



# Youth - Empowerment – Solutions

*Participation, Social Inclusion and Mobility of young people in Europe*

## Project Report



January 2005 - December 2006



Project supported by the European Commission under [Networking of pilot projects in favour of youth participation \(EAC/10/04\)](#)

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## Table of content

**Youth-Empowerment-Solutions – An overview of all events and activities in 2005 and 2006 3**

**Youth-Empowerment-Solutions in numbers 6**

**Y-E-S work process and coordination team 7**

**Public relation work and lobbying work 9**

**The Youth-Empowerment-Solutions local project partners 9**

*IMFE, Granada, Spain: Jóvenes con Respuesta, Youngsters with answers 10*

*Getup, Magdeburg, Germany / Jugendwerkstatt 'Frohe Zukunft' Halle, Germany 14*

*EnAIP Lucca, Italy 14*

*ANHSH, Budapest, Welfare Service Provider of Public Interest from Dombóvár, Hungary 15*

*Children's Society, Bath, UK Children's Participation Project 17*

*Urkraft, Skellefteå, Sweden 20*

**Bi-lateral visits between local project partners and promotion of mobility of young people in Europe 21**

**The youth-led event in Granada: Experimental learning in preparing and implementing a multi-lateral youth event 22**

**Final conference of Youth-Empowerment-Solutions in Halle, 21-22 September 2006 27**

**Observations from a critical friend 34**

**Youth-Empowerment-Solutions – Summing up 36**

**Participation of young people at risk of social exclusion – Comments from young people and project workers during the fish-bowl-session in Halle 37**

**Recommendations and Conclusions 38**

**Follow up and Follow on activities 388**



*Youth-Empowerment-Solutions  
Linking projects across Europe*



## Youth-Empowerment-Solutions – An overview of all events and activities in 2005 and 2006



### **Y-E-S Coordination meeting Stuttgart, 3 - 5 February 2005**

First Coordination meeting of the project group to define the project's objectives and work-plan

### **Y-E-S site visit Granada, Spain 10 March 2005**

Visit to the local project partner in Spain Granada in combination with the Y.E.S. EEIG members' assembly 2005

### **Y-E-S site visit Lucca 15 March 2005**

Visit to the local project partner in Italy in combination with an action 5 training seminar on European youth policy and youth work

### **Y-E-S project presentation at the TCS regional participation event in Manchester 4 - 5 April 2005**

Involving youth workers, academics and politicians informing the TCS participation strategy

### **Y-E-S bilateral youth exchange Children's Society, UK - Urkraft, Sweden 13 - 16 June 2005**

A group of young people from the UK travelling to Sweden

### **Youngsters with answers - local project activities and meetings in Granada June 2005**

Round table meetings and workshops in Spain

### **Y-E-S Coordination meeting Budapest, 14 - 17 July 2005**

Second coordination meeting in Budapest to assess the current status of the project, to exchange about local activities in favour of youth participation and site visit to the local project partner in Dombóvár, Hungary.

### **Y.E.S. FORUM statement at the EU seminar (GD EMPL) "Tackling youth disadvantage in Europe" 15-16 September 2005, Brussels**

Drawing from the experience of the Youth-Empowerment-Solutions Project



**Y-E-S Bilateral youth exchange of the Dombovar group (Hungary) to Bath (UK) 17 - 20 October 2005**

A group of young people with disabilities from Hungary travelling to the project partner in the UK

**Young people represent Y-E-S at the Cardiff youth event, 24-27 October 2005**

Y.E.S. FORUM youth representatives are taking part in the European youth event in Cardiff and presenting results and work approaches from the Youth-Empowerment-Solutions project

**Y-E-S Project team meeting in Skelleftea Sweden, 2-4 November 2005**

Third coordination meeting to evaluate the recent experiences with mobility of young people at risk of exclusion and to prepare for the youth event in Granada and site visit to the local project partner in Sweden

**Championing Participation – Participation Matters, Y-E-S presentation at the conference in Liverpool, 17 November 2005**

This conference included government ministers, children's commissioners, academics and Y.E.S. FORUM members from different countries.

**Get-up final conference, 10 December 2005, Halle**

Y-E-S Project presentation at the Get-up conference in Halle and meeting with young people and youth workers from the German local project partnership

**Disadvantaged neighbourhoods: what opportunities for childhood and youth? Y-E-S presentation at the conference in Strasbourg, 30 January 2006**

Over 123 towns and municipalities all over Europe took part in the European Conference on "Integrated childhood and youth policies in Europe – needs for disadvantaged neighbourhoods", organised at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The Y-E-S project partners from Spain and Sweden represented from their experiences and work-approaches.

**Youth Ambassador seminars and meetings, February to May 2006**

A youth delegation the German project Get-up from Aschersleben is taking part in the youth ambassador seminars in Lancashire, UK in February and May 2006.

**Y-E-S Youth-led event Granada 15-18 March 2006**

Event built around the needs of young people – experimental action both in preparation and implementation

**Y-E-S Project team meeting in London, 12 May 2006**

Evaluation meeting of the youth-led event in Granada and preparation of the final conference in Halle. At the same time visiting the Headquarter of the UK project partner The Children's Society.

**Y-E-S Dissemination and Lobbying Seminar Brussels, July 2006**

Presentation of the project results to EU officials and networking with other European umbrella organisations.

**Y-E-S Preparation Meeting Final Conference Halle, 17 July 2006**

Meeting of the preparation team in Halle to visit the German local project partner 'Frohe Zukunft' in Halle and to prepare for the final conference in September.



### **Y-E-S Final Conference Halle 21-22 September 2006**

Inviting young people and local project partner from all six projects and guests at the second conference day. Presenting the experiences and recommendations of the project.

### **EU Commission evaluation meeting for pilot projects and networking between pilot projects in favour of youth participation in Brussels 16-17 October 2006**

The Y-E-S project was presented at the event with the project coordinator, a local project partner and a young person.

### **Y.E.S. FORUM follow-up and dissemination meeting in Stuttgart 27-28 October 2006**

Meeting of Y.E.S. Coordinators and preparation of several project proposals and to feedback the project results towards the whole Y.E.S. FORUM Network

### **Presentation of the Y-E-S Project results and recommendations at the European youth pact conference, Berlin 4-6 December 2006**

A conference organised by the German National youth agency and the national observation centre for European youth policies

### **Evaluation and dissemination phase, October – December 2006**

And regular online meetings and chat sessions using [www.yes-forum.org/y-e-sprojectteam](http://www.yes-forum.org/y-e-sprojectteam)



The group from Dombovar is visiting Bath (UK) 17-20 October 2005 (left) and Jim Davis and John at the Evaluation event in Brussels (right)



## Youth-Empowerment-Solutions in numbers

- 80-100 young people and project workers participated regularly in the Y-E-S project activities and the activities of the local project partners
- 40 young people took part in bi-lateral visits of project partners to experience for the first time mobility in Europe and travelling across borders
- The Y-E-S project's public web-section and related web-publications has been visited approx. 2.000 times.
- [www.yes-forum.org/y-e-s](http://www.yes-forum.org/y-e-s)
- Regular news-mailings within the Y.E.S. FORUM Community and to practitioners, academics and politicians on a European level potentially was received by several thousand readers
- Reports about Y-E-S project activities have been shown at a local television station in Hungary and appeared in local newspapers in England and Spain
- The appearance of the article „Partizipation von jungen Menschen - Sichtweisen aus verschiedenen europäischen Ländern“ in a well-known German journal has reached 3.000 readers. Other journal articles are in preparation.
- A range of well-known web-sites reported about the project activities and linking to the project's public web-section potentially reaching several thousand visitors.
- The Y-E-S project work approaches, experiences and results have been presented at 8 major European conferences in the last two years reaching around 1.500 participants.



