordinating organisation:**

- The European Federation for Intercultural Learning, Belgium.

**Partner organisations:**

Intercultura — AFS Portugal, Portugal; Organisation for Intercultural Education, Kenya; AFS Intercultura Espana, Spain; AFS Ausstauschprogramme für Interkulturelles Lernen, Austria; AFS Programmes interculturels asbl, Belgium; AFS Intercultur, Denmark; AFS Magyarország, Hungary; Intercultura, Italy; AFS Intercultural Programs Finland ry, Finland; AFS Iceland, Iceland; AFS Interkulturelle Begegnungen, Germany; AFS Interkulturele Programma's v.z.w., Belgium; AFS Starptautiskas Apmainas Programmas Latvija, Latvia; Intercultural Exchange Programmes, Ghana; AFS Interculture South Africa, Zambia.

## 2 TESTIMONIALS

*‘I am now able to use my personal experience to challenge stereotypes. I work with youngsters in Latvia with the AFS goal in mind — to educate people to be more tolerant towards differences in the hope of building a peaceful world.’*

*‘Projects like this not only help individual AFS organisations to grow but offer further intercultural learning opportunities for AFS volunteers. Such projects spread the idea of AFS and foster a better world through the people involved in the project and those touched by it during and after the experience.’*

## 3. New impetus for structured dialogue

The francophone youth council in Belgium (Conseil de Jeunesse de la Communauté française de Belgique) brought together 33 representatives of the national working groups for structured dialogue. This involved European youth councils and youth organisations from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The aim was to improve the structured dialogue instituted by the EU trio of presidencies of Belgium, Hungary and Spain.

Participants met in December 2010 in Belgium and were able to share good practice, and to discuss tools that should be developed and strategies that could promote structured dialogue in countries where this is not yet established. Structured dialogue with youth is integral to the EU youth

strategy, feeding continuous joint reflection on European cooperation in the youth field. It involves consultations with young people and youth organisations at all levels in Member States, and at EU youth conferences organised by the presidency countries, and has focused on themes such as youth employment.

**Project funded by**  
the Youth in Action national agency in the Flemish-speaking  
community of Belgium

**Hosting organisation:**

- Conseil de la jeunesse de la Communauté française, Belgium.

**Partner organisations:**

Portuguese National Youth Council, Portugal; Cyprus Youth Council, Cyprus; Dutch National Youth Council, the Netherlands; the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, Sweden; Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, Bulgaria; Mladinski svet Slovenije, Slovenia; Gyermek és Ifjúsági Konferencia, Hungary; Csoport-éka Association, Hungary; Consejo de la Juventud de Castilla y León, Spain; CNAJEP, France; Austrian Youth Council (OJV), Austria; Deutscher Bundesjugendring / German Federal Youth Council, Germany.

*Participants were able to share good practice, and discuss tools that should be developed and strategies that could promote structured dialogue in countries where this is not yet established*

*The aim was to stimulate research on the impact of non-formal learning on key competences for lifelong learning*

#### 4. Practice meets research

This three-day seminar, which took place in Lithuania in December 2010, marked a milestone in the recognition of non-formal education through evidenced-based research. It strengthened cooperation among researchers and practitioners providing non-formal learning in the context of youth work. The aim was to stimulate research on the impact of non-formal learning on key competences for lifelong learning.

Twenty-two youth work practitioners and educational researchers from European countries took part, and gained a better understanding of each other's contexts. Existing practices and trends in research methodologies, youth work and non-formal learning were reviewed. The programme was designed to develop follow-up actions combining youth work, non-formal learning and research. Discussions also took place with decision-makers,

representatives of the Youth in Action national agencies, youth departments, and the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The project was organised by the Lithuanian Association of Non-formal Education and organisations involved in the UNIQUE network, which focuses its work on the recognition of non-formal learning, learning to learn and support measures for trainers.

**Project funded by**

**the Youth in Action national agency in Lithuania**

**Hosting organisation:**

- Lietuvos neformaliojo ugdymo asociacija, Lithuania.

**Partner organisations:**

Unique — Verein fuer Innovation und Qualitaet in der Bildung, Austria; Ushangary, Finland; Pame Ambro, Italy; NGO Support Centre, Cyprus; Rede Inducar, CRL, Portugal; IKAB — Bildungsweg e.V, Germany; Generation and Educational Science Institute — GENESIS, Austria; COS-Cooperativa de Educacao, Cooperacao e Desenvolvimento, CRL, Portugal; Citizens in Action, Greece; Association Cazalla Intercultural, Spain; TiPovej Institute for creative society, Slovenia; Dutch National Youth Council, the Netherlands; Generation and Educational Science Institute — GENESIS, Germany.

#### 4 TESTIMONIALS



‘The seminar was a valuable first step, generating ideas for introductory seminars on research methodologies and creating a community of research and education practitioners.’

‘Finding a good match between education research and non-formal education will always take time, creativity and the will to learn.’

‘The seminar opened up avenues that are now being explored.’

#### 5. Dialogue to deter youth extremism

This project brought together 24 young activists from different cultural and religious backgrounds from Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It explored what role youth and youth organisations can play in intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in preventing violent extremism among young people, particularly through using interactive non-formal methods. The six-day

training course took place in Bansko (Bulgaria) in 2010.

**Project funded by**

**the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency**

**in Brussels**

**Coordinating organisation:**

- Euro Mediterranean Centre for Cross-cultural Dialogue, Bulgaria.

**Partner organisations:**

Development no Borders, Egypt; Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo, Italy; Abu-Assukar Centre for Peace and Dialogue, Palestine; Youth Division of Tel. Aviv Municipality, Israel; Youth Human Rights Initiative, Greece.

## 6. Overcoming stereotypes in Kigali

Kigali served as a living classroom in this project, in which participants heard from survivors of mutilations, amputations and massacres in Rwanda in 1994, and saw the memorials and the recovery underway in society. It aimed to help form a new generation of young journalists that could promote a culture of peace and diversity. In 2011 the project brought together a network of 12 journalists from Europe and 12 from Africa, to raise their awareness of their own stereotypes and prejudices, and the

social implications and related media responsibility. The participants were helped to develop skills so they could multiply their experience and learning back home.

**Project funded by**  
the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency  
in Brussels

**Coordinating organisation:**  
▪ European Peer Training Organisation, Belgium.  
**Partner organisations:**  
Pistes Solidaires, France; Instants Productions asbl, Belgium; Liga Pentru Educatie Culture si Sport, Romania; Urungano Youth Media, Rwanda; Bolu Valiligi — Bolu Governorship, Turkey; 33-Europe en Espana, Spain; Iriba Afrique asbl, Burundi; BE International O.S., Czech Republic; Tartu Rotaract Klubi, Estonia.

### 6 TESTIMONIALS

‘During 12 days of training where journalists from Africa and Europe confronted their own stereotypes and prejudices, I learnt a lot and I understood one thing above all: all human beings are equal.’

‘All kinds of discrimination prevent you from thinking positively, they distort your focus and they create unnecessary divisions. They stop you moving forward and making great achievements as a human being.’

‘People may think that black and white people are different, that some are superior to others, but in reality these are only barriers that people have created: people are all the same.’

‘Discrimination and separation within society only generate negative thoughts and actions. It does not matter where you are from — neither your race nor your origin.’

## 7. Paths to working life

This training course, which took place in Finland in 2010, developed youth workers’ skills to make use of the Youth in Action programme, especially the European Voluntary Service (EVS). It provided practical learning opportunities for 25 participants from Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey, offering them the occasion to reflect on their work with unemployed young people and to learn about youth unemployment across Europe, as well as enhanced cooperation within the Youth in Action programme.

The participants, from the youth work, social work and employment sectors, visited local youth workshops that provide skills training and

education for young unemployed people. The main achievement was that participants obtained new ideas for reducing youth unemployment among early school leavers, and gained additional understanding of unemployment issues and practices to deal with them. They shared ideas for improving the transition between school education and professional lives. The project also provided the space and time for offering EVS opportunities to young job seekers and for developing ideas for future projects. The range of international and national contacts that the participants acquired provided a basis for long-term cooperation. The course was prepared together with SALTO Inclusion, a Youth in Action resource centre.

**Project funded by**  
the Youth in Action national agency in Finland

*The main achievement was that the participants obtained new ideas for reducing youth unemployment among early school leavers*

### 7 TESTIMONIALS



‘During the course I gained new contacts in other countries that can help me do my work better. And I now have a better understanding of the Youth in Action programme and can help youngsters find the best way to help themselves.’

*Participants learnt what could be done within the Youth in Action programme and through international cooperation, and got to know different approaches to youth work with Roma communities*

## 8. Differences in Roma youth work

The Youth in Action national agencies of Finland, Hungary and Slovakia organised practical short study visits to Roma organisations and to organisations working with Roma youth in each of the three countries in 2010–11. These visits, open to 21 youth workers, social workers, youth leaders and representatives of organisations actively working with Roma youth, made it possible to see the realities of Roma youth work in different contexts. The main aim was to help develop an understanding of the situation of Roma minorities by exploring existing Roma cultures in these countries. But, through sharing and exchanging experiences of working with young Roma people, the visits also revealed certain realities of youth work and practical non-formal learning methods. European partnerships and networks were

promoted that offered the chance to learn about the possibilities of the Youth in Action programme.

This three-part project with links to Hungary and Finland explored the history and current situation of Roma living in Slovakia. Participants learnt what could be done within the Youth in Action programme and through international cooperation, and got to know different approaches to youth work with Roma communities. The results included youth exchanges between the three countries, such as 'We came, we saw ... What we can do together?' in Slovakia in October 2011, and a cooperation with Roma theatre, in which the predominant feature was the high level of motivation among the participants and the interest to cooperate in using the possibilities of the Youth in Action programme.