**Telesfora Ruiz, Director IMFE/Y.E.S. Board and  
Thomas Vollmer Y-E-S Coordinator  
at a conference in Granada, March 2006**



## Y-E-S work process and coordination team

### The project's description and objectives

By promoting **networking** between local projects in favour of youth participation in Europe the project intended to develop a **sustainable approach for youth participation** and to **link partners in different countries long-term** which can **serve as a model** for others. **To apply this to the work with youth at risk of social exclusion was a particular goal of this project.**

Youth and European Social Work (Y.E.S. FORUM EEIG) together with its members has been the responsible body and coordinator of the project. Y.E.S. FORUM is a trans-national Network using the EEIG as its legal body and is focussing on issues like (non-formal) learning, employment, social inclusion, voluntary services but also and in particular on participation. The project Youth-Empowerment-Solutions has been an essential part of Y.E.S.' strategy to strengthen the political representation of the interests of dis-engaged young people on local, regional and European level.

### The Y-E-S Projectteam



The Y-E-S Projectteam consisted of two youth workers from each of the six local projects, the project coordinator and project supervisor, additional support staff and young people. The Projectteam was the central management and steering group for the project deciding in a participative way of the project's workplan, design of events and the use of resources. The project team has been meeting three times in 2005 face-to-face (Stuttgart, Budapest and Skelleftea) as well three times in 2006 (Granada, London, Halle). Two lobbying and dissemination meetings together with other Y.E.S. FORUM coordinators were added in 2006 (Brussels, Stuttgart). The coordination meetings have been always in combination with site visits at the local project locations and encounters with young people of the local projects and structured as followed:

- Update from the local project activities and exchange between the local project partners
- Evaluation of the project activities and work process using the social management approach
- Discussion and work on participation standards and project recommendations
- Drafting of policy recommendations
- Planning of the next project events



The face-to-face meetings have been combined with regular chat sessions and virtual meetings using the virtual project management facilities [www.yes-forum.org/y-e-projectteam](http://www.yes-forum.org/y-e-projectteam). The project management facilities included also file storage, calendar, task-management, who's online and page visit tracker, messaging etc.

**Comments from members of the Projectteam:**

- *The Y-E-S project is a great opportunity to look at yourself and to change the way you are doing things.*
- *It is also a good opportunity to make Y.E.S. FORUM stronger. The potential of Y.E.S. FORUM is to analyse, identify and debate barriers of youth participation in particular through the Y-E-S project.*
- *For young people participation starts on the local level. They are not interested in EU youth policy as their first priority. That is far away. It is therefore our responsibility to bridge from local level to European level.*

**The projectteam defined the following three levels of activity:**

Local level	<b><i>Participation</i></b> Involve young people in local projects
Intermediate level	<b><i>share, exchange</i></b> exchange between the Y-E-S project partners
Upper level	<b><i>influences politics</i></b> doing advocacy work for better involvement of young people

Figure: Antonio's model



## Public relation work and lobbying work

The main tool for the public relation work was and is the web-section of [www.yes-forum.org/y-e-s](http://www.yes-forum.org/y-e-s) with regular updates and downloads about project activities. The project section has profited from the yes-forum.org website which is well established in the youth and social field in Europe and interlinked with many other related sites.

The dissemination of the website was combined with regular news-mailings, presentations of members of the project team at high level and major European conferences relating to the theme of participation of young people, journal articles and newspaper reports. As shown above we reached several thousands of people with our various public dissemination efforts and will continue so after the project is finished. In addition the projects used their own public relation tools and produced materials in their own language.

Also important to point out is that learning and experiences within the project directly informed the lobbying work of Y.E.S. FORUM. It determined our positions and inputs given at various meetings, conferences and expert meetings. To be strongly embedded in the Y.E.S. FORUM Network structure was a particular Benefit to the project with win-win-effects on all sides.

A screenshot of the YES FORUM website. The header features the YES FORUM logo and the text 'Youth and European Social Work'. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: 'Start', 'Members', 'Interact', 'Private', 'Administrate', and 'Logout'. The main content area is titled 'Youth - Empowerment - Solutions' and includes a sub-header 'January 2005 - December 2006'. On the left, there is a sidebar with a list of links: 'Project news', 'Project description', 'Meetings and seminars', 'Local projects', 'Publications', 'Resource section', 'Y.E.S. Projectteam', and 'Granada 15-18 March 2006'. The main content area features a large photo of three young people in blue t-shirts, and a smaller photo of a group of people. To the right of the photos, there is a link to 'Youth Empowerment Solutions Final Conference Report (pdf 1,2 MB)' and a date '21-22 September 2006 in Halle Programme'. Below the date, there is a list of bullet points describing the event.

## The Youth-Empowerment-Solutions local project partners

The transnational project partnership of the Y-E-S project consisted of six local project partnerships in six different countries in Europe – all of them were piloting actions in favour of youth participation in their own context. All project partners have been involving NGO's and local service providers but also public bodies and representatives from the local municipality. A particular strength of the Y-E-S project has been the wide range of the topics the local partners were working on but all with the common objective to promote youth participation and social inclusion of young people. The local lead organisations were and are at the same time members of the Y.E.S. FORUM Network which guaranteed the wide dissemination of the project activities within the Y.E.S. Network and the linkage to lobbying activities. Enclosed the reports from the local projects which were submitted to the final conference in Halle, September 2006:



*IMFE, Granada, Spain: Jóvenes con Respuesta, Youngsters with answers*

<http://www.imfegranada.es/>



### **Our understanding of participation:**

**Participation** as a concept or issue to work on may be somewhat abstract and unclear if we don't use it as a **methodology**. We see participation as a means full of content and values, leading to autonomy (personal and common) in different spheres of life.

For young people, participation is a challenging and motivating activity when linked to our interests and needs. It has to be **practical and useful**. Participating, besides taking part in specific activities and have fun, means **acting, sharing and living together** with other people. Young people usually want to be there when issues concerning them are being discussed. This makes us feel proud and satisfied. Participation is linked to our capacity of **decision-making** and taking-up **responsibilities** with others. Furthermore there is a set of conditions for participation:

Wanting: If we don't want to, if we don't feel like, if we are not motivated towards participation, we never will do it.

Knowing: If we have the necessary communication skills and we know the different ways in which we can participate, it will be easier to do it.

Being able to: There have to be specific mechanisms according to different levels of commitment we want to be in. Being informed, making comments, taking decisions and acting.

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OUR LOCAL PROJECT**

The project *Jóvenes con Respuesta* (Youngsters with answers) is an initiative promoted by the **Foro Infancia y Juventud Norte** (network of associations, public bodies and educational centres) with the purpose of fostering youth participation in the northern town district of Granada, raising awareness on their role towards their social environment, favouring the creation of structures for communication and participation among young people, and tackling existing negative stereotypes towards them.

The **Northern District**, the place we work at, has strong problems of school failure and drop-out, unemployment, marginalization, etc., which have a negative impact on the whole population, specially young people.

Taking into account the lack of matching between needs and resources for young people, there is the need for an **active commitment** of young people so as to point out challenges for the future, using those elements which may have a positive impact on the needs and potentials of young people in the district.

Here a summary of the most important actions:

#### **Collecting information**

More than 500 questionnaires have been collected, with information on young people's views regarding participation, their tastes, hobbies, ways of relationship, as well as a first opinion on their role as members within a community.

#### **Sensitization towards social participation**



- Sociodramas: representing a situation meaning a problem to young people like e.g. the lack of ways of expression.
- Sensitization workshops towards social participation *EXPRESATE (express yourself)*, in order to get to know those situations that have an impact on them, detecting the need-possibility for change and doing first proposals for acting.