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agencies in Slovakia,  
Hungary and Finland

## 8 TESTIMONIALS

*'I not only learnt more about the possibilities for international activities, but was also inspired to initiate local actions.'*

*'One of the striking things to emerge was that while the realities for Slovak and Hungarian Roma are very similar, the Finnish reality is very different.'*



# Youth in Action

## mobilising the potential of young Europeans

Youth in Action is the European Union programme that has helped young people since 2007, through non-formal learning and wider mobility, to boost their skills as well as giving them new opportunities to develop their personal capacities. It is open to all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural backgrounds. It encourages intercultural dialogue and the inclusion of all young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities. It strengthens European values everywhere it operates — in the EU and in 140 countries beyond. It funds a wide variety of youth activities, including exchanges, initiatives, democracy projects, and a voluntary service. It also supports youth workers and civil society organisations through training and networking, and promotes European cooperation in the youth field.

### Noticeable results

Youth in Action has a global budget of EUR 885 million for the 2007–13 period, and by the end of 2010 it had fully used the EUR 549 million allocated so far. Its basic premise is that investment in young people is the best business case for the European Union and it is also the way to make a success of the European integration project. Over the four years 2007–10, more than 527 000 persons took part (390 000 young people and 137 000 youth workers); 61 000 project applications were submitted and 30 100 projects were approved for grants, and Youth in Action involved around 20 000 youth organisations, informal groups of young people, or public bodies every year as promoters of projects. The intense involvement of non-governmental organisations and social enterprises is a stimulating example for young people of what it means to be an active player in society, and many participants in projects later become involved themselves in social work.

The projects supported range widely across youth activities — everything from raising the profile of young people in the media and giving them more of a say, to organising environmental protection projects at local level, creating documentaries on social issues such as young people with HIV or exclusion of minorities, or helping inmates in young offenders' institutions to boost their own self-esteem and to make efforts themselves to integrate into their community and into wider society.

### A significant impact

Youth in Action has had a demonstrable impact on the hundreds of thousands of young people it has involved. The programme has enabled many of them to experience other countries first hand, thus developing a greater sense of openness and understanding of other cultures. And it has provided the young people who have taken part with new skills and confidence.

This is all the more important since for many of the projects, the participants are deliberately selected from communities and social groups with fewer opportunities. The whole programme has a strong social dimension. It makes specific provision for involving young people from disadvantaged groups (with disabilities, health problems, or social, economic or geographic obstacles, unemployed, with educational difficulties, such as early school leavers, or from different cultural backgrounds). The engagement of many different social groups is important in ensuring that the European integration project is not restricted only to elites in European society.

### Attractive learning

Youth in Action makes extensive use of non-formal learning, through attractive methods (such as workshops, interviews or simulations), and based on personal experience outside schools. This promotes individual-based teaching, with the emphasis on talents and strengths. Professional facilitators ensure the learning process is conducted mainly by young people themselves, through participation and peer learning. The non-formal learning experience that Youth in Action provides is recognised through a specific certificate called a Youthpass.

In the different environment offered by projects, young people discover their own potential and abilities, and exercise new levels of independence and decision-making. The experience boosts their personal development and widens their horizons, helping them make choices about their further personal and professional life. And they acquire competencies that are increasingly valuable in an evolving labour market ■

A survey in March 2011 among a representative sample of participants revealed that:

**91 %**

of young people considered participation increased their competences in foreign languages;

**75 %**

said they improved their abilities to identify opportunities for their personal or professional future;

**73 %**

declared they felt more European;

**92 %**

of youth workers considered they gained skills and knowledge they would not have otherwise acquired;

**73 %**

of youth organisations said they were doing more international projects.

### In addition

the 2010 survey showed that participants in the programme have a significantly higher voting record in European elections than their peers. For instance in 2009, **60 %** of participants voted, compared to an average of **29 %** for all young people across Europe.

**60 % / 29 %**

# Who can take part

## in Youth Support projects, and how do they work?

There are no age limits, but participants must be legally resident in a programme country — i.e. the 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey — or in a neighbouring partner country of the EU, eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the Mediterranean countries, south-eastern Europe, or in 118 other countries in the world that have signed an agreement with the European Commission relevant to the youth field.

Applications may be made by bodies legally established or resident in a programme

country, including non-profit/non-governmental organisations, local or regional public bodies, informal groups of young people, European bodies active in the youth field, and national youth councils.

Projects can receive grants from national agencies in the 33 programme countries or from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels.

### Youth Support in figures:

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Submitted projects	1 496	1 520	2 001	2 307
Funded projects	749	669	637	688
Successful grant applications (%)	50	44	32	30
Committed funds (million EUR)	9.779	10.138	9.542	10.456
Number of participants	15 154	13 487	14 074	15 005

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



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