### **Training / capacity-building for autonomy**

Two training courses for *Dinamizadores Juveniles* where young people from the district have been trained as agents to foster participation and motivation within groups of young people.



### **Youth group for participative action *AKATOS***

Formed by several youngsters out of different zones of the district who join together to share experiences, raise proposals and mix in a positive way.

### **Youth social participation channels**

Actions tending to bring youngsters into social participation, starting from grass root to higher levels, but always trying to make them being the main actors.

- Workshops for leisure and participation: Spaces chosen by young people, supported by the previously trained ones, meant to get young people into more playful forms of participation (break dance, video, social theatre, graffiti)
- Youth events in which proposals for action were discussed in a playful and participative way.
- YES event in Granada with young people from 5 different countries.

### **Youth encounter,**

Spaces where once a year young people from the Northern District join together to discuss issues of their interest, participating at the same time in playful activities: graffiti, break dance, percussion and flamenco dance, concert, etc. All conclusions and proposals of the event were forwarded to representatives of public and private bodies working with youth.

### **LINK BETWEEN THE LOCAL PROJECT AND THE YES PROJECT**

The overall aim of this project is to sensitize and motivate young people towards finding joint solutions to their common problems. The *Foro Infancia y Juventud Norte*, through IMFE, is linked to the project Y-E-S – Youth Empowerment Solutions and to the Y.E.S. FOURM European network, focused on fostering participation of disadvantaged young people.

### **HOW WAS IT TO WORK IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT?**

We found ourselves facing an important challenge when organising and running the Granada event, where obstacles such as different language, culture and people had to be converted into opportunities for learning..

**Communication** turns into a risk that has to be faced. We often adapt ourselves to our peers and stop “growing” without being aware of it. We often are frightened by “losing control on things”. When we open the doors of communication, many things start to happen.



It is important that young people have the opportunity to know "other worlds". For us it has been an opportunity to get to know new people, cultures, contexts, to learn what it means taking-up responsibility in an international exchange, and most of all, strengthen relations within our own group. It was really a big challenge.

### **WHAT DID WE LEARN, GAIN AND BENEFIT FROM THE YES PROJECT?**

As many people, we just want to make our dreams come true, dreams that are no longer childhood dreams. We want to be heard and be actors. We have given an example of the potential of active participation, and now we want to go on, without being hindered.

We are learning about designing, organising, running and evaluating activities, going deeper into young peoples' needs and expectations and resources available for them. The project aims are having a multiplying effect:

- Increase personal and common self-esteem of the participants.
- The thrill of being actors, of having the leading role.
- Empowerment of the youth group Akatos.
- A positive image of the role we can play in society.

### **WHAT DID THE PROJECT CHANGE FOR OUR OWN WORK?**

For the *Foro infancia y Juventud Norte* and for Akatos we think that the project has been very important, introducing a rich and complex debate around the issue of social participation among young people, associations, public bodies...

It is useful to bring into the light how important young people in the Northern District can be, the potential they have, giving a positive vision of the district, and being an alternate instrument for breaking-down stereotypes which has favoured the positive contact among young people from different zones, districts, countries.

### **HOW EASY WAS IT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?**

One key issue in the project has been keeping young people motivated within a process developed at the beginning by adults, and which is sometimes maybe quite complex. Communication within the Foro Infancia y Juventud Norte has favoured suitable ways of getting in touch with the youngsters, through key persons in the different institutions and educational centres.

Some of the young people have received specific training and guidance, being prepared to inform and motivate other young people within participative processes. In this way, activities have been organised and carried out according to the interests, needs and wishes expressed by them.

### **WHAT WAS DIFFICULT, WHAT WOULD WE DO DIFFERENT NEXT TIME?**

At this stage we are renewing the project *Jóvenes con respuesta*, trying to improve the actions. We, the young people, have put our energy into this, offering ourselves to participate in this renewal. It certainly will be difficult to keep in mind all the elements, and to have the needed support, consolidate opportunities for participation, create mechanisms for it, to have the suitable spaces and resources, to work out a real participative methodology, etc.

People have to trust straightaway in the young people of our district, value them, so that they can give the needed answers to the community. It would be important if the rest of the city gets to know them and leaves away negative stereotypes. Our young people would like to meet youngsters from other town districts, share experiences, ideas, wishes, etc.



## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Let's focus on two socio-educational needs:

**The need of young people for a comprehensive development and joined society having equal opportunities.** The first worry about this should not only deal with training or qualifications, but also with activating young people to develop their personality and raise their self-esteem.

Training is essential to young people so that they can lead their own process of change in a more permanent and coherent way. The aim of the non-formal education has to be the empowerment of young people, and favour their learning in the formal educational systems.

**The need of the community to be the actor of its reality.** We want to keep-on feeling ourselves actors, showing what we are able to do, that we have strength, that we want to change the negative image of our district. We don't want this to be something just linked to this project.

Now a summary of the most significant conclusions that came out of the last youth event, as the result of one and a half year of work within our project. They can be taken as **RECOMMENDATIONS** for future actions and projects:

- The organisations should have the figure of the *dinamizador juvenil*, this is a specific person trained and skilled in working with and activating young people.
- "Activating youth" as a professional figure and a possibility of work for young people, and the need for **specialized training** for young disadvantaged people.
- **Training actions and programmes** for young people to favour a comprehensive development, taking into account both personal and professional factors, as well as technological competences in the different training processes (formal, job-orientated, LLL).
- **Support for youth initiatives** within the district, using also existing resources and spaces.
- **Youth exchange events** at national and transnational level.
- **Participation** can not only be the aim of the debate within a project, but has to be a working method.

For this, we have to count on several agents and stakeholders whose decisions have an impact on young people's lives. There is the need to work on:

- **Strengthening networks** at local and transnational level, consolidating a **methodology for working**, and setting-up **action plans** at local level in less favoured areas, based on the respect towards citizens from different countries, ethnic or social groups, paying special attention to communication as well as to the actors and the programmes.

Young people have to be the leading actors for a positive change. Therefore the need for a participative methodology, giving youth the lead, starting from their interests, and making them aware of how important social participation is. The capacity to be really active and participative will only be effective after a process of learning, the less favoured youngsters have to go through, and be followed-up continuously. That's why the structures and resources needed must be reliable.

Our conclusion: **TRAINING + PARTICIPATION = INCLUSION**

*The main objective of a youth policy is to increase young people's capacity to behave as social actors; this is to be able to change their social environment in order to carry out personal projects.*



### ***Getup, Magdeburg, Germany / Jugendwerkstatt 'Frohe Zukunft' Halle, Germany***

<http://www.getup-info.de/>

<http://www.start-ggmbh.de/>

<http://www.jugendwerkstatt-halle.de>

The Getup project has been running for a few years and has already received funding from the European Commission and from the German government. Getup is functioning like a resource centre running workshops, trainings etc. for different participation projects and stakeholders in the German federal state Saxony-Anhalt. Advocacy work is the central element of the project and the objective to raise public awareness for participation and involvement of young people. As the Getup project came to the end in 2005, it was substituted by its' sister organisation Jugendwerkstatt 'Frohe Zukunft' Halle which assumed all project responsibilities in 2006 and volunteered as the host of the final conference in September 2006. This was not foreseen in the original project application. However as the funding for the Getup project could not be sustained the change was necessary.

Young people and staff from the Jugendwerkstatt Frohe Zukunft evaluated their project participation as follow:

The YES-project gave us confidence in participating in international youth work. Therefore a group of young people from our centre went to Bulgaria as a form of exchange programme in addition to the Y-E-S project. The personal change of those young people was distinctive to those who normally participate in our daily work. The impression of the foreign country and the journey to it within a group left a long lasting mark on the young people and became the most important event in their life.

Therefore young people from our institution were very interested in Youth-Empowerment-Solutions project. The main idea – the possibility of participation – could only be understood by them after being in Granada. Because of the different disadvantages of the other participants it became clear to them, which borders, but even which chances the young people have who do not come from a protected family or who are not able to earn their living costs themselves. For all participants it was difficult to take this experience as a great chance which opened up for them. The young people had to learn, that they did not have to achieve something in which they could do right or wrong but that their personality was in the centre. We, as staff had to learn to hold back ourselves in order to not influence the work and the ideas of the young people.

Therefore we started to pay more attention to the process of our work than only to reach a certain aim without compromising. Young people who have fewer opportunities have as well a high potential of being creative and of being part of our society, like "normal" young people too. They just need a chance and help to be able to be creative. Those young deprived people are part of the European society as well as students or other people who have the privilege of not being disadvantaged. But they should have the same rights to feel one united Europe through experiences in a foreign country. Experiences like that have a much higher impact on young people who are disadvantaged than on those who have a better chance in their life.

### ***EnAIP Lucca, Italy***

<http://www.squarciagola.net/>

<http://www.luccagiovane.it/>

<http://www.enaip.lucca.it/>

The regional branch of EnAIP – a national NGO promoting education and training of disadvantaged people in Italy - has built a project together with the city of Lucca and the province of Lucca in order to strengthen involvement of young people in the area. It has been acknowledged that certain underlying issues such as right wing movements and conflicts with the gypsy minority has to be addressed and it is seen



as important to activate young people to do so. The project is supporting the set-up and organisation of events run by young people and is offering a web-site to do so. Related to the project was an international seminar including youth workers from 15 European countries which took place in March 05 in Lucca. The seminar looked at approaches to youth policy and youth work in different countries.

Recommendations from the participating young people and youth workers:

- Having the chance to do this experience with young people from other countries, different opportunities open up in my life, even from my job. I discovered cultures whose customs and approaches were different. The exchange with the other young people really helped me to open my mind to open a dialogue and to be less shy and to give me strength against my personal fears. This experience was really useful for my personal growth – really inspiring me to learn something new.
- There should be more attention for young people who have the capacity and skills but do not have the support, so they cannot achieve success. Otherwise they stay in the same disadvantaged position. I really suggest that decision makers should invest in projects that focus on young people at an earlier stage in their life, as this experience could be relevant in changing the direction of their life.
- It is important to give the chance to young people to take part in activities in events like this project – to exchange experiences and parts of their life to share their own cultures. This could give them the space and the time to express themselves to reach their own decisions and to share these. They need that decision makers pay attention to their rights to be recognised as full citizens. Decision makers should invest and support in bottom-up approaches.

***ANHSH, Budapest, Welfare Service Provider of Public Interest from Dombóvár, Hungary***

<http://www.humuszolg.hu/>

The Association of Non-profit Human Services of Hungary is involving its member organisation from a rural area (Dombovar) working with disadvantaged and disabled people running day care and residential services. It is thought to increase the involvement of children and young people in the design of direct service provision and at the same time to discuss children's rights and participation from a theoretical viewpoint. ANHSH itself functioned as a link between the local project partnership and the European project and supported dissemination of the project as well as the development of follow-on projects.

The local project partnership in Dombóvár was led by the Welfare Service Provider of Public Interest from Dombóvár, formed in 1997 with the aim of making social institutions work and employing people of fewer work abilities and disabilities by employing them in community services (park maintenance). The local project was linked to the Y-E-S project concerning the handicapped young people of the Day-Care Centre. This is an institution which provides therapy employment, education and daytime care for the partially handicapped young adults.



**The main objects of our involvement in the project were:**

To gain and share experiences of promoting participation of disadvantaged young people as well as finding solutions to their problems.

To involve young people with disabilities in online meetings and transnational exchange activities. In the interests of this purpose we undertook regular classes to teach 8 handicapped young people English.

**One of the most important outcomes**

of the project was that handicapped young people had the opportunity to travel abroad by plane (it was the first flight for them) and to learn more about the English culture and meet young people who live there through the invitation of the English partner-organization (The Children's Society) in Bath. Attila Tóth the deputy major of the Town Dombóvár also took part in the bilateral exchange and declared his opinion contentedly about the result of the visit: „(...) apart from gaining professional experiences visiting Bath was an unforgettable adventure for the young people as well as a very useful trip especially the support of handicapped young people with the purpose to live a worth life.”

Another important result for us was that we could take 2 young people to the seminar in Granada where they could meet other young people from 5 different countries and get to know further foreign cultures, languages, and they could be active participants of a multilateral exchange.

**Summing up**

The project has promoted the participation and involvement of the disadvantaged young people we work with. They could „look out” towards Europe and gain a broader vision of it by taking part in the transnational exchange activities which otherwise would have been unavailable to them. Nevertheless, through taking part in this European project not only the local media took note of our work at the Centre, but the local government of the town also has been following with attention our work and supported it. Due to the acquaintance of the media the institution has obtained the sponsoring of an international company as well. Moreover it is worth mentioning that a study has been made on the implementation of possibilities of those employment methods and programmes we got acquainted with in the framework of the Y.E.S. project.

**What we suggest:**

- It is important for our organization to involve the local decision makers from the very beginning of the project in order to get their attention and their support for a future co-operation
- Funding bodies need to consult with local projects to find out the needs and the best way of creating new opportunities



### ***Children's Society, Bath, UK Children's Participation Project***

<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk>

#### **Where we come from**

The Children's Society, a national charity of the Church of England is running over 80 projects for children and young people across England. One of them the children's participation projects is based in the South West of England involving young people from 3 rural communities. Two are in Somerset and the third is in Cornwall right at the end of England. The project has a variety of work: Children of drug using sex workers, Work with Gypsy and Traveller community, Advocacy for young people in public care, Promoting children's rights and participation, particularly for disabled children.

The young people involved in the Y-E-S project live in and around the small town of Minehead. Our work with them started over 5 years ago when we helped groups of young people in villages to speak out about their ideas, plans and need for facilities. Our focus was on ensuring that children and young people who had little money were able to take part and be included in all activities for children and young people.

Living in rural England is a good experience for many children and young people, but if you live in a family where there is less money then it can be difficult and restrictive. Our work ensured that services for children and young people in villages Benefited young people who had few opportunities and less money.

At the start of the Y-E-S project we were creating new work based on the concerns expressed about young people's behaviour. In the UK the government has made the behaviour of young people a big issue, new laws and powers to punish and control young people who get drunk, cause damage or behave badly have been created. These powers are being made available to local governments and have added to the sense that young people are often the cause of trouble in our communities.

In our experience we find that many young people feel that they are made responsible for things they don't do or that the way they behave isn't as bad as adults say it is. Our proposal was to develop work that helped young people to speak out about these new laws and to persuade adults in rural communities that they should not always regard young people as trouble.

#### **Why we joined the Y-E-S Project**

We agreed to take part in the project because we thought it would help us to learn about how other people include socially excluded young people in their work. We hoped we would discover how we could improve the work we do by learning the lessons of others. We expected to provide opportunities for young people to meet and to share their experiences; we would provide those opportunities for those young people who never get that chance. We expected to enable young people who had never travelled abroad before to have that experience and to influence the way we do our work.

We also hoped that we could share our ideas and experiences with others and that our work would be of interest as well.

#### **What it has been like**

Our first meeting in Stuttgart was a surprise as we only realised then that the project did not include enough opportunities for young people to meet or to exchange visits, just because of the limited budget available. We decided that if we were going to be involved in the project we had to make sure that young people were able to meet together.



As a consequence we were able to take young people to visit Urkraft in Sweden, to meet with Urkraft young people in London and to host a visit of young people from Dombovar in Hungary. As well as those exchanges John<sup>1</sup> and Susi have also been able to take part in the Granada seminar and in the final seminar in Halle.

These visits and exchanges have been as significant to our learning and development as the seminars between workers. They have also provided the most fun!

The seminars have helped us to think about how we involve young people and how we get a balance right between giving them power and choice, but without giving up our responsibility. Including young people who have few opportunities or less money does involve more effort and support.

For the visits and exchanges we needed to help young people to get passports, to plan for travelling and we needed to make sure that nothing was too expensive. The visits also needed to be long enough to have a good experience but not too long as to make young people change their minds.

One difficulty was that the Y-E-S project budget did not allow for additional exchanges between projects. Because we were creating short visits of only 2 or 3 days we could not access funding that is designed to support European youth exchanges as a minimum of 5 days or more are required. So, we had to cover the costs and that was unexpected and not easy to do. But overall the experience was worth all the effort, money and time.

### **The outcomes**

Our involvement in the Y-E-S project has had an impact on our work. We realised how important it was to help adults change their attitudes and ideas and not just empower young people. As a result we have adapted some of our work to focus on training adults so that they can have a better attitude to young people. We still support young people to express them and participate, but we put as much emphasis on helping adults and community leaders to positively receive the views of young people.

The visit to Sweden was a key contributor to this change as our young people saw how adults in Skelleftea responded to young people and how the responsibility for young people was shared.

The experience of hosting a group was a good one but as other projects have discovered it is a responsibility that we should not take lightly. It can be hard for young people not used to running events or without the support of other adults to be responsible for hosting a programme. The language barrier is not great when young people can relax and communicate in their own time, but it can be a barrier when things need to be planned or decisions need to be made.

John and Susi have their own reflections and outcomes from being involved.

They have both experienced big changes in their lives while they have been involved in the project. Both are now working and living independently. Many of the people John works with are from Poland and John's new experience of travel in Europe has helped him to relate to workers from other countries. John is very positive about his relationship with his Polish colleagues that is not always the case with English people.

Susi has completed her training as a Beauty Therapist and has plans to move to a city and set up in her own business. The travel to Sweden and Spain has given Susi a vision of what is possible for her future.

### **The lessons**

We have learnt that although we have different ways of working we can find common ground when we want to empower young people.

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<sup>1</sup> All names of young people have been changed.



The common ground we share is that young people with fewer opportunities are able to take part and make a contribution, but as adults and workers we need to adapt and support them to make it happen.

We have realised that in the UK we expect young people to be independent and to become adults at an earlier age than many other European countries. This has an impact on joint work and exchanges as we tend to work with much younger people.

We can see that too much youth participation favours those who already have the most opportunity. If this is to change then it is adults, workers and policy makers who need to change and not young people.

Direct contact between young people is the best way of young people taking part.

Exchanges can be productive and powerful even if they are short.

The biggest challenge for young people taking part in European events can be the things adults like the most or take for granted, such as different food, travel, meeting people from different countries and staying in hotels.

### Final words

Before taking part in the YES project neither John nor Susi had been abroad or had much experience beyond their rural community. They took part mostly because they had a good relationship with Claire (one of the project workers) and she helped them at every step to take part. But they should have the final say.

*Sometimes it's been hard to break the ice with people, but once you get through that it's been a piece of cake. John*

*It's made me have a different outlook on life; it's made me think I do want to travel. Susi*



Two pages from Susi's Scrapbook: Trip to Sweden (left) and seminar in Granada, Spain (right)



### ***Urkraft, Skellefteå, Sweden***

<http://www.urkraft.se/>

<http://www.ocn.se/>

Urkraft is located in a rural area in the North-East of Sweden and has been established 15 years ago as welfare service provider. It is concerned with issues such as poverty, living in rural areas, young peoples' participation. Being affiliated with Y.E.S. FORUM for several years Urkraft wanted to participate in the Youth-Empowerment-Solutions project linking one of its local participation projects concerned with young school leavers. Urkraft's work approach had a major input on the Y-E-S project as there is a strong focus to put young persons in the centre. It is the aim to help him/her to realise his/her full potential and to provide opportunities to take part in society. The project was also benefiting from Urkraft's expertise on non-formal learning and alternative education as it founded the Swedish OCN – Open College network.

Urkraft did participate in all project events very actively including two-bilateral visits with the UK and hosting a coordination meeting in November 2005. And although Sweden was not the cheapest place to hold a meeting it was fair to do so as the group from Skellefteå had always the longest way to travel regardless where they went.

Young people from the Swedish project presented also a wonderful and very personal account of their work and their personal changes while taking part in the project. Because of its very personal content we decided not to publish it.





## Bi-lateral visits between local project partners and promotion of mobility of young people in Europe

The project group had intense discussion about the participation of young people in international seminars and project events. It was pointed out by several project workers that the target group the local projects are working with are in particular vulnerable – travelling abroad and participating in a bigger youth event would mean a major step for many of the young people. In fact only a minority has been travelling abroad or even have left the wider region they are living in. The discussion resulted in the following consequences: It was clear that young people can only 'understand Europe' if they 'experience Europe'. It was therefore understood as important that opportunities for mobility are created for young people. However it was also found important to do one step at the time and instead of bringing young people from different countries together it the team decided to start with bi-lateral youth exchanges instead. The bi-lateral exchanges were planned in addition to the coordination meetings and project events.

### Learning and recommendations from the bi-lateral visits:



The bi-lateral visits were evaluated as having a significant impact on the young people; both for the group from the UK and the group from Hungary who travelled to Sweden/UK. It was also remarked that young people are also learning new skills by hosting another group and that this changes as much as travelling.

The presentation of the experiences during the coordination meeting in Budapest triggered the discussion that working with young people at risk of social exclusion and organising such trips is quite expensive and intensive. You have to organise passports as they leave for the first time the country, do phone calls and visits, keep them on track, be prepared to lose somebody from the group, provide a lot of emotional support.

Also from the Swedish experience of taking a group of young people to London in May 2005 it became evident that there are many difficulties regarding funding requirements of the European Youth Programme trying to apply it to young people with multiple levels of social exclusion because:

- **it needs resources, it needs time, it needs a lot of effort**
  - 6 days abroad are too long for a group who is away from home for the first time. These young people would be intimidated by bigger groups – they favour smaller groups and are better off in bi-lateral exchanges.
- and
- half a year of application procedure is too long



## The youth-led event in Granada: Experimental learning in preparing and implementing a multi-lateral youth event:

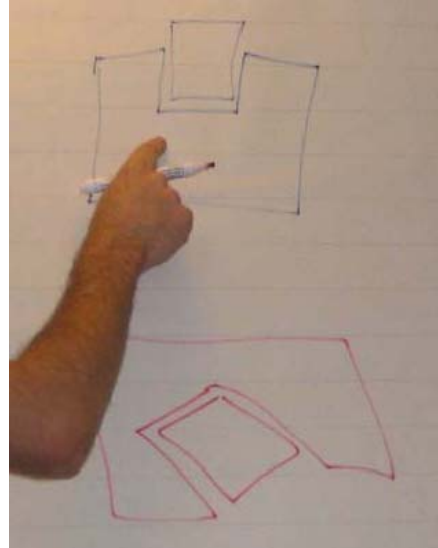


Fig: Jim's Model:  
'Fit the event around the needs of young people'

Following the bi-lateral visits and while preparing for the Granada-event during the coordination meeting in Skelleftea we discussed that there are two different ways of organising such an event – like any similar event:

- a. decide about the structure, theme, topics and methodology of the event and then look for young people who can fit in and cope with that (blue drawing)
- b. or: decide about the young people we want to involve and then make the event fit them (red drawing)

There was a clear decision by the project team that we would work towards the second model. We wanted to make it possible for any of the young people we work with to participate in the seminar. Regardless of their disabilities, disadvantages and other limited capabilities. And: we did not want to invite only young people who can cope with a certain style of seminars. Our core element of the event was social inclusion of excluded young people. This was our starting point and therefore the event was expected to provide an example of how to make it different. Different for example from traditional style European youth events where young people are expected to speak a certain language, to be capable of presenting and disputing verbally in a certain way.

Our slogan was the following: **"the young people who participate do not have to fit us, we have to fit them"**. The event was expected to be different from other seminars. For us it was clear, that social inclusion "happens" if we change the way we are doing things. We clearly wanted to build the seminar around young people, pushing the boundaries of what is common practice.

### **The following guidelines were given to prepare and select the participants:**

**1) Selection of participations:** each of the local projects should decide which young people they want to bring to Granada. The selected participants should be most attached to the organisations and the project and being 'natural'. This means "do not look for somebody who can fit in but for somebody who you are working with on a daily basis, for somebody for



whom this trip to Granada could be a very special experience in his/her life and/or somebody who has been involved in the project already.

**2) Preparation:** Clearly this kind of seminar approach will require much more preparation time and discussions beforehand. But that also means that by the time we arrive in Granada we already know each other and we know what to expect of each other. In the end the seminar/event will not only take three days but three months."



### **3) Recording and critical friends:**

For our learning it was seen as significant to record and observe what we are doing – *what is working and what is not working?*. We selected five persons, academics, practitioners, participation expert who have been already related to Y.E.S. FORUM and are familiar with the work we are doing and invited them to come to Granada as critical friends. The role of the critical friends was described by a team member as follow: *I think that the critical friends have a great opportunity not just to observe how we do things for young people but how we have to change how we do things to include young people. I would also hope that they will be able to comment on how we are able to include young people who normally would not take part in these events. That does mean that they need to be critical to us but friends to the young people. As the programme is carried out we need them to advice and comment on the programme to ensure that young people benefit and we learn from the experience.* The following questions have been formulated as research questions and questions for evaluation:

- We tried to offer a different experience and approach of organising a seminar and the involvement of young people therein. Did we succeed?
- What were and are the feelings, anxieties, expectations of young people and adults taking part in the seminar (before and during the seminar)
- What did go well and what didn't go well? What can we learn from 'Granada'?
- The overall aim of the Y-E-S project (Youth-Empowerment-Solutions) is to set new standards for participation of young people at risk of social exclusion, and to push boundaries and challenge the way things are done currently. What emerges from Granada with regard to this objective?



### **So, how did it go?**

The event proved that we did set ourselves up to a real challenge. We tried very hard putting young people in charge and to stick to the programme as planned and agreed beforehand with all participants. But then we learned that the programme included too many activities. We neglected the time it took to move from one activity to the next; we did not allow for time to check in with each other and to make decisions as a group. We were too careful of not intervening with the leadership of young people of the event, but they felt overwhelmed with the responsibility as the participants had very different levels of abilities or sometimes just simply could not walk only longer, felt cold at night being outside or felt hungry. So, there was no system in place to react as a group immediately to such situations and to be flexible with the programme also because many arrangements had been fixed beforehand. And of course being in Granada, we wanted to make use of the opportunities such a city is offering, but then it was too much. Also, we did not consider the impact that five additional adults as critical friends had on the whole process. They of course observed quite carefully – as it was their role – and pointed out at times that immediate actions and interventions are needed to react to the needs of young people. That created extra tension and pressure. BUT: we still had fun and the comments below show that Granada was a significant event in the young people's life. Most of them felt the need to record and capture for them what they had experienced. Susi's scrapbook is one example, from Hungary it was reported that one young person documented every minute of his trip to Granada. So "Granada" was not perfect but it offered plenty of opportunities for learning. An intense reflection and evaluation process was therefore seen as necessary, one of the reasons to call in an additional coordination meeting in London in May 2006.

### **Impressions from the event:**



**Cooking together a meal**



**Alhambra and Sierra Nevada**



**Flamenco**



**Group before Alhambra**



**Staff and critical friends**



**Playing drums**

### **Comments after the event (project workers are reporting from their follow-up work with the young people):**

*- There are many things the young people enjoyed and many things they found difficult. But it was a chance in a lifetime for them. They never would have gone to Granada/Spain otherwise.*



- They did not feel respected by all adults. It was too much separation and they did not like the separation.
- It informed their view of Europe and one young person produced a scrap book to capture all her memories.
- Another young person produced a big report with photos. The report captured minute for minute of the travel to Spain. He wanted to take part in everything, but also felt it as important to have more simple activities.
- For the youngsters there were too many Spanish people all the time. And it was not possible to talk with them (language).
- It was also too much walking, too much programme – we were always in a hurry. And not all were talking to the young people – they wondered why? But they have been very excited about the experience and Lina took a lot of notes.
- The Spanish group experienced how difficult it was to lead and how difficult it was to work with different languages. There was a lot of pressure on them but it also helped to strengthen the group. For them there were clearly too many adults around and they also wondered why the young people were so closely attached to their workers. They expected the people more to be at the same level as them, but there were a lot of different levels of participation.
- For the German girls it was like being in Wonderland. They enjoyed everything, but had fears at the beginning too with all the different languages. At the end they were only a bit disappointed because they could not speak to all the other people (language)
- We felt like strangers in a strange land. We asked at the beginning 'do we have a map'? We had to invent what a critical friend is! Certainly an interesting experiment
- When we talk about social exclusion we talk not about the same people. It is always difficult. We said before we can bring anybody who is socially excluded? But was that fair? For whom was the programme fair and fitting? Maybe it was too much challenge?!
- Despite all the preparation we had to come together to see how we look together. And: young people are not the same and they have their individual views.

### **Learning from Granada:**

**During the evaluation meeting in London May 2006 the following recommendations for the planning of similar events were collected:**

#### **What to be aware of beforehand**

- Be clear about your expectations – what/how much is reasonable for one event?
- Diverse abilities/backgrounds means you need a 'safety zone'
- Language/concepts need to be explained and clarified
- Need to take the pressure off the 'hosts', at the same time respecting the differences between the young people
- Warmth/comfort/safety are vital
- Preparation needs to take account of the individual needs/choice/fears/worries of each young person
- Specific issues for young people with disabilities (e.g. in youth exchanges) – especially in the time need for preparation of young people

#### **Agenda and programme**

- A clear focus for both young people and adults
- The agenda needs to be understandable
- Enough time for preparation and starting the event/being introduced/understanding the programme
- Avoid too much 'action' which prevents thinking and coordinating and agreeing



- To be brave enough to do less
- Increase communication – to make sure we take care of different people in different ways

### **Decision making, leadership**

- Agree on the decision-making processes for the event and time needs to be allowed in the timetable for this
- If you agree something you should do it!
- Decisions affecting young people should be kept to

### **Young people and adults**

- Explore and clarify adult roles
- Adult/young people interaction –too much/too little contact – finding a good balance is important
- How to use the critical friends in a good way and at the right time – agree to a “challenge”!
- Is the distinction between young people and adults so important (sometimes the age gap is not so big)

### **Learning and measuring success**

- Even with the level of challenge, the experience of different languages/cultures/personalities is very important and it can be turned into a positive learning opportunity
- Do we know what we have learned? Do we all agree this? How do we use this in preparing for future events?
- Success Criteria – how many levels? How many indicators? How is this calculation affected by the fact that the young people are not experienced in this type of project + this type of participation?
- It's important that all young people can have a chance to experience what 'Europe' is (the 'goals' may have to be smaller / being less ambitious is ok)



## Final conference of Youth-Empowerment-Solutions in Halle, 21-22 September 2006

### Design of the final conference in Halle

The final conference in Halle was not designed as an isolated event but part of the project's working process and we applied the learning from the previous two project years. In particular learning from the youth event in Granada in March 2006 was taken into account as explored under the previous paragraph.

It was essential to create a safe setting to put young people in the centre of the event in order for them to share their views and opinions in partnership with their project workers. The conference featured also interactive parts for participants to be in direct contact with the young people and project team involved.

The event was divided in two parts: DAY 1 as the day for the project participants - young people and project workers with the purpose to share and celebrate achievements from the last two years with each other and to prepare for DAY 2.

DAY 2 as the public conference day to share results, experiences and recommendations with guest from other participation projects, practitioners, politicians and academics.

The programme was be build around the needs of young people and featured direct encounters between young people and adults attending the conference.

### Preparation and pre-visit

A thorough evaluation of all project events prior to Halle was done within the Projectteam. This included controversy discussions but once a decision was reached it was supported by all. Preparations for Halle included also a pre-visit to "test" logistical details, timing and usability of the conference venue.

### Conference Venue



The Jugendwerkstatt Halle was used as the conference venue. The conference room was able to host 50 people and more and it was possible to use different settings during the two conference days. Important was also the outside play-area and the in-house catering service as well as all technical and logistic support during the two-days. Young people and the project workers from Halle hosted the event. A big compliment for the perfect organisations and all logistic arrangements.



## Mobility of young people



What is common for many of us was a first time experience for the young people who took part in the project activities and the Halle conference. A good preparation at home was therefore important and a last „familiar“ meal. Young people shared at the conference their impressions of what it is like to come to a different country and different culture for the first time.

## Positive effects



Mobility of young people was one of the core themes of the project. We created opportunities for young people who never travelled abroad to experience mobility in Europe. There are various accounts of the positive effects this had on the personal development of the participating young people.



## Arrival and welcome



All participating groups were asked to take pictures during the trip and to share them upon arrival. Young people from Halle drew a huge European map on a wall-paper so all groups could document their trips and share their impressions.

## Having clear roles and leadership



One of the learnings from a previous event was that there should be no adult in the room without a clear and transparent active role. We used different coloured T-Shirts to identify roles and tasks of all participants in the room (Blue=project participants and project workers, Black=Adults with supporting roles, Red=Translators and language scouts)

## Translators – being an essential and integrative part of the group



There was an extraordinary level of commitment by all involved in this project. This was most visible within the team of professional translators who played an essential role in bridging between the different groups and languages and were very flexible to cope with different conference settings according to the needs of young people.



*"I felt good helping you to communicate. This time it was not just that I was the "machine" without any thoughts but I had the opportunity to give an input, too. That is something special"* (comment from one of the translators after the event).

### **Internal project day one**

The conference was divided into a DAY 1 and DAY 2. DAY 1 was the internal day for the participating project groups, to get familiar with each others and the conference setting, to celebrate achievements and to prepare for DAY 2.

### **Conference setting on DAY 2**



Day 2 was organised as a more formal conference setting with translation equipment but with the objective to put young people on centre stage and to involve them in all activities. All participating adults were asked to take the role of active listeners during the whole conference and not just take part as passive observers.



Day 2 started off with a welcome from the host Klaus Roth and a reflection on participation and the Y-E-S work approach done by Thomas Vollmer. This took up to an hour but was all the time adults had to speak before young people and their project workers presented their experiences and learning from their local participation projects. In the picture left Tony Dobson reflects on the different ways and paths participation can take.

It is a process where decisions have to be taken at every "Crossroad" and in the whole process there are many known knowns but also known unknowns and even unknown unknowns (and maybe also unknown knowns). *The quote was originally made by D. Rumsfeld however in a different context.*



## Presentation by young people



All young people showed a level of maturity and confidence in presenting themselves and their projects which was truly astonishing. They partly presented in a foreign language (English) or were assisted by professional translators. Either way it was evident that they proudly did present what they had learnt being involved in the project and what impact it had on their personal development. A big applaud and lots of positive encouragement was ensured afterwards.

## Communication Exercise



The main objective of the afternoon was to allow for direct interactions between all participants, in particular between young people and adults. The communication exercise combined elements of meditative self-reflection (music, walking) with small discussion rounds and mixed groups of young people and adults. Each discussion group was supported by at least one translator who was at times the facilitator and initiator of the discussion as well.

*"I loved the idea of walking around, listening to music and then suddenly be divided into different groups. Usually, after five minutes, there was a really vivid conversation"* (comment from a participant).



## Breaks and Re-fresh



Volleyball was one of the very popular activity-based activities over lunch to refresh and re-load after the mornings.

*"Volleyball had a positive impact on our relations to our Spaniards and to the participants from other projects. It is a team sport and therefore it also promotes team work, doesn't it?"* (comment from a translator)

## Fish-Bowl Method



A final discussion round using the fish-bowl method was used to conclude and sum-up the conference. The methodology allowed for everybody to get involved on a voluntary base and for people to join the discussion round as long as they liked. The centre was on the fish-bowl in the middle and all listeners grouped around the inner discussion circle. This approach demonstrated again that all participants were equal in the conference. Barriers like tables or putting a round table on stage were avoided.

## Young people being in charge



What we achieved in Halle was to put young people in the centre, to provide them with a positive experience and an opportunity to grow.

*"They were quite self-confident and it says a lot about the work you have done and how much it is needed. It is only when you feel respected as a person by society that you can give something back and improve society"* (comment from a participant)



## Sharing the learning from the project with other participation projects in Europe

Following the final conference the EU Commission invited all European participation pilot projects to an evaluation meeting to Brussels, 16-17 October. John Fox on behalf of the Y-E-S young people, Jim Davis on behalf of the project partners and Thomas Vollmer as the project coordinator participated in the meeting and took the learning from Halle and the project to Brussels.





## Observations from a critical friend

My observations as a 'critical friend' to the Youth Empowerment Solutions project was undertaken in two locations: in Granada, Spain and Halle, Germany. I was part of a team of three other critical friends in Granada and there was a separate report produced by all four of us. I was, along with another 'critical friend', able to draw comparisons between the event and, most importantly, had been able to build up relationships with the young people and practitioners. Involvement in the project has been of an enormous interest to me, I have learnt a great deal and it has given me plenty of food for thought. The following points might be helpful to be raised at this point.

Organisers of the event in Germany were able to learn the lessons of the Spanish event and could build upon the strengths of Granada. This was by and large successfully achieved and such learning included:

- A clear set of protocols for speaking was established with innovative ways in which to involve everybody, not least the young people. Language issues and the translators were used in a very constructive manner that went to further the dialogue between participants.
- There was a clear set of leadership and direction to the two days. The young people were clear about when things were happening and what they were expected to do.
- Afterwards the reflections of practitioners were posted on the web site and this allowed a degree of de-briefing. The technology and 'chatrooms' worked well in this task.
- The role of critical friends was introduced at an early stage and had a role as 'helpers' for the young people, as well as observers. This was reinforced with 'black T-shirts' and we were made to feel as though we were part of the group. This made me feel far less intrusive to the event while allowing constructive comments and observations to be made.

### Further work:

Needless to say with any project there is space for further work. It would be interesting to ask further questions to the young people.

- i. Now the young people have been given a chance to reflect upon the event, how might they organise a similar event in their own country? Or if they were to do it again, how might they organise things differently?
- ii. How did the technology (e.g. chat rooms, e-mail) facilitate communication between the young people?
- iii. What were the young people's expectations of the event and did the event meet these expectations?



- iv. Did the event change anything in the young people's lives, no matter how big or small the change may be?
- v. How did young people's participation affect their 'ordinary life'? (e.g. do you feel happier and more confident in meeting new people for the first time/speaking in public/travelling in your own area/travelling to new places?)

Such follow up questions would be helpful in terms of evaluating the process as a whole.

**Future directions:**

It would be a pity if the learning of this programme was not taken forward and I realise the project does have a number of interesting ideas that build on this learning. The organisers have clearly learnt a great deal about the process of engaging young people and furthering their participation in specific events outside of their usual environments. One interesting direction could be in terms of developing and encouraging understanding between minority groups across Europe.

Intercultural understanding across Europe is arguably approaching a 'crisis point' and while the project involved a fair balance of genders and (dis)abilities, contact between people of different ethnic minority communities is something of social and political importance today.

What was especially satisfying about the process of Youth Empowerment Solutions was the way in which it encouraged and empowered young people who were unused to being activists in their own communities. The fact that most of the young people never even had a passport testifies to the hard work behind the scenes done by the individual projects. I hope that more socially excluded young people will be given the opportunity to Benefit from the social learning achieved in the two events I had a chance to participate in.

Dr Tom Cockburn, University of Bradford



## Youth-Empowerment-Solutions – Summing up

The project provided a significant outcome and life-experience for the young people, the project workers involved and the Y.E.S. FORUM Network at large as it provided a major input for the Network's lobbying work in order to promote participation, involvement and social inclusion of young people. The project was certainly challenging at times, we set ourselves up to difficult situations and experimental learning. But through very intense and careful preparations and in-depth evaluation after events we maximised effective and positive learning from the project.

The work process and work culture can be described as very dynamic. The large majority of the project partners have been very active and interested in the transnational project as the exchange was beneficial to their own work. They immensely shaped the project's work process and its outcomes. It was evident that they took a huge interest in the project. However there was also disappointment that one project partner was not as active as expected and had to be prompted various times to full-fill its commitments. Others turned out to be much more active than expected.

A very important element for the project's success was the supervision provided and applying the social management approach with its process oriented and participatory coordination style. This ensured that every event planned was building on the results and experiences from previous project activities. There was a constant evaluation and re-definition of project objectives in order to take the next steps.

What was difficult to cope with were changes in the project team, and changes regarding young people. On the other we had a surprisingly stable core group, who ensured that we could cope with changes and were able to integrate new participants without losing the dynamic of the project.

We did focus as much as we could on activities and direct encounters for young people and increased the level of meetings, bi-lateral visits and dissemination events within the available budget.

The project was also tightly tied with the lobbying work of Y.E.S. FORUM. And because of the established and well-functioning Network structure of Y.E.S. FORUM and its activities on EU level recommendations from the project were reflected back to the preparation groups for the EU youth event in Cologne, the EU youthweek in June 2007 and a wide a range of national youth policy events and seminars.



## Participation of young people at risk of social exclusion – Comments from young people and project workers during the fish-bowl-session in Halle

### Issues around travel and duration of events

- The difficulties to cope with funding requirements for European youth exchanges were pointed out: 6 programme days are too long – especially if you take young people abroad for the first time. It was said that we can do it well but in a shorter time. More and shorter visits would be better for young people. That way they can apply learning from a previous trip for their next travel. It was also pointed out that very long visits are hard work for the host.
- Also bear in mind that travel is hard work, in particular if you live in a rural area and along way from a big town and airport.
- Preparation for an event + recovery from a trip needs to be taken into account – arranging travel – washing your clothes afterwards etc. might take a lot of time but also offers a lot of learning opportunities

### Comments on the design of events

- It was emphasized that there is a need for time for yourself and to think, speak and reflect in your own language. And there is only so much time you can spend at one event.
- Difficult to be flexible if you are tied to a fixed timetable because of the project application. But there is a need to be flexible during an event in order to adjust to the needs of the participants and to allow more time for support if needed.
- There is only so much time you can spend at one event and in one session.

### General comments to the Y-E-S project

- Values the YES FORUM Network – amazed of level of energy and enthusiasm – it would be a shame if this was the end. Very important that there are follow-up activities to this project.
- Mobility as a theme was not raised at the beginning of the project but developed as one of three very important elements to ensure social inclusion (participation/mobility/motivation=inclusion)
- The word action (youth in action) is not an action but a process – there is a continuity – new ideas develop + grow
- For projects like this it is important to mix young people and decision makers from different countries, so they can influence each other (sharing good practice and learning from each other)
- It is always important to remember that organisations undergo change, also staff changes during a project. Therefore essential that activities happen in each country, so that changes in one place have not such a negative impact. The Y-E-S project serves as a positive example able to cope with changes
- The Network structure of Y.E.S. FORUM also includes academics, local governments, national co-ordinators etc. - There is a huge capacity to take the work developed in this project forward.



## Recommendations and Conclusions

A core element for the success of the project was the intense involvement of young people in all stages of the project in particular young people of which their environment had little expectations. Therefore the project developed as a joint effort and as a joint action of young people and project workers for participation and inclusion.

The following points should be in particular highlighted:

- Providing opportunities for mobility of young people proved to be a very important mean for learning and personal development and in essence for more active participation of young people at risk of social exclusion in European society.
- It is worth to take risks and to give the involved young people as much responsibilities and tasks as possible. This has a major impact on any activities. We felt our events and meetings were more intense with positive effects on the motivation of all involved (including adults). The level of engagement rises as well as the awareness for the needs of others.
- Young people are motivated and ready to take part regardless of their abilities if they are taken serious and for full.
- Linking actions and on local level through Networking across Europe can have a very positive impact on the development of a European youth policy.
- It is indeed possible to involve young people with fewer opportunities in European events and European conferences. All it needs is a careful preparation process and an appropriate conference setting like the right choice of communication tools. Such a platform is then very suitable to exchange and to develop both practice and policy.
- The project managed to transform participation into involvement and inclusion. Participation is in that sense a means for young people to develop their own life perspectives and to feel part of a certain group or a larger society. If that was achieved the project can be regarded as successful.

## Follow up and Follow-on activities

A wide range of follow-up and follow-on activities have been developed. All of them are a direct and/or indirect outcome of the Youth-Empowerment-Solutions project:

- A concrete follow up project is the ***Youth for Youth in CLE Programs***: It encourages youth actions for fighting discrimination and exclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and features a partnership between ANHSH, Y.E.S. FORUM and the open society justice initiative (Budapest)
- The project ***Youth against Terrorism*** is commissioned by PeaceMaker, a new member of Y.E.S Forum. The proposal was developed under EU measures in favour of victims of terrorism. The aim is to enable young people to build friendship and solidarity across Europe by developing different approaches to peer mentoring initially in UK, Spain and Italy and then sharing the approaches across Europe.
- In relation to the INTI Programme promoting participation and integration of young migrants Y.E.S. FORUM in cooperation with BAG EJSA commissioned the proposal ***Ubuntu***. It focuses on activities e.g voluntary work of young people and exchange of good practice.
- In addition there are currently activities planed for Liverpool, European Capital of Culture in 2008 together with the Y.E.S. FORUM Network and partners in Liverpool.
- Also Y.E.S. FORUM is going to develop together with academic partners a proposal with the working title ***Present and Future for Young People***. It is about hopes



and fears of young people in the various EU-countries, about multiple identities (in terms of gender, economical and ethnic background as well as religious).

- Further information on follow-on and follow-up activities will be provided by the Y.E.S. European office, [yes-info@yes-forum.org](mailto:yes-info@yes-forum.org)



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And with contributions from young people, project workers, members of the project team and critical friends. Thank you all.

For more information visit:  
<http://www.yes-forum.org/y-e-s>